NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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South Africa

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CAUSES OF LAPSATION AND PROCEDURES TO MINIMIZE OR ERADICATE THIS PHENOMENON

By

Revd W TONY WHITFIELD, BD, MA

for the Philosophiae Doctor in Practical Theology
of the
North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)

Promoter: Revd Dr Peter Naylor
Co-Promoter: Professor Dr B.J. de Klerk

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ABSTRACT

An individual lapses when he ceases attendance at Church. It is a withdrawal from the social, spiritual and communal aspects of the Church. Lapsation can occur in both young and adult, in the former case it is likely to be precipitated by parental failure, in the latter there are many causes from disagreement with the teaching of the Church. However, one of the most prevailing causes is the feeling of not belonging which is often found in large urban communities. Today, young and middle-aged individuals are leaving the Church which, if it persists, it will be deprived of its membership for tomorrow.

The present writer believes that lapsation in the young can be ameliorated by a more intentional attitude of parents towards developing the faith in their children by prayer. In addition, the latter, instead of studying comparative religion, should be taught from a faith perspective and be taught doctrinal material and Biblical knowledge. In addition, the parish could offer support to parents.

The present author also maintains that adult lapsation can be obviated to some extent by the individual's participation in a cell offering an intimate setting for both the encouragement of faith and its development and providing an atmosphere in which the individual felt that he belonged. The parish would have a network of cell-groups which would be over-seen by a core team comprising specialist members. He also believes that the provision of welcome teams monitoring the attendance of new parishioners would be an essential aid to limiting defection. Such teams could check on absentee parishioners who are likely to have problems which could be resolved in the early stages of an individual's arrival into the parish.

PREFACE

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

'Lapsation' may be defined as a process by which an individual ceases to practise his – and, in many cases, any form of institutional – religion. It is a phenomenon that occurs in all denominations of the Christian Church. In today's multi-ethnic/cultural society in England, it often seems an almost impossible task to stem the tide of religious lapsation. This presents a worrying problem for parish clergy, as those who are particularly vulnerable are the young (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997: 1-10; Fulton *et al*, 2000: 169-171). If the current trend continues unabated, therefore, many parishes will find themselves with ageing and depleted congregations. To compound the dilemma still further, parish clergy often feel unable to either understand the causes or to counter the trend (Fichter, 1954: 239; Fanstone, 1993: 22).

Secularisation has also contributed in no small measure towards the decline in Sunday services during the past hundred years and across all mainstream denominations (Bruce, 1996: 25-37). In the present researcher's opinion, the relationship between secularisation and lapsation is that the former presents a macro vision of decline, whilst the latter affords a micro vision of the same problem. What seems without doubt is that today's Church in England is faced with a major problem of potentially critical proportions (Brierley, 2000: 67-80). A viable solution appears to be the discovery of a method or strategy to eliminate or, at least, minimise, the effects of lapsation.

The problem associated with lapsation is both multi-faceted and complex (Roof, 1994: 32-80; Fanstone, 1993: 29-49). That there are potentially a multitude of reasons why an individual might cease to express his or her faith in the prescribed manner certainly contributes to this entanglement. Generational issues between clergy and those to whom they seek to minister is another participatory factor, as is the Church's apparent inability to promote an appropriate method of restoration to persons who seek it (Hadaway, 1990: 32-33; Richter & Francis, 1998: 138).

The present writer believes this particular field of study has not been exploited sufficiently by practical theologians and that there is a great deal of additional data to be found. Richter and Francis (1998: 169) confine their study to the south-east of England, while Hoge (1981: 4-6) concentrates on the Roman Catholics in his investigation. Hadaway (1990: 11-16) provides important information on this subject but does not

describe the methodology by which he obtained it. Brierley (2000: 9-50), on the other hand, views the problem of secularisation nationally, providing statistics of church affiliation but does not directly address lapsation. Fanstone's (1993: 272-280) surveys, conducted in various parts of England, are thought to be unrepresentative by virtue of the small number of people interviewed. However, these researchers have contributed important information and provide a basis for further investigations. They do not establish a relationship between the lapsed person and other types of individual in the church, from the most committed to the least.

On the other hand, it is the present researcher's view that a survey conducted among 1,500 adults - comprising Roman Catholic, Church of England, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations spread over a representative part of England and 1,000 young people possessing similar religious affiliation - would yield important data for the church. In his research the present writer discovered an alarming paucity of material on such an important subject, but it is hoped that his own investigation will be able to confirm or question current findings.

Our view is, therefore, that although this phenomenon is most familiar in the present writer's tradition, it is evident that it also occurs in other mainstream institutional denominations, a fact born out by the work of Christian Research in England (Brierley, 2000: 10-11). The present writer, therefore, believes that an analysis of the causes of lapsation and the development of strategies to limit or eradicate it are perhaps overdue. Such an analysis will be of service to most religious institutions. The central question posed by this work, therefore, is: 'How may one make the best use of procedures that are both available and accessible to eradicate or minimise the process of lapsation?'

The questions that naturally arise from this problem are:

- How can lapsation be defined within the context of the Christian parish community?
- What are the principal causes of lapsation in the young and adult?
- How may one identify the potential spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral implications normally associated with lapsation?
- What are the expressions of faith, belonging and value of the lapsed?
- What features and characteristics are associated with the process of lapsation?

- What guidelines can be formed for returning to religious practice after a period of lapsation with reference to scriptural principles and an analysis of lessons drawn from modern church history?
- How may we formulate a strategic plan that might be implemented to minimise the process and effects of lapsation in young people and adults?

The main aim of this thesis is to identify and investigate procedures that could be employed to eradicate or minimise the process of lapsation.

The objectives of this study must be seen in their relationship to the aim. In so doing, it is intended to approach the subject from seven angles:

i. to determine a definition of lapsation within the context of the Christian parish community;

ii. to ascertain the causes of lapsation in the young and adult;

iii. to discover the identifiable spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral implications of lapsation;

iv. to evaluate the expressions of faith, belonging and value of the lapsed;

v. to describe the process of lapsation;

vi. to investigate the nature of returning to religious practice after a period of lapsation. This will be undertaken with reference to an outline of scriptural principles and an analysis of the lessons drawn of this phenomenon from an historical perspective. The scriptural principles will provide a basis for investigation of lapsation and the strategies that will be required.

vii. To formulate strategies that might be employed for minimising the process and effects of lapsation in young people and adults.

Since lapsation is understood to be a process whereby a baptised individual ceases to practise his religion, the central theoretical argument of this study is, therefore, that by investigating spiritual, sociological, psychological and moral causes in which this

phenomenon occurs in the Catholic Church in England, lapsation can only be eliminated by a holistic process of education.

The research will be conducted both on a qualitative and quantitative level, both of which have their strengths and weaknesses. The quantitative approach reveals a statistical overview but lacks fine detail, whereas the qualitative method yields a deeper and richer aspect not possible in the former. The present writer believes that these approaches need to be made so that a proper evaluation of attitudes to lapsation can be formed.

The Basic Theory will comprise a survey of Lapsation in the New Testament leading to preliminary conclusions about the Scriptural perspective; and an historical overview that will evaluate the influence of culture and tradition on the types of this phenomenon encountered.

The Meta-Theory will analyse the relation between lapsation and other disciplines that are non-theological, such as the study of sociology. This can be done by examining behaviour through questionnaires and interviews.

The Practice-Theory will examine the empirical and hermeneutical approaches and the relation between lapsation and the claims of the Christian faith. From a comparison of Practice-Theory, Meta-Theory and Basic-Theory evaluations a Model of lapsation can be determined.

The questionnaires fall into the following divisions:

Questionnaire 1 will be responded to by young persons up to the age of 20 years. This will focus on reasons for lapsing and, if the individual has returned to religious practice, the causes and the precipitating factors that caused the individual to do so. This questionnaire appears in Appendix 1. The results of this questionnaire will form the central position of chapter 3 and, to some extent, chapters 4, 5 and 7.

Questionnaire 2 will apply to adults. This questionnaire will attempt to discover the causes and consequences of lapsation; the aspects of belonging, values, practical matters and situations in which the individual has returned to religious practice; the precipitating factors for returning and his spiritual needs. This appears in Appendix 2.

The results of this survey will contribute to the core of central chapters 3, 5, and, to some extent, chapter 4.

Both the above questionnaires comprise the quantitative survey of lapsation. It is proposed that some of the data will be gathered by personal interview and the remainder by postal means. A letter will be sent to an interviewee requesting his co-operation in taking part in the survey and the choice as to whether a personal interview or a postal method would be preferred. This letter is shown in Appendix 4. Because the interviewee will not be required to state his name on the survey sheet, the data will be anonymous.

Questionnaire 3 embraces the qualitative research in which fewer individuals will be personally interviewed. The basis of this questionnaire is shown in Appendix 3. The result of this survey will contribute the core of chapters 5, and 7.

The basic criterion governing this field study is that interviewees must be those who do not attend church during the course of the year, with the exception of Christmas, Easter and special occasions such as baptisms, marriages, funerals and confirmations. These are considered to be events undertaken through personal motives rather than communal. This level of practice could be interpreted as low, bearing in mind that Richter and Francis (1998: 168-9) set the top level of lapsation as attending church services no more than six times in a year. The present writer believes this to be too arbitrary and whilst in theory an individual could, on our criterion, attend church services on six occasions per annum, in practice it would probably be lower. Excluding special family celebrations, attendance at church could be limited to twice a year.

Initially, a small pilot study will be conducted in the researcher's locality to test the comprehensibility and accuracy of the questions. These may be subsequently refined and, possibly, additional questions introduced. The revised questionnaires will then be used over an extended area covering Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Evangelical communities.

The qualitative study will cover a smaller number of individuals over as wide a denominational scenario as possible. The interviews will be recorded and analysed. A record will be kept of the number of surveys issued, the area in which they were used, the number of completed questionnaires and the number of individuals who declined to

participate. For the purposes of the study the terms humankind, mankind and the pronoun 'he' are used to refer to any person, male or female.

A computer programme, possibly Microsoft Access, will be installed to process the data received.

This sociological study will also compare the literary material available on the subject, with the results of analyses of the above surveys. The former will include appropriate literary contributions relating to the causes of lapsation, an evaluation of works by writers who have researched the process of lapsation and a review of material dealing with its psychological, sociological and moral implications. Having looked at all the available evidence, including that carried out in our field studies, the present writer proposes to make rational deductions, whilst at the same time acknowledging that this research is effected within the Roman Catholic tradition, yet not excluding other traditions. The Biblical survey and exegesis will be applied in chapter 7 in which the Scriptural principles of lapsation and return will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: DEFINITION OF LAPSATION AS UNDERSTOOD IN A CHRISTIAN PARISH COMMUNITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to arrive at a definition of lapsation with reference to the Roman Catholic Christian parish community. In order to achieve this, a study will be undertaken of the parish in terms of its membership and the various models and characteristics of a parishioner, since parishioners can demonstrate varying levels of commitment to the parish.. A lapsed individual implies one who may or may not regard him/herself as a member of the parish, but nevertheless, objectively speaking, is not. By arriving, therefore, at a definition of a parishioner and the modes that can be assumed, a description can be provided of the various levels of membership and an understanding and definition of a lapsed person can be arrived at in relationship to a parish. Hence the purpose of this chapter will be achieved by studying the works of Bird, 1999; Brierley, 2000a; Caplovitz & Sherrow, 1977; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994; Dudley, 1979; Fanstone, 1993; Fichter, 1954; Fulton, 1999; Greeley, 1979; Hadaway, 1990; Hoge, 1981; Hornsby-Smith 1987; Klein 1990; Lechner, 1989; Marler & Hadaway, 1993; Mauss , 1968; Moberg, 1962; Perry et al, 1980; Roozen, 1980; Sharot et al, 1986; Stark & Iannaccone, 1996; Sweetser, 1974; Towler, 1974; and Wilson, 1982.

The modes of personal commitment in a parish are based on the work of Joseph Fichter, who published under the title of 'Social Relations in an Urban Parish' (1954) and on those of Moberg (1962), Fulton (1999) and Hornsby-Smith (1987). Although the first two named wrote in the middle of the last century, it is believed that their work is unique because the various modes of personal commitment perceived in parishioners have not really changed from that time to the present day, although it could be argued that the demography of the average parish has undergone alteration.

Therefore, a Catholic parishioner would be in the same social category today as would have been the case fifty years ago. Arguably, the style of the Church may have changed but the social relationships within it have not.

2.2 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Social scientists use different terms to indicate the same phenomenon. These terms include: 'lapsed' (Hornsby-Smith, 1991); 'dropout' (Dudley, 1979; Hadaway, 1990; Hoge, 1981; Mauss, 1968); 'dormant' (Fichter, 1954); 'nominal Christian' (Hadaway, 1990; Roozen, 1980); 'mental member' (Hadaway, 1990); 'marginal member' (Marler & Hadaway, 1993);'falling away from the faith' (Van Kaam, 1966; Moberg, 1962); 'church leaver' (Richter & Francis, 1998); 'inactive' (Moberg, 1962); 'disidentified' (Greeley, 1979); 'disengage' (Roozen, 1980); 'defection' (Mauss, 1980); 'backsliding' (Stark & Iannaccone, 1996); 'apostate' (Caplovitz & Sherrow, 1977). The term 'dropout' conveys to English ears one who has rejected conventional society; the terms 'dormant', 'nominal' or 'mental member' are close to the present author's concept of the phenomenon except that, as will be shown, a 'lapsed' individual would not be regarded as a member of a parish.. 'Falling away from the faith' is a phrase which signifies a non-practising Roman Catholic to someone who follows that denomination, although the present writer's view is that faith, once given, cannot be eradicated. The present writer does not favour the term 'apostate', which seems too strong a term in this context. An explanation of its inappropriateness is provided later in this chapter. Therefore, the term 'lapsation' will be adopted to describe the process, and 'lapsed' to indicate the individual's state in relation to the parish community.

2.3 DEFINITION OF A PARISHIONER

Membership of a parish does not include all and sundry, but only those who are received by means of some test of acceptability. A definition of a parish by Hiller, cited by Fichter (1954: 9), "... is a distinctive and organised plan of relations by designated persons participating in the pursuit of some one or several implicit or explicit values".

A parish can be a formally organised body or a statistical category. From a Catholic standpoint, the individual is baptised and thereby introduced into the community as a member. With reference to the parents and godparents, this action is deliberate.. An adult convert joins the Church by a deliberate action also. Canon Law (Canon 204.1. 1983: 34) states: "Christ's faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ through baptism, are constituted the People of God. For this reason, they participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called,

each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission of which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world." So every validly baptised Catholic is a subject of the Church of Christ and is a member of a parish by virtue of residing in a parochial territory. However, it has been laid down by papal authority that members of the Church remain only those who have been baptised, those who profess the faith, those who have not withdrawn from the body-unity, or those who for grave faults have not been excluded by legitimate authority. This last point refers to excommunication in regard to grave error in conduct or profession. A serious error in conduct would be thought of as a deliberate assent to abortion, according to the Code of Canon Law (Canon 1364.1: 1983: 243), and a denial of an article of faith would be considered as a grave error of profession - such as the doctrine of the Trinity or the divinity of Christ - according to Klein (1990: 268). The procedure of excommunication is rarely used today and the instances mentioned above would not incur it. It may be said, therefore, that the minimum condition for membership of a particular parish is valid baptism and place of residence. This may be taken as the sociological definition of a parishioner.

However, according to Fichter (1954:11), for a more comprehensive definition of parish membership other personal criteria should be included, such as intention, religious observance and social participation. It could be claimed that every person living in a parish is potentially or actually a member of it. The care of souls, for which every parish priest is responsible, is supposed to extend to everyone in the parish. Missionary endeavour of the parish should be directed towards potential parishioners who, sociologically, cannot be considered as part of the parish. Fichter suggests (1954: 11) that the dormant or lapsed Catholic can also be excluded from parish membership due to lack of belief, or failure in behaviour, or both. The implicit and explicit values of the Church are primarily religious. The criterion for membership is based on whether the individual fulfils the minimum requirements of formal religious practice.

Intentionally, there may be people who consider themselves Catholics, but do not consider themselves parishioners. These are often dormant or lapsed Catholics. They do not practise any of the religious observances expected of their denomination; they neither attend church services regularly nor frequent the sacraments. So, the minimum pattern for parish membership would be a person's attendance at Sunday Mass, even if irregularly, or for some special occasion such as a wedding or funeral for family members. Such an individual's children will probably be baptised and they will have

received their first communion. He would have been married in church and expect the priest to administer the anointing of the sick even if he is not suffering a life-threatening condition. Some may think that this goes beyond what a parishioner actually is; they may consider such a person to be really a dormant or lapsed individual. But the person who by intention thinks himself a parishioner, who makes minimum gestures of religious practice, cannot be excluded from the category of parishioner. Fichter believes (1954: 17) that the lapsed Catholic, on the other hand, is one who has separated himself completely from the practices of the Church.

As proposed by Fichter (1954: 18), the final criterion for membership of the parish is social participation. This introduces a dilemma, for the acceptable level of integrated social participation needs to be decided. A great majority of urban parishioners who fulfil the other conditions do not have continuous social interaction, but if it be insisted that the parish is a social group, then the number of parishioners would have to be revised downwards. If so, either the urban parish is not a social group in the strict sense, or those persons who fail to meet some requirement in regard to social participation must be considered non-parishioners. It is to be assumed that the first option, namely that a parish is not a social group, can be accepted and that it can be designated as a social aggregate or category.

Social intercourse in the definition need not refer to personal communication, according to Fichter (1954:18), but to the relation of the individual to organised patterns of belief and behaviour. An instance in which participation may be displayed in religious services is by reading the lessons, taking part in the responses in the Mass and participating in fund-raising, recreational, or pastoral ventures. In the writer's view, by participating in the Mass as a prayer offered to God the Father, the individual relates to God through the community. The parishioner, therefore, relates horizontally to other members of the church community and vertically to God. Hence a parishioner may be defined as one who is baptised, makes minimum gestures of religious practice in Sunday worship, relates to organised patterns of belief and behaviour and is socially involved in the life of the parish.

2.4 THE NUCLEAR OR CORE PARISHIONER

2.4.1 Introduction

The nuclear parishioner, according to Fichter (1954: 23), is one who is a faithful practitioner and an active participant in parish life, co-operating with other parishioners and priests. This view is echoed by Moberg (1962: 407) when he states that the nuclear parishioner is an active person who remains in conformity with the teachings of the Church. Belief controls all the roles in all associations. Fichter (1954: 23) observes, also, that Christian behaviour is portrayed in personal and social life as well as adherence to high religious values and conformity to the sacramental expectations of the Church. As an integrated Christian, the same values guide all the activities undertaken. His/her moral code is based on religious belief and controls the roles played in economic, familial, recreational and political areas. He believes that eternal salvation with God is the ultimate goal and that in order to achieve this he recognises a duty of service to his neighbour. This belief is not shared by the present writer, who maintains that salvation is a present reality as well as a future realisation, as Paul writes in his Letter to the Ephesians: "It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith" (Eph 2: 8: NJB). It is not something that one can achieve; it is a gift from God. Paul states in the Letter to the Romans (1.16) that 'it (the gospel) is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith.'

From a practical point of view, a nuclear parishioner should be someone who attends Sunday Mass regularly, receiving communion and participating in parish organisations. It may be that a certain amount of overlapping occurs between the nuclear and modal parishioner. For instance, a parishioner may attend Mass regularly, but may not be able to join parish societies; and, conversely, very active people in social organisations may not be able to frequent the sacraments at Easter time, which is considered obligatory even now by the Church.

Fichter states (1954: 25) that the youngest age group (10-19 years) exhibits the highest fidelity to religious practice and group activity. The members are probably unmarried and although they have ample leisure time to devote to parish societies in the twenty-first century, young people have a wide choice of activities so that religious practice is not always a priority for Sunday mornings. But an older age group (40-49 years)

consisting of married parishioners may have more time to devote to parish activities than younger married persons, since their children will be grown up.

In the present writer's opinion, an urban parish may comprise a large number of people who have a high degree of social awareness, but are not participants in the religious group. Similarly, there are those who are very religious but neglect or do not choose to carry these religious beliefs into their wider social life. This failure to combine individual social aspects of religion with religious observance is one of the principle reasons accounting for the small percentage of 'core Christians' or 'nuclear parishioners.' The present author thinks that this is true today in most parishes: many are not eager to establish an involvement in a religious group, even if they are overtly religious.

2.4.2 Characteristics of the Nuclear or Core Christian

Fichter states (1954: 26, 27) that the nuclear parishioner usually belongs to a nuclear family closely attached to the parish centre. It is possible that his children could be 'nuclear', but the family from which he comes could be modal or even marginally Catholic. The educational record for the nuclear parishioner tends to be slightly better than for the modal parishioner, in that the former will have had more formal education and will have spent more time in Catholic schools. The nuclear parishioner tends to be a 'born Catholic' rather than a convert, although the latter tends to be active at the supra-parochial level. It is believed by the present writer that the economic and class status of a nuclear parishioner tends to be middle class, salaried and a self-employed or professional person. The individual does not belong to social clubs with pretensions of upward mobility. His relations on a supra-parochial level tend to be religious, and oriented towards the welfare of other members.

Hornsby-Smith (1987: 51) sub-classifies the typology of nuclear parishioners as 'Involved Traditionalists' who are elderly and middle class. They are attached to traditional patterns of Catholic worship and are unhappy about the changes that occurred after Vatican II. They also prefer the traditional model of 'sacred priesthood'. In other words, they place the priest, whose opinion is infallible, on a pedestal. Another sub-classification of nuclear parishioner is the 'Involved Non-traditionlist', according to Hornsby-Smith (1987: 51).This individual is open to inter-communion and has the same

commitment as the 'Involved Traditionalist'. This sub-group consists of middle class women in early middle age.

The core parishioner, according to John Fulton (1999: 173), seeks silent worship and devotion at sacred places such as the Lourdes Grotto, or in a quiet chapel and within community celebrations. He does not view either the priest or the bishop as shrouded in sacrality and ceremonial pomp is viewed ambivalently.. According to the same writer (1999: 173), although the core Catholic believes that 'good liturgies' exist, he does not always participate in them as a regular occurrence. He appreciates the Eucharist as a communal event where God is present and experienced, but few core Catholics have any sense of an encounter with Christ in Holy Communion. Instead, there is the sense of a simple divine presence, whereby God is thought of in an abstract manner.

The main spiritual experience of the core Catholic, according to Fulton (1999: 174), is gained during pilgrimages or retreats. Pursuing a career which is uninteresting or seeking employment that will give improved financial rewards does not seem to have a high priority; he/she thinks instead of the caring professions. Concerned primarily with a close circle of friends, national issues hold no interest. There is more awareness of social breakdown and a strong desire for justice, particularly with regard to poverty and the plight of the third world. Fulton also thinks (1999: 176) that such individuals are concerned with environmentalism, feel inadequate to respond to it and suspect that politics do not provide any way of tackling the issues. It would appear that a chasm has been created separating moral issues from political action.

The moral problems of euthanasia and abortion are deeply felt by this kind of parishioner. In Fulton's opinion (1999:176) both core and modal Catholics are interested in the Church's teaching, but they are inclined to make up their own minds, probably believing that such teaching is either out-dated or impractical.

2.4.3 **The Motivational System of the Nuclear Christian**

Orthodoxy of religious belief seems to be a characteristic of the nuclear parishioner. The dogmatic and moral teaching of the Church is not questioned and this adherence helps in pursuing high behavioural objectives. Religious principles are not adopted according to his own whim. Fichter believes (1954: 29) that for such a parishioner the religious

institution is central and that there is a tendency to 'go against' the prevailing culture. Our view is that although the religious institution may be central to him, he will not be in opposition to the prevailing culture since it is not antagonistic either towards him or to the institution. He is marginal in the latter but nuclear in the religious culture. The institutionalised religious culture is also central for him. He places more importance on the religious role as a sort of core into which all other activities must be integrated. He operates within an integrated value system. The present writer believes that the present-day core Catholic lives in a world in which his value system is somewhat fluid and may be slightly different from the official church position. I agree with Fichter (1954: 30) that the core Catholic does not think of the Commandments as exclusively religious principles operating only in religious institutions. They embody a philosophy of life which applies to every sphere into which he enters. In other words, he does not apply one set of values to his family relationships, another to his business contacts and yet a third to his leisure and recreational activities.

His relationship with the clergy tends to be cordial. He will defend the actions of the priest and co-operate in the more tedious and thankless tasks of the parish. He understands his status as a layman in the parish and that the priest must make the ultimate decision in any matter. Fichter states (1954: 30) that he may regard himself as an assistant to the parish priest. Our view is that this attitude is rarely found these days.

2.4.4 **Leaders**

A leader is a definite type of core Catholic. He may be described according to the opinion of Fichter (1954: 31) as being a practising Catholic with a good knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic faith; he has a good approach to people, treating them with tact, diplomacy and courtesy. He is willing to treat others in an unselfish, charitable and unprejudiced way, and is open, honest, sincere and trustworthy; he must be recognised as a good, moral character, who sets an example to other parishioners; he is able to work hard even when the job is not considered important; he shows courage, enthusiasm and aggressiveness and has the ability to express his thoughts clearly to others and is able to speak well in public; he has executive ability and is a good organiser and manager; he will be active and successful in the community, the neighbourhood and in his occupation; he possesses vision and broad-mindedness. Our view is that such a person

would not often be found in a parish scenario. He is more likely to flourish at the supra-parochial level.

Moberg (1962: 408) asserts that lay leaders may emanate from nuclear members. They are attached to the Church through an appreciation of some sort of faith centring on ritual, charismatic leadership, or other forms of parish activity. They are sometimes thought of by the clergy as 'ideal members' or 'pillars of the Church', recognised as dependable leaders rendering outstanding service. It is possible, according to Moberg (1962: 408), that being a 'pillar' may be socially inherited. The present writer believes that in the present day, where social mobility is high and congregations have a considerable turnover, this may not occur.

In the ranks of the Protestant denominations, Moberg (1962: 408) believes that nuclear members emerge, who deviate from the majority of the mediocre members to instil new vigour and insight, thus making the Church a 'prophetic' influence in society. Moberg (1962: 408) thinks that some nuclear members may have deficient social relationships elsewhere and find personality outlets in Church organisations and activities. He does not provide any data for this assumption.

Both Fichter (1954: 34) and Moberg (1962: 417) observe that the parish priest is considered as the primary full-time leader in each parish group. Moberg (1962: 417) suggests that the success of a leader depends on his relationship with the priest, the group members, the goals of the group, the characteristics of parochial groupings and the qualities of the leader himself. A lay person can only be a part-time leader, operating sporadically. The parish leader is unable to dispense or receive rewards that may otherwise serve as an incentive to group action, but a layman may receive a pontifical award granted for services performed in the diocese. The parish priest cannot compensate his leaders other than by offering praise and recognition. It is possible that this could alienate some of his followers. Inability to dispense rewards can be a drawback for the maintenance of lay parochial leadership. On the other hand, a member may quit an organisation without losing face and without the need to explain his withdrawal. The lay leader can never be a total leader. The priest is his superior, and the layperson can only give a portion of his time to the work. Fichter states (1954: 35) that the motives he or his followers have for doing the work seem intangible. It would appear to the present author that in many cases, the core Christian undertakes such work because of his religious principles. The parochial organisations in which he works are

not 'total' organisations, either because they function intermittently or are voluntary. The lay religious leader seems to require greater knowledge and ability than that of the professional leader with paid followers. The lay leader needs five elements for successful functioning, according to Fichter (1954: 35). His role implies:

- A relationship with the priest-director. There must be a degree of independence and initiative allowed to the leader. Effective leadership cannot exist by appointment or dictation.

- A relationship with the group membership. Success in leadership seems to depend on a balance and integration of these relationships. Co-operation between the leader and the group members is probably the most important factor.

- A certain level of social skill is needed to maintain the line of communication between the priest and the members of the group. The success of a leader may be judged by the success of the organisation. Its success will be gauged according to whether it has attained its goal. The latter must be clearly understood by the priest, the leader and the members. Any vagueness on this point will precipitate inefficient leadership.

- An intimate knowledge of the function and goal of the group. No group can function automatically and no goal is achieved spontaneously. Successful lay leadership depends upon the interest which the priest, leader and the members have in the operation of the group.

- A sustained interest by all participants in the group. People will co-operate more actively in the attainment of goals which are consonant with their ideology or value system. If they have a secular mindset, they will not be interested in the more spiritual activities. Where spiritual values are debased, the following of a parochial athletic programme will be greater than in following a prayer programme. A leader has to be active in a group whose interests mirror his. A pious man with good leadership qualities but with no interest in athletics would not be successful in running a youth club.

Fulton believes (1999: 179) that an outstanding core Catholic, one who is, presumably, a leader, is usually single, female and wishes to devote attention to full-time institutional ministries.

However, the individual is sometimes highly critical of a Church dominated by priests, and wishes married clergy to be installed, looking to the future when women will be ordained to the ministry. In this view Fulton disagrees with Fichter. However, the latter describes a past age in the Church and Fulton is more accurate in regard to its present state.

2.5 THE MODAL PARISHIONER

The modal parishioner, according to Fichter (1954: 40), is neither enthusiastic enough to be counted within the inner core, nor lethargic enough to be considered as marginal. According to Fulton (1999: 179), he is committed to a career and is less enthusiastic about the Catholic faith than is the nuclear member. He attends church frequently, yet not weekly, in the opinion of Fulton (1999: 179) and Moberg (1962: 409), and according to Fulton (1999: 179) is orientated to a positive evaluation of life, in what can be achieved rather than what can be avoided. Moberg (1962: 409) and Fulton (1999: 179) think of him as an ordinary church member, of a type which constitutes a majority within the church membership. Moberg (1962: 409) states that while not being a model of what a follower of Christ ought to be, to outsiders he is a model of a typical Catholic. Fulton (1999: 179) describes him also as the most widely representative of the urban Church. He typifies not the best among Catholics, but their majority. The modal Catholic is the living model or 'type' of Catholic set as an example before the great majority of others. His behaviour is rated as typical Catholic behaviour and his beliefs and attitudes are assumed to be those of the Church. Although, according to Moberg (1962: 410), he may behave in an inconsistent manner, he is neither unaware of his inconsistency nor frustrated by it. Marler & Hadaway (1993: 35) are probably speaking of the modal parishioner when they describe such a person as 'active.'

Hornsby-Smith (1987: 52) makes 'Non-involved Traditionalists' a sub-classification of the model parishioner. These are mainly elderly, lower working class and are sometimes found in the first generation of Irish immigrants. Their religious behaviour is similar to that of the 'Involved Non-traditionalists'.

Another sub-category identified by Hornsby-Smith (1987: 52, 53) is that of 'Orthodox Attenders'. These are elderly, middle-class and more conformist than the average Catholic parishioner. They support openness to change, married clergy, birth control and divorce. Hornsby-Smith (1987: 53) posits a final sub-group of the modal parishioner - the Heterodox Attenders'- who are young, middle class and open to innovation.

Towler (1974: 166-71) distinguishes two types of commitment to a religious community. The first is 'Local', where the salient context is the parish or neighbourhood and the second is 'Party', where the salient ethos is a particular denomination. He does not qualify the levels of participation in either group.

Fulton (1999: 179) speaks of the modal parishioner as exhibiting social solidarity, implying a high degree of morale and consensus, a close adherence to a common value system externalised in social co-operation among the members of his group. Moberg (1962: 409) asserts that the ideal pattern of social solidarity, based on love, is not met in modal members. They are more influenced by occupational, social and economic considerations. These aspects are more significant in promoting co-operation and group unity than religious factors. Personal friendships, similar education and age, personal interests in a specific activity and recognition from others in the Church are more significant in social solidarity than the higher motive of love of God, membership of the Church and loyalty to the parish. A group is most cohesive when its members find membership attractive; they are motivated to assume their assigned roles, and they share a common understanding of the group's norms. The existence of social solidarity serves a double purpose: first, to draw Catholics together in their social and human relations and second, to distinguish them from other groups and secular organisations.

The question of social solidarity involves thinking of the urban parish as a communal group held together by shared religious values. It may be that the sharing of functions is a more practical feature of unity than the sharing of common values. The lack of social participation in the past leaves us with the provisional conclusion that it is but a social aggregate. And if it does not exist in the parish, it does not exist in the Catholic Church. Fichter assumes (1954: 43) that Catholics remain together because of their common religion. This may not be so, in our view. The species of unity among them can be categorised as: unity by human consensus; unity by divine grace; and unity by social

virtue. These can be observed and measured on a general community level, on the supra-parochial level, and on the level of parochial activities and groups respectively. These various forms of solidarity will now be examined.

2.5.1 **Solidarity by Consensus**

Apologists of the Church, in particular Sheehan (1953: 154), have stressed the Roman Catholic Church's unity: that it is the one, holy, universal and apostolic Church. The inference has been drawn that Catholics who are orthodox and united to Rome agree about the truth of the shared dogmas of faith all over the world and all through time. In the writer's view, this was a pious assumption, which has not been found to be true even in England and especially during the last two centuries. It is further assumed that they also accept the same code of morality, which is obligatory and binding on all who have attained the age of reason. This assumed form of solidarity, in Fichter's opinion (1954:43), is a consensus of the mind concerning the abstract truths of Catholicism. But this theological unity, a common agreement on creed, cult and code is, by implication, a social phenomenon. This means that all Roman Catholics have the same attitudinal relationship to God and that they share a kind of 'mental' communion among themselves. Perhaps a non-social or anti-social Christian is unthinkable. Therefore, although all Roman Catholics may be said to have a similar relationship with God, they may not be closely associated with one another. Likeness in kind does not always lead to close relationships. The greatest physical proximity may be accompanied by the greatest social distance among people. Our view is that if a non-social Christian is inconceivable, then, by implication, a Christian needs to have not only a close relationship with God, but also close relationships with other Christians. Otherwise, the concept of the body of Christ is an illusion.

2.5.2 **Solidarity by Divine Grace**

This type of unity depends upon sacramental grace, a unity sometimes emphasised by apologists, in particular Sheehan (1953: 154). It can be said, according to Fichter (1954: 45), that perhaps the only union experienced by Roman Catholics is obtained in the Church's sacramental life. This sacramental life or spiritual unity is not synonymous with community, but is the type of unity mentioned by St Paul. According to Roman Catholic tradition, he says that we are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, since every one who has been baptised has put on Christ. He amplifies this by saying

"... there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female - for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3.27-28; NJB). It is a kind of mystical relationship among Roman Catholics within the mystical body of Christ which binds together the members of the Church militant, the Church suffering and the Church triumphant. It is implied in this assertion that this unity should become incarnated into society and should help to develop a community spirit among Christians. If it is assumed that this bond exists and that it unites baptised persons as a social aggregate, then it is primarily the work of God, not of man and as such lies beyond the remit of sociological study.

2.5.3 **Solidarity by Social Virtue**

Unity of faith and unity of grace can be investigated by sociological research, but they are presupposed in the operation of the fundamental principle of Christian solidarity, the social virtue of love. Supernatural love is an internal motivation which generates external relationships. If a Roman Catholic loves his neighbour, it is presumed that this is based on his love of God. However, this is a supposition which cannot be proved. Fichter states (1954: 46) that to observe the external practice of the virtue of love is the same as observing the manifestation of social solidarity. If the unity of faith and grace exists, there is, or ought to be, a recognisable social solidarity among its members. This raises the questions: "Can Roman Catholics co-operate socially because they are Roman Catholics, and can the social relations which they may have be distinguished from social relations among Christians generally?" The three areas in which Christian love operates are: in the general community, in the religious relations of Roman Catholics outside the parish, and in parochial activities.

2.5.3.1 **In the community**

Christian love demands that the individual exercises universal good will towards all people regardless of race, colour or religion. The modal parishioner associates with other Christians in recreational and occupational activities, but rarely in civic improvements, according to Fichter (1954: 47). He appears to be motivated either by his love of God in social relations, or to be motivated by secular values and natural love.

2.5.3.2 **On the Supra-parochial level**

The same factors which tend to unite or divide people in the general community, such as class, status, ethnic background and education, tend to unite or divide persons who profess the same Christian faith. This is true even though the religious bond of Christian love is supposed to transcend all those other factors of association which can be expressed in positive human relations among baptised Roman Catholics. Fichter believes (1954: 49) that modal Catholics do not appear to demonstrate a specifically Catholic kind of solidarity based on supernatural love. Although the present writer concurs in this view, it is hard to see how it can be proved..

2.5.3.3 **On the Parochial level**

The social virtue of love supposedly unites all parishioners into a strictly defined social group. A fundamental degree of social solidarity would be achieved in human relations, but similar occupational and class categories appear to constitute a more effective bond between Roman Catholics and other Christians than does a common religion. The present writer considers that this is true. Also, the type and degree of education affect the solidarity of modal parishioners. There may be religious sub-groupings in an urban parish exemplifying a high degree of social solidarity, which may be kept going by nuclear parishioners. Modal parishioners frequently co-operate in many ways, but this seems to be based on a dominant interest rather than a shared religious faith, or the virtue of Christian love. These sub-groups, according to Fichter (1954: 51), could be divided into two classifications: the small secular groups; and those officially listed as sub-units of the religious parish. Some parishioners take part in small secular groups which incorporate a high degree of social solidarity. Shared interests and a common status are the unifying factors in this group. Membership of bridge clubs, bowling, cricket or football clubs is not limited to a sole religious group, and social status does not depend on the similarity of religious convictions. The boys who play football or girls who play basketball with neighbourhood teams rather than those who are parish-based are not confined to a particular social status or religious grouping. This applies to all secular or parish functions, as well as to occupational, civic, political and philanthropic charitable groups such as the Red Cross. Real patterns of religious solidarity never meet in the modal parishioner, in the view of Fichter (1954: 53).

Second, there is an approximation of the ideal in parish sub groupings in which there is a primary religious principle of social solidarity, not found in the secular example. They have specified aims and objectives quite apart from the generalised purpose of the parish. In this instance, we are concerned with the working core and not with the total formalised parish.

Fichter maintains (1954: 53) that most parishes contain one or more subgroups of highly active, well integrated and co-operating parishioners. They may be a parent's association, a social group organising parish events; they may be of the same economic class and may have come into this work through their friendship. They are probably in the same age category, since parishioners of different age categories do not seem to co-operate well in church work. If they are long-term residents in the same town, they will tend to co-operate better than those who are newcomers. The church function in which they are engaged is recognised as important by priests, nuns and other parishioners, whose esteem their value. Success in the enterprise is encouraged by their admirers and the activity in which they are engaged is simple, concrete and definite. If the project reaches an impasse, the priest may offer a solution, or another member may assume leadership of the problem. The group that operates with a repetitive formula tends to enjoy a higher degree of solidarity than the one which has to be continually redefined. The work is not only that which can be done easily, but the group likes to do it. This means that they have become expert in their pattern of action. They enjoy their work, whether it be singing in the choir, sewing linens for the altar, or coaching football teams.

From the point of view of religious observance, those who co-operate best are non-nuclear parishioners. Someone who has not made his Easter duties, that is one who has not fulfilled one of the stipulations of the Church, or someone who is in a mixed marriage - that is, married to a person of another religion or denomination - is as capable of showing social solidarity as anyone else. A practising Roman Catholic also shows social solidarity in co-operating with those outside the parish where non-religious functions are performed together. Roman Catholic solidarity motivated by Christian love and operating at parochial level is at best an ideal towards which a parish is struggling with varying success.

2.6 THE MARGINAL PARISHIONER

2.6.1 Introduction

Many people are uneasy about the rigid structure of the religious institution and its style of worship. This uneasiness is exemplified to a great extent by dormancy (lapsation) and to a lesser extent by marginality, which we shall now consider.

The aspects of marginality, according to Fichter (1954: 57), comprise the individual's internal psychological conflict, his ambiguous and inconsistent behaviour and the sanctions attending this behaviour, the socio-religious distance or the degree of remoteness from the social activity of the parish and from religious practice. Moberg (1962: 410) remarks that the marginal member is both aware of and frustrated by inconsistencies in his behaviour. He (1962: 409) also considers that psychological value conflicts, imperfectly institutionalised roles and personal remoteness from the goals and values believed to be ideal by the Church characterise the marginal or fringe member..

On the other hand, Greeley (1979: 29) terms the marginal as 'alienated'. They are persons who drift to the fringes of religious practice without relinquishing their Catholic affiliation. He (1979: 29) sees conflict in the family: the family's religious devotion and style, religious experiences and religiosity of spouse are viewed as variables which may influence religious behaviour in doctrinal beliefs, sexual attitudes and attitudes towards the church. He (1979: 38) suggests a correlation between age and religious behaviour. Older Catholics are more likely to be devout and religious than younger ones, due to the influx of a religious generation (30-40 years) and the declining level of religiosity (in the age group 20-30 years). Family tensions in childhood correlate negatively with religiosity in adult life (Greeley: 1979: 41) and religiosity of spouse is important in times of instability, although this is not so in stable times, when the devotion of one's family is more important, according to Greeley (1979: 42). These aspects will be discussed later.

Hornsby-Smith (1987: 53) stipulates two sub-categories of marginal parishioner. The first one he terms 'Orthodox Irregulars'; young, female and lower working class, their orthodoxy comes from a Catholic school education. Their attendance and practice are lower than those of the 'Heterodox Attenders'. He calls his second sub-group (1987: 53), who are young and more educated than average, 'Heterodox Irregulars'. They have

the lowest communal involvement of the previous sub-groups and have had less contact with the developments in the Church since Vatican II.

There are four frequently occurring aspects of marginality that will now be discussed.

2.6.2 **Contrasting Assumptions**

Fichter (1954: 57) specifies that this is an effort made by the individual to reconcile contrasting values and customs; for example, it is a moral evil to tell a lie. The marginal Catholic will think that one can cut corners with regard to minor dishonesty in the business world. To justify this, he would say that everyone does it and there is no need for scrupulosity. The marginal Catholic feels that he has to be practical. Moberg (1962: 410) agrees with Fichter that this type of member tries to reconcile contradictory values and patterns of conduct.

2.6.3 **Relative Morality**

This is closely associated with the concept of contrasting assumptions. In the latter, the individual accepts both contrasting beliefs and then finds himself pulled in both directions. Relative morality means that the goodness or badness of social behaviour depends upon the social situation in which the person is involved. This is shown in the area of birth prevention, which is forbidden in the Roman Catholic Church. The individual wants to do the right thing, but finds that circumstances make it impossible. He thinks that the Church's stand on birth prevention is unreasonable. Fichter maintains (1954: 64) that the marginal Catholic does not deny the validity of the Church's doctrine on birth prevention, and may even defend the high moral tone of the Church in a society which he thinks is losing its moral standards. According to Fichter (1954: 57), he admits the correctness of the Church's doctrines but feels that God understands his position. Moberg (1962: 410) asserts that the modal Catholic tends to be anti-authoritarian, opposed to the hierarchical, dictatorial policies of the Church.

Our view is that this so-called relative morality is practised not only by marginal Catholics but by Catholics generally, even core Christians.. The example quoted, that is the use of birth prevention methods other than natural means, was formally enunciated by Pope Paul II in 1970 and was greeted with almost universal shock and condemnation

by some theologians. It could be suggested that marginal Catholics do not accept the teachings of the pope or the Church, even if they know what they are.

Fulton believes (1999: 176) that the moral problems of euthanasia and abortion are less felt by distant or marginal Catholics than by nuclear parishioners. In fact, the former would approve of these practices, although some of the latter would regard euthanasia with aversion and believe abortion to be a moral choice by the woman. Even so, it is hard choice for a woman to make, even though she may disagree with official Church teaching.

2.6.4 **Anti-authoritianism**

To the marginal Catholic, the authority structure of the Church appears arbitrary. The priests and parishioners will carry out their reciprocal social roles. Fichter thinks (1954: 65) that the marginal Catholic will charge the priest with being dictatorial in those matters that are not specifically religious. Where a priest speaks out on social questions, the marginal Catholic tends to accuse him of interfering with the freedom of the parishioner. Our view is that the marginal Catholic is probably correct — but then, this was the manner in which the Church functioned in the fifties and sixties.

2.6.5 The **Dysfunctional Parish**

The social structure and the cultural values of urban industrial and commercial society have affected the working of the Catholic parish as a community of persons. The social functions once enjoyed in the Catholic parish have now been located outside it. Whereas in earlier times Catholics enjoyed their leisure in church-related functions, nowadays the former are separate and are indifferent to a system of religious values. It could be presumed that the higher values of a religious institution offer compensation to the person who is regimented in the pursuit of economic goals. That is, the materialistic functions of a working day would be balanced by the more humane social functions of an integrated parish. The marginal Catholic leans towards secularised activities, in Fichter's view (1954: 67), and although he may see no harm in this, he becomes more secular in his thinking by so doing. The present writer agrees with this analysis.

2.7 THE DORMANT OR LAPSED PARISHIONER

2.7.1 Introduction

Although the Catholic parish is a social aggregate or a loose plurality of persons, it does have some outer limits. Lapsed Catholics are seldom expelled or excommunicated. In fact, such instances do not occur in the modern world. Fichter remarks (1954: 68) that even though the Church has authoritarian procedures, it takes no drastic action against non-conformism and reluctantly allows the 'lost sheep' to go their own way..

Both Fichter (1954: 68) and Moberg (1962: 410) suggest that all social units have to cope with inassimilable elements, and it may be that the departure of lapsed Catholics possibly leads to improved social relations in the parish itself. Our view is that this is not the case. When people leave the Church, for whatever reason, it leaves a scar, not least of all on those who weep bitterly that their friends or relations not longer tread the same path that they do. Lapsed Catholics are not always initially aware of this and do not always deliberate about the steps that take them away from the Church.

Hornsby-Smith (1987: 54) suggests three sub-classifications of the dormant parishioner. The first is the 'Orthodox Non- attender, who retains Catholic beliefs and doctrines, but has not attended a Catholic service for over a year. Such a member is mainly a middle aged female having had no further education. She is usually married to a non-Catholic and has few friends of her own denomination. The Orthodox Non-attender has a strong local orientation. Her beliefs and practices are similar to the 'Heterodox Attenders'.

Hornsby-Smith's (1987: 54) second sub-group comprises the 'Heterodox Non-attenders'. This group consists of the youngest members, two-thirds of whom are under thirty-five (35). Their Catholicism may be no more than nominal, since few of them received a religious education. They have a low attachment to the parish.

His (1987: 54) last sub-classification is of 'Non-Identifiers', who are predominately male. Their communal involvement is small, although they have a larger proportion of Catholic friends than any other sub-group. Some of them attended a Catholic school, but their allegiance to the Church may not have been more than nominal. Their alienation from the Church is complete.

Hornsby-Smith (1987: 181) maintains that dormant Catholics in the younger age group are likely to be "cradle Catholics". They are unlikely to have received any further education and they are less involved in both the communal and associational life of the parish. It is also unlikely that they are orthodox in terms of belief and practice. Dormant Catholics would fall into the category that Towler (1974: 166-71) describes as 'Pragmatic'.

2.7.2 **Analysis of Lapsation**

Moberg (1962: 410) labels the lapsed as 'inactive' or 'fallen away,' and Fichter (1954: 69) uses the terms 'dormant' or 'leakage' as implying an unobtrusive, unintended and accidental escape from the Church. It may be said that their departure is as unpublicised on their behalf as it is on the Church's to announce their removal. Both Fichter (1954: 69) and Moberg (1962: 410) believe that the lapsed or dormant Catholic neither has a position in the parochial circle of the Catholic institution, nor is he a member of the Church.. The latter writer (1962: 410) thinks that as the individual may occasionally attend a church service, his contact with it is therefore sporadic and intermittent.. His behaviour and thought is non-Catholic. By the institutional criteria of baptism and place of residence he could be included in the confines of the Catholic parish, but by the personal criteria of intention, religious practice and social participation, he must be excluded from the parish system.

The dormant or lapsed Catholic is colloquially termed as 'fallen away' and continues to be an object of missionary and evangelical concern to the clergy. He is believed (Fichter. 1954: 69) to be usually a Catholic by birth and has received the sacrament of baptism and probably has been married in the Catholic Church with a priest officiating at the ceremony. He might have his children baptised, but according to Fulton (1999: 180) they are unlikely to assume the same degree of identification with the church unless they attend a Catholic school. Our view is that attendance at such a school is unlikely to promote a religious attitude, in view of its absence in the home. Moberg (1962: 410) asserts that the lapsed individual comes from a family that neglected the child's religious education.

The lapsed Catholic might ask for the attendance of a priest when he is on his death bed, although it may have been the behaviour of a priest that led to the individual's departure, in Moberg's (1962: 410) opinion.. This writer (1962: 410) also thinks that the individual may have had traumatic experiences, such as disappointment with the clergy, or a realisation that the Church's teachings were contrary to his personal ideals. It is unlikely that he will join another denomination, although in the present author's opinion this cannot be ruled out. In most cases his family was or is Catholic, and family members may deplore his defection from the Church. As mentioned before, he has a sporadic contact with the Church; for instance, he may attend a church-sponsored dinner or an athletic contest. In this category, Moberg (1962: 410) includes 'drifters', comprising the very old whose mental and physical state makes them incapable of meeting institutional requirements, and 'social strainers' who have subordinated their religion in an effort to gain a higher social status. However, the present writer would claim that the former are not really lapsed because their intention may be to participate in religious events. Their physical and mental inability forces them to abdicate this. On the other hand, 'social strainers' could be conceived not only as lapsed but as possibly irreligious. Moberg (1962: 411) categorises the 'dead' church member as one who has joined another religious denomination. He is 'dead' to his former religious persuasion and 'alive' in his new religious affiliation. The present writer does not believe that such an individual should be regarded as lapsed since he has joined another religious organisation.

A provisional definition of a lapsed Catholic is, therefore, one who is validly baptised, does not practice his religion, has not joined another denomination and belongs to a household in which other members are either practising or lapsed Catholics. This last aspect is not important enough to nullify the definition.

Fulton (1999: 176) agrees with Fichter that a lapsed Catholic is someone who regards himself as such; although he believes that the Church is irrelevant to his life. Rather than believing and belonging, his association with the Church is like an identity badge worn by a supporter of it, despite the individual having little association with the institution or its beliefs. He may acknowledge the good Catholic moral education he received from his family and Catholic school. But he has left the Church in the same way that he has moved on from his childhood.

Lapsation is sometimes considered to be an individual matter, even as each conversion to Christianity is an individual experience. It is frequently asserted that someone lapses because he had become enmeshed in habitual sin, or that the gradual weakening of his faith paved the way for habits of immorality or neglect of prayer. This is a possibility, but as a comprehensive explanation it cannot be accepted, for it is like saying that a lapsed Catholic is such because he no longer lives up to the moral or dogmatic values of the Church. It seems necessary to study the causes and influences which exist beyond the individual and which account for lapsation. This will be considered in the next chapter.

Hadaway describes (1990: 35) lapsed individuals as 'mental members', who assert a Protestant or Catholic persuasion and attend religious services only once a year. He thinks (1990: 36) they are likely to be young, live in large urban areas and were reared in affluent, well-educated families. They are more often male than female and are possibly married to a person professing a different faith. This, he notes (1990: 37), can provide a conflict in terms of churchgoing. Some lapsed Catholics are divorced. The children of mental members (1990: 38), life-long marginals, as Marler and Hadaway (1993: 45) later describe them, lack the tradition of church participation and regular attendance and tend to hold liberal views on pre-marital and extra-marital sex and abortion. The present writer agrees with this view, which is congruent with the statements offered by the previously mentioned social scientists.

Hadaway describes (1990: 39) a certain type of lapsed or 'mental member' as 'estranged', which he and Marler (1993: 46) later describe as a 'critic'. Such an individual believes he is a Christian without going to Church. In fact, churchgoing is an optional extra and, according to this view, such a person retains a view of himself as religious even though he does not express his religion publicly. He can be one who feels he has a commitment to and belief in Christ. He prays to God and considers religion to be an important aspect of his life. Even so, he has a rationale for not attending church services. Hadaway maintains (1990: 40) that he has a negative attitude to the Church. Valuing this, he considers the Church to be too restrictive and un-empowering. Perry et al (1980: 390, 391) claim that the 'estranged' resemble in their beliefs those who attend church. They hold traditional Christian beliefs and religion is important to them. They may have been active in the Church at one time but no longer feel their need for it..

Hadaway's (1990: 42) second type is termed the 'indifferent', someone who believes in the resurrection of Christ and prays, but does not assent to the view that institutional religion is important and therefore has not made a commitment to it. At the same time, he is not antagonistic towards the Church even though he did not attend religious instruction or have any form of religious education as a child. His parents may not have attended church frequently, nor was religion important to them when they were growing up. He was, in other words, brought up by irreligious parents who were inactive as children though they were nominally affiliated to a religious denomination in which their religious commitment was low. The 'indifferent' were trained by 'mental members'- that is lapsed persons. They would prefer to occupy their time on Sundays other than by attending Church. Hadaway (1990: 43, 44) states that such an individual would tend to hold liberal views on sexual matters. Most of the 'indifferent' would like their children to receive religious instruction, since they see the value of what the Church has to offer, but they do not want their children to be over-exposed to it. It is sufficient for their children to imbibe the basic values, but not inherit the full disease! However, the 'indifferent', according to Perry et al (1980; 391), hold Christian beliefs with less certainty than the 'estranged.' They are unlikely to claim a commitment to Christ, even though they may not be critical of the Church.

Hadaway's third classification (1990: 43) is someone whom he would call the 'nominalist.' He avoids churchgoing, does not hold traditional religious beliefs, such as the resurrection of Christ or life after death, does not pray, and considers religion unimportant. Like the 'indifferent,' according to Hadaway (1990: 45), the 'nominalist' has irreligious parents and attended Sunday school less frequently than the other examples of mental or lapsed individuals. Again, like the 'indifferent,' he imbibed an uncommitted form of Christianity early on, but unlike them, the only factor gained from nominal association was a denominational label. The 'nominalist' is opposed to the moral teaching of the Church. Indeed, he has constructed his own form of morality by mixing Christianity with New Age thought and secular humanism. The 'nominalist' seems to be interested in meeting human needs and addressing public issues and cultural activities. Perry et al (1980: 390) state that the 'nominalist' is not religious. They (1980: 390) agree with Hadaway that he does not hold traditional Christian beliefs and that he does not pray. Indeed, the 'nominalist' has neither made a commitment to Christ nor does he consider himself religious. A major difference between this type of individual

and the 'none' is that the former identifies himself as Protestant, while the latter expresses no religious preference.

Perry et al (1980: 391) state that lapsed Protestants are independent thinkers who believe that they can arrive at their own religious beliefs without the help of the Church. Lapsed Protestants also think that they can be good Christians without attending Church. Perry et al (1980; 391) claim that the 'estranged,' 'nominal' and 'indifferent' feel that the Church does not welcome outsiders. It is perceived to be ineffective in helping individuals find a meaning in life.

Perry et al (1980: 395) conclude that the conservative, fundamentalist and sectarian groups will tend to comprise larger than average proportions of the estranged, while groups which offer a more rationalistic approach to religion will have larger than average proportions of nominals.

In a later study, Marler and Hadaway (1993: 34) use the term 'marginal' in their consideration of the typology of Protestant church members. By 'marginal' they mean inactive individuals who may attend irregularly. The authors (1993: 34) make a distinction between marginal and non-member affiliates who call themselves 'Protestant', but who are not baptised into any denomination. They are termed by Hadaway (1990: 45) as 'nones'. The 'marginal' appears to have more coherent religious identity than those who are non-member affiliates (nones). Marler and Hadaway (1993: 36) classify three levels of religious commitment by attendance:

- **Actives**, who claim denominational affiliation and church membership and who attend church regularly. Presumably, they would fall into the category of 'modal' or 'marginal', according to the classification by Fichter (1954: 57).

- **Marginal members**, claiming denominational affiliation and church membership, but who do not attend regularly.

- **Mental affiliates**, claiming denominational affiliation, but do not claim church membership and do not practise regularly. Marler and Hadaway do not quantify the degree of regularity.

This classification does not imply baptism as necessary to membership, which in the present writer's view is essential.

Of the marginal (lapsed) individuals, Marler and Hadaway (1993: 40) discovered four types: the traditionalists, liberals, life-long marginals and critics. The largest and oldest group was that of the traditionalists. Their beliefs corresponded with active members, indicating that separation from the Church was not a matter of disbelief, hostility or lack of religious socialisation. They found difficulty in attending church through physical feebleness or a change in location. Our view is that the former cannot be considered as lapsed or 'marginal,' since by our provisional definition there is an implied intention to attend Church services.

Liberals, according to Marler and Hadaway (1993: 45), have not rejected the Church but are satisfied with their current level of religious participation. Life-long 'marginals' grew up on the periphery of the Church. Now they feel the Church is useful but not essential. Marler and Hadaway (1993: 46) reckon that they do not feel close to God and do not pray. They are disconnected from the Church and other expressions of religion. They are equivalent to Hadaway's (1990: 35) 'mental members'. Such are critical of the Church and may have had a bad experience. They have lost confidence in the Church as a medium for helping people find meaning in life. They are, according to Marler and Hadaway (1993: 46), open to experimentation and would attend Church if they found a suitable congregation. This category is similar to the 'estranged' that Hadaway (1990: 39) observes.

Marler and Hadaway (1993: 49) believe that the children of some 'traditionalists', most being liberals and critics, attend Church less frequently than their parents when they were growing up. This implies a legacy effect that has serious consequences for the second and third generations while the 'actives' are rearing life-long 'marginals'. The latter's children have even less contact with the Church than the 'actives' had. They are likely to be rearing persons whose religious profile approximates to that of 'mental affiliates'. Clearly, this is a serious problem.

Mauss (1968: 129) uses the term 'defection' for lapsation.. He defines it as a withdrawal from fellowship or activity by church members who have had some history of regular attendance and involvement in the Church, an involvement that was not nominal. He uses the term 'defection' synonymously with the terms 'disaffection', 'dropping out' or 'disinvolvement'. He does not place limits on the level of 'disinvolvement'. Presumably he attributes this term to the complete separation of the individual from his previous religious allegiance. One dimension of 'disinvolvement' is based on disbelief in certain

tenets of religion and possible belief in secular doctrines. The present writer does not think that disbelief plays an important part in total 'disinvolvement' nowadays. Mauss infers (1968: 130) that this phenomenon occurs as a consequence of the disintegration of social bonds, unsatisfying social experience or the formation of strong ties outside the Church. This might show itself in the loss or lack of close friends in the Church, relatively low social status compared with the congregation, personal acquaintance with few or no church workers or clergy, little or no participation in church social activities, marriage to a member of another denomination and perceptions of coolness or cliques among members of the congregation.

Mauss (1968: 130) cites a second dimension as an emotional or spiritual state. Unhappy, unsatisfying, emotionally deprived or rigid family environments in fundamentalist homes sow the seeds of agnosticism.

Hoge (1981: 105) states that some dropouts (lapsed) in his survey had children who had grown up, had moved away from home and felt no need to go to church.

- Some were working long hours in a new job and therefore did not have much spare time. Fanstone (1993: 76) indicates that 5 per cent who were questioned did not have time to go to Church. Homework, visiting the family, having to work on Sunday and involvement in sporting activities were given as the reasons for non-attendance.

- Others were separated from their spouses or the engaged partner, who had earlier encouraged them to attend.

- There were those who felt no support from their spouses or children and who felt that their struggle to persuade them to attend or to go alone was too hard.

- Lastly, they had experienced an unpleasant conflict with the priest or with parishioners. An extrinsic motivation had been removed and there was no intrinsic one.

According to Dudley (1997: 77), the lapsed person is the product of a broken relationship. He cites Presbyterians as grading their reasons for ceasing church practice as loss of an important personal relationship, disappointment in pastoral relationships, theological disagreement with their Church and a need for personal religious

independence. If such alienation festers, the relationship with the Church will be infected. He believes that some join the Church, at least in part, for social satisfaction, but leave when this is damaged or unfulfilled.

On the other hand, Greeley (1979: 117) does not use the term 'lapsed' but 'disidentified', believing that the former term could be objectionable to some. He suggests three explanations for this phenomenon by offering certain models:

- The secularisation model, by which he means that more sophisticated, better educated and more cosmopolitan people become less likely to maintain their ties with traditional religion. Bruce (1995: 126) agrees that this view is prevalent.

- The family-strain model, in which the family exercises a powerful influence on the decision to disidentify religiously. Greeley (1979: 118) believes that the Church emits many stimuli, and one may choose to focus on a particular stimulus that determines disidentification. Such a choice is a function of the psychological perspective one brings to an encounter with the Church from one's family experience. Religious disidentification is often predicted in someone who comes from a broken family, where there is family conflict, where the individual is unhappy, or where the individual assumes a liberal stance on political issues.

- The religious intermarriage model, according to Greeley (1979: 118), is where the partners re-arrange their religious affiliation to minimise strain and conflict that might exist in a family of different religious loyalties. Religious exogamy remains a problem in terms of lapsation and will be discussed along with other aspects of the family strain model in a further chapter.

One should distinguish between a *de facto* lapsed and one who attends church but does not believe. Presumably an individual who rejects all Christian doctrine would see no reason to practise any form of commitment, but there are some who maintain an allegiance to the Church yet do not obey its dictates on moral issues such as birth control or abortion. Such a person is termed a 'communal Catholic' by Greeley (1979: 103). The 'Communal Catholic' is 'catholic' in the way he chooses without regard to the official norms of Catholic behaviour. Such individuals identify with the Catholic

community; they are interested in Catholic heritage and tradition and want to pass their catholicity on to their children, but do not look to the Church for instruction on how to conduct their lives. This implies a 'two-church' model, as suggested by Greeley (1979: 105), in which one church is located at parish level and the other at the hierarchical level, the former not paying much attention to the latter. One is liberal in nature: the other, conservative.

Caplovitz and Sherrow refer to lapsed individuals as 'apostates.' They (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 30, 31) define apostasy in an individual as one who relinquishes a set of religious beliefs and rejects his particular community as a basis for self-identification. The authors (Caplovitz & Sherrow; 1977: 97) state that religious identification comprises religiosity, which consists of religious beliefs, ritual observance and communality. The latter term refers to identification with a religious group. The present writer agrees with Klein (1990: 66) that theologically an apostate is 'one who renounces his faith and religion;' although a lapsed person may renounce his religion, it does not always follow that he will have completely relinquished his faith or belief. He may have only separated himself from the Church. Therefore, the two terms are not synonymous, in the present writer's opinion.

The authors (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 133, 134) suggest several determinants which possibly pre-dispose the occurrence of apostasy. These traits are:

- **The quality of parental relationships**. They consider (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 50) that apostasy can be seen as a rebellion against an individual's parents. The possibility of apostasy increases as parental advice is less valued. The present writer agrees with this view.

- **Radicalism:** The authors (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 65) state that the more radical the young person's orientation, the more likely he will apostasise. They maintain (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977; 61) that the more the individual is committed to 'higher values,' then the possibility of a radical perspective is greater. Higher values are considered be the elements of idealism, intellectuality and culture.

- **Intellectuality**: The authors (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 73) believe that the intellectual is more prone to question the validity of accepted beliefs. Caplovitz and Sherrow (1977: 74) cite the work of Stark (1963: 14) as

showing a fundamental incompatibility between religion and science. He takes as his model of intellectuality the student of science. However, a different view was proposed by Greeley (1964: 239), who claimed that apostasy leads to intellectualism.

- **Psychological adjustment**: The authors believe (Caplovitz and Sherrow; 1977: 62) that social adjustment is strongly related to apostasy. The less adjusted the young person, the more likely he will apostatise and that poor relationships with parents contribute to emotional disturbance.

The present writer concurs with this view.

Roozen (1980: 427) uses the terms 'dropout' and 'disengage' synonymously in regard to church participation. 'Disaffiliate' is a term used to refer to religious preference or church membership. He defines (Roozen; 1980: 428) a 'dropout' as one who has ceased church attendance for a period of two years or more. He believes (Roozen; 1980: 428) that the dropout rate of mainly young Catholics and mainline Protestants increased in the 60s and stabilised in the 70s. The dropout rates were more stable in conservative Protestant and Catholic denominations prior to the 60s. Since then, there has been a dramatic decrease in both Protestant and Catholic engagement and a convergence of Catholic and Protestant dropout rates.

He (Roozen; 1980: 429) proposes three models of disengagement:

- **The Traditional**, in which disengagement increases from adolescence to about 35 years, then steadily decreasing to old age. Its feature is curvilinear.

- **Lifetime Stability**, in which there is no relationship between age and dropout rates. There is a decrease in engagement from early to mid-adulthood due to increased pressure of children and home. This is followed by an increase in disengagement as the children leave home.

- **Social Disengagement**, which posits an increase in dropping out following middle age. There occurs a natural severing of ties between aging individuals and their previous social involvements, according to Roozen (1980: 428).

Stark and Iannaccone (1996: 265) interpret religious practice in economic language by stating that religious commodities are both costly and risky. They demand the sacrifice of valuable resources in return for promised rewards that, in most cases, lie beyond empirical proof. In view of this, religious consumers are tempted to backslide (that is, to lapse to some extent), reducing their level of commitment and participation. To counter this tendency, vigorous 'marketing' is required to overcome backsliding and attain a high level of achievement. They assert (Stark and Iannaccone, 1996: 265) that if a religious organisation is dominant it will lack competition and be able to retain its dominance without the need for 'marketing'. But it will not thereby generate high levels of commitment or participation.

They (Stark and Iannaccone, 1996: 265) also postulate that societies that have a low level of commitment and participation (in religious affairs?) will lack effective religious socialisation. The present author suggests that the obverse is more pertinent: that if religious socialisation is low, then there will be a correspondingly low level of religious commitment and participation.

Stark and Iannaccone (1996: 265) suggest that where there is little or no religious socialisation, subjective religiosity will tend to be idiosyncratic (individualised) and heterodox and far more widespread than organised religious participation. The present writer does not agree with Stark and Iannaccone's theory that backsliding is only caused by the individual's perception of the risks and costs involved in religious participation. Presumably, by 'backsliding' they mean some degree of lapsation or a lax form of religious observance. Such a reason is possible, but it is not the only one, nor is it the most important in an individual's cessation or relaxation of religious participation. The present writer does not relish the concept of 'consumer' and 'marketing' when used in the context of religious practice. Whilst some individuals may be termed 'consumers', there are those who are both 'consumers', 'participators', 'providers' and 'facilitators'.. Although the religious organisation provides the initial impetus, its individual members are not just recipients of what the organisation offers.

The religious model that Stark and Iannaccone outline is inappropriate. The concept of competition, although conceivable elsewhere, is foreign in England. In today's society it is doubtful whether there is any geographical area in which a particular Christian religious denomination is dominant.

Stark and Iannaccone (1996: 265) state: "Where religious economies lack competition, the dominant organisation will be lazy and not generate high levels of participation or commitment to the religious organisation". This view is challenged by the present writer as not being universally true. The Roman Catholic Church in both Poland and Ireland, although existing alongside the comparatively small Lutheran and Church of Ireland denominations respectively, does have high levels of participation and commitment. In Poland, religion was allied to political resistance to external domination, a situation that was true in Ireland in the last century, but not true today. If commitment and participation have declined in recent years, the present author believes that this may be due to the advent of secularisation as an over-arching change in society.. Secularisation is defined by Wilson (1982: 149) as occurring "when religious institutions, religious actions and religious consciousness lose their social significance in society".

2.7.3 **The Effects of Secularisation on Religious Practice.**

Modernity, which introduces a secularising effect, according to Stark and Iannaccone (1996: 269), always seems to be concentrated in those faiths most willing to accommodate it, while having little or no impact on more traditional bodies. The authors (1996: 270) remark that "... religious institutions must soon decay in the face of pluralism, rationality and scientific enlightenment". Bird (1999: 16) admits that societies become more complex in their organisation as a consequence of modernity and the pace of social change increases dramatically. Such societies tend to be urban and often economically highly productive with varying forms of inequality. They often contain a wide range of different cultures and belief systems. The present writer maintains that the Church must reach out to the wider community in order to fulfil its mission. In the writer's view, it seems that transition from an evangelical to a liberal theology may result in the declining membership of the Church.

However, there may be limits to the decline of religion in the most secularised societies, as Sharot, Ayalon and Be-Rafael (1986: 194) predict. They give as a reason the interpenetration of religion with ethnic or national identity, where societies have an historical identity anchored to religion. The sharpest declines in religiosity are to be found in those communities which change from a traditional to a modern society. According to Sharot et al (1986: 195), a decline in religiosity lessens with each generation.

In the view of Lechner (1989: 145), a de-pillarisation of the Church in the Netherlands arising from the changes of Vatican II has allowed severe secularisation to set in. By de-pillarisation, Lechner means the collapse of the almost water-tight denominational divisions in the country.. This has produced a fluid arrangement of co-operation among the various religious groups. This, he believes (1989: 145), has affected the Church's pastoral-social strategy so that it does not have an effective voice in that country. The present writer believes that the Christian Church in England is similarly affected. The influence of the Church has receded, an influence stemmed and aided by the introduction of traditional and retro policies by a conservative establishment.

According to Sweetser (1974: 87), people are bewildered and confused by the sudden theological changes of Vatican II. There was a lack of education and instruction at all levels. The individual was not given a theological perspective or grounding in the changes so that they could be sympathetically received and understood. The present writer concurs with this belief. Sweetser (1974: 88) suggests that the inherent meaning of the Church changed. In the minds of many, it stood for the only way to salvation. The Church has become no longer an absolute; the boundaries are no longer clear and distinct. There has developed a widening of the concept of 'Church', together with a greater degree of diversity and pluralism. Some traditionalists felt that the Church was falling down and withdrew from parish activities. Allied to this, is the shift in emphasis in moral theology. Church discipline in regard to fasting and abstinence has changed from obedience to fixed rules, to individual intention. In other words, the importance of moral choices changed from being objective and absolute to placing them in the context of a person making a choice for himself. Sweetser (1974: 90) notes also the relaxation of rules governing mixed marriages introduced in Vatican II. The present writer suggests that there has been a shift from traditional to liberal liturgy in the Catholic Church that may be partially responsible for the decline in church membership. He also believes that the uniqueness of Christianity has been muted. This is observed today in England especially in our multi-ethnic society, in which interest is shown in New Age and the New Religious culture and its corresponding off-shoots and in the generally secularised nature of society.

There are indeed large numbers of 'lapsed' in all Catholic parishes, but there is a larger proportion of them in urban than in rural areas. Brierley (2000a:14) asks why this is so and quotes the reasons offered by David Lyons, who states that:

> The age in which we live can no longer be considered as an age of faith as it existed in Victorian times; the uniqueness of Christianity has been muted; there has been a loss of intellectual confidence stemming from Darwin, which is seen in social, intellectual and cultural ways; many people have lost their religion and have seen the world as losing theirs; Christianity has become marginal in the lives of many people; it has also become private, personal and a middle-class occupation.

The present author concurs with much of this, although he believes that too much emphasis has been placed on Darwin's alleged contribution to science. It is doubtful whether personal faith has been damaged by his investigations or by the controversies surrounding his thesis. It is, in the writer's view, incorrect to regard Victorian times as an age of faith. Certainly, more people attended church services then than they do now. But whether this indicated a corresponding religiosity remains to be proved. It is certainly true that many people lost their interest in religion through the advent of the two world wars, but then many have done so because of the perceived failure of science, as an over-arching belief system claiming universal legitimacy and authority, to eliminate disease and deliver improved welfare.

2.8 SUMMARY

In order to illustrate lapsation or a lapsed individual, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the terms 'parish' and 'parishioner'. A parish can be defined as a distinctive and organised plan of relations by designated persons participating in the pursuit of one or several implicit and explicit values. It can be a formalised body or a statistical category. From a Catholic standpoint, it is equivalent to the people of God, or Christ's faithful, who are incorporated into the Church through baptism. They are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted the Church to fulfil in the world. This missionary mandate is detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it states (1994: 197) that it obeys the command of Jesus to "Go therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes until the end time" (Matt 28. 19-20 NJB). This leads to the purpose of the mission, which is referred to in the Catechism as (1994: 197) "... none other than to

make men share in the communion between Father and the Son and in their Spirit of love". In fact, the Church, which implies the body of Christ, is "the visible plan of God's love for humanity" (1994: 180). Therefore, every validly baptised Catholic is a member of the Church of Christ and through residence in a particular area is a member of the appropriate parish. This is the sociological definition of a parishioner. However, other personal criteria must be introduced, such as intention, religious observance and social participation. Thus, a baptised person living in a parish could be either a potential or an actual member of it. Whether a person is an actual member depends upon the fulfilment of minimum conditions of formal religious practice. These minimum conditions would be whether the individual attends Sunday Mass, even if his presence is irregular. Such a person's children will be baptised and have received their first communion; they will be married in church, and the individual will want the priest to confer the anointing of the sick, even when he may not face a life-threatening illness. This fulfils the criteria of intention and religious observance. The final criterion, that of social participation, does not necessarily imply face-to-face communication, but the relation of the individual to organised patterns of belief and behaviour, such as reading the lesson or recreational and pastoral activities.

Since a definition of a parish and whom it comprises has been established, we proceed to describe the modes of parishioner. These are listed in descending order of personal commitment. The person with the highest commitment to the parish is the nuclear or core parishioner. He is an active participant in parish life and conforms to the sacramental expectations of the Church. He is guided by the same values in whatever life situation he finds himself. His moral code is based on his religious beliefs and controls the roles he plays in familial, recreational or political areas of life. Since his goal is eternal salvation, he believes that this is accomplished through his duty and service to his neighbour. The nuclear parishioner attends Church every Sunday, receives communion and participates in parish activities.

The nuclear Catholic belongs to a nuclear family, and tends to have above average formal education, possibly in Catholic schools. He is more likely to be a 'born Catholic' rather than a convert, and belongs to the lower middle class. He is salaried rather than self-employed. The nuclear parishioner does not belong to clubs on the supra-parochial level which do not promote the advancement of its members; his interest lies in the welfare of other Catholics. His beliefs are orthodox and he does not question the dogmatic teachings of the Church. On the contrary, the Church's teachings tend to assist his behaviour. Because the religious institution is central to his life, he tends to be at odds with the prevailing culture. The values the nuclear Catholic holds are maintained

in whatever sphere he finds himself. He is an advocate of the clergy and will co-operate in performing the more tedious jobs of the parish. He might see himself as an assistant to the parish priest, though he understands that the latter must make the ultimate decision in any matter. The nuclear parishioner can be classified as an 'Involved Traditionalist'. He is elderly, middle class and is attached to traditional patterns of Catholic worship He is unhappy about the changes that occurred after Vatican II. The second sub-classification is the 'Involved Non-traditionalist', who is open to inter-communion and has the same commitment as the 'Involved Traditionalist'. This sub-group consists of middle-class women in early middle age.

A certain type of nuclear Catholic is a 'leader.' He usually has excellent personal relationship skills and therefore has a good approach to people by using his abilities of tact, diplomacy and courtesy. He has an unimpeachable character and is a role model for others. He has the ability to be articulate, and possesses managerial and organisational skills in both regulating events and deploying individuals' activities. But he only operates part time, and therefore is unable to dispense or receive rewards for group action. Although it is possible for him to receive a papal award, this is far from certain. The parish priest can compensate his leaders only by offering praise and recognition. However, this can cause alienation to some of his followers. On the other hand, a member can quit an organisation without the need to explain his action. The leader recognises that the parish priest is his superior. But his motives are intangible. The group, which functions intermittently and voluntarily, and for which he works, is not the 'total organisation'.

For successful functioning, the lay leader requires a good relationship with the parish priest. This implies that the parish priest must accord him a certain degree of independence and initiative. He also needs a good relationship with the membership. His has social skills which maintain the line of communication between the members and the parish priest. His success will be judged by the attainment of the group's objectives. He will need an intimate knowledge of the function and the goal of the group in which all the participants should possess a sustained interest. In fact, they should have the same ideology or value system as the leader.

The modal parishioner is the most common and is identified as representative of normative Catholicism. He is neither as enthusiastic as the nuclear nor as lethargic as the marginal parishioner. He possesses social solidarity and has a close adherence to the value system. His social solidarity is in accordance with human consensus, divine grace and social virtue. Social solidarity by human consensus means that all Catholics have a common mind and a mental communion concerning the abstract codes of Catholicism. This supposed unity is a social phenomenon. It is based on the belief that all Catholics have a similar relationship with God, even though they may not be closely associated with one another. Social solidarity is a type of unity engendered through participation in the sacraments. It is a mystical relationship believed to exist within the mystical body of Christ, approximately identifiable with the Church. This mystical unity, which is a gift from God, binds together the three sections of the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering.

Social solidarity can operate through the virtue of love, assumed to be the fundamental principle of Christian solidarity. This can only be the case if the individual is graced by faith. But if it is offered, it can be bestowed on the community generally whether at the supra-parochial or parochial level. Christian love is assumed to take place in the general community arising from the basic commandment to love one's neighbour, regardless of who he or she may be. Modal parishioners associate with other Christians in recreational or occupational activities, but rarely in civic improvements. They are motivated by love for God in their social relations or by secular values and natural love. On the supra-parochial level, those factors which tend to divide people, such as race, class or status, tend to unite or divide those who profess the same faith. Modal Catholics do not exhibit a solidarity based on supernatural love. On the parochial level, similar occupational and class categories appear to express more of a bond between Catholics and those of other faiths. A dominant, shared interest rather than a shared faith or the virtue of love, is the main reason for co-operation in activities. This applies to secular groupings such as cricket or football clubs. However, in parish sub-groups, the solidarity can be social and possibly religious, although religious solidarity rarely occurs in the modal parishioner.

The modal parishioner, mainly elderly and lower working class, is sometimes sub-classified as a 'Non-involved Traditionalist. He is sometimes found in the first generation of Irish immigrants. The second sub-group is the 'Orthodox Attender'; elderly, middle-class and more conformist than the average Catholic parishioner, he/she supports openness to change, married clergy, birth control and divorce.

The third classification is the 'Heterodox Attender', who is young, middle class and open to innovation.

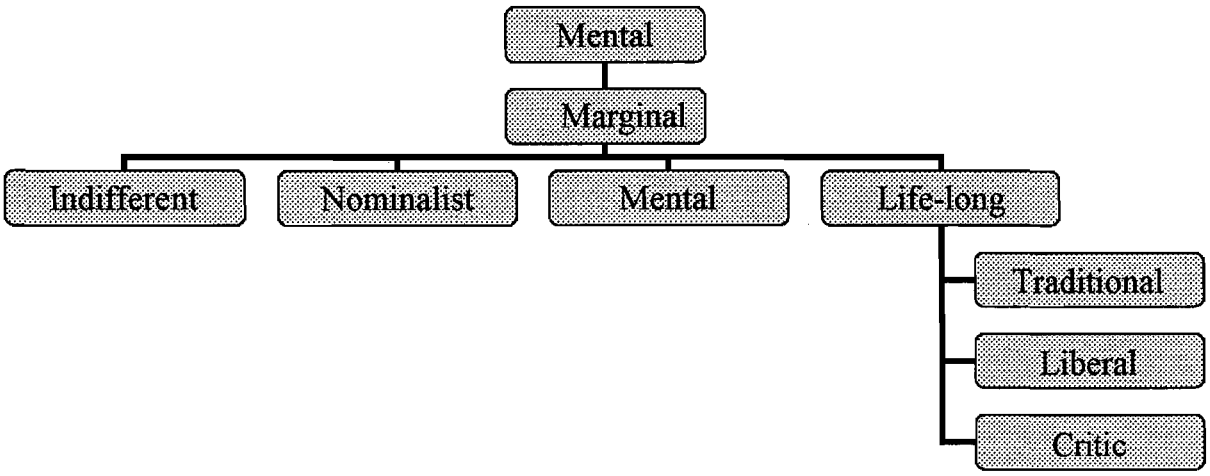

Figure 1: Diagram showing Variations of the Marginal Christian..

The variations of marginality are shown in Figure 1 above. The marginal parishioner is on the fringe of religious practice. Marginality is characterised by the assumptions made, often contrasting and contradictory. There is a tendency for him to rationalise the moral teachings of the Church, although in theory he may believe these teachings to be true though he is unable to comply with them. The marginal Catholic believes that the authority of the Church is arbitrary; it is unnecessarily interfering and dictatorial. He leans towards secularised activities and often adopts secular attitudes.

Sub-classified as the 'Orthodox Irregular', the marginal parishioner is young, female and lower working class, whose orthodoxy proceeds from a Catholic school education. The second sub-group is the 'Heterodox Irregular', who is young and more educated than average. He has a lower communal involvement than the previous sub-groups and has had less contact with the developments in the Church since Vatican II.

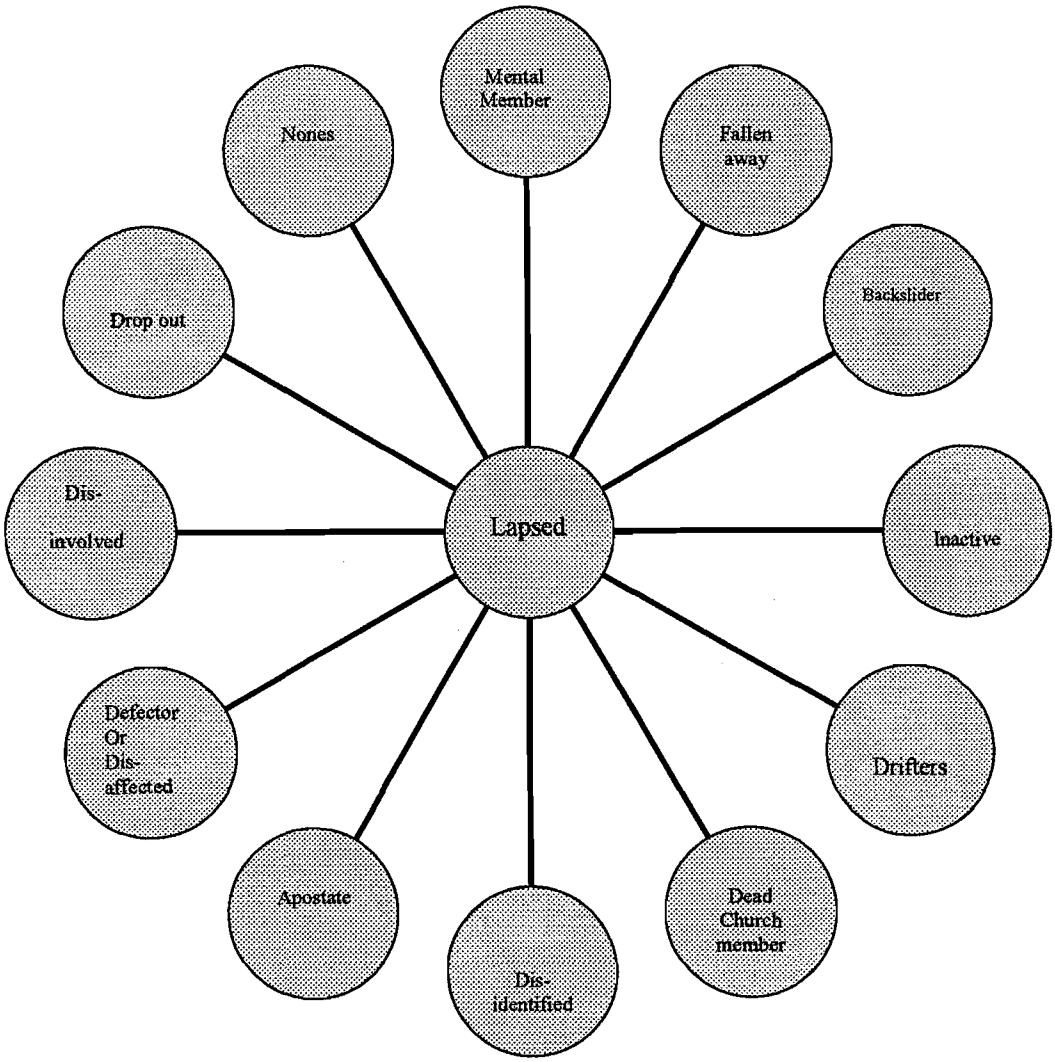

Figure 2: Diagram showing the various terminologies used to describe a lapsed individual.

The various terminologies used to describe a lapsed individual are shown above in Figure 2. The 'dormant' or 'lapsed' person does not belong to the parish and cannot be considered as a parishioner, for he has left the Church. His behaviour and thought is non-Catholic in tone. Although he is baptised and resides in a parish, by the personal criteria of intention, negative religious practice and social participation he has excluded himself from the parish system. Apart from these characteristics, he would probably be a Catholic from birth, maybe married in a Catholic Church with a priest officiating; his children will be baptised, and he will call in the priest if he is dying. It is possible that he will join another denomination. He may express sporadic contact with the Church, a nominal contact being unlikely to be shown in attending religious services.

There can be three sub-classifications.

- The'Orthodox Non- attender', who retains Catholic beliefs and doctrines, but has not attended a Catholic service for over a year. Such a member is mainly a middle aged female having had no further education. She is usually married to a non-Catholic and has few friends of her own denomination and has a strong local orientation.
- The 'Heterodox Non-attender' forms the second sub-group. This consists of the youngest members, whose Catholicism may be no more than nominal, since few of them received a religious education. The have a low attachment to the parish.
- The third group comprises the 'Non-Identifier', who is predominately male. His communal involvement is small, although he has a larger proportion of Catholic friends than any other sub-group. He attended a Catholic school, but his allegiance to the Church may not have been more than nominal. His alienation from the Church is complete.

A traditional religious organisation is less likely to be affected by modernity than a liberal religious organisation, given that modernity can convey secularising effects. Where denominational structures have to some extent coalesced (depillarisation), the Church's pastoral strategy has been affected. It does not possess the effective influence it once had. In the Roman Catholic Church, it is widely held that the provisions of Vatican II were introduced too quickly. Many were bewildered that the meaning of the Church had changed. It was no longer to be regarded as the only way to salvation. It was no longer absolute. Boundaries (especially moral ones) were no longer clear and distinct. Resulting from this, many withdrew from parish membership. It is suggested,

by the present writer, that there has been a shift from traditional to a more liberal liturgy, which may be partly responsible for the continuing decline in parish membership.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Our definition of a parish is that it is an organised plan of relations by designated persons who participate in the pursuit of one or several implicit or explicit functions for the benefit of its members.

Hence, a parishioner may be defined as one who is baptised into the Christian community, makes minimum gestures of religious practice in Sunday worship, relates to organised patterns of belief and behaviour and is socially involved in the life of the parish. He relates horizontally to other members of the Church community and vertically to God. From our analysis, a lapsed parishioner is one who participates neither in Sunday church services nor in parish social activities. Although he is baptised, he shows no intention of belonging to the parish in which he resides. If he has any contact with the Church it would be intermittent and sporadic. His behaviour and thought would be non-Catholic. He would not join another religious organisation.

This chapter has also demonstrated that a parish comprising baptised persons residing in a particular area, and who have not been expelled, is made up of individuals possessing varying degrees of commitment to the Church's established objectives. These objectives could be described as, first, missionary, encompassing an evangelistic endeavour towards those who are 'dechristianised' and are unaware of the salvation offered though Jesus Christ. This objective is promoted by the Catholic hierarchy. Second, through the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments the personal holiness of the Church's members is fostered.

There can be no doubt that many in the Catholic Church do not visualise the Church's objectives in this manner. Some regard it as a vehicle for *their* salvation. Others are ignorant of the missionary role of the Church, except its deployment in the third world. Among the members of a parish there exists a small group of nuclear Catholics, who will attend Church every week, eager to support it in any way they can. Then, there is the vast majority of modal Catholics, not so committed, but faithful to their religious

practice. Lastly, we have the marginal Catholic whose practice is sporadic and whose beliefs are tinged with secular values. But beyond the parish boundaries, there is the dormant or lapsed Catholic, who is validly baptised, lives in the parish area, but by personal choice does not belong to the parish, and through default in intention, religious practice and social participation, is not part of the parish community.
By investigating the characteristics of the lapsed individual and comparing these with those of nuclear, modal and marginal parishioners we can arrive at some appreciation of his position and attempt a strategy for his reclamation.

We are obliged to concern ourselves with lapsed Christians because it is the function of the Church to be 'missionary', and this impetus should be directed to lapsed Christians and 'dechristianised' people alike. One could argue that the former have made a choice not to belong. A response to this is that it is possible that the lapsed Christian has not rejected the message but only the institution of the Church.

The question may arise as to whether a consideration of the various commitments of practising Christians should not have been omitted, and that it would have been more expedient to consider the lapsed individual as a phenomenon in itself. Our view is that the models of Christian behaviour prescribed here have been analysed because some standard of appraisal is required so that a comparison can be made and a balanced view obtained. It will also, in the writer's opinion, assist in the search for methods that might be adopted in seeking a solution for the rehabilitation of the lapsed individual.

CHAPTER 3: THE CAUSES OF LAPSATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the reasons that people give for leaving the Church. It will be seen that these vary greatly from having a row with a member of the parish to a more serious disagreement with the teachings of the Church. Each religious lapsation is unique. Hoge (1981: 92) maintains that the stages leading to conversion are similar to those leading to lapsation. It is sometimes claimed (Fichter: 1954: 74) that a Catholic becomes lapsed because of an enmeshment in habitual sin, producing a gradual weakening of faith that paves the way either to habitual immorality, or neglect of prayer. This opinion may be true, as far as it goes, but cannot be accepted as an explanation. The inference is that a dormant or lapsed Catholic is one who no longer lives up to the moral or dogmatic values of the Church. It seems, therefore, necessary to study the causes accounting for lapsation.

In this chapter we shall consider, first, the causes of lapsation in the young, that is, those up to 20 years. These causes originate in the family and over which the young person has no control. For this purpose we shall examine the works of Argyle and Beit-Hallahini, 1975; Fichter, 1954; Gibbs: 1977; Hoge, 1981; Hughes et al, 2000; Mauss, 1968; Richter and Francis, 1998; Schweitzer, 2000; Richard Thomas, 1997; Wuthrow and Mellinger, 1978, and present our own data extracted from the questionnaires.

Second, we shall analyse lapsation in the adult, that is, those persons over 20 years, their religious training, the causes and influences that assisted defection, and its consequences. To attain this objective we shall analyse the works of Bruce, 1996; Decker and Griesinger, 1997; Fanstone, 1993; Fichter,1954; Hadaway,1990; Hoge, 1981; Hoge and Roozen, 1992; Hornsby-Smith, 1987; Richter and Francis, 1998; Robbins, 2000; Rosie Miles, 1994; Richard Thomas, 1997 and Zaenglein et al, 1975. This section will include results of our own investigations through questionnaires.

We shall conclude by broadly classifying the types of lapsed adult. This part will comprise the results of our own investigations through questionnaires, personal interviews and depositions. As might be expected, individuals do not fit neatly into categories.

Three types of questionnaires are used in our research. Questionnaire 1 (Appendix 1) was applied to young people up-to-and-including the age of 20 years. Questionnaire 2 (Appendix 2) was used for adults. Both questionnaires were used to assess the quantitative features of religious practice and lapsation. The third questionnaire (Appendix 3) was utilised for personal interviews with those who had ceased religious practice at some stage and in some cases returned to religious practice. The purpose and meaning of questionnaire 3 was to gain both a qualitative insight of lapsed individuals and to assess if this found any compliance with other researchers' views. Information from personal interviews would provide us with a deeper insight into the circumstances causing lapsation. We stated in chapter 1 that this research would be conducted on both quantitative and qualitative levels: the former reveals a statistical overview; whilst the latter yields a deeper and richer aspect not possible in the quantitative method.

Our collection of statistical data commenced with a postal questionnaire for those adults who were known locally to have ceased religious practice. Forty-four questionnaires were despatched, accompanied by an explanatory letter (Appendix 4). In order to cover a larger area, it was decided to make an appeal in eleven parishes for help in this project from both adults and young people. This appeal is shown in Appendix 5. Meanwhile, three secondary schools were contacted in order to obtain the assistance of their pupils in completing questionnaire 1. The distribution of questionnaires 1 and 2 and their responses are shown in Appendix 6, 7 and 9. Data from these questionnaires were fed into a specially designed Microsoft database (Appendix 10) from which an analysis of the aspects of religious practice would be derived. Few personal interviews were conducted (see Appendix 8) and it was deemed unsuitable for database processing. Therefore, the qualitative information was analysed manually. The responses to our personal interviews are reported verbatim.

The age categories of the young persons' and adults' responses are shown in Appendix 9. The date and place of parish appeals is also listed in this appendix.

3.2 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAPSED

According to Hoge (1981:82, 83), a lapsed person tends to be young and male. He estimates (1980: 83) that of those who lapse, one-third leaves the church by the age of 20 years and over half by the age of 25 years. One-fifth leaves between the ages of 25 to 35 years, one-sixth between 35 to 50 years and one tenth after the age of 50 years. Hoge believes (1981: 84) that young people account for nearly half of all lapsed individuals. In fact, lapsation among teenagers is so common now that it is generally regarded as quite normal. Parents of such children find it hard to accept this, given the years of faith formation that have been expended. They sometimes believe that they have made mistakes somewhere, though these might be accidental. Some believe that the time spent in a secondary school represents a distinct stage in faith development, a stage which is termed 'searching faith'. It is a period characterised by doubt, critical judgement of tradition and a desire for experimentation with other life-styles and commitments. Hoge claims (1981: 85) that the sacrament of confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church could be delayed until the individual reaches 20 years, when 'owned faith' could be celebrated. Our view is that this is rare in parishes, mainly because there would be so few candidates. However, the present writer believes that the sacrament of confirmation, which is one of initiation, is most favourably celebrated during the early teens. If the candidate is still attending Church at this time, he will receive the grace of the sacrament, which it is believed will give him spiritual strength during the period of adolescence and enable him to approach 'owned faith'.

Kay and Francis (1996: 143) believe that drift from churches is not restricted to behaviour, but is influenced more by attitude. Although attitude and behaviour go hand in hand, it is suggested that with increasing age cognitive development and a different quality of thinking occurs: namely, the ability to deal with abstract thought. The theory that drift occurs through a change from primary school to secondary school is contradicted by Kay and Francis (1996: 144). As young people emerge from the world of childhood they are increasingly absorbed into an adult world that is characterised by the secular. It is a socialisation process that draws young people into the ethos of the post-Christian world. To be irreligious is to be normal. Parental example is, according to Kay and Francis (1996: 149), a precursor of drift. The potential for drift is most apparent in the 14-16 age groups, according to Kay and Francis (1996: 143).

These writers (1996: 149) state that children are unlikely to attend Church if their parents do not. The influence is greatest when both parents attend. The mother is more significant to both sons and daughters. The authors claim (1996: 149) that parental example is stronger over children's religious practice than it is over their attitude to Christianity. Children from a higher social class are more likely to attend Church than children of a lower social class, according to Kay and Francis (1996: 151,152). Children from the lower social class are more likely to hold a more positive attitude towards Christianity, but are unlikely to translate this into church attendance.

Robbins (2000: 109) states that those who leave the Church before adolescence remain more open to religious beliefs than those young people who have never attended. They retain a more positive approach to the Church than those who have never attended and are more likely to want their children to be baptised and to be married in Church; they support the place of religious education in school. Those who leave the Church are less likely to be dismissive of it than those who have never supported it. They are unlikely to consider the Church as boring or the Bible as irrelevant for life today.

3.2.1 Social Learning Theory

According to Richter and Francis (1998: 77), social learning theory suggests that religious behaviour and attitudes are learned by children mainly from their parents, as well as language, socially acceptable behaviour and gender roles. Children look up to their parents as role models, although teachers can also be important in developing religious attitudes and activities. Socialisation is successful in religion when parents are committed to their faith. This implies that a conscious effort is made to inspire religious values in their children where the relationship between parent and child is good. Brought up in a religious family, children learn to be part of a religious subculture, possessing a particular view of the world and assuming a set of moral standards. This aspect of acquiring moral and religious values is developed further in chapter 8.

When the transmission process breaks down, or children fail to learn churchgoing from their parents, Church-leaving becomes much more likely. It is possible that in such cases less emphasis had been placed on religion, whereas the opposite would be true of those who are faithful to church commitment. Of course, it remains a mystery why children turn away from the Church when they come from stable Christian families. Significantly, there are several factors within the control of parents which make it likely

that churchgoing habits are effective. Zaenglein et al (1975: 51) observe that it is often assumed that adolescence brings with it a crisis of faith. This implies that the adolescent re-evaluates his childhood orientation. He finds it difficult to accept the belief system of his parents and significant adults. Life becomes increasingly diversified with broader personal networks and widening intellectual interests. Divergent beliefs and attitudes must be confronted that challenge the belief system of childhood. These authors (1975: 52) insist that an emphasis has been placed upon deviant rather than upon conforming behaviour. They (1975: 52) maintain that an age-related decline in orthodoxy is unsupported in their findings.

3.3 CAUSES OF LAPSATION IN THE YOUNG

3.3.1 Those Caused by Family Tensions

Hoge maintains (1981: 89) that the young cease to attend Church because they rebel against family pressure. This can take two forms: first, the young person lives in a situation in which he has received religious education, attended Mass in early childhood and adolescence, yet has never internalised his faith. He does not identify with the faith in which he was brought up or with the Church which supposedly formed his early faith. As he grows older, he feels little motivation to attend Church and as soon as family pressure relaxes, ceases to attend. Some parents may not object strongly. They may feel that they have exposed their child adequately to the faith, and if he wishes to reject it then that is his business.

The second form comprises a general rebellion against the family and all that it stands for. This situation can be emotionally charged on the part of the young person. The Church may be blamed for all its faults and weaknesses, but these do not explain the behaviour. They are rationalisations. This form of rejection involves a frontal attack on the parents, whereas in the former it does not.

These patterns indicate that lapsation from Church is precipitated outside the Church itself. It arises in churched families and occurs more among males who are critical of the Church, than females. The individual may feel uncertain about the Catholic faith and may not trust Church authority. The Church may be perceived as too impersonal and formal, or that it puts too much emphasis on money. Family tension seems to be the

most common influence on lapsation, according to Hoge (1981: 77). Kay and Francis (1996: 150) state that the ultimate family tension, where the parents divorce, produces a less positive attitude to Christianity in the young person.

In our survey of 356 young people, two non-practising males in both age groups, representing 1.14 per cent, were recorded. Two non-practising females under 14 and three in the15-19 age group recorded tension in the family. This represents 1.3 and 2 per cent respectively. There were two practising males in the up-to-and-including 14 years age group and two females in the 15-19 age group who registered tension. This represents 1.14 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively. This data is illustrated in Table 1 below. This represents 2.77 per cent aggregate.

Tension in the family	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	1.14	1.14
Males 15-19 years	1.14	—
Females ≤14 years	1.3	1.3
Females 15-19 years	2.0	—

Table 1: Distribution of non-attending and attending males and females who experienced tension in the family (n = 324)

Our investigations in this case do not appear to verify Hoge's assertion that family tension is the most prevalent in the lapsation of young people. Surprisingly, no report of tension was made in the practising 15-19 age range for males and females.

3.3.2 Lack of Parental Consensus

If in a two-parent family each chooses to attend different denominations, or where one attends a particular church and the other does not attend any, the children in this instance will receive mixed signals from their role models. It is likely that the child will withdraw from religious commitment altogether, according to Richter and Francis (1998: 79). The child cannot please both parents at the same time by choosing to follow one or the other parent's religion. Mauss (1968: 130) agrees that a lack of parental

consensus through an exogenous relationship can cause defection from church involvement.

We discovered that of the non-practising there were two males and two females who indicated that they had parents of different faiths. The same was replicated among those who practised weekly or monthly. This is shown in the table below. It represents an aggregate of 1.85 per cent.

Lack of emotional intimacy	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	0.57	1.14
Males 15-19 years	0.57	—
Females ≤14 years	0.67	—
Females 15-19 years	0.67	—

Table 2: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced a lack of emotional intimacy n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.2.1 Case study: Rebecca

Rebecca experienced parental conflict that resulted in ceasing her religious commitment. We interviewed her using the format of Questionnaire 3. The purpose of this case study was to illustrate the result of the lack of parental consensus that occurs sometimes in exogenous relationships. The study verifies the assertions of Richter and Francis (1998:79) and Mauss (1968: 130).

Rebecca attends Church twice a year, is single and in her twenties. She is the daughter of parents who have an allegiance to different denominations. She attended Catholic schools and practised her religion until she was 15 years old. Rebecca ceased religious practice because of work and study, but admits that being in a family in which two different traditions were being followed made her think differently and may have affected her churchgoing.

Living in a dual religious family gave her a perspective of Catholic and Protestant rival claims, particularly in Northern Ireland. "Recently, I have made more of an effort to attend church with my mother, simply because I feel sometimes that I need direction. I feel that attending a church service gives me this," she affirms.

Rebecca's deposition shows that the scenario of lapsation is multi-faceted. She did not cease religious practice solely because of her parents' different religious allegiance, but it was a contributory factor in her ceasing religious practice. Such a family setting provided her with a wider appreciation of Christianity.

3.3.3 Parental Distance

Richter and Francis reckon (1998: 80) that lack of emotional intimacy between parents and children fails to bond them. Sometimes, divorce and loss of custody creates distance between parent and child. Where emotional intimacy is lacking, there will be little incentive on the part of the parents to try and shape their child's religious choices, since the outcome will be of small consequence to them. At the same time, children who do not feel close to their parents will be less likely to attend Church to make them happy. It is more likely that they will leave the Church.

Fichter maintains (1954: 75) that the greatest loss in urban parishes is among baptised infants. Large numbers of children 'disappear'. After baptism they do not subsequently attend first communion classes or attend Catholic schools. In this instance, the parents, who are dormant or lapsed, have to shoulder the blame for infant leakage. The present writer strongly agrees with these views.

Mauss (1968: 130) believes that where an individual is in an unhappy, unsatisfactory and emotionally deprived atmosphere, or a rigid family environment, it is possible for disinvolvement from the Church to take place. Out of a total response of 324 Roman Catholics who indicated that they felt a lack of emotional intimacy towards their parents, our study revealed that: three females in the up-to-and-including 14 years age group, four males in the up to an including 14 years age group and one male in the 15-19 age group indicated parental distance. This represents an aggregate of 2.46 per cent.

Parental distance	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	2.3	—
Males 15-19 years	0.57	—
Females ≤ 14 years	1.3	0.66
Females 15-19 years	—	—

Table 3: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced parental Distance n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.4 Conflict with Parents

Richter and Francis believe (1998:80) that where there is persistent disagreement between parents and their children, church leaving may be a means of spiting the former or, at least, for children to assert their own identity. This would be more common among teenage children, according to the opinion of these authors. From the children's point of view, there would be no need for their going to Church to please their parents because this will not necessarily guarantee an easier life at home, as it might once have done. Relationships will have broken down since then.

Our investigation shows that only four males of fourteen and below and two males in the 15-19 age group reported a conflict with parents. This represents 3.4 per cent of male respondents. It is surprising that there were no female responses. Overall the aggregate is 1.85 per cent.

Conflict in the family	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	1.72	0.57
Males 15-19 years	0.57	0.57
Females ≤14 years	—	—
Females 15-19 years	—	—

Table 4: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced conflict in the family n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.5 **Antipathy Towards Parents**

Religious choices are made in a social context. The preferences children make will inevitably have an effect on their parents. Richter and Francis state (1998:82) that pronounced antipathy on the part of children towards parents may result in their choosing to leave the Church. Pronounced sympathy towards parents may also affect church leaving. If those who are fond of their parents become less religious for some reason, they may feel that they are bound to be nominally religious to avoid causing distress. Such people may have left the Church 'mentally', but not physically.

Again, in our study only two females, one from each age group, and two males in the 15-19 age group indicated any antipathy towards their parents. This results in an aggregate of 1.23 per cent. The detail is shown in Table 5 below.

Antipathy towards parents	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	—	—
Males 15-19 years	0.57	0.57
Females ≤14 years	0.66	—
Females 15-19 years	0.66	—

Table 5: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced an antipathy towards parents n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.6 **Family Disorganisation**

Fichter defines (1954: 76) family disorganisation as a demoralisation of family relationships within and without the family circle. A breakdown in family organisation can bring about a breakdown in religious practice. There may be instances in which a lack of acceptance of the Church's teaching on marriage has fragmented the marriage and the family. In our investigation, this aspect yielded seven males of fourteen and below and five males in the 15-19 age range, which represents 4 per cent and 2.87 per cent respectively according to their categories and an aggregate of 3.7 per cent. Our results are shown in the table below.

Family disorganisation	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	2.87	1.14
Males 15-19 years	2.3	0.57
Females ≤14 years	—	—
Females 15-19 years	—	—

Table 6: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced family disorganisation n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.7 Inconsistent Messages

Richter and Francis believe (1998: 82) that sometimes the implicit messages conveyed by parents towards their children are at odds with the ostensible messages conveyed by the parents' religion. Ideally, both messages should reinforce each other. If the child has been abused, neglected or starved of love, it becomes difficult to believe in a God of love. Also, if a child has grown up in a loving home, certain versions of Christianity might be difficult to visualise, considering that an overwhelmingly positive home background has been experienced. Again, very few results were obtained in our survey. Only one female in the up-to-and-including fourteen years age group and two males in each age category reported a lack of communication. This represents 0.66 per cent and 1.14 per cent respectively, and an aggregate of 1.54 per cent.

Inconsistent messages	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	1.14	—
Males 15-19 years	1.14	—
Females ≤14 years	—	0.66
Females 15-19 years	—	—

Table 7: Non-attending and attending males and females who experienced inconsistent messages n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

3.3.8. **Gender**

Richter and Francis (1998: 84) claim that girls are more conformist than boys in following in their parents' footsteps. Girls who have close relationships with their mothers are encouraged to exhibit responsibility and obedience, while boys are allowed a certain degree of autonomy. Religious development in the young tends to be associated with women and the parents' attempt to inspire religious participation in their children tends to be biased towards girls. This produces a discontinuity in the transmission of faith, making male children more likely to lapse from churchgoing.
Our survey results are shown in Table 8 below.

Conformity	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males (both age groups)	9.9	45.5
Females (both age groups)	10.3	34.3

Table 8: Comparison of conformity in non-attending / infrequent and weekly / monthly attending males and females n (number of respondents = 242)

Males score more in their weekly and monthly attendance in terms of conformity to their parents' religion than females. Males and females who attend church infrequently or not at all have almost similar rankings. This table does not indicate whether the relationship between parents and their children is close, but only whether the latter conform to their parents' faith. The feature of conformity among males and females illustrated does not appear to agree with the claim of Richter and Francis (1998: 84) that females are more conformist to their parent's wishes than are males.

3.3.9 **Birth Order**

The first born, especially if male, tends to have a closer relationship with his parents than later-born siblings and is more likely to accept their authority. Similarly, an only child tends to be more dependent on his parents and more susceptible to their influence. According to Richter and Francis (1998:84), later born children, especially males, tend to be more influenced by their peers and not so much by their parents. The birth of a child, especially the first, brings immense changes in the family. While the extra

responsibilities can leave little time for churchgoing, it can also be an occasion in which parents return to religious practice for the sake of the child's religious and moral upbringing. The birth of a child can bring parents back to Church or influence their leaving, according to Richter and Francis (1998: 75). The factor of birth order and gender is outside the control of the child, but parents could adjust their parenting differently to compensate for the influences they convey to their children. Our analysis of first born and siblings is shown in the Tables 9 and 10 below.

First born	≤ 14		15 -19	
	Males %	Female %	Males %	Females %
Conform	88	100	77	81
Close relationship	100	100	100	100
Accept authority	100	88	88	81
Take notice of parents	100	77 *	55 *	45 *
Take notice of friends	0	33 *	44 *	63*

Table 9: Showing relationships between age range, sex and characteristics of parent and first born child

Note: Number of Males ≤ 14 = 22 ; Males 15-19 years = 22; Females ≤ 14 = 29 ; and Females 15-19 years = 24. This represents 97 responses out of a total of 324 surveys

*The discrepancy arising from these figures occurs because some respondents indicated a dual preference towards parents and friends.

In **Table 9**, the highest level of parental conformity in first-born children appears to take place in females up-to-and-including fourteen years. Males do not have such a high level of conformity, although they may take more notice of parents than of friends. In the 15-19 age group, conformity among males decreases with respect to their counterparts in the lower age range. Females in the same age group appear to possess greater conformity to their parents' religion than males and place a greater reliance on their friends than on their parents.

Males in the same age range appear to place a greater emphasis on their parents than on their friends, yet one would have thought that females would place a greater reliance on their parents, and that males would consider their friends' opinions more than their parents. Males and females in the survey are quite few numerically and the results could not be extrapolated to convey a general view of all males and females in these categories.

Siblings	≤14		15 -19	
	Males %	Females %	Males %	Females %
Conform	100	90	92	92
Close relationship	100	100	92	77
Accept authority	84	80	92	84
Take notice of parents	84	80 *	61	46 *
Take notice of friends	16	10 *	39	38 *

Table 10: Showing relationships between age range, sex and characteristics of parent and siblings

Note: Number of Males ≤14 = 22; Males 15-19 years = 22; Females ≤14 = 29; and Females 15-19 years = 24. This represents 97 responses out of a total of 324 surveys

*The discrepancy arising from these figures occurs because some respondents did not indicate a preference towards either parents or friends.

Referring to **Table 10**, siblings in the under fourteen and below age category score highly and place greater weight on their parents' views than on their friends'. Females in the same category do not score as highly as males, although they place a greater reliance on their parents' opinions. In the upper age group, again males score consistently higher for conformity, close relationship, acceptance of authority and for placing greater weight on parents' views than females do, although the difference between them is not numerically large. These tables can only reflect responses to the questionnaires. A universal feature cannot be attributed to the data.

A correlation of conformity to birth order and close relationship has resulted in the data shown in **Tables 9 and 10**. An analysis of conformity alone over all respondents grouped according to sex and level of commitment is shown below in **Table 11**.

Conformity and frequency of attendance	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males (both age groups)	13.8	63.2
Females (both age groups)	16.66	55.33

Table 11: Showing relationship between conformity to parents' religion, sex and frequency of attendance n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

The response to questionnaires for males was 77 per cent and for females was 72 per cent. The remaining questionnaires did not contain any information on this aspect. Weekly and monthly attending males and females have a higher rating than their corresponding counterparts, as might be expected.

In **Table 9**, it appears that first-born females of fourteen and below and the 15-19 age group conform more to their parents' religion than males do. In **Table 10**, sibling males in the up-to-and-including fourteen group appear to conform more than females. However in **Table 11**, both males and females conform more in the weekly and monthly attending group and less in the non- attending and infrequently attending group.

Close relationships	Non-attending or Infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	13.2	47.1
Males 15-19 years	12.1	16.6
Females ≤14 years	8.0	50.0
Females 15-19 years	14.0	9.33

Table 12: Close relationships in non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly males and females ≤14 and 15-19 age groups n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

Close relationships appear to exist in the fourteen and below practising male and female categories, the latter being slightly higher. It diminishes significantly in the male and female 15-19 age groups. In the non-attending and infrequent categories, parental intimacy appears to increase in females in the 15-19 age category. The male response was 89 per cent; the female 81.3 per cent. The remaining respondents did not enter any information.

Accept authority of parents	Non-attending or Infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	11.5	7.5
Males 15-19 years	9.7	17.2
Females ≤14 years	3.3	48.0
Females 15-19 years	11.3	6.3

Table 13: Those who accept the authority of their parents in the non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending males and females ≤14 and 15-19 age groups n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

Table 13 above illustrates the feature that females under fourteen who attend church regularly accept the authority of their parents more than that of other groups. Females in the same age group show the least willingness to accept the authority of their parents.

3.3.10 Stage in Life

Parental influence over children tends to decline during teenage years. Those who go to university are exposed to alternative world views and values. Teenagers often want to be radically different from their parents, but later on they may revert to treating their parents as role models, particularly if they have children of their own.

Adolescence may stimulate church leaving, as Richter and Francis state (1998:85), but the advent of a family of one's own may inspire interest in the Church. To attend Church may be implicit in the notion of being a good parent. Richter and Francis say (1998:84) that those parents who went to Church as children often want the same for their own children, even if they had negative associations in their own youth.

Take notice of friends	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	1.72	4.6
Males 15-19 years	2.3	5.7
Females ≤14 years	7.3	13.3
Females 15-19 years	8.0	4.0

Table 14: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who take more notice of friends (74 respondents)

n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

Response: Males: 14.3 per cent; Females: 32.6 per cent

Practising males in the under fourteen group appear to take less notice of friends than those in the higher age group. Practising females up-to-and-including fourteen take more notice of friends than those in the higher age group. Males seem to take more notice of friends in the 15-19 age groups. Perhaps in approaching adolescence, they wish to distance themselves from parental influence. Practising females seem to take more notice of friends in the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group and less so as they get older. It probably reflects their desire to become adult. A similar scenario occurs in the non-practising male and female groups where a greater percentage in the 15-19 age category appear to show more reliance on friends' views rather than on parents'.

Take notice of parents	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	11.5	44.2
Males 15-19 years	8.0	13.8
Females ≤14 years	6.0	43.3
Females 15-19 years	8.0	6.0

Table 15: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who take more notice of parents (n =324: Males 174; females 150) (230 respondents)

Response: Males: 77.5 per cent; Females: 63.3 per cent. The response is much greater than for the previous item.

In **Table 15**, practising males up-to–and-including the age of fourteen show the greatest reliance on parents, although practising females in the same age group come close. Their corresponding percentages in the 15-19 age groups are considerably reduced, which seems to suggest that they want more independence. Although non-practising males show less reliance on parents' opinions than do corresponding age categories in the weekly/monthly attenders, the non-practising female groups, surprisingly, show a greater reliance on parents in the 15-19 age category.

An examination of the desires of males and females in their age categories, with respect to whether they wish to be like or different from their parents, reveals some interesting data.

Want to be like parents	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	3.4	21.8
Males 15-19 years	4.1	6.9
Females ≤14 years	2.6	32.0
Females 15-19 years	8.0	2.0

Table 16: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who want to be like their parents n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (130 respondents)

Response: Males: 36.1 per cent; Females: 44.6 per cent

Males and females up-to-and-including fourteen, who attend monthly or weekly, show the greatest desire to be like their parents when compared with the infrequent and non-attending group. In the latter, surprisingly, both males and females in the 15-19 age category, who attend infrequently or not at all, show a greater desire to be like their parents by comparison with the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group. However, this tendency is more pronounced among females than males. The non-attending males and females seem to show a greater desire to be like their parents as they grow older. This tendency is reversed in the practising group.

Want to be different from parents	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	11.5	26.4
Males 15-19 years	8.1	12.6
Females ≤14 years	8.6	26.0
Females 15-19 years	6.6	8.0

Table 17: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who want to be different from their parents n=324 (Males 174; females 150)

(176 respondents)

Response: Males: 58.6 per cent; Females: 49.2 per cent

Males and females up-to-and-including fourteen score higher than their counterparts in the 15-19 age group, although practising males and females in both age groups show a greater willingness to be different from their parents.

3.3.11 Church Denomination

There are always competing influences at work, apart from those exercised by parents. Richter and Francis maintain (1998: 85) that some denominations, such as Roman Catholics, are more effective than others in insulating their children from the rival influences of secular culture. In other denominations that are culture-affirming, the boundaries between Church and the world are weaker. According to Richter and Francis (1998:85), denominations also vary according to the importance given to the family. For Roman Catholics, the Church and the family belong closely together, whereas Protestants, the above authors (1998: 85) maintain, give priority to faith bonds; the ties and obligations of their faith community are considered more important than their family bonds. Our view is that their statement concerning Roman Catholic families may have been true at one time but does not apply now, though the unity of the family is considered important by the Church. Richter and Francis' observations concerning faith bonds may not be universally true.

They (1998: 85) further state that children, when they are older, often practise different forms of institutional religion to that of their parents, which is sometimes hurtful to the latter. It is, however, more important for individuals to make up their own minds and come to a personal faith decision rather than follow the faith of their parents. Sometimes, it will entail a decision to leave the Church altogether. Church leaving does not mean that parents have been ineffective in passing on their deepest values. If the parents' religion stresses freedom of thought, it is possible that children will infer that religion is unimportant, or that particular beliefs do not matter.

3.3.12 **Parental Over-enthusiasm**

Richter and Francis think (1998: 86) that parents can be too keen and hard about passing on the faith to their children, with the consequence that the opposite reaction to that intended is manifested in their children. Parental influence should be balanced by respect for a child's growing independence and autonomy for, if children are pressured into going to Church, they may cease to practise at the earliest opportunity. Richard Thomas (1997) discovered that in his survey where 12 per cent in the 14-20 age range were discouraged when they were young. He does not state whether the discouragement occurred through over-enthusiasm, parental conflict, or some other experience. Our data for young people who attend Church under protest highlights an interesting issue.

Attend church under protest	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	3.4	18.4
Males 15-19 years	3.4	2.8
Females ≤14 years	4.6	21.3
Females 15-19 years	2.0	1.3

Table 18: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who attend church under protest n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (93 respondents)

Response: Males: 28 per cent; Females: 29.2 per cent. This is quite a small response. Particularly in the up-to-and-including fourteen age category, a large percentage of practising males and females object to attending religious services. The reason for this may be highlighted in a further analysis, which demonstrates that a high percentage of

young people find the Church boring. Presumably, in the 15-19 age groups, a larger percentage of males protest at religious observance than do females. It is likely that the latter find attendance at Church more agreeable because of the quality of parental relationship. It is also reasonable to comment that the small percentages of both females and males who either do not attend, or do so irregularly, object to regular churchgoing because they believe that attendance on special occasions, such as a wedding or funeral, is sufficient.

Attend church willingly	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	5.2	31.0
Males 15-19 years	5.2	14.4
Females ≤14 years	3.3	30.6
Females 15-19 years	6.6	7.3

Table 19: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who willingly attend church n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (169 respondents)

Response: Males: 55.8 per cent; Females: 47.8 per cent

Practising males and females up-to-and-including fourteen years appear to attend Church more willingly than practising males and females in the 15-19s age groups. The latter are approaching adolescence and grappling with religious practice, although males are more willing to attend religious services in the up-to-and-including fourteen age groups rather than later on, a concept that is predictable. Again, the relatively lower percentages of both the non-attending and infrequently attending groups of up-to-and-including fourteens and 15-19s shows that they display less willingness to attend Church than their more regular counterparts. Significant data was collected with reference to those who attended Church unwillingly and find it boring. **Table 20** illustrates this feature.

Attend church unwillingly and bored	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	2.3	12.1
Males 15-19 years	2.8	1.1
Females ≤14 years	4.6	22.6
Females 15-19 years	2.0	3.3

Table 20: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who unwillingly attend church but are bored (n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (81 respondents)

Response: Males: 18.3 per cent; Females: 32.5per cent. This is a very low rate of return.

Those who find the Church boring are both frequent and unwilling attenders. It is understandable that males in the up-to-and-including fourteen category who attend unwillingly find church services boring more so than do males in the 15-19 age group. This feature is reflected in the respective female groups. This is clearly a serious matter that requires to be addressed by the Church. Otherwise, those individuals who attend weekly or monthly could lapse in the future. Even those who accept the authority of their parents find Church services boring.

Attend church willingly and are bored	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	2.8	13.8
Males 15-19 years	4.0	9.8
Females ≤14 years	3.3	16.0
Females 15-19 years	6.0	5.3

Table 21: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who willingly attend church but are bored n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (99 respondents)

Response: Males: 30.5 per cent; Females: 30.6 per cent.

Clearly, those who find church services boring in the infrequent attending group, yet willingly attended, are probably those who had to attend Church on special occasions rather than those who do not attend at all. The high scores of males and females who find the Church boring suggest that our findings are consistent with the data illustrated in the previous table. The problem of boredom should be addressed by both Church and parents, otherwise a grudging acquiescence, particularly by weekly participants, could herald lapsation.

Bored	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	10.3	27.6
Males 15-19 years	11.5	13.8
Females ≤14 years	12.0	34.7
Females 15-19 years	10.6	8.6

Table 22: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending but are bored n=324 (Males 174; females 150) (216 respondents)

Response: Males: 63.2 per cent; Females: 70.6 per cent.

The data shown in **Table 22** above confirms that of **Table 21** and shows that boredom is most pronounced in male and female in the fourteen and below age group who are practising. This feature attracted a high response rate from both sexes, who clearly wished to register their strong feelings. The present writer believes that the data contained in this analysis represents a reasonable cross-sectional view of the practising community and is therefore truer. The infrequently and non-attending categories express an opinion without it being tested. They probably have imbibed a view that religious practice is not all that important from their non-practising or irregularly-attending parents.

Conflict in the family, antipathy towards parents, lack of emotional intimacy, communications between parents being at odds with the gospel and lack of parental agreement have very low scores and do not appear to affect appreciably the responses of both age groups.

3.3.13 **Children of Faith**

Children of stable Christian families do not necessarily follow in their parents' footsteps and attend Church. This does not mean that their upbringing has been in vain or that Christian influence is not apparent in their relationships, business ethics or charitable works. Children will have absorbed many of the teachings of the Church and live by their understanding of Christian morality. According to Richter and Francis (1998:87), Church leaders sometimes fail to appreciate the importance of the foundations that have been laid in children.

Our survey indicated that most of the young people attended the same denominational church. Only two males in the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group and two males in the 15-19 age group attended a different church from their parents. This represents 2.3 per cent of males surveyed and an aggregate of 1.23 per cent.

3.3.14 **Lack of Religious Training**

Fichter notes (1954:75) that lack of religious training implies formal and informal education in the meaning of Catholicism and of patterns of religious thought and behaviour. From this aspect, it could be suggested that the fault again lies with the parents, since the training of children is often neglected by dormant or lapsed parents. If they fail to take advantage of the channels of Catholic instruction in adolescence and adulthood, then their failure is culpable, provided they are aware of the gravity of their omission.

Schweitzer (2000: 94) notes the feature of religious disaffiliation and development as a factor within the individual's distancing himself from religious practice. He believes that education seems to stimulate religious development.

Hughes et al (2000: 171) agree with Schweitzer that there is a significant relationship between formal education and dropping out of Church involvement. They believe that those with secondary or trade skills may cease whilst still young people, whereas fewer of those with a diploma or university degree drop out as young people, although a greater percentage could lapse when adult. Nevertheless, a considerably higher proportion of these would remain church members.

Kay and Francis claim (1996: 154) that a religious syllabus concentrating on world religions records a significantly less positive attitude to Christianity than those which focus on Christianity and the Bible. Pupils who acknowledge and name religious experiences record a significantly more positive attitude towards Christianity than pupils from comparable backgrounds who do not share these experiences.

Our data shows that the vast majority surveyed either attend or attended a religious school. This is shown in Table 23 below.

Attend religious school	Non-attending or infrequent %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	9.7	40.8
Males 15-19 years	10.9	17.8
Females ≤14 years	10.0	49.3
Females 15-19 years	13.3	10.0

Table 23: Male and female non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attending who attend a religious school (n = 324. Males: 174; females: 150 (262 respondents)

Response: Males: 79.3 per cent; Females: 82.6 per cent.

More weekly and monthly practising male and females in the up-to-and-including fourteen age group attend religious schools than those in the same age categories who do not attend or only do so on special occasions.

3.3.15 Summary

The lapsed individual tends to be young and male. This is frequently a cause of concern for parents who feel that they have failed in some way. Social learning theory informs us that religious behaviour, attitudes, language and gender roles are absorbed by children from their parents. When relations are good, and when the parents are committed to their religion and make an effort to inspire religious values, the child will learn to be part of a religious subculture possessing a particular world view. This scenario does not mean that the child will not lapse from religious participation, but at

least he will have imbibed a sound religious culture which at a later stage he can 'own'. If, however, the transmission process breaks down, the child is put at risk in terms of denominational fidelity.

An assessment of the reason(s) why young people leave the Church was made by consideration of the following aspects that are presented as aggregate percentages of the individual's relationship with his or her parents:

	Tension in family %	Lack of parental consensus %	Parental distance %	Conflict with parents %	Antipathy towards parents %	Family dis-organisation %	Inconsistent messages %
Aggregate Male & female	2.77	1.85	2.46	1.85	1.23	3.7	1.54

Table 24: Relationship of the child with parents expressed as an aggregate percentage of the total survey n= 324 (Males: 174; females: 150)

As can be seen from the percentages shown above, all the negative features are quite small.

The more important causes of breakdown in the transmission of religious belief would be:

Tension in the family; this may cause the young person to rebel and at a later time, to demonstrate a predisposition to leave the Church although family tension has in fact decreased?

He may not have internalised his faith adequately; lack of parental consensus, in which the parents are of differing religious persuasions or where one parent is an active religious participant and the other has either no religious belief or is antagonistic to religion. The child of such a union will tend to withdraw from religious commitment because he receives mixed signals.

Parental distance occurs when intimacy and love are not demonstrated and bonding between parents and child fails. The child will receive a negative incentive to continue

religious practice, since it will be seen as of little consequence to the parents, even though they may both practise their religion.

Parental conflict is shown when there is continual disagreement between parents and child. The child will tend to drift away from churchgoing in order to assert his identity. The relationship between them has been broken.

Parental antipathy or antipathy on the part of the child towards his parents may result in his leaving the Church. The obverse is also possible, namely, a pronounced sympathy between parent and child which can affect church leaving. The child may become less religious, but to please his parents he continues to attend Church. In a sense, he has lapsed. Family disorganisation can produce a breakdown in religious practice because a collapse of routine and order in the family has occurred.

Inconsistent messages: this occurs when parents convey notions to the child that are at variance with religious teaching. Indicators of child and parental relationship were also studied. These are:

Conformity: weekly or monthly attending males appear to conform more (45.5 per cent) to their parents' religion than females (34.3 per cent). The lower figures for the infrequent (9.9 per cent for males and 10.3 per cent for females) express an uncertain position on their parents' religion.

Yet, girls are supposed to be more conformist than boys and through the close relationship which they exhibit with their mother they learn fidelity. Boys are allowed more autonomy, and therefore males are more likely to lapse than females.

Birth order: the overall picture discovered that a higher number of males (63.2 per cent) conform in the weekly and monthly category than females (55.33 per cent).
Females (16.66 per cent) appear to be more responsive to parents' wishes in the infrequent category than males (13.8 per cent).

A first-born male tends to have a closer relationship with his parents than later siblings. Later born males tend to be influenced by their peers. An only child tends to be more dependent on his parents.

Acceptance of the authority of parents: females (48.0 per cent) up-to-and-including fourteen years who practice their religion weekly or monthly accept the authority of their parents more than males (7.5 per cent). The reverse situation applies for females in the 15-19 age group where they score 6.3 per cent against 17.2 per cent for males.

Non-attending or infrequent-attending females fourteen and below are surpassed by males in the same age group (3.3. per cent and 11.5 per cent respectively). Females in the 15-19 age category are slightly in the lead over males (11.3 per cent and 9.7 per cent respectively).

Those who take more notice of friends than parents: weekly and monthly practising males in the up-to-and–including-fourteen and 15-19 age group are similar (4.6 per cent and 5.7 per cent) in the feature that they take more notice of friends than parents.

There is a large difference between females in the up-to-and-including fourteen age group (13.3 per cent) and the 15-19 age group (4 per cent).

There is little difference in the infrequent and non-attending males and females except that females seem to take more notice of friends than males (males: 1.72 per cent in the up-to-and-including fourteen age group, 2.3 per cent in the 15-19 age category; females: 7.3 per cent in the up-to-and-including fourteen age group, 8 per cent in the 15-19 age category).

The stage in life means that parental influence decreases during teenage years. Teenagers are often exposed to different ways of thinking and different modes of religious practice. Adolescence often encourages church leaving.

Take more notice of parents: weekly or monthly attending males up-to-and-including fourteen show the greatest dependence on parents (44.2 per cent), but this diminishes to 13.8 per cent in the 15-19 age group. Females in the same attendance and age categories show a similar dependence (43.3 per cent) but their dependence reduces to 6 per cent in the older age group.

Infrequent and non-attending males up-to-and-including fourteen show a lower dependence on parents (11.5 per cent) but this diminishes as they grow older. Females in this attendance category show the reverse feature, which can be doubted (6 to 8 per cent respectively).

Those who want to be different from their parents: males and females in both attendance categories show a similar pattern. Weekly or monthly attending males falling into the category of up-to-and-including fourteen show a decease from 26.4 per cent to 12.6 per cent as they reach the 15-19 age category. Females up-to-and-including fourteen record 26 per cent in wanting to be different from their parents, to 8 per cent when they reach the upper age range.

Males up-to-and-including fourteen in the non-attending or infrequent category show an 11.5 per cent wish to be different from their parents, which diminishes to 8.1 per cent in the 15-19 age group. Similarly, females in the up-to-and-including fourteen age group and in the same attendance category show a decline in wanting to be different from their parents from 8.6 to 6.6 per cent in the older age group. Both males and females show a wish to be therefore more like their parents as they grow older.

Those who want to be like their parents: weekly and monthly practising males up–to-and-including fourteen show a higher degree (21.8 per cent) of wanting to be like parents compared with those who infrequently attend church (3.4 per cent). They show a marked decline (to 6.9 per cent) as they enter the 15-19 age category, whereas those in the infrequent or non-attending category show a slight increase in this aspect (4.1 per cent). Females also show a more frequent wish to be like their parents (32 per cent) compared to males in the same attendance category, but like them, it declines rapidly as they approach the 15-19 age groups (2 per cent). Females in the infrequent or non-attending category on the other hand exhibit an increase (2.6 to 8 per cent respectively) in wanting to be like their parents in the 15-19 age group.

Those who willingly attend Church: weekly and monthly practising males up–to-and-including fourteen show a relatively high willingness (31 per cent) to attend Church, probably because they come from practising families, but their willingness decreases when they reach the upper age group (14.4 per cent). Males in the infrequent or non-attending group indicate a constant willingness in both age groups (5.2 per cent).

Females in the weekly and monthly attendance group show a similar pattern. They show a relatively high willingness in the up-to-and-including-fourteen age category (30.6 per cent). But this diminishes to 7. 3 per cent in the 15-19 age group. Females show a slight increase from the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group to the 15-19 age group (3.3 to 6.6 per cent).

Those who attend Church under protest: weekly and monthly practising males up-to-and-including fourteen indicate a decrease in their unwillingness to attend Church as they grow older. This is shown as an unwillingness of 18.4 per cent when they are up to and including fourteen, to 2.8 per cent when they are in the 15-19 age group. Males in the infrequently attending group show unwillingness constantly at 3.4 per cent. Females in the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group show slightly more unwillingness to attend Church (21.3 per cent) compared with males in the same age group, but their unwillingness to attend Church diminishes to 1.3 per cent when they reach the 15-19 age group. Females in the infrequently attending category indicate slightly less unwillingness to attend Church in the 15-19 age group compared to the up-to-and-including-fourteen age groups (2 from 4.6 per cent respectively).

Parental over-enthusiasm indicates that they try too keenly to pass on their faith. This can lead to an opposite reaction to that intended.

Those who attend unwillingly and are bored: weekly and monthly practising males up – to-and–including-fourteen show a 12.1 per cent rating of both unwillingness and being bored, which decreases to 1.1 per cent in the 15-19 age group. Males in the infrequent category show a slightly different constant percentage rating (from 2.3 per cent for those up-to-and–including-fourteen to 2.8 per cent in the 15-19 age group).Weekly or monthly practising females in the up-to–and-including-fourteen group show a much larger rating (22.6 per cent) which reduces to 3.3 per cent in the older age group. Up-to - and-including-fourteen year females show a small indication of being both bored and an unwillingness to attend Church at 4.6 per cent. But this too decreases to 2 per cent in the 15-19 age group.

Those who attend willingly and are bored: weekly and monthly practising males up-to – and-including-fourteen who are both bored and willingly attend Church show a decrease when in the 15-19 age group of 13.8 to 9.8 per cent respectively. The males who practise infrequently in the corresponding ages groups show a slight increase of 2.8 to 4 per cent respectively.

Females in the up-to-and-including-fourteen age group show a higher level of boredom and willingness to attend (16 per cent), but again, this decreases to 5.3 per cent in the 15-19 age group. Infrequently practising females, on the other hand, show a slight increase from the up-to-and-including-fourteen to the 15-19 age group of 3.3 to 6 per cent.

A question concerning boredom was asked of weekly and infrequently attending males and females who are bored. Weekly and monthly practising males in–up-to–and-including-fourteen age group recorded a 27.6 per cent affirmation in this aspect. It decreased when they reached the 15-19 age group of 13.8 per cent. Infrequently attending males showed little difference between the age groups. There was a slight increase from the younger to the older groups of 10.3 to 11.5 per cent respectively.

Weekly and monthly attending females, on the other hand, also mirrored the males. Their rating was higher, though, for those up-to–and-including-fourteen. They recorded 34.7 per cent in this group, but it declined in the 15-19 age group to 8.6 per cent. Infrequently practising females showed a slight decrease from the up-to-and –including-fourteen to the 15-19 age groups of 12 to 10.6 per cent respectively.

Those who attended or who attend a religious school: weekly and monthly attenders in the up-to–and-including-fourteen age group show the highest levels of involvement in religious schools.

Males (40.8 per cent) are exceeded by females (49.3 per cent). Those in the 15-19 age group indicate a lower observance (17.8 per cent in the under fourteens for males and 10 per cent for females). The infrequent and non-attending males up-to–and-including-fourteen have a lower rating of 9.7 per cent, which is only slightly higher in the 15-19 age group. Females follow the same pattern. They have 10 per cent in the up-to-and-including fourteen and 13.3 per cent in the 15-19 age groups.

Lack of religious training: if the formal or informal religious training has been inadequate, there is a tendency for lapsation to ensue.
It is thought that the type of denomination can affect the leaving process. The Roman Catholic Church is alleged to be more effective in insulating the individual against secular culture.

Even if a child has been reared intelligently in the faith, it is still possible for him to lapse from religious practice. Sometimes it is unknown why this happens, but it does not mean that the child has become irreligious or that the efforts made by the parents are in vain. The child will have absorbed much of the teaching of the Church, and will have imbibed concepts of religious morality.

3.4 LAPSATION OF ADULTS

3.4.1 Introduction

In this section, the causes of lapsation in adults are examined. Adult lapsed individuals are classified as those who are 20 years or older and have ceased attendance at a Catholic Mass. The main categories of lapsed individual and the influences which bear on his or her cessation of religious practice will be considered.

In the tables, the non-attending and infrequent parishioners - that is those who attend on special occasions or twice a year - are considered as lapsed, according to our definition. Their data will be compared with the weekly and monthly participants.

3.4.2 Weary or Bored Lapsed

According to Hoge (1981: 105), these comprise the largest and most diverse group covering all age ranges. The main concentration is in the 20 age group. These persons, for various reasons, had no motivation for attending Church. Some had stopped going to Church because they had become disenchanted, or had found it meaningless, particularly since they had learned more about other religions. Richard Thomas (1997) reports over two-fifths of his respondents who did not go to church claimed to be bored.

Fanstone observes (1993: 74) that irrelevance is the chief reason for individuals ceasing church attendance. His survey reveals (1993: 74) that one-quarter of his respondents declared the Church irrelevant to everyday life; indeed, the Church was thought far removed from it. He further reasons (1993: 161) that a particular church building may not be as attractive a place for worship; it may have been neglected and therefore compares unfavourably with other church buildings. To the outsider, it appears to represent something old, tired out, austere and not welcoming. He reveals (1993: 163,164) that men more than women found the Church irrelevant; those in their twenties and thirties more so than older age groups; Anglican and Catholic more than other denominations. Males are probably less tolerant of what seems to be an irrelevant church service. Young people have been brought up to analyse what is going on around them. If it appears illogical or incomprehensible, they will reject it.

Fanstone remarks (1993: 164) that, by comparison with other denominations, the problem of irrelevance in the Catholic Church may arise from the static nature of the liturgy. However, our view is that if proper catechesis and formation take place, and the minister relates the gospel to everyday life, then this form of lapsation could be mitigated.

Fanstone believes (1993: 165) that the use of hymns written two centuries ago may indicate to an individual that the Church is using antiquated material. A similar objection is also presented by Thomas in his survey in the Diocese of Oxford. He (1999) reports that about one-fifth of both regular and non-churchgoers do not know hymns. Whether this refers to traditional or modern hymns is not recorded. Our view is that traditional hymns are part of the Christian heritage. Fanstone alleges (1993:167) that church services do not meet everyone's needs. When an individual finds that nothing in his life changes, he may become despondent. He may hear stories of marvellous miracles, but they are not translated into the here and now. It may seem to him that God is either powerless or that the stories themselves are not transcendent.

Fanstone suggests (1993: 167,168) the possibility that the Church may not minister to local needs. It is as if the need does not exist. Despite publicity, it may be that the Church does not respond to world needs either, such as famine in Africa. Such parochialism and narrow mindedness is likely to cause despair in some. Our view is that

the Church does respond to these needs and often is the spearhead to awaken others to support rescue causes.

'Baby boomers', that is, those born between 1946 and 1964, find the Church irrelevant, according to Fanstone (1993: 169), because they see it trapped behind a cultural barrier. Our view is that the Church exists in a cultural context which provides the basis for its existence.

The 'wearied lapsed' voiced criticisms of the Church; namely:

- it did not follow the Bible enough;
- it was too rigid in its rules and restrictions;
- there was too much emphasis on money; and
- the rules regarding birth control needed to be changed.

To what extent these criticisms influenced the individual to lapse is not clear. They were possibly not the main reasons for such an action. According to Hoge (1981: 106), about one quarter of lapsed individuals join other religious groups. An individual did so because he thought that the answer to his needs was in terms of doctrine and Bible study. It is reported by Hoge (1981: 106) that he found nourishment in these new groups, resulting in an improvement in family life and personal outlook. It may be recalled that in our definition of lapsation, the fact that former churchgoers join other religious groups does not apply to our definition.

Fanstone in his study reveals (1993: 66) that about one-quarter of respondents stated that they were bored. The main reason was poorly prepared sermons that were not lively or interesting. He also discovered (1993: 171) that this applied to males more than females, those under 34 rather than those 35 and over, Anglicans and Catholics rather than other denominations. For this he suggests (1993:171) that males are less tolerant than females if they detect a lack of incompetence or imagination. The same is probably true of younger people who have grown up in a society where professionalism and creativity are expected.

The static and unyielding nature of the Roman Catholic and Anglican rites may have something to do with boredom. On the other hand, in our view, perhaps the individual has been poorly trained and has received an inadequate understanding of the liturgy.

Fanstone cites (1993: 172) four stimuli for boredom.

- The first is a lack of awareness by those who lead a religious service. They are too preoccupied with what they are doing and they assume that it is satisfactory for everyone.
- The second point concerns a lack of spiritual vitality in those conducting the service.
- The third, a lack of spiritual awareness in the congregation.
- Lastly, a lack of imaginative planning in the liturgy.

In our view, these possibilities are more apposite for the free churches, in which the individual expects a tailor-made and personal liturgy. In the Catholic Church, the greater part of the liturgy is static and the individual, unless he has not been brought up in it, will find it rather strange and boring.

The only variable elements in the liturgy are music, the Scripture readings and the homily. Indeed, Fanstone speaks from the position of the Baptist Church, but shows that a random survey reveals how confused and ignorant of Christian doctrine people have been. However, how representative it was of the Catholic Church could not be discovered. Fanstone states (1993: 171) that this state of affairs is not the fault of the individual, but rather of the pastoral ministry. He concludes (1993: 176) that some who left the Church did so because of a lack of spiritual diet.

Hoge and Roozen (1992: 624) agree with Fanstone that boredom and apathy are a cause of lapsation, but they do not quantify it. We felt that it was a feature that needed to be evaluated. Our results are shown in the table below.

Boredom or weariness	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Aggregate of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Aggregate of males and females %
Males	20-29	41.0	36.6	5.0	7.7
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	33.8		10.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 25: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who expressed boredom or weariness with the Church

Our investigations show that in the non-attending and infrequently attending group, the level of boredom and weariness is much greater than for the weekly and monthly attenders. This verifies Hoge's claim that boredom is the most frequent assertion by lapsed individuals. Gibbs (1977: 7) also cites boredom as a major characteristic in the churchgoer, which can result in his defection.

3.4.2.1 Case Study: **Fred**

Fred fits into the category of the weary. He admits to being 'bone idle'. We interviewed him using the format of Questionnaire 3. The purpose of this case study was to illustrate an aspect of weariness. One who is weary need neither voice criticisms of the Church nor express dissatisfaction with it. The individual may retain his belief in God and the afterlife. The case study also shows that weariness can occur at any age. It is likely that Fred's lack of commitment was due to both his preoccupation with personal interests and, possibly, his poor training or inadequate understanding of the liturgy. Our study seems to verify Fanstone's (1993: 176) view that a lack of spiritual diet can cause weariness.

Fred is a widower, retired, has no children and only goes to Church on social occasions. He favours historic traditions and ceremonies but does not consider himself a very good Christian. Fred is satisfied with life as it is. He does not pray much, but believes in being egalitarian. He thinks of himself as spiritual and tries to 'do right'. He would restore stolen goods. His belief in God is accompanied by his belief in evolution, which 'was a slow gradual process, not the work of six days'. He does not look at the world differently now than before. He thinks of himself as more intolerant. Fred is satisfied with his life, but counts himself lucky to live in the western world. He did not leave the Church for any particular reason. 'I suppose I'm lazy.' Yet, according to Fred, there is a great advantage in belonging to the Church: 'Yes, if you believe, it's a great insurance for eternity.' Fred was not attracted to other religions and was not influenced by non-churchgoers or non-believers. He left the Church slowly and did not feel lost as a result. 'There are plenty of interests to occupy me. Plenty of study; history of churches and travel.' Although Fred insists on an interest in the Church and religion generally, it appears to be academic rather than personal. Although he has a belief, it does not foster a need to belong to a congregation or even to pray. The admission that he believes himself to be spiritual is hard to reconcile with what he says elsewhere. It is probable that Fred did not come from a churchgoing family whose formal allegiance to the Church of England was passed on to him. Fred could be regarded as a mental affiliate.

3.4.3 Life-style Lapsed

According to Hoge (1981: 112), those termed as 'life-style lapsed' discontinued going to Church for moral reasons, which were usually related to sex and marriage. Their life-styles were in conflict with Church teaching and so they left. Most of the lapsed would have been in their 20s or 30s. The reasons for their dissatisfaction were unique: the rules governing birth control, the Church's attitude to divorce and remarriage and the changes since Vatican II were uppermost.

Fanstone concurs (1993: 83) with Hoge that there appears to be a fear of rejection on account of cohabitation, their sexual orientation (that is, homosexual), children born of single-sex parents or a moral lapse such as an adulterous relationship or obsession with pornography. Victims of rape or sexual abuse fall into this category because they may believe that it was partly or wholly their fault. Hoge (1981: 83) notes that not many of the 'life-style lapsed' were involved in other denominations, though those who were involved seemed to be unhappy about it. They express emptiness in their lives, religion

being unimportant. They advocate more liberalisation than other types of lapsed. For instance, Hoge states (1981: 112) that nine-tenths of his respondents believed that divorced Catholics should be allowed to remarry in Church, and that almost all thought that Catholics should be allowed to use artificial methods of birth control. 'Life-style lapsed' experience more conflict with priests than other groups. This is caused by tension relating to Church authority and law rather than to personal differences.

Hughes et al (2000: 182) agree with Hoge that the Church's moral teachings are predispositions for an individual's lapsing from church practice. They cite divorce, premarital sex and homosexuality as the issues upon which young people differ from official church teaching. Hughes et al (2000: 183) indicate that aspects such as enjoyment and excitement correlate negatively with church attendance. The Church is seen by them as opposed to a way of life in which enjoyment, drinking, sex and gambling are taken for granted.

Opposition to the Church's moral rules featured in Miles' (1994: 21) study, where the females thought that the Church believed that it was not acceptable to be happily single. The religious institution makes single women feel a lack of worth. They claim that there is no room in the Church for lesbians. The present writer believes that the Church should not exclude such individuals, a point that is made in Miles' survey (1994: 32). However, the Church should make it plain that lesbianism is not normative but dysfunctional and sinful. There is room for the individual to change. Indeed, as Miles' (1994: 27) relates, the Church is perceived to take no account of failure. It is (1994: 31) a conditional organisation that only allows a person to contribute on its own terms. Some respondents went even further to allege that (1994: 30, 31) the Church restricts Christianity by controlling people. The present writer suggests that some do not wish to be subservient to a rule or law. They think that it restricts their freedom. They desire complete autonomy and, therefore, are individualistic and possibly anti-authoritarian.

Life-style inconsistent with Church practice	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	25.6	27.7	15.0	71.8
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	29.0		94.7	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 26: Non attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females showing that that their life-style was inconsistent with church practice

Our sample was too small to analyse by age group. The rather large figure for female attendance in terms of inconsistency of life-style with Church practice appears disproportionate in comparison with other groups, and suspect.

3.4.4 Spiritual-need Lapsed

According to Hoge (1981: 116), these were numerically few. Some of them were divorced and felt that they could not approach the Catholic parish for help. Others were depressed. These individuals left the Church in a time of personal crisis. About one third transferred their allegiance to other communions, the remainder being ripe for conversion since their dispositions for change were strong. A high percentage of these were women.

Fanstone agrees (1993: 79) with Hoge that the 'spiritual-need lapsed' are probably numerically small, although spiritual need could be a larger problem than it appears. Fanstone records (1993: 79) that a small number of the people surveyed stated that God had let them down in a serious way. He states (1993: 181) that these were female rather than male; those falling in the age range 35 to 54 were numerically greater than those

younger than 34 years. They would be predominantly Methodists and Baptists rather than of other denominations, residing in England rather than Scotland or Wales. Fanstone thinks (1993: 182) that females are assumed to be more intuitive, and more likely than males to sense betrayal or failure by God.

Although the 35 to 54 age group have had more experience and may feel let down, they may not have grown in faith. Otherwise, they might not have believed themselves betrayed. He observes (1993: 184) that some who felt let down did not have a relationship with God, presumably after the occurrence. But faith in Christianity is something that cannot be proved. New believers may think that something magical happens after their reception, which transforms their lives. If, however, a convert believes that the problems of life henceforward will disappear, he will be sadly mistaken. Fanstone reckons (1993: 186) that when people blame God, it is due to the paucity of instruction received. This is most important in the early stages of belief. He speaks (1993: 190) of a faith crisis in one's life, there being a transition from one phase of life to another. Such crisis points may be in one's early twenties, at mid-life and retirement. It is at such stages that people may abandon their Church. It can be a make-or-break time for their faith.

Hughes et al (2000: 182) assert a different perspective to boredom. They believe that it is related to the failure of church services to touch the important aspects of life. They may be too conceptual, insufficiently exciting, or the culture of Church life may not be in tune with what the individual had previously experienced.

Miles (1994: 43, 44) reports that some women voiced the need for a wider spirituality than that found in the Church, a spirituality that sees the earth as living, demanding respect for its processes and the inter-dependence of life. They see the West wrapped up in guilt and sin. The Church constrains one's spirituality by insisting that there is only one spirituality.

Some women believed (1994: 47) that their deepest spiritual experiences were unconnected with the Church. These were found in everyday life and living. Christianity seemed to them exterior to one's interior spiritual experiences. The latter were considered to be genuine. They believed (1994: 48) that there are many paths to the truth.

Spiritual need	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	23.0	16.8	15.0	23.1
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	12.9		31.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 27: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who expressed a spiritual need not being met by the Church

According to our survey, spiritual needs not being met by the Church do not appear to be as few as Hodge believes. It is, however, a serious problem, for unless it is resolved it could result in the lapsation of the weekly or monthly adherents.

3.4.4.1 Case Study: **Samantha**

We interviewed Samantha using the format of Questionnaire 3. The purpose of this case study was to illustrate a spiritual need that was not being met. It also shows that Samantha searched for fulfilment in the wrong places. She admits that she experienced a crisis of faith in her life. Our case study agrees with Fanstone's (1993: 190) assertion that a spiritual need not satisfied by the Church can result in a person's departure from it.

Samantha is a young woman of 35 years, living with a boy friend. She previously had several boy friends. She displays the characteristic of someone who searches in the wrong places for fulfilment and happiness. She is a Roman Catholic and attends Church monthly. She says that she has more of an attachment to God than the Church.

'I am often in tears when in Church. I should go more frequently. I found faith by means of Alcoholics Anonymous three years ago. I suppose I have an attachment to the Church; I grew up in it. I endeavour to be spiritual. I am more spiritual than religious.' Concerning her moral code, she replied: 'I did not have one before, but I do now.' She explains: 'I try to think of other people. I try to be honest and not hurt peoples' feelings. I try to give time to people I care about. If I do this it brings me closer to God. It's a way of getting closer to God and becoming a better person. There is, though, a selfish motive - which is to stay sober.'

She was asked if she looked at the world in a different way, Samantha replied that she did.

'When I lapsed it was a case of wanting to get as much pleasure out of life regardless of whom I upset. I was hedonistic. Life was chaotic, undisciplined. I avoided responsibility. Things that I thought would make me happy didn't. They were false idols and false promises. Now I want to be happy. I am trying to find a direction in my life. I pray and get answers to my prayer in a way. I find that talking rather than silence helps me to find my calling and I have a calling to something. I would like to work in the community. Perhaps, to look after old people. I would like to do something like this rather than car insurance. I would like to do something more useful.'

When asked why Samantha left the Church she replied:

'I felt I did not belong. I had a crisis of belief. I felt different from others. I felt I was not good enough. It was an excuse to be selfish.'

Yet she believed that there was an advantage in belonging to the Church. She stated that the relevance of a sense of community of all ages and backgrounds and of a common need with others. Samantha was vaguely attracted to other religions such as Buddhism and meditation.

She believed in the god within. Yet she was influenced by her peer group.

'My experiences at school and college conveyed to me that religion was weakness. Most people want money, power, prestige and position. I took drink, drugs and had sex trying to escape, but this did not bring me happiness.'

She was unsure about any one event which might have disaffected her from going to Church, although it was important to be with her peer group. Samantha left the Church slowly.

'I rebelled and wanted to make my own decisions.' Yet she felt lost when she did leave. 'I was lost for a lot of years and searching for spiritual wholeness. At the time I did not know what I was searching for. I tried to live honestly.' She looked towards people to provide her with something.

'I looked towards drink, drugs and sex and did not find it. I was searching for something that was fulfilling.'

Samantha has been battling with drug-taking and drinking since she was a teenager. She has since pursued happiness and fulfilment in the wrong places. She became 'unhinged' in rebelling against her parents and asserting her independence. This rebellion extended to leaving the Church. Although her searching has led through different avenues, reclamation has come through the spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous. Samantha is now trying to retrace her steps back to the Church.

3.4.5 **Anti-change Lapsed**

The changes introduced into the Catholic Church since Vatican II have been generally welcomed, but some individuals are bitterly opposed to them and have dropped out of church life altogether. Some may offer as a reason for ceasing religious practice the view that the Church has changed. This may not be the truth. The people who fall into this category are in the 20-50 age category.

Hoge says (1981: 125) that the majority of persons who were interviewed had a superficial commitment to the Church. They were all married and had not become involved in other religious groups. The facilitators of these persons were their spouses. Relationships with priests and nuns were strained. Most of them seemed dissatisfied with changes in the Mass. They felt that the new liturgy was too social, too modern, and not serene or quiet enough. Many disliked the new musical forms. In addition to this, there was dissatisfaction with priests and nuns who were felt to be too socially oriented and too friendly. It was alleged that the dress of nuns was not emblematic of their religious persuasion.

Religious change	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	—	17.8	10.0	10.25
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	29.0		10.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 28: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who object to religious change

3.4.6 Mixed Marriages

Fichter cites (1954: 76) mixed marriages as a possible cause of lapsation. A mixed marriage is one in which a Catholic marries someone belonging to another denomination. Although it can be a source of defection, it can also be a means of conversion to the Church. Hornsby-Smith (1987: 99) puts it mildly when he says that the long-term influences of his type of marriage seem likely to be considerable, but then asks whether a mixed marriage causes lapsation? There may be a selective mating process that results in those who are already weak in religious adherence being more disposed to contract invalid unions. Hodge (1981: 72) maintains that inter-church marriages present either the greatest source of conversion to Christianity or the greatest source of disidentification. The present writer believes that mixed marriages can have a detrimental effect on the life of a churchgoer if the spouse is not a Christian or, in some cases, where the spouse is an adherent of a different religious group and may be antagonistic to his partner's religion. The present writer believes that marriage between a practising Catholic and a non-practising Catholic influences the former to lapse. Although Hornsby-Smith (1987: 114) reckons that the timing of any lapsation relative to marriage and the type of marriage entered into are strongly related to all socio-

economic variables: that is the respondent's commitment to religion, type of Catholicism and his communal involvement.

3.4.7 Personality of the Priest

The attitude and behaviour of a priest is closely scrutinised by critical people, but to what extent priests drive people away from the Church and to what extent Catholics rationalise this as an explanatory excuse for their own religious failure is uncertain. Certainly, as Fanstone points out (1993: 72), there are some who consider themselves ignored. They feel that they have nothing to contribute to the Church. The individual may be reserved, never push himself and may allow others to do it for him. He may have friends in the congregation, but he is mainly a loner. It is possible that church ministers find that too much of their time and attention is spent on those who are not backward in coming forward. Being ignored will only continue for as long as the person feels that he is able to bear it; but eventually he may leave the Church.

Fanstone considers (1993:73) that some leave the Church if it is found to be too closely tied up with its own problems and does not possess an evangelistic vision. As he states (1993:73), quite correctly in the present writer's opinion, growing churches look outward and declining churches look inward. His survey (1993: 78) reveals that one-seventh of people interviewed claimed that they did not relate to the pastor. What the pastor says or does not say, the activities in which he does or does not engage, these affect the relationship between him and his congregation. Fanstone alleges (1993: 138) that those who have problems with the priest are females rather than males. We concur with this statement. Few older people leave Church over conflicts with the priest because they are not intimidated so easily and refuse to leave the Church and change the habit of a lifetime. They also consider themselves more of a fixture within the Church rather than their pastor, who may move on.

Fanstone believes (1993: 140) that if pastors feel under threat, they may become defensive, protective and unnecessarily intransigent, which, in turn, may cause frustration and anger in those who want to raise issues with them. The present writer concurs with this view. If, however, an individual has a problem which the pastor is unwilling to discuss, this can lead to rejection of the Church as cold, uncaring and unsupportive. Fanstone states (1993: 122) that the uncared for are middle-aged more

than young people, those who live in the parts of England other than the south east, and Baptists more than Anglicans, and possibly, Catholics.

These problems arise when the Church does not provide individuals with care and support at crisis moments in their lives. As Fanstone remarks (1993: 123), such sentiments may cause bitterness and anger and may lead to a major problem between the individual and the Church. If at that stage a representative from the Church makes contact, the individual may suspect his motives. It will be too late to heal the division; hence, interaction needs to take place at the earliest possible moment. Although the present author agrees with Fanstone's arguments, he also maintains that this situation is more likely to occur in Baptist and Methodist communions than those which are Catholic.

Decker and Griesinger (1997: 147) reveal another aspect concerning the attitude of clergy and how this may affect disengagement with the Church. They state that a negative view of the laity fosters church decline, although they do not say if this leads to lapsation. Clearly, they believe that, as a defensive posture, a 'we/they' relationship is believed to be inhospitable to outreach and lay involvement. It signifies a 'fortress' mentality similar to that adopted by the Roman Catholic Church after Catholic emancipation in 1850.

The authors suggest (1997: 148) that it is possible that a negative view of the laity is implied when authority is based on a command-and-control basis. The present writer does not think this is true necessarily, since it depends on the type of authority in question. Decker and Griesinger (1997: 148) note that where authority is vested in one person, such that he is the sole decision-maker with whose decisions the members are duty-bound to comply, such a scenario is not conducive to church growth, nor is it likely to attract the young or hold more creative members. Decline in membership is attributable to the extent that leaders may neglect evangelism and to lack confidence in their laity. In their study Decker and Griesinger focus on church growth or decline, rather than on lapsation.

Dislike personality of priest	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	2.17	6.4	—	10.25
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	8.5		15.7	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 29: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and female who dislike the personality of the priest

Both the non-attending/infrequent and weekly/monthly attendances, females show the greatest incidence of dislike and possible conflict with the priest. This may occur because of their greater association with the priest by comparison with the males. The latter are, possibly, more able to cope with conflict situations in an unemotional manner than the females. This phenomenon is suggested by those attending showing a greater percentage disliking the priest than in the non-attending or infrequent groups.

3.4.7.1 Case study: **Margaret**

Margaret was interviewed using the format of Questionnaire 3. Her response provides a concrete example of conflict with the priest. The purpose of the study demonstrates the tenuous nature of adherence. Further, it shows that the personality of the priest facilitated such a departure, though this was not the only cause. Poor parental example appeared to sow the seeds of Margaret's disillusionment. The result of the study indicates an adverse relationship arising through the personality of the priest, which verifies Fanstone's (1993: 72, 122) assertions.

Margaret is 42, a Roman Catholic married with two children. She attends four times in a year, but does not feel that she has an attachment to the Church. It does not mean much to her now, although previously it did play an enormous part in her life.

'I like to know the Church is there, although I don't go to it much. I like to know the priest is around and would call on him if I needed him.'

Margaret never felt an attachment to those who went to church. But she believes in God and considers herself spiritual.

'When I am in need, I feel his presence. My life is totally in his hands.'

Margaret alleges she lives by the teachings of God. She tries to be a good Christian by going by the guidelines of the Church. She is quite happy that she has a relationship with God.

'I don't have to go to Church.'

Margaret left the Church because of disillusionment.

'I did not like authority figures. I was set a bad example by my step-father who had a reputation for being very close to the church. The priest used to come to supper. But at other times he was very cruel. I did not find this in keeping with his going to church. I think I had a lack of peer or adult models.'

One other event discouraged Margaret from going to church:

'My children and I were not treated properly at Mass. My children were ignored when they volunteered to take part in the Christmas Mass.'

Margaret felt that there was no advantage in belonging to the Church; she did not feel loss when she left and she has neither been influenced by non-churchgoers, attracted by other religions, nor had replaced anything in her life when she left. Margaret probably looks upon the Church as an insurance policy, since she can call for the priest if she is sick or when she thinks that she is dying. This does not mean that she feels an attachment to the Church. The lack of belonging probably stems from the fact that she never had close friends or attachments within the Church. Margaret left because she was disillusioned by authority figures, especially her step-father, who abused her. This latter was a pre-disposition. The influence Margaret experienced that caused her parting from

the Church was the treatment she received by the priest, emphasising her earlier disillusionment.

3.4.7.2 Case study: **Alex**

Alex was interviewed using the format of Questionnaire 3. This study also shows the devastating effect of a priest's personality on a member of the congregation in the Church of England. The results comply with the views of Fanstone (1993: 72, 123). The study also shows that although Alex ceased church attendance, he retains some Christian beliefs and that he was not encouraged to participate in alternative activities when his singing came to an end at adolescence.

Alex, a widower with one son, is a member of the Church of England. He is a retired work study engineer. He believes his mother, a Roman Catholic, was a great influence in his life. He was put into an orphanage and was brought up in the Church of England. His step-father raised him in a 'fearful way'. He now only attends church yearly. Yet he believes that he has an attachment to it.

'It's a home from home, but I am not a club member,' he explains.

He used to support the church school and the cub groups. He visits the Abbey, 'not just for prayers'. Alex considers himself spiritual. He is 'always talking to God, regard him as on my right hand'.

'When I get annoyed, I get annoyed with God, but not Jesus. I blame him [God] for letting his Son die on the cross.'

Alex claims to have a moral code. He describes this as 'do as you would be done by. Always offer a hand of help. He was taught to be a nice person. Follow the Commandments, which is the best bit. Can't improve on them.'

'I believe in the indissolubility of marriage.'

Yet Alex believes in creation as the work of God.

'Something started it all — a supreme being. Things just don't happen. Don't believe in evolution where man is concerned. There is a great difference between man and animals. God created man in his image.'

Alex does not look at the world in a different way now.

'It [my view] is inbuilt as to not changing my opinion or outlook.'

He was active in the church up to 13 years. So Alex's way of life is not more plausible than formerly.

'Life has not changed. I go off on pilgrimage without going to church. I express Christian values and confront those who oppose them. Leaving church did not change my life. I still believe in Christianity. The Church is sometimes boring, unless you had a job to do.'

Alex left the Church because: 'I did not need the church. I was disillusioned with teachers [pastors]. I wanted to be friends with the pastor.'

Alex claims that, '... he belongs to God; belongs to the Christian faith'.

He was unattracted to other religions: 'They don't compare.'

He was similarly uninfluenced by non-churchgoers or non-believers. An event that disaffected Alex from attending church was:

'The Church of England parish preaching hell and damnation put me off. It was unfair for the vicar to tell us off when performing in the church choir. Age 13 at the time, I was upset. I thought that hell and damnation were going to take place on me. You dressed up on Sunday and people were turned away if they were not dressed up.'

Alex left suddenly and did not go back. He did not feel any loss when he left.

'I thought I was acceptable in any church.'

In fact Alex found another church, an evangelical one in which he sang until he was 15, at which point his voice broke.

'There was nothing more. No Sunday school. I got out of the habit of going to church.'

Alex thinks of himself as a Christian expressing Christian values. He certainly has Christian values, although, by his own admission, he belongs to God and not to the Church, which he does not need. He was probably pre-disposed to leave the Church by the style of preaching which he describes as 'fire-and-brimstone'. Alex believed that he would be visited by this phenomenon. The 'fire-and-brimstone' treatment was consolidated by his father. He could reject the latter. Possibly the style of preaching was a stimulus to leaving, which was fostered by his disagreement with the vicar. However, Alex admits that when his church activity ceased, so did his church worship. This seems

to suggest that he would have continued his churchgoing had there been an activity in the Church in which he could have participated. On the other hand, it is possible that Alex was not evangelised. Individuals can speak persuasively about religious beliefs, yet not act on them.

3.4.8 Traumatic Experience

In this category, Fichter notes (1954: 77) the example of a lapsed parishioner who expresses his dissatisfaction with the functions of the Church, the priest in the pulpit or the confessional, teaching brothers or sisters, and even churchgoers perceived as setting a bad example. Fanstone agrees (1993: 84) with Fichter that if an individual disagrees on a point of doctrine that cannot be amicably reconciled, then he will possibly leave the Church.

According to Fanstone (1993:71), some leave because of the perceived hypocrisy of its members. The assertion 'I can be as good a Christian without going to church' is well known. But perhaps, more fundamentally, there is a realisation that one or more of the teachings of the Church conflict with the individual's desire or conviction. This shows itself in the so-called intransigence of the Church on the question of artificial birth control.

At the opposite end of the scale, there is the individual who feels that he does not belong to the Church. Fanstone's survey (1993: 75) indicated that about one-third of respondents believed they were in this position. He mentions (1993: 117) the fact that there are more females than males, younger rather than older people, English rather than those from the rest of the UK, and Baptists more than Catholics or Anglicans. Fanstone posits (1993: 117) the belief that, if they receive negative vibrations, females are more in tune with their feelings and more likely to leave than males. Younger males have not had the same length of time as adults to establish themselves in Church. A number of contributory factors may have been responsible: for example, the congregation was too large and the individual felt lost. On the other hand, it may have been small, and the person felt intimidated. There may not have existed a situation in which individuals could have developed relationships with one another. Perhaps the class of people who belonged to the Church was different in terms of life-style and values. According to Argyle and Beit Hallalini (1975: 60), social class differences in belief and behaviour are not as significant as one might expect. They state that there is evidence of a tendency

for higher social classes to be more involved in the life of the Church than lower social classes. In the present writer's opinion, lack of relationships in a congregation does not encourage, at least, an individual's sense of belonging, and may result in his leaving that church to seek one that is more acceptable.

'Belonging' will be discussed in chapter 5.

Traumatic experience	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	2.56	8.9	1.72	1.23
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	12.9		0.66	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 30: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who had a traumatic experience

Traumatic experiences could relate to conflict with the priest, church leaders or the congregation. Our data corroborates Fanstone's assertion that females are more likely to leave if they receive negative vibrations. Non-attending and infrequently attending females register 12.9 per cent compared with 2.56 per cent for males in the same category. Contrary to Fanstone, the present writer does not believe that a traumatic experience is a likely occurrence to be engendered by the size of the congregation,.

3.4.8.1 Case Study: **Marion**

Marion was interviewed using the format of Questionnaire 3. Her responses provide us with an example of trauma brought about by both a marital breakdown and disagreement with Church teaching. There appears to be an absence of conflict with the

Church or its ministers. The trauma she experienced caused her cessation of religious practice and it has left Marion as an agnostic. Our study does not seem to find compliance with either Fanstone or Fichter.

Marion, a widow of 60 and a Roman Catholic, was married to a schizophrenic but had to divorce him. He has since died. She has one daughter aged 30. Marion attends Church about six times in a year but finds it hard to believe in God.
'I hope more than believe in God.'

She was brought up in Ireland to be close to the Church which she believes is a force for good in the lives of people. It has shaped the world. Marion considers that part of her is spiritual.
'There is something behind ourselves that reaches out to us and we reach out to someone who is greater than we and who created the world,' she explains.
'I'm sometimes in a dilemma but feel that there's something out there. Nature reveals a certain spirituality which makes you feel that there is something out there. The visible and natural cosmos cannot be there by chance. It's too great and mysterious.'

Marion's code of morals is the Ten Commandments. She believes that she sees life differently now than she did formerly.
'There are more shades of grey. I probably thought that some questions were black and white when in my twenties. There is nothing straight forward. There is no definite yes or no. I don't feel guilty about being a non-active church member.'

At the same time, Marion did not think her life was more plausible now than in her early days.
'I did not accept the Church's teaching on contraception.'

For three years she was in a mental crisis of conscience which she could not reconcile.
'My religion was one of fear and punishment in the beginning. When the fear went, I had nothing to hang on to. The Church's authority disappeared.'

Marion felt a freedom in not belonging to the Church. She did not think she was a bad person.

'I envy people who are strong believers. If they cope with things, it gives more meaning to life, and when dying it gives consolation.'

She was not attracted by other religions.

'Religion is a personal thing. 'When I left my husband, I felt the Church was negative and judgmental. The people who helped me didn't judge me. Non-churchgoers looked on me in a different way.'

The trauma of the marriage break-up and the 1966 Humanae Vitae Encyclical disaffected her from going to Church, but...

'I never felt I had parted from the Church. I had a lot of friends who were practising Catholics. I knew I would go back.'

She did not replace the Church with anything when she left. She was busy at work and with bringing up her daughter.

'The Church would still be part of me. I was in touch with the Church through teaching and the Catholic schools.'

Marion's early life was traumatic since she had married a schizoid. After her divorce, she felt that she would be rejected by the official Church since Marion was employed in a church school. Her relationship with her Catholic friends has not suffered and so, in a sense, she feels that she is close to the Church. Disillusionment with the Church's teaching on contraception became a pre-disposition favouring lapsation, which reached its completion in divorce and fear of rejection by the Church, although in principle she has not rejected it.

3.4.8.2 Case Study: **Elizabeth**

We interviewed Elizabeth using the format of Questionnaire 3. The purpose of this case study illustrates the effects on an individual's religious practice when a trauma is experienced causing disenchantment with religion. The outcome of our case study accords with the views of Fichter (1954: 77) and Fanstone (1993: 71).

Elizabeth is 44, and is married to a Catholic with three grown up children. **She was convent-educated but only attends church twice a year. She believes herself to be spiritual but does not think she has an attachment to the Church.**

'I do not need the Church. I talk to God all the time. I believe in angels. I saw them with my parents at their funerals. I believe in an afterlife.'

Does she have a moral code by which to live?
'Yes. I'm a bit prudish. Few things shock me. I'm neighbourly and kind. Don't agree with many things in the Church. Family values above all. I abhor murder and rape. We experience Hell as living in this world so that we become better spiritual beings.'

Does she look at the world in a different way now that she has left the Church?
'I did not have a view when I was a member of the Church. The lack of a view stemmed from my mother. I had different views to hers.'

She does not blame God for tragic events.
'It's people who have caused them.'

Elizabeth left the Church through disillusionment. There was no advantage in belonging to the Church and she was not attracted to other religions. Her husband, who is a lapsed Catholic, dissuaded her from attending.
'He came with me. He preferred the Latin Mass. It was a horrendous experience going to Church with him. It was easier not to go.'

There were other events that caused Elizabeth's disillusionment. A priest was having an affair with her sister at the time her father was dying.
'I was thinking about the rights and wrongs of the Church. It destroyed my trust in it. So I took the easy way out. We were ostracised by the priest and my sister, who did not behave in a Christian manner.'

Elizabeth left the Church slowly after the children were baptised. She did not feel lost.
'I felt found. I did not feel hypocrisy. I can find God every day.'

She did not replace the Church with anything.

'I did not miss the spirituality. I stopped going because my husband preferred a Latin Mass.'

Elizabeth was brought up by a dominant mother. She was dissuaded from practising her religion partly by the opposition she encountered from her non-practising husband, as well as by disillusion at seeing her sister having an affair with the parish priest. The latter acted as a pre-disposition. This introduced distrust of the Church, with whose moral teachings she does not agree. This study could be classified as 'traumatic'. It is difficult to assess which was the stronger influence: her husband, or the effect of her sister's relationship.

3.4.9 Drifting and Disillusionment

Fichter classifies (1954: 78) 'a drifter' as one who does not offer a reason for leaving the Church. He may have gradually lost interest in it, this paving the way for ceasing attendance altogether. However, this is merely a description of what happens rather than an explanation of lapsation. Fichter believes (1954: 78) that there are two types who fit this category.

- First, the very aged, who have become weary of all aspects of life. A physical and mental apathy renders them incapable of meeting the institutional demands of society.
- The second can be termed 'social strainers', who have immersed themselves in the scramble for social status. This is a specific religious drifting quite unlike the 'lapsed aged'. They are alert, ambitious and energetic in the non-religious institutions of society, giving major credence to secular values and negligible observance to sacred ones.

Religious indifferentism is not only noticeable among religious drifters, but in all lapsed Catholics. Fichter believes (1954: 78) that lapsation and indifferentism are synonymous terms. This category is not mutually exclusive; it can be held in conjunction with other causes. See case studies **3**.4.8.2, **3**.4.7.1 and **3**.4.8.1.

Miles (1994: 15) reports women experiencing a feeling of not being wanted in the Church. There was a sense of cynicism. There appeared to be no caring or recognition of personal need (1994: 16). The Church did not build up inter-personal relationships

and consequently one felt like a stranger. Some Roman Catholics felt that the Church was too traditional and should move with the times.

3.4.9.1 Case Study: **Richard**

Richard was interviewed using the format of Questionnaire 3. His response shows the phenomenon of drifting rather than disillusionment. Our study appears to agree with Fichter's (1954: 78) view that those who drift offer no reason for their behaviour.

Richard is married, retired and has two children who have left home and are married. Both he and his wife and he are Anglicans They attend Church monthly. He appears to interpret 'attachment' as 'being made welcome'. Richard admits that he is not spiritual, but bases this on a belief that it is due to his infrequent attendance at church. **He does admit to having a moral code.**

'In a lot of cases, treat others as they treat you and tread the straight and narrow path. To be moderate in all things.'

Although the welcome Richard and his wife received in Church when they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in the Lake District was important for them, Richard states that

'I would still go to Church even if I was not welcomed.'

To the question **'Did you believe that there was no advantage in belonging to the Church?'**

Richard replied, 'It's better to belong.'

Richard was received into the Methodist Church but later joined the Boy Scouts, a movement linked to the Church of England, in which he has remained. Given the answers to the questions, it is hard to see Richard as lapsed. Unlike Fred (case study 3.4.2.1), he attends Church and feels a belonging to it. Richard could probably be described as a marginal member of the Church of England.

3.4.10 **Changes in Life Affecting Churchgoing**

Change is disruptive of routine and those who have established a pattern of going to church weekly find that when change occurs their habits are overturned and they may not find space in their lives for churchgoing. They may have built up this habit over many years, but when change comes it may be that churchgoing is not deemed essential in their lives. Bruce points out (1996:90) that "... inertia is a powerful social force and change is likely to make for disengagement of those whose commitment is too weak to survive the need for change".

Richter and Francis believe (1998: 66) that some changes present obstacles to a person's churchgoing. Some of the changes in old age make churchgoing less satisfying and, in some cases, impractical. Work schedules can make attendance difficult, and some changes are highly stressful, such as the death of a spouse, divorce, personal injury or illness, termination of employment, change of residence, addition to the family or even a change in the type of work that is done. The death of a spouse may not alter churchgoing habits, but it may raise fundamental questions about the goodness and existence of God.

The onset of a change in a person's life can mean the loss of the habit of going to Church. But, at the same time, the influence in an individual life of the factors outlined is unpredictable and for some, they may result in a return to the Church. A disruption in routine may be insufficient reason for church leaving, but it may open the way for other factors to operate.

If churchgoing habits are disrupted, the individual may become more conscious of the assumed irrelevance it has in their lives.

3.4.11 **Moving Home**

Fanstone estimates (1993: 63) that moving home accounts for a small number of instances of church leaving. For example, a university student who lives an unstructured life-style in a busy environment can easily have churchgoing habits disrupted. Richter and Francis observe (1998: 68-70) that when churchgoers of any age move to a new community, it takes time to establish links with the local church. The individual will gravitate to a church of his own denomination; he will look for a church with a

particular style, similar to his home church. If he does not entirely fit in his home church, he may look for something radically different. Even when a suitable church is found, the individual will have to overcome the hurdle of being a new-comer. He will need to summon courage to walk through the door and meet new people. Assimilation into a new church is difficult for old and single people. There may have been social pressures in one's home church to attend. Since these have been removed, the individual may be prone to give up. If he moves from a rural to an urban community he is especially likely to cease churchgoing, since he leaves behind ties that bonded him to his original place of worship. If he is less rooted locally, resulting from occupational mobility, he is likely to discontinue his attendance at church. He can sometimes be called 'cosmopolitan' and does not stay long enough in the community to sink roots. Local commitments such as churchgoing may not be easily accommodated in his life. Since he tends to move around frequently, he may protect himself from the grief of leaving friends by avoiding participation in the Church. He may spend so much time abroad, where no English is spoken, that he learns to live without it. The present writer thinks that this scenario is all too common, though it is conceivable that the individual could make a new start. On the other hand, according to Argyle and Beit-Hallalini (1975: 84), variations in *social* mobility were not related significantly to religious beliefs, practices and attitudes.

Our research into those who move home, thus affecting their churchgoing, is shown on the next page:

Moved home	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	7.6	12.9	—	—
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	16.1		—	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 31: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who moved home

Possibly, non-attending females felt the most strain on their churchgoing when they moved, since they would be severing close emotional ties formed in their previous Christian community.

3.4.12 Divorce

Richter and Francis suppose (1998: 70) that marital breakdown and divorce disrupt established churchgoing in a variety of ways. Sometimes, one partner will find it more convenient to move to another community, reinforcing the break. Going to church on one's own is more difficult than going as a couple, assuming that they both attend the same Church. The individual who locates to another area may experience difficulties in finding a Church sympathetic to divorcees. The person who remains in his present Church may feel uncomfortable if he remarries. The present writer believes that divorce does not carry the stigma it once did and it is easier in the present day for a divorcee to feel comfortable in Church unless the local leadership exercises exclusion on him or her.

Richter and Francis observe (1998: 70) that many individuals may believe that their churchgoing is hard to reconcile with divorce, especially if they are the 'guilty' party. Even if an individual is the divorced respondent, he may feel unable to continue attendance at Church. He may believe that the Church will reject him. Fanstone agrees (1993: 83) that some cease Church practice because of a presumed fear of rejection by either the congregation or the priest. Richter and Francis suspect (1998: 70) they may not feel good enough. Divorced Roman Catholics, who have remarried, would not be permitted to receive Holy Communion. Even if they do not remarry, they may feel uncomfortable about churchgoing. Our view is that although this is true in many instances, the official teaching of the Church is that communion should be withheld. Nevertheless, many priests see the hurt that this causes and waive the official teaching by administering communion.

Fanstone (1993: 70) comments also on guilt. He distinguishes two types if guilt: one as a result of sin, which is legitimate guilt; and the second, guilt incurred as a result of a 'hang-up', that is, a psychological or emotional preoccupation and personality problem. Some cease churchgoing because of a past event that makes them feel uncomfortable before God. Such an occurrence may well be divorce, even if they are the 'innocent party'. Guilt can then affect churchgoing, and whether the guilt is a result of sin or has occurred as a 'hang-up', has to be determined and dealt with by the pastor.

Divorce	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	—	1.0	20.0	15.4
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	1.6		10.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n= 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 32: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who were divorced

Our study shows a significant number of weekly and monthly churchgoers who are divorced.

3.4.12.1 Case Study: **Marion**

Marion was divorced and had a combination of dispositions when she left the Church. See 3.4.8.1

3.4.13 Work schedule

Richter and Francis believe (1998: 71) that leaving Church is sometimes attributed to changing work schedules that involve working on Sundays. Responsibilities at work compete with Church participation. According to one survey (Fanstone, 1993: 63), a small number of British Church leavers attribute working on Sundays as a main factor underlying their departure. Even when companies are down-sized, few employees work longer hours but still return home too late and tired to get involved in week-night activities. Some jobs, such as nursing and transport, involve Sunday shifts, and those working in the retail trade are often under pressure to commit to Sunday working. Some

professional people work on Sundays because they can do so without the interruptions that are normally encountered during the week. The affordability of computers has made it more tempting to bring work home and spend Sunday in front of the computer monitor. The present writer, though agreeing that this may portray English society nowadays, cannot help feeling that it represents a small proportion of churchgoers. Few people who work part of the weekend are able to attend church, although they may be able to participate in church-related activities.

Work schedule	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	—	1.98	20.0	12.8
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	3.22		5.26	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 33: Non -attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who had a change in their work schedule

Table 33 shows that more males than females are affected by their work schedule.

3.4.13.1 Case Study: **John**

John was interviewed using the format of Questionnaire 3. His response shows that a work schedule can affect an individual's churchgoing. The result of our case study indicates an agreement with the views of Richter and Francis (1998: 71) and Fanstone. (1993: 63).

However, John comes from a practising family and wants to attend Church, which he does when possible. His intention is not to fall away from practising his religion, and his partner offers no opposition to his church allegiance. The work schedule is the only aspect which precludes it.

John is a 27, living with a non-Christian partner. He was educated in Catholic schools and considers himself a Catholic even though he only goes to Church about four times a year. He would be devastated to be called 'lapsed'. Even though his Church commitment is low, he considers himself as having an attachment to the Church (although he found this difficult to describe) and believes himself to be spiritual. He prays every day and affirms that he follows a moral code, even though this is not highly developed. He believes in helping people.

John was a regular churchgoer until he left school and then embarked on a service profession entailing unsociable hours which presented him with difficulty in practising his religion. Up to leaving school, he was also an enthusiastic participator in drama, but this also has had to be relinquished. The relationship with his partner probably imposes some restriction on his religious practice, but this is more of a social nature than a personal opposition. She admits that she is quite happy for him to pursue his religious practice when and where it can be accomplished. It is not John's intention to stay away from church deliberately; therefore, he cannot be thought of as *de facto* lapsed.

3.4.14 Illness and Old Age

According to Fanstone's study (1993:63), a small number of British respondents cited illness or old age as a factor for their ceasing Church attendance. Declining health can bring hearing and eye sight problems, making attendance less satisfying. Without suitable transport, problems of mobility make churchgoing difficult if not impossible.

Richter and Francis note (1998: 73) that it would be erroneous to conclude that the elderly cease Church attendance because they are disengaging from the wider society. They may still wish to participate, but their disability, aggravated by lack of transport and poor weather, provides an insuperable obstacle. Our view is that they may be considered as unintentionally lapsed.

Illness or old age	Age group	Non-attending and infrequently attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	2.56	3.96	—	5.12
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	4.83		10.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 34: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who were ill or old

3.4.15 Burn-out

'Burn-out' occurs when too much is expected by people of those who feel that they cannot contribute any more. The present author believes this applies as much to ministers as to any persons. Fanstone maintains (1993: 67) that it is easy for committed Christians to become over-loaded or be given a temporary job which lasts for years. On the other hand, our view is that there is unwillingness among many to take on responsibility for programmes offered by their Church. It is hard to recruit new volunteers, especially on weekly projects and, as a result, the 'old faithful' are left to carry on the work. Of course, a serious commitment to one's faith is fundamental to Christian living, but this does not mean unrelenting personal activity.

It could be said that if the Church does not understand and ameliorate this problem, which some have, then the only solution for those affected is to leave. Hadaway agrees (1990: 41, 42) with Fanstone that some lapsed persons, whom he describes as 'estranged', have suffered burn-out. They have been over-used and feel that they have done their time and can now 'do their own thing'. Observers may think that they were

wronged by the Church in some way, or that people do not care. We did not discover any instances of 'burn-out' in our investigations.

3.4.16 **Disagreement with the teachings of the Church**

A number of individuals leave the Church as a result of disagreement with its teachings. We discovered a significant number of individuals, both practising and non-practising, in this category. Some individuals cannot practise their religion whilst disagreeing with Church teaching. Those who remain in the church disregard the official teaching and possibly pick and choose what course of action they will take.

Disagreement appears to be greater in the non-attending and infrequent category. It is possible that the practising members did not wish to place on record their disagreement. The data concerning disagreement with the teachings of the Church is shown in Table 35 below.

<table>
<tr><th>Teachings of the Church</th><th>Age group</th><th>Non-attending and infrequent attending %</th><th>Total of males and females %</th><th>Weekly and monthly attending %</th><th>Total of males and females %</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Males</td><td>20-29</td><td rowspan="4">25.6</td><td rowspan="8">27.7</td><td rowspan="4">10.0</td><td rowspan="8">12.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>30-44</td></tr>
<tr><td>45-64</td></tr>
<tr><td>65+</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Females</td><td>20-29</td><td rowspan="4">29.0</td><td rowspan="4">15.7</td></tr>
<tr><td>30-44</td></tr>
<tr><td>45-64</td></tr>
<tr><td>65+</td></tr>
</table>

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 35: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and females who disagree with the teachings of the Church

3.4.17 Experience of Antagonism or Pressure Exerted by Partner or Spouse

This feature occurred in a small number of instances, but is a source of strain both on the partnership or marriage as well as on the individual concerned. It appeared to exist in either mixed marriages or those in which one partner either did not participate in church services or not as frequently as the practising member. This data is presented in Table 36 below.

Antagonism	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	2.56	2.97	15.0	12.8
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	3.22		10.5	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 36: Non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending males and female who experienced pressure or antagonism by partner or spouse in practising their religion

3.4.18 No Reason Given for Lapsing

It is probable that individuals who could give no reason for ceasing religious practice were raised by lapsed parents and accordingly, lapsed at a young age. They are possibly only 'nominal' in their beliefs and allegiance to the Church. Table 37 below illustrates the percentages of those who could give no reason. They are closely associated with those who drift from church involvement.

No reason given	Age group	Non-attending and infrequent attending %	Total of males and females %	Weekly and monthly attending %	Total of males and females %
Males	20-29	20.5	15.8	—	—
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				
Females	20-29	12.9		—	
	30-44				
	45-64				
	65+				

n= 39 (Males); 62 (Females) n = 20 (Males); 19 (Females)

Table 37: Non- attending/infrequently attending males and females who give no reason for their cessation from Church practice

3.4.19 Summary

The types of lapsed individual are shown in Table 38 below:

	Weary or bored %	Life style %	Disagree with teachings %	Spiritual need %	Object to change %	Antagonism by partner %	Personality of priest %	Ill health %
Infrequent and non-attending								
Male	41.0	25.6	25.6	23.0	—	2.56	2.17	2.5
Female	33.8	29.0	29.0	12.9	29.0	3.22	8.5	4.83
Aggregate	36.6	27.7	27.7	16.8	17.8	2.97	6.4	3.96
Weekly and monthly attending								
Male	5.0	15.0	10.0	15.0	10.0	15.0	—	—
Female	10.0	94.7	15.7	31.0	10.5	10.5	15.7	10.5
Aggregate	7.7	71.8	12.8	23.1	10.25	12.8	10.2	5.12

	Traumatic experience %	No reason %	Influence of children %	Moved home %	Divorced %	Change in work schedule %
Infrequent and non-attending						
Male	2.56	20.5	—	7.6	—	—
Female	12.9	12.9	—	16.1	1.6	3.22
Aggregate	8.9	15.8	—	12.9	1.0	1.98
Weekly and monthly attending						
Male	1.72	—	—	—	20.0	20.0
Female	0.66	—	—	—	10.5	5.26
Aggregate	1.23	—	—	—	15.4	12.8

Table 38: Percentages of infrequent/ non-attending and weekly/monthly males and females in terms of categories of lapsed and potentially lapsed individuals

We discovered no instances of children influencing their parents to cease attendance.

- The small percentage (3.96) of individuals who reported ill health as a reason for ceasing to attend church are probably not lapsed, according to our definition. Those who are weekly or monthly attenders reported the same feature and maybe they do not consider themselves lapsed at all.

- A surprisingly small number, 6.4 per cent in the non-attending and 10.2 per cent in the attending group respectively, expressed a conflict with the personality of the priest. It is to be noted that females in both groups reported more of a conflict than males. It is most likely that these individuals would not be in the sixty-five or more group since the latter generally believe themselves to be more of a fixture than the priest, who at some stage will move. Case studies 3.4.7.1 and 3.4.7.2 illustrate this feature.

- Antagonism by a partner or spouse seemed to be more prominent in the regular participants rather than in the infrequent ones, possibly due to the irregular nature of the latter's observance. It can be a potential influence to one's leaving the Church, as the case study of 3.4.8.2 suggests.

- Those who infrequently attended church services objected to change (17.8 per cent) in the Church more than those who attend regularly (10.25 per cent). It is very likely that the former largely ceased their involvement in the Church because of their opposition to the changes introduced by Vatican II. It may be that some of these individuals dislike or even repudiate the change of the Mass to the vernacular. Yet, in the present writer's view, they do not all have a superficial attachment to the Church, as Hoge (1981: 125) stipulates.

- Those who had experienced a trauma were more numerous in the non-attending and infrequently attending (8.9 per cent) than in the weekly and monthly categories (1.23 per cent). Females appear to have had more traumas than males. Traumas are sometimes connected with a conflict with the priest or the congregation. Some may leave if they perceive hypocrisy displayed by either the members of the congregation or the priest. Traumas are also connected with divorce and death.

- Those who had ceased religious practice and could give no reason for their cessation were quite high (15.8 per cent). They had probably been baptised by non-practising or infrequently practising parents, and due to the latter they had ceased at an early stage.

- Moving home clearly causes an upheaval in terms of religious practice. It sometimes presents the individual the need to find a congregation in which he or she will feel at home. Often this is not available and the individual ceases to attend. The percentage of 12.9 is quite significant. Neither Fanstone nor Hoge offers any statistics on this problem.

- The analysis discovered a high proportion of divorced people attending weekly or monthly (15.4.per cent), but a surprisingly small proportion (1 per cent) who had ceased church involvement. Divorce can introduce trauma in relation to the Church. It can also introduce guilt in terms of churchgoing. Again, no statistics on this problem are offered by either Fanstone or Hoge.

- A change in work schedule did not seem to be responsible for individual's ceasing their religious commitment (1.98 per cent) whereas for those (12.8 per cent) who frequently practiced their religion there was a change in their work schedule that did not appear to affect their churchgoing. It may be that work schedule affects other aspects of religious commitment, such as evening meetings.

- Males who had ceased churchgoing on a regular basis expressed more of a spiritual need than females, a need not being met by the Church. The aggregate was 16.8 per cent. This need was also noted in the weekly and monthly attenders, but in this case females expressed a greater need than males. The aggregate was 23.1 per cent. We discovered that spiritual need was quite a high priority and its respondents were not numerically few, as Hoge believes (1981: 116). It probably occurs in a time of crisis, possibly divorce or where the individual thought that God had let them down. We could not confirm Fanstone's (1993: 181) findings that it occurred more in females than in males, although one would believe this to be more probable. Some seek a more diverse spirituality than the Church offers, as Miles (1994: 44) observes. It seems to be wrapped up in matters of guilt and sin.

- Those who disagreed with the teaching of the Church were also a significant feature. Of the infrequent or non-attenders the aggregate was 27.7 per cent and females expressed a greater disagreement than males. This was not replicated in the regular participants to the same degree (12.8 per cent). It is possible that the lapsed female respondents disagree with Church teachings on contraception.

- Life style also generated a high percentage (27.7) rating among the lapsed. However the huge figure of 71.8 per cent influenced by the 94.7 for females is somewhat suspect. They probably discontinued going to Church because of the rules connected with divorce and remarriage and sexual morality. This group is strongly allied to those who disagree with the teachings of the Church

- Boredom was the feature that attracted the highest statistic. Those who did not practice at all or the 'infrequent' registered 36.6 per cent in which male exceeded female. The present writer believes that males have a lower perseverance threshold than females. The comparatively low figure of 7.7 per cent recorded for the regular participant could be expected. Our data confirms Hoge's (1981: 105) findings that this is the largest group of lapsed people to have become disenchanted with the Church and found it meaningless and irrelevant in their lives.

Our results for adults compared with those of Hoge (1981: 96) show significant similarities:

Feature of lapsation	Family tension %	Bored or weary %	Life-style %	Spiritual need %	Anti-change %	Others %
Hoge	2	39	25	11	12	11
My results	Not measured	36.6	27.7	16.6	17.8	—

Table 39: Comparison of statistics of major types of lapsed individual

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The main causes of lapsation in the young are:

- **Family tension**, in which the young person no longer identifies with the faith of his parents.
- **Lack of parental consensus**, in which the parents adhere to different religious beliefs.
- **Parental distance** in which the parents display little emotional intimacy to the child.
- **Conflict with parents** where there is a persistent level of disagreement with parent.
- **Antipathy towards parents**, affecting the religious practice of the child.
- **Family disorganisation**, whereby a breakdown precipitates a breakdown of religious practice.
- **Inconsistency,** where the parents convey messages to the child that are contrary to the Christian gospel.
- **Gender**: girls appear to be more conformist to religion than boys. Our results do not agree with the view of Richter and Francis (1998: 84).
- **Birth order**: first-born males and only children are more likely to accept parental authority. Later-born children, especially males, are more likely influenced by their peer group. Our results do not appear to agree with Richter and Francis (1998: 84) in either age category.
- **Stage in life**: lapsation, for instance, is stimulated by adolescence.
- **Church denomination**: it is believed that some denominations are more effective in insulating children from the influences of secular culture.
- **Parental over-enthusiasm**: this trait can produce a contrary effect to that intended.

- **Children of faith**: although children may lapse, the influences they have absorbed will be retained. This is not a cause but a consequence of lapsation.

- **Lack of religious training**: both formal and informal education may account for lapsation.

These patterns of lapsation are precipitated outside the Church.

The types of adult lapsed are:

- **Weary or bored.** They sometimes voice criticism of the Church, drift from practising their religion and believing that the Church is irrelevant. Perhaps they are disenchanted.

- **Life-style lapsed** are those who discontinue church attendance because they believe their life-style is in conflict with church teaching.

- **Spiritual-need lapsed** seek a spirituality outside the Church because they believe it is not to be found inside it.

- **Anti-change lapsed** are individuals who oppose the changes inaugurated by the Vatican Council in 1962.

- **Mixed marriages** are those where the spouses adhere to different denominations, which introduce conflict of religious commitment. They present either the greatest source of conversion to Christianity or the greatest source of disidentification.

- **Personality of the priest**. It is uncertain to what extent this determines lapsation.

- **Traumatic experience** whereby an individual is dissatisfied with a priest or a member of the congregation who sets a bad example.

- **Drifting and disillusionment**, in which only disillusionment is offered for lapsation.

- **Changes in life**. Growing old, retirement and changing work, for example, can promote this phenomenon.

- **Moving home**. Changes from living at home to getting married or attending university are situations which can cause lapsation.

- **Divorce**. Marital breakdown can influence breakdown in religious observance.

- **Work schedule**, changes in patterns or work can cause lapsation.

- **Illness and old age**: although these can introduce a cessation of religious practice, we believe that they do not always incur lapsation.

- **Burn-out**: where individuals feel that they can give no more time or energy to their congregation.

- **Disagreement with Church teachings**. This may or may not be associated with a life-style which is thought to be incongruent with them.

- **Antagonism exerted by partner or spouse**. This may not necessarily be caused by an exogamous relationship.

- **No reason given**.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It must be admitted that although the base figure used was constant in my calculations, many respondents believed that the questions posed were of the multiple-choice type. Consequently, the aggregate percentages shown in Table 38 only signify a relationship between the infrequent and non-attending and the weekly and monthly attending group. Therefore, Table 39 does not show a direct comparison between my results and those of Hoge. One could assume that there is some congruence between the two data.

The most salient features concerning young people emerging from this study are:

- Of those who attend Church unwillingly or under protest, 93 answered positively.

  Those who stated that they attended Church willingly numbered 169, revealing a total number of responses of 262. There were 342 returned

questionnaires, of which 62 respondents did not indicate whether they willingly attended Church or not. Therefore, those who unwillingly attended Church represented 35.5 per cent of returned responses. Although only 93 young people responded negatively to Church practice, unwillingness realised a moderate percentage: 18.4 per cent (for up-to-and-including fourteen males) and 21.3 per cent (for 15-19 females) in the weekly and monthly attenders. Though the response was not particularly high, these percentage figures for 'unwillingness' are significant. It is therefore an aspect that needs to be resolved by the Church.

- Those who attended Church willingly achieved a better response than from those who attended Church unwillingly. The former produced 169 replies, of which 47.8 per cent were male and 55.8 per cent female. This indicated a serious downturn from the up-to-and-including fourteen age category to the 15-19 age groups for both males and females (31 per cent diminishing to 14. 6 per cent for males and 30.6, diminishing to 7.3 per cent, for females).

- The aspect of boredom featured significantly in our investigations. It was assessed in three ways:
  - those who willingly attended Church but were bored;
  - those who went to Church unwillingly and were bored; and
  - those who expressed boredom irrespective of their willingness or unwillingness to attend Church.

In the first study, only 99 individuals responded (30 per cent of responses). Males and females showed a reduction in boredom in the under fourteens and 15-19 age groups. Since the base figure was very low, it is problematic whether the statistics are representative. The second case produced similar results and patterns over the two age ranges. Again, it is problematic whether the statistics are representative. However, the third study elicited 216 responses in which males registered 63.2 per cent and females 70.6 per cent. This revealed that 27.6 per cent of monthly and weekly male churchgoers and 34.7 per cent female churchgoers expressed boredom. We conclude that boredom needs to be reduced. This could possibly be achieved by better education and catechesis, or otherwise today's monthly and weekly young people will become tomorrow's lapsed.

Tables 9 and 10 in the text concerning conformity are based on respondents' answers to question 2 in the first Questionnaire. Only 97 responses provided the data. Table 11 is derived from 324 responses which did not take account of birth order. It will be noted that a considerable difference is perceived. Table 11 could be claimed as being more accurate, given the larger base figure, although it does not take into account birth order. Tables 9 and 10 have a base figure which is quite small. Perhaps what we can discover from these data is a trend in conformity.

The relationship between parents and children is a constituent and major factor often determining future religious practice. Although not much evidence of negative features was found in our investigation, tension in the family being the highest at 2.77 per cent, it does, nevertheless, promote lapsation.

For adults, the salient features of lapsation appear to be:

- **Weariness or boredom**. This registered an aggregate of 36.6 per cent.
- **Life-style being at odds with church practice** which achieved an aggregate of 27.7 per cent.
- **Disagreement with the teachings of the Church**. This usually relates to matters of sexual morality: divorce, birth control, remarriage of divorcees. This produced an aggregate figure of 27.7 per cent.
- **Spiritual need**, which occurred in 16.8 per cent of responses.
- **Objection to change**. This is usually associated with changes in the liturgy and the layout of churches. This feature registered 17.8 per cent.

Objection to modifications in the future will not be as persistent as it is now. Opposition to change occurs in older members and traditionally-minded individuals of the Church who do not accept change in the presentation of the liturgy. The present writer does not imply change in the sense of the fundamentals of religion, such as the basic teachings of the Church.

Sexual ethics have driven some away from the Church, although many members remain in the Church while disagreeing with its teaching. However, the former could make a greater effort to facilitate its members' spiritual needs than perhaps has been attempted hitherto.

The wearied and bored are shown as the most statistically important and difficult to rectify. Boredom, in the writer's opinion, implies a lack of understanding concerning the essential features of Christianity and/or an unwillingness to participate. This feature is very likely connected with spiritual need.

CHAPTER 4: THE SPIRITUAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MORAL NATURE OF THE LAPSED

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we shall examine the spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral nature of the lapsed individual.

The spiritual aspect will be discussed referring to the works of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1994; Fulton: 1999; Greeley: 1985a; Greeley; 1985b; Kung: 1978; Merten: 1975; Miles: 1994; Roof: 1994; O'Neal: 1996; Tacey: 2004 and the results of my investigations will be considered. The psychology of lapsation will be analysed with reference to the works of Acquaviva, 1979; Berger, 1964; Berger, 1967; Martin, 1969; Keen, 1967; Van Kaam, 1966 and the results of my survey. The sociological aspect of lapsation will be reviewed with respect to the works of Berger P, Berger B and Kellner, 1973; Berger, 1967; Berger, 1979a; Giddens, 1990; Happold, 1980; Stark and McCann, 1993; Stark, Finke and Iannacconne, 1995; Wilson, 1982 and the results of my own investigations. Although perspectives of the spirituality, psychology, sociology and moral nature of the lapsed among Roman Catholics are considered, the present writer believes these can apply to individuals of any religious persuasion. As indicated in the text, the demarcation between the spiritual and psychological is not always clear-cut in modern day terms.

The moral aspect of the lapsed individual will be assessed in relation to the work of Kay and Francis: 1995 and the data obtained from my research.

4.2 THE SPIRITUALITY OF LAPSED CATHOLICS

As Fulton (1999: 180) observes, the lapsed Catholic wants to be identified by his religious affiliation. However, there may be varying degrees of identity. Former adherents, in the present writer's opinion, retain some religious ideas and domestic practices that they inherited from the home, Sunday School or state schools. These may be reinforced to some extent by practising Catholic friends who exert some influence on them. Although the individual may have withdrawn from religious practice, he will have retained some Catholic spirituality. This may comprise a belief in an impersonal

higher power, or a personal God, and accompanied by the recitation of prayers in the morning and at night-time that were learned in childhood. Though he has ceased attending church this does not mean that his belief in God has deteriorated. There may be a small number of individuals who refrain from churchgoing because they do not believe or, at least, are unsure what to believe. Both belief and belonging to Church are no longer coincident in today's society. The individual may believe in Christ and the redemption that is offered and he may even think that the Church has taken an incorrect direction or has lost its relevance to life in today's society. Resulting from this he may, in conscience, believe that he cannot take alternative action other than to separate himself from the religious institution. He might have discovered it to be an obstacle in his encounter with God, whereby parish structures did not help.

Often, lapsation in the young occurs when the individual evaluates himself with reference to a normative institution that proposes beliefs and values to which he has to conform and with which he may feel unable to comply. Adolescence is often seen as a period for rejecting authority. Breaking away from religious practice is frequently seen as part of adolescent culture reinforced by peer group pressure that validates an individual's lack of religious observance.

Our view is that if an individual has lapsed, but retains some belief however incoherent, it is possible that his personal spirituality will be sustained; though he might have recourse to the Church only for weddings and funerals. On the other hand, if an individual has lapsed and holds no belief of any kind, it is possible that he may be open to alternative beliefs, such as those expressed by the new religious movements with their emphasis on an immanent God. If he has absorbed a high degree of Christian teaching and is unsympathetic to the religious institution in which he was brought up, he may be attracted to a Christian denomination whose beliefs are consonant with his own. If, through parental pressure, he was forced to go to Church, he might reject both the Church and its teachings and leave without belief or a personal spirituality. It is possible, given this condition, that the New Religious or the New Age movements could claim him as an adherent.

The individual who has ceased religious practice due to illness or finds difficulty in attending Church either because of a lack of adequate transport or by some impairment, such as deafness or blindness, may retain the spirituality imbibed from an earlier

commitment, by following the prayers of the Mass either from a Missal or by following a service on radio or television; by reciting devotional prayers; by observing the traditional laws of fasting and abstinence and possibly by praying the morning and night prayers from the Roman Breviary. In such an instance, it is likely that he would remain in contact with the Church through the visitation of an Eucharistic minister or priest conducting a service of holy communion and communicating news and information concerning the activities of the parish. Although he does not attend Church services, he is in communion with the Church. He may even be asked to sponsor a child who is making his confirmation or first Holy Communion. This may entail further visits by the child and his family, so that the individual is aware of the progress being made by the child, whom he can foster by his prayers at home. In such a scenario, the individual has not lapsed.

Our investigations show that young people have a spiritual need which is not being met by the Church. This aspect is shown in Table 1 below.

Spiritual need not satisfied by Church	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males up- to –and-including -14 years	9.6	27.0
Males 15-19 years	11.5	5.8
Females up- to -and -including -14 years	9.6	19.2
Females 15-19 years	7.7	9.6

Table 1: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending young people who allege a spiritual need not satisfied by the Church (n = 52)

Not surprisingly, the non-practising male and female individuals do not indicate a high level of spiritual need, although it is present. A relatively high degree of spiritual need is shown in the up-to-and-including-fourteen female age category. If this is true, and their

needs are not met, they may consider leaving the Church at some stage. Young people were asked if they had a spiritual need or felt a lack of meaning in their lives.
The results are shown in Table 2 below.

Spiritual need or lack of meaning not satisfied by Church	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males up- to -and – including- 14 years	11.4	26.1
Males 15-19 years	8.0	12.5
Females up –to- and-including -14 years	7.4	22.1
Females 15-19 years	5.7	6.8

Table 2: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending. Young people who allege a spiritual need or feel a lack of meaning in their lives not satisfied by the Church (n = 78)

This shows a similar trend to Table 1, namely, male and female non-practising individuals do not show a high level of spiritual need, although it is significantly present. Spiritual need and lack of meaning is mainly shown in the practising males and females in the up-to–and-including-fourteen years' category. From our investigations, the degree of spiritual need in both infrequently / non-attending and monthly/weekly attending adults is shown below:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
41	17.9	29	15.4	36.8	15.8	30	17.8

Table 3: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who expressed a spiritual need or lack of meaning in their life (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Those who believe that they are fulfilled spiritually are shown below in our survey in Table 4:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
—	—	6.45	3.96	10.5	5.12	15	7.69

Table 4 Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who believe that they are spiritually fulfilled (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

In our analysis, not many non-attending or infrequently attending females can claim that they are fulfilled spiritually, and apparently no males could state any fulfilment at all, which if true, underscores the notion that spirituality in this category does not have a high profile. Even worse still, the weekly and monthly attending category cannot claim fulfilment to a much greater degree, although females seem to occupy a higher rating than males.

4.2.1 Religion and Spirituality

There is a difference between being spiritual and religious. One can be spiritual yet not religious. To be religious implies going to Church and receiving communion. On the other hand, to be spiritual is to be in touch with a higher power or God, according to Roof (1994: 77). To be spiritual is personal and implies the deepest motivations in life. To be religious conveys connotations of belonging to a religious institution and attending worship services.

Religious commitment can be socially inherited and it is quite distinct from religious experience. In fact, one could classify religious experience as first or second hand. Tradition falls into the latter category, according to Roof (1994: 67), whilst first hand experience is authentically one's own. Many of the lapsed have felt this dichotomy. They have sensed a distance from the religious institution whilst they were growing up.

The world inside the Church often seemed far from, if not alien to life experienced outside. The institutional language of creed and doctrine often comes across to them as stale and time-worn. Yet there is a yearning for some kind of spirituality focused within the self, whereby knowing God and getting in touch with oneself - the 'higher self'- is important. When institutional forms of religion become fixed and objective entities, abstracted as a separate belief system that appears divorced from the everyday world, there is a danger that the beliefs will be separated from the meanings and feelings that gave them birth. This, according to Roof (1994: 78), has occurred in the western Christian tradition. In this case, religion risks loosing its subjective and experiential qualities and becomes dry and unmoving. Yet the original meaning of *'religio'* embraced the human capacity to perceive meaning and design in life; to see, feel and act in terms of a transcendent dimension.

Many find these aspects of meaning and feeling absent in organised religion. They not only lapse from religious practice, but also, as Roof observes (1994: 79), they may turn to serious metaphysical quests of their own in the hope of finding a more fulfilling way of living and believing. There may be a desire to experience God either directly or simply within nature or other people, without the intervention of inherited beliefs or tradition. This is understandable, since although 'second-hand' religion can be devoid of meaning, personal experience is authentic and empowering. Individuals are likely to trust their own experiences more than others' and the truths of self-discovery can have a greater relevance for them than those handed down by tradition. Direct experience, according to this scenario, is more trustworthy because of its 'inwardness' and 'within-ness'. Inner experience is the well-spring of authentic spiritual and religious life, for arising out of it is a sense of what is true and right for that person's spirituality. This can be summed up by stating that, to be meaningful, the spiritual and religious must relate to the individual's everyday experiences and give expression to his deepest feelings and concerns. A person must find his true self and allow that self's assertion in order to be genuinely spiritual.

Roof believes (1994: 69) that the pursuit of the self has led to the rediscovery that psychology and spirituality are not exclusive domains, but are integrally related. Today, wholeness or unity of life is being reclaimed. The rediscovery of inner experience allows individuals to be more in touch with themselves, so that questions can be posited about the meaning of life. The individual can relate meanings to peak experiences and

discover ways of relating to the surrounding universe and of exploring the healing power of the non-rational. Tacey (2004: 146,147) believes that once the spirit is discovered inside oneself by introspection, seclusion or retreat, it brings with it the imperative to go outside oneself and serve others in the world. The inwardness of the spirit is a 'temporary' dwelling place, in the sense that its bestowal is not for private satisfaction only. In our experience, God starts off as 'my God', my personal redeemer, and ends up as the supreme, unknowable godhead, the great mystery who is the creator of the world and the reality within everything. Thus, the spirit is not a private entity. It impels us into the world and exemplifies itself as inner life and outer engagement, spiritual contemplation and social action as complementary parts of the whole.

At the same time, spirituality is paradoxical, according to Tacey (2004:117). On the one hand, we are fascinated by its mystery. On the other, we live in dread. The darker aspect is an awesome awareness of a sacredness that overrides and envelops our lives; an overwhelming aspect that can be associated with death and the fear of dying. Tacey (2004: 148) believes that although spirituality can be seen as a preparation for life, it can also be viewed as a preparation for death. Some people think the latter too morbid to contemplate. The God who gives so much to us and fills us with life, joy and contentment is the same God who overshadows us with mystery and darkness and draws us to himself at death. In the prospect of this awesome mystery we sometimes contemplate our own frailty, weakness and smallness in relation to God's overpowering might and majesty. The task of religion, in Tacey's (2004: 150) opinion, is to release the spirit from its individual location and broaden its horizons to include the social world, the community and the whole of the individual's experience.

Religion is also compelled in the above author's view (2004: 150) to place more emphasis on the darker aspect (*tremendum*) of the 'numinous' than the lighter (*facinans*). Religion must therefore inspire our spiritual aspirations and temper them by reminding us of our boundaries, limits and responsibilities.

4.2.2 **The Image of God**

How God or a higher power may be symbolised or conceptualised is hugely important for those who express an inward view of reality and for those who have ceased religious practice. What is this higher power like? The traditional Christian view is that God is a personal, supernatural, omnipotent and immanent being who responds to prayer. He is intimate and approachable; a loving Father, yet reigning over creation as a holy being, active in human affairs. Perfect in goodness, he created the universe and acts providentially within it. He is the ultimate ground of meaning and hope and is thereby worthy of worship and praise.

Hans Kung's (1978: 81) view is that God cannot be equated with natural or historical processes. He (1978: 82-3) suggests that an understanding of God as an anthropological projection, living in the realm beyond this world, cannot be sustained. God must be thought of not as part of reality, but the infinite in the finite, the absolute with the relative. He (1978: 80) believes that the universal concept of God is ambivalent and ambiguous. That God cannot be equated with natural or historical processes is echoed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994: 18), when it states that our knowledge and language of God is limited. But it also remarks that all creatures, especially mankind, bear a certain resemblance to God, who created mankind in his own image and likeness. But the mystery of God is beyond description. Language uses human modes of expression, and between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude. The human mind cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not and how other beings relate to him.

Thomas Merten (1975: 94), a Trappist contemplative, remarks that the knowledge of God in love is not knowledge of an object by a subject, but a far more transcendent kind of knowledge in which the created self seems to disappear in God and knows him alone. The self undergoes a kind of emptying and an apparent destruction until, reduced to emptiness, it no longer knows itself apart from God. It might appear that Merton is advancing the concept of annihilation, but for the words 'apparent' and 'seems'. Merten speaks about intimate knowledge and union with God, and in this sense, objective concepts have no meaning. Even so, they are only approximate. One can have a concept of God without knowing him. The contemplative view is that one can only know God through loving prayer and contemplation, through which one can say what God is not

rather than what he is. Even so, it would appear that the Christian is obliged to offer a concept of God to the seeker.

However, so many have found the traditional beliefs uninspiring and bland. They have witnessed death and destruction, tragedy and evil in the world, and find it difficult to accept the idea of God as all-good and omnipotent, in view of disasters such as the Holocaust, the threat of nuclear warfare, assassinations of national leaders and AIDS. So much of reality, they maintain, can now be explained naturally without the need to introduce God.

At the same time, the tragedies of modern times have led either to a return to renewed orthodoxy, as experienced in various evangelical movements, or they have stimulated a turning inward in a personal quest. In the opinion of Roof (1994: 75), such a quest has revealed a new idea of the living image of God as a creative power. Creativity is the ultimate experience. It characterises all that is good - truth, beauty, love, hope and life. It is to be god-like. Divine reality is not something removed from life but is a creative and transcendent energy flowing in all things. If the divine 'yes' is extended to creative energy, the divine 'no' must apply to the destructive or demeaning of human potential. Injustice, exploitation and hate negate human freedom and expression. Therefore, creativity can be linked to self-actualisation. Through the concept of creative power, an image of God as Mother has been developed, in the opinion of Roof (1994: 75). It is an image which Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth-century mystic, proposed. According to O'Neal (1996: 10-11), Eckhart says that, "God is Father because he is the cause of all things and their creator. He is the mother of all things as well, for when creatures received their birth from him he remains with his creatures to keep them in being". It is an extraordinary image, yet one that has been expressed in maternal imagery through the ages: the Virgin, the Madonna, the Goddess and Sophia. Miles (1994: 3, 4) reports that her survey revealed that some women cannot relate to the image of maleness; a female god or 'mother-god' is more appropriate. The reason for this is found in the idea that a 'male' god does not reflect attributes like wistfulness, independence, need and support. Clearly, being a lesbian offers a problem to one who seeks a loving relationship with Christ. The Church, it is alleged (1994: 6), does not offer feminine symbols of the divine.

Roof believes (1994:76) that an attractive image of God is that of a unifying presence. Holism offers a balanced and integrated view of reality, as opposed to the dualisms: God/us; body/spirit; God/nature. This assertion, in the opinion of the present writer, does not embrace pantheism, since the latter is a belief in which God is identical with the universe or the forces of nature and that through God, although a transcendent reality, man is a manifestation of him. Roof states (1994: 76) that mankind and God are distinct one from the other, but the former is 'infused' by God. The self is the indwelling of God and the latter is omnipresent. We discover the higher self, the transpersonal self that unites in a mysterious manner with others, nature and creation. All things are in God and God is in all things. There is 'connectedness' in linking the self, the larger community and the whole of creation. However, it is our view that God dwells in the deepest part of the human personality. He is distinct from that personality and he is not the substantial self.

Tacey suggests (2004: 163) that the old image of God no longer satisfies the post-modern mind. He believes that God can no longer be viewed as a static figure in heaven: one who creates the world like an artisan. Tacey conceives (2004: 163,164) God as intimate and intensely immanent, whose transcendence is regarded as the radical presence of divine being. God is not conceived as extrinsic or outside reality but as mystery at the heart of ordinary reality. His transcendence is not regarded as operating in another world but as a deeper dimension of the real that transcends our perception. In modern thought, God is not presented as a supernormal being, known only to prophets and saints, but as one revealed to everyone who wishes to listen to him. The new image of God is omnipresent. The manner in which the Christian perceives God is essential for contemporary society. Although the image is not the reality, the way the Christian thinks of God is important for the revelation he gives to unbelievers and society in general.

Greeley (1985a: 199-201) asserts that the sensibility of Catholics regarding their image of God has undergone a change in recent years, such that images, pictures and stories of God are more benign, gracious and affectionate. God, he (1985b: 23-29) believes, is now more commonly described as a protector, redeemer, master, creator and father than as judge, lover, mother. The most popular descriptions of Jesus are gentle, warm, patient and comforting rather than stern, distant, demanding, irrelevant and challenging.

From our investigations, those who expressed a belief in God in both attendance categories are shown in Table 5 below:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
74.4	28.7	80.6	49.6	84.2	41	85	43.6

Table 5: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who expressed belief in God (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Since our questionnaire was promoted by the Church, it may be that those individuals who did not respond to this question felt that their conception of God was inconsistent with that portrayed by the Church and therefore, they did not wish to acquiesce in the Church's concept. It is interesting that both males and females in the non-attending/infrequently attending category show high personal levels of belief that do not differ hugely from those who attend regularly.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
12.8	4.95	9.67	5.94	10	5.12	15	7.69

Table 6: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who have changed their belief in God (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

In Table 5 individuals may either have changed their belief in God or altered their image of him. We asked the question whether they had not changed their belief in God. The result is shown in Table 6 above:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
7.7	2.97	9.67	5.94	15.8	7.7	10	5.12

Table 7: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who have not changed their belief in God (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Comparing the above tables, it is evident that approximately 88 per cent of participants indicated whether they had changed their belief in God or not. The data is not conclusive and does not show any swings either way. If there was any probability of individuals being dissatisfied with their religious denomination, which prompted a decision to change, it does not show up in any serious manner. Only one weekly or monthly practising male in our survey indicated that he had changed his denominational preference. This only represents an individual personal figure of 5.26 per cent, and 2.56 per cent aggregate.

4.2.3 Summary

- The lapsed individual usually wants to be identified by his former religious affiliation.
- Although ceasing religious observance, he will have retained a belief in either an impersonal higher power or a personal God. In other respects his beliefs may be incoherent. It is possible that his personal spirituality will be sustained.
- A significant number of young people have an alleged spiritual need which is not being met by the Church. This is highest in males (27 per cent) and females (19.2 per cent) in the up-to–and- including-14 years' category. In the non-attending and infrequently attending group, males in the 15-19 years age range register 11.5 per cent. Similarly, a lack of meaning in life was shown in males in the up–to-and- including-14 years group in the weekly and monthly attendance

category (26.1 per cent) and 22.1 per cent females in the same group. In the non-attending and infrequently attending category, 11.4 per cent males and 7.4 per cent females in the up-to-and-including-14 years' group indicated the presence of a spiritual need or a lack of meaning in their lives.

- The degree of spiritual need and lack of meaning appeared to decrease with age. In adults, the degree of spiritual need was shown in 41 per cent males and 29 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group. Males (36.8 per cent) and females (30 per cent) in the weekly and monthly attendance groups also expressed a spiritual need. Conversely, of those who believed that they were spiritually fulfilled, 6.45 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group alleged satisfaction. There were no male respondents in this category. Males (10.5 per cent) and females (15 per cent) in the weekly and monthly attendance group alleged a spiritual fulfilment.

- The image of God is an important factor in the spiritual aspect of the lapsed individual. Our research discovered that 12.8 per cent males and 9.67 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category had changed their concept of God. Males (10 per cent) and females (15 per cent) who attend weekly or monthly had changed their belief in God. Conversely, a smaller percentage of non-attending and infrequently attending males had not changed their concept of God. However, 15.8 per cent males and 10 per cent females in the weekly and monthly age category expressed the view that they had not changed their belief in God.

Nevertheless, our survey may be inconclusive on this aspect, since over 80 per cent of those canvassed did not state whether they had changed their belief. As the data stands, it would seem to suggest that more males than females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category had changed their belief, whereas weekly and monthly attending males had shown fewer tendencies than females to change their belief.

4. 3 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LAPSED CATHOLICS

Falling away from religious practice can imply a loss of faith that in turn indicates a lack of belief. If it is thought that mankind's natural desire is to seek goodness, truth and beauty; it is theology's task to unveil the truth that this desire is directed towards God. The individual believes that God speaks to him. And God encounters this deepest self (the 'soul' in Roman Catholic theology) in the individual. The latter desires to be in union with God, which is achieved to some extent when the individual answers 'yes' to an expression of the restless desire for God from within him. According to Van Kaam (1966: 8), this 'yes' to God is faith. But his response has to be embodied through the actions and words of his life. A loss of faith, or an infidelity, makes explicit a loss of faith in the believer. Psychology illuminates this phenomenon that occurs in man. It takes into account his motivations, perceptions, emotions, neuroses, problems and temptations, possibilities of despair, his desire for salvation, culture, education, work and entertainment.

Van Kaam assumes that by saying 'no' to God, the individual loses his faith. The present writer disagrees with this. An individual may say 'no' to God due to concupiscence. He has not renounced his belief but has sinned, for which repentance is necessary. Our view is that if he repents, he is then open to God's grace. It is the transmission of grace that has been affected by the individual's response to God and not his faith.

There are two methods that can be adopted in order to investigate the psychology of lapsation: the mechanistic and the existential.

4.3.1 The Psychology of Lapsed Catholics According to Van Kaam

Van Kaam states (1966: 18) that mechanistic psychology observes mankind in an instinctual or deterministic way. This implies that he lacks free will, since all his actions are determined by preceding events and conditions. The subjectivity of the individual is not considered. Van Kaam (1966: 19) proposes that existential psychology considers man as possessing freedom of choice, entailing responsibility for his actions. He is enabled to experience and understand events in the world upon which he can impress his will.

Van Kaam believes (1966: 21) that a psychological study of lapsation implies a study of the contemporary world of meaning, and the impact this has on religious culture and its influence on the individual's lapsation. Mankind must attempt to understand his world of meaning. By relating with this cultural world, Van Kaam insists (1966: 22) that in order to comprehend the psychology of man's defection from the Church, this relationship must be made explicit.

4.3.1.1 **Overview**

Van Kaam (1966: 23) states two basic ways of assessing reality: namely, the sacred and the profane. The former implies that the individual experiences a meaningful world that derives its meaning from a divine creator who transcends it. The sacred manifests itself in mundane appearances whilst transcending them.

The profane world –view is one where, though the individual is open to it, he is closed to mundane appearances. The world is functional and the profane affects the way in which the individual experiences people, nature and events. An individual who lives in a functional manner, not rooted in transcendence, regards himself as the master both of the world and himself. Such a world-view, in Van Kaam's (1966: 27) thought, leads to desperation. Marcel's philosophy, expressed by Keen (1967: 10), agrees that life in a functional, 'broken' world becomes a process without a purpose and that man is prey to nihilism. Van Kaam (1966: 39) thinks that a believer's faith is supported by a living tradition that helps him to feel at home in society. This tradition is a shared style of thought, feeling and action. Tradition is the necessary ground for the survival of faith and it is alive when it does not degenerate into externalised custom. It binds an individual to the Church. The possibility of lapsation arises when the channel of tradition is blocked and the inspiration and celebration of the community becomes an anachronism.

The present writer believes that faith, once given, cannot be lost. It can reach low ebb, but it cannot be eradicated for it is a gift of God. Stratification of western society is based on profession. An increasing specialisation of functions leads to an increasing specialisation of professions. Because the greater part of the day is spent within professional circles, the latter cultivate a life, a perspective and a language of their own. They become a 'life-world', so that the daily mode of existence is shaped by

professional experience. This function of being then colours the individual's outlook and he may feel more at home with his colleagues than with other people.

Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 64), although agreeing with the concept of a 'life-world', believes the individual to be more at home with his family, whereas he feels estrangement at work. Van Kaam thinks (1966: 47) that many professional groups establish their own style and tradition that express their shared mode of existence. The present writer concurs with this view, although he believes that the individual may not feel 'estrangement' to the degree implied by Van Kaam. It is certainly true that different 'life-worlds' apply to an individual who finds himself in a variety of social locations. Berger admits (1964: 64) that pluralisation not only operates in the world of work but also in the home. This occurs when two people of different religious backgrounds are involved in a negotiation between the meanings of two discrepant worlds. A further aspect of the individual's psychology in Berger's (1967: 108) view is the secularisation of the consciousness, a secularisation which exists also in religious institutions. The concept of 'life-worlds' is discussed in **4**.4.1.

4.3.2 **The Psychology of Lapsed Catholics According to Acquaviva**

Acquiviva defines (1979: 144) the trends in psychological orientation with regard to the supposed crisis of religious practice. He specifies three conceptions:

- rhythm, space and time;
- sensitivity and perception; and
- cognitive attitudes.

These ideas will be now be outlined and discussed.

Acquaviva notes (1979: 145) that a pre-technical society possessed a natural rhythm derived from the seasons, day and night, the weather and the stages in animal life, the human body, sensitivity, perception and changes in mentality. In those times, the pattern of life was slow and there was a close connection between the rhythms of life and, physical and intellectual activity. Contemporary man, on the other hand, is exposed to the tensions introduced by technology in work and leisure. The present writer endorses this view.

Logic, according to Acquaviva (1979: 147), is the pivot which conditions cognitive ideas and assimilates terms which may have a religious or rationalising significance. Logical classifications are dictated by human needs and requirements, which vary with the conditions of social and cultural life. Logic has been enriched by concepts derived from scientific and technological development. Acquaviva (1979: 148) believes that this implies that a negative interpretation of religious phenomenon is possible.

4.3.2.1 **Overview**

The basis of religious transformation lies in the transformation of the rhythm of life, sensitivity, perception, logic and the cognitive attitude of man, according to Acquaviva (1979: 152).

Cultural socialisation places the individual in a learning situation which compels him to revise his cognitive processes, attitudes and behaviour. Successive religious experiences are oriented by a schema of behaviour, and the individual's psychology is influenced by culture. A crisis of religiosity occurs at both these levels. The cognitive process in religious matter unfolds within the human psyche as it reacts to certain stimuli, although the reaction takes place in an existing pattern of thought. The individual's psyche-psychological characteristics lead to an adjustment of this 'pattern'.

Personal impulses may act as motives. The individual may experience a reluctance to go to Church. He perceives a feeling of tedium influencing this tendency. At one time, irreligious behaviour was considered to be a confused, psychic experience. It now manifests itself as being connected with the technologies and a de-sacralised world, in the view of Acquaviva (1979: 154, 155). He believes (1979: 145) that a chaotic mixture of judgments and new values contrast with one another in the person's mind and that new data from technology is incorporated into the culture which infuses its own de-sacralising rationality and language. When the latter has emerged, the cognitive process attains a social outlet. If de-sacralisation becomes prominent in the individual, then as Acquaviva observes (1979: 156), the possibility of its becoming a group phenomenon exists.

Language and communication have thus imparted some degree of coherence and become, in the final phase of knowledge, the process of abstraction. In this process, knowledge which was originally personal becomes social by communication, and thus impersonal.

Acquaviva claims (1979: 157) that intuition operates within a psychological not a logical frame of reference. The individual intuits a connection between his view of things and external reality. He then fits the image of the latter into his own system. From the interaction or intuition and abstraction, ideologies of wider or smaller social groups emerge and become diffused. These ideologies, when subjected to new social rules, attitudes, and language, prove capable of reacting upon society.

Such an example would be the confrontation between Marxism and religion. Marxism was introduced by irreligious or anti-religious groups, first in a philosophical manner and then in ideological terms, which then operated as a medium for the diffusion of atheism among those social classes possessing some disposition towards it. In other words, Marxist thinkers have operated through abstraction upon the anti-religious or a-religious, resulting in an alteration of previous intuitive-abstract mental operations. These revised abstractions, in turn, have been diffused among the masses and generated within them a new a-religious or anti-religious intuitive abstraction, or at least, have facilitated this development. As changes take place in perception, language and social life, the abstraction also changes. The latter changes because knowledge advances. The cognitive process involves the phases of impulse, perception, registration, communication and abstraction. Behaviour generates new objects of knowledge in the context of communication. As the individual lives his experience in each phase, the components of his personality are welded together. Once the abstract phase has been attained, it is possible that a clear indication emerges of whether, and to what extent, the personality will be religious or irreligious.

Acquaviva asserts (1979: 159) that over the last few centuries social life has presented to the individual new impulses and stimuli. This has occurred on the objective level. That is to say, new facts having been revealed, and on the subjective level, activities that over time have become signs and symbols. These facts and activities that have developed over time, determine social attitudes related to new patterns of living, such as urbanisation and technology. From a religious perspective, these must be viewed as

negative phenomena. Their impact on religiosity has been more marked when the significance of these impulses has been perceived, since perception has been followed by communicative behaviour. Individuals affected by a multiplicity of religiously negative impulses have communicated their meaning.

The process sign – meaning – communication may originally have been enacted on a small scale, but after a considerable time interval it is distributed and makes an impact on subsequent perceptions. Therefore, a myriad of religiously negative meaningful experiences affect the process of de-sacralisation. Although this replication of meaningful experiences takes place chaotically and without co-ordination, it finally brings forth clear expressions of irreligiosity. Acquaviva asserts (1979: 161) that in the behavioural phase, society changes in the direction of de-sacralisation. These changes engender others that unfold in the final abstract or intuitive-abstract phase where irreligious ideas and doctrines multiply.

An illustration of Acquaviva's thought would provide a focus on a practical level. The development of society from peasant to industrial has produced stratification both of society and the social classes. Although there appears to be a cultural gap between this development and the level of education, the rise of science and technology has been accompanied by new ways of doing things, new activities and the introduction of a new style of language. There has been considerable development and expansion of industry, which according to Acquaviva (1979: 163) favours irreligosity. In fact, industrial society has developed in the presence of strong political and social tensions between social classes; for example, between the trade unions and industrial elites. The latter, according to Acquaviva (1979: 163), has favoured the disintegration of religious groups. Our view is that this is not always true, as Acquiviva implies. Some industrialists were noted for their altruistic and paternalistic attitudes towards their employees, encouraging their engagement with religion. We may say that this is the objective stage in Acquaviva's analysis.

The second stage is subjective. As industrial society developed, there occurred a great demand for education, particularly at university level. However, at the beginning, this mostly benefited the wealthier classes, while the less cultured were affected by irreligiosity. This occurred because of their low level of cultural maturity. They were unable to withstand the psychological, social and cultural stimuli of modern society.

The new 'language', to which we have alluded, has produced new signs and symbols in the consciousness. For example, in the industrial city, nature is now thought of as an object of science, whereas a higher level of maturity would interpret it in different ways as having myriad significances. From this standpoint, it is difficult to regard society, a human product, as an expression of a creative God. Science can be said to be one of the essential sources of culture and the logic of irreligion, according to Acquaviva (1979: 170). It seems to expel from social life both religious conduct and its justification. Where events are rationally determined, it appears to leave little space for God. For instance, time-tables, diaries and calendars appear to govern our activities. We assume that all the events listed will take place. We tend to give little consideration to the immanence of God.

Although Acquaviva states the common view that science is the enemy of religion, it is the writer's opinion that this is not so. Martin (1969: 116, 117) suggests that an impression of greater human power results from the impact of science. This occurs through the individual's certainty that the divine operation has been curtailed to some extent. However, science shows us the wonders of creation, which to a believer's mind demonstrates the omnipotence of God. But then, am I speaking from a cultural context? Science, we believe, is a neutral component in the individual's psychology. It can be used either to argue for or against religion.

The rationalisation of language, the proliferation and predominance of technical and scientific terms and concepts that accompany the development of modern society, bring about changes in the individual's consciousness. They constitute his cognitive and communicative orientation. At the same time, as a consequence, the position of the sacred is impoverished. Only a high degree of culture can offer any resistance to becoming socialised and moulded by a society that tends to de-sacralise mankind. Rising educational and cultural levels accompanied by better economic conditions seem to favour religion.

The third stage involves the signs and symbols described above, existing in the consciousness, that determine social attitudes related to patterns of living. Each social class has its own language and its inimitable way of expression. Society is stratified, but its stratification is not culturally or economically cohesive. Acquaviva (1979: 163) regards this as negative phenomena affecting the individual which, when perceived, are

communicated by behaviour. This introduces irreligiosity into the individual's life. The individual enters society with his own psychological background, and his particular tendencies and dispositions allow him to interact with the social environment. He may possess a pre-constituted tendency towards religion or its antithesis. But his position on religious matters changes over time as his relationships with objects and the environment develop. Acquaviva claims (1979: 161) such relations bring about a decline in religiosity within industrial society. The present writer confirms that this could be true of certain individuals and that it is possible as a trend, but that it cannot be asserted as a universal occurrence.

Acquaviva concludes (1979: 161) that de-sacralisation is rooted in distinctive features of human psychology and mankind's cognitive process. The sense of the sacred diminishes according to the analysis shown above, which indicates irreligiosity. It should be noted that Acquaviva discusses de-sacralisation of the individual, the loss of the sacred, which is not the same as lapsation, although the former is assumed to cause the latter.

4.3.3 Statistical Data on the Psychology of Lapsed Catholics

Our survey investigated the amount of tension in a family that experienced lapsation with one of its members. We compared this with tension that was experienced in weekly and monthly attenders.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
—	—	4.83	2.97	15.8	7.7	—	—

Table 8: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults experienced tension in the family (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Tension in the family seems to be experienced mainly by non- and infrequently attending females and males in the weekly and monthly attending group.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
5.12	1.98	11.3	6.9	21	10.25	5	2.56

Table 9: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who had a change in life which may have resulted from lapsation (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Non- and infrequently attending females seem to experience more of a change in their personal lives than males in the same category, as a result of lapsation. Males in the weekly and monthly attending group appear to have had more changes in personal life than females, possibly arising from a change in their work schedule. When asked whether they had a more positive or a negative outlook following lapsation, they responded as shown in the tables below:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
—	—	8.1	4.95	10.52	5.12	20	10.25

Table 10: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who have a more positive outlook following lapsation (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

No males in the non- and infrequently attending category appear to have a more positive outlook, whereas females register a smaller individual percentage of 8.1. Males in the weekly and monthly attending group show a 10.52 individual percentage, but females in the same category show a larger one, 20 per cent.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
7.7	2.97	1.61	0.99	5.26	2.56	—	—

Table 11: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who have a less positive outlook following lapsation

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Weekly and monthly attending females do not show any negative reactions to this question. Non- and infrequently attending males display the largest response with regards to having a less positive outlook following lapsation.

The responses to the question of personal guilt in those individuals who attended both weekly and monthly and those who attended infrequently, or not at all, are shown below.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
43.6	16.8	40.3	24.7	42.1	20.5	40	42.1

Table 12: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who feel guilty when ceasing to attend Church

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Feelings of guilt are a dominant issue in Roman Catholics, so much so that the observance of Sunday Mass was considered crucial in the lives of its adherents. Consequently, many of the older members believe that if they do not participate in the Sunday ritual, serious consequences will be incurred. This mindset does not permeate the young, who often have a relaxed attitude to attending Sunday Mass. It is likely that the non- and infrequently attending individuals who possess this attitude belong to the older generation. Old habits die hard and it is probable, in the writer's opinion, that even in the lapsed there are vestiges of feelings of guilt at not attending religious worship.

According to the data above, it seems as prominent in non/infrequently attending, as well as for those practising weekly and monthly.

4.3.4 **Summary**

- Existential psychology is the fundamental manner that regards man as possessing freedom of choice. He can regard reality as either sacred or profane. The former implies that the individual experiences a meaningful world that derives its meaning from a divine Creator who transcends it.
- Our technical society has obfuscated the sense of seasonal rhythms, space, time, sensitivity, perception and cognitive attitudes that existed in pre-technical communities.
- We discovered a certain degree of adult tension in the family. Females (4. 83 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending category and males (15.8 per cent) in the weekly and monthly attending group.
- We found that 5.12 per cent males and 11.3 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group experienced a change of life as a result of ceasing religious observance. This contrasted numerically with 21 per cent males and 5 per cent females who stated that a change of life had been experienced by those in the weekly and monthly attending category.
- Following lapsation, in the non-attending and infrequently attending group, Females (8.1 per cent) had a more positive outlook than previously. Males (7.7 per cent) and females (1.61 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending category expressed a less positive outlook following lapsation.
- Guilt seems to be a pervading feature in the Roman Catholic Church. Males (43.6 per cent) and females (40.3 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending group and 42.1 per cent males and 40 per cent females in the weekly and monthly attending groups expressed a feeling of guilt on ceasing to attend Church.

4.4 THE SOCIOLOGY OF LAPSED CATHOLICS

4.4.1 'Life-worlds'

Berger, Berger & Kellner define (1973: 62) 'life-world,' to which we have already alluded, as "to live in a reality that is ordered and that gives sense to the business of living". A 'life-world' is social in its origin and kept in existence by collective consent. Individuals today live in a plurality of 'life-worlds'. Berger, Berger& Kellner (1973: 115) view the modern economy and state as imposing themselves as alien realities upon traditional social situations. According to Giddens (1990:115), Berger claims that the private sphere has become 'deinstitutionalised' as a result of the dominance of large-scale bureaucratic organisations.

Wilson (1982:125) agrees that social organisation has moved away from a communal structure, with its emphasis on localism, to a societal system. Such a society is a large-scale, internally coherent system of complex institutions organised in a nation state. The individual no longer lives his life in a single, continuous social group into which he is born, lives and dies and which has its own identity as a group, though its composition changes within a lifetime. These communities included the dead as well as the living. The Christian community on earth believed that it was in communion with those who had died believing in God, and furthermore was supported by them.

Life is no longer lived exclusively at a local level. Since societal systems are rationally organised and communications have grown, particularly the mass media, the individual's experience and vision are considerably widened. Alien ideas, products and organisations become part of everyday life. When events in remote places affect daily living, local interpretations of relationship with the supernatural possibly undergo some modification. Even if religion is deeply influenced by the past, the circumstances of contemporary society make evident that new interpretations of the divine must take account of these widened horizons. However, as Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 62) admit throughout most of history individuals lived in a unified 'life-world' that possessed a high degree of integration. This integrating order was religious. For each individual the same integrative symbols permeated each sector of his existence; whether in his family, work, or participating in ceremonies, he found himself in the same 'world'. Unless he left his own society, he would have no occasion to feel that he was absent from this common 'life-world'.

In modern society, different sectors of everyday life bring vastly discrepant 'worlds' of meaning and experience. Modern life is segmented to a high degree. That segmentation expresses the loss of many uncertainties and of direction posts encourages Happold (1980: 159) to enquire how it is possible to reach the deepest harmony, understanding and reconciliation, not only individually but also in order to resolve conflicts, and religious and ideological concepts between individuals and social classes. This segmentation or pluralisation is not only objectively observable but manifests itself on the level of consciousness.

Berger, Berger & Kellner believe (1973: 63) that a fundamental aspect of pluralisation is the dichotomy between the private and public spheres: the world of an individual's private life and the 'world' of his public sphere, in which he relates in a variety of sharply contrasting roles. Different occupations have constructed for themselves different 'life-worlds' that are totally incomprehensible and alien to the outsider. It is thought that the private sphere is open to pluralisation, according to the belief of Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 63), although the individual will try to construct and maintain a 'home-world' that serves as a meaningful centre for his life. Such a venture is hazardous, in their opinion (1973: 64); marriages between people of different cultures and backgrounds involve negotiations about the meanings of discrepant 'worlds', as previously noted. Children leave the homes of their parents, and alternative and often repulsive 'worlds' from neighbours impinge on private life. It is possible that an individual, dissatisfied with his private life, seeks out plurality in other private connections.

The pluralisation of 'life-worlds' has had an important effect in the area of religion. Until recently, religion fulfilled a vital role in providing a comprehensive range of symbols for the meaningful integration of society. Formerly, various meanings, values and beliefs were cohesive, forming a comprehensive interpretation of the reality that related human life to the cosmos as a whole. Religion made mankind feel at home in the universe through the structure of religion. The function of religion is threatened by pluralisation because different sectors of life are governed by discrepant meanings. It therefore becomes increasingly difficult for religious traditions and religious institutions to integrate this plurality of social 'life-worlds' into a comprehensive and over-arching world-view. The religious definitions of reality are threatened by the subjective consciousness of the individual. Whilst religious symbols truly over-arched all segments

of the individual's social experience in the past, the latter served to confirm the plausibility of religious symbols. Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 75, 76), together with Bird (1999: 162, 163), state that almost everyone acknowledged the same over-arching symbols and thus validated the credibility of those symbols.

Berger, Berger& Kellner (1973: 76) aver that in modern life, pluralisation forces the individual to take notice of others who do not believe what he believes. His life is dominated by different and sometimes contradictory meanings, values and beliefs. Thus, pluralisation has a secularising effect, weakening the hold religion has on society and the individual. The present writer concurs in this view. Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 76) believe that the most visible consequence of this is the privatisation of religion. The latter has had to vacate one area after another in society and usually resides now in the private domain. The individual continues to utilise old religious rites in connection with the great events of the life cycle, such as birth, marriage and death; although, in the private sphere there appear to be many religious options. The public sphere, on the other hand, is dominated by civic 'creeds' with only a vague religious content or no content at all.

With the absence of general social confirmation, religious definitions of reality have lost their certainty and have become matters of choice. Faith is no longer socially acceptable, according to Berger, Berger& Kellner (1973: 77), but must be individually achieved. Faith is much harder to come by in a pluralistic situation.

The secularising effect of pluralisation has been accompanied by other secularising forces in society. The consequence of this, in the view (1973: 77) of Berger, Berger & Kellner, is that modern man suffers from a profound condition of 'homelessness', incurring a nostalgia of not being 'at home' with himself in society and the universe. Explanations of human events that bestowed meaning upon the experiences of suffering and evil (theodicy) were provided in former times. Previously, religion made meaningful the most painful of human experiences, whether caused by natural or social agents (1973: 166). Modern society has threatened the plausibility of religious theodicies, but has not removed the experiences that stimulated them. Modernity has accomplished many far-reaching improvements, but it has not changed the fragility and mortality of the human condition, thus weakening those definitions of reality which made the human condition easier to bear. Berger, Berger & Kellner believe (1973: 175)

that modernity has liberated the individual for whom autonomy is the most important aspect in society. But the experience of alienation is the correlate of individuation: it is the price of individuation.

4.4.2 Market Forces of Religious Practice According to Stark, Finke and Iannaconne

Stark and McCann (1993: 111) assert that social scientists had assumed that the average person's commitment to religion would be more intense in a monopoly-religion state than in a pluralistic one. The latter would be assumed to experience a lower level of participation, and if the Roman Catholic Church were a minority religion it would not be able to generate religious vocations. The present writer agrees that this is in fact happening in England. According to Berger (1967: 151), pluralism calls into question the plausibility of all religions and deprives them of their status as 'taken for granted', a view that the present writer endorses. He (1979: ix) further states that the authority of all religions tends to be undermined. Stark and McCann (1993: 112) affirm that a new paradigm replaces the traditional sociological view, namely that high levels of religious participation pertain in a pluralistic society whilst inducing widespread religious apathy in a monopoly-religious state. Their terms of reference are based on four propositions enunciated by Stark, Finke and Iannaccone (1995: 432, 442), namely:

- The capacity of a single religious denomination to monopolise a religious economy depends upon the degree to which the state uses coercive force to regulate the religious economy.
- To the degree that a religious economy is unregulated, it will tend to be very pluralistic. The more denominations having a market share, the greater is the degree of pluralism. The capacity of a single religious denomination to monopolise a religious economy depends upon the degree to which the state uses coercive force to regulate the religious economy.
- To the degree that a religious economy is pluralistic, religious denominations will specialise. To specialise, a religious denomination will cater for a specific need.

By 'religious forms' the authors (1995: 432) mean social enterprises, the purpose of which is to 'supply' religion. By the term 'religious economies' (1995: 432) they mean all religious activity in any society. Religious economies are akin to those of commerce, in their view (1995: 432), in that there is a market of current and potential customers, a set of religious denominations seeking to serve that market and the 'religious product lines' offered by the religious denominations. The present writer does not endorse this view of religious practice, however plausible it may appear. It is presented as a possibility that in some circumstances some individuals may leave the Church in obedience to the second or third proposition above. The propositions seem to rely on the supposition that religious denominations design their goods for a specific market. In other words, their goods are customer-orientated. The present writer does not believe this to be the case. It follows that, since all mainline religious institutions are declining, and the newer ones are not filling the gap, how is it that "many firms will be able to meet the demands of a much larger proportion of the population than can be the case when only one or a very few firms have access to the market" (1993: 112-113), which Stark and McCann maintain? Many firms are not even reaching 20 per cent of the market. Since a monopoly of religion does not exist today, we do not know whether the latter would attract more or less than 20 per cent. Comparisons can only be made on the basis of congruent conditions.

4.4.3 Statistical Data on the Sociology of Lapsed Individuals.

Only a small number in our investigation reported improved family relations as a result of ceasing religious practice. It amounts to 1.61 per cent or 0.99 per cent aggregate and exclusively females. Some believed that the Church was oppressive and that religion was stale. This is shown below. We compared those who did not or infrequently attend Church with those who attended regularly.

It was expected that the non-attenders or infrequent attenders would show a more convinced opinion that the traditional Church was both oppressive and that traditional religion was stale. This was high-lighted more in males than in females, with the exception of weekly and monthly attending females who showed a higher individual and aggregate percentage than males.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
53.8	20.8	43.54	26.7	36.8	17.9	15	7.7

Table 13: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who believed that the traditional Church is oppressive

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
72.2	25.7	54.8	33.6	47.4	23.1	60	30.7

Table 14: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who believed that traditional religion is stale

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

It is possible that Church membership demanded too much. So we asked the question whether this was so. Our results are shown in Table 15 below: again, we compared regular Church members with those who attended irregularly or not at all.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
12.8	4.9	19.3	11.8	5.3	2.5	10	5.1

Table 15 Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who alleged that the Church demanded too much from them

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Non- and infrequently attending females seem to indicate that their congregations demanded too much from them, although we cannot assess what this was. On the other hand, both males and females show a low percentage of those who believe that the Church demands too much from them.

Possibly as committed members, most regular attenders do not resent the demands made on them. Females in the weekly and monthly attendance category realise a larger individual percentage than males.

We asked our respondents about the adequacy of pastoral care and whether the expectations of church leadership fulfilled the respondents' expectations. Our results are shown below:

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
48.7	18.8	37.1	22.7	57.9	28.2	30	15.4

Table 16: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who expressed satisfaction with the adequacy of pastoral care and support

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
28.2	10.9	30.6	18.8	57.9	28.2	30	15.4

Table 17: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who expressed satisfaction with the style of church leadership fulfilling their expectations

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

One would have expected a higher level of satisfaction in pastoral care from the weekly and monthly participants. However, it greatly exceeds that of the non- and infrequent male attenders. Dissatisfaction with fulfilment is shown in the non- and infrequently

attending males and females. But fulfilment of expectations is seen in weekly and monthly attending males in the individual percentage of 57.9. The present writer would have estimated this at a higher figure.

If individuals cease practising their religion, it sometimes happens that they assume philanthropic desires by supporting charitable causes. We asked the question whether they supported national or local organisations on social or ethical issues. We again drew a comparison between those who attend Church regularly and those who attend irregularly/not at all.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
23.1	15.4	17.7	8.9	31.6	15.4	45	23.1

Table 18: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who support local or national organisations on social or ethical issues

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

From the above data, there does not seem to be a marked difference between non- and infrequently attending and weekly and monthly attending individuals in terms of supporting local or national organisations. Weekly and monthly attending females, both individually and aggregate, score over males in their category, and males and females in the weekly and monthly attending category.

Parents who cease to practise their religion can have an affect on their childrens' religious observance. Either the latter cease to practise their education or their attendance at a religious school is interrupted or stopped. We asked whether the religious education of the children was affected if either parent ceased practising their religion.

Non and infrequently attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
35.9	13.8	32.2	19.8

Table 19: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending who stated that the religious education of their children had been affected

(n=101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Males expressed more of a concern than females, which the present writer finds surprising.

4.4.4 Summary

- Modern society is complex and stratified. Individuals live in discrepant 'life-worlds'. The pluralisation of the latter has effected the practice of religion becoming privatised. The individual suffers from the condition of 'homelessness'.
- High levels of religious participation are supposed to be achieved in a pluralistic society.
- Males (53.8 per cent) and females (43.54 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending category believed that the Church was oppressive. In the weekly and monthly attendance group, 36.8 per cent males and 15 per cent females concurred.
- In the non-attending and infrequently attending group, 72.2 per cent males and 54.8 per cent females believed that traditional religion was stale. In the weekly and monthly attendance category, 47.4 per cent males and 60 per cent females agreed.
- The Church demanded too much from 12.8 per cent males and 19.3 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group. In the weekly and monthly attending category, 5.3 per cent males and 10 per cent females thought that the Church demanded too much from them.

- Males (48.7 per cent) and females (37.1 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending category expressed satisfaction with the adequacy of pastoral care. In the weekly and monthly attending group, 57.9 per cent males and 30 per cent females concurred.

- Satisfaction with the style of church leadership was recorded in 28.2 per cent males and 30.6 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group. However, 57.9 per cent males and 30 per cent females in the weekly and monthly attending category expressed satisfaction with the style of church leadership.

- Males (35.9 per cent) and females (32.2 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending group stated that the education of their children had been affected by parental lapsation.

4.5 THE MORAL ATTITUDE OF THE LAPSED INDIVIDUAL

4.5.1 Young People

Kay and Francis (1995: 49) believe that there is a significant prediction of differences in adolescent attitudes towards sexual morality and, in particular, a clear trend in the relationship between church attendance and the attitude to sex outside marriage. In other words, they are quite certain in their views concerning the morality of such actions. According to these authors (1995: 84), boys tend to adopt a more conservative framework than girls on issues of homosexuality, divorce and contraception, although as they get older, they will tend to reject moral absolutes.

Teenagers, according to Kay and Francis (1995: 94), are prepared to live tolerantly and without guilt. Those who are the offspring of divorcees do not fear ostracism from their contemporaries. Kay and Francis (1995: 97) remark that whilst teenagers may oppose abortion, they are not as enthusiastic to embrace the Church's teaching on moral issues. In fact, the Church's moral teaching may have precipitated their lapsation. The authors (1995: 157) reckon that a positive attitude towards Christianity is a key predictor of the young person's attitude towards traditional moral values. Drift suggests an abandonment of these moral values and a liberalisation of attitudes towards sex, alcohol and drugs.

4.5.2 Moral Attitudes of Adults

From our studies of adults, some concern for life-style emerged from our respondents. Table 20 below sets out the respondents' replies to the question: **Do you believe that your life-style was incompatible with churchgoing?**

Females in both attendance groups show a high level of assumed incompatibility of life-style with churchgoing. In what way the weekly and monthly attenders regard this, we do not know. It may be a feeling of living in a society which is acquisitive and often shows little regard for the less fortunate. They may feel bound up in such a society in which they feel helpless and constrained. On the other hand, it may relate to one's personal moral life which is thought to be unsatisfactory.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
38.5	14.8	30.6	18.8	15.7	7.7	30	15.4

Table 20: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who believe that their life-style is incompatible with churchgoing

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Males in the in non- and infrequently attending group showed the highest level of alleged incompatibility at 38.5 per cent. However, is personal morality an issue affecting lapsation? Does it affect this phenomenon? Table 21 below gives some incomplete answers when the question was posed: **Do you think that personal morality is a matter of choice rather than something that is imposed by the Church?**

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
82.1	31.7	87.1	53.5	47.4	23.1	70	35.9

Table 21: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who believe that personal morality is more a matter of choice than rules being imposed by the Church

(n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Non- and infrequently attending males and females show the most concern regarding the adoption of a personal morality that is uninfluenced by any teachings of the Church. Females in the weekly and monthly attending category indicate a high level of personal choice, probably due to the fact that they see celibate males making up rules for those who are married, and which they view as anomalous. Clearly, the Church cannot legislate for all areas in a person's moral life. There are many grey areas which can only be personally approached.

4.5.3 Summary

- A drift from religious practice suggests the abandonment of traditional moral values and a liberalisation of attitudes towards sex, alcohol and drugs.
- In the non-attending and infrequently attending category 38.5 per cent males and 30.6 per cent females believed that their life-style is incompatible with churchgoing. Males (15.7 per cent) and females (30 per cent) in the weekly and monthly attending group concurred.
- Males (82.1 per cent) and females (87.1 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending category and 47 per cent males and 70 per cent females in the weekly and monthly attending group believed that personal morality is more a matter of choice than following rules imposed by the Church.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we have considered the lapsed individual in terms of his spiritual, psychological, moral and sociological nature.

His spiritual nature varies from a belief in a higher power or God to whom prayers may be addressed, to one who merely uses this as a convenience, though affirming his religious identity. The latter may think that the Church has taken a path that the individual is not inclined to follow, or he may believe that the structures of the Church impede his encounter with the divine. On the other hand, he may have lapsed and retained something of his earlier religious formation. He is possibly open to alternative beliefs that he finds acceptable. If he were forced to attend Church as a child, he might leave without any commitment to personal spirituality. However, though an individual does not have a commitment to Church this does not necessarily imply a rejection of God. He may find comfort in new religions or New Age Movements.

From our survey, 74.4 per cent of non-and infrequently attending males and 80.6 per cent females believe in God. It appears that 84.2 males and 85 per cent females in the attending/monthly group claimed to have a belief in God. It seems strange that the remainder responded to the question neither affirmatively or negatively. This may be due to their belief in a God who does not correspond to the Christian's conception of him.

A distinction can be made between being religious and being spiritual. To be religious implies attending Church, but to be spiritual is to be in touch with God. They are not mutually inclusive. Spirituality derives from one's inner experience, whereas to be religious can be socially inherited by tradition. Religion can appear stale, worn out and divorced from everyday living. When this occurs, many lapse from religious practice. They may wish to experience God directly and will trust and value personal religious experience because it relates to their everyday world. For those who explore this inward view of reality, there exists a danger of creating one's own subjectivism in which the objective is absent.

Many believed, according to our survey, that the Church was both oppressive and that traditional religion was stale. In the non- and infrequently attending group, 53.8 per cent of males and 43.54 per cent of females answered affirmatively, and in the weekly and monthly attendance categories, 36.8 per cent of males and 15 per cent females agreed that the Church was oppressive. An even larger section believed that traditional religion was stale. This evoked a response in 72.2 per cent males and 54.8 per cent females in the non- and infrequently attending group. In the weekly and monthly attending group, 47.4 per cent and 60 per cent females concurred.

At the root of spiritual searching is the individual's concept of God. A depiction in Christian terms may not satisfy everyone, in view of the calamities that have befallen mankind in recent times. Some like to think of God as a creative power since it is believed that such a view epitomises all that is good. Divine life, it may be felt, flows in all things and the negative of the divine must apply to destructive processes such as injustice and exploitation. Other proposed concepts of God include that of 'mother,' having a close affinity to creativity, and of God as a unifying presence. These concepts emphasise the self as the indwelling of God in the person.

Respondents were asked whether they had changed their concept of God. Of non- and infrequently attending males, 12.8 per cent and 9.67 per cent females replied affirmatively. Males in the weekly and monthly category realised 10 per cent and females 15 per cent. The opposite case was asked, namely whether respondents had not changed their belief in God. To this question, 7.7 per cent of males and 9.67 per cent females, who were non-or infrequently attending, agreed. In the weekly and monthly category, 15.8 per cent males and 10 per cent females expressed the view that they had not changed their belief in God.

Spiritual need and a lack of meaning were investigated in young people who alleged that the Church was not addressing these areas even for those who attended Church regularly. Males, in the up–to-and-including-14-age group, who practise weekly or monthly, showed a 27 per cent need. Females in the same attendance and age group displayed 19.2 per cent, while non-practising or infrequently practising males indicated 11.5 per cent. Those who have a spiritual need or find a lack of meaning in the Church are demonstrated by higher percentages. Males in the non- and infrequently attending

category realised 11.4 per cent. Monthly and weekly attending males and females in the up-to-and–including-14 age group recorded 26.1 per cent and 22.1 per cent respectively.

A spiritual need or lack of meaning in life was also reflected by adults. Males in the non- or infrequently attending group show a need of 41 per cent, and females 29 per cent. Even in the weekly and monthly attending group, males show 36.8 per cent and females 30 per cent. But those who indicated spiritual fulfilment were fewer. Females in the non- or infrequently attending group recorded 6.45 per cent, and males and females in the weekly and monthly attending group are 10.5 and 15 per cent respectively.

We discovered that the existence of tension in the family as a cause of lapsation did not appear to be significant in both the non- and infrequently attending or the weekly and monthly attending categories. A change in one's life resulting from lapsation was shown in 11.3 per cent non-practising females and 5.12 per cent non-practising males. This change may incur a more or less positive attitude of life. Our data suggests that only 8.1 per cent of non-practising females showed a more positive outlook. In males it was negligible. Those who thought that they had a less positive attitude were mainly male, recorded at 7.7 per cent. Guilt arising from non-attendance at Church showed markedly larger percentages compared with previous aspects. Males in the non or infrequently attending category indicated a 43.6 per cent rating, and females 40.3 per cent. Weekly and monthly attenders also scored highly. For males it was 42.1 per cent, and for females, 40 per cent were recorded.

In Van Kaam's view, the psychology of lapsation can be investigated, either by the modes of mechanistic or existential psychology. In the mechanistic programme, mankind is observed in a mechanistic, instinctual and deterministic way by which the subjectivity of the individual is ignored. A mechanistic approach regards man as highly structured and libidinal, upon whom a stimulus is imposed and from whom a response obtained.

The second scenario integrates experiential, behavioural and social aspects of man's identity as a free, responsible person. The psychological aspect of lapsation involves a study of the contemporary world of meaning and the impact this has on religious culture and its influence on the individual. The implicit dialogue between mankind and the

world of meaning needs to be made explicit and such an implicit dialogue can lead to a crisis regarding the meaning of life or about his religious attitude.

Reality can be assessed by sacred or profane modes. The former involves the individual experiencing the world as pointing to something beyond it; in the profane, the individual, although open to the world, is nevertheless closed to its transcendence. The world is functional.

Tradition makes people feel at home, provided it is dynamic. A person is supported by this living tradition in the home, the school and community. It is a shared style of thought, feeling and action. It is necessary for the survival of the faith. The possibility of lapsation increases if living traditions are blocked. The rapid development of science and technology leads to the disappearance of traditions and many forms of traditional life. Through this development, society becomes more stratified and may find itself in different 'life-worlds' that colour its outlook. The individual's psychology is thus deeply affected by secularisation of the consciousness.

Acquaviva, on the other hand, offers a different analysis of psychological orientation in respect of the supposed crisis of religious practice. In this crisis, the individual experiences the phases of rhythm, space and time, sensitivity and perception, and cognitive attitudes. Contemporary man is exposed to the tensions introduced by technology in work and leisure, allowing few pauses for religious reflection.

A cognitive attitude is formed by the whole person who incorporates language, art, myth, history, science, experience and human relations within it. The centre of this person's being is a logic that conditions cognitive ideas and assimilates terms which may have a religious significance. Human needs dictate logical classifications and this need varies with social life.

Logic is informed by scientific and technological development, and the standards of judgement have been modified so that a negative interpretation of religious phenomena is possible. The result has been the secularisation of the sacred.

Religious transformation occurs through a transformation of the rhythm of life, sensitivity, perception, logic and cognitive attitudes. Judgement accompanies experience of the sacred, and experience implies religious behaviour. Behaviour is, however, related to its cultural setting in which the latter compels the person to revise his cognitive ideas and attitude. A crisis of religiosity occurs at the level of the psychological make-up and behaviour of the individual. The cognitive process develops within the psyche that reacts to external stimuli, which consequently may change the pattern of thought.

New judgements and values are being formed and the data from new technology enters the culture, imposing its de-sacralising language. When the latter has formed, the cognitive process attains a social dimension in which language is translated into communication. By so doing, the latter enters the process of abstraction. This means that language that was at one time personal becomes impersonal through communication.

Intuition is also part of the psychological process whereby the individual constructs some correlation between his view of things and external reality. He proceeds to fit that image of reality into his own system. Through the interaction of intuition and abstraction, ideologies are formed. As knowledge, perception, language and social life change, so does abstraction.

The cognitive process involves impulse, perception, registration, communication and abstraction. When the latter has been attained, it is possible to indicate whether the personality is religious or irreligious.

Modern social life has presented fresh impulses and stimuli that occur on the objective level by means of new facts, and on the subjective level by new activities which become signs and symbols. These facts and activities must be thought of as negative phenomena. Their impact on religiosity is more significant when they have been perceived. When this stage is reached, it is followed by communication. By reason of the multiplicity of facts and activities, religiously negative meaningful experiences arise which stimulate the process of de-sacralisation. In the course of time, a clear expression of irreligiosity is developed.

In modern society, everyday life brings with it different 'life-worlds' of meaning and experience because modern life is segmented. This segmentation is objectively observable and manifests itself also on the level of consciousness. The individual relates to a variety of roles within these segments that are in sharp contrast. Different occupations have constructed for themselves 'life-worlds' which are incomprehensible to the outsider. The private sphere is also open to pluralisation, which effects religion. Until recent times, religion provided a comprehensive range of symbols for the meaningful integration of society. Meanings, beliefs and values were formerly cohesive, religion making man feel at home in the universe. Now it becomes increasingly difficult for religious traditions and institutions to integrate the plurality of 'life-worlds'. Religious definitions of reality are threatened by the subjective consciousness of the individual. Pluralisation forces him to take note of others who do not share his beliefs. His life is dominated by different and sometimes contradictory meanings, values and beliefs. Pluralisation weakens the hold of religion on society and the individual, which results in its retreating from the public into the private domain. Religious definitions have lost their certainty and have become matters of choice. Man, as a consequence, suffers from the condition of 'homelessness'.

In our survey, respondents were asked if their life-style was inconsistent with churchgoing. Non- and infrequently attending Catholic males and females thought so. Their respective percentages were 38.5 and 30.6. Weekly and monthly attending Catholic males and females measured 15.7 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. At the same time, 82.1 per cent males and 87.1 per cent females in the non- and infrequently practising group believed that personal choice should be exercised in preference to obeying rules set by the Church. This was mirrored by 47.4 per cent males and 70 per cent females in the weekly and monthly categories.

Perhaps the Church demanded too much from its erstwhile adherents. The results we obtained from a question couched in these terms revealed moderate results. Non-attending and infrequently attending who believed that this was true stood at 12.8 per cent for males and 19.3 per cent for females. But of weekly and monthly attending members, only 5.3 per cent males and 10 per cent females concurred in this attitude.

People lapse through the inadequacy of pastoral care and support. Of the non- and infrequently practising, 48.7 per cent males and 37.1 per cent females agreed. But of the weekly and monthly members, 57.9 per cent males and 30 per cent females concurred. Those, on the contrary, who express satisfaction with a style of leadership that fulfilled their expectations, had only a moderate response. In the non- or infrequent category, 28.2 per cent males and 30.6 per cent females expressed satisfaction. In the weekly and monthly attendance categories, 57.9 per cent of males and 30 per cent of females believed their expectations were fulfilled.

It sometimes happens that when individuals lapse, they take for granted the support of local or national philanthropic groups. Our data reveals that this is only moderately so. The largest sub-group which recorded 45 per cent is the weekly and monthly practising female. This far exceeds the non- or infrequently attending male (23.1 per cent) or female (17.7 per cent).

4.7 CONCLUSION

In our study of the spiritual nature of the lapsed, we have shown that a spiritual need is evident in both the lapsed and the regular church member. This need is not being met in the Church and it is very likely that it will be sought elsewhere. Therefore, those who are practising members may be tomorrow's lapsed. Young people who have a lack of meaning in their lives are not satisfied by the Church.

Whilst those who are lapsed do not exhibit a major difference in their belief in God compared with those who do attend church, a majority of our respondents did not answer the question: **Do you believe in God?** This discrepancy may be attributed to the assumption that they did not hold the concept of God portrayed by the Church. But when asked whether or not they had changed their belief, we were again faced with a huge number who did not answer the question. This may or may not be connected with the concept of God to which the Church ascribes.

To gain some appreciation of the psychology of lapsed and regular practising Catholics, we asked whether they had experience of any tension in the family. This did not produce a significant result. But lapsed females seemed to have experienced a change of life as a result of lapsing, and they also had a more positive attitude to life than males.

The subject of guilt, not surprisingly, still haunts Catholic minds among both regular churchgoers and the lapsed, and these achieved high scores in both male and female categories. Yet staleness of traditional religion and the view that the traditional Church is oppressive was agreed in many of both the lapsed and the regular attenders.

But, apparently, the Church does not demand too much from those who regularly practise their religion, whereas those who had lapsed, both males and females, indicated that it did. Whether the latter left the Church because of this (unlikely) or whether they believe that the burden imposed by the Church was unsupportable (very likely) is not clear.

Other indicators, such as the level of satisfaction with pastoral care and support (which is moderate, according to our respondents) and satisfaction with the Church leadership in respect of expectations, obviously shows greater significance in practising males than in any other category.

Life style appears to be incompatible with churchgoing for both the lapsed males and females. Individuals in this group also believe that personal morality should be governed by personal choice rather than following rules laid down by the Church. Females were more numerous than males in this aspect.

CHAPTER 5: ASPECTS OF FAITH, BELONGING AND VALUE ASSOCIATED WITH LAPSATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explore:

- the practical nature of faith expression;
- practical matters, such as the costs and benefits of leaving the Church, ideals, expectations, worship, pastoral care, the style of leadership and the teaching of the Church;
- belonging, believing but not belonging, losing one's sense of belonging, religious commitment, involvement and passivity, intimacy and anonymity, inclusiveness and exclusiveness and attractive alternatives; and
- the values of 'Baby Boomers', 'Baby Busters' and teenagers.

In order to achieve this aim, the works of Barclay, 1976; Brierley, 2000a; Bruce, 1995; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, Dudley, 1979; Etzioni, 1961; Fanstone, 1993; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Gerard, 1985; Gibbs, 1977; Giddens, 1990; Greeley, 1973; Greeley: 1992; Hornsby-Smith, 1987; Houtart: 1969; Kay and Francis: 1995; Richter and Francis: 1998; Roof: 1994; and Stark and Bainbridge, 1996 will be studied and the results of our own surveys will be added.

5.2 CHURCH LEAVING ASSOCIATED WITH DISBELIEF

One must distinguish between two types of disbelief: atheistic and agnostic. Those in the latter category are unsure about the truth of religious claims, whereas the atheist rejects them. However, there are different kinds of atheism: philosophical, experiential and transitional.

5.2.1 **Philosophical Atheism**

This type of atheism involves a decision to reject the claims of the truth of religious faith. Its approach is not indifferent, but accompanied by strong feelings and conviction. The individual may have studied seriously the question of God's existence and arrived at a negative conclusion. He may think that believing does not realise any credible outcomes.

It is difficult to maintain one's faith in a community that largely holds diverse views, although belonging to a religious congregation serves to confirm and validate one's faith, since the individual socialises with those of a common mind. However this cannot be sustained indefinitely. If the television is switched on or a newspaper read, another world is opened in which God is marginalised. Children in particular may be unable to sustain religious beliefs when faced with a largely secular school curriculum. An individual's belief is affected by his reference group or plausibility structure. Richter and Francis state (1998: 31) that when the individual leaves the Church for reasons other than a diminution of faith, he finds that his belief is vulnerable since it operates apart from the faith community.

5.2.2 **Experiential Atheism**

This type of atheism is experienced if the individual feels that God has let him down. Religious explanations of the origin of the world and belief in life after death are rejected. It is possible that an individual thinks that the idea of God is a pleasant fantasy. Stories about God may be comforting and inspiring, but they are not transcendent, according to this view. This type of atheism can be rooted in the individual's experience of life, as well as resulting from intellectual enquiry. Disappointments or tragedies such as bereavements and suffering can threaten the faith of even the strongest of believers, even as they can be important factors in conversion to Christianity or in strengthening a Christian's faith. Equally, it can lead to a diminution of faith.

5.2.3 **Transitional Atheism**

Richter and Francis (1998: 32, 33) state that this type of atheism is temporary and occurs naturally as part of one's growth in faith. During this journey in faith, certain concepts of God may be rejected in favour of more developed ones. The adolescent will, for instance, experience periods of doubt and searching. Sometimes, church leavers feel

that they must distance themselves from God as well as from the Church because they feel that their lifestyle is incompatible with their relationship with God. The data regarding incompatibility from chapter 4 is presented below.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
38.5	14.8	30.6	18.8	15.7	7.7	30	15.4

Table 1: Male and female non-attending/infrequently and weekly/monthly attending adults who believe that their life-style is incompatible with churchgoing (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

Males in the non- and infrequently attending group show the highest level of alleged incompatibility at 38.5 per cent.

Brierley (2000a: 5) believes that the description of 'nominal Christian' does not denote a state, but a period of transition. The present writer does not agree with this view. He (2000: 5) goes on to remark that 'nominal' implies that they are not real Christians and the term 'nominalism' is more appropriate to behaviour than belief. However, in the present writer's experience 'nominal' refers to a superficial appellation of Christianity and that this term does not necessarily refer to behaviour.

Fanstone (1993: 69) remarks that sometimes confusion arises where an apparent contradiction arises as a person's faith and scientific knowledge are brought to bear on church teachings that offer an interpretation different from that taught in one's youth.

5.2.4 Faith Position

Richter and Francis (1998: 34, 35) state that leaving the Church does not imply disbelief in God. Although an individual may experience a traumatic event, such as a tragedy or injustice inflicted upon him, his faith in God is not thereby automatically dead. Sometimes, in the face of personal tragedy, an individual vents his anger on God by withdrawing from the Church. God's existence is not doubted, only his ability to act justly in a particular situation. Leaving church may be followed by a period of self

questioning, during which faith may be scrutinised and possibly other world-views examined, resulting in re-embracement of the former faith position. Richter and Francis (1998: 36) assert that faith claimed by church leavers is not just an intellectual one, but influenced by the values of Christian teaching.

According to the same authors (1998: 37), people below the age of twenty are more likely to have suffered a blow to their faith than those who are older. The same group are more likely to question their faith on philosophical or intellectual grounds.

Our respondents were asked whether they based their faith on personal experience. Their replies are shown below.

Faith based on experience	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	51.3	65.0
Females	58.1	78.9

Table 2: Those who base their faith on personal experience (Non-Practising n= 101; Males: 39; Females: 62. Practising n= 39; Males: 20; females: 19)

A large number of non-attending or infrequently attending males and females choose to base their faith on personal experience, but this group is not as large as those in the weekly and monthly attending group. It appears that some do not base their faith in such a manner.

5.2.5 Summary

Religious disbelief can arise through:

- **philosophical atheism**, which is a rejection of the claims of religious faith;
- **experiential atheism**, which is rooted in the individual's experience of life even though he may have made an intellectual study; and
- **transitional atheism**, which is a temporary state and occurs during one's growth in faith.

The individual's life-style can be thought incompatible with churchgoing, but leaving the Church does not imply a disbelief in God.

Faith is based on personal experience for over 50 per cent of non-attending or infrequently attending males and females and over 60 per cent for weekly and monthly attending males and females.

5.3 CHURCH LEAVING ASSOCIATED WITH PRACTICAL MATTERS

5.3.1 **Costs and Benefits**

Commitment to church involves a cost in terms of time, energy and money. Richter and Francis state (1998: 90) that churches expect their members to devote some of their spare time to Sunday services, to meetings and social events. The organisation, to which the layperson is expected to make some contribution, needs to be kept running smoothly. In the Roman Catholic Church, expectation may exceed commitment and the provision of necessary services is often in the hands of the faithful and loyal few. Church cleaners, flower arrangers, visitors to the sick and housebound, accountants and welcomers to church services are present in most Roman Catholic establishments.

The Church needs sustained financial input to cover the costs of repair and renovation of church premises and expenses incurred in catechetical material. Belonging to a church can involve considerable physical and emotional investment. In fact, without a cost it would be pointless to speak about commitment. However, members can expect a 'return' or 'benefit', some of which are spiritual and others, mundane. Membership of a church community can offer friendship, entertainment, church-based clubs, sports facilities and a route to a voluntary aided school. Basically, churches offer a context within which people can find ultimate meaning and purpose in their lives. The Church helps to stimulate experience of God and foster spiritual growth whereby the 'benefit' is not restricted to this world.

Richter and Francis say (1998:91) that some social scientists use the language of economics to study religion. In particular, they use rational choice theory, assuming that people treat religion in the same way as they treat other objects of choice. This theory states that the Christian 'consumer' weighs up the cost of qualifying for the rewards of Christianity against the actual costs of leading a Christian life and participating in the

Christian Church. One such cost would be the surrender of an attractive lifestyle. Christian 'consumers' evaluate the costs and benefits so that the benefit is maximised. This rational choice approach is not popular with religious believers. Many find it inappropriate and mercenary. The present author endorses the view of Richter and Francis when they remark (1998: 90-2) that the language of economics is too prosaic to deal with the complexities of religion. One may enquire where the Holy Spirit and God's grace fit into this theory. Nevertheless, social-exchange theory imparts some light on lapsation, for if the costs appear to be disproportionate to the assumed benefits of involvement, Church leaving may occur. On the other hand, religious economics may be countered by strongly ingrained feelings of guilt that arise from the idea of leaving the Church.

Where over-involvement occurs, burnout may sanction the individual's departing from religious observance. Those who suffer from this feel emotionally drained and exhausted. Their health may start to deteriorate and their personal relations with people may suffer. They may treat others impersonally rather than as living individuals who require care and an open ear. They may be dissatisfied with their achievements and believe that they have not received the recognition they deserve. A feeling may be perceived that they are giving more than they receive and are weary of trying. In such an instance, which has been described in chapter 3, an individual may decide that the personal cost of remaining in the Church outweighs any benefits and that leaving the Church is the only option. This may be highlighted if he believes that others have been 'free-riding' at his expense.

As Richter and Francis correctly observe (1998:92), most churches rely on comparatively few individuals to carry the work load. These are core group members who are always ready to help when a job needs to be done. They are generous with their time and energy. The remainder are 'free-riders', who take out more than they put in. Although they do this habitually, they still expect the same pastoral care from the Church as the active members. One might imagine that increasing the cost of belonging to church would make the 'free-riders' drop out, but, as Richter and Francis point out (1998: 93), it is in those churches in which little is requested of members that there is a greater possibility of a decline of membership.

Richter and Francis observe (1998: 100) that where needs were not met, little satisfaction in participating was revealed and the Church was considered a lost cause: these were opinions voiced mainly by the under 20s rather than by the over 20s.

5.3.2 Ideals and Expectations

Richter and Francis believe (1998: 102) that, since the Church is not a human club but Christ's body on earth, individuals have expectations and ideals of the Church because they believe it to be a body that can deliver. If the Church fails to match up to the individual's dreams, disillusionment may arise and church leaving may occur. In many instances, people leave voluntary organisations because they have become disenchanted.

Ideals fell short	Non or infrequently attending or %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	43.6	9.7
Females	45.2	31.6

Table 3: Those whose ideals of the Church fell short in practice (Non-Practising n= 101; Males: 39; Females: 62. Practising n= 39; Males: 20; females: 19)

Table 3 above indicates individuals whose ideals of the Church fell short in practice. It will be noted that both non-attending males and females, or infrequently attending, show more dissatisfaction in the fulfilment of their ideals than the weekly or monthly attenders. Weekly or monthly attending females appear to be more idealistic than males and show a significant dissatisfaction in the realisation of their ideals.

The respondents were asked whether their expectations of the Church's worship fell short in practice. The results appear below in Table 4.

Expectations fell short	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	48.7	55
Females	37.1	9.7

Table 4: Those whose expectations of the Church's worship fell short in practice (Non-Practising n= 101; Males: 39; Females: 62. Practising n= 39; Males: 20; females: 19)

Males in the weekly and monthly attending group show the most dissatisfaction at 55 per cent. Males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending group show considerable levels of dissatisfaction, but it is unlikely, in our view, that the format of church worship causes an individual to cease attendance. Changes in the style of church services and the arrival of new clergy sometimes cause dissatisfaction. Occasionally, local churches close, due to lack of support, and their members are encouraged to join a new congregation. Finding a new spiritual home can be challenging.

If expectations are not met, the individual may decide to try and reform the Church from within, in order to bring it into alignment with his ideals. But this will only happen if he thinks he can exercise a significant impact. The Church is both a human and divine institution and it is bound to fall short sometimes; churchgoers are likely to forgive the Church or make allowances for it, even when it becomes similar to other institutions. Richter and Francis postulate (1998: 105) that churches never satisfy everyone all the time. Expectations differ from one individual to another. Some prefer the Church to challenge injustice and inequality in society while others may prefer the Church to distance itself from political issues. Changes occurring in the Church may upset an individual's expectations to the extent that he may leave if he believes that substantial deviation has occurred from his ideal vision of what the Church should be.

5.3.3 **Worship**

Richter and Francis suggest (1998: 107) that some expectations of worship require the involvement of the whole congregation. It has to be participatory, spiritually uplifting, relevant, use modern media, be lively, provide alternatives, be in tune with modern culture, dynamic, offer a sense of fellowship, possess uniformity every week, be reverent, traditional, formal, possess an ethos of mystery, be true to biblical scholarship and offered in a variety of styles.

Our respondents were asked whether they found the Church not conducive to praying. The results are shown below.

Church not conducive to praying	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	2.1	4.3
Females	2.1	2.1

Table 5: Those who find the Church not conducive to praying (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

The contrary question was not asked, that is whether the Church was conducive to praying. As they stand, the results indicate that only a small number feel that the Church is not conducive to praying. It may be that many do not use the Church for private prayer. However, the liturgy celebrated in church is its prayer and so the question resolves into whether the church surroundings and accoutrements aid praying or whether they detract from it.

The respondents were asked whether they thought the style of worship was either too modern or traditional.

Worship too modern	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	—	—
Females	1.61	—

Table 6: Those who thought that the Church's worship was too modern (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

One female in the non-attending or infrequent category answered positively the question whether or not the worship was too modern.

Worship too traditional	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	13	—
Females	5.3	1.06

Table 7: Those who thought that the Church's worship was too traditional (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

The relatively high percentages in the non-attending or infrequently attending categories indicate that they perhaps favour a more 'charismatic' approach to worship. However, worship should not be emotionally manipulative, amateurish, too highly structured, mechanical, routine, boring, non-descriptional, unpredictable or old fashioned. Some leave the Church, according to Richter and Francis (1998: 108), because they do not favour a modern style of worship; others leave because they are alienated by traditional forms.

5.3.4 **Pastoral Care**

Richter and Francis state (1998: 108,111) that pastoral care encompasses healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. When a congregation fails to supply these needs, individuals will forsake the community since they believe that the Church has forsaken them. When pastoral care is unprofessional, over-directive or under delivered, disillusionment of the individuals' involvement will occur. The data on this aspect is reproduced from chapter 4.

Non and infrequently attending				Weekly and monthly attending			
Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %	Males %	Aggregate %	Females %	Aggregate %
48.7	18.8	37.1	22.7	57.9	28.2	30	15.4

Table 8: Male and female non/ infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending adults who expressed satisfaction with the adequacy of pastoral care and support (n = 101) 39 male respondents: 62 female respondents

From the above data, it can be seen that males in both attendance categories show the most satisfaction with pastoral care. Females in the weekly and monthly attendance category show a surprisingly lower level of satisfaction by comparison with their equivalent in the non- and infrequently attending group.

5.3.5 **The Style of Leadership**

Richter and Francis (1998: 110, 112) believe that sometimes people feel let down by the style of leadership in the Church. Churchgoers have a right to expect that leadership will be exercised in a Christian manner. The reign of God should be seen in microcosm in the Church, which is an egalitarian realm repudiating gender discrimination, violence, domination and racism. Where these ideals are insufficiently realised, the individual may look elsewhere. On the other hand, some individuals may leave the Church because it is not sufficiently authoritarian. In this instance, they would think it too broad, accommodating and theologically weak.

The respondents were asked whether they had experienced any conflict with the Church leadership. The data is supplied below:

Conflict with church leadership	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	6.5	6.5
Females	6.4	1.06

Table 9: Those who alleged a conflict with the Church leadership (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

Difficulties with the leadership could be over any feature and it is not possible to state the causes of the respondents' conflict, although it is significant. It is possible that these respondents consider that the Church is either closed to outsiders or open to them. Their responses are shown below.

Church closed to outsiders	Non or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	4.3	2.1
Females	3.2	1.06

Table 10: Those who believed that the Church was closed to outsiders (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

Clearly, the non-attending or infrequently attending believe to a greater extent than those who are regular churchgoers that the Church is closed to outsiders. Only one male in the age range 45-64 replied that he thought that the Church was open to outsiders. Most of the respondents were unaware as to whether the Church was open or closed.

Perhaps, after lapsing, individuals prefer the company of friends rather than seeking an alternative denomination. The data concerning this is shown below.

Prefer friends	Non-attending or infrequently attending %
Males	13
Females	8.5

Table 11: Those who preferred to be in the company of friends than being in Church (n: 140. Males: 46; Females: 94)

This information suggests that friendship is important and that if one does not find it in the Church, then it is sought elsewhere.

5.3.5.1 Conflict and compliance

Conflict with church leaders is sometimes a contributory factor to an individual's lapsing. There may be a clash of personalities between the individual and the clergy. Sometimes the church leadership behaves in a way that undermines a person's sense of belonging. He may have been personally humiliated by one of the church leaders.

Houtart (1969: 45) offers an analysis of the types of contestation in the Post-conciliar Church.

- The first characteristic is legitimacy, the manner in which authority justifies its functions or decisions. This can be contested. In the present writer's experience, the Roman Catholic Church rarely offers any justification in its local decisions, but invariably does so in its international ones. The legitimacy of authority, for instance, was contested over both the papal encyclical Humanae Vitae (1968) and the rule of clerical celibacy.

- The second characteristic is the value the hierarchy places on unqualified obedience and loyalty. This also can be contested.

- The third characteristic, Houtart (1969: 45) suggests, stimulates contestation against the social system or the organisational behaviour of the Church's officials as, for instance, objection to the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith's pressurising liberal and liberation theologians (Kung,

Boff and Curren are examples) to cease teaching or writing on theological matters.

Individuals may contest the teachings or decisions of the Church. For instance, they may oppose the official teaching on contraception. A different type of contestation may be the activity of a social movement. For instance, a justice and peace movement might contest the assumed low priority given to justice in pastoral practice, or take the form of a charismatic movement, inasmuch as its represents a protest against the supposed restrictive spirituality of the Church.

On the other hand, Etzioni (1961:3) offers an analysis of an individual's compliance with authority by listing three types of power: coercive, remunerative, and normative and three corresponding congruent types of involvement in the organisation: alienation, calculative and moral. He (1961:3) regards the Roman Catholic Church as a normative organisation relying on normative power to achieve the moral involvement of its members. There is an oral commitment of a minority of its members who have been socialised and who have internalised the express goals of the leadership, but the dominant pattern of beliefs and practices of many Catholics seems to indicate a calculative involvement insofar as they make up their minds to what extent they should go in their compliance with the teachings and expectations of the Church. There exists an alienative and antagonistic response from a minority in the Church who have experienced coercive forms of power exercised by priests over issues of sexual and marital morality, or the Church's rulings on mixed marriages, or who regard any attempt by the Church to control such matters as coercive or intrusive.

Our view is that Etzioni's depiction of compliance is useful but may have been more appropriate in the days of the fortress Church of the pre-Vatican II era, but it is less so nowadays where lay participation is encouraged and where there is a slow emergence of lay leadership.

5.3.6 **Teachings of the Church**

Richter and Francis state (1998: 112-114) that, sometimes, the clarity of what the Church believes is diffused. Some part company with the Church because either it is too liberal or too conservative, too hard-line or too tolerant. Perhaps church members leave because of particular teachings, such as that relating to sexual morality. Some young

Roman Catholics, for instance, find their Church's teaching on this subject too conservative and reductive. On the other hand, others have transferred their allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church because its stance is uncompromising. The data on adults who disagree with the teachings of the Church have been presented in Chapter 3.

The young often complain that the Church is boring. Provided that they do not mean that it is not entertaining, this description could reflect hunger for a church that connects with their lives. If the Church's teaching is perceived to be unintelligible or irrelevant, then members are likely to leave. If the Church's teaching fails to engage their faith with everyday life, with its hopes and fears, successes and failures, then the Church will be discarded as irrelevant.

The research into young people's views concerning the teachings of the Church is summarised in Table 12 below:

Disagree with Church teaching	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males up–to-and - including-14 years	4.7	15.6
Males 15-19 years	10.9	6.3
Females-up-to–and-including-14 years	10.9	25.0
Females 15-19 years	14.1	12.5

Table 12: Male and female non/ infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending who disagree with the teachings of the Church (n = 64)

Practising females in the under-fourteen age group appear to disagree most with Church teaching. It is assumed that those who practise their religion possess a better conception of Church doctrine than those who practise infrequently or not at all. The latter will be

aware of the teaching of the Church through attendance at a religious school. Since they only have a nominal allegiance, Church teaching may not impinge on them as much as for those who are practising members.

The adult respondents were asked whether they were unsure of or distrusted the decisions of the Church.

Unsure about decisions	Distrust %	Unsure %	Neither %
Males: non-attending or infrequently attending %	12.8	46. 2	5
Females: non-attending or infrequently attending %	68.4	40.3	13
Males: weekly or monthly attending %	20.9	35	41
Females: weekly or monthly attending %	15.8	42.1	38.7

Table 13: Those who distrusted or were unsure about the decisions of the Church (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

Non-attending or infrequently attending females distrust church decisions more than do other categories; a view shared by Hornsby-Smith (1987: 56) who states that, apart from housewives, they are more prone to diverge from the official teaching of the Church than any other group. Males and females who attend weekly or monthly are generally more trusting than others, except for the non-attending or infrequently attending males. Even for the regular participant, the percentages are quite high.

5.3.6.1 **Depositions concerning church teachings from respondents**

A deposition from one female correspondent - single and in the 20-29 age group and who attends church infrequently - illustrates by means of a concrete example some of the characteristics of disagreement with the teachings of the Church. Her response agrees with the findings of Hoge (1981: 87) and Richter and Francis (1998: 114). She states: "I feel that although the basics of Christianity are relevant for life, Catholicism

itself is too absolutist with such ideas as no contraception, no divorce and displaying an attitude regarding women as inferior. This is simply incompatible with modern life."

5.3.7 Summary

Commitment to participation in the Church involves:

- **A consideration of the costs and benefits**. How much will the individual have to spend in terms of time, money and energy, and the benefits, both spiritual and personal, that will be experienced?

- **Ideals and expectations**. Does the Church fulfil the person's dreams? Ideals were found to fall short in over 40 per cent of the non-attending and infrequently attending males and females, and over 30 per cent in the weekly and monthly attending females. Only 9 per cent of males in the latter category confirmed that their ideals fell short. Expectations also fell short in over 35 per cent males and females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group. Over 50 per cent of males and over 9 per cent of females in the weekly and monthly attending category expressed that their expectations had not been met.

- **The style of worship**. Only a small percentage stated that they thought the Church was not conducive to prayer. Very few respondents thought that the Church's worship was too modern, although 13 per cent of males and 5.3 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending groups believed that the Church's worship was too traditional.

- **Pastoral care**. The data produced on this aspect indicated significant satisfaction.

- **A perception of the Church as being open or closed to outsiders**. Only a small percentage believed that the Church was closed to outsiders.

- **Conflict with church leaders**.

- **Teachings of the Church**. The Church may be thought of as too liberal or too conservative.

The teaching may be unintelligible. Weekly and monthly attending males and females appear to disagree significantly with the Church's teachings and non-attending; infrequently attending individuals do not seem to disagree to the same extent. Females in the latter group appear to distrust the decisions of the Church. Between 35 to 40 per cent of males and females in both attendance groups are unsure about the Church's decisions.

5.4 CHURCH LEAVING ASSOCIATED WITH BELONGING

Greeley maintains (1992: 55) that only 69 per cent of Britons believe in God compared with 94 per cent of Americans. Diminishment of faith or lack of it may be an important factor in church leaving in England, although religious belief does not always imply churchgoing. Bruce states (1995: 47) that "those who explain the lack of church involvement by considerations other than a lack of belief are fooling themselves or fooling the researchers". Belief often correlates with going to church. Those who in the past were churchgoers may well retain more orthodox beliefs, unless exposure to the Church was short lived or experienced only as an infant.

Stark and Bainbridge (1996: 4, 5) assert that social integration (belonging) is a shared willingness to conform to a set of norms defining proper interaction. The individual will conform to these norms to the extent of his attachment to others who accept the legitimacy of the norms. Yet the present writer thinks that the norms do not define social interaction. Social interaction results from a belief in the norms. Greeley (1973: 146), on the other hand, expresses the view that any intimate community is structured around a set of convictions about the nature of reality. Without a shared world-view, intimate community is impossible.

Many people in Britain, whilst not involved in a church, claim religious belief. It is unlikely that diminishment of faith underpins much of church leaving. Faith is sometimes expressed in an individual's willingness to participate in religious activities.

Those who feel that they do not belong to the Church are shown in Table 14 below.

Do not belong	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	38.5	70
Females	50	31

Table 14: Those who feel that they do not belong to the Christian Church (Non-Practising n= 101; Males: 39; Females: 62. Practising n= 39; Males: 20; females: 19)

Females in the non-attending and infrequently-attending groups feel that they do not belong to the Christian community. Males in this group also show this propensity, but not quite to the same extent. However, the percentages are quite high. In the weekly and monthly attending group males more than females feel that they do not belong. This would seem to indicate that practising males are more likely to leave the Church than females. It is significant that feelings of not belonging permeate a high level of both regular and non-attending or infrequent attenders. Fanstone (1993: 119) believes that an inner feeling of insecurity can prevent an individual from feeling that he belongs. He may not always seek to enter into relationships in the Church, as a result of which he fails to become integrated into the body of Christ. Gibbs (1977: 8, 9), on the other hand, states that churchgoers should share a sense of identity with what is happening at the altar, and possess a sense of anticipation.

5.4.1 Depositions from Respondents concerning Belonging - 'Jennifer'

A written testimony from a female respondent, who is divorced and in the age range 45-64, illustrates a feature of alienation and of not belonging to the Church. She writes: "Somehow the Church needs to come into modern society and be appealing enough for people, young and old, to want to belong. That belonging to God was apparent after the Twin Towers and very much evident before and after Pope John Paul's death, but it is quickly forgotten." Faith, in the western world, she believes, has been replaced by a desire for material wealth that in its turn, introduces drugs, drink, sex and lax morals.

Clearly, she does not believe that the Church has accommodated itself to modern society, or that it speaks to modern society in a language that it understands. The result of this deposition verifies to some extent the assertion of Fanstone (1993: 119) when he states: "He may not always seek to enter into relationships in the Church, as a result of which he fails to become integrated into the body of Christ."

5.4.2 **Believing but not Belonging**

Richter and Francis (1998: 121,122) observe that human beings have a deep-rooted need to feel they belong somewhere. The present author shares this view and believes that in a society where significant geographical mobility and rapid change exist, the Church can be a source of close friendships and supportive networks, especially for the isolated family and those who live alone. The Church can also take the place of the distant family, offering support in times of crisis and providing a regular family atmosphere. When the Church fails to offer this sense of belonging, the individual may prefer to leave. Roof (1994: 200) asserts that believing, disconnected from belonging in 'Baby Boomers', amounts to a portable faith by which one searches for new and innovative experiences.

Richter and Francis (1998: 122) reckon that where relationships in the Church are no longer close or supportive, where they are conflictual, leaving the Church will ensue. Lapsation can be triggered by conflict with the clergy, a family member or church members. Particularly for those under 30 years of age, failure to feel accepted as an individual, loved or wanted, but rather that one does not belong, will result in the person leaving the Church. Some would argue that creating a sense of belonging is not the primary function of the Church. The Church witnesses to the Word made flesh and enables people to find salvation and ultimate meaning in their lives. Some denominations describe themselves as 'Christian communities' or 'fellowships' that express the concept of *koinonia*. This term, Barclay (1976: 173, 174) assures us, was used by early Christians to describe a sharing of friendship. The Christian lives in the presence, help and guidance of the Spirit. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994: 180) emphasises the communal dimension of the Church in the expression 'People of God'. Although some would claim that belonging to a community is a secondary function, the Roman Catholic Church states that by virtue of the People of God assembled together to celebrate the Eucharist they, *ipso facto,* form a community. If the Church fails to foster *koininia,* one would doubt whether it is performing its primary

function. For converts, belonging often precedes believing, although formal admission to membership or full communion involves assent to the Church's official creed or fulfilling baptismal promises.

5.4.2.1 Deposition on believing but not belonging – 'Jane'

The following deposition illustrates, by way of an example, belief but not belonging. 'Jane', a female Roman Catholic in the age range 45-64, divorced her husband and later remarried. She writes:

> Years ago, my first husband left me with two small children. I desperately needed help, but my local priest berated me for sending my daughter to a Church of England school. I explained that the distance I would have to walk with my daughter and one–year-old child too, especially in the winter, was much too far for me to do twice daily. He had no understanding at all, plus, I divorced my husband for desertion. The priest sympathised with me, but never came back to visit me, so I took it as an insult to myself. Obviously, he did not want me in his church again.

'Jane' goes on to recall more recent events: "I came to Corby, remarried a wonderful man, brought up my children, who are all nice people. I consider myself a good Christian. I care about people and get on well with everyone. I would not do anyone a bad turn, and I think I am well liked in the community. I pray, I believe in God, but I do not go to Church.'

The lady believes but does not belong. This sense of belonging to the Christian community has been driven out of her, not just by an unhappy first marriage, but by the attitude of the priest and a lack of follow-up by him or a member of the Christian community. This has brought about a perception that she was not wanted or valued. It is probably not true that the priest in question did not want her in his congregation, but from her point of view that is what it looked like. The result of this deposition is that it concurs with the assertion of Richter and Francis (1998: 121) when they report that "failure to feel that an individual is accepted, loved or wanted, that he feels that he does not belong, will result in the person leaving the Church".

5.4.2.2 Deposition on believing but not belonging – 'Angela'

Since we believe that belonging is an important issue for the Church, we present another instance of this feature. In this case, the respondent does not experience a conflict with the priest, or with a member of the congregation as in the previous deposition. Angela's sense of not belonging is driven by the Church's attitude towards sexual morality and her conception of God. Even though she ascribes to being a Roman Catholic, she attends church infrequently. Angela is in the 45-64 age range.

She writes: "I don't know what God is – possibly just a force for good and love which is in each one of us. I don't believe Jesus was divine, but a son of 'God'." She believes that the Church is "now a massive institution on a backward swing of the pendulum. In the world it fights to rule people with social rules on contraception that are laughable. Is the natural method (biggest joke!) basically playing Russian roulette with 'God'? Sex generally has too much focus – all man-made rules by celibate men. The crucial issues involve compassion and caring in which the Church as an institution is seriously lacking. Would Jesus recognise the riches and robes, the rules and regulations? Somehow, I think not."

"The Church has got itself into a corner. The sterility of conformity has sapped spirituality. Religion blossoms in the Third World."

"I still regard myself as religious in the proper sense. I care, I'm concerned. I see 'God' in many people and their actions. I don't deny the goodness of many individuals within the Church, but it is no different to individuals everywhere."

The result of this deposition does not fall into a neat category. The respondent does not seem to have had a personal conflict with the Church, yet disagrees with its teachings while, at the same time, having a confused idea of God.

5.4.3 Losing One's Sense of Belonging

Richter and Francis (1998: 122,123) believe that those who lapse from membership of the Church leave through a lack of esteem, of recognition shown to them, and of a sense of belonging. This can occur if the church membership is unbalanced socially, racially, sexually, or by age thus marginalising them or making them feel intrusive. The Church

should welcome those from all backgrounds, since the gospel informs us that it will overcome all barriers. Yet for cultural reasons, where there are social classes, a barrier exists.

Not welcomed into church	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	—	4.3
Females	6.4	2.1

Table 15: Those who felt they were not welcomed into Church (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

Some individuals experience the Church as unwelcoming. Table 15 above indicates the extent of this feature. It will be seen that these percentages are quite low. It is significant, though, that those females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category display the highest percentage, which may have been a contributory factor for their leaving the Church.

On the other hand, it was customary in the past for individuals to attend Roman Catholic Church services without being welcomed. They may have exchanged words with their neighbours, a custom built up over generations. However, welcoming groups are gradually being introduced, especially into large parishes, to inculcate a sense of belonging in an otherwise cold atmosphere.

Congregation too old	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	13 0	2.1
Females	6.4	—

Table 16: Those who felt that the congregation was too old (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

The respondents were asked whether the congregation was too old or young. There was no response to the latter, signifying perhaps that the average age of the congregations is increasing. But the data for those who find congregations too old are shown above in Table 16. It is noteworthy that both non-attending and infrequently attending females and males register the highest percentages.

The question was asked whether the individuals ceased to attend because the congregation was either male or female dominated. There was no response to the former and only 4.4 per cent response by non-practising or infrequently practising males in the latter. It was therefore concluded that this aspect did not play a major part in ceasing religious practice. Sometimes, an individual will leave the Church if he feels that he is not wanted or his presence is not valued. The respondents were asked whether they were invited to take part in the activities of the Church.

Not asked to participate	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	6.5	2.1
Females	6.4	3.2

Table 17: Those who alleged they were not asked to take part in the activities of the Church (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

Both non-attending and infrequently attending males and females show a significant numerical correspondence at over 6 per cent. Although the percentages are low, this feature is important in church life. The majority of Roman Catholic congregations are quite willing to support the Church financially but they either cannot or do not want to support it in its pastoral life. However, it is fundamental for committed Christians to participate in the parishes' pastoral activities.

If a newcomer joins the Church and finds it unfriendly, he may leave it or search for an alternative. The respondents were asked whether or not they could make friends in the Church.

Could make no friends	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	2.1	—
Females	1.06	2.1

Table 18: Those who thought they could not make friends in the Church (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

The low percentages shown in Table 18 do not indicate a serious problem in making friends.

Not appreciated	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	2.1	2.1
Females	—	2.1

Table 19: Those who alleged they were not appreciated for their services to the Church (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

There appears to be little distinction between those who attend weekly or monthly and those who do not attend or attend infrequently. Those who were not appreciated for their services represent a small number of individuals. It may be that the males left the Church as a result.

Black immigrants sometimes find English churches unwelcoming, even hostile. Women feel alienated in male-dominated churches and men feel out of place in predominately female or elderly congregations. In many congregations, there are few who are in their 20s, 30s or 40s. New families would not be encouraged to join a predominately elderly community. Richter and Francis (1998: 125, 126) allege that cliques pose a danger in all congregations. Unless one is on the inside, it is likely that one will feel excluded and not part of the community. Consequently, unless some relationship is established among

other members, the future will look bleak in terms of belonging. Sometimes individuals complain they are not listened to, or asked to sit on committees, or to assume a leadership role. Equally, some leavers hold positions of leadership and resent the lack of appreciation shown them. There may even be some who think that if they cannot run the Church, it is not worth their while to belong. Belonging may involve some features which we shall now discuss.

Gibbs (1977: 11, 12) alleges that the city is a place of non-communication and violence. Having created a city, man discovers that it assumes a personality of its own, generating problems he cannot solve and power he cannot control. He (1977: 12) believes that given these elements of urban life, the Church needs a prophetic role so that community can be created within a 'self-sufficient, yet paradoxically lonely urban society'.

5.4.4 **Religious Commitment**

Belonging can be influenced by the individual's commitment. Gerard states (1985: 68, 69) that the age at which terminal education occurs influences religious commitment. Neither social class nor physical location significantly affects religious commitment. The intensity of the commitment increases as the individual becomes older.

Females, as a group, tend to be more religious than males at any age level. The degree of commitment of working females is stable throughout their working lives. However, though it is higher in non-working females well into middle age, the religious conviction varies significantly with age. The least religious group is that of females at home, looking after young children. The psychological well-being of females in employment with no children differs compared with those at home with young children. The latter are remote and lonely. It is assumed that psychological well-being and religiosity are linked and therefore, a low level of religious commitment among females at home is to be expected, since they are undergoing a major change in their lives. On the other hand, the commitment of males tends to decrease as the locality in which they live shows a higher overall commitment. The small congregation, such as the village, mostly fosters a high level of commitment. Overall religious commitment is shown in Table 20 on the next page.

Element	Overall religious commitment				
	Low %	Low-medium %	Medium %	Medium-high %	High %
Age					
18-24	39	27	15	11	9
25-44	24	31	16	16	14
45-64	14	21	19	20	27
Over 65	14	11	18	28	28
Sex/Employment status of women					
Male	27	25	18	14	15
Working Female	18	23	17	23	20
Non-working Female	15	23	14	22	26
Terminal education age					
14 years and under	15	15	18	25	28
15-17 years	24	29	17	16	14
Over 18 years	26	23	14	15	22
Locality					
Village	17	22	19	21	21
Small town	24	23	17	19	17
Large town	22	27	14	16	21

Table 20: Social Profile of Religious Commitment, with reference to Age, Sex, Employment Status of Women, Terminal Education Age and Locality.

Source: David Gerard. 1985. *Values and Social Change in Britain.* Page 70, adapted European Value Systems Study Group. Macmillan

(Note: Not all the rows give a total of 100%. The author does not explain this.)

The majority of males are to be found in low-commitment categories, although the retired group without children are highly committed. Among married men with children over 15 years considerable variation is apparent. Greater variation of commitment is observed in the middle-age groups, although the effects of age and domestic circumstances appear greater for women than for men. The ages of children in the family appear to exert no influence on the religious commitment of their parents. Religious commitment by age, sex and working status of women is shown in Table 21 below.

Level	Males %				Working Females %			Non-Working Females %			
	Under 25	25-44	45-64	65 & over	Under 25	25-44	45-64	Under 25	25-44	45-64	65 & over
Low	45	29	18	20	23	18	13	54	20	8	9
Low-medium	26	35	22	11	28	25	13	29	32	26	10
Medium	14	15	22	24	16	17	19	11	16	12	14
Medium -high	7	13	16	22	19	25	21	4	11	25	33
High	8	9	23	22	14	15	32	0	22	29	35

Table 21: Religious Commitment by Age, Sex, and Working Status of Women.

Source: David Gerard. 1985. *Values and Social Change in Britain*: page 71. Adapted European Value Systems Study Group. Macmillan

(Note: Not all the columns give a total of 100%. The author does not explain this.)

5.4.5 Religious Commitment by Denomination

Table 22 on the next page illustrates the relationship between denominational levels of commitment. Those who have a denominational membership and practise their religion at least once a month exhibit a higher level of commitment than those attending Church less frequently.

Commit-ment level %	Denomination						
	Established Churches		Roman Catholics		Free Churches		None
	Monthly	less	Monthly	less	Monthly	less	
Low	2	22	-	14	1	26	73
Low-medium	7	25	1	23	1	22	15
Medium	11	16	5	15	4	9	7
Medium -high	34	25	22	29	21	20	2
High	45	12	73	19	73	24	3

Table 22: Religious Commitment by denomination and frequency of Church attendance.

Source: David Gerard. 1985. *Values and Social Change in Britain*: page 75, Adapted European Value Systems Study Group. Macmillan
(Note: Not all the columns give a total of 100%. The author does not explain this)

Religious individuals tend to have greater attachment to values and attitudes indicative of concern. Their values imply openness, according to Gerard (1985: 83), and a non-judgmental attitude to others. They are also more likely to belong to voluntary organisations and sacrifice their lives for a cause beyond their immediate family. The level of involvement in voluntary organisations was discussed in chapter 3.

Roof (1978: 129) expresses the view that liberal Protestant churches are facing serious problems of institutional support. In a similar way to other denominations, they have suffered declining attendance, lack of financial contributions and membership losses. However, he does not think that a post-Christian era has been heralded, or that mainstream churches will disappear. New institutional priorities emphasising evangelism, personal faith and reduced commitment to social ethics and activist concerns have been implemented. Roof (1978:130) believes that some think that decline is related to the collapse of orthodox Christian beliefs. It may be stated that the latter are critical because, historically, they have possessed authority. Commitment to the religious institution and the individual's fundamental conception of reality are influenced by local community attachments, according to Roof (1978: 205). Such aspects help to reinforce the individual's beliefs. This does not imply that the communal context of religion determines an individual's belief. The stronger the ties the individual

has with the believing community, the easier it is to maintain the plausibility of traditional meanings.

5.4.6 **Involvement and Passivity**

Richter and Francis (1998:127) observe that a sense of belonging may derive from an intense involvement in the life of the Church. Such persons may hold positions of leadership, or their life may centre on church services or activities. Their church's style of worship may evoke special spiritual or intellectual participation. Others may prefer to be spectators rather than be participative. This does not diminish their sense of belonging. Gibbs (1977: 10, 11) asserts that there should be ample opportunities for participation and that every act of worship should lead to a renewed dedication to Christ, his Church and the world. It is likely that each individual will require a balance between involvement and passivity that is unique. When the balance tips in the 'wrong' direction, it may cause some individuals to leave. Worship may be too participatory or too passive. If the change in either direction is too much, there will be risk of alienation.

The respondents were asked how they viewed the Church's worship. Did they find it too participatory or too passive? An individual could leave the Church if he felt the style of worship was not to his taste, or one to which he could not be accommodated.

Style of worship too participatory	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	—	2.1
Females	3.2	1.06

Table 23: Those who alleged that the style of worship was too participatory (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

It is possible that non-attending or infrequently attending females as shown in the table above find church services too participatory nowadays, having been used to saying prayers quietly during a Latin Mass.

Style of worship too passive	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males	6.5	—
Females	2.1	1.06

Table 24: Those who alleged that the style of worship was too passive (n: 140. Males: 46; females: 94)

It is surprising that males in the non-attending and infrequently attending category should find church worship too passive.

5.4.7 Intimacy and Anonymity

Richter and Francis (1998:128) think that some will be more at home in a church that fosters open-hearted dialogue. Others will feel more comfortable in the anonymous setting of a large building, where one can adopt a private devotion during the service. In such an atmosphere, one does not need to speak to one's neighbour or stand and sing hymns. Such an individual would be horrified at the intimacy of church fellowship. At the same time, the 'fellowship-goer' would regard the anonymity of the cathedral as impersonal. There is a danger that the fellowship model can become too intrusive and the leadership too parental. 'Cathedral' worship can become so privatised that it becomes disconnected with the social dimension of the gospel. A sense of belonging may be connected with the physical age of the church building and that of the congregation. Over-large churches can be too impersonal, and very small ones can be claustrophobic. Individuals will be prone to leave if the balance between intimacy and anonymity to which they are accustomed is disturbed.

Some congregations may assume an outdated notion of themselves as 'community'. This might be attractive to some. However, most people live their lives in separate 'networks' or 'life-worlds'. There is also the virtual connectedness via the internet. Life no longer consists of a range of face-to face relationships. The Church may have to embrace both those who desire a distant, anonymous relationship and those who desire community.

5.4.8 Congregation Size

Richter and Francis (1998: 130) confirm a factor recognised by social scientists in church leaving: the potential imbalance of the size of the congregation and the seating capacity of the church. Often the size of the congregation is small in relation to the capacity of the church. Many churches are too large for today's congregations, since they were built in a period when more people attended. In such a scenario, individuals can feel a sense of coldness and impersonality. It might be assumed that the congregation is a dying one and churchgoing unfashionable. Empty and redundant churches reinforce the concept that religion is a thing of the past. Sparsely populated churches are those with predominately elderly or female members, and this may be a daunting prospect for marginal churchgoers.

5.4.9 Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness

Richter and Francis (1998: 131, 132) suggest that some may prefer to belong to an inclusive congregation with fluid boundaries and a low level of theological content. This could be described as an 'open' church. Others may prefer a congregation that is strongly demarcated from the outside world, a division between the believer and the unbeliever rigidly drawn. This may be termed a 'closed' church. The Christian gospel has in practice become sectarian. A sense of belonging is sometimes conveyed by a 'fortress mentality'. For others, their community is radically inclusive and somewhat unappealing to the outsider. Any change in the current balance between inclusiveness and exclusiveness may cause an individual to consider his allegiance to a church.

5.4.10 Attracting alternatives

Young people may prefer to belong to their peer group rather than a church, if the latter is devoid of a similar age group. They may attach more importance to what this group thinks and believes. Their worst fear is to be ostracised or thought odd by their friends and fellow students at college or school. It is important for them to be fashionable, and since churchgoing is often not thought of in this way, it is easy to visualise to which group a young person will choose to belong. Older people may feel that their sense of belonging is more easily satisfied by a bridge or golf club than by a church. The elderly, who do not know any churchgoers, may not have the will to go alone. If they live in retirement homes, they could encourage others to attend a church. When these die or move away the individual may be vulnerable, since their presence at church depends on

their friends. The situation where adults prefer the company of their friends rather than seeking friendship in a religious congregation is discussed in chapter 3.

According to Richter and Francis (1998: 133), a feeling of not belonging is the most likely reason to be cited by under-20s for not going to church. If most of their friends are not churchgoers, they may regard such an activity as unfashionable. The feeling that there are cliques or 'in groups' which they believe are exclusive was more likely to be cited by the over-20s. The belief that the Church has too negative an attitude to the outside world is offered as a reason for lapsation among the under-20s. The opinion that the Church does not draw a clear distinction between Christian values and those in society generally, is given as a reason for leaving the Church after the age of 20 years. The present writer's investigations suggest that a perceived lack of meaning in the Church may influence young people's sense of belonging. This aspect is illustrated in Table 25 below.

Lack of meaning in the Church	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	12.3	23.1
Males 15-19 years	10.75	10.75
Females ≤14 years	4.6	23.1
Females 15-19 years	7.7	7.7

Table 25: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending who believe that there is a lack of meaning in the Church (n = 65)

Lack of meaning seems to predominate in practising males and females up-to-and-including fourteen years, although males in both age groups show a much greater preponderance than females in the respective age groups. At the same time, the question

'Do you feel guilty about not practising your religion?' was posed, and the responses are summarised below.

Guilt	Non-attending or infrequently attending %	Weekly or monthly attending %
Males ≤14 years	9.68	9.68
Males 15-19 years	9.68	19.35
Females ≤14 years	4.83	17.74
Females 15-19 years	17.74	11.3

Table 26: Male and female non-attending/infrequently attending and weekly/monthly attending who feel guilty about not attending Church. (n = 62)

Surprisingly, feelings of guilt are recorded in the non-practising females in the 15-19 age group (17.74 %), practising females in both age groups (17.74%, for females in the up-to–and-including 14 age group and 11.3% for those in the 15-19 age group) and practising males in the 15-19 age group (19.35%).

5.4.11 Summary

- Over 35 per cent males and 50 per cent females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category do not feel that they belong to the Church.
- Seventy per cent of males and 30 per cent of females in the weekly and monthly attending group allege that they do not belong to the Church.
- Failure to feel accepted will probably result in a person leaving the Church, particularly if he is under 30 years.
- Belonging precedes believing, but the latter can exist without the former.

A feeling of not belonging can occur in the following ways.

- A welcome is not extended. The data presented show a small percentage in both attendance groups who were not welcomed in church.
- The congregation may be too female or male dominated. The most significant data was found in the non-attending and infrequently attending group.
- A small percentage of both attending categories alleged that they were not invited to participate in the activities of church.
- Some cannot make friends in church and some believed that they were not appreciated for their services. The data presented on these aspects was quantitatively insignificant.
- The level of education affects religious commitment, although the latter tends to increase as the individual grows older. Females appear to be more committed than males.
- Those who practise their religion at least monthly show a higher level of commitment than those attending church less frequently. Those who attend frequently are more likely to support voluntary organisations. The individual's conception of reality is influenced by his attachment to community projects.
- Some people want to be spectators; others prefer to participate in church activities.
- The data shows a low percentage of individuals who think that the style of worship is too participatory. Males (6.5 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending group believe that the style of worship is too traditional.
- Some prefer a community in which there is open-hearted dialogue. Others feel more comfortable within an anonymous atmosphere whereby privacy is assured.

- A coldness and impersonality within a large building.
- Whether the church is exclusive or inclusive. The boundaries of church membership are found to be either fluid or closed.
- A choice to belong to a peer group in the case of young people. Older people may find more companionship in a social club than in a church.
- The Church may be thought of as unfashionable or express a negative attitude to the world.

- The data presented shows that those who either do not attend a church, or do so infrequently, express the view that there is a lack of meaning in the Church.
- A feeling of guilt arising from not attending a church on Sundays was higher in the weekly and monthly attending category than in the non-attending and infrequently attending group.

5.5 CHURCH LEAVING ASSOCIATED WITH VALUES

5.5.1 The values of 'Baby Boomers'

Roof (1994: 39) defines 'Baby Boomers' as those born between 1945 and 1960. They were exposed in their formative years to massive cultural upheavals such as new musical forms, extensive drug taking, the permissive society, increased availability of higher education, the growth of new religious movements, intense political idealism and unrest. It was discovered by social commentators that teenagers were not leaving the Church for time-honoured reasons related to normal adolescent behaviour, but due to the advent of cultural changes, which influenced their values. Brierley (2000: 35) concurs with this view.

Roof (1994: 40, 41) lists the values of the 'Baby Boomer' generation as:

- distrust of leaders and institutions;
- a sceptical view of many societies and institutions;
- the family is perceived as a bourgeois relic; and

- the hierarchical Church with its rules and regulations thought of as an oppressive system.

Although they may have mellowed and settled down over the years, their suspicion of institutions remains and their leaders have to earn respect. Experience takes priority over beliefs for 'Baby Boomers'. Cultural and religious certainties were rejected in favour of living in the present moment. They broke free from the crowd and were released from the chains of the past to live a truly free life. Religion was written off as stale and ossified. They wanted something to accommodate them, rather than fitting into an existing system. They desired self-actualising spiritual experience in nature, whether this amounted to knowing God or communing with one's true self. The human spirit had to be set free from stifling social structures. The 'charismatic', New Age and New Religious movements found aspirants in the 'Baby Boomer' generation. As Roof comments (1994: 78), the latter are alert to the possibility that churches may just go through the motions.

Roof (1994: 43) explains that Boomers were raised in the 'never had it so good' era; they were brought up in a period of affluence and were encouraged to express themselves with the approval of Dr Spock. Instead of a struggle to survive, they could focus on the well-being of the self and a search for meaning. The virtue of self-denial was replaced by the ethic of self-fulfilment. One's potential had to be realised, and to possess a heightened self-knowledge was the goal. A person had to grow in order to achieve a certain quality of life. The self was not a static entity but something which could be enriched if the individual would accept responsibility for self-growth, which knows no upper limit. Although the economic optimism of their childhood gave way to economic recession, 'Baby Boomers' still place a high regard on growth of the self. Diversity of choice has been an important feature in consumption, life-style and media viewing. Pluralism is highly valued and although religion is optional, pre-packed religion is treated with suspicion. The term 'pick-and-mix' spirituality has been coined to describe the fluidity with which 'Baby Boomers' combine various aspects of religious tradition. Again, Brierley (2000: 35) agrees with Roof's description.

Roof (1994: 44) maintains that 'religion' to the 'Baby Boomers' is a word with negative associations, whereas 'spirituality' is a term which appeals to them, for this relates to the experiential, mystical and immanent. But 'Baby Boomers' regard personal life style as a matter of personal choice and they are tolerant of others' life-styles. They seek independence from old moral authorities and tend to make spontaneous and intuitive decisions concerning the way they should conduct their lives. Nowadays, they have become more conservative, but they still place great emphasis on individual autonomy and, therefore, respect different life-styles. Those who believe their life-style was incompatible with churchgoing are discussed in chapter 3. They may believe that sex outside marriage, lesbian and gay relationships, or the consumption of illegal drugs are appropriate. They feel that a moral censure would be imposed by the Church if they remained members. Roof (1994: 46) believes that Roman Catholics are perhaps more sensitive to the difference between the individual's sense of morality and that sanctioned by the Church. The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to artificial birth control, abortion, divorce and promiscuity has not always driven people away from the Church. An increasing number have chosen to defy papal rulings. It is assumed that the British tend to be more law abiding than those in continental countries and would be more likely to leave the Church if they believed that the rules were incorrect, rather than remain in bad faith within the Church. Whether they stay or leave will depend on the social networks to which they belong and upon the priests they know.

Many 'Baby Boomers' become idealistic. They search for world peace, social justice, gender equality and ecological harmony. Their spirituality seeks to become more holistic. Where 'Baby Boomers' are churchgoers, they expect their churches to be concerned with globalised social issues and not to be content with spiritual, safe issues. In some respects their personal inclinations have developed into a sense of connectedness with others, and preoccupation with self has evaporated. 'Baby Boomers' have discovered that commitment to the Church can enhance self and need not stifle it. Self-fulfilment, in the words of Roof (1994: 246), is recognised as involving "the cultivation of shared meanings and the sharing of lives". Roof further claims (1994: 185) that 'Baby Boomers' are a generation "weighing what commitment means" and "figuring out what to give themselves and where to place their energies".

5.5.2 The Values of 'Baby Busters'

Roof (1994: 47, 48) defines 'Baby Busters' as those born between 1961 and 1981; they are sometimes called 'Generation X'. 'Baby Busters' have continued the Boomers' quest for personal autonomy. Like them, they show a high level of tolerance in regard to personal morality and religious preference. In the post-modern world, however, traditional authorities such as the Church have little influence on their lives. Compared with earlier generations, ''Baby Busters'' tend to be more pragmatic than idealistic. Many have witnessed the breakdown of their families, although they are not apathetic. Given the right issue, they can show considerable passion, for instance in the field of animal rights. They are less optimistic than their parents about the ability of politics to change anything. ''Baby Busters'' tend to adopt tangible issues such as recycling garbage rather than changing the world. In the latter mission they cannot trust anyone. Education may have failed to give them the prospect of a job.

In their personal lives, 'Baby Busters' seek to achieve a balance and a sense of perspective. They desire neither to be materialistic nor idealistic. They are aware that their parents turned them into 'latch-key' children in the pursuit of lucrative careers. They both work and play hard. Loyalty to the company is less important than loyalty to their friends and family. They have been over-exposed to television with the result that advertising has made them sceptical of 'hype'. They have learned that television advertisements do not live up to expectations. 'Baby Busters' do not accept information at face value. They require honesty and openness from those in positions of influence and they are alert to the possibility that they might be manipulated. They are increasingly active in channel hopping and surfing the internet, in which they expect communication to be interactive. Roof (1994:49) admits that.

'Baby Busters' are appreciative of such television programmes as Father Ted or the Simpsons, which break the rules of genres and indulge in self- parody. Considerable exposure to television has saturated the 'Baby Busters' sense of sight and has attenuated their visual sense so that other sensory perceptions are considered more important. In previous cultures, individuals tended to focus on visual images and the printed word, inclining them to think in terms of order, pattern and position. Nowadays, other senses are predominant and these appear to be more confused. In fact, the world of the 'Baby Buster' is chaotic and subjective. 'Doing your own thing' takes precedence over

uniform fashions, tribes and party membership. Such people express themselves in terms of their feelings. Self-expression is therefore important.

Brierley (2000a: 36), echoing the words of Croucher (1998: 26-31), agrees with Roof: " 'Baby Busters' dress to express rather than impress. They 'pick-and-mix' to develop their own style, in preference to copying anyone". The reason for 'Baby Busters' leaving the Church is not attributable to teenage rebellion. In fact, they are probably closer to their parents than teenagers were in previous generations. They have left the Church due to a suspicion of easy answers, an unwillingness to be treated as passive individuals, scepticism towards manipulation, the sense of their own person-hood, the hunger to have all senses satisfied. Roof (1994: 50) believes their style to be original, rather than following the crowd or the dictates of denominational tradition. 'Baby Busters' may not have lost faith, but by leaving the Church they have opted for a different faith less conducive to churchgoing.

5.5.3 Teenage Values

Kay and Francis (1995: 200) report that Church involvement for the Christian is widely regarded by teenagers as unnecessary. They believe that one can be a Christian without attending Church. In fact, some think that the institution is irrelevant to modern life, according to Kay and Francis (1995: 198). On the other hand, teenagers endorse the work of Christian ministers and the services of the rites of passage offered by the Church. A large number of young people want to get married in the Church and have their children baptised. About one-third believe that religious education should be taught in schools; although the same proportion think that the Bible is irrelevant to life today.

Dudley (1979: 34) presents a family life-cycle theory that posits an optimistic prognosis for the middle classes where the Church is particularly important for different phases of the Christian journey. Dudley agrees with Kay and Francis that young adults do not believe churchgoing important since they devote their energies to establishing a career and beginning a family. During the middle years, parents of school-age children are primarily concerned with the religious education of their children and commit themselves to Church membership. However, Dudley (1979: 35) maintains that when the children have left the family, adults are inclined to increase their participation in the Church. He (1979: 35) reckons this theory is subject to qualification, because the family

life-cycle theory is unpredictable and inconsistent. A polarisation of social attitudes can take place that is the result of a change of values. The distance between the young adult and the older generation is growing and participation is declining in all age groups, especially in the young.

The values challenged by youth are in those areas where the middle class members appear to be most sensitive. Some of the different attitudes of young adults and older Church members appear below.

Attitudes of Church members and older adults	**Attitudes of younger adults and Fewer Church members**
Faith: orthodox doctrine	Faith: personal experience
Belong to Church and accept traditions	Question all authority and doubt institutional promises
High priority to family	Individual high priority
Believe in large families	Less interested in children
Emphasis on community moral standards	Emphasis on individual decision about personal life styles
Greater opposition to premarital sex	Greater acceptance of premarital sex
Greater opposition to extramarital sex	Greater acceptance of extramarital sex
Greater opposition to abortion	Greater acceptance of abortion
Greater opposition to divorce	Greater acceptance of divorce
Greater opposition to homosexuality	Greater acceptance of homosexuality
Greater opposition to pornography	Greater acceptance of pornography
Greater opposition to birth control	Greater acceptance of birth control
Greater opposition to remarriage	Greater acceptance of remarriage

Table 27: Contrasting Attitudes of older and younger adults
Source: Carl S. Dudley. 1979. Where have all our People gone? Page 37, adapted Pilgrim Press

According to Dudley (1979: 38), young adults who have experienced college or university are more likely to share the values of their peer group. On the other hand, those who have not completed secondary school are more likely to share the beliefs of

their parents. Our view is that this depends on the social class to which they belong. If they emanate from the working class, they are unlikely to persist in their beliefs.

Dudley (1979: 39) demonstrates that young people who espouse the values in Table 27 have probably come from families having high incomes, high levels of education and greater social mobility. They have been taught to think for themselves and place a high premium on their personal experience. They have also been free from the worries of the physical necessities of life and are able to concentrate on its quality. These represent the 'lost members' of the Church: the lapsed.

Dudley (1979: 40, 41) maintains that young believers hold on to the idea of a divine being through their own experience, without representation from the institutional Church. They believe in God, Jesus, prayer and life beyond death. Their faith is portable in the sense that they expect to find satisfaction as they travel with their companions in faith. Personal morality is a private decision. They are therefore tolerant of many activities that traditional society sees as threatening and which the Church has condemned. Older church members sometimes regard the young believer as a hedonist seeking self-satisfaction. The young believer sees the older church member as a rigid dogmatist who has not experienced the life of the Spirit.

Many values that the young have compromised are those which church members have found difficult to emulate. Sexual mores that threaten or support families are examples of this. Young individuals do not trust institutional systems to deliver in any field — political or spiritual. Youth culture often sees no need for church membership since their values conflict. There are different premises on which decisions are made, and different priorities.

Dudley (1979: 42) believes that young believers who do not practice a religion did not leave the Church in anger but drifted away because of a difference in cultural values. Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 111) suggest that nowadays the establishment of adult identities has become problematic due to life-styles becoming increasingly shaped by market forces that are not regarded as individualistic in choice. There is a polarisation of social life in which those occupying a disadvantaged socio-economic position face the prospect of total exclusion.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997: 113) claim that there is a weakening of social identities caused by individualisation. This brings about a convergence of class cultures. Individualisation introduces risk and uncertainty into the young adult's life. Giddens (1990:140) offers the view that in the way that the individual interprets the world and constructs social realities subjectively, spatial experience alters, whereby familiarity and estrangement are related. He (1990: 141) illustrates this view by stating that the experience of telephoning someone thousands of miles distant can be more immediate and personal than communicating with a person in the same room. Giddens thus relates familiarity to estrangement. He (1990: 141) states that one's insertion into a globalised cultural and information setting implies that familiarity and place are less consistently connected than hitherto.

These features determine the way in which the young adult interprets the world. The present writer agrees with Kay and Francis (1995: 94, 95), who predict that the family will become a cultural minority in the future, since fewer people will accept its underlying assumptions. Non-attending young girls display certainty concerning the practice of sex outside marriage and contraception, whereas those who are practising members of the Church show uncertainty on these issues. Such tension may be due to a conflict between the Church code, which states that sex outside marriage is wrong, and the prevailing youth culture which says that it is right.

5.5.4 **Summary**

- The values of 'Baby Boomers' were influenced by the permissive society, growth of new religious movements, new musical forms, availability of higher education, political idealism, a distrust of institutions, especially the hierarchical Church.
- For 'Baby Boomers', experience takes priority over received beliefs and self-fulfilment takes precedence over self-denial.
- Spirituality and individual autonomy are more important to 'Baby Boomers' than religion.
- They seek ecological harmony and social justice.

- Traditional authority has little influence on 'Baby Busters'. They are more pragmatic than idealistic and less optimistic than their parents concerning the ability of politics to change anything.
- They tend to adopt issues such as recycling rather than changing the world.
- Loyalty to friends is very important to them. They are alert to the possibility of being manipulated.
- Their world is subjective and chaotic.
- They may have left the Church due to unwillingness to be treated as passive individuals.
- Teenagers often think of themselves as Christians, though they may not attend church, which they believe is irrelevant to modern life.
- Baby-busters as adults tend to participate in the life of the Church when their children have left home.
- They tend to accept pre-marital sex, abortion, birth control, pornography and remarriage. They make up their own minds concerning moral issues. Teenagers have been taught to think for themselves.
- If teenagers attend college or university, they are more inclined to share the values of their peer group. Those whose education stops at secondary school are likely to share the beliefs of their parents.
- They have drifted from the Church through a cleavage in cultural values.
- Their individualism introduces risk and uncertainty in their lives.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the aspects of faith, practical features, belonging, and values associated with lapsation have been analysed.

Although faith cannot be extinguished, since it is a gift of God, nevertheless belief can deteriorate, thereby promoting agnosticism. Agnosticism assumes three forms:

- philosophical, which is a decision to reject religious faith;
- experiential, in which the individual feels God has let him down; and transitional, which is a temporary state of mind occurring during one's growth in faith and where self- questioning takes place.

Leaving the Church is connected with the experiential type.

Lapsation can also be attributed to practical aspects. For instance, a consideration of the costs of belonging in terms of time, energy and money and the benefits both spiritual and mundane likely to be obtained can affect one's commitment.

One's ideals and expectations are also factors. Does the Church match up to one's individual dreams and ideals? It was discovered in our investigations that 31.6 per cent of weekly and monthly attending females were disenchanted with their congregation, compared with 9.7 per cent of males in the same category. Those who attended infrequently or not at all showed the highest level of disappointment. Males recorded 43.6 per cent and females 45.2 per cent. Such a response affected their churchgoing. A short-fall of expectations in church worship was also recorded. Fifty-five per cent of weekly and monthly attending males said that they were not satisfied. Only 9.7 per cent females reported disappointment. In the non- or infrequently attending category, 48.7 per cent males and 37.1 per cent females recorded dissatisfaction.

The issue of worship did not convey a significant response. The Church's worship was not thought to be too modern, although a small percentage of weekly and monthly attenders (1.06 per cent) believed it was too traditional, whilst 5.3 per cent females and 1.3 per cent males in the infrequently or non-attending group thought worship was too traditional. Whether such views influenced their departure from the Church is inconclusive.

The level of pastoral care can influence church leaving. The survey concluded that in the weekly and monthly attendance group 57.9 per cent males and 30 per cent females expressed satisfaction with pastoral care. In the infrequently or non attending category 48.7 per cent males and 37.1 per cent females thought pastoral care was satisfactory.

Conflict with church leadership can precipitate lapsation. It was discovered that the degree of conflict was quite low, though it is an important factor. Monthly and weekly attending males and females recorded 6.5 per cent and 1.06 per cent level of conflict respectively, whilst males and females in the infrequently and non-attending group expressed a 6.5 per cent and 6.4 per cent level of conflict respectively. Conflict in the Church has been analysed by Houtart who indicates types of contestation and the manner in which the institutional Church legitimises its decisions. Etzioni describes three forms of power as respectively coercive, remunerative and normative, and the corresponding forms of involvement as alienation, calculative and moral. He believes the Roman Catholic Church exercises a normative power and that the personal involvement is calculative.

Did our respondents believe the Church was open or closed to outsiders? A small number felt it was closed. Weekly and monthly attending males and females registered 2.1 per cent and 1.06 per cent respectively. Males and females in the infrequently and non-attending group recorded 4.3 per cent and 3.2 per cent respectively.

Those who were lapsed, 1.3 per cent males and 8.5 per cent females preferred to be in the company of their friends than being in church.

The adult's response to the teachings of the Church has already been considered in chapter 3.

In the current research, it was found that in the up-to-and-including-14 year group, weekly and monthly attendance category, 15.6 per cent of males disagreed with the teaching of the Church. Twenty-five per cent of females in the same age category registered discontent. Males and females in the 15-19 age groups recorded 6.3 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively. These statistics are quite high considering that the majority of the respondents attend a religious school. In the infrequently and non-attendance category, males and females in the up-to-and-including-14 age group show

4.7 per cent and 10.9 per cent level of disagreement respectively, whereas males and females in the 15-19 age group indicated a 10.9 per cent and 14.1 per cent disagreement respectively.

Related to disagreement with the teachings of the Church is the question of whether churchgoers and non-churchgoers distrust the decisions of the Church. It was found that non- attending or infrequently attending females showed the highest degree of distrust at 68.4 per cent. This may have been a contributory feature in their leaving. However, it was also discovered that 41 per cent and 38.7 per cent of males and females respectively, who practised weekly or monthly, neither distrusted nor were unsure about the Church's decisions.

A large number or respondents indicated that they base their faith on personal experience. This achieved scores of over 50 per cent in both attendance categories.

From the current research, it was discovered that 38.5 per cent males and 50 per cent females who practised infrequently or not at all felt they did not belong to the Church. Their view may have had some influence on their decision to leave the Church. 70 per cent of males and 31 per cent of females in the weekly and monthly attendance categories expressed a feeling that they did not belong. Individuals can believe without belonging. A loss of any sense of belonging can be attributed to the shock of not being welcomed into Church. The present research indicated that 6.4 per cent of non-attending and infrequently attending females expressed a view that they were not welcomed. Males and females in the weekly and monthly attendance group registered 4.3 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively. Loss of a sense of belonging can be allied to a congregation being too old: 13 per cent of males and 6.4 per cent of females in the infrequently and non- attending groups indicated this.

There appeared to be no instance of congregations being male or female dominated, although this can act as a deterrent to participation.

Sometimes, lapsation occurs due to an individual not being asked to take part in the activities of the Church. Infrequent and non-attenders showed a significant level at over 6 per cent. Males and females in the weekly and monthly attendance group registered 2.1 per cent and 3.2 per cent respectively.

A loss of belonging can be induced by an unfriendly atmosphere. The surveys did not find any significant responses. Infrequently attending and non-attending only scored 2.1 per cent.

A strain is sometimes placed on those who feel they are unappreciated for their services. Again, no significant data was uncovered. Males in both attendance categories only recorded 2.1 per cent.

Religious commitment usually increases as individuals grow older. Women tend to be more religious than men, although the degree of commitment varies according to whether they are working or at home.

An individual's sense of belonging may depend on whether he wishes to be involved or act as a spectator in Church. Belonging to an intimate community depends on the sharing of a set of convictions about the nature of reality. Without a shared world-view, intimate community is impossible.

The present survey established that 3.2 per cent of infrequently and non-attending females perceived the style of worship as too participatory, whereas 6.5 per cent males in the same attendance group believed it was too passive.

Some may leave the Church either because it fosters too intimate a style of community or it supports an anonymous style of community.

The size of a congregation can promote church leaving, either by being too small, which fosters claustrophobia, or by being too large, which entails an impersonal atmosphere.

One's departure from church commitment could also be furthered by either an open or closed Church or whether its style is inclusive or exclusive.

Young people may wish to belong to their peer group rather than attend a church that is devoid of people of a similar age. Young people's sense of not belonging could also be attributed to the lack of meaning they find in the Church. The current research informs us that in the infrequent and non-attending category, 12. 3 per cent of males in the up-to–and-including-14 age group register a lack of meaning in the Church. Males in the

same age group who attend weekly or monthly report 23.1 per cent lack of meaning. Males in the 15-19 age group register 10.75 per cent, irrespective of level of attendance. Females who attend infrequently or not at all, in the up–to-and-including-14 age group express the lowest at 4.6 per cent, although their equivalent in the weekly and monthly attendance group is 23.1 per cent. Females in the 15-19 age group show 7.7 per cent, irrespective of attendance.

Respondents were asked whether they felt guilt in not practising their religion. Infrequently and non-practising males in both age groups recorded 9.68 per cent. This percentage was also registered by weekly and monthly attending males in the up-to-and-including-14 age group. But weekly and monthly practising males in the 15-19 age group expressed 17.74 per cent in this aspect. This was almost matched by females in the up-to-and-including-14 age group who attended weekly or monthly and females in the 15-19 age group who infrequently attend or do not attend. They reported 17.74 per cent. Non-practising females in the lower age group showed the least guilt at 4.83 per cent.

'Baby Boomers' (age 45-55 at 2000) distrust leaders and institutions. Religion, they believe, is ossified and experience is the most important facet, through which self fulfilment is achieved. A form of spirituality that is holistic and autonomy, by which self-fulfilment is gained, appeals to them. They would consider sex outside marriage, gay and lesbian relationships and consumption of drugs to be amoral.

'Baby Busters' (age 19-29 at 2000) also seek autonomy. They are more pragmatic than idealistic. Loyalty to the family is paramount. They seek honesty and openness from those in positions of influence and revel in situations which indulge in parody. Their world is confused, chaotic and subjective. Self expression is important to them and they are suspect of easy answers. They are unwilling to be treated as passive individuals. They are sceptical of manipulation and possess a sense of their personhood.

Teenagers believe that the Church is irrelevant in modern life, although they may want to get married and have their children baptised in it. Young adults who have attended college or university are more likely to share the values of their peer group, whereas those who attended secondary school only are more likely to endorse the views of their

parents. They believe that personal morality is a private decision. Those who left the Church did so because of a difference of cultural values.

5.7 CONCLUSION

- In order of importance, it is claimed by the present writer that belonging is the most crucial issue — in accordance with the current research. Seventy per cent males and 31 per cent females who attend church weekly or monthly record a feeling of not belonging. In the infrequent and non-attending category, 38.5 per cent males and 50 per cent females express a feeling of not belonging to the Church. This is an amazing statistic.

- The next important features are those of ideals and expectations. Practising females felt in 31.6 per cent of instances that their ideals had fallen short. Infrequently and non-attending males and females indicated a falling short of ideals in 43.6 per cent and 45.2 per cent of cases respectively. This is also a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Expectations of church worship also attained high scores. In the infrequently and non-attendance category, 48.7 per cent males and 37.1 per cent females expressed disappointment in expectations. Practising males, on the other hand, registered 55 per cent.

- Third, the adequacy of pastoral care achieved scores of 57.9 per cent for males and 30 per cent for females in the weekly and monthly attendance category, whereas those in the infrequent and non-attending group showed 48.7 per cent for males and 37.1 per cent for females. However, it is not known to what extent individuals feel that pastoral care is unsatisfactory.

- Fourth, young people are quite vulnerable to non-Christian concepts. Young males and females up–to-and-including-fourteen registered a fairly high percentage (23.1) of not finding meaning in the Church. This is probably attributable to the combined failure of catechesis, a following of the values of the peer group, exposition to secular values and culture, the inability or failure of the family to inculcate and maintain Christian values and the inability of the congregation to support faith development of the young person.

In many cases, a low sample response ensued. The data collected may not possess a universal significance, but it is believed that its accuracy for the parishes in which the research was undertaken is undeniable. These aspects are not outside the influence of parish ministers, the parish core group, family and educational or catechetical system.

CHAPTER 6: THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the process of lapsation will be described; though it is presented as a process, it should not be imagined that this is clear-cut. There is a certain amount of over-lap between the stages and it is possible that some may not even be experienced.

In this endeavour to discover the process of lapsation, a study of the works of Berger. Berger & Kellner: Bruce: 1999; 1973; Fulton: 2000; Hornsby-Smith, M. P. Lee, R. M; Reilly, P. A: 1977; Hornsby-Smith: 1989; Hoge: 1981; Kay and Francis: 1996; Richter and Francis : 1998; Stark and Bainbridge: 1985; Miles: 1994; Neville: 1999; Schweitzer: 2000; Tacey: 2004; Thomas: 1997; Wuthrow and Mellinger: 1978 will be attempted.

6.2 THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION ACCORDING TO RICHTER & FRANCIS

6.2.1 Roles

Richter and Francis (1998: 14, 15) express their theory in a reductive and analytical form. Sociological role theory assumes that human behaviour is largely shaped by the expectations of others. A person's sense of self is formed and developed by his viewing a mirror image of other people's reactions. In everyday life, a person may play a variety of roles: motorist, spouse, child, employee and churchgoer, for instance. Sometimes individuals go to church not because of a faith commitment or religious experience, but through curiosity. They might be indistinguishable from other churchgoers, but this role will be discarded if they are unconvinced of the likelihood of any benefit they may receive.. For the sake of authenticity, they will renounce it.. Even when an individual plays an authentic role there will always be the possibility of a conflict that could be resolved to the detriment of the churchgoer. For instance, many sports fixtures occur on Sunday and, since parents realise the danger their children face travelling alone for the event, they will assume the role of chauffeuring their children to and from the match.

6.2..2 Stages of Deconversion

Conversion is defined (1998: 16) by Richter and Francis as "a radical transformation in the way an individual interprets reality, entailing a fresh view of the world, a new set of relationships and an altered personal identity".. The hymn 'Amazing Grace' expresses it very well when it says "I once was lost but now I'm found"..

Deconversion either constitutes a journey from a faith position or transfer to another more plausible religious way of interpreting reality and self identity. Much of what happened at conversion is reversed, although conversion and deconversion could not be described as mirror images. The stages of deconversion are noted by Richter and Francis (1998: 17). They are:

- crisis of belief;
- review and reflection;
- disaffection;
- withdrawal;
- transition and relocation.

These stages will now be examined.

6..2.3 Crisis of Belief

Richter and Francis (1998: 17) state that disillusionment may be caused by a number of factors, such as the over-exposure to a secular culture that calls into question Christian perspectives of the world. Alternatively, the individual may be frustrated that the Church is not having an impact on the community. Some may be impatient with a conflict-ridden or uncaring church that fails to be a loving community. They may be aware of the inconsistency between what leaders preach and what they do.

From a Catholic point of view, the present writer believes that the loss of parishioners would certainly result in a conflict situation, and our view is that disillusionment sets in when an individual feels that he is an anonymous member and that no one takes any interest in him or greets him when he attends church. He may assume the role of parishioner, but when he sees that his presence is not acknowledged he will depart either for a friendlier environment or leave altogether. We think that a crisis of belief is not always responsible for disillusionment. The latter can be caused by any of the factors mentioned in chapter 3.

6..2.4 **Review and Reflection**

Richter and Francis (1998: 18) believe that at this stage the individual will reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of continued involvement. This is often a gradual process, but even if a sudden decision to leave is undertaken it is likely to have been preceded by heart-searching. During this period a person's life style, religious identity and understanding of the world are re-evaluated. After considering the alternatives he may, in some cases, feel the pull of other religious systems. Alternatively, some will not find a suitable congregation to satisfy their needs. This is possible when a church exercises so much control over the individual that there appear to be few viable alternatives available. At the same time, if some are dependent on a church for their friends, as well as for a meaning in life, it would take considerable courage to leave. The latter would involve self doubt and the consideration of the correct option being acted upon. Those who leave sometimes retain an ambivalent attitude towards their former congregation and this may be a source of comfort and meaning to them. Leaving does not render the former attachment in a negative light. The ending of a formal commitment does not cancel the more satisfying features of it: something positive from the former commitment is salvaged. Such features are paralleled in a marital separation and divorce. Sometimes the influence of non-churchgoers or non-believers is an important factor at this stage.

Drawing upon his own pastoral experience, the present writer thinks that death of a loved one or divorce can have a powerful effect on a person's religious commitment, possibly leading to disaffection.

6..2.5 **Disaffection**

Richter and Francis (1998: 21) claim that during this stage, emotional ties between individuals begin to unravel. The conversion experience is high-lighted by the importance of friendship and emotional bonding, often predating conversion at the level of conviction and belief. The deconversion process involves distancing oneself from emotional involvement with a church. Gradually the bonds are severed between the religious community and new ones possibly established elsewhere. The decision to leave is thus taken and planning begins as to how this will be effected.

In the present writer's opinion, disaffection might not precede deconversion. This is because the individual may not have any plan in mind to transfer allegiance to another religious institution. Disaffection could be resolved in any case at this stage by pastoral initiatives. It may not be the turning point that Richter and Francis (1998: 21) describe. The present writer believes that a traumatic experience may occur before an individual considers distancing himself from his church or his friends. Indeed, he may consider that loss of involvement in church does not necessarily entail a loss of the friendships developed there, although the formation of new ones in a different religious group could be difficult. To transfer to another religious institution would involve a certain amount of courage and determination, unless aided by individuals in the new religious group.

6..2.6 **Withdrawal**

This is the point at which departure takes place. It is effected by 'the final straw that breaks the camel's back'.. According to Richter and Francis (1998: 22), this precipitating factor could be something that appears in the press, the ordination of women, the introduction of new hymns, or a new minister. Such an event, though trivial in itself, becomes the trigger causing departure. The leave-taking can vary. Some wish their departure to be quiet and unnoticed, so that they do not have to answer questions regarding their decision. Others may express their leave-taking in a more declarative manner in which they publicly state the reasons for their departure. One such individual may be a seasoned churchgoer who has given up trying to influence his community. Such a departure may help to release some of the tension that accompanies separation from the Church. In fact, leave-taking could be experienced as liberating. It could also be experienced as a source of anxiety and uncertainty.

Our experience is that in Roman Catholic circles departures are usually quiet. There is not much to say, for the individual realises that his church is not going to bend to his opinions, and certainly not on moral issues.

6.2.7 **Transition**

After leaving, the individual enters a period of transition in which he sheds his previous identity and attempts to find new sources of meaning and purpose in his life. Richter and Francis (1998: 23) believe that it is possible that he may feel disoriented during this period due to being cut off from the safe and familiar. It is an experience similar to

taking part in funerals or as bride and groom at a wedding: the participants experience a creative though disturbing phase in their lives. Church leaving involves loss of home, a place which provides a framework where one can be and which expresses who one is.

In common with Richter and Francis (1998: 18), the present writer claims that although a person may establish a new identity, the positive influences imbibed within the previous religious body will remain. He may have entered a period of transition in the withdrawal phase.

6.2.8 **Relocation**

The final phase of deconversion, by no means inevitable according to Richter and Francis (1998: 24), is the stage where the individual successfully disassociates completely from the former religious institution, begins to make sense of life without reference to it, in a place where he builds new social relationships.

The present writer thinks that the individual may not make sense of life at all in his new scenario. This view is based on the large number of respondents (20.5 per cent males and 12.9 per cent females in the infrequent and non-attending category) who could give no reason for their defection from churchgoing (see 3. 4.19). It is possible that the individual may be in a confused state and open to New Age thinking.

6.2.9 **Comment**

Richter and Francis (1998: 16-24) analyse the psychological process of lapsation, the phases of which may not be accessible to another, except for the final stage: withdrawal. This phase may be at too late a point for attempting any strategy of reconciliation. Nevertheless, the analysis provides an important insight into the process of lapsation.

6..3 THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION ACCORDING TO HORNSBY-SMITH

The perspective adopted by Hornsby-Smith is somewhat descriptive rather than psychological.. Hornsby-Smith (1977: 8) enquires what type of individual practises his faith. He responds by saying that women practise more than men, and middle-aged people more than older ones, presumably because of infirmity in the latter. Those who fall into the 18-30 age range practise the least. There are high rates of commitment

among married people, except for those who are engaged in the process of building a family, and among older single people and widows. A reasonable percentage of divorcees attend regularly; those engaged in non-manual work and those with educational qualifications are more likely to practise than manual workers who left school at the usual age. This is not to state that manual workers do not attend church, but that it is less likely for them to do so than non-manual workers, although working class people living in a middle-class area are more likely to attend than those living in a working- class area. Class appears to be more important than region. Communities that have a high rate of attendance encourage those who might do otherwise to go to Mass.

Hornsby-Smith (1977: 8) addresses the question as to why and when people lapse. Accordingly, there are certain critical phases when this is likely to occur; for instance, the transition from school to work appears most commonly. A move from school to college, or leaving home to get married, is also a recurring reason for lapsing. Moving from school to work involves a transition from a Catholic background to one which is unsupportive and stressful. Hornsby-Smith (1977: 9) observes that when certain social controls are removed, the individual is free to decide what to do. In some cases, if the social control is repressive - for instance, where the parents force attendance on their children - when this control is removed, transition is an escape. If the individual practises his religion throughout adolescence and early manhood, he is likely to continue doing so for the rest of his life. We have seen that repressive social controls are unlikely to maintain religious commitment when the individual is free to make a personal choice concerning his allegiance to his parents' religion.

Hornsby-Smith (1977: 9, 10) admits that the reason for lapsation is not a conscious rejection of the Church. There are perhaps more enjoyable activities in which to participate on Sundays. There is little ideological or intellectual rejection of the Church either. According to Hornsby-Smith (1977: 10), few disagreed with the birth-control issue, but there were difficulties over divorce and mixed marriages. Rarely do Catholics feel antagonistic towards the Church, although some condemn its obsession with money and its wealth in contrast to the poverty of some of its members.

The present writer maintains that the birth control issue was a major one, resulting in many leaving the Roman Catholic Church. It is, however, not a serious problem today

because most married couples make up their own minds on moral issues, as has been suggested in chapter 3 (see 3.4.16), and do not always follow the rules of the Church.

There are a substantial number of lapsed individuals who identify themselves as 'Catholic': they believe in the teachings of the Church and bring up their children as Catholics, yet have no commitment to attend Sunday Mass in a regular way. Hornsby-Smith (1977: 15) supports this view. Such individuals often do not express a reason for irregular attendance at Church.

Hornsby-Smith (1977: 15) believes that to the disaffected young person up to the age of twenty, religion seems unimportant. There is a substantial degree of heterodoxy and non-acceptance of Church authority. They reject traditional Catholic sexual morality and tend to be middle class, male, from mixed marriages, particularly in which the father was Roman Catholic.

The adolescent frequently struggles for personal autonomy, according to Hornsby-Smith (1977: 15-18). He rebels against the Church and the school. Most adolescents rely on their peer group and when the pupil does not find support for regular practice from family or friends, he lapses. Our experience suggests that many adolescents view the institutional Church as incomprehensible. For them, the lessons and sermons are boring or irrelevant. They are disinterested rather than antagonistic towards the institutional Church. Part of the adolescents' rejection of Catholicism stems from his predominantly impoverished conceptualisation of God and religion and a fear of being identified with childish things whilst struggling for autonomy. In Hornsby-Smith's (1977: 18) view, the adolescent sees little sense in belonging to an institutional Church. That writer (1977: 19) believes that this represents a failure of the Church, in spite of recent liturgical changes, to promote a sense of the common membership of the People of God.

Hornsby-Smith (1977: 23) reckons that the principle issue in this process is that of social control. Given a climate which favours independence and autonomy, coercion of individuals to hold certain beliefs or to behave in a specified ways is a non-starter. We argue that coercion may have worked when denominational cultures were more divided. It can have no place in modern society. Religious commitment is a matter of choice, and lapsation will be less likely where individuals in the younger generation are persuaded,

exhorted or attracted rather than threatened or prohibited. As Hornsby-Smith (1977: 23) correctly observes, some rewards, controls and sanctions are necessary in any institution. Alhough the individual may seek autonomy, the social institution must be clearly defined so that a chaotic situation of 'normlessness' does not result.

He (1977: 23) believes that mixed marriages are considered to induce a reduction in familial support for continuing religious involvement. Lapsation is more likely in the future to occur in endogenous marriages, so that more attention needs to be offered to providing a religiously supportive climate to couples who have different religious allegiances. Lapsation, he (1977: 19) concludes, is a process which is multi-dimensional and complex.

6.3.1 **Comment**

Hornsby-Smith (1977: 8-23) identifies the occasions when lapsation is likely to occur, such as the individual's transition from school to work, school to college or university and from school or college to getting married. This provides important information for shaping and focusing future strategy, although this might be difficult to construct and even more difficult to implement. The present writer suggests that it would be easier to prevent defection than to cure it, on the assumption that if the illness is detected in its early stages, it is generally far easier to treat it than when it reaches its terminal stages.

6.4 THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION, ACCORDING TO TACEY

Tacey (2004: 106) describes the stages of 'recovering the sacred'.. This is a process of divergence from religious practice to one where the individual discovers the sacred. Tacey (2004: 106) describes it as a five-fold path which travels from natal faith to adult (secular) spirituality. The stages are as follows.

:

- Being born into a religious family and inducted into the tradition and institution.
- At adolescence, questions are asked to which no satisfactory answers are forthcoming.

- Loss of contact with natal faith and a renunciation of institutional affiliation which may be permitted by the parents.

- Although the individual may have embraced secular society, it did not satisfy him.

- There is a feeling that something is missing. Secular life in itself is not fulfilling.

- The individual develops his own 'secular spirituality' outside religion, outside the Church. Tacey believes that many people are taking part in the resurgence of the spiritual in today's society..

The present writer does not believe that this last aspect is necessarily assumed since people are often driven by secular pursuits.

6..4.1 **Comment**

Some of the stages of lapsation, or 'recovering the sacred,' as Tacey (2004: 106) calls it, have points of agreement with those of Richter and Francis (1998: 16-24) and Hornsby-Smith (1977: 8-23). These stages suggest that if natal faith is not developed and parental guidance is inadequate, then it is possible that the individual will attain a level of spirituality later on, although this author (2004: 106) does not specify how this is to be achieved. In fact, some of his remarks seem to indicate the formulation of a personal spirituality unconnected with God and sympathetic to New Age thinking. Such a strategy leaves open the possibility that the individual will rejoin his previous religious alliance. Although the stages are useful, one would wish to utilise them so that the individual could be evangelised to recommit to Christ. This analysis is similar to that of Richter and Francis (1998: 16-24), except that these writers consider the phases from a religious standpoint, whereas Tacey (2004: 106) reviews the process as the individual attaining a greater degree of spirituality. Spirituality and religious practice should be coincident..

6..5 THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION ACCORDING TO HOGE

Hoge (1981: 85-97) analyses the pre-dispositions, influences and personal consequences of lapsation in young adults. It is not possible to state exactly the age range into which a 'young adult' would fall, except to confirm that the individual will be post adolescent, with an established home and has probably married.

6.5.1 Pre-dispositions or Precipitating factors

Hoge reports (1981:85) the discovery of nine pre-dispositions. These are:

- Tension in the parental family. The pressure ceases once the family's values are rejected.. This appeared to be the most common and has been noted also in 3.3.1.
- A rejection of confession or a life practice conflicting with the Church's moral teaching.
- Unwillingness to go to confession may arise from a fear of the confessor's response. The problems of the Church's moral teaching occur in the realm of sexuality, when a person is engaged in pre-marital sex, co-habitation or masturbation.
- Hoge reports (1981: 87) that the Church was considered boring, or a loss of interest was shown in it. There is an absence of motivation or motivation is blocked by conflict arising from a deficiency of internalised faith. There could be conflicts over life practices that are disallowed by the Church's moral teaching. The Church may be considered boring if an individual experiences a meaningful liturgy in one parish and finds an absence of it in another; or it may be that a person experiences a let-down when a beloved priest leaves or dies, and he cannot relate to the replacement.
- An objection to the Church's moral teaching. This mainly occurs in the older lapsed. The objection is usually in the area of sexuality, birth control, pre-marital sex, and abortion.
- According to Hoge (1981: 86), the Church is not friendly enough. There is too much talk of money. Richard Thomas (1997) notes the unfriendliness of his respondents.

- Hoge states (1981: 87) that there was no support from the spouse or the family. The individual had to struggle with the attitudes of his spouse and children. Either the family accompanied the individual to Church, or the individual attended church without this being a source of contention.
- Hoge thinks (1981: 87) that the individual feels emptiness, perceives a lack of meaning in religious practice or suffers emotional depression.
- He also believes (1981: 87) that the individual feels a void in his life or has a spiritual need.

According to Hoge (1981: 87), two or more of the above dispositions may be present. The most common combinations are the rejection of family pressure and the fear of confession or the feeling that the Church is boring. The former disposition provides the occasion for dropping out, but the motivation arises in either of the latter instances. It is believed that moral teachings impact more on individuals than doctrinal teachings, the most sensitive teaching being on sexuality. The present writer concurs in this view, which is supported by Hornsby-Smith (1977: 10), who maintains that doctrinal issues are marginal to most individuals.

On the other hand, Wuthrow & Mellinger (1978: 234) examined the view that the counter-culture of the 60s had cooled and that university students had returned to more traditional values and loyalties.. They report (1978: 241) that non-religiosity increases slightly when at university, as does that of the indifferent and those opposed to religion. The deeply religious do not change. Only the moderately religious show a decline.

According to Richter and Francis (1998: 137), unfulfilled expectations and loss of faith seem to be the main precipitating factors in leaving the Church. Changing values, belonging, and stages in faith were not so common, whilst childhood upbringing and high cost were the least influential. The same authors (1998:137) maintain that about 45 per cent of those who leave the Church are likely to return, of which those who have left for definite reasons are more likely to return than those who have left for no reason.

6.5.2 Influences Causing Lapsation in Young Adults

According to Hoge (1981: 89), the most important reason for lapsing was dissatisfaction with the Church or its teachings. The most common complaint was perceived to be inadequate bible study and religion's lack of relevance to daily life. Some were unhappy with the emphasis on money, and some found the Mass or service boring. Although the latter seemed to have a high profile, dissatisfaction with the teachings of the Church did not have such prominence in this research.

In Hoge's study (1981: 89), a significant number found spiritual help and religion in other religious groups. Personal conversion led a similar number to leave the Catholic Church, while a significant number experienced a sense of void in their feelings about life, which led them to lapse. Some revealed a conflict with priests or nuns, and a similar proportion was influenced by friends, parents or siblings. On the other hand, personal and family problems, the influence of charismatic prayer groups, marriage encounter groups, radio, television, reading, and conflict between themselves and other parishioners led to a decision for them to leave the Church. Some of these transferred their allegiance to a Protestant denomination, according to Hoge (1981: 90).

He believes (1981: 90) that such a change-over is due to interfaith marriage or prospective interfaith marriage, while others are drawn away by friends, relatives or the engaged partner being devoted to a different denomination. In our view, endogenous relationships pose a possible conflict in the Church and often cause lapsation. This opinion is supported by Hornsby-Smith (1977: 23), who claims that such relationships can introduce tension into a family over such issues as religious education, religious practice and birth control. Theological argument rarely influences people to change their religious allegiance, and interpersonal ties can only succeed in persuading an individual to change his allegiance when his relationship with the existing group is already weak.

Schweitzer (2004: 97, 98) suggests that distancing from the Church is not always due to a young person's lack of interest in religion, but the absence of interesting possibilities for participation. Our opinion is that distancing depends on the commitment of the family. This is based on the grounds that if the latter is committed to God and the practice of religion, it is likely that siblings will be more likely to share the aspirations of their parents. If there is an endogenous relationship, it is possible that the children

will be confused as to which parent to follow. Such a scenario may incur distancing from the Church. This is supported by the views expressed in 3.4.6.

Hoge alleges (1981: 93) that dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church and its teaching was very common. Reported changes in the Church occurring since Vatican II formed the main complaints. He (1981: 93) states that this accounted for one-fifth of all those who had lapsed. Inadequate emphasis on the Bible, the stand of the Church on birth-control and its position on divorce were cited. A large number of people believed that the Church was not adjusting itself sufficiently to modern life. We do not agree with Hoge's view of the moral teaching of the Church or that changes occurring since Vatican II have significantly affected dissatisfaction or lapsation. Whilst it is admitted that today the moral teaching of the Church is often contentious, our investigations show that disagreement is higher in the non-attending and infrequently attending than in the weekly and monthly attending individuals (see 3.4.16). This seems to suggest that disagreement with Church teaching, resulting in lapsation, increased immediately following Vatican II.

A family or personal problem may have influenced an individual's decision to leave the Church, while a significant number found spiritual help and religious truth elsewhere. Hoge states (1981: 97) that some were strongly influenced by conflict with priests or nuns, and an equal number noted a void or need that was not addressed, or they were influenced by the disparity between the Church's view on sexuality and their own opinions. Hoge reports (1981: 93) that one-fifth of older lapsed are now participating in other religious groups. Although their spouses' pressure was not an important factor in their decision to cease religious practice, children were found to be more significant influences. A small number of the latter left the Church. This characteristic affected their parents' choice.

Miles (1994: 37) believes that the Church does not accept women as they are. The latter felt threatened and did not feel relaxed or comfortable. She (1994: 38, 39) alleges that the Church seems to stifle and discourage her respondents from becoming holistic. Anger, she (1994: 37) felt, had to be suppressed since it was not consonant with being a Christian. These respondents (1994: 33, 35) claimed that the Church favours men and that the symbolism in the church services reinforced the subservient position of women. Men and women therefore were not regarded by them as equals (1994: 40). Some

(1994: 40) thought the Church and Christianity were fundamentally connected, and in some cases both are rejected. Indeed, it was remarked (1994: 7) that the Church appeared destructive of women's selfhood. It had done little for them – opposing suffrage and supporting the image of the family, which the respondents believed was at odds with the experience of many. It is thought (1994: 10) that women were not valued in the same way as men. Some participators state (1994: 13) that the Church is allied to the status quo so that left-wing issues are believed to be political and unorthodox, but right-wing views acceptable.

The foreword of this survey (1994: v) states that women are believed to leave the Church because it does not expect enough from them; the Church does not deal with matters of simply being human: sexuality, relationships and those whose marriages are unsuccessful are not considered sufficiently. Lesbian and single women feel excluded. The Church imposes an inferiority upon women, who are expected to work to an agenda which has been framed for them and which neither meets their needs nor utilises their gifts and experience. The result of this is boredom, frustration and hurt. Leaving the Church is thought of as a conscious choice, made in order to take control of their own spirituality, even though they face the task of reconstruction without community support.

6.5.3 **Personal Consequences of Ceasing Religious Observance**

Hoge alleges (1981: 90) that tensions within the immediate and nuclear family increased as a result of ceasing religious observance. In terms of their personal outlook, nearly half were more optimistic and happy; they had more autonomy and freedom from restrictions and rules, and believed that they were more spiritually fulfilled. One-third stated that they had changed their personal life practices, comprising reduced churchgoing and religious activity, the cessation of smoking, drinking and drug taking, although the latter denial probably derived from a commitment to other religious groups. One-quarter reported that they had selected friends from the group with which they socialised. This appears to be a reasonable outcome. But religion remained important to about two-fifths of those who had lapsed. Therefore, the act of lapsing from their original denomination did not mean a rejection of religion. In fact, they believed that they were as religious as ever. They did not need to attend church to be religious; they could relate to God in a private manner.

Lapsation was a response to their feelings about the Church rather than their feelings about God. This is an important distinction, in the present writer's opinion, which agrees with that of Hornsby-Smith (1977: 9, 10). Because the lapsed person retains a belief in God, there is a possibility of his returning to church practice.

Hoge questions (1981: 94) whether any change in the family life of the older lapsed had occurred.. The response was that about one-third answered affirmatively. The most frequent changes were perceived to be improved family religious life and enhanced family unity, although some believed it had resulted in tension in the immediate family and had weakened the children's religious education. But as to whether there had been any change in their personal attitude to life, one-third answered affirmatively. There was a more positive outlook on both life and self. Some had made changes in their personal life, the principal change being that they had ceased drinking, smoking or using drugs. A few more were spending more time in prayer or bible study or less time attending church. According to Hoge (1981: 94), one-sixth had made changes in their selection of friends. Ceasing religious observance was not a rejection of God but a change of personal religious stance, which intensified their commitment. Ceasing to attend Mass, however, was more consequential in the life of the older adult, rather than for the younger lapsed person.

Miles' (1994: 50) respondents claim that some women feel that they have lost touch with the Church as a caring community. There was clearly a need to be with others. But at the same time some (1994: 51) did not think that it was a focus for healing and support. The remainder (1994: 53) were happy to have rejected the Church, even if the outcome is isolation from a community. Christianity cannot be in isolation; it is a social religion. Miles reports (1994: 53) that some believed there was nothing within the Church that included women.

Kay and Francis (1996: 156) suggest that the development of intellectual ability during the secondary school phase occurs at the same time as a decline in religiosity, which in turn promotes a decline in empathy. A lower level of empathy reinforces a drift from the Church. On the other hand, according to Kay and Francis (1996: 157), a positive attitude to Christianity is indicative of a higher level of self esteem during childhood and adolescence. Low self esteem is shown in bullying, drug abuse and suicidal behaviour. Hence a drift from the Church suggests a lowering of self esteem.

Hoge's (1981: 85-90) analysis of the process of lapsation is presented in Table 1 on the next page..

Our investigations did not show a significant association between family tension and rejection of religious practice. In fact, there was a low occurrence of family tension. However, we agree with Hoge that boredom greatly influences rejection of religious practice. From the current investigations it was discovered that boredom was a prominent reason for lapsation (see 3.4.19).

Although it was discovered that some lapsed due to the changes introduced by Vatican II, it was not concluded that this was a major reason for defection.

Pre-dispositions	Influences and facilitators	Consequences
*Family tension	Family problems	Decreased family tension. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
* #Rejection of religious practices		More autonomy. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
#Boredom (reason for going has changed) +	Boredom	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Objections to moral teaching (Sex roles, divorce)	Dissatisfaction with church and its teaching (inadequate bible study)	Freedom from instructions and rules. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Church atmosphere	Congregation	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Exogenous relationship (unsupported by partner)	Partner/spouse	Decreased family tension. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Lack of meaning	Lack of relevance of religion to daily life	Feeling of being more spiritually fulfilled. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Emotional depression	Personal or family problems	Reduced churchgoing/ lapsation or change to another denomination when individual is spiritually unfulfilled. Believed to be as religious as before
Spiritual need		
Changes invoked by Vatican II: + related to boredom and/or reasons for going has changed.		Change in family life. Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
	Emphasis on money	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Conflict	Priest, religious or member of congregation	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Movement to a new parish		Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Divorce		Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
Change in life-style after children have left home		Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
	Friends, relatives, engaged partner	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation
	Participation in charismatic prayer group	Reduced churchgoing or lapsation

* These elements often go together

Table 1: Pre-dispositions, influences, facilitators and consequences in religious lapsation (Source: Hoge, 1981, pages 85-90)

6.5.4 Attitudes on Moral and Religious Issues

Hoge believes (1981: 91) that attitudes concerning religious and moral issues are the same for the young lapsed adult as for those of older lapsed persons— with the ollowing exceptions. The young lapsed adult is more individualistic, believing that he should arrive at a religious faith position irrespective of any religious denomination. Young adults are more tolerant of pre-marital sex than are their elders.

6.5.5 Comment

Hoge (1981: 85-97) identifies pre-dispositions, influences and facilitators, and consequences as the three stages of lapsation that contribute to an understanding of this phenomenon. They highlight the necessity for pastoral care that may alleviate, to some extent, their continuance. This implies the need for a detailed knowledge or awareness of the problems that potential lapsed individuals may face. A practical procedure for obviating or minimising these pre-dispositions might not be easily formulated. As a last resort, if the individual's commitment was reduced to being an irregular churchgoer, such a change could be investigated by the pastor or a person nominated by him so that the problem could be resolved and the individual nursed back to the Church. We shall return to the subject of minimising or eradicating lapsation in the final chapter.

6.6 THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION, ACCORDING TO STARK & BAINRIDGE

Stark and Bainbridge do not actually use the term 'lapsation', although in their writings they infer it by using the term 'schism'. They (1985; 101) define this term as a splitting up of an organisation into two or more groups that occurs along a line of cleavage. When an internal conflict breaks out, it does so between sub-networks that existed prior to the outbreak of the dispute.

Now, although we are not directly concerned with schism, we would contend that lapsation occurs by a similar process. However, there are differences. Lapsation is a unique and singular phenomenon affecting an individual, whereas a schism implies a group of individuals who break away from a parent organisation and usually form a new organisation. Such groups rarely leave quietly and amicably. They justify their departure and severely denounce the parent body. Sometimes, the break-away sect asserts that it embodies continuity with the original faith. It does not claim to be a new church but a restoration of the original. None of these features are to be found in an individual's lapsing from church membership, even if more than one person leaves a church over the same dispute. In the opinion of Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 102), the sources of cleavage are to be found in the worldly rewards available through the religious organisation, which may be dominated by the powerful. An example of a worldly reward would be the status an individual might have in a church by reason of

his affluence. The enjoyment of such a position would be consonant with his status in the secular world. There are other-worldly compensations offered by religious organisations for scarce rewards, which will have the greatest prominence for the less powerful. An example of this can be found in the feeling of belonging to the Christian community and the social bonds that would be enjoyed by those in the same class.

There are also the universal compensations of religion; for those rewards that do not exist in the natural world serve the needs of the powerful and powerless alike. A universal compensation would be the reward of eternal life, to which all members of the community will aspire. These rewards and compensations give people a common concern to sustain religious organisations, since they validate the common view that both rich and poor are in the hands of God. However, according to Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 102), the worldly and other-worldly dimensions reflect the fact that members of a religious organisation do not have identical concerns. Religious organisations encompass members who differ in the degree of power and privilege they have. Social stratification penetrates all religious organisations, as everywhere else.. Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 102) conclude that since some members are leading more successful lives and, thereby, receive a greater share in earthly rewards than others, such stratification promotes a cleavage in the social network.

Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 102, 103) assert that a close relationship may not be enjoyed between those who lack a substantial share of some scarce reward and those who possess this reward in abundance. The present writer enquires on what basis such an assumption is made. Why cannot those in whom an abundance of gifts resides share a common inheritance and an eagerness for the universal compensation, that is, eternal life?

Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 103) also maintain that stratification in religious organisations produces lines of cleavage which constitute a basis for a dispute over which religious group serves and how it will serve. For example, the religious group can emphasise the other-worldly dimension and thereby de-emphasise the worldly one. This implies a state of tension between the religious group and the surrounding society. These writers (1985: 103) state that such a tension is contrary to the interests of the more powerful members. An erosion of other-worldly compensations arises when affluent people exhibit their success in the procurement of worldly rewards.

Our view is that this is simply not the case. Individuals who are under-privileged may desire the benefits afforded the rich and powerful, but this does not necessarily mean that they will jettison their beliefs in the ultimate compensation.. It may well be that the privileged, although enjoying the pleasures of this life, may be living in a sinful way, or at the least not exercising their religious mandate to follow the gospel and its teaching on love and justice. They may not be models of Christian living at all and hardly good examples for the under-privileged to follow. Of course, poverty is not a virtue and, in the present writer's experience, the impoverished have not always remained faithful to the Church. Their infidelity may not have been caused by their impoverished state, but by a lack of education and catechesis.

Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 104) believe that a religious organisation cannot contain one section devoted to a higher tension (that is, a higher-worldly group) and another part devoted to a lower tension (that is, the powerful who seek to assimilate with society). The latter will tend to control the religious organisation so that the tension may be reduced.. Such a scenario will not hamper the privileged, insofar as they are able to control the organisation.

Bruce (1999: 33) observes that rewards, as defined by Stark and Bainbridge, are tangible, concrete and immediate. Anything else becomes symbolic, unreal and a substitute for some present gratification. Such a view is not sustainable, according to Bruce (1999: 33). An intangible reward is not spurious. Though people have an abundance of goods in this life, they may still seek life after death as a valuable asset worth securing. Bruce believes (1999: 33) that Stark and Bainbridge separate the concrete and immediate from the intangible and distant rewards. True rewards are the former, whereas the latter comprise something people will accept only if the immediate and concrete cannot be secured. He (1999:33) maintains that the Stark-and-Bainbridge model is highly materialistic. Indeed, as Bruce (1999: 34) correctly observes, their theory is built on premises that are essentially atheistic.

6.6.1. **Comment**

The Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 101-104) theory is based on an assumed cleavage between two or more groups. This cleavage is caused by the conjunction of dissimilar groups of people who seek different rewards. The rich and privileged seek a status in the Church consonant with their standing in society. The under-privileged, on the other

hand, seek for a reward beyond this present world that they believe membership of the Church facilitates. If the former is dominant in the Church, a tension is introduced therein, since they will give prominence to a worldly culture. This will be at variance to the desires of the under-privileged. If the latter are dominant (which would be unusual), a tension will occur in the Church contrary to the interests of the privileged.

It is the present writer's experience that although tensions exist in the Church, they tend to be personal. The tensions that Stark and Bainbridge envisage that cause defection do not exist. Our view, then, is that the Stark and Bainbridge theory does not significantly contribute to an understanding of the process of lapsation. It does, however, warn of a possible danger should one of the groups become dominant in the Church..

6.7 THE EFFECTS OF LAPSATION ON THE PARISH

6.7.1 The Case for Religious Decline

Undoubtedly, there has been a decline in Mass attendance in the Catholic Church since the 1960s. Similarly, the levels of child baptisms, marriages, confirmations and first communions have also declined. Adult receptions (conversions) into the Church, which at one time were quite significant, have diminished to only a trickle. Since the end of the last war the number of priests has declined and their average age has increased. The tables below provide an accurate picture of the decline in membership, Mass attendance, child baptisms, adult receptions and confirmations and marriages.

	Membership			Number of churches			Number of ministers		
Year	England	Wales	Total	England	Wales	Total	England	Wales	Total
1990	1,351,342	54,659	1,406,001	3,535	213	3,748	5,789	316	6,105
1995	1,105,940	47,244	1,153,184	3,462	240	3,702	5,637	288	5,925
2000	989,440	40,630	1030,070	3,401	238	3,639	5,246	253	5,599
2001	971,172	39,640	1,010,812	3,428	233	3,661	5,247	255	5,602
2002	947,845	38,650	986,495	3,423	230	3,653	5,225	249	5,474
2005	888,369	35,170	923,539	3,320	222	3,542	5,041	228	5,269

Table 2: Decline in membership, the number of church buildings and the number of ministers in the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales 1995-2005.. Source: Brierley, 2003/ 4. UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 4, page 2.22, adapted) Christian Research. London

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
England	1,601,400	1,424,200	1,351,300	1,105,900	990,400	889,000
Wales	75,800	72,200	58,300	50,200	43,800	35,200
Total	1,676,600	1,496,400	1,409,600	1,156,100	1,034,200	924,200

Table 3: Mass attendance in the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales during the period 1985 - 2005

Source: Brierley. 2003/4. UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 4, page 2.24 (adapted). Christian Research. London

Year	Infant Baptisms	Confirmations	Adult Conversions (Great Britain)	First Communions	Marriages	
					Both Catholic	Other Marriages
1996	67,412	39,921	5,180	59,059	5,290	10,492
1997	67,384	38,558	5,089	59.931	5,193	9,601
1998	65,200	38,300	5,050	60.400	5,080	9,100
1999	64.600	38.100	5,000	61,000	4,970	8,600
2000	64,042	37,800	4,960	61,500	4,861*	8,178*
2001	58,716	37,600	4,920	62,000	4,565 *	7,680*

* split estimated

Table 4: Infant Baptisms, Confirmations, Adult Conversions, first Communions and Marriages in the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, except where otherwise stated, during the period 1996 - 2001

Source: Brierley. 2003/4. UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 4, page 8.7 adapted. Christian Research. London

The present writer assumes that although Mass attendance has declined, the reason for the increased number of communions might appear to be that Catholic families, even those who are lapsed, view first communion and confirmation as necessary for the maintenance of the identity of their child.

From his pastoral experience he also believes that membership of recognised Catholic associations has declined sharply over the same period. Social changes, such as higher living standards, higher educational levels, better housing, television and leisure opportunities have brought about a decline in the parish as a major focal point for educational, social and leisure pursuits. The 'boundary wall' that defended the fortress Church has dissolved and the parish is no longer required to provide social support and identity to a group that has a distinctive sub-culture that it is bound to preserve. By the turn of the century, due to the shortage of priests, the situation had become so adverse that parishes had to be 'twinned' in such a way that they shared the services of a priest. This has encouraged the involvement of lay leadership in many functions of parish life that formerly were the preserve of the priest. At the same time, many diocese in England have so few candidates in training for the priesthood that when they become active their number will fall short of that needed for replacing those who have retired or died.

It is thought that the future will undoubtedly introduce change, in that it is possible that the Catholic priesthood will almost die out, leaving the administration and running of parishes to lay members. At the same time, parishes will diminish and, ultimately, some of the larger church buildings will be decommissioned. This, of course, leaves the problem of who leads the liturgy and who is responsible for the overall supervision of the Church, since in the Catholic Church this has been traditionally the role of the priest. This scenario is vastly different from that of the mid-twentieth century, where relatively large congregations were administered by a larger number of priests. Thus, there appears to be institutional decline.

6.7.2 **The Case Against Religious Decline**

The overwhelming majority of parishes in England are recognisably different from what they were forty or fifty years ago. In some, the changes are cosmetic. For instance, the priest faces the people while he says the Mass in English. Other changes involve the provision of readers and eucharistic ministers; communion can be administered on the hand. In some parishes a council exists in which an opportunity is provided for the laity to discuss or even challenge decisions made by the parish priest. It may be that in most locations the parish priest retains *de facto* control, only sharing power over trivial matters, such as flower arrangements, while retaining control of liturgical style and major items of expenditure. Due to the style of the parish priest or to local circumstances, enormous variations exist between adjacent parishes..

Fulton (2000: 178) observes that in numerous parishes lay people, both men and women, have replaced priests in many parish-related duties. A shift in Catholic consciousness has occurred from the clerical-caste mentality to an understanding of a calling, a vocational consciousness affecting all areas of life and elevating lay and married states.

This writer (2000: 178) also suggests that a decentralisation of the Church with the papacy only retaining extraordinary power over local and national hierarchies would assist in a greater enculturation of the Church and the development of local traditions. As he correctly (2000: 178) observes, many old and young Catholics pay little attention to papal statements and interventions. The real power of the hierarchical Church has already been diffused and decentralised. The present holders of clerical positions will

have to adjust to the new situation if they are to perform any real religious function for the laity.

However, Hornsby-Smith (1989: 208) sounds a cautious note. He suggests that the Church's overtly religious functions, such as the transmission of beliefs, practices and moral values could be more concentrated and the level of activities might be performed to a much higher standard than previously. There might be, for example, more emphasis on biblical teaching, adult educational programmes and the development of a more mature laity, capable of grappling with emergent moral issues.

Although some parishes encourage lay people to participate in decision-making in areas such as liturgy and financial control of the parish, Hornsby-Smith believes (1989: 209) that once the participation of the laity takes place, no matter how unevenly, it is unlikely to be reversed. Once the participation of lay Catholics becomes an expectation and they have a real experience of shared ministry with their priests, there seems little chance that they will relinquish that involvement in the mission of the Church for which they have been 'socialised'. This does not mean that the distinction between priest and lay person will coalesce but that there will be a general shift from an autocratic style of leadership to one that is more facilitative and enabling.

In a pluralistic situation religious institutions are confronted with the option of either accommodation to the prevailing culture or intransigence towards it, as Berger & Kellner (1973: 156) foresee. In the parish there is a tension, according to Hornsby-Smith (1989: 211), between the mission of activists who seek on the one hand high levels of commitment and exclusiveness, and on the other hand the offering of a comprehensive pastoral policy to a much more loosely defined membership. But why should not these two aspects peacefully co-exist? The Second Vatican Council legitimated the option of accommodation and encouraged the Church to make itself more relevant to the modern world. It replaced Latin with the vernacular in its liturgy and encouraged the study of the Bible; it emphasised the priesthood of the laity and promoted their importance in evangelisation. Fulton (2000: 178) admits that some of the means for bridging the divide between clergy and laity was suggested by this Council. These were dialogue, greater collegiality, diffusion of authority and new technologies for decentralising the management of the Church from a top/bottom bureaucracy model towards a web-network society and development of team ministries. The concept of

web-networks will often be alluded to in our study. All these will involve a higher level of commitment from the laity. But the danger of accommodation, as Berger, Berger & Kellner (1973: 156) point out, is that a subjective emotionalism replaces objective dogma as the criterion of religious legitimacy.

Neville (1999: 120-121) asserts that today, "the Church is less confident, more open, more fragmented and less regimented than formerly, which makes change both more possible and likely. The teachings of the Second Vatican Council are unfolding, though we may have difficulty in seeing it in these terms"..

Hornsby-Smith observes (1989: 43) that it is possible for a parish to decline in vitality as the source of social support and religious inspiration. In the present writer's experience, this to some extent happens now. The parish becomes 'greedy' by consuming all the energies of active Catholics so that the laity is unable to address the moral and social issues of contemporary society. One of these issues is maintaining or modifying the paradoxical situation of a Church built on communal lines, yet existing in a highly individualistic culture. In many cases, parish-based social action, welfare and justice are undertaken on an international level.

Fulton (2000: 167) argues that the Catholicism of young people is not weaker than it was formerly. Modern faith is different from the more devotional style of faith of the past. This constitutes strength for the modern church. He (2000:173) believes that religion is alive in the private individual's faith and moral experience, as well as in the social faith of the Church and the social-moral field of real and imagined community. Fulton (2000: 176) believes that many priests are worried by the Roman Catholic Church's operation of closure on divorced and remarried individuals and on priests who have left the ministry and married. Such individuals may wish to assist the Church in some way. A loss of human resources to the Church is thereby encountered and the impossibility of church expansion threatens. The present writer believes that exclusion has for too long existed in the Church. Exclusion operates for divorced and remarried individuals by their being refused communion. Invariably, it affects married ex-ministers who are refused reconciliation to the Church, church members who are disallowed a marriage service in church on the grounds that they are not practising, and Catholic parents whose child is not admitted to baptism on the basis that the parents do not practise. In the present writer's opinion, the Church should be open and not closed

or discriminative. He bases this view on Paul's words to the church at Corinth: "... the best thing now is to give him your forgiveness and encouragement, or he might break down from so much misery" (2 Cor 2: 7).

Perhaps decentralisation, partial democratisation and regular councils can be suggested measures for the development of the Church. Fulton (2000: 177) thinks that the right wing of the Church might threaten schism, although they might accept such decisions should they be able to maintain their own practices within a more pluralist church. Fulton (2000: 177) maintains that the major sources of change in religion have been through the growth of new internal and external religious movements. Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 46) note the rapid growth of the charismatic movement as a demand for a more intense religion. They (1985: 46) put forward the view that there are clear signs of weakness: the high rates of defection of priests and nuns and the decline in seminary admissions. Yet, it must be questioned whether the vigour of a religious institution can be measured by its defections?

6.8 SUMMARY

The process of lapsation, according to Richter and Francis, commences with a crisis of belief or disillusionment. The individual then reflects on his commitment and how its loss would affect him. Having arrived at a judgment concerning his future commitment, he then distances himself from emotional involvement with the Church. This leads to his separation from the Church.. He will enter a period of transition in which he will shed his previous identity and attempt to find new sources of meaning and purpose in his life. This may have been discovered already. He will relocate to a new institution or assume a different life-style.

Hornsby-Smith considers why and when people lapse. He believes that there are critical moments in one's life when lapsation occurs; for instance, an individual leaving home to get married. The removal of social controls also promotes this phenomenon. There is neither conscious rejection of the Church nor difficulties over divorce and mixed marriages. Adolescents struggle for autonomy and most of the time rely on their peer group. Lapsation may occur if the individual is unsupported by his family or friends. Otherwise, the Church appears incomprehensible, boring and irrelevant to them. The individual's rejection of Catholicism is due to an impoverished conceptualisation of God.

Tacey (2004: 106) believes that disillusionment sets in at adolescence, whereby the individual loses contact with his natal faith. His contact with secular society leaves him unfulfilled and unsatisfied and he then develops his own spirituality.

Hoge distinguishes the phases of lapsation as: pre-dispositions or precipitating factors; influences and facilitators; and consequences. In the first group, he lists tension in the family, a rejection of confession, boredom, objection to the Church's moral teaching, an unfriendly congregation, lack of support offered by the spouse or family, a lack of meaning and a spiritual void or need in the individual's life.

Stark and Bainbridge specify a system of rewards and compensators sustaining the religious organisation, which comprises people of different social standing. They imply that rewards and compensators are not always commensurate with the social position of some individuals. If the reward is of the 'higher-worldly' type it will distance the more powerful from the social circle to which they belong. If the reward is of the 'lower-worldly' type, this may be acceptable to the powerful, but not for the under-privileged who look for the 'higher-worldly' reward. According to this system, the outcome is a cleavage that results in people leaving the organisation.

As a result of lapsation, a case for the decline of parishes can be made on the basis of: the decline in the membership of congregations; in the number of church buildings; in the number of ministers over a period 1990-2005; in the Mass attendance in England and Wales over the period 1980-2005; and in the number of baptisms, confirmations, first communions and marriages during the period 1996-2001 in England and Wales.

The case against decline hinges on a shift in individual consciousness from a clerical caste mentality to an understanding of personal vocation. This shows itself in lay participation in parishes. A higher standard of transmission of beliefs, practices and values can now be performed. There is a greater diffusion of technologies and authority for de-centralising the management of Church from a top/bottom model to a web-network of team ministries. Though the parish as a structure may decline in vitality as a source of social support, the strength of the modern Church is the devotional style of its faith.

However, the closure of the Roman Catholic Church to divorced and remarried individuals and priests who have left the ministry and married is worrying. There is a loss of human potential and expansion. No consideration of human weakness and failure is offered. Should the Church not receive sinners? Did not Christ have compassion on the weak and the sinner? Should the Church only embody the righteous? As stated earlier, the divorced and remarried, although welcomed into the Church, are denied communion. Baptisms are sometimes refused on the basis that the parents practise their religion irregularly and church marriages are sometimes not allowed because the parties do not attend. Priests who have left the Church and have since married are denied the opportunity to assist at church services or to receive communion.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The process of lapsation is important because, by understanding and apprehending the stage at which an individual is located, a key to halt and if possible to reconcile the individual to his denominational adherence is facilitated.

The present writer would assert that only Hoge and Richter and Francis' accounts of the process of lapsation fulfil this description.. They can be utilised for the rehabilitation of a potentially lapsed person. Although Hornsby-Smith indicates those transitions in which lapsation usually occurs, it is difficult to envisage a strategy to ameliorate it.

Is it not easier to reconcile the individual while he still remains a member (by virtue of his baptism) of the Church? If he is on the point of leaving, he may feel a great deal of anger if no one bothers to enquire after him.

Although the process of lapsation is essential to our understanding, it was disappointing to discover that only a small amount of research had been undertaken.

CHAPTER 7: RETURNING TO CHURCH

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will analyse lapsation from a scriptural viewpoint, starting from the individual's calling to Christianity, his response to that call, the influences that may cause lapsation, his return to religious commitment after a period of lapsation and some of the influences of lapsation in the early Church. From this study, pastoral applications will be derived.

The Biblical commentaries of Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy (eds), 1978; Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy (eds), 1999; the Fuller, Johnston and Kearns (eds), 1975 edition; Lane, 1991a; Lane, 1991b; Lincoln, 1990; and Snodgrass, 1996 will assist the present writer in this purpose. The New Jerusalem Bible (Roman Catholic 1984) will act as the basis of the Commentaries.

The chapter will proceed to analyse lapsation in modern history, partly covering the last one hundred years, in which the works of Brierley, 2000a and b; Brierley, 2002/3; Croucher, 1998; Dudley, 1979; Francis and Littler, 2003; Hadaway, 1990; Hastings, 2001; Hoge, 1981; Gill, 1993; Gill, Hadaway and Marler, 1998; Richter and Francis, 1998; Roof, 1994; Roozen, 1980; and Wraight and Brierley, 2000/1 will be used with the results of this research work. This section will seek to show the decline in:

- Christian and religious communities, Christian membership and the number if baptisms over the last one hundred years;
- Sunday church attendance, both overall and by age group;
- the frequency of church attendance, the number of marriages, the number of church buildings and clergy over the last twenty-five years.
- At the same time, belief and disbelief in Christian principles have decreased markedly and increased respectively over the last sixty years.

The chapter will conclude by outlining the conditions necessary for individuals to return to practising their religion. The works of Dudley, 1979; Francis and Littler, 2003; Hadaway, 1990; Hastings, 2001; Hoge, 1981: Richter and Francis, 1998; Roof, 1994; Roozen, 1980 and the results of our own statistical surveys will be presented. The types

of returnees will be by means of the works of Hoge (1981) and Roof (1994) and the results of our case studies. The latter will be compared with the findings of the above writers and assessed as to whether they are consonant with their findings.

7.2 SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES

7.2.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to present an overview in scriptural terms of both religious commitment and disengagement. From this analysis it will be possible to derive scriptural principles that underpin lapsation. The New Jerusalem version (Roman Catholic) of the New Testament will be used and reference made to the biblical commentaries of Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy (eds) (1978 edition); and Fuller, Johnston and Kearns (eds) (1975) edition.

7.2.1.1 The calling of the individual to belief

Scripture presents the individual Christian as called by God's love. This is described in Ephesians 1: 3-13, in which Paul states that God has blessed the individual member of the community with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ (v3). God's ordered purpose and activity are now brought into the human arena, and the unity of redeemed mankind in Christ is manifested through incorporation into a visible community under Christ's leadership. The Christian was chosen, not accidentally, but as part of God's plan from the beginning, before the creation of the world, to be spotless and to live in love in God's presence (v4) as his adopted son (v5). By this, the Christian will give God praise and glory. He should praise God and give him thanks.

It is by the blood of Christ that the Christian has gained his freedom through forgiveness of his sins (v7). Redemption implies setting free a person or group under someone else's power or slavery, as noted by the Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 343), and the work of God's grace (New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (1975: 1184). Through Christ, all God's adopted sons have been claimed as his own people from the beginning of time (v11). They were referred to in Old Testament times as God's 'inheritance' or 'heritage'. Whatever God wills, he works effectively and surely to

accomplish. It is through the preaching of the Good News that the message of salvation has been delivered and believed (v13).

The Jerome Commentary notes (1978: 343-4) that there has been only one people of God and that the messianic time has made it possible to encompass every nation and language within the people of God. Paul often uses the word 'salvation' in an eschatological sense, referring to salvation from a future judgment, although it can also refer to either present relief from legal guilt or from the power of a sinful inclination. Paul states in Ephesians 2 that, "when we were dead through our sins, he [God] brought us to life with Christ" (v5). He further states that it is through grace that we have been saved, by faith, and not by any deeds of our own (v8). The process of salvation has already begun in the present through the Spirit. Baptism of the Spirit, which was promised by Jesus (Acts 1: 8; John 14: 18-21) is incorporation into him. The Gentile world has thus received the pledge of salvation, although this does not mean that all Gentiles will be saved.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, given as the pledge of the promise of an inheritance (v13). This inheritance Lincoln (1990: 267) perceives as the Church endowed with the fullness of Christ, which parallels the mature person in his final state. In a similar way, the second letter of Peter reminds us that the Christian community has been called and chosen (2 Pet 1:10), and therefore we must work all the harder to manifest this. If this is done, then we will not be confronted by any danger of ever falling away but be granted admittance into the kingdom of heaven. The faith to which the Christian is called is precious, as Matthew states in the parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price (Matt 13: 44-46).

Lincoln (1990: 264) refers to Ephesians 1-6 as a call to unity, for which there is a distinctive concern. Paul urges the people to make every effort to preserve this unity given by the Spirit. The individual needs to show a gentleness that issues from a consideration of the needs of others and mutual forbearance, which is only possible through the power of love.

7.2.1.2 **The individual's response to his calling**

In fact, the story of the woman of Samaria, as related in John's Gospel (4:1-42) illustrates that sometimes the most unlikely, in human terms, are called. However, although many are called, few are chosen (Matt 22:14), and calling can entail refusal, as illustrated in Mark's Gospel (10: 17-31), where a man of great wealth finds it hard to sell his property to the poor and follow the Lord. The cost was too great. Again, his own people did not accept Jesus when he preached in his own locality (Mk 6:1-6); as Jesus says, a prophet is not recognised in his own country. Indeed, the fact that not all accept the message of the gospel is shown in Matthew 10:14, where the followers of Jesus are told to "shake the dust from your feet" (Matt 10:15) if the villagers reject the apostles' message.

Although the word is proclaimed, it exhibits different responses, as the parable of the sower indicates in Mark 4: 1-25; Matthew 13: 1-23; Luke 8: 4-18. In this parable, some seeds fall by the wayside, some on stony ground and some fall among thorns. Jesus instructed his followers concerning the possibility that his teaching would meet variable success. The Lord explains that the seed is the Word of God. The 'Word' that Satan carries away is represented by the seed which falls on the edge of the path. By this it is meant that the person loses apparent, but not genuine, faith. The seed truly planted never dies. The writer of Hebrews states that those who were brought into the light received a share of the Spirit. Lane (1991a: 145-6) claims that the community possesses and experiences the result of God's redemptive activity through Christ. They have participated in the eschatological gifts of spiritual insight and renewal. If they were to withdraw from Christ in an act of apostasy, they would be witnesses against themselves. To repudiate Christ entails unbelief and makes inevitable the imposition of sanctions. But in spite of their falling away, it is therefore impossible for them to be renewed a second time. That is, they have 'crucified' Christ and mocked him. On the other hand, those who have grown 'brambles and thistles' are abandoned and are 'practically cursed' (Heb 6: 4-8). The seed sown in rocky soil represents those who hear the word of God and welcome it with joy, but then superficial faith crumbles in times of trial and it is too costly to hold. Those who receive the seed among the thorns have the worries of this world and the lure of riches which drag them away. But those who have received the seed in rich soil, hear the word and keep it, yield a harvest of thirty, sixty or a hundredfold.

Not only are we called by God as individuals, we are called to remain united, as the letter to the Ephesians 4: 1-6 states. Snodgrass (1996: 198) observes unity as something given by the Spirit. It is not some entity that the individual creates. Unity can be something from which the person starts or it can be an aspiration. Paul instructs his hearers to, "... take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together" (Eph 4: 4).

Snodgrass (1996: 198, 199) states that everything the community holds of any significance is held by others. All share both the same calling and destiny. (Paul describes the body of Christ by using the analogy of a human body in 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30.) Since there is one Body and one Spirit (v4), there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism, in the same way as there is one God (v 5,6). Snodgrass (1996: 199) emphasises the point that if people profess the same Lord, believe in the same gospel and have experienced the same reality of being baptised in Christ, then they should live out this unity. In order to maintain binding peace, the members of the community must bear with one another in complete humility, gentleness, patience, and support each other in love (v2).

7.2.1.3 **Influences causing lapsation**

By using gifts and building up the Body of Christ, providing a unity of service, the community will attain maturity (Eph 4: 13) which, as the authors of the New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary (1999: 889) observe, is full adulthood measured in relation to the stature and fullness of Christ. In such an event they will not be carried away by every 'new gust of [erroneous] teaching' nor be at the mercy of those who practise deceit or trickery (v14). This can only be accomplished if truth and love are exemplified by each individual working according to his function so that the body grows and builds itself up in love (Eph 4: 12-13). Although Christians may strive for unity of the body, functional disunity often arises, as James (4) says in his letter. He ascribes this breakdown to a lack of faith and prayer that is selfish and worldly (v3). In fact, he accuses some in the Christian community of making friends with the world, which he identifies as the devil's. By doing this, they appear as God's enemies (v4). Such people, who are waverers, are instructed to banish such associations with the world from their minds and avoid making friends with the world (Jas. 4: 8). Yet this does not mean that one must not honour civic authority. One must pay appropriate tribute to it, as Jesus says (Matt 22: 15-22). The Christian becomes a waverer through the influence of false teachers and

their doctrines, which insinuate disruptive views (2 Pet 2: 1ff). Peter attributes his accusers as having motives of greed. Paul calls them 'dogs' in Philippians 3: 2. False teachers, doctrines and empty speculation are also given focus in 1 Tim 1: 3-7.

In this letter, Paul directs Timothy to insist on warning people against spreading wrong teaching (v1-4), which can only raise doubts in the mind of the believer instead of furthering the designs of God. Further, he says that some have gone off the straight course and taken a road that leads to empty speculation (v1-6). He returns to this subject in chapter 4 where he states that there will be some who will desert the faith and choose to listen to deceitful doctrines that emanate from devils (v1). Believers should have nothing to do with old wives' tales and godless myths (v7).

False teachers, doctrines and empty speculation are also referred to by Paul in his second letter to Timothy, where he reflects his struggle against the danger of false teachers. In 2 Timothy 2: 14-26, he instructs Timothy that there should be no wrangling about words, since the result is the destruction of the listeners (v14). They should have nothing to do with godless philosophical discussions which only lead them away from true religion (v16). They should also avoid all futile speculation, since this only gives rise to quarrels, in which a servant of God should not engage (v23-24).

The Jewish Christian must not be drawn away by empty speculation (1 Tim 1:6; 2 Tim 2: 23-24; and Colossians 2: 8 and 18), and according to the writers of the New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary (1999: 896), they must not turn aside from the truths of Christianity, but must live according to Christ (Col 2: 6-7). The content of the tradition is Jesus Christ, in contrast to the human tradition of their opponents. By wavering, there is a danger of falling away from the faith. Paul, in the first letter to the Corinthians, says that the man who thinks himself safe must be careful that he does not fall (1 Cor 10: 12) and that for consolation he must trust in God since the latter will not let the person be tried beyond his strength (1 Cor 10:13). Paul warns in Colossians 2: 6 that his readers must live their lives according to Christ, be rooted in him, built on him and held firm in the faith that has been taught. The community should not be seduced by empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world (v8). They should not be taken in by those who desire to grovel to angels to worship them (v18). Peter also warns about false teachers in 2 Peter 2: 1ff. In his letter he says that they will insinuate their own disruptive views and disown the master who purchased their freedom. Paul too warns in

Philippians 3: 3 to 'beware of dogs!' That is, to watch out for those who make mischief. Peter calls the community to Christian living, saying that by his divine power Christ has given all the things that they need for a life of true devotion, bringing them to know God who gives them the guarantee of something great and wonderful to come. Through this they will be able to share the divine nature and escape corruption, rife in a world through disordered passion (2 Pet 1:3-4).

Lane (1991b: 308) believes that the writer of Hebrews 10: 25 remarks that some members of the house church had stopped attending the meetings of the assembly. The non-attendance of members indicated a serious defection from the community. This provokes a stern warning in Hebrews (10: 26-31) of the spiritual peril to which the lax and callous attitude exposed those who had experienced the reality of the Christian life. To follow false teachers brings with it the danger of apostasy, on which the writer focuses in Hebrews 10: 26-31. He says that should the individual commit sins after knowledge of the truth has been given, there is no longer any sacrifice that can be offered for him (v26). In other words, should the individual commit the sin of deliberate apostasy he will be unable to share in the fruits of the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross. Apostasy is defined in the New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (1975: 1233) as, "the hard-hearted turning away from God which prohibits his sharing in the fruits of the passion of Christ". On the other hand, Paul states in I Corinthians 3: 11-15 that it is on the foundation of Jesus Christ that the individual builds and upon which he will be tested. If his structure stands, he will receive his wages. However, deliberate apostasy is conceived in Hebrews 6: 6 as a crucifixion and mockery of the Son of God. The apostates' rejection of the Christian faith means that they have put Jesus out of their lives; he is dead to them. On this subject, the writer of Hebrews does not believe that someone who exhibits such behaviour can be reconciled.

To "disregard the law of Moses" (Heb 10: 28) is evidently not to sin against it, but to practise idolatry, for which the death penalty was enjoined. The writer of Hebrews states that "anyone who tramples on the Son of God and treats the blood of the covenant which sanctified him as if it were not holy, and who insults the Spirit of grace, will be condemned to a far more severe punishment [than death]" (v29). This is the consequence of the sin of deliberate apostasy, which the author addressed to Hebrew converts in danger of reverting to Judaism.

Lane (1991b: 310) comments that a distancing from Christ and a rejection of the efficacy of his sacrifice leads to an inability to worship God. The writer of Hebrews cites those who "were once brought into the light and tasted the gift from heaven, and received a share of the Holy Spirit [and who]... has fallen away" (Heb 6: 4-6). The Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 391-2) suggests that the author probably refers to those coming into faith. "Those who were brought into the light" may simply mean the illumination given by faith in Christ, and "tasting the heavenly gift" is a metaphor for the experience gained by faith. The phrase probably means that that the Christian has experienced the power of salvation brought by Jesus. The gift is called 'heavenly' because it is an eschatological reality possessed in an anticipatory manner by the believer. As a present pledge, the believer shares the Holy Spirit in anticipation of a fuller possession of the eschatological blessings. The preaching of the gospel was accompanied by manifestations of the presence of the Spirit, who is seen now as an indication of the age to come. This age, although a future reality according to Jewish thought, for the Christian is a present reality, though not yet realised in its fullness.

7.2.1.4 **Return to commitment**

It is possible for lapsation to be followed by a return. This is illustrated in the stories of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32) and the lost sheep in Luke 15.1-10, a feature that is accomplished through the love of the Good Shepherd as expressed in John 10. 1-42.

7.2.1.5 **Influences of lapsation in the early Church**

The possibility of lapsation is shown in the letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation (2-3) which make clear that the danger menacing the churches of Asia lay not so much in external oppression as with the heterodoxy of some Christians who, inspired by a theory of liberty, suggest consorting with the syncretistic world around them.

Jesus addresses the seven churches. To the church at Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) he acknowledges their faith but informs them that they do not love him as they did formerly. They must repent and resume the relationship they had at the beginning. Syncretism opened the door to many superstitious practices, among which the imperial cult and worship of Artemis predominated in Ephesus, as is noted in the Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 473). Christ, however, is present among all Christians as the source

of life for them. Those passing themselves off as apostles were probably itinerant preachers who perhaps had some connection with the Nicolaitans. To abandon brotherly love of the community involved a loss of the love of Christ. Those who have fallen must remember, repent, and do the works of God. If they do not, the lamp stand will be removed, which means the termination of the church at Ephesus, as noted by the Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 473). The group influenced by the Nicolaitans taught that Christians were free to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

The Spirit warns the church in Smyrna (Revelation 2.8-11) that they will suffer imprisonment and that some will be put to death. He admonishes them that, if they stand firm in their faith, they will be rewarded with the crown of life. This community was poor, partly through the menial origin of its members and partly through the sacrifices their Christian faith occasioned.

The Jews were trying to discredit both Christ and his followers. But their trials (for ten days) contrast with the eternity of their reward. They will undergo physical death but escape the real death, eternal damnation. Some followers in the church at Pergamon (Rev 2: 12-17) are accused of being adherents of Balaam, or of following the teaching of the Nicolaitans. In Numbers 25: 1, Balaam advised the Moabite women to give themselves to the Israelites on condition that the latter turn to the Moabite gods and take part in their sacrifices. Like the Ephesians, the followers of Pergamon must repent of their sin. They have been deluded by false doctrines. Pergamon was a syncretistic city, possessing many temples dedicated to different gods, against which the church encountered many difficulties. Pergamon is branded 'where Satan sits', either because of the cult of Asklepios, symbolised by the serpent, or because of the imperial cult which was popular in the city. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary (1999: 1002) states that Satan is seen as the ultimate instigator of actions taken against Christians by the local authorities. The teaching of Baalam was also prominent. This was a heresy that held for moral libertinism in respect of idolatrous feasting. Both the Nicolaitans and the disciples of Baalam united in a single group. Their teaching had perverted the Pauline doctrine of liberty, inasmuch that Christians should not separate themselves from the pagan milieu. They also encouraged the Christians' return to moral laxity.

To the Thyatiran Church (Rev 2: 18-29), the Spirit warns about Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess who draws some away from the faith by advocating sin, which they must reject. The Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 474) remarks that although the city possessed no temple dedicated to the emperor, the Church's dangers proceeded from within. The New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary (1999: 1003) observes that the congregation is chastised for permitting a rival of John's teaching to be active in the community. In the Old Testament (1 Kings: 19ff), Jezebel was the wife of Ahab who had led Israel into idolatry, and is pictured as a false prophetess whose teaching of a libertine type links her with the Nicolaitans. Some had been indirectly led into error by her and therefore, became her spiritual descendents. As a result, they encounter Satan's depths instead of the profundities of Christ. However, if the individual follows Christ, not only will the victor share in Christ's prerogatives, but also he will receive the Lord himself.

The Spirit accuses the members of the church at Sardis (Rev 3: 1-6) of not being alive, and challenges them to revive what they have left. In the beginning, they were eager when they heard the message. They must now renew their previous enthusiasm and repent of their lethargy, although a few remained committed. Both the Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 474) and the New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (1975: 1272) observe that this city had a reputation for luxurious and licentious living. The prominent cult at Sardis was that of Cybele. This community had fallen into the spiritual death from which Christ had drawn it. The Spirit admonishes the community "to wake up, put some resolve into the vigour you have left since the community is dying" (Rev 3: 2). The Christian must maintain the attitude of waiting in anticipation of the return of the Master, who will come like a thief only to those who do not expect him (Rev 3: 3) on the last day. The individual will be rewarded for being pure at a time of great depravation, where the Christian has not given himself to sexual debauchery, unlike the pagans. He will be transformed in Christ and live in intimacy with the glorious Lord in heavenly beatitude. The names of those saved will be inscribed in the book belonging to the people of God, permitting them to escape judgment and to enter eternal life. Since they have kept the commandments and have been true to their calling when enduring trials, the Spirit praises the church at Philadelphia. But in the future trial, the Spirit will safeguard them. He will reward them if they do not forfeit the prize of victory. This city had a strong Jewish colony, as remarked by the Jerome Biblical Commentary (1978: 474). A favourable occasion for serving Christ is offered by spreading the gospel in

spite of the adversaries of the Church. The 'open door' (Rev 3: 8) could be an allusion to an entrance into eschatological glory which Christ 'who has David's key' is able to grant since he has been established with authority over the house of God. It is suggested by the New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (1975: 1273) that the 'open door' is an allusion to missionary activity, as referred to in Acts 14: 26-27. However, the community is instructed to imitate the patience of Christ. In the heavenly Church, the faithful Christian will be definitively fixed like the columns of a temple. On each column Christ will write three names – the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem and his own name. He will bestow his glory to his own.

The church at Loadicea (Rev 3. 14-22), which was of high standing in the city, is accused of being complacent. They have placed their trust in riches, but in fact they are poor. They must repent. They have only to ask and they will receive. They have merely to open the doors of their hearts to him and he will come to them. They are exhorted (v18) to testify to the faith proclaimed by the church, even though this will lead to social rejection, harassment and even death. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary (1999:1003) states that they had rejected the teaching of John (v20), though to have accepted this teaching would imply a reception of Christ (New Jerome Biblical Commentary (1999:1003).

This was a wealthy city because of its commercial interests and banking activities. The church, which receives the most severe reprimand, is not accused of any particularly grave fault. Christ condemns their existing state of tepidity and self-satisfaction. It enjoys material well-being and there is an absence of trouble. However, this situation has engendered pride, which closes the individual to every gift of Christ. In such a scenario, Christ contrasts the riches he can grant with those of an illusory kind, as offered by the city. Only he can give real riches: the fullness of salvation and authentic healing. In spite of this, his reproof is inspired by love, and whoever responds to the call of Christ will participate with the Lord in the joyous banquet at the future time. Not only will the individual live with Christ, but he will share in his royalty. In fact, the victory of the Christian is tightly bound up with Christ's victory.

The underlying theme of these passages is that all concerned must repent. They have breached their relationship with God in various ways: the Ephesians do not love him as much as they did formerly; the Smyrians need to keep faith; the Pergamons and Thyatirans have followed strange doctrines; the church at Sardis is lethargic and must revive its faith; the Loadicean church is neither hot nor cold, but has been lured by riches. By way of application, the individual Christian can fall into any of these states. He must therefore repent and follow true teaching in the future and consolidate his position by prayer. Although the Word of God is proclaimed, the individual is free to accept or reject it. He can reject it through lack of faith, or believe it to be too costly, or he can be subject to the lures of the riches of the world, which appear more attractive.

7.2.2 **Pastoral Applications**

Faith was considered precious by biblical writers. It was not given to everyone, but was demanded by the imperative of the gospel through the preaching of God's word and was to be accepted or rejected by the recipient. The fundamental message of salvation was and is the death and resurrection of Jesus, in whom belief by the individual will entail salvation as a free gift. He is offered freedom from slavery to become an adopted son of the Father. This message would be confirmed by the Holy Spirit. The individual, because he is adopted, must respond accordingly and not take his adoption for granted. He has not received the spirit of slavery, but the spirit of sonship (Rom 8:15), waiting for the body to be set free (Rom 8: 23).

Although the word of God is proclaimed, not everyone accepts God's gracious offer. Personal response varies, depending on attitude and circumstance; although once embraced in the Christian community, the unity of the Spirit must be observed by living in peace and concord with one another. By living in the Spirit and using the gifts that He brings, the community will attain a maturity so that it will not allow itself to be drawn away by false doctrines or deceived by trickery.

Faith should be fostered by prayer and one should not identify oneself with the values of the world. To comply with the latter's values not only involves the disruption of the community, but also the dislocation of the individual from the community of God. Such alienation can occur through the influence of false teachers, who initially raise doubts in the individual's mind and further empty speculation, the result of which could be ultimate desertion from the community. To combat this danger, the individual must

place his trust in God and live in accordance with Christ, his Master in the faith that has been taught. Through reception of the faith the individual is brought into a living relationship with Christ, who will lead him to the heavenly banquet. He must repent of his sin, since this implies a failure to love. He is called to exercise repentance, not only to God, but also to his neighbour.

7.2.3 **Summary**

The main dangers that may cause lapsation and the safeguards that must be observed in order that the individual may remain true to his faith, as exemplified in the New Testament are thus:

- One must work to be faithful to God's calling.
- Faith may wane if the individual does not persevere in this calling. Faith must not be taken for granted because it is a precious gift.
- There is an inherent danger of making friends with the world and being driven by its values, cares, joys and riches.
- One can also be driven by the responsibilities of life so that religious adhesion will be jettisoned.
- False teachers, false doctrines and empty speculation can become harmful influences.
- To resist the known truth (which is apostasy) and follow superstitious practices or philosophies that may seem more attractive paves the way to a serious dislocation from the community.
- Following the Lord can appear at times too costly. The demand on one's time, energy and resources may be considered unrealistic or unbearable.
- One can return to the faith community through a realisation of the Father's love and knowledge of one's failure or wretchedness.
- One must not regard religious liberty as permissiveness. Consorting with a syncretistic community poses danger to one's faith.
- Sin strikes at the heart of the community. Personal and communal repentance must be offered to God.

- Moral laxity and licentiousness are at the forefront of the age in which we live, attributes which the Christian should neither espouse nor be influenced thereby.
- Luxurious and licentiousness living hampers love of God and can draw the individual away from him.
- Lethargy and complacency can lead to a dependency on riches. Such tepidity and self-satisfaction often springs from possession of wealth and material well-being. Pride perverts access to God and ultimately leads to spiritual death if it persists.
- Poverty can also be a harbinger of lapsation, if the individual strives to alleviate his condition at the expense of religious practice.
- To abandon the fraternal love of the community involves a loss of the experience of the love of Christ. One should repent of this action. Deliberate apostasy is regarded as a crucifixion of Christ and therefore a denial of him.
- Christ is the source of all love and life. He is present to all. One should repent of a lack of love for God and neighbour.

Our assessment of scriptural principles could be said to reflect some of the states an individual experiences prior to lapsation or to disengagement from his faith.

7.3 ANALYSIS OF LAPSATION OVER THE LAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS

The effects of lapsation can be shown in a number of ways, perhaps the most pertinent being the decline of the Church community over the period 1900 to 2000. This is shown in Table 1 on the next page.

Year	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian	Methodist	Baptist	Others*	Total	% of population
1900	23.1	2.5	3.2	1.7	0.7	1.6	32.8	86
1910	25.4	2.7	3.4	1.8	0.8	1.8	35.9	85
1920	26.3	2.9	3.5	1.7	0.8	1.8	37.0	84
1930	27.1	3.2	3.5	1.8	0.8	1.8	38.2	83
1940	27.6	3.5	3.5	1.7	0.8	1.8	38.9	82
1950	285	4.0	3.5	1.7	0.7	1.7	40.1	80
1960	27.6	4.8	3.5	1.7	0.6	1.7	39.9	77
1970	27.8	5.4	3.1	1.5	0.6	1.6	40.0	72
1980	27.7	5.7	2.8	1.4	0.6	1.6	39.8	71
1990	26.6	5.6	2.7	1.4	0.6	1.7	38.6	67
2000	25.6	5.8	2.6	1.3	0.5	1.9	37.7	64

Table 1: Christian and religious communities (in 1,000,000s) in the UK, 1900-2000

* includes Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal, New and other churches

Source: Wraight/Brierley, 2000/1. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition page 24, adapted. Christian Research. London

Church community is defined by Peter Brierley (2000b: 10) as, "All those who would positively identify with belonging to a church even if they may attend irregularly or were baptized as a child" or "those who belong to a particular denomination however loosely". From the point of view of membership, lapsation can be seen over the same period, even though religious adhesion has declined from 33 per cent of the population in 1900 to 12 per cent of the population in 2000, as can be seen in Table 2 on the following page.

Year	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian	Methodist	Baptist	Others	Total Number	% of population
1900	3,241	1,912	1,649	849	360	644	8,664	33
1905	3,336	1,965	1,739	908	417	726	9,091	33
1910	3,480	1,995	1,766	918	412	733	9,704	33
1915	3,871	2,064	1,783	900	403	761	9,782	32
1920	3,820	2,107	1,816	877	399	779	9,803	31
1925	4,120	2,176	1,852	911	404	825	10,288	31
1930	4,166	2,190	1,829	918	400	854	10,357	29
1935	4,124	2,205	1,810	894	391	838	10,292	29
1940	3,911	2,232	1,822	862	376	814	10,017	27
1945	3,670	2,247	1,790	815	352	808	9,682	26
1950	3,444	2,432	1,796	809	334	799	9,614	25
1955	3,397	2,567	1,827	798	320	809	9,773	25
1960	3,341	2,845	1,814	789	317	812	9,918	24
1965	3,174	2,793	1,791	761	290	839	9,648	23
1970	2,987	2,746	1,951	673	272	843	9,272	22
1975	2,298	2,525	1,718	602	238	679	8,060	19
1980	2,180	2,455	1,437	540	239	678	7,529	17
1985	1,896	2,281	1,322	497	242	705	6,943	15
1990	1,728	2,198	1,314	478	230	776	6,624	14
1995	1,785	1,914	1,088	434	223	841	6,285	13
2000	1,657	1,722	979	387	209	908	5,862	12

Table 2: Christian membership (in 1,000s) in the UK, 1900-2000

Source: Wraight /Brierley, 2000/1. UK Christian Handbook. Millennium Edition Page 25. Christian Research. London

Membership is defined in different ways by religious denominations. Membership of the Anglican Communion is taken from the names on the electoral roles. Membership of the Baptist Church relates to those who are baptised as adults, whereas the Roman Catholic denomination defines their membership as those who are baptised, whatever their age.

A survey carried out by Christian Research into the decline in Sunday attendance in England for the period 1980 to 200 is shown below in Table 3, which indicates that although some denominations have increased their church attendance, the general overall trend is a decrease.

Denomination	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Anglican	1,370,400	1,264,600	1,202,600	1,050,400	960,800
Baptist	286,900	274,000	267,800	275,800	280,000
Roman Catholic	2,064,000	1,851,500	1,738,500	1,394,100	1,240,200
Independent	239,200	252,900	258,100	198,900	150,200
Methodist	606,400	560,500	506,400	433,100	372,600
New Churches	75,000	124,700	174,600	213,100	248,400
Orthodox	10,200	11,300	12,700	20,500	25,600
Pentecostal	221,100	225,800	235,900	228,600	216,400
United Reformed Church	188,300	163,000	138,100	128,800	118,700
Other Churches	139,800	116,800	112,100	99,300	89,300
Total	5,201,300	4,845,100	4,647,000	4,042,600	3,702,200
% of population	11.1	10.2	9.6	8.2	7.4

Table 3: Total Sunday Church attendance in England, 1980 -2000

Source: Brierley, 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends 3, page 223. Christian Research. London

Table 3 shows a decrease of 1,499,100 over a 20- year period, which approximates to a decrease of 1,450 people per week. When reviewing numerical church decline by age group, it can be seen that most losses to the Church are in the under 15, 15 to 19, 20 to 29 age groups. The least decline is shown in the over 65s. This is shown in Table 4 below.

Age group	Under 15	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+	Total
1979	1,416,000	489,700	598,200	870,300	1,087,800	979,000	5,441,000
1989	1,177,000	337,300	481,200	809,400	1,042,500	895,400	4,742,800
1998	717,100	210,600	326,600	646700	885,800	927,900	3,714,700
% 1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	100
% 1989	25	7	10	17	22	19	100
% 1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	100

Table 4: Sunday attendance by age group in England, 1979-1998

Source: Brierley, 2000b. The Tide is running out page 94. Christian Research. London

This shows clearly that lapsation significantly affects the younger members of the Church and that therefore, if this phenomenon is not severely curtailed or reduced, many denominations will face the prospect of ministering to an ageing congregation and possibly to the limited enthusiasm of young people who possess little incentive to remain in an organisation that contains so few individuals of the same age group.

The characteristics of those who fall into the above age categories have been described by Brierley (2000a: 102). He describes 'seniors' as those born in 1926 or earlier. They received an early religious education in Sunday school and helped the church to grow to its numerical peak in 1930. 'Builders' are those (2000a: 103) born before the Second World War and who were 55 -73 in 2000. They helped in the social and economic reconstruction necessary after the War.

'Boomers', to whom we have previously alluded (2000a: 103), are those who fall into the age group 36-54 in 2000. Roof (1994: 39) categorises them as falling into the age range 40-55 years. They exhibit a diversity of spirituality, reflecting the consumer culture and a rich and powerful 'melding' of diverse traditions with an emphasis on the relatedness of all things. They value religious pluralism, tolerance and respect for others. Their interests are varied: icons, meditation, spiritual direction and belief in reincarnation, even though they may be churchgoers. They also value giving and serving others and personal enhancement through self growth.

Roland Croucher (1998: 27) describes 'Busters' as those who fall into the age group 17-35 in 2000. Roof (1994: 47- 48) places them in the 19-39 age category. They are the most educated, the most travelled and the longest-living generation ever. They are unique in that only they have grown up with environmental catastrophes such as AIDS. They are the first 'electronic' generation, having mastered the use of laptops, fax machines, modems and play stations. They possess a tremendous ability to process a mass of information rapidly and, at the same time being multi-tasked, as in listening to the radio whilst doing homework. Croucher (1998: 27) terms this 'parallel thinking'. They are the first generation to be raised on television and exhibit musical tastes which are passionate and angry. They are rebellious, sometimes religious or spiritual — and mostly honest. They have a great longing for reality, community, healing and peace, but are anti-materialistic. They are likely to have a succession of jobs rather than a career, although they place a high priority on relationships; they have an insatiable appetite for junk food, and reject institutions; their knowledge of the Bible is less than any other generation; they have probably come from homes where both parents worked; fewer than half of them will have lived with two biological parents throughout their childhood; they are the first generation to grow up without absolute truths, believing that the highest virtue is tolerance of others; they could be described as post-Christian and postmodern. The following Table illustrates the differences among the three generations.

Trait	Busters	Boomers	Builders
They respect	openness	competence	Status
They think	creatively	linearly & logically	linearly & logically
Support: they	need it	like it	Can manage without it
Work: they	look at the team first	are more specialist	are happy to do any job
Church: they	attend when they feel like it	like to use their gifts	attend out of habit

Table 5: Differences among three Generations of British people

Source: Brierley, 2002/3: UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 3 Page 5, 6. Christian Research. London

Category	Year	>15	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65 +	Total =100%
Total of all English churchgoers	1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	5,441,000
	1989	25	7	10	17	22	19	4,742,800
	1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	3,714,700
Anglicans	1979	27	9	10	17	18	19	1,671,000
	1989	24	5	8	17	24	22	1,491,900
	1998	18	4	7	16	26	29	980,600
Roman Catholics	1979	24	12	12	19	20	13	1,991,000
	1989	24	8	11	18	23	16	1,715,900
	1998	18	6	10	19	25	22	1,230,100
Baptists	1979	30	8	9	16	19	18	290,000
	1989	26	7	10	18	20	19	270,900
	1998	22	6	9	18	22	23	277,600
Category	Year	>15	15-19	20-29	30-44	44-65	65+	Total=100 %
Independent and New Churches	1979	31	9	13	17	14	16	299,000
	1989	31	16	13	18	13	9	425,500
	1998	23	7	12	21	20	17	392,100
Of which: Independent	1998	19	5	8	16	23	28	161,600
New Churches	1998	26	9	15	25	18	7	230,500
Methodist	1979	28	5	5	12	25	25	621,000
	1989	23	5	7	12	23	30	512,300
	1998	19	4	4	11	24	38	379,700
Orthodox	1979	27	12	6	13	23	19	10,000
	1989	24	7	12	14	25	18	12,300
	1998	17	12	11	17	20	23	25,200
Pentecostal	1979	33	11	12	18	16	10	228,000
	1989	31	9	15	18	17	10	236,700
	1998	27	8	14	22	19	10	214,600
United Reformed Church	1979	27	5	7	14	21	26	190,000
	1989	24	4	6	13	23	30	149,300
	1998	18	3	5	12	24	38	121,700
Other denominations	1979	25	9	11	16	20	19	141,000
	1989	27	6	8	14	21	24	113,600
	1998	18	5	9	16	23	29	93,100
English population	1979	21	8	14	19	23	15	46.4 mn
	1989	19	8	16	20	22	15	47.7 mn
	1998	20	6	13	22	23	16	49.7 mn

Table 6: Age distribution of English churchgoers by denomination

Source: Brierley, 2000b. The Tide Is Running Out page 117 adapted. Christian Research. London.

From Table 6 above, it can be seen that Anglicans, Methodists, Orthodox and Independent Churches have lost more children in percentage terms. The Independents have lost the most teenagers and the Anglicans most in their 20s. Only 27 per cent of the Methodists are under 30 years. The Roman Catholics, although nearer to the population profile, have fewer children than the Pentecostals, but the latter have more children and fewer elderly members.

Table 6 shows how membership has decreased in most denominations over a five- year period, except for the Orthodox and Free Churches.

	Age group							
Category	year	< 15 %	15-19 %	20-29 %	30-44 %	45-64 %	65+ %	Total = 100%
England	1979	26	9	11	16	20	18	5,441,000
	1989	25	7	10	17	24	25	4,742,800
	1998	19	6	9	17	24	25	3,714,700

Table 7: Church attendance in England

Source: Brierley, 2000b. The Tide is Running Out page 125 adapted. Christian Research; London.

Regular or weekly attendance at Church, while at one time part of the Christian culture in England, no longer occurs. According to Brierley (2000a: 77), the percentages of people attending Church are:

Twice a week: 12 per cent
Weekly: 46 per cent
Fortnightly: 11 per cent
Monthly: 9 per cent
Quarterly: 5 per cent
Twice Yearly: 17 per cent

This makes no allowance for those who have ceased religious affiliation.

Denomination	% Twice a Week	% Weekly	% Fortnightly	% Monthly	% Quarterly	% Twice a Year	Total (=100%)
Anglican	7	39	14	12	6	22	980,500
Baptist	22	51	10	6	3	7	277,600
Roman Catholic	7	57	6	5	3	22	1,230,100
Independent	31	43	9	6	3	8	161,600
Methodist	14	47	13	10	5	11	379,700
New Churches	26	53	10	5	3	3	230,500
Orthodox	5	10	9	11	4	61	25,200
Pentecostal	33	39	8	9	3	8	214,600
United Reformed Church	7	52	14	11	7	9	121,700
Others	25	41	9	10	5	10	93,100
Overall	12	46	11	9	5	17	3,714,700

Table 8: Frequency of Sunday attendance in England by denomination in percentage terms

Source: Brierley, 2000a. The Tide is Running Out page 82. Christian Research. London

If commitment is measured by churchgoing, then the Anglicans have a smaller proportion of committed individuals. The strongest in commitment appear to be the newer churches, where 80 per cent attend every week. The Independent, Baptist and Pentecostal churches are the next strongest in commitment.

Brierley (2000a: 84) estimates that of the 40 per cent who leave the Church, half of them are 're-cycling', by which he means that they have moved and have not established themselves in a new parish. It is possible that a change in location will involve a denominational change. Of the remaining 20 per cent, about one-fifth will return to Church practice after a period of eight to ten years absence; the remaining 16 per cent will not. This drifting may have been caused by feelings of not belonging, expectations that were not realised or a diminution of faith. Using the above data, Brierley (2000a: 86) calculates a type of balance sheet of gains and losses in overall churchgoing in England in the 1990s.

Gains		Losses	
Outside people joining the church (conversions)	60,000	Church- goers leaving temporarily	60,000
Ex church- goers rejoining	60,000	People changing churches	355,000
People changing churches	355,000	Church-goers leaving permanently	250,000
		Deaths	310,000
		People changing their frequency of attendance	530,000
Total	475,000	Total	1,505,000

Table 9: Balance sheet of gains and losses in England in the 1990s

Source: Brierley. 2000b. The Tide Is Running Out, page 76 adapted.
Christian Research London

The above table indicates that there have been 475,000 joining and 1,505,000 leaving the Church, which gives a net loss of 1,030,000. Brierley (2000a: 86) concludes that the infrequency of attendance is the major reason for declining church commitment. Why this infrequency occurs or, indeed, why people do not attend church at all is suggested in the preceding chapters.

Apart from church attendance, there are other data showing that the level of church affiliation has declined. We shall outline the most important.

The total number of baptisms as a percentage of the population has decreased from 73 per cent in 1900 to half that figure in 1999. The largest decrease occurred in the Anglican Church from 564,000 in 1900 to 125,000 in 1999. Table 9 below shows the trend in baptisms over this period.

Year	Anglican		Methodist	Presbyterian		Roman Catholic		Total (000s)	% of births
	Church of England	Other churches		Church of Scotland	Other churches	England & Wales	Scotland & Northern Ireland		
1900	564	14	48	60	20	55	32	793	73
1910	673	14	52	51	20	60	34	804	78
1920	604	15	50	54	18	101	54	896	91
1930	424	10	53	38	14	83	40	662	91
1940	365	8	51	35	12	87	39	597	90
1950	441	10	47	43	13	92	40	686	88
1960	412	9	46	51	13	123	43	687	74
1970	347	7	39	25	10	108	34	580	64
1980	226	5	30	23	7	76	23	390	53
1990	186	4	29	15	5	69	24	332	42
1995	148	4	23	14	4	75	22	290	40
1996	141	4	23	13	4	67	22	274	37
1997	139	4	22	12	4	67	21	269	37
1998	129	3	22	11	4	67	20	256	36
1999	125	3	21	10	4	66	20	249	36
2000	122	3	21	9	4	65	19	243	35

Table 10: Baptisms by denomination in the UK, 1900 -2000

Source: Brierley, 2002/3. The UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3 page 2: 2. Christian Research. London

The number of marriages in denominational terms has also declined steadily since 1970. Subsequent to 1995, it became possible to conduct marriages on approved premises, such as hotels. Such marriages have grown in popularity, as can be seen in Table 10 below. As a result, the percentage of church weddings has decreased.

Year	Percentage of all marriages held in			Percentage of religious marriages of denomination					
	Register Office %	Approved premises %	Church %	Anglican %	Roman Catholic %	Methodist %	URC %	Baptist %	All Others %
1985	48.8		51.2	65.6	14.2	9.2	3.8	2.2	4.9
1986	48.4		51.6	65.6	13.7	9.6	3.8	2.4	4.9
1987	47.8		52.2	66.1	13.6	9.3	3.8	2.3	4.9
1988	48.5		51.5	65.9	13.6	9.4	3.7	2.3	5.1
1989	48.1		51.9	66.1	13.2	9.6	3.8	2.2	5.1
1990	47.4		52.6	66.2	12.9	9.7	3.8	2.1	5.3
1991	49.3		50.7	66.2	12.6	9.7	3,8	2.1	5.6
1992	50.4		49.6	65.9	12.2	10.0	4.0	2.2	5.7
1993	51.1		48.9	65.7	11.9	10.2	4.0	2.2	6.0
1994	52.3		47.7	65.3	11.8	10.3	3.9	2.3	6.4
1995	54.1	0.9	45.0	65.6	11.9	10.1	3.8	2.2	6.4
1996	53.4	5.4	41.2	65.4	12.2	9.5	3.6	2.2	7.1
1997	52.6	8.1	39.3	65.7	12.3	9.0	3.3	2.2	7.5
1998	50.2	10.8	39.0	66.7	12.1	8.5	2.1	2.2	7.4
1999	47.5	14.2	38.3	66.7	12.3	8.5	2.9	2.2	7.4
2000	44.9	17.3	37.8	67.1	12.4	8.2	2.7	2.1	7.5

Table 11: Proportion of marriages by location and religious marriages by denomination, England and Wales, 1985 -2000

Source: Brierley, 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3 page 4:5 Christian Research. London.

Year	Total religious marriages	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Methodist	United Reformed	Baptist	Congregational	Jews	Others
1985	177,364	116,378	25,207	16,362	6,717	4,152	998	1,005	6,545
1986	179,669	117,804	24,578	17,173	6,847	4,238	1,091	989	6,949
1988	183,571	121,293	25,020	17,118	6,929	4,176	1,080	916	7,039
1988	179,595	118,423	24,372	16,894	6,682	4,056	1,050	1,014	7,104
1989	180,046	118,956	23,737	17,231	6,908	4,013	1,021	935	7,245
1990	174,275	115,328	22,455	16,867	6,656	3,698	965	960	7,346
1991	155,423	102,840	19,551	15,063	5,901	3,275	829	969	6,995
1992	154,597	101,883	18,795	15,446	6,116	3,433	876	933	7,115
1993	146,267	96,060	17,465	14,927	5,783	3,197	805	903	7,127
1994	138,956	90,703	16,429	14,347	5,449	3,178	782	813	7,255
1995	127,522	83,685	15,181	12,846	4,783	2,771	717	784	6,755
1996	114,817	75,147	13,989	10,919	4,141	2,564	677	815	6,565
1997	107,020	70,310	13,125	9,676	3,581	2,319	585	910	6,514
1998	104,231	69,494	12,615	8,863	3,220	2,262	600	870	6,307
1999	100,836	67,219	12,400	8,517	2,900	2,200	600	830	6,170
2000	97,700	65,600	12,100	8,000	2,600	2,100	580	800	5,920

Table 12: Religious marriages by denomination in England and Wales, 1985 – 2000.

Source: Brierley, 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook. Religious Trends 3, page 4.5. Christian Research: London.

Not only have the number of attendees at Church services declined, but the total number of ministers and church building has decreased, as illustrated in Table 13 below.

Year	Church Buildings	Male Ministers	Female Ministers
1995	28,942	21,239	1,165
1996	28,751	20,859	1,211
1997	28,716	20,722	1,295
1998	28,700	20,409	1,329
1999	28,604	20,185	1,540
2000	28,559	19,891	1,655

Table 13: Number of Church Buildings and Clergy in the UK 1995-2000

Source: Brierley, 2002/3. UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 3, page 2.22 adapted. Christian Research. London

There has been a steady overall rise in the number of female ministers and a decrease in male ministers. There are no female ministers in the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox communions, although there has been an increase in the number of deacons in the Roman Catholic Church from 380 in 1995 to 532 in 2000.

If church attendance, the number of baptisms and the number of marriages has declined, one may ask whether Christian beliefs too have declined. Originally, Gill (1993: 13) rejected the notion that a decline in churchgoing resulted primarily from a gradual loss of religious belief; itself caused by the development of scientific and rational thought in the nineteenth century and enhanced by war and technology in the twentieth. Our view is that although a general increase in church attendance occurred from 1821 to 1851, there has been continual decline since then, spurred we believe, by a decline of belief. However, Gill, Hadaway and Marler (1998: 14) allude to this aspect in a later study. They claim that a measurable decline is evident in Britain, specifically in Christian beliefs; and there is a growing scepticism concerning the validity of such beliefs. At the same time, the pluralist theory or persistence is supported by evidence of an increase in both 'New Age' beliefs and beliefs that might be held by both Christian and 'New Age' followers. Their conclusions are shown on the next page, covering the period 1940 to 1990.

Belief in	% of British population				
	1940/50s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
a personal God	43	39	32	32	31
God as spirit	81	78	70	71	70
Jesus as Son of God	68	62	—	47	—
life after death	49	49	37	43	43
heaven	—	—	52	55	51
hell	—	—	21	26	25
the Devil	24	28	20	24	26
Disbelief In					
God		10	15	18	27
Life after death	21	23	42	40	41
heaven	—	—	33	35	40
hell	—	—	68	65	66
the Devil	54	52	70	64	67

Table 14: Belief and disbelief in Britain 1940s-1990s

Source: Gill, Hadaway & Marler 1998, page 18 (abridged) unpublished paper

From the above table, it can be seen that belief during the period considered has waned, albeit erratically, whilst the level of unbelief has increased.

7.3.1 Summary

That lapsation has occurred over the last hundred years, can be supported by statistical data. The Christian community as a whole has decreased from 86 per cent in 1900 to 64 per cent of the population in 2000, although there have been some increases in denominational terms. Over the same period, church membership has declined from 33 per cent to 12 per cent of the population.

Recent statistics show that church attendance was 11.1 per cent of the population in 1980, compared with 7.4 per cent in 2000. The denomination possessing the largest number of churchgoers, the Anglican, has suffered a decrease from 1, 370,400 to 960,800 over the same period; whilst the comparative figures for the Roman Catholics are 2,064,000 and 1,240,200 respectively.

Sunday attendance has decreased significantly in the under -15 age group. In 1979, 1, 416,000 young people attended. This dropped to 712,100 in 1998. The 15-to-19 age group experienced a decrease from 489,700 to 210,600 over the same period. The 20-to-29 age group decreased from 598,200 to 326, 600. All age groups were similarly affected. The most stable group was the over-65s. This represents a serious and challenging scenario to the church, which finds itself bereft of young people and surviving with the elderly and middle aged in many cases. The under-15 age group represents approximately one-quarter of total attendees, whilst the over-65s correspond to approximately one-fifth. It is also seen that many churchgoers no longer attend weekly. Although 46 per cent attend weekly, 17 per cent attend only twice-yearly. This suggests that the church is possibly less cohesive than formerly. Taking into account those joining the church, ex-churchgoers rejoining, those changing religious denominations, people leaving church temporarily or permanently, deaths and those changing their frequency of attendance, the gains estimated for the church are 475,000 whilst the losses are 1,505,000, realising a net loss of 1,030,000.

The numerical effects of lapsation can also be deduced from the number of baptisms being performed in the UK. In 1900, 73 per cent of all births were baptised. This can be compared with 35 per cent in 2000. The Church of England suffered the most. In 1900, 564,000 baptisms were recorded. By 2000 this had been reduced to 122,000.

Similarly, the effects of lapsation are mirrored in the number of religious marriages. In 1985, 51.2 per cent of all marriages were performed in church, whilst in 2000 this had become 37.8 per cent. In statistical terms, 177,364 marriages were celebrated in 1985, compared with 97,700 in 2000. The two largest denominations - the Roman Catholic and Anglican - were the most affected.

The decline in the number of ministers over the period 1995-2000 does not reflect that in the number of churchgoers. The number of male ministers declined from 21,239 to 19,891 over this period. However, the number of female ministers more than compensated for this. We believe that these figures obscure the fact the Roman Catholic Church has experienced a serious reduction in the number of its pastors over the same period, for which statistics are not available. The emergence of female ministers in the Anglican Church is the result of the Church's decision in its 1992 Synod.

The number of church buildings in use has declined by 383 in the UK over the same period. This figure indicates the downward trend of church attendance, and hence the phenomenon of lapsation.

All the data that has been presented does not cover the period 1900 to 2000. It has been possible to recover information only on Christian membership, Christian and religious communities and on the number of baptisms in this category.

7.4 RETURNEES

7.4.1 Pre-Dispositions and Facilitators of Returnees

Hoge (1981: 131) believes that the age range during which returnees resume churchgoing is similar to that of new converts. It is assumed that the motivation for returning and for conversion is the same. Roozen (1980: 444) believes that disengagement is not permanent, but he gives no reasons for re-engagement. Hoge asserts (1981: 131-2) that the pre-dispositions of the returnees comprise:

- concern for the religious training of the children;
- concern for family unity
- the feeling of a spiritual need; and
- the lack of meaning or depression, whereby the individual feels guilty for his inactivity in being absent from the sacraments.

The feeling of guilt only affects inactive Catholics who have a strong religious upbringing and whose family ties include close church associations. They sometimes feel nostalgic at not living up to what they were like in former times. Maybe some event has been triggered that makes them feel discomfort at being absent from Church. Hoge further states (1981: 133) that a fourth pre-disposition is that of the individual who is

married to a Catholic and who feels obliged to be active. This may arise through pressure or influence of the spouse, or by a contention by the spouse that her partner should attend religious services. The facilitating persons are usually spouses, relatives, priests, friends and neighbours. The facilitating events triggering a decision to return to church are serious illness, personal crisis, birth or baptism of a child, marital or family crisis, a move to a new parish or having a religious experience.

7.4.2 **Religious and Personal History**

Hoge (1981: 134) claims that the majority of returnees received religious training as children. Roof (1994: 161) maintains that people with strong religious backgrounds, after a period of absence, might return to religious involvement. He thinks that religious socialisation in the family is an important and lasting influence that shapes the child's belief in God. Ethical values and fundamental views of the self, others and the world are all learned in the family environment. But at the same time, the impact of religious socialisation depends on the exterior cultural climate in which children grows up. Roof (1994: 162) thinks that religious values across the generations will be reinforced within the family, but in an environment where a greater distance occurs between the views of teenagers and parents, family socialisation tends to break down. Roof (1994:162) alleges that young people who come from homes where relations are characterised as 'permissive', or liberal, are liable to deviate from conventional or traditional forms of religion. Liberal child-rearing philosophies are conducive to radical experimentation. Permissive upbringing is associated with lapsation. Such an individual is unlikely to return to church involvement. Returnees, according to Hoge (1981: 137), are thought to have more liberal views on moral questions than active Catholics. For instance, they favour remarriage in Church of divorced Catholics, and support a liberalised position on abortion and birth control. On the other hand, those who are brought up rigidly, provided that they do not rebel against their parents, do not lapse to the same extent. Yet if it happens, they are more likely to return to religious practice. A close relationship with either mother or father is unlikely to produce lapsation in the offspring. However, if this occurs, a return to religious practice is extremely probable.

Roof (1994: 169) suggests that parental religious socialisation appears to be unimportant in shaping the 'Boomer' generation. He (1994: 169-70) reckons that cultural experience in the sixties is suggested as the reason for this. The youth counter-cultural values that swept the generation during adolescence and teenage years led them

to question the authority of institutions. They viewed religious participation as optional and favoured greater autonomy in matters of belief and practice. When they had reached their early twenties, they had ceased religious practice and were unlikely to return to it. If they have continued to practice their religion at this stage in their lives, it is almost certain that they will continue to do so.

Roof (1994: 163) maintains that individuals often cease religious affiliation during adolescence or early adulthood, but return to Church when they are older, especially when they marry or have children. His belief is that as a young person grows older, he settles into a stable job and becomes more involved in community life. Perhaps becoming a parent entails a responsibility for another person's moral and religious upbringing. However, a return to involvement in Church is far from being a predictable outcome in this instance.

Roof (1994: 165-7) alleges that education predicts an individual's social and political attitudes and that returning to religious practice is more frequent among the less educated and is less significant for post-graduates. It could be inferred from this that once 'Boomers' have ceased to practise their religion, their return depends on the degree of education they have received. Associated with education for 'Boomers' is the fear of downward mobility. Many discover that they are over-educated for the jobs available and fear this process. They were born in an age when expectations were high and careers were waiting for them. Even in the high technology area that was assumed to provide the answer to economic ills, the expectation of continued prosperity has faded. Roof (1994: 168) poses the possibility that the economically deprived will seek an answer or a refuge in religion. Certainly, the Church is a resource centre for those experiencing hard times. Whilst it is true that many 'Boomers' have ceased their interest in religion, it is also likely that some resorted to religion in times of trouble, though they may have done so through the support being offered rather than out of a deeply-based religious commitment. An individual's economic status is not a major factor in his return to religious practice.

7.4.3 **The Most Likelihood of Returning**

Hastings (2001: 14) carried out a study on those in the age group 30-44, believing that individuals in this category would return to the Church. Although he concluded that the Church had failed to 'keep up' with the modern world, he offered no response as to whether there were any returnees. He also does not state explicitly in what way the Church has failed to 'keep up' with the modern world.

On the other hand, those who are most likely to return are described by Richter and Francis (1998: 138) as 'chances and changes'. They have moved to a new area and failed to find a church that they liked. Another group who ceased attending church are those who experienced increasing pressure from work or family.

Although the likelihood of returning to religious practice has focussed on adults, it is not unknown for young people to return to the practice of their faith after a period of lapsation. Our research of young people and adults shows that this is possible. See Tables 15 and 16 below. Richter and Francis (1998: 138) believe that four categories are likely to resume churchgoing. They are:

- those who felt that there were not many of their own age in the congregation;
- those who left because of the consumption of illegal drugs;
- individuals who felt that they were being pressured through the Church making increasing demands on their money; and
- those who felt that the Church was failing to contribute to their children's needs.

	Males ≤14	Males 15-19	Females ≤14	Females 15-19
Events				
Birth of child	1			
Family				
Friends		1		
Religious experience			1	
Death of loved one	1		5	
Individuals who influenced return				
Spouse				
Friends	1		5	
Priest			1	
Children/family				
others	2			

Table 15: Males/females ≤14 and males/females 15-19 who have returned to religious practice, the events causing a return and the individuals influencing it

Fourteen (14) affirmative replies were obtained (6 females and 8 males) in response to the question: 'Have you returned?' Of these, one female and five males reported infrequent or non-attendance at Church. Consequently, these were eliminated from the current analysis and 5 females and 3 male respondents remained. Of those who replied to the question concerning events that had facilitated their return, 9 females and 8 males indicated affirmatively. Of these, 3 females and 5 males admitted to infrequent practice or non-practice of their religion and were therefore disregarded in our analysis. A return to church practice was influenced by 8 females and 9 males influenced, of these 2 females and 6 males indicated either irregular or non practice of their religion. Hence the number of respondents analysed in this study became 6 females and 3 males. These data agree with the number of respondents to the last question, but present an anomaly because of the number of individuals who expressed affirmatively a return to churchgoing. This may be due to the respondents double-entering information on the questionnaire (No 1, Appendix 1).

The current data suggests that death of a loved one and the influence of friends facilitated more than any other aspect the return of females in the up-to-and-including-14-age group to religious practice. Males in the same age category are also influenced by the death of a loved one and the birth of a child. No males and females in the 15-19 age group admitted a return to church involvement. It is concluded that a return to Church practice is more likely in the up-to-and-including-14 age category than in the 15-19 age group.

	Males				Females			
Events	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Marital			1			1	1	1
Personal								2
Birth								
Religious experience		1	1	2		1	1	
Move to			1				1`	
Death of loved one								1
Influences								
Spouse								1
Friend							1	2
Priest						1		
Children							1	
Family								
others		1	2	2				

Table 16: Male and female adults who have returned to religious practice, the events causing a return and the individuals influencing it

A return to practice was indicated by 12 female and 7 male adults; 6 of the females reported irregular involvement with the Church. Since, by our definition, they are lapsed, they have been discounted in this analysis. Therefore, 6 females and 7 males were surveyed.

When questioned concerning what particular event facilitated the individual's return, it was discovered that 16 females and 5 males reported an event. As seven females were excluded from this analysis - since they specified irregular attendance - this gave a result of 9 females and 6 males, which does not agree with the number of individuals

who indicated a return. It is suggested that either a combination of events facilitated a return or that some respondents misunderstood the question.

The responses to the question concerning the facilitator(s) of a return to church revealed 12 females and 5 males. Six females, who indicated irregular attendance, were omitted from this analysis, leaving 6 females and 5 males, totals that agree with the numbers specifying a return to church practice.

From our survey, is can be seen that no males or females in the 20-29 age group returned to Church practice. The data suggest that a return by both males and females is more likely to occur in the 45-64 and 65 + age groups. This tendency would be more likely to be predominant in females, for whom the influence of friends is important.

7.4.4 **The Least Likelihood of Returning**

Richter and Francis (1998: 139) believe that those least likely to return to church practice are those who feel that their values and beliefs are at odds with the Church, and that they could not conscientiously retain church membership. Some claim that they doubted, questioned or lost interest. They questioned the Church's moral teaching and found it difficult to reconcile with modern science or with the claims of trustworthiness of other faiths. A third group comprised those forced to attend church when they were children. This practice blunted their interest in religion. A fourth group claimed that their motivation for going to church was not religious. There were others who were radically disenchanted with the Church. They were disillusioned; they thought that through the abuse of power and wealth, through its attitude towards women, homosexuality and racism, the Church has not lived up to its ideals. The last group believed that the Church was irrelevant to life; the Church's teaching, worship and preaching do not relate to their lives. It is an alien institution.

7.4.5 **The Average Likelihood of Returning**

According to Richter and Francis (1998: 139-40), those who are likely to return fall into seven categories.

- Those who felt marginalised. The Church did not value what they had to offer or did not listen to them; they were not allowed to play an active part in the life of the Church.

- Individuals who left the Church because they felt that God had let them down. They could not reconcile their own suffering with belief in God.
- Those whose life-styles were incompatible with Church teaching. Maybe their marriages had broken down or they were having sex outside marriage, or they were sexually active in a same-sex relationship.
- Those who believed the Church was out of step with their own level of faith development and that it was not helping them to grow. The Church's teaching was both too simplified and unchallenging, or it failed to provide the certainty they were seeking.
- Those who felt burned-out by their leadership role and responsibility and found it increasingly difficult to listen to others and care for them.
- Those who had grown dissatisfied with the Church's leadership and did not find it caring or supportive. Alternatively, they believed the Church's pastoral care to be unprofessional or abusive.
- Those who disagreed with the way the Church was changing. They did not like new hymn books, a new style of worship, the new minister or the new seating arrangements.

Those who leave the Church because they believe it is too resistant to change are less likely to return than those who leave the Church because it is too open to change.

7.4.6 **Aspects of Church Life Encouraging a Return**

Hadaway believes (1990: 86) that single lapsed individuals can be attracted to the Church by involving them in social causes, such as care of the homeless; and by introducing programmes of a social nature such as outings and concerts. The Church could act as a surrogate family for single people, in Hadaway's view (1990: 88), by making opportunities available to them communal activities in which friendships can be fostered. These are not ends in themselves. The problem arises as to how to attract young lapsed persons to the church groups that provide these functions. They will have to be introduced by their Christian friends. It is possible that they may need counselling, especially if they suffer despair and are in need of help. According to Hadaway (1990: 90), it is probable that an obstacle to an individual's lapsing may be due to the Church being traditional. However, to alter the Church would undermine its distinctiveness and render it useless. At the same time, structures are required which are 'open' and friendly

so that the lapsed individual may feel comfortable. This does not mean that the faith content of the Church should be jettisoned but that a distinction between what is structural and what is scriptural must be made.

Francis and Littler (2003: 14) suggest that a warm and friendly welcome, a social event after the service, an explanation of the relevance of the sermon and prayers, and a facility with which the service can be followed are all features enabling a return. Established residents, they (2003: 7) believe, show more of a willingness to attend than do newcomers. They (2003: 9) suggest that the expressed opinion of potential churchgoers should not be ignored. At the same time, it would be naïve to think that the suggested changes would result in the pews of rural congregations being filled. Francis and Littler (2003: 8) believe that a sensitive pastoral approach needs to be made, so that individuals feel that the Church is not at fault. This could be accomplished by reading the signs of alienation. Relationships that are promoted by cell or house groups, proposed by both Hadaway (1990: 90) and Dudley (1979: 75, 76), are theoretically more likely to succeed than hoping that such relationships will develop by accident. We return to this postulate in the next chapter.

7.4.7 **The Decision to Return**

According to Hoge (1981: 136), the decision to return was often motivated by a concern for family life, the education of children, a need for personal spirituality and a feeling of guilt arising from absenteeism from the Church. The influences enabling a return were facilitated by spouses, children, friends, relatives and priests - in that order. Personal and family problems, such as a marital crisis, death of a loved one, personal illness or divorce were also common. Some return to church through a desire for friends and personal relationships. Returnees tend to choose parishes frequented by family or friends.

7.4.8 **Result of Returning**

Hoge (1981: 137) believes that returnees were generally happier after returning to their former denomination. The change resulted in family unity and an increase in contentment. At the same time, they experienced more satisfaction, optimism and happiness. This aspect was not examined in our research.

7.4.9 **Types of Returnees**

According to Hoge (1981: 138-9), there are four types of returnees. They are: 'marriage-life', 'family life', 'guilt-feeling' and 'seeker returnees'. Some pre-dispositions tend to occur together: the most significant being the combination of family-life concerns and spiritual need; and the combination of family-life concerns and a feeling of guilt from being absent from the Church.

7.4.9.1 **Marriage-life returnees**

Hoge (1981: 139) estimates that marriage-life returnees have a median age of 30 years. They left the Church in their teenage years or early twenties, but the influence of their marriage partners encouraged their return. Most of them were active in non-Catholic denominations prior to returning, at which stage they were newly married or engaged to Catholics. Roof (1994: 157) agrees with Hoge that the influence of a spouse and the maintenance of family life provide strong motivation for individuals to return. Roof (1994: 165) believes that wives have more influence than husbands on their spouses' return to church allegiance.

Their level of attendance at Mass is the lowest of the four classifications, and their estimate of the importance of religion is also the lowest. Hoge (1981: 141) states that some had an experience of marriage encounter which they considered important, whereas the importance of the minister was quite low. However important the influence of spouses, this was not the only motivation. A significant number related their feelings of personal void or a spiritual need which added to their motivation.

7.4.9.2 **Family-life returnees**

Family-life returnees resumed Mass attendance through concern for their children's religious education and upbringing and family religious life. According to Hoge (1981: 144), they returned during their 20s or 30s after leaving the Church in their late teens or early twenties. Most of these are females and all have children or are expecting children. Only two-fifths of spouses exerted influence on their partners to resume Church attendance. One-third believed that religion was important in their spouse's lives, but stated that it was more important in their own lives. Three-fifths reported that spouses, priests and friends had influenced their return to Church. Three-fifths felt that they had a

need in their later life; two-fifths of returnees thought that their own feelings were influential in their decision to return to Church.

One-quarter of those of school age attend Catholic schools, while three-quarters of returnees stated that their concern for their children's education influenced their decision to return, together with religious family unity. A desire to be role models for their children was decisive. Marriage encounter and prayer groups influenced only a small number of individuals and radio, television and books were secondary influences. Roof (1994: 157) also believes that the rearing of children and their enrolment in religious education classes are even stronger reasons than is the influence of a spouse, although he admits that returning to church can sometimes be riddled with pain, especially for those who have children from a previous marriage.

7.4.9.2.1 Case Study '**Jane**'

The purpose of this case study illustrates in some personal detail the profile of a family-life returnee. It provides an insight into the nature of family-life returning and verifies Hoge's (1981: 144) assertion that returnees of this type rejoin their religious denomination so that their children can be brought up in their parent's religion. This would have been an important factor for Jane, since it is doubtful whether her husband was a Christian. The response is the result of a deposition.

Jane - a senior citizen, married with two daughters - had a convent education in India. She admits that as a young girl she never read the scriptures, but does so now.

'How can one come to love someone without finding out about them,' she observes.
Jane left the church on completion of her convent education. She spoke about her early (5-8) years:

'You just followed rules and regulations and I was one of those people who were usually in trouble and rebellious.'

She continued: 'I had very unpleasant experiences with some of the nuns and perhaps do not forgive them. Looking back, they could have done with lessons in child care!'

She continued: 'This must have carried on within me to my next convent boarding school where I was happier, though a trial to the nuns.'

Jane said that she loved to break rules, and so when she left school she stopped practising her religion. She remembers attending Mass in India, where the indigenous people were poor.

The subject of the sermon was money.

'I remember being mad that he [the priest] should be asking people, who obviously didn't have very much of this world's goods, to cough up. I can't remember going to a service in Church again until I was married. Then it was all quite pathetic as my father did all the talking to the priest about getting a dispensation as we were not sure whether my husband had been baptised.'

Jane lapsed for about thirty years although she had arranged for her two daughters to be baptised. She travelled a lot and 'remembers visiting Cyrene, sitting on a bank overlooking the remains of an early Christian Church and wanting to go to church'. She did so eventually.

'For me, that part of the Acts of the Apostles about Cyrene is very special. It was where God caught up with me, but I also feel that there were souls of the first Christians interceding for me too.'

7.4.9.3 **Guilt-feeling returnees**

Hoge (1981: 150) states that guilt-feeling returnees accounted for four-fifths of females who lapsed from the Church during their teens or even in mid-life. They returned to church later than other returnees. This group was not trained differently from other returnees, but they had left the Church because of dissatisfaction with the teaching and practice of the Church. This sub-group accounted for one-fifth of returnees. Some were bored and others had experienced marital problems or were divorced. Their life-style conflicted with Catholic moral teaching, usually in the area of sexuality. The importance of religion to them was much greater than in other returnees, according to Hoge (1981: 151). In their period of absenteeism, the majority did not join other religious groups. Of those who returned, three-quarters were married, one-seventh single, one-tenth divorced or separated and a small number widowed. Few of the spouses were influential in their partners' decision to return to religious practice, although they reported that priests, friends and relatives had helped them. They had thought of becoming active Catholics for some years and specific events had triggered a feeling that induced them to return to religious practice. Guilt-feeling returnees experienced more difficult life events than

other returnees: the death of a loved one, a marital crisis and personal illness were examples of this. Their feelings of guilt stemmed from distinctive and conflictual situations.

7.4.9.3.1 Case Study – '**Alice**'

The purpose of this case study, which resulted from a deposition, shows that guilt feelings sometimes bring individuals back to their childhood religion. Although Alice did not leave because of disagreement with the moral teaching of the Church, she left in the belief that she had not married in accordance with the Church's rules, and therefore thought that she was not in communion with it. We do not know why she married outside the Church. Maybe her husband was antagonistic towards her religion. This case study verifies Hoge's (1981: 151) assertions concerning guilt-feeling returnees.

Alice is a Roman Catholic, a divorcee and a weekly attender.

She reports: 'I was a practising Catholic for 23 years. I then married out of the Church and believed that I was excommunicated. I returned to my faith 40 years later when my husband died and I was very ill. I now attend regularly but have found many new practices rather alien.'

7.4.9.4 **Seeker-returnees**

Seeker-returnees comprise a relatively large number of single, divorced and separated individuals, according to Hoge (1981: 158). They are more influenced by charismatic prayer groups and by individuals who have had conversion experiences, but they also think that priests played an important role in the decision to return.

They lapsed from Church attendance during their late teens or early twenties and usually returned in their late twenties. Their religious training in childhood was similar to other returnees. Whilst they were inactive Catholics, one-fifth were active in other denominations. Of the returnees, one-half were married, one-fifth were single, one-fifth separated and divorced and a small number widowed. Of those who were married, three-quarters were married to Catholics, but only rarely were spouses instrumental in influencing their partners to return to religious practice. One-third reported that their friends, relatives and priests were influential in this regard. Most important to seeker-returnees was the impact of personal problems and personal needs. Nearly three-

quarters of them said that they had experienced personal family problems that influenced their religious views: the most common being the death of a loved one, personal illness and divorce. Two-fifths said that this influence was very important in their decision to return to church worship. Four-fifths reported that they felt a need or void in their lives, of which two-fifths said that this had played an important part in their return to church. These individuals had experienced life-shattering events and strong feelings of meaninglessness and had returned to church in order to fulfil a spiritual need. One-third had been involved in charismatic prayer groups, of which one-tenth believed that it was an important factor in their decision to return to church attendance. One-seventh thought that religious reading had contributed to their decision.

Seeker-returnees' lives changed considerably as a consequence of their decision to return to Church. They attend more frequently than any other group. Nine-tenths attend weekly or more often. They are more active in parish groups and they ascribe great importance to their faith, more so than other groups. Roof (1994: 158) agrees with Hoge that as a result of these feelings of emptiness and loneliness, seeker returnees are concerned with a personal quest for the meaning of life. Hoge (1981: 160) believes that the theological and moral attitudes of seeker-returnees are not remarkable. What is characteristic is their strong spiritual need, their life-changing conversion and their strong commitment to the Church. Their reason for returning to the Church was not due to marriage or family-related motivations. Roof (1994: 159) believes that some feel the necessity of belonging to a community. They feel the need for group support, the need to share their faith and their activities with others, although some, according to Roof (1994: 160), feel a sense of nostalgia about church attendance, stemming from childhood memories of family worship. Some have guilt feelings because they are not actively involved.

With movement in and out of religious institutions, the question of religious commitment naturally arises. Are those who lapse at one stage and rejoin later as committed as those who never lapse? Are returnees loyal to their religious organisation once they have come back? Roof (1994: 180), contrary to Hoge (1981: 160), believes that returnees are less committed to the Church than loyal members who do not lapse. However, this is an area beyond the scope of this thesis.

7.4.9.4.1 **Case study -'Helen'**

The purpose of this case study is to illustrate some of the features found in a seeker-returnee. We conducted the interview using the format of Questionnaire 3 (Appendix 3). The case study also shows that there can be a combination of factors that influence both a lapse from religious practice as well as a return to it. It verifies the assertions of Roof (1994: 159) and Hoge (1981: 160).

Helen is a divorced Roman Catholic with two teenage daughters. She is in her early forties. She says:

'Before I lapsed, everything in my life was so negative and wrong. Now that I regularly attend everything, my life is more positive and family relations have improved. Maybe part of this positive attitude is due to the fact that I am now involved in various church related activities such as ALPHA, the meditation group, children's liturgy and the Lourdes pilgrimages. There was tension in the family before I left the Church, but now at my return I have a deeper belief in God. Although, I do not intend to change my religious denomination.'

'I have attended other church services which I have found to be more participatory in their style of worship. Before I left, I did not feel that I belonged. I felt like an outsider, not part of what was going on, and I was not asked to belong to anything. The style of worship was not always conducive to prayer and I felt that it was too traditional. I did consider for a while changing to a more participatory church, but now I realise that God is in every church and every human heart. Now I feel that I belong to my church and though I like the style of Mass, at times I just want to be by myself at a traditional Mass, not speaking to anyone, not being recognised, but just concentrating on my private prayer to God. Even so, I feel that the worship in my church could be more participatory and uplifting.'

'I feel sad about divorcees not being able to receive communion, and I think it unfair if a woman's husband has left her; in a way she is being punished twice. My husband and I are going through a divorce after 25 years of marriage. Although he is a Catholic, he does not practice much. He works abroad, and I believe he has found another partner. My daughters are very attached to their dad whom they see only occasionally. My return to church was brought about by our marital crisis and subsequent religious

experience. In fact, my parish priest and the nuns persuaded me to return to practising my religion.'

'There was a lack of spiritual meaning in my life before I left. I felt lost, but now I'm found, which has provided a balance to my life and new meaning. I feel that the Spirit of God now lies deep within my heart. I felt guilty when I lapsed, but if you know that God lies within your heart, guilt is lessened.'

'Although I have two daughters (17 and 11 years) who attend a non-Catholic church school, I do not put pressure on them to attend church in case I put them off. Yet I find it hard to encourage unless I put some pressure on them. They are teenagers and find the Mass 'boring' (their words).'

'Even so, I feel more fulfilled now. One's morals are improved by leading a more Christ-like life.'

7.4.9.4.2 **Case study - 'Tom'**

The purpose of this case study is to illustrate a lapse from church practice during adolescence. The individual, who is an only child of non-practising parents, was received into the Church in his early teens. The individual's experience in his early years was different from the previous case study in that 'Helen' had received a religious education with her two sisters and had been brought up in a religious environment. The interview was carried out using the format of Questionnaire 3 (Appendix 3). The result appears to dispute the claim of Roof (1994: 180) that returnees are not as committed to the Church as those who do not lapse. There seemed to be a need to belong and to depart from a spiritual vacuum. This confirms the assertions of (Hoge: 1981: 160). Tom is single and a retired pastor. He relates that he left the Church.

'Like many young people, I did not experiment or change my religion. I wanted to see what it was like not going to church. But I also had some doubts about my religion. At the time, I was an apprentice and I mixed with both believers and non-believers. One person, a committed Roman Catholic, answered all my objections and turned my disbelief into belief. When I look back on that time it seems strange that I did not imbibe those antagonistic attitudes to the Church which were quite common among those with whom I worked. After an absence of six years, I decided to return to church practice. I do not think that I could have continued absence for much longer. My parents

only attended church at Christmas and although they appeared uninterested in religion, not only did they place no barriers but they actively encouraged my religious practice.'

7.4.10 **Summary**

Those who return to church practice do so because:

- they are anxious for the religious education of their children;
- they have a spiritual need;
- they have a lack of meaning in their lives;
- they have guilt feelings for their religious inactivity;
- they are influenced by their spouse.

Those who have returned have:

- received religious education as children;
- more liberal views on moral questions than active Catholics;
- a close relationship with either practising parent;
- a standard of education at college or university level.

For young people, our data suggests that the death of a loved one and the influence of friends facilitated the individual's return. It is concluded that a return to church is more likely in the up-to-and–including-14-years age group than in the 15-19-years age category.

The results of our investigations also suggest that a return is more likely to occur in the 45-64 and 65+ age groups than among the younger.

The main types of returnees are:

- 'Marriage-life', in which a return is influenced by the individual's spouse.
- 'Family-life member', in which the individual is influenced by the need for religious education of his children.
- 'Guilt-feeling'- someone who left the Church because of a conflict with its teaching but has rejoined through feelings of guilt.

- 'Seeker-returnee', where the individual has a spiritual need or void in his life that has encouraged a return.

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has:

- considered the scriptural principles of lapsation;
- analysed this phenomenon over the last one hundred years; and
- examined the process of returning to the Church after a period of lapsation.

One is called to faith by God, and this exemplifies itself in commitment. There exists the danger in this of bowing to secular values, cares, riches and joys. The responsibilities of life can also adversely affect religious adhesion, as the influences of false doctrines or spurious teachers can be harmful. It is also detrimental to faith to follow superstitious practices and anti-Christian philosophies.

At the same time, following Christ can appear costly or place an excessive demand on one's time. As sin strikes at the heart of the individual's commitment and at the community, so licentiousness and luxurious living can draw him away from it. Lethargy can lead to a dependency on wealth, which again can lure a person away from God. On the other hand, poverty can lead to religious defection, if alleviation of this plight is achieved at the expense of commitment. When one lapses from the community one abandons its fraternal love and this involves the loss of the love for Christ.

Lapsation is not a new phenomenon; it has existed since the foundation of Christianity.

- The Christian community in England has decreased from 86 per cent in 1900 to 64 per cent of the population in 2000.
- Church attendance in 1980 was 11.1 per cent of the population and this reduced to 7.4 per cent of the population by 2000.This decrease has primarily affected the under-15 age group.
- In nearly twenty years, from 1979 to 1998, the Sunday attendance of young people in this group decreased by 303,900. The 15-19 age category decreased by 279,100, and the 20-29 age group by 271,600. In other words, lapsation is more pronounced among younger members than older ones.

- There are fewer baptisms today than in former times. In 1900, 73 per cent of all births were baptised. By 2000, this had decreased to 35 per cent. Numerically, in 1900 there were 564,000 baptisms. By 2000 only 122,000 baptisms were recorded.

Although lapsation has significantly affected church membership over the last one hundred years, some individuals return to church practice. Their reasons for doing so are varied, but the most common are

- a concern for the religious education of their children;
- a spiritual need;
- a feeling of guilt attaching to the person's inactivity;
- an event which has caused discomfort; and
- the individual's spouse influencing a return.

Almost any event or person can facilitate the individual's return but the most prominent are spouses, relatives, friends, priests and neighbours. The most likely events are serious illness, a personal crisis, the birth or baptism of a child, a marital or family crisis, a move to a new area or having a religious experience.

Returnees probably have strong religious backgrounds, whereas those brought up in a permissive environment are unlikely to return. Returnees are thought to have a more liberal approach to moral questions than active Catholics. A close relationship to either mother or father, but preferably both, is conducive to a return to church involvement. Some believe that the less educated are more likely to return than are graduates; although a person's economic status is not an important factor.

According to this research, young people were most likely to return as a result of the death of a loved one. The influence of friends facilitated the return of females in the up–to-and- including-14 age group. Males in the same-age category were influenced by the death of a loved one and the birth of a child. It appeared that in this age group it was more probable that a return to church practice would occur.

Our research on adult returns showed that they were more likely in the 45-64 and 65+ age groups than in any other. Females were more likely to return to church involvement than males. Their facilitators were friends.

Those least likely to return feel that their values and beliefs are not consonant with those of the Church. There are some who doubt, question, or lose interest in religion, while others may have been forced to attend as children. Still others do not think that the Church lives up to its ideals because of its attitude to power, homosexuality, racism and women. Those who believe that the Church is irrelevant to modern life are also unlikely to return.

Social and cultural activities can be promoted to encourage returnees, and also friendship for single individuals. Relationships could be developed by house groups. When an individual returns to church commitment, a social event after the service could enable an easy transition.

A returnee is usually happy and experiences satisfaction and optimism. Although the typology of returnees is varied, there are thought to be four basic patterns.

- 'Marriage-life' returnee who returns through the influence of his spouse.
- 'Family-life' returnee, who is concerned for his children's education and moral development.
- 'Guilt-feeling' returnee, who left the Church through dissatisfaction with its teachings, but who feels guilt at his lack of adherence.
- 'Seeker-returnee', who comes back to the Church because of a perceived spiritual need.

Some feel the necessity to belong to a community for group support.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Albeit lapsation is a major problem in the Church, it is by no means a one-way process, since a small proportion of the lapsed return to their parent denomination. Unfortunately, there appeared to be a paucity of research material on the characteristics of returnees. The present writer believes that although the phenomenon of lapsation cannot be eradicated, some strategy or strategies might be employed to curb it.

CHAPTER 8: PROPOSED STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION AND FORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

To establish a method of minimising lapsation, we will, first, outline some of the present methods and aims of education and formation in the Christian faith. This will be compared and contrasted with a more holistic method involving the faith community, rituals and liturgy, action, personal development, enculturation, styles of faith and family relationships. These aspects will be proposed as a strategy for minimising lapsation in the young.

The works of Arthur, 1995; Astley et al, 1997; Coman, 1977; Convey, 1994; Flannery (ed), 1992; Foy, 2003; Francis and Egan, 1990; Francis, 1989; Francis and Lankshear, 1991; Francis, 2002; Gibbs, 1977; Gibbs, 2006; Hadaway, 1990; Hornsby-Smith, 1987; Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson, 1975; Hirst, 1981; Horwood, 2006; Hume, 1989; Jerusalem Bible, 1984; Niebuhr, 1952; Niebuhr, 1975; O'Neill, 1979; Pohschneider, 1969; Richter and Francis, 1998; Ryan and Foster, 1995; Schweitzwer, 2000; Smith, 1983; Strommen and Hardel, 2000; Tacey, 2004; and Westerhoff, 2000 will be consulted.

The second purpose will be to suggest strategies for the reclamation of 'adult lapsed'. The works of Beckford, 1973; Berger, 1979 b; Brierley, 2002/3; Brierley, 2003/4; Brooks, 1994; Clarke, 1977; Cox, 1984; Croft, 2002; Decker and Griesinger, 1977; Dudley, 1979; Fanstone, 1993; Gamble, 1991; Francis and Lankshear, 1991; Gibbs, 1979; Gibbs, 1981; Gibbs, 1993; Gumbel,1993; Hadaway, 1990; Horwood, 2006; Jackson, 2002; Kelley, 1972; Lee, 2000; O'Halloran, 1991; Tacey, 2004; Trudinger, 1979; Winter, 1973; Winter, 1985 and the authors of the 'Easter People' and the 'Lausanne Declaration' will be discussed.

8.2 THE PRESENT STRATEGY OF EDUCATION AND FORMATION

In theory, the ideal 'ecology' of the religious institution - that is the pattern of relations between organisms and their environment - should ideally comprise living in a homogenous community whereby family life is secure and stable. In such a setting, the children attend a parochial school, religious lessons are conducted in the parish, and the

Church is composed of members who know one another. All these elements coalesce to produce an educational 'ecology'.

However, communities are now heterogeneous. Pluralism of religious and secular activities exists, which interacts and competes one with another, so that the community can no longer be counted upon to transmit a particular set of understandings and beliefs. The composition of the family has also changed in recent times. Families have fewer members now. Both parents often work and one-parent families are increasing numerically. Inter-faith marriages are more common now than in previous times. The average family is more mobile and frequently without roots.

Many functions once carried out by the family are now assumed by society. For instance, there exist day nurseries for young children, retirement homes for the retired and aged, recreational facilities for youth and hospices for the sick and dying. The Church is no longer the centre of social and community life. Families often go away at weekends or are distracted by various secular groups. Television, the mass media and the internet have replaced religious publications to some extent. Hence, the Church school struggles to function in a highly complex society.

Westerhoff (2000: 16) maintains that the transmission of religious beliefs cannot be achieved by the 'schooling-instructional' paradigm, as he calls it, which ignores this changed situation. However, he thinks the more we know about learning and teaching, the more our educational problems can be solved. Nowadays, technology as an educational tool is used instead of new ways of forming and encouraging relationships. Psychology is utilised to understand and control behaviour instead of reflecting on the meaning of a relationship. Instead of re-thinking the nature of community, psychologists resort to group dynamics when facing difficulties in classroom discussions. Formal teaching has been resorted to with the idea that a workable school for the Church can be provided. It has been assumed that the more we know about people and learning, the more effective will be our educational efforts.

The 'schooling-instructional' paradigm encourages adults to exercise power over their pupils. An adult way of being in the world is inflicted upon minors. The teacher wants the 'neophyte' to be like him, in his own image and likeness. He wants to do something to or for the pupil so that the latter will reflect the image the teacher wants him to be.

However, education grounded in Christian faith cannot be a vehicle of control. It must encourage an equal sharing of life in the community, an opportunity for co-operative reflection on the meaning and significance of life. It is always easier to instruct or impose rather than reflect, share and interact.

The question that a teacher must ask is: 'What can I bring to another?' not 'What do I want that other person to know or be?' Further questions would be: 'Is there a need for schooling and instruction in a Christian context and is it necessary for education?' or 'Is living as a Christian with others inherently educational?'

Faith is deeply personal, dynamic and ultimate, of which religion is an expression. Religion is concerned with institutions, creeds, documents and artefacts. The institution of the Church includes statements of belief and official documents, such as the Bible and the Church's theology, convictions and moral codes. Religion is important, but not ultimately so. Faith must be the concern of Christian education. Now, the 'schooling-instruction' paradigm is concerned with religion which can be taught. Faith cannot be taught. Teaching someone about religion or Christianity is relatively unimportant, although the practice of religion as an expression of an individual's faith can lead others to faith. One can know something about Christianity and not be a Christian at all. Since the membership of the Christian Church has declined over the last century, as we have shown in chapter 7.3, it has been accompanied by the 'schooling-instructional' paradigm which taught pupils about the Christian religion without apparently making all of them committed Christians. It appears from this that personal commitment to Christ has been eroded. Many catechists also have changed their emphasis to teaching the Bible, the history of the early days of the Church, Christian belief and morality. Under this system, many educated atheists have emerged.

However, an individual is not saved by his knowledge, beliefs or worship within the Church. He is not saved by his religion or actions. He is saved by and through the love of God and the suffering and death of Christ. To live according to this truth is to have faith. Although faith cannot be taught, it can be promoted within the faith community. It cannot be transferred to one person from another. Faith can be expressed and made meaningful by persons sharing their faith in an historical, tradition-oriented, believing community. The 'schooling-instructional' paradigm, modelled on modern psychology and pedagogy, leads to a focus on religion rather than faith.

Westerhoff (2000: 19) concludes that the 'schooling-instructional' paradigm is bankrupt. Many congregations, Anglican and Roman Catholic, generally follow this method, although there may have been some effort made to develop the individual's faith. The present writer agrees with Westerhoff (2000: 19) that the present situation is unsatisfactory. It is sometimes assumed that faith resides in an individual pupil after education in a church school or Sunday catechetical classes. Large numbers of young people in the 15-19 age group have ceased to practise their religion, even though they may have attended a Christian school. This procedure leaves room for doubt as to whether the system works at all. In the 1960s, it was the common hope of the Catholic bishops that education in a denominational school would secure the adherence of young people to the Church. We have seen that this has not happened. Nowadays, the Catholic bishops of England and Wales give lip-service only to Catholic education, in the present writer's view.

The Roman Catholic Church has, in recent years, instituted a form of education during the Sunday liturgy primarily aimed at children in the 5-8 age category. Although this is very popular in parishes, it can be questioned as to whether it encourages faith. It might only promote religious education.

Many Roman Catholic parents have invested their energies in the voluntary-aided denominational school in the hope that their children's religious commitment will be assisted, and that they may be equipped to act as followers of Christ when they leave. Indeed, this type of school was regarded as a faith community having an implicit relationship with the Catholic community. But a faith community, according to O'Neill (1979: 48, 49), is characterised by a common intentionality, where individuals share a common pattern of complex values, understanding, sentiments, hopes and dreams that deeply condition everything in the person's life. It was believed that voluntary-aided Catholic schools offered parents an atmosphere in which home and school share an explicitly religious understanding of life.

Francis and Egan (1990: 590) state that although there is a notion of the Catholic school providing an alternative educational environment, primarily for practising Catholic pupils of practising Catholic parents. There are usually three strands of pupils attending a Catholic school: first, practising Catholic pupils of practising Catholic parents; second, non-practising Catholic pupils of non-practising Catholic parents; and third,

non-Catholics. They (1990: 590) believe that the latter two groups could impair the ethos of the school and they (1990: 591) suggest that, if the school is to be a faith community, the inclusion of a significant number of non-practising Catholic pupils produces serious disaffection within the establishment. The same writers (1990: 588) conclude that a disparity often occurs through the expressed view that the Catholic school is a faith community, given the reality of the pupil's background.

In their study, they (1990: 596) discovered that if the parents attended church, then their child was more likely to do so, although the maternal influence is greater than the paternal. Even if one parent attended church, a pupil from such a home is more likely to go to church than one from a home where neither parents practise their religion. Francis and Egan (1990: 597) believe that the father's churchgoing is unrelated to his baptismal status, but is related to the mother's. On the other hand, the mother's attendance at church is unrelated to the baptismal status of her husband. Catholic fathers are more likely to go to church if they are married to someone of the same religion. The mother's church attendance was unrelated to the baptismal status of her husband. Mothers who are Catholic are just as likely to attend church, whether their husbands are Catholic or not. Thus religious education, to be effective, must have as a pre-requisite the condition that the parents practise their religion.

In a later study, Francis (2002: 80) suggests that the greatest threat to the Catholic secondary schools comes not from the presence of non-Catholic pupils, but from the admission of lapsed Catholic pupils. The present writer thinks that it is through this tendency that Catholic secondary schools have rendered themselves uninfluential in fostering the faith of its students. It might be enquired in what way religious education in Catholic schools differs from that of state schools.

Francis (2002: 79) notes that separate attention needs to be given to the four categories of pupils attending Catholic schools: namely, practising Catholics (those who attend Church every Sunday), sliding Catholics (those who attend some Sundays, but not weekly attenders), lapsed Catholics (those who never attend Church on Sundays), and non-Catholics (those who have been baptised in a non-Catholic church and who may or may not be practising members of their respective denominations).

Francis (2002: 80) reported that although practising Catholic pupils attending Catholic schools recorded higher scores than those from non-denominational schools, lapsed Catholic pupils recorded scores close to those in non-denominational schools. The present writer does not find this surprising. Francis (2002: 80) repeats an earlier proviso that the greatest threat within the Catholic secondary school does not come from the presence of non-Catholics, but from lapsed Catholic pupils. He concludes that the Catholic school cannot be considered as a homogeneous community. The threat to homogeneity, he (2002: 81) maintains, comes from religious differences among the pupils, since females are considered more religious than males and remain more traditional in their moral values than boys. He observes (2002: 81) that practising Catholic parents who wish their children's religious and moral formation to be shaped by a practising Catholic environment may discover this to be a fragile assumption.

Astley et al (2000: 267, 268) note how the aims of religious education have changed over the last fifty years. Previously, up to the 60s, most syllabuses made explicit the evangelistic function as instruction in the Christian religion that helps the school community to prepare for Christian living in the wider society. These aims are now regarded as unacceptable for religious education in secular schools where religious education now must be non-confessional.

Astley et al (1997: 171) distinguish between the aims and the methods of teaching religious education. They (1997: 171) regard the former as sometimes phenomenological, so that the pupils acquire and develop a knowledge and understanding of Christianity and ethnic religions in Great Britain. The 1988 Education Act requires that the curriculum of every school should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of school children. The aim, according to Astley et al (1997: 172), of religious education is the development of pupils so that they are able to evaluate religious and moral issues and engage with the fundamental questions of the meaning of truth and religion. The methods to be adopted advocate learning by investigation, interpretation, reflection, empathy, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, application and expression. It is also recommended that the teaching of strategies that engender respect, care and concern encourage attitudes of commitment, fairness, self-understanding and enquiry. Astley et al (2000: 267, 268) state that the distinctive feature of this approach is the inclusion of non-Christian religions, since, it is argued, we live in a pluralistic and multi-faith society.

Astley et al (2000: 268) believe that an important part of the teacher's task is to encourage pupils to reflect on ultimate questions as part of their search for meaning and value in life, by means of their understanding of religious meaning in their own lives.

A second outcome is the development in pupils of a range of implicitly religious, spiritual and moral attitudes and beliefs, including a tolerant attitude to those of different religious persuasions living in a pluralistic society.

Astley et al (2000: 270) remark that adherents of the confessional approach to teaching explicit religion (Christianity) regard it as justifiable because it is true and that it is right and good for children to be brought up in the Christian faith. The personal quest teacher, on the other hand, teaches religion because it is a good thing for children to explore questions of meaning. Its purpose is to help with a sense of meaning and purpose. Such questionings of meaning are long-term processes that continue outside the classroom. Although teachers may think that this method helps pupils find some appropriate commitment, the present writer believes that religious adhesion is caught from the attitude and commitment of the teacher himself.

These writers (2000: 271) note that in the voluntary-aided church school, its trust deed would specify that religious education should reflect the faith and practice of the appropriate denomination, and a diocesan syllabus published by the bishop would usually be followed. Therefore, the writ against confessional religious education does not apply in this case. Even so, this practice has been questioned by educationalists who argue that the classroom is not the place for the evangelisation of pupils, nor is it the place for catechesis or to seek to bring children to faith or nurture them in it. They (2000: 272) state that religious nurture is the task of the parents and the faith community. Our view is that the Catholic school has been traditionally regarded as a faith community. Provided that the denominational school only caters for that particular denomination, then the school is part of the denomination's community. As has been stated, it is a contentious issue among educationalists as to whether, even in the religious voluntary-aided school, the confessional mode is appropriate. Religious education is certainly the task of parents and the faith community. But if the educational establishment which admits practising Catholics is from a faith community, then surely the task of religious education is shared by the school.

Arthur (1995: 50) claims that on the basis of the Declaration on Christian Education issued by the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales, there is a significant shift towards increased dialogue with modern educational thought, which emphasises service to the community, involvement in the secular world and religious freedom.
Astley et al (2000: 277) correctly observe that Catholic secondary schools were founded in order to provide a higher priority for promoting a religious way of life and, as Astley et al (2000: 279) observe, Catholic teachers of religious education in Catholic schools view it differently from their counterparts in non-denominational schools, although there exists no difference between them in the importance of other aims.

One may enquire what influence the Catholic school produces on its students. Ryan and Foster (1995: 47) ask this question. They assert (1995: 47) that many people believe that the Catholic school is not doing its job if students do not go to church. They envisage a 'high religious home' as one where at least one parent attends church regularly and the parents have a positive influence on the student's religious development. A 'low religious home', on the other hand, refers to one where neither parents attend Sunday service and where they do not expect their child to attend either. They ask (1995: 48) whether it could be that high levels of religiosity are indicators of the effectiveness of religious education in religious schools. Such an assumption, they claim (1995: 48), defines faith as a unitary characteristic ignoring the complex relation between faith and church practice. Such a commitment to faith could indicate the depth of religiosity, the quality of the life of faith and adherence to Catholic values.

We believe that this last statement is not supported by any evidence, and the present writer cannot agree, although it is accepted that a high level of religiosity in an individual does not occur as a direct consequence of effectiveness of religious education in school. Such a quality of religiosity arises mainly from the religious nature of the family which the school enhances. Therefore, we endorse Ryan and Foster's argument concerning the importance of a student's 'religious' home as a collaborator with the school in developing his religious commitment.

The authors (1995: 50) discovered that a simplistic view posits a direct relationship between church attendance and religious faith and that increases or decreases in church attendance do not indicate shifts in the dynamics of a person's faith. We assume that Ryan and Foster have in mind only small increases or decreases in church attendance; otherwise, their statement appears to be contradictory.

Francis (1989: 85) conducted a survey measuring pupils' attitudes towards Christianity over the period 1974 to 1986. He discovered that pupils in the fifth year had a less positive attitude than those in the first year. But the same author (2002: 79) admits that there is a higher level of commitment to Christian moral and religious values than would be the case in non-denominational schools.

However, Hirst (1981: 90) opposes this distinct form of Christian education. He states (1981: 90) that education is the development of the person within the limits of reason, that can be accompanied by a catechesis which seeks to complement his education in matters of faith. His (1981: 90) reasoning is that such a view does justice to natural reason, the status of religious belief and to the free, autonomous response that is required from the individual. In practice, this author means that state schools should be devoted to secular education and that Catholic schools should be custodians in all matters of catechesis. In our view, such lines of cleavage are foreign to the promoters of religious education.

The teaching method today in Catholic schools, according to Arthur (1995: 66), is the experiential approach, which focuses on the life experience of the learner. This author (1995: 66) warns that if religious education becomes less confessional, then denominational schools will become increasingly anachronistic and even less desirable. Arthur (1995: 70) observes that contemporary educationalists exclude Christianity from the aims and purposes of education. They favour a commitment to pluralism and hold that society is too heterogeneous to have any conception of a common good. Arthur (1995: 75) cites the opinion of some educationalists who deny the possibility of constructing a relationship between Christian faith and education. They think that it has no contribution to make to the understanding of education. Arthur (1995: 76) believes that the secularisation of modern thought has resulted in the decline of religious concepts. In fact, no all-embracing Catholic philosophy of education has emerged to undergird post-Vatican II statements.

Arthur (1995: 242) maintains that it should be quite legitimate to assume the Catholic faith in Catholic schools. After all, secular education is dominated by liberalism, which in the view of Hume (1989: 18) 'has an ideological character of its own'.

8.3 THE PROPOSED STRATEGY OF EDUCATION AND FORMATION BY PARENTS

8. 3.1 Faith Community

Westerhoff (2000: 51) believes that faith exists within a common memory of tradition, a common understanding of the ways of life and a common goal and purpose. Unity in the community's understandings and ways are important. Diversity can only be allowed in non-essentials such as commitment to political, economic or social causes or to a particular strategy for change. A faith community possesses an identity which must exhibit agreement on beliefs; otherwise, it will be unable to interpret those beliefs for constructive ends.

Diversity of interpretations can be valuable, but only if there is an agreement in basic faith statements and in authority used as a guide for interpretation. If there is diversity in essentials, faith can neither be sustained nor transmitted and the community can dissolve into social fraternalism. Faith can only be nurtured within an 'intentional' community of faith. An 'unintentional' community is where a group of individuals meet to share a common interest or hobby which does not necessarily result in an outreach to outsiders. The members are drawn into membership by their common interest without any binding purpose other than for themselves. On the other hand, an 'intentional' community is one in which each individual is focussed into achieving the aims of the group; far from satisfying individual concerns, it promotes its ideas to those beyond the group.

The present writer concurs with Westerhoff (2000: 51), but would perhaps challenge the view that consistency in the essentials of faith exists in practice. It is likely that it persists in small communities, but in larger ones there may be some differences of view on major beliefs. The present writer believes that there must exist a concerted attempt at education and formation of the community so that faith can be transmitted with a clear voice. A faith community must be small enough to maintain meaningful, purposeful

interactions among its members in its mutual care; and where lived, faith can be shared. Without a sense of intimacy, the community becomes just another institution in society. True community, in Westerhoff's (2000: 52) view, requires the presence and interaction of three generations. The third generation is the generation of memory without which the others are locked in the present. The first generation is that of vision. It is impossible to have a vision without a memory. The second generation is the generation of the present. It functions to confront the community with reality. According to Westerhoff (2000: 53), without the other two generations, left to itself and to the present, life becomes meaningless and intolerable. Christian community is allegedly difficult to maintain without these three generations. Our experience suggests that many denominations possess the second and third generations, but lack the first. The present writer also maintains that intimacy is important and that the only way of developing this in large parishes is to form cell-churches.

Francis and Lankshear (1991: 15) suggest that in small groups the congregation should accept responsibility for Christian nurturing of the young. A true community must be composed of persons of diverse gifts. These can be found in the small group. If the Christian Church is divided by race, social and economic status, nationality or ethnic origin, true Christian community is impossible. Even when one sex is restricted to particular roles or denied equal status, a Christian community cannot flourish. The present writer believes this view is unassailable.

If children's faith is to be promoted, they must live in a community that encompasses faith, ritual, personal experiences which people have in the community, and the actions that the members of the community perform, both individually and corporately. Hadaway (1990: 93) concurs by stating that patterns of behaviour and values are learned by observing the actions of significant others and listening to their words. The mother and father are undoubtedly the most important of these 'significant others' as well as close relations and siblings at home. Later on in childhood, peers, teachers and other important adults may rival the parental influence. The present writer believes that although this may be the case, parental influence is rarely lacking. If they are practising Christians, Hadaway also states (1990: 93) that most would point to their mothers as the most important religious influence in their lives. Their religiosity tends to predict the religious activity of the individual in later life. Whilst this is true, it is also important to stress that fathers are of equal importance in influencing religious behaviour.

It is undeniable that many Christian parents are failing to provide a clear religious example for their children. It is likely that parents hardly talk to children about God or religious issues. In many instances, the work of children's catechesis is performed by the Church. Adult education and religious formation offered by this institution has little demand. Such a situation suggests that the Church is for young people and not appropriate for adults. Foy (2003:1) claims that the adult church rarely seeks out young people. It does not help them to recognise God in their lives and in the lives of those around them. Yet they want to belong, to be invited to participate and to be of service to others. The same author (2003: 1) argues that peer pressure is not the only influence dissuading young people from participating in the Church. It is often a lack of good example from those who claim to be Christian, especially parents. Young men react to the lack of significant role models in the Church. Convey (1994: 166), although referring to the Irish context, sees a need to develop the existing strategy of the procedure for Christian Initiation of Adults to local situations. He (1994: 167) believes that individuals should be appointed who carry out the formation of both adults and minors in all dioceses. This presumes that before any fostering of faith has begun evangelisation has already occurred.

Thus religious activity can be trivialised by adults. Children hear what their teachers are saying, but they pay more attention to what both their parents and significant adults do. Peers are important for religious development. But one has to ask what sort of influence it is. If a child has close friends in the Church, then the influence of a peer can be a positive factor in the child's development. If, on the other hand, a child has no close friends in the Church, or if these friends are not interested in God, then the influence of peers hostile to the Church tends to pull a child away from it.

8.3.2 Rituals and Liturgy

Rituals and liturgy express the hidden meanings of our experience and our relationship with God, others, and the world. They provide us with purposes and goals for living. When an individual's understanding, or way of life changes he tends to cease participating in the rituals that once inspired him. Gibbs (2006: 183) maintains that they are creative expressions which facilitate participation by the members of the group. An absence of ritual reduces the members to consumerism and passivity. In fact, images and actions can reach people in a way that words alone cannot. Westerhoff (2000: 54) thinks that one of the primary needs is to bring to birth new liturgies. Our view is that

Roman Catholic liturgies and rituals are only changed in terms of how they are expressed and presented. Their fundamental meaning cannot change at all.

Liturgy should become a major facet of Christian education. Prior to this, the rites and their roles should be understood. Rituals are orderly, predictable and stereotyped. The ritual life of the community has to be conveyed by education. This is a task incumbent on the educational ministry. Rituals, which are the prescribed or established form of a religious or other ceremony:

- help to sustain and transmit the individual's understanding and
- make meaningful the crises or transitions of life.

For Roman Catholics, the first type of ritual is exemplified in the Sunday Mass when the community gathers to celebrate its faith. Some individuals state that to cease worship is to 'lose' faith or lapse. The present writer believes that ceasing worship is not synonymous with 'losing one's faith'. In fact, faith cannot be lost once it has been implanted. It may become weak but cannot be extinguished.

The second type of ritual could be described as a crisis rite. It conveys an understanding of the most significant moments of life. The individual's pilgrimage of faith starts with baptism. This is followed by first communion, reconciliation, confirmation, marriage, sometimes ordination, and death.

For the faith of children to be promoted, they must worship in the faith community. Hence, in the present writer's view, the procedure of catechesis during the service, which occurs in the Roman Catholic liturgies, is incorrect. Children need to be exposed to the community's experiences. Learning is initially achieved through experience, which then develops by imaging (stories) and finally, through the use of signs or conceptual language. But the most fundamental form of learning is experience. Later on a person may 'image' that experience and even later conceptualise it. Life in a community is experienced first, and then the Biblical stories are learned. By reflection on the individual's own experience he symbolically conceptualises the community of God in terms of love, justice and charity.

Hadaway (1990: 98) maintains that the most frequently addressed criticism by youth and many adult lapsed persons is that the Church is boring and irrelevant. The question is how to express a liturgy which preserves what many hold important, but adding excitement. If the Church is perceived as irrelevant there will be more difficulty in reversing this than in making a dull Church exciting. Yet relevance and caring support will keep the members active. The concept of irrelevance arises from two factors. First, many young people may have come to hold values which are directly opposed to those of the Church. As a result, they will consider the values of the Church to be irrelevant, regardless of content. Second, young people may not believe that the Church offers any meaningful answers to ultimate questions, even though it purports to specialise in this area. Nevertheless, it may not hold any relevance for them.

The solution to the first factor, in Hadaway's (1990: 99) opinion, would appear to be a demonstration of a positive example by parents and adults generally. This could take the form of greater involvement by children and youth in the life of the Church and a clear articulation of its values and beliefs.

In regard to the second factor, unless the Church has a compelling set of values and a meaningful interpretation of life to offer young people, preventing individuals from lapsing may not be possible. It is probably easier for conservative denominations to articulate a more definitive set of beliefs, values and answers to ultimate questions than liberal mainline ones.

8.3.3 Action

The true test of faith is shown in individual and corporate action in society. It was the life and action of the early Christians that converted individuals to the faith. In the present age, the tendency is to act within new ways of thinking rather than to think of new ways of acting. Christian faith communities engage in personal, inter-personal and social actions. Personal service to those in need exemplifies the Church's concern for others. Interpersonal forms of action, although necessary and supported by the Church, are conducted mainly by professionals. Such groups as the Catholic Aid Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and the Catholic International Institute of Racial Justice (CIIRJ) are examples of such interpersonal action. Economic justice falls short in meeting the needs of the poor; an engagement in political activity to reform the economic system is incumbent on the Church so that justice may be achieved. Whilst

there is no specifically Christian economic system, for the Church to be a community of faith it is called by the radical nature of the gospel to consider radical social action in order to struggle against evil. Action is therefore an educational ministry. According to Hadaway (1990:97), the primary characteristics which distinguish the young lapsed are:

- their liberal values in the area of personal morality;
- an active secular life style;
- a lack of religious belief;
- a perception that the Church is irrelevant.

The Church must teach Christian values. It must teach children and youth the reality of God and his relevance to their lives in the world. Parents and children alike should be involved in this work. Through parental and clerical involvement, children and youth will not only learn the values of the faith, but also feel a sense of caring and support from other children, youth and adults. Such an environment cannot be irrelevant.

8.3.4 **Personal Development**

Westerhoff (2000: 71) suggests that an understanding of individuals as thinking, feeling and willing beings will support the growth and development of their intellectual, intuitive skills and historical awareness. Christian education requires that help is given to create and wonder, dream, imagine and envisage, sing, dance, paint, act, thus developing the individual's appreciation of the marvellous and mysterious, sensual and kinaesthetic [the sensation of bodily position, weight, muscle tension and movement] awareness. This requires the community to recover their God-given ability to express themselves emotionally and nonverbally.

The same writer (2000: 71) believes that the educational ministry must focus on the arts and develop historical awareness. Storytelling should become a natural part of Church life. The narrative of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt needs to become the individual's story, since he is a participant in history. In order to facilitate faith in children, all aspects of Church life must be inspired, judged and informed by how well it develops the individual's spiritual life as a thinking, feeling person of God. At the same time, a certain amount of factual knowledge needs to be offered, but in the view of the Congregation for Catholic Education (1977: 56) it should be regarded as something to

be consumed. It is an aid to a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things. It is not to be considered as a means of power, but as a call to serve and be responsible for others.

However, Arthur (1995: 59) points out that the 1977 Document enlarges the hitherto definition of Catholic education by appearing to contradict previous statements. For instance, the Document (1977: 85) specifies the preservation and promotion of other spiritual and moral qualities, which as Arthur (1995: 59) observes, do not fit easily with a unitary Christian vision.

The present writer's experience suggests that this has become a commonplace and therefore begs the question as to what is the purpose of the Catholic school. The latter is even more pertinent considering that 'Catholic schools must no longer assume faith in the children they admit' (1995: 59). It is possible that the authors of the Declaration have shown a more open approach to religious education by taking into account the ecumenical dialogues resulting from the Vatican II Council. This Council (1992: 728) emphasised that it is upon parents that the gravest obligation falls to educate their children, but also requires the help of society (1992: 729). But education is the concern of the Church, since this is a part of society. It cites the school as of outstanding importance (1992: 730), since they bequeath to children the cultural heritage of former generations. They also orientate the whole of human culture to the message of salvation (1992: 732).

Indeed, God has given us a vision of his Kingdom; that is living in a world which should be characterised by love, justice, peace and community. The educational ministry ought to transmit and sustain this vision. But vision is insufficient in itself and must be accompanied by hope in order that the vision may be realised. Despite appearances to the contrary, God's kingdom has come, is coming, and will come in all its fullness. In order to challenge the evils of society, hope in Christ has no alternative but to engage in social action. The Kingdom of God will, of course, be established in his time, but we are called to live in hope and to struggle against evil. In order to accomplish this, the graces of the Holy Spirit - power, wisdom, skill, knowledge and motivation - are needed to act politically, socially and economically in the world. Christian education is essential to enable the Church to act in this manner and empower its members with the appropriate gifts so that they can fulfil their vocation.

The Congregation for Catholic Education states that a complete education includes a religious dimension. Religion is seen as making an effective contribution to the development of other aspects of the personality (1977: 19) and the school (Catholic) should be committed to a synthesis of religion, culture and life (1977: 49).

8.3.5 Enculturation

Enculturation normally refers to the gradual acquisition of the norms of a culture or group. Westerhoff (2000: 79) uses the term to characterise his method of education in the Christian community. The present writer does not agree that the norms of a prevailing culture are important or necessary for the Christian community. Indeed, its cultural norms may be antithetical to Christian teaching. It would be more appropriate for the criteria of the Christian community to be applied to the prevailing culture, if that were possible.

Christian faith is required to focus on the mutuality of personal engagements with one another so that the categories of adult (the one who imparts knowledge) and pupil (the one who needs to know) are observed. Religious 'enculturation' emphasises the process of interaction between and among persons of all ages. It focuses on the environment within which people seek to acquire, sustain, change and transmit their understanding. In this process, one person is not seen as an actor and the other as acted upon. Both act, thus initiating action and reaction. Instead of one person imparting knowledge or skill to another, 'enculturation' emphasises what one person has to bring to another and the dialogical relationship between equals. Instruction implies that since all the essential knowledge in the teacher is present, he must assume a responsibility for fulfilling what the receptor does not know and needs to know. This process does not encourage dialogue. The religious 'enculturational' approach is one of sharing with one another and the method by which Christians strive in a single community of faith. In could be stated that this method follows a model in which each person acts in an adult way to the other.

8.3.6 Styles of Faith

Westerhoff (2000: 87) believes that faith is a way of behaviour that involves knowing, being and willing. The content of faith can be described as the individuals' worldview and value system. Faith expresses itself in actions with others, by which faith deepens through distinctive styles which he terms 'experienced', 'affiliative', 'searching' and 'owned' faith. The same writer (2000: 89) states that 'experienced' faith can be found in children of pre-school age and early childhood. It is experienced by performance, as in a play. Children initiate actions and respond to them. The child explores, tests, imagines and creates, observes and copies, experiences and reacts. Children and adults need to be hugged and caressed. 'Experienced' faith is foundational. Experiences of love, trust and acceptance are important to Christian faith. It is through mutual actions that faith is expressed and the meanings of the words used to express faith are directly related to experience. The experience of faith can be shared with others, even though its character cannot be determined.

Westerhoff (2000: 91) maintains that if the needs of 'experienced' faith have been met, a person may adopt the 'affiliative' style. This means that individuals seek to act with others in an accepting community with a clear sense of identity. They need to participate in something such as the church choir, a service project or a prayer group in which they will know everyone's name and they will be missed if absent. A further characteristic of this type of faith is the dominance of religious affections. This implies a focus on the intuitional mode of consciousness. Experiences and opportunities for wonder, awe and mystery could be expressed by drama, music and dance, sculpture, painting and storytelling. The religion of the heart, in other words, should not be ignored.

The third characteristic of 'affiliative' faith is the sense of authority. The community affirms the story and way of life that judges and inspires its actions. This may be termed the tradition of the Church which inspires its people and is vitally connected to what they say and do. It is the community's story that can be told again and again. Faith, after being expressed by role play or drama, is reformulated in images or stories.

Westerhoff (2000: 93) states that having experienced the needs of 'affiliative' faith in late adolescence, the individual may deepen it into a 'searching' one, the first characteristic of which is doubt or critical judgement. This is sometimes painful. In order to move from an 'affiliative' faith to one that is uniquely personal, the individual needs to question or doubt that faith. The religion of the head assumes an equal importance to the religion of the heart. A serious study of the community's story and an engagement with historical, moral and theological thinking about life becomes important. The doubts of the searching soul need to be affirmed and it is necessary for individuals to join others in their intellectual quest for understanding. A second characteristic is experimentation. Searching implies that alternatives are available. It is by investigating these that a conviction can be reached which is truly personal. The third characteristic is the need to commit one's life both to others and to causes.

Searching persons often appear fickle, giving their lives in rapid succession to a number of ideologies, some of which would be contrary to others. But this is how commitment is learned. Many adult church members have never had the benefit of an environment that encouraged searching faith; some lapse from the Church and never return, while others remain searching for the rest of their lives. All need to be encouraged to stay in the Church community during their intellectual struggle. Westerhoff (2000: 95) thinks that if the needs of 'searching' faith have been met sometime in early adulthood, the individual can deepen his faith to an 'owned' one. The movement from 'experienced' to 'affiliative', 'searching' and 'owned' faith is sometimes called conversion. Conversion experiences can be sudden or gradual, dramatic or undramatic, emotional or intellectual, but always involve a change in the individual's thinking, feeling and willing. Due to the struggle with doubt, 'owned' faith often appears as a great illumination or enlightenment. Some want to involve themselves in personal or social action and are willing to defend their beliefs even against the community of their nurture. It is typical that persons of 'owned' faith want to be witnesses to that faith by word and deed. They struggle to eliminate any dissonance between faith and their actions in the world. They need the help of others to sustain their faith. The characteristics of 'searching' faith are never eliminated, according to Westerhoff (2000: 95), although doubt and struggle are dealt with in different ways. Liberation, wholeness of life, spiritual health and identity are acknowledged and the individual can live a life in the world, although he may not be a part of it.

8.3.7 The Quality of Family Relationships

However, education and formation are insufficient in themselves to stem the tide of lapsation. Although parental harmony, control, communication and expressions of love for children tend to decrease from childhood years to adolescence, they are nevertheless important aspects in the shaping of life and in maintaining young peoples' interest and commitment to the Church. Even though couples may participate in pre-marriage courses and family counselling, and even when young people are counselled, the husband and wife may still seek a divorce, have children out of wedlock or re-marry and form a stepfamily.

Nevertheless, there are elements in a family situation that cannot be changed: race, gender and age. The changeable aspects in a marriage comprise marital relations, children's relationship with a resident father, a resident mother, a non-residential mother, or a non-residential father, the level of income and the standard of education. The last two items are listed by Strommen and Hardel (2000: 33) as unchangeable elements, with which analysis the present writer does not agree. These aspects determine the closeness and happiness of the family unit. There are, however, two contrary dynamics – being close and being separate - both of which are important in family life. When these are unbalanced, the family becomes dysfunctional. There should be intimacy without possessiveness in childrens' personal relationships within a family. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 37) believe that close family relationships are important, since faith is formed through them. These relationships can be strengthened by parental harmony, effective communication, wise parental control and nurturing. These aspects will be discussed below.

Schweitzer (2000: 96) argues that religious education in the family has been successful in handing on religious traditions to the next generation, much more so than other aspects of life, such as music or sport. The present writer thinks that this was once true, but is no longer so.

8.3.7.1 **Parental harmony**

Parents set the tone and establish an atmosphere in the home. Parental warmth and affection are important factors for healthy child development. In fact, parental harmony is far more important than family structure in its contribution to child adjustment, self-esteem and well-being, according to Strommen and Hardel (2000:37, 38). It plays a pivotal role in the child's socio-emotional adjustment.

8.3.7.2 **Effective communication**

The quality of communication between children and their parents is vital for the relationship. The more time fathers spend with their children, the better the measure of the child's well-being and emotional adjustment. The latter is at its highest when mothers interact enjoyably with their children and lowest when interaction becomes difficult and not enjoyable.

Communication is easier to establish when the children are young. It becomes increasingly difficult to sustain as they move into early adolescence. Although both boys and girls tend to lose interest in communicating with their parents at this stage, it does not mean that there is a complete loss of interest, according to Strommen and Hardel (2000: 47).

8.3.7.3 **Wise parental control**

Parental control is shown by the way boundaries are set and discipline exercised in the home. The parents' approach to discipline shapes not only the emotional climate of the family but also the child's personality and character. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 58) believe that permissive and autocratic discipline creates distance between parent and adolescent, whilst democratic discipline encourages family intimacy. Parents who discipline their children autocratically can expect to see their children involved in rebellious or risky behaviour. They who choose to discipline permissively will probably see negative effects, whilst parents who use a democratic method will be more likely to see children developing a commitment to Christ and living a life of witness and service. Richter and Francis (1998: 89) hold similar views when they claim that a lack of intimacy between parent and child is likely to result in the latter leaving the Church.

Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson (1975: 95) agree that studies confirm that a democratic family, where a child is allowed a fair amount of autonomy, is included in important decisions and is controlled by verbal and reasoning discipline, is more apt to produce a self-reliant and effective adolescent than an authoritarian family, where rules are set without consultation and discipline is mainly physical. A child reared in a democratic atmosphere tends to have a warm relationship with his family even though he feels free to disagree with them. The authoritarian product tends to be superficially compliant yet rebellious and impulsive beneath the surface.

In order to support families, the Church community may be able to offer classes to teach parents how to establish rules and boundaries and how to be consistent in defining and applying clear consequences when boundaries are infringed; how to discipline when not in the presence of others and how to handle conflict in a positive way; how to use good judgment in order to take a flexible stance; and how to avoid sarcasm. Children grow and develop when they have a strong sense of what is expected of them.

8.3.7.4 **Parental nurturing**

This involves parental acts and attitudes of love that enhance the well-being of children. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 62) state that children whose parents are always emotionally available to them see them as trustworthy and themselves as worthwhile. Optimal adolescent development is fostered when parents combine high levels of care and support accompanied by attitudes and behaviours that promote increasing autonomy and independence in their children.

The authors (2000: 63) believe that the young who are bonded with both birth parents or both adoptive parents are most likely to abstain from risky behaviour. Expressions of love and caring tend to diminish as children grow older, but they remain essential elements in the development of close family relationships.

8.3.7.5 **Fostering close relationships with God**

Our culture no longer encourages religious faith, rather it undermines it. Indeed, Gibbs (2006: 156) alleges that the Church has been corrupted and compromised by the culture of modernity. Faith has three facets, described by Strommen and Hardel (2000: 75-79)

as an affair of the heart, a commitment to the mind, both of which result in the third, other good actions.

First, faith is a relationship in which love and trust are given and received. Faith is an affair comprising a human and divine aspect. From the human aspect, a child who is loved and cared for is helped to develop empathy for others. The child learns to love and trust. A child's faith in a caregiver is based on sensory and affective modes of knowing. From the divine aspect, faith in God is similarly created. Awareness of God's love enables the individual to love in return (1 John 4:19). God's fidelity creates faith in the individual in a way similar to a mother's fidelity to her infant. This confidence is more than a feeling and is an affection that bonds the individual to God. It is, in other words, an affair of the heart. This love affair with God is ignited by the love of the human caregiver that the individual has learned to trust - parents and grandparents - whose conversations about God and whose loving care make faith contagious in the home.

Second, faith is more than a commitment of the heart. It is a commitment of the mind, that is, the thinking, willing and judging aspects of life. Faith seeks to know and understand God, involving knowledge of Biblical beliefs and the traditional truths the Church holds and teaches about God. As a commitment of the mind, faith goes beyond equating belief in church doctrine with the essence of faith. It is nurtured by what the Christian community teaches in religious instruction, namely that God exists, that Christ died for men, that he rose from the dead and lives with his people. However, in itself this is insufficient. The beliefs are not just intellectual statements. They enable the individual to make a commitment to Christ so that he may affirm Christ as his Saviour. They enable one to claim the promise of salvation, implore Christ's power and enter his presence. Whoever encounters Christ desires to know him as much as possible and the plan of the Father which he revealed. Thus, the two aspects of faith - that of cognitively believing in God and that of entering into a personal relationship with him - are equally important.

Third, because faith is an affair of the heart and a commitment of the mind, it should result in good actions, the purpose of which is to serve God and others. Faith makes itself public in acts of decision, obedience and service. Individuals volunteer their

services and their actions as a response of obedience to a deep sense of the individual's calling (2 Corinthians 5: 20).

A further result of an integrated faith is obedience to God's moral law, as expressed by the Decalogue. Moral judgment and behaviour are vitally connected to a life of faith. Therefore, an integrated faith - comprising an affair of the heart and a commitment of the mind resulting in service and moral behaviour - constitutes a very close personal relationship with God.

8.3.7.6 **The Families' contribution to Faith**

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 81-2) believe that families need to be more intentional in their words and actions than they are nowadays, more gospel-orientated, committed to moral values, sharing their faith at home and involving themselves in service activities. By being more gospel-orientated they will value a spiritual dimension in life and be more aware of a caring God. They need to have certainty in their faith, believing it important, and they should be more biblically literate. Parents also need to assume a positive attitude to life and death. Those who observe these values create close family relationships with God.

8.3.7.7 **Communicating moral values**

Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson (1975: 80) maintain that there are three levels of development of moral values.

- In the first stage, the pre-moral, the child obeys rules in order to avoid punishment or conforms in order to obtain rewards or have favours returned.
- In the second stage, the morality of conventional role-conformity, the child conforms to avoid disapproval or dislike by others, or conforms to avoid censure by a legitimate authority which will incur guilt.
- In the third stage, the individual conforms to maintain the respect of the impartial spectator who judges in terms of community welfare, or to avoid self-condemnation. This latter stage requires formulating ethical principles and conforming to them in order to avoid self-condemnation. It is doubtful whether many individuals reach this stage.

Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson (1975: 85) point out that although a child may be influenced by friends, the power of his peer group is dominant only when the relationship of love with his parents is vastly diminished.

These researchers (1975: 98) also concur with Strommen and Hardel (2000) that where there is an unsatisfactory relationship at home, or the adolescent has a negative view of himself, he is likely to place more trust in the views of his peers than his parents. The adolescent searches for his own identity. The same writers (1975: 95) observe that initially the adolescent's values and moral standards are those of his parents. As he moves away from his family, the values of his peer group become increasingly important. To the extent that his parents, peers and teachers reflect the same values and that he comes from a caring atmosphere, his search for identity will be easier. To the extent that there is a divergent set of values among his parents and their peers, and the home atmosphere is uncaring, then he will tend to reflect the values of his peer group.

Caring parents are the primary influences in shaping the moral values of the child. The traditional moral values that parents wish to see in their children are: caring for the family, doing good to others, protecting the powerless, showing generosity and mercy, keeping promises, postponing self-gratification. In terms of the Christian ethic these values become: seeking first the kingdom of heaven, forgiving as God has forgiven, loving others as God has loved us, living a life of service, and being transformed into Christ's likeness. These Christian values stand in sharp conflict with secular culture which espouses: looking out for yourself, letting instincts be your guide, not making commitments, seeking material success, seeking immediate gratification, stressing self-expression rather than self-restraint and defining your own morality. Self-enhancement and self-gratification are the motivation for these values. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 88) maintain that parents communicate values and internalise them in their children. They do this by expressing congenial relationships, acting as model Christians, verbal sharing, written word, induction and grace orientation.

Induction is defined by Strommen and Hardel (2000: 92) as gentle reasoning in order to communicate values. For instance, there would be a need to explain why certain moral laws are important and that by breaking them a violation of one's inner needs occurs as well as bringing unhappiness to someone else.

The same authors (2000: 93) state that grace orientation involves a parental focus on the love, promise and presence of Jesus Christ, inspiring youth to internalise Christian values and lifestyles. Any attempt to control youth by means of rules and regulations inclines them to reject the values being pressed upon them.

8.4 PROPOSED STRATEGY OF EDUCATION AND FORMATION BY THE COMMUNITY

8.4.1 Introduction

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 105) state that the aim of the community should be the same as that of the parents, namely, trusting in a personal God, understanding grace and living in grace, praying to God regularly, demonstrating moral responsibility, living unprejudiced and loving lives, accepting authority, being personally responsible, having a hopeful and positive attitude, participating in the rituals of the Christian community, engaging in mission and service and accepting responsibility in the community. Due to the current very low state of biblical knowledge and the influence of the pluralist society, it is essential that a high priority be given to the faith-enhancing potential of Christian education. According to Arthur (1995: 48), the primary aim of Christian education is to form the individual so that he will be both fitted and determined to strive constantly towards moral perfection which, he believes, does not directly assist his attainment of eternal salvation. The secondary aims are to supply those essentials which help to achieve the primary aim. They imply conscious efforts to form youth by instruction, guidance and discipline that will be fitted to enable him to carry out life's work.

Since World War II, both mainstream Catholicism and other Christian denominations have had to come to terms with pluralism. Non-Christian and non- Judeo groups are gaining prominence in society. At the moment the amount of protection afforded to counter secular beliefs and self-centred values is limited. The type of Christian education which is offered at present can no longer be a protection from exposure to non-Christian beliefs and values. Intentional education and enculturation by the whole Christian community is therefore required in today's society.

8.4.2 Restoring the Content of Christian Education for Children

8.4.2.1 Cultural illiteracy

The present writer agrees with Strommen and Hardel (2000: 114) that education theory over the past fifty years has tended not to impose adult ideas on children before they could be understood. This implies a devaluation of learning specific historical data. It has been claimed by educational theorists that this method is not unnatural. Furthermore, it has been accompanied by distaste for memorisation.

8.4.2.2 Biblical Illiteracy

Memorisation of the catechism which was formerly a requirement in Catholic education has been dismissed as learning by rote. As a result, those being confirmed today know far less about the Bible, the Creeds, Commandments or Church teachings than their counterparts did in previous generations. With such a limited background, today's youth find it hard to understand what the words of scripture mean or imply. Lacking the historical information - for example about sacrifice, reconciliation, angels, Moses, Mary, the Egyptian Captivity and justification - their understanding of the Christian faith is severely limited. They are, therefore, at a loss to appreciate the uniqueness of the Christian faith. This commonly results in dismissing the Bible as boring.

Strommen & Hardel (2000: 115) claim that a return to steeping children in the scriptures, so that they are conversant with its stories, its heroes of faith, its record of God's commands and promises and its account of divine intervention and its description of the life to come, is needed painfully. A memorisation of these events and of Biblical characters can be indelibly imprinted on the minds of children.

8.4.3 Faith-Focussed Christian Education

8.4.3.1 To present a Personal Christ

Christian education should help every person to enter into a personal relationship with Christ (John 1: 12). Helping young people to identify with a personal God goes beyond assent to doctrinal statements. The individual can say, 'I am convinced that God hears me, cares for me, forgives me; I am in God's presence. I believe in his promise to me that I will be saved if I am true to my calling.' Such expressions of faith make a life-

shaping impact on young people. It is claimed by Strommen and Hardel (2000: 124) that this attitude among young people has decreased over the last forty years, a view with which the present writer concurs.

Education should seek to form the whole person. Tacey (2004: 104) believes that education should not be simply cerebral or intellectual, but imaginative, affective and creative. It should not seek to develop the rational capacity to the detriment of the intuitive or imaginative. Spiritual education in particular should encourage or initiate the inner life of the spirit. Intellect and heart need each other. Similar observations were noted earlier in this chapter. Tacey (2004: 105) maintains that to teach through the spirit is to bring to life the inner core of the person and relate that core to the intellectual material that is being discussed.

Arthur (1995: 233) agrees with Tacey that an holistic model, which receives the most approval by the Church's teaching, should be used in preference to the 'pluralistic' model or the 'dualistic' model. In the holistic model, the school attempts to follow post-Vatican II principles, which view the school as an educational setting within which a critical synthesis should occur between culture and the Catholic religious vision. It pursues the meaning, values and truths specific to the Catholic faith and seeks to establish a partnership with the parents, forming a seed ground for the mission of the Church.

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 124) suggest that only teachers who have a personal relationship with Christ should be appointed. Although this is a logical procedure, given the present climate in religious education, the present writer argues that discovering such teachers is difficult. Many Catholic schools in England have a mixed staff of committed and non-committed Christians because of the inability of school management to appoint devout Christians. This, in turn, has produced in pupils the low level of Biblical, cultural and doctrinal literacy so evident today. Mixed messages are conveyed by teachers, the result being that a clear Christian message is obscured. Further, the Christian ethos of the school is impaired. A secondary aspect is that Christian teachers either believe that they are required to give instruction in Christianity or that their Christian calling is a vocation. It can be argued that the necessity of the National Curriculum has placed a severe strain on teachers and that many have left the profession due to the weight of administrative paperwork imposed on them through its

introduction. In the present writer's view, though the suggestion is sound, its implementation would have to be effected by a board of governors, responsible not only for the selection of teachers, but who themselves can discern an individual's quality of belief and personal faith in Christ, as exemplified in service to the community.
The second suggestion mentioned by Strommen and Hardel (2000:125), that is securing information on the young person's spiritual journey, could be achieved easily. The young person would be required to draw on paper a faith life-line describing his pilgrimage. This can employ symbols of growth where and when they occurred. The present writer believes that this procedure would demonstrate the paucity of most young peoples' awareness of Christ in their lives.

The third suggestion (2000: 126) is probably the best one, in the present writer's opinion. It is certainly the most practical one because it provides a caring faith conversation with the young person. This would seem to be the most effective way in which to help individuals come into a personal relationship with Jesus.

8.4.3.2 **Teach a grace orientation**

To teach a grace orientation implies an acceptance of God's grace based on believing what he has done and promises to do. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 127) assert that if this is not taught in the home, children will interpret Christianity as a religion solely of expectations, demands and requirements. In this event, many will grow up to adulthood believing that their efforts to live a good life qualify them as Christians. Their focus would rest upon what they have done rather than what God has done, is doing and will do for them.

Where individuals live in an achievement-oriented society it is easy to believe that acceptance into the family of God comes simply by believing God's promises. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 128) think that this can result in youth being self-oriented in their values, prejudiced in their attitudes, lacking a sense of mission and living outside a personal relationship with Christ.

8.4.3.3 **Teach parents to pray with their children**

This is very important. There are many occasions when parents can pray with their children. They are: at mealtimes, when someone is sick, in times of joy, when one is troubled, in moments when the family pray for one another, in moments of thanksgiving, in times of blessing one another and when praying for those in need.

8.4.3.4 **Teach moral responsibility**

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 135) maintain that society's emphasis on self-enhancement and self-gratification has resulted in life-denying behaviours. Both parents and the Christian community need to be more intentional in regard to raising morally responsible young people. The present writer agrees with this position. According to the authors (2000: 136), the Christian community can teach the meaning of values, orientate teachers to communicate with them and teach young people decision-making, and support theological values.

8.4.3.5 **Welcome ethnic diversity**

Though less prejudiced than adults, young people tend to reflect the attitudes of their parents. Therefore a conscious effort is needed to create the sensitivities that characterise a loving and understanding attitude towards those who are different from themselves.

8.4.3.6 **Involve youth in service.**

Service was the central theme in Christ's mission (Matthew 20: 26). In today's society, a shift has occurred from service to others to self-service. Reversing this change, according to Strommen and Hardel (2000: 144, 145), involves the introduction of service in early childhood. The goal would be to help children see themselves not as consumers but as practitioners of the faith. Sometimes children and youth attend religious lessons at the same time as adults attend services. This procedure conditions them not to attend religious services with parents and not to identify with the on-going worship of the Church. The procedure of young people attending religious instruction simultaneously with adults attending a service is common in the Catholic Church. It is performed in the mistaken notion that young people would not understand the adult service and therefore, it is more beneficial for them to attend religious instruction.

8.4.3.7 **Involve youth in mission outreach**

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 148) suggest that an objective for young people is to communicate a concern for evangelisation so that others may arrive at a belief in Jesus Christ. When this ingredient is absent, the young assume that faith is not important and that belief in Christ is not of eternal significance.

8.4.3.8 **Teach Christian rituals**

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 150) believe that a Christian education programme should provide training for parents in rituals and the traditions of the Christian community. It should also teach them to create family symbols and traditions of faith in the home. Family traditions such as celebrations of family stories speak about what the family believes, values and promotes: grace before and after meals, bedtime prayers, a birthday or baptismal anniversary celebration or a prayer before the cross can communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. Family life focuses on the word of God, the sacraments and other holy moments with God.

8.4.4 **The Church Community as a Family**

Inasmuch as the community strengthens and supports families to become a domestic Church, it is equally important for the Church community to be a family. Even in Jesus' time his blood family did not support him and the family from which he drew the most support in his mission consisted of believers (Matthew 12: 46-50). Strommen and Hardel (2000: 37) think that community members who serve as mentors of youth become a surrogate family to lonely, single or dysfunctional people. In our secular culture many families are fractured by divorce, people are left hurt and young people psychologically scarred. Fewer young people know close family life and the security and love that characterises it. For such persons the Church community can provide the experience of being part of a family. It is the only institution in the wider community that is open to all ages and equipped to provide an experience of family life.

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 158) posit the factors that make a Church community a family: a hospitable climate, inspirational worship, a caring environment, families who help one another; an emphasis on prayer, intergenerational service efforts and a sense of mission. Horwood (2006: 25) believes that there should be a missionary consciousness in the individual and that it is everyone's responsibility to find and to respond to opportunities for spreading the good news. In the past, the mindset of Catholics had

been somewhat inward-looking. Gibbs (1977: 20, 22) maintains that mission should be integrated into the local church so that a constant dialogue and engagement with others is effected. With the low level of church attendance that pertains in Britain Gibbs (1977: 22) thinks that it should be regarded as a mission area, an opinion which the present writer endorses.

8.4.5 **Youth Sub-culture**

Young people need a support group in which living together, going on retreats and worshipping will empower them to sustain their faith in Jesus and continue his ministry. Such support groups engender loyalty and counteract the negative aspects of the prevailing culture. Young people are being lost to the Church, as chapter 7.3 points out.

According to the authors (2000: 199), the essential components for a Christian sub-culture are: discussion of youth issues, faith-sharing experiences, community activities, service and peer ministry, involvement in music, informal friendship groups, adults counselling youth and community leadership.

8.4.6 **Biblical View of Culture**

The apostle James stated: "Do you not realise that love for the world is hatred for God? Anyone who chooses the world for a friend is constituted an enemy of God" (James 4: 4). James identifies 'the world' as its culture. Similarly, the apostle John is no less direct in his remarks when he writes: "Do not love the world or what is in the world. If anyone does love the world, the love of the Father finds no place in him, because everything there is in the world – disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes, pride in possession – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world, with all its disordered desires, is passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever" (1 John 2: 15-17). Christ speaks about the culture of his day when he says, "I passed your word on to them [the disciples], and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One" (John 17: 14-15).

8.4.7 Christian Attitudes Toward Culture

Although Niebuhr (1952: 47) insists that Christ has sole authority over his followers and rejects culture's claim to their loyalty, Strommen and Hardel (2000: 262) categorise six possible stances that can be taken towards the prevailing culture. These are:

- the separation of the Christian from the world;
- an accommodation of the Christian to contemporary culture;
- a synthesis of Christianity and culture;
- a dualistic approach towards Christianity and culture; and
- the Christian ethic as a transformer of culture.

These attitudes will be reviewed with the object of assessing the most optimal.

8.4.7.1 Separation of the Christian from the world

This stance regards contemporary culture as completely contrary to Christianity. The world is a secular society dominated by 'disordered bodily desires, disordered desires of the eyes and pride in possession' (1 John 2: 16). Strommen and Hardel (2000: 263) believe that this view dominates many conservative and fundamentalist groups. They believe that faith is antithetical to culture and emphasise that personal guilt and piety are central to religious faith. The Amish community of Pennsylvania are examples of those who believe Christianity to be contrary to culture. On the other hand, although their faith is to be respected, it can be argued that Christianity is evangelistic by virtue of Christ's command to, "Go and spread the news of the kingdom of God" (Luke 9: 60). By definition, they have cut themselves off from contemporary life and it is therefore difficult to envisage them as the leaven in the dough.

As Niebuhr (1975: 117) remarks, a theologically stated conviction is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Father Almighty, who created heaven and earth. From this conviction, Christ and the world cannot be opposed to each other, and the world cannot be regarded as a realm of godlessness since it is upheld by the Creator and Governor of nature. On the other hand Niebuhr (1975: 66) admits that withdrawals and rejections of the institutions of society have been of great importance to both Church and culture since they have maintained the distinction between Christ and Caesar, revelation and reason and God's will and man's will.

8.4.7.2 An accommodation of the Christian to the contemporary culture

Strommen and Hardel (2000:266) think that there are some who do not feel a great tension between the Church and the world or between the working of divine grace and the human effort or between the ethics of salvation and those of social progress. Such a belief retains religion as the servant of Christian living. Our view is that in such a stance contemporary culture can modify religious beliefs and therefore weakens the impact of Christianity.

Niebuhr (1975: 68) emphasises that the Christian must feel that he is claimed by the Lord to reject the world and its kingdoms with their makeshift compromises and many interests, its hypnotic obsession of the love of life and fear of death. He (1975: 68) believes that the movement of renunciation is a necessary element in every Christian life, even though it may be followed by a responsible engagement in cultural tasks. When renunciation is lacking, Christian faith degenerates into a utilitarian device for the attainment of personal prosperity or public peace and some imagined idol takes the place of Jesus Christ.

The Christ of culture, as Niebuhr (1975: 105) calls it, appears to make effective the universal meaning of the gospel. It brings into sharp focus the elements of the teaching of the New Testament. He (1975: 105, 106) claims that Jesus was relevant to his time; he affirmed the laws of society; he pointed out, not only the end of the age, but also temporal judgments; he took issue with the political parties of his nation. Though Jesus commanded his disciples to seek the kingdom, above all else, he did not tell them to scorn other goods or be indifferent to the institution of the family, freedom of the oppressed, or the fulfilment of duty by the powerful, since God's future kingdom reaches to the present.

Even so, Niebuhr (1952: 113) maintains that though a Christian may assume this accommodation, it is possible with the aid of the Spirit to discern the spirit of the times and the Spirit of God.

8.4.7.3 A synthesis of Christianity and culture

The positions outlined in 8.4.7.1 and 8.4.7.2 are extreme. The stance of those who propose a synthesis of Christianity with the prevailing culture supports the primacy of grace and the necessity of the works of obedience that flow from faith. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 269) observe that this stance differs from the preceding options, in that neither radical faith (8.4.7.1) nor cultural Christianity (8.4.7.2) takes Christ seriously enough, but emphasises the enormous gulf between the two. A synthesis of Christianity and culture sees the latter as the work of God-given reason in a God-given nature. But opposed to this view is the revelation through both the prophets and Jesus that rational individuals discover.

This gulf is established by the fact that those who follow the synthesis of Christianity and culture believe what the culture deems impossible. The proponents of such a stance believe that Jesus was born of Mary, the virgin, and that during his ministry he walked on the water, healed the sick and raised people from the dead. They believe that Jesus rose from the dead and promised eternal life; they believe that God's call supersedes the dictates of this life and its culture. For them, another life awaits when this life is over. They believe in miracles, in God's intervention in life. Such believers are present in all denominations, but they are mainly found in the fastest growing denominations - the charismatic and Pentecostal groups - whose worship revolves around signs and wonders.

Niebuhr (1975: 121) believes that in the synthesist's view, there is a gap between Christ and culture that the Christians who support accommodation Christianity never take seriously enough and that the radical Christians never try to overcome. He (1975: 146, 147) further states that the effort of synthesis leads to the institutionalisation of Christ and the gospel; yet, if Christ's grace, law and reign are not institutionalised every synthesis must be provisional and open to attack, to conversion and to replacement by the action not only of a free Lord but also, of mankind, subject to his commandments rather than to a religious institution.

8.4.7.4 A Dualistic approach to Christianity and Culture

This stance views Christianity and culture as a paradox. Christ and culture are 'both and'. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 271) state that followers of this point of view regard human culture to be godless and sick unto death. In belonging to culture, they cannot free themselves from it and hope that God will sustain them. Their dualism stems from the apostle Paul who defines popular ethics and biblical Christian culture as radically different. Dualists see Christians living within the world of culture, but at the same time believe the culture in which they live out their faith as a distinct other-world phenomenon. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 272) maintain that such individuals do not regard world culture as completely evil but think that natural wisdom in mankind is the work of God. The dualists hold that Christ gives people the knowledge and freedom to act out faithfully and lovingly whatever is consistent with the wisdom of the culture. They do not seek to transform society but rather to live their Christian life as people who are content with world culture and its institutions.

Niebuhr (1975: 156) thinks that the dualist joins the radical in pronouncing the whole world of culture to be godless and sick to death, although he knows he belongs to that culture. This writer (1975: 157) maintains that the law of Christ covers all people, although he (1975: 157) insists that no human culture in obedience to the law of man's nature can avail to extricate him from his sinful dilemma. The dualist, according to Niebuhr (1975: 155), wants to be secure in the possession of the true religion rather than dependent on a Lord who possesses, chooses and forgives us.

8.4.7.5 The Christian ethic as a transformer of culture.

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 274) say that the proponents of this view believe that culture is under God's sovereign rule. Culture's affirmative stand emerges from three theological convictions:

- first, a positive regard for creation and a sense of responsibility for God's created order;
- second, the view that culture is redeemable; and
- third, that all things are possible since God's guiding hand is ever present.

A conversion from self-centredness to Christ-centredness includes all aspects of culture: its customs, political systems and economic organisation. There is no element of human

culture over which Christ does not rule and there is no human work that is not subject to Christ's transforming power. This position indicates that Christians can significantly influence social conditions. The present author thinks that, from a sociological point of view, it would appear that Christianity in England, which is marginal, has an enormous task to transform society and to infuse into it Christian values. But from a theological standpoint, with God nothing is impossible. It seems that since God acts through persons, he can only do so if they are attuned to his will and follow the Christian prerogatives of serving and witnessing to Christ in the community. Yet many Christians do not think of their commitment in these terms. It is the present writer's view that unless and until the members of the Christian community view their following of Christ in such a way, the culture of society, its political system and way of life will remain unchanged. Horwood (2006: 27) agrees that spreading the kingdom of God is not only about transforming society for both believers and non-believers, but also about offering to individuals a more fulfilling spiritual life.

8.4.8 **Transforming Today's Culture**

According to Hornsby-Smith (1987: 210), a largely distinctive Catholic sub-culture had largely dissolved by the mid-60s. This process was not cataclysmic. It was a gradual change that took place over several decades as a result of the steady dissolution of existing barriers and also, in the solvent of rapid social change following the Second World War and the religious fusion encouraged by Pope John XXIII. This assimilation, in the opinion of Coman (1977: 105), took place through education, mixed marriages, dissent over traditional teaching of birth regulation, the questioning of the limits of papal authority, the gradual substitution of English instead of Latin in the liturgy, the movements towards ecumenism, the softening of traditional disapproval of mixed marriages and the abolition of the Friday abstinence.

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 257) believe that for today's culture to be transformed, people of faith must emerge who can act as role models, make an impact on young people and enliven the spiritual tone of the wider society. Horwood (2006: 37) asserts that the institutional Church can help individuals to become more effective witnesses. This implies training and preparation for mission. It is important that parishioners respond courageously, so that an active partnership between clergy and laypeople may develop, the former as enablers, and the latter as missionaries. At present, parishes and

dioceses are providing opportunities for Catholics to grow in faith and confidence. Some of these are local, such as Catholic Faith Exploration (CaFE) and ALPHA, which is outlined in 8.7.6.1. Such programmes need to be more widespread.

It is the belief of the present writer that there are, at present, very few religious models, national or international, communicating a deep commitment to Christ. Many Christians idolise football and television personalities.

Culture can be defined as a way of living that has become normative for a group of human beings. It includes art, music, the media and intellectual stimuli that communicate norms and values. A culture that mediates life-enriching values as a source of blessing and enjoyment can be misrepresented and eroded by the media that communicate them. A media that encourages individualism, self-gratification and anti-authoritarianism is potent in shaping the attitudes and values not only of young people but of families, communities and the culture itself.

It could be argued that a dominant aspect of English culture is that of individualism. For individualists, goals revolve around personal choice. One must become one's own person. Strommen and Hardel (2000: 258) think that such people find it difficult to commit themselves to marriage, a family, a church community, an organisation or a work force. If individualism guides a person, then being good becomes being good at things. Being right, far from being an ethical choice, is having the right answers. The individual encompasses utility instead of duty and self-expression instead of authority. This implies a diminished civic commitment. The prevailing culture tends to relegate religion to a marginal position. It becomes something private, personal and trivial.

Niebuhr (1975: 190) states that Christ as the transformer of culture, accepts the individual's station and duties in society and obedience to the Lord and that such a view does not seek to modify Christ's sharp judgment of the world and its ways. Those who accept this position, he (1975: 191) maintains, have a more positive attitude towards culture than dualists: based on three theological convictions. These are:

- **The creative activity of God**. Niebuhr (1975: 192, 193) says that the individual lives under the rule of Christ and is concerned with the redemptive works of God, but holds together the themes of creation and redemption, incarnation and

atonement. The effect of this understanding is that God has entered into human culture that has never been without his ordering action.

- **The Fall**, which is entirely the action of man. Hence, his culture is corrupted. It is perverted good, not evil, according to Niebuhr (1975: 194). The problem of culture is therefore the problem of its conversion.
- **A conviction about history** that, in Niebuhr's (1975: 194) view, for God all things are possible in a history that is, fundamentally, not a course merely of human events, but always a dramatic interaction between God and mankind.

8.4.9. **Vision**

Without a vision, actions become *ad hoc* or reactive. A strategic vision institutes coherent communications management on a daily basis and enables a communications officer to respond to periodic crises with greater efficiency and confidence. Horwood (2006: 54, 55) asks how our vision is developed? Consultation and commitment is essential for the success and establishment of any strategy that should include the stakeholders (communications staff, parish, and bishop). If there is a lack of ownership of the vision, the strategy is likely to be undermined. It would, therefore, be necessary to ensure the correctness of the vision before it is placed before the bishop for approval.

Horwood (2006: 55) states that the vision would engender several objectives which must be specific, achievable, measurable and realistic. These would constitute the strategy to be performed over a specific period of time, and concern the future direction of the parish, the required result and the method of attainment. According to this writer (2006: 56), the most important part of the strategy is the plan of action that sets out a clear pattern of objectives, the persons responsible and the timing. It would include an evaluation of the process and possibly a re-focussing of the objectives. An evaluation may modify the action plan, but not the objectives.

8.4.10 **From Vision to Action**

Strommen and Hardel (2000: 292) suggest that members of the Christian community should be encouraged to participate in the work of witnessing to Christ because they are enabled through baptism to continue the mission that Christ entrusted to his Church. No other body has been chosen for this work and the wider community is not empowered to

perform it. The Christian community should act as a leaven in society. It should preach the gospel in season and out of season, by word and example.

At the same time, related to the Church's mission, the needs of those who are hurt, the families who are breaking up and young people who are not interested in the Church should be investigated and a network of relationships formed to satisfy those needs. As Smith (1983: 114) correctly observes, an inner-city parish must be open to the poor, the deprived and the oppressed in our society. For the parish to be a community there must be a sense of shared power over destiny. We suggest the employment of cell-groups to this end. For this purpose individuals should be selected and trained so that they can be involved in this work. From the Roman Catholic Church's point of view, the approval of the bishop or his appointee should be obtained. To prevent such an enterprise from becoming a patchwork, it would be advisable for all parishes to assent to such a strategy, as stated above, which can then be validated by the bishop. A small pilot study could be inaugurated from which mistakes are noted and procedures improved. A revised strategy and action plan could then be devised incorporating the views of all the stakeholders.

An argument concerning the appropriateness of cell-churches will be presented later in this chapter.

8.5 SUMMARY

In the foregoing, the present strategy of education and formation has been considered and is believed to be deficient in forming young Christians in their faith. In many instances it has not developed them through the stages of psychological growth to becoming mature Christians. Our view is that the process of lapsation could be stemmed, partially through the introduction of the proposed strategy. Lapsation is a major problem in the Church and its reduction could be effected in some measure through the proposals made.

The present policy of education assumes that the community is homogeneous. This is far from being the case. Most communities are unstable because mobility is a strong feature of present-day society and the Church is no longer the centre of social and community life.

It is argued that modern religious education is a vehicle of control. However, faith cannot be nurtured by control. Modern education teaches the Christian religion (as well as other religions). This knowledge is taught by a 'superior' to 'inferiors'. Although this type of education is important, faith development is even more so. The latter, of course, cannot be taught, but it can be inspired in the faith community and can be made meaningful by individuals sharing their faith experiences in an historical, tradition-orientated faith community. Nowadays, education centres on religious knowledge as distinct from faith. Religion is a personal expression of faith. As such it comprises doctrines, church services and teachings, whereas faith implies a personal relationship with God ['faith in'] and a belief in what he has done, is doing and will do ['faith that']. As a vehicle for inspiring, sharing or furthering faith, it has proved bankrupt.
The proposed strategy to alleviate this problem assumes that the faith community possesses a substantial agreement on essential matters of belief. It also assumes that the community will be small enough to allow interaction among its members so that there can be a genuine sharing of faith experiences. This is manifested particularly if the community is composed of three generations.

The faith community primarily expresses its relationship with God in the liturgy and ritual. The liturgy expresses the ultimate meaning of life, the individual's purpose in living and a celebration of the turning moments in his life. Young people need to be introduced into church rituals from an early age so that it can transmit to them the meaning of faith. They need to be exposed to the community's experiences through which they will learn. Later, they may 'image' that experience, and at an even later stage conceptualise it. The first stage of this is experience of life in the community; in the second, Biblical stories are learned. By reflection on these experiences, love, hope and justice are conceptualised in terms of the community.

Faith manifests itself in individual and corporate action in society. It can be said that action itself is educational. Personal development should include assistance to create, wonder, dream, imagine and to employ the gifts of singing, dancing, painting and acting

so that an appreciation of the marvellous, mysterious, sensual and kinaesthetic (as previously defined) can be experienced. Storytelling also ought to be a central part of church life. The educational ministry should transmit and sustain a vision of living in the Kingdom of God characterised by love, justice and peace and accompanied by hope. Instruction implies the passing on of knowledge from one who knows to one who does not know. In this procedure there is no dialogue, whereas the process of 'enculturation' involves sharing with another. It is dialogical so that the equality of parties is emphasised. The individual develops through various styles of faith. He starts with 'experienced' faith in which love, trust and acceptance are conveyed to him. Through these elements, faith is channelled. 'Affiliative' faith arises when the individual acts with others in a community with a clear sense of identity. The third style is 'searching' faith which incurs doubt and critical judgment. The religion of the head assumes an equal importance with the heart. Searching implies that other options are available, and the individual tries to commit his life to others or to a cause. When a belief system is discovered with which the individual is comfortable, it may be termed an 'owned' faith, although the characteristics of searching are never quite eliminated.

Education and formation need to be complemented by the quality of family relationships. Parental harmony, control, communications and expressions of love for children and young people are necessary. Intimacy and privacy are required to maintain a healthy balance in family life.

Faith is formed through the influence of close family relationships, parental harmony, effective communication and parental control. The latter seeks to set boundaries in terms of behaviour and delivers an approach to democratic discipline in which parents, if they are emotionally available to their children and if a high level of care is available, will promote increasing autonomy. Their children should be encouraged to foster close relationships with God through their love and care, which enables the child to trust. Parents need to be more gospel orientated, committed to moral values, prepared to share their faith at home and to involve themselves in service projects more so than at present. The moral values parents wish to see in their children are: caring for the family, doing good to others, protecting the powerless, showing generosity and mercy, keeping promises and postponing self-gratification. Values are communicated by congenial relationships, through which individuals act as model Christians by means of verbal sharing, gentle reasoning and focusing on the love of Christ.

In the proposed strategy for education and formation by the community it is suggested that the present educational focus (of presenting information at the stage when it is believed that the child is ready to absorb it) should be replaced by learning historical data and the memorisation of Biblical and doctrinal information. Today's young people are ill equipped to understand the uniqueness of the Christian faith and many are ignorant of the Bible.

Encouragement is needed to develop a faith-focused personal Christ, going beyond doctrinal statements, which will help young people identify with a personal God. The individual requires an orientation to grace, believing in the power of God, in what He will do rather than an emphasis on personal ability. To consolidate this, parents need to be taught to pray with their children and encouraged to raise morally responsible young people. If the latter are exposed to service when younger, they should be expected to be involved in service, not only locally but nationally and internationally, as one of the constituents of a missionary community. Missionary consciousness should be the hallmark of every Christian who endeavours to spread God's word.

The traditions and rituals of the Church should be taught and families encouraged to celebrate their own personal faith stories. An absence of ritual reduces individuals to a consumerist state of passivity.

The Christian community can and should be regarded as a family in which mutual care and help are offered and received. It should support the youth sub-culture so that they are able to sustain their faith and continue the mission of Jesus countering the negative effects of the prevailing culture. There are a number of possible ways in which the Christian can relate to this culture. He can:

- separate himself from the world;
- he can accommodate his belief to contemporary culture;
- he can synthesise the beliefs of Christianity with culture;
- he can regard Christianity and culture paradoxically;
- he can regard Christianity as a transformer of culture.

The latter is believed by the present author to be the most scriptural method of transmitting belief, a conviction that is based on the creativity of God, the Fall of man and the view that history is pervaded by an interaction between God and mankind.

English culture is dominated by individualism and self-gratification. So in order to transform this culture, people of faith acting as role models are necessary. The members of the Christian community ought to witness to Christ and continue his mission in a more intentional way. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, they are empowered to act as leaven in society by preaching the gospel by word and example.

8.6 CONCLUSION

The present method of education, particularly in denominational schools, is based on the teaching of religion and the ways that religious belief is expressed. It is clearly not completely helpful in the character-formation of young people. Although some religious education is necessary, it is also important to communicate through the liturgy and personal commitment the ultimate meaning of life, the celebration of the turning points in a person's life. The young person needs to be exposed to the community's experience and actions, from which they will learn. The young person needs to progress through the various stages of faith from the 'experienced' to 'owned' faith. If the teaching of religion is associated with the head, then the experience of the individual in the community relates to the heart. However, such a formation cannot occur unless faith is nurtured in the family. Young people today are not often conversant with the Bible and are often unappreciative of the uniqueness of the Christian faith, a situation that should be corrected. A personal Christ, who is the focus of the individual, needs to be promoted.

Unless Christian education is changed and both the family and the Christian community accept the obligation of working in harmony with one another, the task of forming young people to become adult, committed Christians will be thwarted. Yet it is only by the implementation of such a strategy that the rate of lapsation of young people will tend to decline.

8.7 STRATEGIES FOR RECLAMATION OF THE LAPSED ADULT

8.7.1 Introduction

The types of lapsed individual encountered in the present writer's investigations (see 3.4.14) are:

- weary and bored (see 3.4.2)
- life-style lapsed (see 3.4.3)
- those who disagree with the teachings of the Church (see 3.4.16)
- those who object to change (see 3.4.5)
- those who experience antagonism from the partner (see 3.4.17)
- the personality of the priest (see 3.4.7)
- ill health (see 3.4.14)
- traumatic experience (see 3.4.8)
- no reason (see 3.4.9)
- moving home (see 3.4.11)
- divorced (see 3.4.12)
- changes in work schedule (see 3.4.13)

The last might involve a change in work which, in turn, would entail moving home. These categories are to be found in the infrequent and non-attending (lapsed), as well as the weekly and monthly attending, although the impact of the first three categories is significantly greater in the infrequent and non-attending. It is clear that antagonism by the partner, the personality of the priest, ill health, trauma, moving home, a change in work schedule and divorce are not features that can be easily obviated. The objection to change, which realised 17.8 per cent in the infrequent and non-attending group and 10.25 per cent in the weekly and monthly attending category, is likely to refer to the changes adopted in parish life as a result of the decisions of the Vatican Council (1962). It is also likely that objections emanated mainly from the older members of the Church, since they would have preferred the form of worship in which they had been educated to remain.

Objections may also have arisen against local pastoral decisions unconnected to those of Vatican II. From his own experience, the present writer believes, that such a category of individual persists, whose objections it would be unwise to ignore. The problems encountered by the remaining categories, with the exception of 'life-style lapsed', can at least be the subject of a strategy.

It was also determined in the present writer's research that significantly large proportions of individuals, irrespective of the attendance category they fell into, expressed a feeling of not belonging to the Christian community (see 5.4).

8.7.2 The Parish

The parish may be thought of as a series of concentric circles at the centre of which is the pastor. In the next circle are the core members of the parish, supporting the pastor in an administrative capacity. In the outermost circle lies the congregation of loosely-knit people who are less committed, many of whom see their allegiance as an individual or occasional affair.

To ameliorate the situation of the urban parish, Jackson (2002: 11) suggests that it has to imitate the smaller one in some way. It needs to have small group structures so that it can replicate the relational features of a small congregation.

It should provide a place for each member:

- who will be immediately missed if absent;
- who will have a role to play;
- who will be known;
- who has friends; and
- who is needed.

The provision of house groups, interest groups, working groups, such as choirs and cell-groups are necessary for sustaining the life of a large congregation. Such provision requires organisational ability and an increased commitment in order to build up and oversee smaller groups and in so doing will provide good quality 'glue' to the large congregation. The minister may not be the right person to be directly responsible for such an activity.

Thus the larger structure can be divided up into a coalition of small interlocking, worshipping communities, each with its own identity, but finding unity through a shared vision, ethos and leadership that can combine the advantages of large and small. This means that groups of people who favour worshipping in a particular manner with a unique format can do so without having to compromise with another group that wants to

worship in a totally different way. The combined small groups can assemble together on important occasions (Sundays). This appears to be a very attractive idea.

The house and interest groups are often the setting in which the discussion of relevant subjects can be made. Although this practice was popular in the 60s, it is less so now, according to the present writer's experience. Maintaining the existence of groups requires considerable energy and skill, and such groups only live for a brief period of time before collapsing. At present, the only groups that flourish are based on a perceived need, such as instruction in communion, confirmation and baptism. The participants cease attendance when their needs have been met.

8.7.3 Team Ministries

Team ministry, although instituted in the Anglican and Methodist denominations, has not been adopted into the Roman Catholic communion. Perhaps in the wake of a reduced number of available clergy it may be possible to introduce a variant to this concept. In such an event, the concentric circle model of the Church would still persist although its composition might alter. Instead of the pastor being isolated at the centre, the clergy and core members would constitute the centre. This team would comprise members possessing specialities that could be utilised over a larger area than at present. The team, headed by the parish priest, would make corporate decisions in relationship to a pre-determined strategy. This method implies that the present operating system would be thought unworkable or unrealistic. The clergy would have charge of important aspects of worship, pastoral care and education. The use of a team allows the clergy to exercise a more focussed approach to what is, after all, the purpose for which they were ordained. This team should possess a deep sense of corporate decision-making, in which each member is open to others, including those beyond the boundaries of the Church and parish. The emergence of 'extended households', small groups or cells, provides a great opportunity for the layperson to offer his specialisms and skills for the service of the local church. Segmenting the parish into small units containing a diversity of functions means that the Church can harness its potential range of lay resources. In many instances, the layperson lives a great part of life away from the neighbourhood in which he lives. Such an arrangement can provide a more lively concern for the total neighbourhood and parish than does the present practice. But whether the individual would be able or willing to offer time and talents to the parish is questionable.

8.7.4 Reclamation of the Lapsed

However, according to Hadaway (1990: 93), the truly lapsed are not likely to return to church practice even in later life. They are difficult to engage in dialogue about Christianity. He (1990: 104) states that many of those who lapsed due to parental rebellion would appear to be non-religious rather than anti-religious. They may not, in other words, think much about religion. Therefore, Hadaway (1990: 106) believes that reaching this group would be hard, since they have not rejected anything. Though they may bear a similarity to church members, the lack of common ground in religious belief creates a barrier which would be difficult to surmount. Returning to the Church would be a major change of behaviour. Many may have faced great transitions in their lives and as they begin to confront their mortality, some at least might be willing to reconsider membership of the Church.

In Hadaway's (1990: 111) view, although it may have been distorted by exposure to vacuous statements, many of the older lapsed have some conception of Christianity. They will never have received a clear, articulated message of the Christian gospel. Even if the latter had been heard, it was probably distorted by conflicting values and life-styles, prejudices, and lack of trust. Prevention of the defection of 'irreligious traditionalists', as Hadaway (1990: 112) calls them, could include keeping track of members who move, making efforts to activate members who rarely participate and out-reaching new members, ensuring that the religious message becomes meaningful to them. Dudley (1979: 54) offers the view that the Church must want to grow. On the other hand, members of the Church should look for others who are like themselves in their perception of values, culture, background and religious expectations. Those who are receptive must be identified. Hadaway (1990: 112) develops this idea. Many 'irreligious traditionalists' were at one time peripheral members who possessed unorthodox beliefs. On moving elsewhere, they eventually dropped out of the Church altogether. If a new life-style is assumed in another area, it will be quite difficult to introduce that person back into the Church. Hadaway (1990: 112) believes that the introduction has to commence before the settled life-style has begun. Those who have settled down will have to be reached outside a church context, probably within the communities in which the lapsed live.

This writer (1990: 112) sees the first step in evangelising the lapsed as the cultivation of friendships on an individual basis rather then through Church initiatives. Those individuals who seek the individuals' reclamation will need to be trained in sharing their faith. This process does not entail knocking on the doors of strangers, but of cultivating relationships among persons with whom the church member already has some acquaintance. Once such a relationship of trust has been established, Hadaway (1990: 114) asserts that religious concerns, beliefs and values can be discussed. This must be accomplished gently, sensitively and without offence to the other person. If interest is expressed, the next step would be an introduction of the individual to a group of Christians. This could be done at home, or in a cell-group. This will require both a caring and supportive relationship in a non-threatening environment. The person may not choose to pursue this avenue of faith development, in which case no bad after-effects from the committed members, his family, or the members of the cell-group should exist.

Another option, Hadaway (1990: 114) suggests, is to hold a class which aims to develop a special interest exterior to the Church. The topic should not be religious in nature, but the group should be led by Christians using this opportunity to develop their relationships with non-Christians or the lapsed. Classes could be held on a variety of topics: gardening, auto repairs and quilting. Special-interest support groups could be held for widows, single parents and the bereaved. Task-related groups could address community needs such as renovating low-income housing, helping to feed and clothe the homeless and fund raising for various causes. There is, of course, a hidden agenda involved, which is developing relationships with the lapsed and non-Christians. However, the Christian leader must not use this advantage to deliver an unexpected evangelistic message. If this occurs, the participants will feel exploited and leave. The group must pursue its legitimate aims, but use the relationships developed as a means of starting the process of gentle evangelisation of their friends. Once an interest is intimated in spiritual matters, the individual could be invited to another group that should be expressly religious and not secular. The type of group to which an individual might be invited will depend on what he envisages as important.

8.7.5 Factors Encouraging Church Growth

We discussed a way in which church decline can be slowed down or stopped. At the same time, we need to consider the factors that encourage corporate growth, which could act as a neutraliser to the process of lapsation. Kelley (1972: 58) claims that social strength is conveyed by commitment, in which there is a willingness to sacrifice status, possessions, safety, and life itself for the cause of religion, even though the possibility of their occurring is remote. A high degree of church commitment promotes solidarity and total identification of the individual's goals with this body. He (1972:58) thinks that a willingness to suffer sanctions resulting from the infraction of rules should obtain, rather than the individual leaving the organisation. Kelley (1972: 58) believes that such a scenario induces a missionary zeal and an eagerness to proclaim the good news of one's experience of faith. This writer (1972: xii) maintains that religious congregations are dying today not because they are more religious, but due to the fact that they are not religious at all. He (1972: 95, 96) therefore claims that strong organisations tend to increase in membership and weak ones diminish. Social organisations are entropic – they run down and subside towards a state of rest.

Dudley (1979: 47, 48) believes that the Church should be strong and stand apart from the world. Members must be willing to suffer discipline. He considers (1979: 48) institutional structures, separation from the world [cultural separation], theological conservatism and evangelical zeal to be marks of the Church's members, although he (1979: 51) believes that this model is ineffective among wealthy and cosmopolitan individuals. This author's views are significantly sympathetic to those of Kelley. Growing churches, according to Dudley (1979: 56), are characterised by strong worship [Bible-based], and a diversified programme organised by effective pastors for an enthusiastic congregation.

As Tacey (2004: 20) points out, religious institutions today are so bound up with themselves and so resistant to change that they cannot make some contribution to the individuals' yearning for sacredness, spiritual meaning, security and personal engagement with the Spirit. He (2004: 190) believes that religion is incomplete unless it is communicating effectively to the world. If it fails to communicate its message and thereby, fails to transform the world, then it has to examine the reasons why this occurs. Indeed, the deepest desires and aspirations of the individual, his spiritual needs and spiritual offerings have to be satisfied by the Church in a language that is contemporary

and comprehensible to him. This means that an engagement with contemporary spirituality has to occur between both those inside and outside the Church. If this does not happen, both are impoverished. The individual remains ignorant of what the Church can offer and it is relegated to the margins of society, since the individual does not see any relevance in belonging to it. Therefore, the Church cannot be replenished by the aspirations of society and the latter cannot be enriched by the Church's vast store of accumulated wisdom. Hence, the Church ceases to become missionary and does not fulfil the purpose for which it was instituted.

Tacey (2004: 197, 198) believes that the Church in the future will have to think in more fluid, open and expanded ways and not in terms of closely-knit, stable and parochial communities, but in terms of loose networks, drop-in centres and small groups of cells of evangelisation. He also (2004: 198) observes that inherited faiths have broken down. Children no longer accept the faith of their parents, grandparents or natal tradition. They search for meaning and value. He (2004: 194,195) claims that people cannot envisage what religion has to offer. It has failed to speak of the personal experience of the Spirit. Tacey (2004: 195) rejects the notion that God is being diminished if traditional practices are less popular.

Decker and Griesinger (1997: 155) think that it is important that the Church should focus on newcomers, who must be provided with a pathway towards a deeper commitment to service, thus enabling them to grow. These authors (1997: 156) believe that negative attitudes towards the laity will sap motivation and curtail initiative. There must exist a system of connective enabling and involvement, where church leaders encourage, equip, co-ordinate and facilitate the work of the laity. They (1997: 156) make the important observation that continuity of leadership is essential. When this is broken, set-backs occur.

Fanstone (1993: 154) remarks that in today's consumer society, if people do not find what they want within a particular context they will seek it elsewhere. In religious terms, they may choose a cult, sect or an institutional denomination. On the other hand, they may opt out of religious choice altogether.

According to Bob Jackson (2002: 6), who has worked as a pastor for twenty years in the north of England, large churches (that is those having congregations in excess of 200) have experienced a greater probability of suffering a larger decrease in membership over the period 1989 to 1998, than smaller churches having a membership of 200 or less. The causes of decline discovered by Jackson's (2002: 8-9) study can be summarised as follows.

- The members of small churches, that is two hundred or less, are more regular and frequent in their attendance. They belong to a tightly-knit community with a strong sense of obligation to one another. Members are more likely to be integrated into a small group and have a role in their church that matches their gifts.
- On the other hand, by comparison with those who belong to smaller churches, members of large churches hold a more consumerist attitude to their churches. Churchgoers like to belong to a fellowship rather than attend a service. It is easier to belong to a small fellowship rather than to a larger one. Small groups are more appropriate nowadays, anyway. What people desire from their church has changed. Once it was teaching and inspiration; now it is belonging, but there is no doubt that belonging to a community also featured in earlier times.
- Stress and business have increased considerably in recent years, so people are coming to church more worn out and stressed than before. They feel the need to receive, and fewer have the capacity to give. Large churches experience the difficulty of finding leaders with time and capacity for major tasks.
- In larger churches, newcomers are hard to spot and harder to integrate into the community. It is possible that if they are not welcomed or have not made a few friends within a month or two, they will cease coming to church. Newcomers do not attend every week, which compounds the problem of keeping in touch or integrating them. Newcomers often feel that the church not only does not notice them, but does not need them or care about them. If this is the prevailing situation, it is not hard to see them drifting away. In smaller churches, nearly everyone knows who was not in church last Sunday. A friend will know where the absentee is.

- Larger churches have a higher proportion of children and young adults, and they are likely to run children's groups, although this happens in smaller churches also. Children and young adults are being lost more rapidly than older people in the larger churches, which are declining more quickly. Also larger churches are likely to have a faster turnover of members than in rural areas, due to easier mobility of society. Therefore, new members need to develop a relationship with the church leaders and the membership generally. A fast turnover can have a de-stabilising effect on the parish community. From a pastoral point of view, a welcoming team could be formed to watch for newcomers and fringe members, helping them to integrate into the community. When this has been achieved, the welcome team can consider that its task has been completed. Some churches have welcome teams, but the work of integration is reserved for the pastor. Different 'welcomers' could be given different age groups or different rows of seats, but it would be essential for them to be on duty every week. In a similar way, a pastoral care team could be given the jobs, noting which members are absent and following them up, at least to find out whether or not they are ill. Members of the welcoming and pastoral care teams need to be well trained and supported in their ministry.

- Leadership styles in large churches are quite different from those in smaller ones. The minister of a large church needs a wide range of skills, which is not always catered for in his training period. Many clergy feel unprepared and unsupported for their tasks. Also, members of large churches may feel less happy with their clergy than members of rural ones. Some ministers are tempted to leave early, and some churches find it hard to engage suitable replacements willing and able to accept responsibility.

Brooks (1994: 355) alleges that declining membership is the result of a shift from evangelical to liberal theology, a declining interest in evangelism, new church development and psychological exhaustion. If by 'liberal theology' Brooks means the rejection of Biblical authority, advocating individual freedom and free will instead of strict discipline, the present writer would contend that this aspect is more appropriate to New Age thinking than Christian theology.

8.7.6 **Cell-churches**

Many are dissatisfied with the present structure of the Church. As Beckford (1973: 45) notes, 'the territorial parish is ill-suited to contemporary urban conditions.' A view that is urged by Winter (1973: 57, 58), who favours a shift of emphasis in the Church towards small basic communities consisting of 30 to 40 like-minded people. He believes that the Church is an obsolete structure, too large and unwieldy to be a community because it is inherited from the Middle Ages. It acts like a parasite working against the achievements of small groups. He (1985: 131, 139) reckons that it has proved dangerously impervious to the spirit of Vatican II, having sufficient life of its own to absorb the energy of a great many individuals in matters of maintaining the fabric of the buildings. Even the authors (1980: 42) of the Easter People, responding to the National Pastoral Congress, expressed the view that small groups can witness, evangelise and serve. They can provide an opportunity for community prayer and can concern themselves with the social needs of the area. They are able to provide a valuable ministry of welcome to newcomers and others who need support. Such a vision promotes the community into becoming loving, caring and worshipping. Thus, parishes are enabled to become a communion of Christian communities. Such groups, according to Dudley (1979: 75, 76), can provide an umbrella for many caring programmes that the congregation could sponsor. A small group, he (1979: 75, 76) believes, operates best in a highly mobile society. It may have a limited life-span which would be dependent on need, but within it, individuals can develop mutual trust and understanding so that faith will grow. This is feasible because, as Gamble (1991: 172) remarks, the average church congregation is a loose collection of religious individuals, floating on a veneer of superficiality, the result of which is that individuals hardly know one another at a deep level. The Church as a 'household' should be a place where everybody belongs. Therefore, as this writer (1991: 176) states, an importance attaches to small groups, stimulating, loving and caring for one another, asking questions and expressing deep feelings. Such groups, Gamble (1991: 177) believes, make the Church strong. Such a strategy is adopted by Hadaway (1990: 90).

Cox (1984: 108) believes that, although initiated by the clergy, these groups possess a significant degree of lay control and an internal life of prayer. They are communities where the historic images of biblical faith are celebrated. They study and evaluate their secular life style in which the participants live and subject it to biblical teaching, resulting in an engagement with the wider community. Cox (1984:125) believes that

groups that do not comprise the poor or marginalised run the risk of creating a parallel church of the prosperous. They can become pious little clubs.

Berger (1979b: 201) maintains that future religious resurgences will create new institutional forms. In fact, he speaks about the reversibility of the process of secularisation as probable because of the pervasive boredom of a world without gods. Berger (1979b: 201) does not mean a return of individuals to the Church, which will be left as a remnant of a bygone era. Although the present writer agrees that this prediction is probable, he believes that the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24.49; Acts 2) and the promise of Christ to remain in his Church, even to the end of time (Matthew. 28.20), will still persist. Berger (1979b: 238) insists that there will have to be institutional changes in the structure of the Church.

Gibbs (1981: 174) observes that the larger the congregation, the greater is the percentage of 'passengers' and the larger the number of unused and frustrated leaders. This writer (1981: 181) also emphasises the importance of small groups for the growth of the Church, both in the quantity of corporate life and in the points of contact which will foster outreach into the local community. He (1981: 183, 184) distinguishes three levels of actions.

- The smallest is the 'primary group' (cell-group), consisting of twelve members or less, which provides for the possibility of developing in-depth personal relationships.
- The second stage is the 'secondary group' with a membership ranging from 13 to 175. In this group it is possible to know everyone by name, to be on casual speaking terms and experience a group identity. This group engages in social activity rather than personal interaction, although the latter cannot be ruled out. It is therefore task-orientated.
- The third tier starts at a membership of 175: the 'tertiary group', in which it is not possible for people to know one another. It exists for celebratory events.

Thus, for large congregations, according to Gibbs (1981: 183), we have the equations:

Church = celebration + congregation + cell-group

(tertiary) (secondary) (primary)

- **The primary group** provides an ideal base for identifying seekers and the following-up of contacts by home visitation.
- **The secondary group** can incorporate prospective members who would find face-to-face contact in the primary group intimidating. It would provide an easy way to become involved in the Church.
- **Even in the tertiary group**, Gibbs (1981: 204) believes that some may wish to listen whilst being lost in a large crowd and left alone in order to draw their own conclusions.

Gibbs (1993: 239-240) speaks of a pilot project undertaken by clusters of affinity groups within the congregation. The emphasis of these groups is mutual support in working out the implications of Christian discipleship and how genuine care can be mediated to others in response to their work, social pressures, family crises, personal goals and health concerns. The object is to live out the Christian life for the benefit of the local community. These communities, according to Gibbs (1993: 241), form a lay apostolate which will help the Church to develop theologies and ministries for the laity. He (1993: 241) advises starting on a small scale so that experience can be acquired and mistakes on such a small scale remedied. He (1993: 242) warns that a decentralised approach to ministry must not cause fragmentation, which is a possibility. Such small groups, according to Gibbs (1993: 243), involve a multiplicity of ministries according to their social context that must all relate to a set of core values and to a common purpose. Although individuals like to belong to a small group, they also desire to be part of a significant movement that is intimately involved with society and is addressing contemporary issues. If there is an absence of a purpose statement and a creed, then the networking model will fall apart.

According to Gibbs (1993: 244), a decentralised ministry model operates on a New Testament strategy of outreach, sharing the Good News of life in Christ. It represents an incarnational rather than an 'extractionist' approach to ministry. Each group of believers is termed by Gibbs (1993: 244) as a community of witness and forges points of contact for the unchurched or lapsed. The major obstacles, in Gibbs' (1993: 246) view, which prevent a reactivation of the faith of the lapsed are mainly attitudinal or intellectual. This was not discovered in the present writer's research, nor is it posited by other sociologists. However, it does happen that there can exist an inadequate knowledge

upon which to base belief. This is cited by Gibbs (1993: 246), and this aspect has been discussed earlier in the present chapter. Provision is suggested regarding education and formation, which the present writer believes is fundamental to the prevention of lapsation on a large scale. Gibbs (1993: 247) asserts that if individuals have insufficient knowledge, but are eager to learn, a strategy should be based on the provision of information. For those who have inadequate knowledge, who are misinformed and have a negative attitude, then an approach will have to involve exploration and exploding of myths and misunderstandings. This should be done carefully and sympathetically. For those who possess knowledge sufficient to stimulate an excuse for rejecting the Christian message, then the approach in this case may be to discover the extent of their knowledge of the gospel and to uncover the reasons for their negative attitudes. Such obstacles as intellectual resistance, absence of spiritual insight, or refusal to accept the implication of the Christian message may be discovered.

Communities of witness (or cell-groups), as Gibbs (1993: 252) terms them, are outposts, the spiritual vitality of which must be evident at the base (the tertiary group). These groups will disintegrate and disassociate themselves from the centre if the latter becomes purely organisational. The latter should provide training and support to those involved in the initiatives. The centre represents the core in which the assembled teams rejoice in what God is doing. It enables them to reform their vision.

In outlining his programme, Gibbs (1993: 15) has 'nominal' Christians in mind, whom he defines as those who call themselves Christian, or are so regarded by others, but who have no authentic commitment, based on personal faith in Christ, to the Church. Such a commitment is based on a transforming, personal relationship with Christ characterised by such qualities as love, joy and peace, a desire to study the Bible, prayer, fellowship with other Christians, a determination to faithfully witness, a deep concern for God's will and a living hope of the world to come. These features are based on the Lausanne Congress Declaration (1980: 5). Gibbs (1993: 16-17) identifies 'nominal' Christians as those who attend regularly, worship devotedly, but who have no personal relationship with Christ. The present writer suggests that having or not having a personal relationship with the Lord is not an objective consideration but rather a subjective assessment that cannot be determined scientifically. Gibbs' (1993: 15) definition of 'nominality' is too broad, in that it is concerned with involvement in the activities of the

Church. However, the tenor of this writer's objective is to bring those on the sidelines into church commitment.

The implantation of cell-groups attempts to re-discover the nature of community and to address the spiritual and social needs of the Church's members. A variant of the cell-group is based on the monastic model, whereby the participants live, pray and sometimes work in community. This is proposed by Clarke (1977; 4-5), who defines community as a sentiment that people have of themselves expressed in action and behaviour. These feelings are thought to be both a sense of solidarity or belonging and a sense of significance. The strength of the community is determined by the degree to which its members experience both solidarity and a sense of significance within it. The search for significance, according to Clarke (1977: 6), is a quest for integrity and wholeness; it is a quest to affirm oneself as fully as possible in the realms of body, mind and spirit. Mankind has divorced himself from nature and is dysfunctional in regard to creation with its rhythms and moods, the cycle of the seasons. Another aspect of this search is the urge people possess to use their skills in creative attitudes. Clarke (1977: 9) claims that there is a spontaneous eagerness to paint, weave, mould, carve and sculpt. Religious behaviour has championed self-control, and stereotyped patterns have allowed little room for the Spirit.

Basic communities, as Clarke (1977:21) points out, are radical in that they are trying to return to the roots of being human. He (1977:21) calls them 'intentional'. They comprise individuals who share their lives intimately in working towards a common goal. The participants not only share themselves and their talents, but also their possessions. The emergence of such communities indicates that these individuals are unhappy about community as practised today and wish to return to a more radical and primitive form. Such a strategy may be termed a 'community house'.

There is, therefore, a body of sociological opinion favouring not the abolition of the Church, but its segmentation into a network of cell-groups having an intimate relationship with the whole.

O'Halloran (1991: 31) points out that the Church as a world-wide reality is becoming increasingly hard to identify as the community of Christ's followers or as Christ's presence on earth. It is too big. One of the places where the Church's true nature and

identity with Christ becomes increasingly apparent is in the small community. Such an orientation, O'Halloran (1991: 40) believes, reaches out for the sacred and (1991: 47) prepares Christians to become socially, politically, religiously and environmentally aware.

He (1991: 97) thinks that it is helpful to start a group comprising those who have had a group experience, but stipulates (1991: 98) that its composition should be open to every Christian. If these groups are drawn from the same locality, the participants will tend to have a similar background.

Lee (2000: 80, 81) believes that individuals reconstruct their relationship to Catholic heritage and negotiate a way of remaining in a pluralistic society. They become part of an extended family in which God touches them and enables them to grow. Thus, community become tangible so that within it, support is offered for the individual's needs and longings.

Lee (2000: 84) indicates a typical format for a cell-group that may consist of prayer, faith-sharing, scripture and spirituality. Lee (2000: 86, 87) maintains that prayer is the responsibility of the group leader, although some participants may take turns in preparing rituals. It unites the community and forges the members' bonds to their heritage. Gibbs (1979: 15) agrees that praying for neighbours, or those moving out of the locality, is a vital activity. He (1979: 15) adds that new arrivals should be welcomed, since this ensures a regular contact made with the neighbours.

Lee's (2000: 87) second element is faith-sharing, which focuses on the participants sharing with one another how God is working in their lives. This creates a space within which religious matters can be taken seriously and related to everyday life. The group becomes a scenario where everyone can share all the dimensions of their lives. In doing so, it helps to integrate the whole person. Gibbs (1979: 12) suggests discussion as an activity. The discussion must have a purpose and feed on input material, or be provided with a resource person who guides the outcome to which an individual can respond in practical manner. Lee (2000: 89) suggests that if reading and discussion of scripture take place, then members will be engaged in a conversation between their lived experience and the scriptures.

However, Lee (2000: 93) contends that a new form of prayer or asceticism will not necessarily be practised in the last element, spirituality. From his experience of cell-groups, he (2000: 94) believes that though social awareness is heightened, the cell-group does not move into social action.

O'Halloran (1991: 99) states that leadership of cell-groups should be a matter of animation, co-ordination, careful listening, but not domination. They should, in this writer's (1991: 102) view, summon, plan and direct meetings, conduct celebrations of the word of God, lead prayer, organise retreats, workshops, courses, and days of reflection. The leader should organise activities for the group, facilitate social events and encourage ministries, but at the same time allow time for conversing with the members about their sorrows, joys, achievements, opportunities and problems. Trudinger (1979: 108, 109) advises that there should exist a good relationship between different cell-leaders. To this end, meetings should be arranged for the sharing of problems, how to address them and the potential of their groups.

Lee (2000: 97) stresses that four issues have to be confronted in regard to leadership. These are:

- **belonging** (who belongs and how people become group members);
- **power issues** (how decisions are made and how accountability functions);
- **intimacy issues** (what kinds of disclosure and closeness are appropriate for a particular group); and
- **effectiveness** (achieving the objectives of the group).

For Gibbs (1979: 13) friendship is paramount; an individual has to be prepared for an encounter with another. He (1979: 13) cites relaxation and pastoral care as being necessary ingredients of any cell formation. A reasonable degree of pastoral care, he (1979: 13) believes, is only possible through a small group structure. Through cell-groups, people are able to discover and exercise their gifts. This point is also made by Francis and Lankshear (1991: 15) and O'Halloran (1991: 102). Gibbs (1979: 14) believes that this is not brought out in the parish setting, many of whose members are unaware of the gifts they possess.

Although Lee (2000: 99) believes that, due to a desire to participate in a democratic structure, rotating the leadership may be an option; this may reflect a time constraint: felt by many people with busy life-styles. It could arise at an early stage of group development. However, groups mature and an indication of this is its increasing ability to be explicit about the form of power in its life. Rotating leadership, in Lee's (2000: 97) view, could imply a lack of confidence in personal power. He (2000: 97) believes that for its objectives to be effective and the degree of intimacy to be determined, the issue of power has to be addressed at some point. However, according to Gibbs (1979: 16), the leader should possess qualities of dynamism and the ability to inspire the group. On no account should a leader be self-appointed. On the contrary, he should be appointed by the minister, or an appropriate body, since he is responsible to the Church. This is an issue that finds agreement in Trudinger (1979: 113). A suitable period of tenure will provide a safeguard for both group and Church. Prior to this, in Gibbs' (1979: 16) opinion, training should be given in biblical knowledge, group dynamics and pastoral counselling.

O'Halloran (1991: 102) posits the view that participants will possess gifts that can become ministries. There will be members who are talented in music, interpreting the Bible, spontaneous prayer, working with young people, working for justice, hospitality, helping the old, sick, imprisoned and teaching religious education. This writer (1991: 104) believes that networking is important and that the forging of links among other communities is essential. In O'Halloran's (1991: 107, 108) opinion, the results that can be expected of cell-groups are self-enrichment in the fields of the Bible, in basic theology, justice and peace, in the social teaching of the Church, catechetics, leadership skills and counselling. Even reflecting what the group does [sometimes called conscientization] is a creative thing to do: that is, raising one's self-awareness.

Gibbs (1979: 18) itemises two types of group.

- The first one, the neighbourhood group, should represent a cross-section of the locality and be capable of attracting and holding onto the variety of people who live there. The leaders should proceed with caution at the formation of this group, since it could degenerate into a clique.

- Gibbs (1979: 18, 19) calls the second type homogeneous, as like is attracted to like: that is, possessing a common interest such as young mothers, senior citizens, nurses and doctors, business people, and skilled manual workers, who encourage and guide each other in their professional calling.

Gibbs (1979: 21) advises that a syllabus or programme should be agreed for a particular group. It should be remembered that people cannot be processed and therefore, flexibility is necessary. If a course is ineffective, it must be rejected and a new one be found to replace it. The objective of the cell-group, according to Gibbs (1979: 12), is to provide a flexible, expandable structure to help Christians toward mature spirituality and to serve Christ effectively both in the Church and in the world.

However, according to Croft (2002: 175), forming small cell-groups may meet with a lack of enthusiasm from those it seeks to help. Croft (2002: 175, 176) itemises an issue of commitment in which persons, in not offering more than an occasional Sunday church attendance, are perceived as not taking their discipleship seriously. There may be a problem with time. Croft (2002: 175) rightly says that people are too busy to give up one evening for a meeting. Again, there may be a problem with culture, where some may have an established notion of Christian life or church and regard small cell-groups as odd. Croft (2002: 176) mentions the problem of trust, whereby the individual may be afraid to commit himself to others in an ongoing way, perhaps because he has experienced disappointments in being let-down in the past.

Croft (2002: 179) suggests that a prototype cell-group should be set up from which the lessons learned can be applied to successive groups. He (2002: 181) agrees with O'Halloran (1991: 97) that a group that is open to all Christians is the best to adopt. The members can be drawn from both within and outside the congregation, some of whom may be on their way to faith, or have become new Christians. If they comprise the latter, Croft (2002: 195) believes that a decision must be made as to whether they will be nurtured and grow as part of the ongoing group, or perhaps encouraged to take part in ALPHA or a similar course. If this latter option is chosen, the participants can, if they wish, be supported by their original choice.

8.7.6.1 The **ALPHA Programme**

The ALPHA course, which can be thought of as a special type of cell-group, is considered by the present writer to be instrumental in church growth by enabling the participants to be evangelised and to acquire more knowledge of their faith. Evangelism promotes church growth, but as Horwood (2006: 26) suggests, "(it) means bringing the good news to all strata of humanity and, through its influence, transforming it from within and making it new". The characteristic of a church which is alive, according to Gibbs (1979: 20), is not activity but purpose.

Brierley (2002-3: 5.17) reports that from his research ALPHA is one of the essential tools for church growth. He states (2002-3: 5.17) that in churches which never ran an ALPHA programme, growth was only 20 per cent, whereas those churches where one or two courses were run experienced 21 per cent of growth. In churches which ran a programme for three years or more, 26 per cent of them had grown. This shows a significant difference. Brierley (2003-4: 5.3) estimates that APLHA contributes 69 per cent to the overall growth in a parish.

The ALPHA course is based on Nicky Gumbel's book 'Questions of Life' which, as Gumbel (1993:9) states, is an attempt to answer some of the key questions at the heart of the Christian faith. The programme consists of topics such as belief in Jesus, faith, the Bible, prayer, the Holy Spirit, evil, healing and the Church. The meetings start with a communal meal, during which participants can get to know each other. This is followed by a DVD presentation on one of the above topics after which a discussion, led by a group leader, takes place. The meeting concludes with prayer. The course has been astonishingly successful, according to Gumbel (1993: 9), and since its inception it has provided more than 18,000 courses in over 120 countries.

8.7.7 **Dangers of Cell-churches or Cell-groups**

There is always a tendency for small groups to become inward-looking or narcissistic. Gibbs (1979: 10) believes that such groups are pre-occupied with their own concerns, and therefore turn inward. They could develop into forums which find fault with the parish, its members or its pastor and hence tend to be negative. Again, Gibbs (1979: 10) asserts that a cell should not develop as a protest group, since such an orientation fragments the Church rather than building it up. Trudinger (1979: 104) alleges that there

is a danger of cell-groups becoming cliques. Furthermore, power can go the head of a leader who regards the group as his kingdom. Therefore his authority should neither be possessive or selfish and the group should not plead special privileges or status. He (1979: 106) also states that a group can be hindered by rebels and extroverts - people who wish to dominate the meetings. Another danger, in the present writer's view, lies in the possibility that it can degenerate into a talking shop, especially if the leader does not properly oversee or manage it. In such a case, it would cease to be a genuine attempt at person-to-person encounter. Gibbs (1979: 11) thinks that if a group loses its momentum without the input of an outside stimulus, it can grind to a halt: it has reached stagnation point and boredom will set in, accompanied by irregular attendance. Further, if a group is not working in accordance with a specific need or aim, it could self-destruct through want of purpose. One assumes that the leader will ensure that this is obviated.

8.8 SUMMARY

- The weary, bored and those who can offer no reason for lapsing are thought to be in possible situations that could be addressed. It may be that life-style could be changed as a result of the present writer's strategies. The teaching of the Church could be explained with more clarity— yet disagreements, particularly over moral issues, are inevitable.
- Large parishes, in which personal anonymity often exists, could imitate small ones, so that each member has a place, a role and friends, and is wanted.
- Members are more likely to be integrated into a small parochial community than into a larger one.
- Larger churches have a faster turnover of members than rural ones. New members should develop a relationship with the church leaders and members generally.
- Large churches comprise a highly mobile congregation. They are ideal scenarios for the establishment of small cell-groups. The latter can stimulate love and care for the participants and share deep feelings.
- The larger the organisation, the greater the number of 'passengers' and unused potential leaders.
- A welcoming team could be formed to watch for newcomers and fringe members helping them to integrate into the community. Newcomers must be welcomed.

There must exist a connective and enabling ministry in which involvement can be established by church leaders.

- Newcomers are hard to spot in large churches. If they are not welcomed or have not made friends, they are likely to cease coming to Church.
- A team ministry comprising the pastor and core members of the parish, who possess specialities, could be established. The clergy would shed their administrative role which would be assumed by the core team.
- Children and young adults are being lost to the Church more rapidly than older members.
- Reclamation of the lapsed who have a distorted view of Christianity would be difficult.
- It would be necessary to re-introduce a lapsed person into the Church before he or she settles down. Those who are already settled down can only be reached through the community in which they live by committed members who cultivate their friendship.
- An engagement with contemporary spirituality is essential.
- The arrangement of a church community could assume the form of a network of cell-groups which would consist of the primary one, the congregation for those who wish to engage in some field of social action (the secondary group), and lastly the celebration group (the tertiary group) which draws everyone together to celebrate the work of God in the community.
- Cell-groups attempt to discover the nature of community and address the spiritual and social needs of its members. Their format may comprise prayer, faith-sharing, scripture and spirituality.
- Leaders of cell-groups should be animators, co-ordinators and possess the ability to listen. Their function is to plan and direct meetings, conduct celebrations, organise retreats and facilitate social events.
- Leaders should confront the problems of who belongs to the group and how people become members; how decisions are made; what kinds of disclosure and intimacy are appropriate; and how to achieve the objectives of the group. A relaxed atmosphere and pastoral care are important.

- Rotation of leadership may be permissible at first. It could otherwise imply a lack of confidence. Leaders should be appointed by the minister or a representative body.
- The benefits of a cell-group are the qualities of self-enrichment, leadership skills and counselling. Those who possess gifts would be discovered.
- Starting small groups can be difficult owing to a lack of individual commitment or trust and a cultural difference which envisages cell-groups as foreign to parish life.
- Cell-groups should have some input from an external source, otherwise stagnation may occur.
- Intentional cell-groups, otherwise known as basic communities or community houses, comprise participants who share not only themselves and their talents, but also their possessions.
- Small groups have a tendency to be inward-looking and are sometimes narcissistic. The core team or leader would be responsible to see that this does not happen. Small groups can emerge as cliques. The leader's power can subvert the group's objectives and the group could encourage the admission of rebels and extroverts.
- Small groups should not be protest groups. The Church would tend to be fragmented rather than enhanced or grow.
- The introduction of a continuous ALPHA Programme into a parish is likely to effect considerable growth.
- Stress and the pace of life have increased in recent years. People tend to be worn-out and feel the need to receive. They have a reduced capacity to give.
- Religion can be inward-looking, but it needs to communicate effectively to the world. It should make a contribution to the individual's yearning for spiritual meaning, sacredness and personal engagement with the Spirit.

8.9 CONCLUSION

The fostering of growth in the Church, far from being inward-looking, seeks to evangelise. It possesses a liturgy that is comprehensible and meaningful to the participants, and is the seed bed for retaining individuals who would otherwise lapse. Divorce, a life-style which is deemed to be incompatible with church practice, objection to change, disagreement with the teachings of the Church, antagonism by a partner, the personality of the priest, ill health, traumatic experiences, moving home and changes in

work schedule are found to be triggers for lapsation, although rehabilitation would be difficult to achieve, except on an individual basis. It is possible that a person's life-style could be modified as a result of the present writer's strategies. The teachings of the Church could be discussed and explained clearly, but disagreements, particularly on moral issues, are inevitable. The weary, the bored and those who offer no reason for lapsing are thought to be in those categories that can more readily be addressed. It is also significant that many individuals in our research expressed a feeling of not belonging to the church community. It is with this in mind that the cell-church is believed to be appropriate in today's parish life.

The work of reclaiming the already lapsed can only be done through personal friendship.

The establishment of cell-groups (primary), and the larger structures of congregation (secondary) and celebration (tertiary), welcoming and pastoral teams, basic communities or community houses are believed to be necessary in the present age. It is to be noted that the celebration (tertiary) group would be the parish. The institution of these groups would be essential in the urban setting.

8.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

8.10.1 The Present Strategy

The ideal composition of a parish would be an homogeneous community where family life is secure and stable. However, communities nowadays are heterogeneous, in which pluralism of religious and secular activities competes with one another. The average family is now more mobile than in previous ages and does not establish roots in the community.

The philosophy of education clearly determines to some extent the type of pupil it produces. Education can be thought of as a vehicle of control. In this context, the term 'schooling-instruction paradigm' has been utilised to describe a system which imposes a relationship of power by the teacher over the student rather than establishing a gentle relationship of seeker and provider. The 'schooling-instruction paradigm' is devoted to the teaching of religion from an objective standpoint. It taught people about Christianity

without making them Christians. It can therefore be claimed that this system has failed, since many educated agnostics have been generated.

On the other hand, although faith cannot be taught, it can be promoted within the faith community in an historical, tradition-orientated manner. Voluntary-aided schools were supposed to attain this aim, but they have only succeeded in providing religious education. The inclusion of non-practising Catholic pupils and non-Catholic pupils in a Catholic voluntary-aided school is believed to impair its ethos and produce serious disaffection within the establishment.

Pupils are more likely to practise their faith if both parents do so. Even if one parent attended church (especially the mother), the pupil is more likely to attend too. A Catholic father is more likely to go to church if his partner shares the same religion. Therefore, for religious education to be effective for the pupil, one or both parents should be committed. The greatest threat to the Catholic voluntary-aided secondary school comes from lapsed Catholic pupils. A voluntary-aided Catholic school cannot be regarded as a homogeneous community if it comprises practising Catholics, lapsed Catholics and non-Catholics. Hence, the religious and moral formation of practising Catholic pupils might not be enhanced in such a scenario.

The methodology of religious education has changed over the last fifty years. Up to the 60s it made explicit the evangelistic function as a preparation for living in society. This rationale has changed to a focus on non-confessional religious education. This implies that a knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions is now the hall-mark of religious education in both state and voluntary-aided schools. The aim of this changed stance is to develop the pupil's evaluation of religious and moral issues and to engage in a fundamental quest for the meaning of truth and religion by investigation, analysis and interpretation. Adherents of the confessional approach, on the other hand, justify their approach since Christianity is true, and it is good for children to be brought up in the Christian faith. By contrast, the 'personal quest' teacher teaches religion because it is good for children to explore questions of meaning.

Religious nurture is of course the primary task of parents and of the faith community, and the voluntary-aided school has been traditionally regarded as a faith community. But the latter's approach to religious education nowadays is experiential and, if this becomes non-confessional in character, the school may become increasingly anachronistic and less desirable. It may be that secularisation of modern thought has brought about a decline of religious concepts. However, it is thought legitimate to teach the Catholic religion in a confessional manner in a Catholic voluntary-aided school, since secular education is often dominated by liberalism.

8.10.2 The Proposed Strategy of Education and Formation of Young People and Children by Parents

A faith community must be small enough to maintain meaningful, purposeful interaction where faith can be shared. Ideally, a community should be comprised of three generations:

- **memory**, which is the third generation;
- **vision**, which is the first generation; and
- **the present**, which is the second generation.

Such a faith community could accept responsibility for Christian ministry to the young, who learn patterns of behaviour and values. It is undeniable that Christian parents often fail to talk to their children about God, and the adult church often does not help young people to recognise him in their lives. Frequently, it also happens that children hear what their teachers tell them, but respond to the conduct of their parents and other adults. Therefore, the importance of peer pressure cannot be over-emphasised.

The child or young person needs to experience ritual which will help him to understand and make meaningful the transitions or significant moments in his life. He must be exposed to the community's experience, whereby he will learn. He may later image that experience and thereupon conceptualise it. Once again the involvement of both parents and children in the life of the Church is essential.

Secondly, the faith of the young person must impel him to Christian action through which he will learn the value of faith and feel a sense of caring and support from others. Christian education requires the development of the person in an holistic manner in the

spheres of creativity, wondering, dreaming, imagining, singing, dancing, painting and acting. Such an education must develop historical awareness. Storytelling should become a part of the life of the Church. At the same time, a certain amount of factual information should be given.

'Enculturation' emphasises the process of interaction between all persons in the educational group. This implies an interactive dialogue among persons who are regarded as equals in God's sight, yet unequal in knowledge and experience. Through the process of enculturation, ritual and personal action, the individual progresses through the stages of:

- '**experienced**' faith - a foundational type found in children; and
- '**affiliative**' faith, in which the individual acts with others by accepting the community as a clear sense of identity.
- '**Searching**' faith is characterised by doubt or critical judgment and a quest for truth. This type of 'faith' results in
- '**owned**' faith, in which the individual wants to witness by word and deed.

These stages need to be recognised by parents, whose duty it is to sympathise and encourage the young person in his endeavour. They need to assimilate two contrasting aspects in the relationship with their children, simultaneously being close and yet separate from them. There should exist intimacy without possessiveness. Such a relationship can be strengthened by parental harmony, effective communication and wise parental control and nurture.

Parental harmony consists of warmth and affection. Wise parental control is governed by the boundaries set up by them and the type of discipline they administer. A democratic style of discipline appears to foster a commitment to God, while optimal adolescent development is fostered when parents combine a high level of care and support with attitudes that promote autonomy and independence in their children.

In order to develop, faith has the facets of an affair of the heart and a commitment of the mind, both of which result in good actions. Families nowadays must be more intentional and become more gospel orientated, sharing their faith at home and engaging in service activities. Families should communicate moral values. The latter develops through three stages.

- The child possesses a pre-moral attitude when he obeys in order to avoid punishment and to receive rewards.
- In role conformity, the child conforms in order to avoid censure.
- Lastly, the individual conforms so as to retain the respect of the impartial spectator.

The values of his parents will be imbibed as he grows older, provided that he comes from a caring home. On the other hand, he will tend to adopt the values of his peers if either there is a divergent set of values between his parents or if he came from an uncaring home.

8.10.3 Proposed Strategies of Education of Young People and Children by the Christian Community

- It is thought that the study of historical data and memorisation should be restored. Biblical and doctrinal information should be taught so that young people understand their faith better. They should be seeped in Scripture, conversant with its stories, its record of God's commandments and promises and the life to come.
- Christian education should help every person to develop a personal relationship with Christ. It should emphasise what God has done and is doing for them, rather than what they have achieved. Parents should pray with their children, teach them moral responsibility, be open to ethnicity [those who espouse different religions] and involve their children in Christian action. The importance of communicating faith in Christ is essential.
- The Christian community can teach parents the importance of prayer in the home and the use of Christian symbols. At the same time, it is important for the Christian community to act as a family in order to be surrogate to single, lonely and dysfunctional people. Young people need the support of a group which will both engender loyalty and counteract the negative aspects of the prevailing culture.
- What should be the Roman Catholic community's attitude to the latter? The Christian ethic must be the transformation of culture through individuals who are attuned to God's will. They are people of faith acting as role models. Only the

Christian body can witness to Christ and continue his mission. This body should act as a leaven in society. It should heal the wounds of those who are hurt, the families who are breaking up and the young people who are not interested in the Church.

8.10.4 The Strategies for Reclaiming Adult Lapsed

Those who are weary, bored and who offer no reason for lapsing are probably those alone who can be addressed in terms of reclamation, although it would be easier to rectify these aspects in individuals who either attend church weekly or monthly.

- A discussion with individuals who had disagreements with the teachings of the Church could be initiated and their complaints resolved. Objection to change, antagonism by a partner, the personality of the priest, ill health, traumatic experience, being divorced, changes in work schedule and life-style lapsed are not easily remedied.
- Perhaps a more significant aspect is the feeling of not belonging, found in large parishes. It can be argued that the latter needs to be rendered into smaller units, each resembling a smaller parish. Such parochial units need to provide a place for each member, who is known and has a role. In this respect, house groups, interest groups and working groups are necessary for the sustaining of spiritual life. Indeed, a coalition of small, interlocking communities or cells, having their own identity and possessing a unity through a shared vision, ethos and leadership, can provide the advantages of large and small communities. The combined cells can assemble on Sunday for worship.
- Cell-churches can provide opportunities for community prayer, investigation of social needs and a ministry of welcome to newcomers to the Church. This is appropriate in a highly mobile society, although the individual cells may have a limited life span. A strong church is built by the stimulation of loving and caring for one another and the expression of deep feelings. 'Passengers' from a large parish will be enabled to belong and to grow spiritually. The corporate life of the Church will tend to mature and points of contact with the local community will be forged. Three levels of action in the Church may be distinguished.
  - **The primary cell group** is the smallest, consisting of about twelve members. In this group in-depth relationships are developed.

- **The secondary group** consists of 13-175 members in which social activity would be engaged.
- **The tertiary group** of more than 175 members would exist for celebratory events.

The primary group identifies seekers and follows them up by home visitation. The secondary group incorporates prospective members who would find the intimacy of the primary group intimidating. Small groups include a multiplicity of ministries which must relate to a common purpose and a set of core values.

Those who have inadequate knowledge and understanding, who are misinformed or who have a negative attitude, and those who possess considerable knowledge that encourages their rejection of the Christian message can be evangelised in the primary cell, if they so desire. It is important that the function of the tertiary group should not be solely organisational, although it should provide training and support for the cell leaders. It should also be a centre for inspiration and spirituality to which the primary groups can turn for help. A variant of the cell group is the basic community in which its members intimately share their lives, talents and possessions in a community house.

There is a potential danger inherent in cell groups and basic communities because there is a tendency for them to look inward or be narcissistic. If the tertiary group does not properly oversee them, they can degenerate into 'talking shops' and thereby cease to operate according to their specified aims or needs.

Even so, it may be that the truly lapsed in later life cannot be reclaimed. There is a difficulty in engagement in dialogue. They have probably received a distorted picture of Christianity and possess conflicting values, life-styles and prejudices. Prevention of lapsation may be the easier option.

- The need to evangelise those who share similar values, cultures, backgrounds and religious expectations is important. In the event of an individual moving to a new area, it would be necessary to introduce him to a church before he reaches a settled way of life. If an individual has reached the latter condition, reclamation could only be achieved by cultivating his friendship outside church. Once a trust has been established, religious beliefs and values could be tentatively pursued, and if

an interest is shown, the individual could be introduced to a group of Christians, perhaps in a cell group.

- Factors that encourage church growth should also be investigated. A scheme that encourages strong commitment, promoting Church solidarity, together with an identification of the individual's goals with those of the Church, should be devised. Such a scheme induces missionary zeal. Religious institutions need to be strong, their culture not being driven by worldly criteria. If religion is not communicating its message to the world, then it needs to examine itself.
- The individual's spiritual needs have to be satisfied by a church using a language that is comprehensible to him. Indeed, a dialogue of current spirituality must occur between those inside and those outside the Church. If this does not happen, both are impoverished. This means that the Church has to think in a more fluid, open way than that which occurs in closely-knit parochial structures: that is, in cell groups. Newcomers, who feel lost in large parishes, must be focussed. They must be provided with a pathway to deeper commitment that will enable their growth. A connective, enabling involvement needs to be initiated.
- Team ministries, comprising pastors and those who possess a speciality, is envisaged; such groups would determine a corporate plan based on a pre-determined strategy. This scheme allows clergy to concentrate on those matters for which they were ordained. The organisation and development of the cell groups would be the responsibility of the lay members.

8.10.5 Model of Proposed Strategies of Education and Formation For Parents and Young People

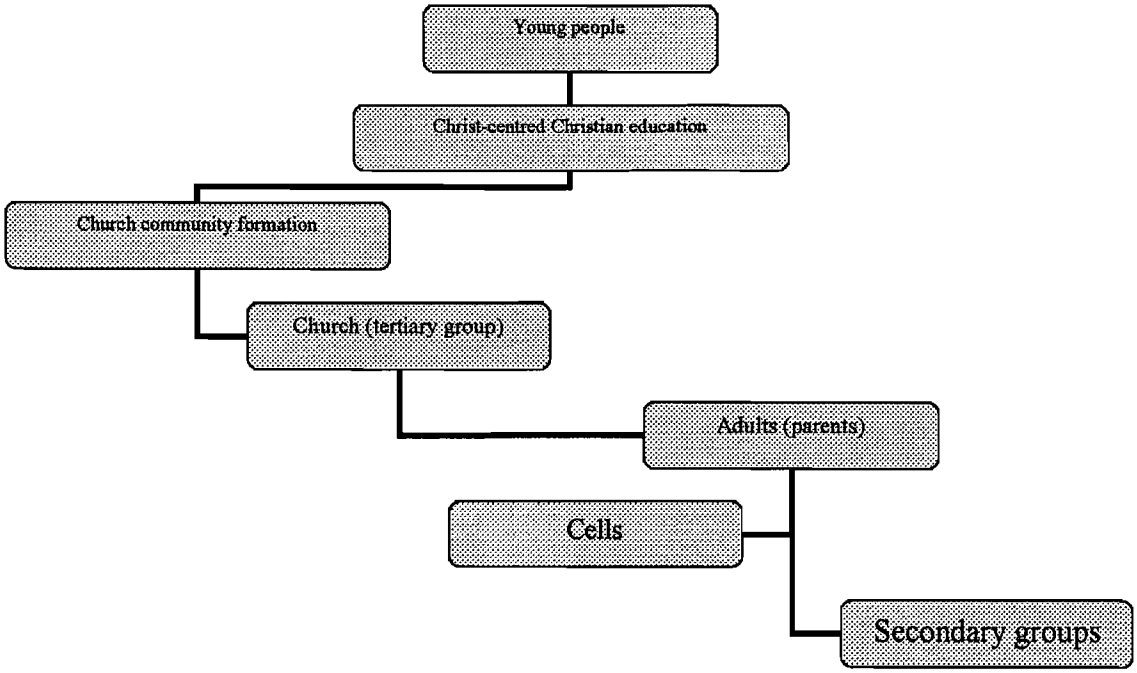

Figure 2: Model of Strategies for education and formation

8.11 CONCLUSION

We admit that the suggested overall pastoral plan is theoretical and may not work in practice. However, the present writer believes that something similar to this has to be put into action if lapsation is to decelerate. Nevertheless, there are a few drawbacks in this strategy which need to be mentioned.

- In the voluntary-aided school, it is evident that a homogeneous body cannot survive unless non-practising Catholics are admitted. As has been stated earlier, non-Catholics and non-Christians pose no threat to the formation of Catholic pupils, although this cannot be said for lapsed Catholics.
- Although confessional approaches of teaching religion have been criticised, a non-confessional approach is adopted in state schools. The present writer believes that a confessional style is appropriate in a voluntary-aided school. This is what

parents want. It is the reason behind their choice to send their children to such a school. However, the likelihood that a confessional approach will be delivered is becoming more remote as the provision of practising Catholic teachers is less hopeful. Indeed, this failure to do so and the admission of non-Christian teachers who utilise the 'schooling-instruction' procedure means that they cannot share their faith experiences with the children they teach.

The present writer believes that 'enculturation', in the sense of interaction between pupil and teacher is satisfactory. This interaction involves the conveyance and assimilation of knowledge, the pupil learning from his teacher. Interaction, in the sense that both teacher and pupil learn from each other, cannot be satisfactory.

- Though we have stated that families must be more intentional nowadays, it must be observed that most Roman Catholic families have been too Mass-conscious in the past and have not tended to engage at home in faith sharing. In many cases they have believed that the school has provided this for them. From the writer's experience, not many adults participate in faith- sharing programmes in the parish. It may be that such individuals placed all their commitment in attending church services, and that their knowledge of the Bible is cursory.

- The present writer believes that the some provision of support for those who appear on the fringe of the Church should be adopted. Such a procedure might be more practical than seeking the lapsed. They might be weekly or monthly attenders who state that they are weary or bored, or feel they do not belong, or offer no reason for their dissatisfaction with the Church. Many of the practising members desire to belong to a community, although some desire anonymity.

In the present writer's experience, most members of the Roman Catholic communion are not trained to cultivate the friendship of those who have similar ideas, and they would be opposed to entering into a friendship, the common purpose of which is to evangelise.

- Pastoral visitation of the parish, which was once a common feature in the life of a Catholic priest, has fallen into disuse, sometimes owing to the chairing of committees or the working schedules of those visited. It might be due to a belief that this is no longer necessary. A simple register containing basic information of the members of the parish would facilitate the work of a welcoming team.

We believe that persuading people to join cell groups would be difficult in any parish. We also think that the problem of lapsation has to be approached as part of the problem of Church growth. If the latter looks outwards and grows, this will to some extent limit lapsation.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on lapsation as understood within the context of a Christian parish.

9.1.1 Problem Statement (refer to Chapter 1)

There are many reasons why an individual might cease to express his faith in a prescribed manner. This field of study has not been exploited; even though researchers have contributed valuable information that provides a basis for further investigation, no attempt has been made to suggest ways in which this phenomenon may be ameliorated. Therefore, the present researcher believed that a survey conducted among 1,500 adults and 1,000 young people would yield important data for the Church, which would confirm or question current findings. It was proposed that, prior to this survey, a pilot postal survey of 44 households would show whether this method would be feasible. This pilot survey rendered 13 returns (29.5 per cent) and this was thought satisfactory. The main survey was conducted among 3, 404 adults and 2,935 young people in state schools. The number of issues and returns are shown in Appendices 6 and 7.

Although the researcher writes from his own Catholic tradition, it is evident that this phenomenon occurs in other main-stream denominations, a fact borne out by the work of Christian Research in England. The present researcher therefore believes that an analysis of the causes of lapsation, and the development of strategies to limit or eradicate it, is perhaps overdue. Such an analysis would be of help to most religious institutions. Thus the central question posed by this work is:
'How may one make the best use of procedures that are both available and accessible to eradicate or minimise the process of lapsation?'

9.1.2 The Layout of the Chapters

The research is divided into eight sections. The thrust of chapter 2 was to define a Christian parish in which various types of members resided: nuclear or core, leader, modal, marginal, and lapsed.

Chapter 1 provides the background and the problem statement and poses the following questions:

- How can lapsation be defined within the context of the Christian parish community? (chapter 2)
- What are the principal causes of lapsation in the young and adult? (chapter 3)
- How may one identify the spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral implications normally associated with lapsation? (chapter 4)
- What are the expressions of faith, belonging and values of the lapsed? (chapter 5)
- What features and characteristics are associated with the process of lapsation? (chapter 6)
- What guidelines can be formed for returning to religious practice after a period of lapsation with reference to scriptural principles and an analysis drawn from modern church history? (chapter 7)
- How may we formulate a strategic plan that might be implemented to minimise the process of lapsation in the young and adult? (chapter 8)

These questions gave rise to the main aim, which is:

To identify and investigate procedures that could be employed to eradicate or minimise the process of lapsation.

In order for this to be a success the following objectives were given focus.

- To determine a definition of lapsation within the context of the Christian parish community.
- To ascertain the causes of lapsation in the young and adult.
- To discover the identifiable spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral implications of lapsation.
- To evaluate the expressions of faith, belonging and value of the lapsed.
- To describe the process of lapsation.

- To investigate the nature of returning to religious practice after a period of lapsation. This would be undertaken with reference to an outline of scriptural principles and an analysis of the phenomenon drawn from a historical perspective. The scriptural principles would provide a basis for investigation of lapsation and the strategies required.
- To formulate strategies that might be employed for minimising the process and effects of lapsation in young people and adults.

9.2 DEFINITION OF THE PARISH AND LAPSATION

9.2.1 Introduction

We cannot proceed with the exploration of lapsation until definitions of 'parish' and 'lapsation' are determined.

9.2.2 Definition of 'parish' and 'lapsation' (refer to 2.3, 2.8 and 2.7.2)

In order to illustrate lapsation or a lapsed individual, we derived a definition of 'parish' which can be stated in the following way:

- A parish can be defined as a distinctive and organised plan of relations by designated persons participating in the pursuit of one or several explicit values. It can be a formalised body or a statistical category.
- From the Catholic standpoint, this equivalent to the People of God or Christ's faithful are those incorporated into the Church through baptism and who are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world. This missionary mandate expresses the command of Jesus to, 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The purpose of the mission is to persuade people to share in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hence, every validly baptised Catholic is a member of the Church and through residence in a particular area is a member of the appropriate parish. However, other personal criteria must be introduced such as intention, the degree of religious observance and social participation. Whether an individual is an

actual member of a parish depends on the minimum conditions of formal religious practice, while social participation implies the relation of the individual to organised patterns of belief and behaviour, such as reading the lesson or participation in pastoral or recreational objectives.

Our definition of the dormant or lapsed person is therefore that he is not a member of the parish at all and cannot be considered as a parishioner. Although he is baptised and resides within the parish boundaries, by the personal criteria of intention, negative religious practice and lack of social participation, he has excluded himself from the parish system.

9.3 CAUSES OF LAPSATION IN THE YOUNG AND ADULT

9.3.1 Introduction

Having established a definition of lapsation, the present writer proceeded to discover the causes of this phenomenon in both young and adult individuals.

Chapter 3 surveys the causes of lapsation assessed in a quantitative manner, in order to obtain a perspective as to which are the more serious and common causes.

9.3.2 Causes of Lapsation in the Young (refer to 3.3)

The causes of lapsation were found to be related to parental control or the lack of it. They are: lapsation resulting

- from family tension;
- from parental consensus;
- from parental distance;
- from conflict with parents;
- from antipathy towards parents;
- from family disorganisation;
- from inconsistent messages;
- from gender: boys are more likely to lapse than girls;

- from birth order: for instance, an only child tends to be more dependent on parents, and a first-born is more likely to accept the parents' authority than later-born siblings. Later-born males tend to be more influenced by their peers. From our researches, siblings in the up-to-and- including-14 year age group place a greater weight on their parents' views than on friends'. In the 15-19 year age category, males have a greater conformity with their parents' views than males in the same category.
- Lapsation occurs according to the individual's stage in life. For instance, one may lapse at university. Adolescence also stimulates church leaving.
- Lapsation sometimes occurs as an indirect result of the religious institution to which the individual belongs. Some are more successful than others in insulating the person from the effects of secular culture.
- Lapsation resulting from parental over-enthusiasm. Children may not always follow in their parents' footsteps. They may express their religious commitment in other ways.
- Lapsation due to lack of religious training.

9.3.3. **Causes of Lapsation in the Adult (refer to 3.4)**

The main categories of lapsation were as fpllows.

- **Weary or bored lapsed**. We discovered that of the non-attending or infrequently attending, the aggregate was 36.6 per cent.
- **Life-style lapsed**. It was found that of the non-attending or infrequently attending, the aggregate of male and female was 27.7 per cent.
- **Spiritual-need lapsed**. The non-attending or infrequently attending male and female realised an aggregate of 16.8 per cent.
- **Anti-change lapsed**. We discovered that the non-attending or infrequently attending realised an aggregate of 17.8 per cent.
- **Mixed marriages**. We obtained no data here.
- **Personality of the priest**. This produced a low response. Non-attending or infrequently attending male and female showed an aggregate of 6.4 per cent.

- **Traumatic experience** also indicated a low response. Non-attending or infrequently male and female attending produced an aggregate of 8.9 per cent.

- **Drifting and disillusionment**. No data was obtained on this aspect.

- **Changes in life** affecting churchgoing (for instance, death of a spouse, personal injury, illness, termination of employment, change of residence). We obtained no data here.

- **Moving home.** Of non-attending or infrequently attending males and females, an aggregate of 12.9 per cent was realised in our study.

- **Divorce**. In our research, an aggregate of only 1 per cent of males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending category indicated divorce as a reason for non-attendance at church.

- **Work schedule**. Our research revealed an aggregate of only 1.98 per cent of males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending group who expressed a change in work routine being the cause of not going to church.

- **Illness and old age.** Of the males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending category, only 3.96 per cent indicated that this was a reason for their ceasing church practice.

- **Burn-out.** We obtained no information on this aspect in our study.

- **Disagreement with the teachings of the Church**. Our study revealed that an aggregate of 27.7 per cent of males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending category cited this as a reason for ceasing religious practice.

- **Experience of antagonism or pressure exerted by a partner or spouse**. Our evidence showed that an aggregate of 2.07 per cent males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending group expressed this as a reason for their non-attendance at church.

- **No reason offered for lapsing**. Our results show that an aggregate of 15.8 per cent of males and females in the non-attending or infrequently attending group expressed no reason for their defection.

- **Drifting and disillusionment**. We obtained no data on this aspect.

It will be noted that the above figures do not add up to 100 per cent. This is due to respondents multi-choosing.

9.4 THE SPIRITUAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MORAL ASPECTS OF LAPSATION

9.4.1 Introduction

Lapsation can be evaluated in a quantitative and qualitative manner. The previous chapter provided statistical data and so satisfied the former condition. In the present chapter, the writer attempts to survey a deeper and richer perspective and understanding of lapsation when it is considered qualitatively.

9.4.2 Spiritual Implications of Lapsation (refer to 4.2)

Our investigations into the spiritual aspects of this phenomenon revealed the following.

- The lapsed individuals' spiritual belief varies from that of someone who believes in a higher power to whom prayers are addressed, to one, who although affirming his religious identity, merely uses this as a badge.
- The individual believes that the structures of the Church impede an encounter with the divine.
- He is open to alternative beliefs.
- He might not be open to commitment to a personal spirituality.
- Our survey shows that he might not have rejected God. 74.4 per cent of non-attending and infrequently attending males and 80.6 per cent of females in the same category believed in the deity.
- Religion may appear stale to the lapsed. Our survey revealed that in the non-attending and infrequently attending group, 53.8 per cent of males and 43.54 per cent of females believed that the Church was oppressive.
- Some believed that traditional religion was stale. Respondents were asked whether they had changed their conception of God. Of the non-attending and infrequently attending respondents, 12.8 per cent of males and 9.67 per cent of females admitted they had done so. Of those who had not changed their

conception of God, it was discovered that 7.7 per cent of males and 9.67 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category answered affirmatively.

- Young respondents were asked whether they had a spiritual need, or if they had experienced a lack of meaning in their lives. It was found that of the males in the up-to-and-including 14 years age group, 11.4 per cent in the non-attending and infrequently attending category answered affirmatively. A spiritual need or lack of meaning was revealed in adults. Males in the non-attending and infrequently attending group expressed a need (41 per cent) and females (29 per cent).
- A change in one's life resulting from lapsation was shown in 11.3 per cent females and 5.12 per cent males in the non-attending and infrequently attending group. Non-practising females (8.1 per cent) showed a more positive outlook following lapsation, whereas it was negligible in males. Males (7.7 per cent) believed that they had a less positive outlook. Males (43.6 per cent) in the non-attending and infrequently attending group expressed guilt (as a result of non-attendance) compared with 40.9 per cent of females.

9.4.3 **Psychological Aspects of Lapsation (refer to 4.3)**

It was determined that lapsation can be observed in a mechanistic, deterministic manner where the subjectivity of the individual is ignored; or, in an experiential way, where the behavioural and social aspects of a free, responsible individual can be observed. The psychological aspects of lapsation involve a relationship to the contemporary world of meaning, which impacts on the religious culture and, thereby, influences the individual. Man has an implicit dialogue with the world of meaning that needs to be made explicit. Such implications can lead to a crisis regarding the meaning of life and the religious attitude of the individual.

Commitment to the Church depends on sustaining the living tradition in the home, school and community. It is a shared style of thought. The possibility of lapsation increases when living traditions are blocked. The spread of science and technology leads to the severing of traditions, and society becomes more stratified. Individuals find themselves in different 'life-worlds', which colour their outlook.

Contemporary man is exposed to tensions that are introduced by technology in work and leisure, allowing few pauses for religious reflection.

A cognitive attitude is formed by the whole person incorporating language, art, myth, history, science, experience and human relations. The centre of a person's being is a logic that conditions cognitive ideas and assimilates terms that may have religious significance. Logic is informed by science and technological development, and standards of judgment have been modified so that a negative interpretation of religious phenomena is possible, the result of which has been the secularisation of the sacred.

A religious transformation occurs through experiencing a change in the rhythm of life, sensitivity, perception, logic and cognitive attitudes. Judgement accompanies experience of the sacred, and experience can promote a change in religious behaviour, the latter relating to its cultural setting, in which it persuades the person to revise cognitive ideas and attitudes.

A crisis of religiosity occurs at the level of the psychological make-up and behaviour of the individual. The cognitive process develops within the psyche that reacts to extreme stimuli, which may change the individual's pattern of thought.

New insights - introduced through the influence of new technology - which are accompanied by new values and judgments resulting from the psychological process, promote a desacralising language in the individual. The latter is expressed by communication to others.

Intuition is also part of the psychological process, whereby the individual constructs some correlation between his view of things and external reality. He attempts to fit that image into his own system. Through the interaction of intuition and abstraction, ideologies are formed. As knowledge, perception, language and social life change, so does abstraction and, when changes to the latter are attained, it is possible to indicate if the personality is irreligious or religious.

Modern social life is presented, on the objective level, with new impulses and stimuli occurring by means of new facts and, on the subjective level, by new activities that become signs and symbols. These facts must be designated as negative phenomena.

Their impact on religiosity is more significant when they are perceived and, when this stage is reached, it is followed by communication. By reason of the multiplicity of facts, activities and religiously meaningful experiences arise that stimulate the process of desacralisation. This, in turn, develops into a clear expression of irreligiosity.

9.4.4 Sociology of the Lapsed Individual (refer to 4.4)

Modern life is segmented and it brings with it different 'life-worlds' of meaning and experience. The individual relates to a variety of roles within these segments that are in sharp contrast one to another. Different occupations have constructed for themselves 'life-worlds' that are incomprehensible to the outsider. This has a profound influence on religion, which is similarly affected by the private sphere dominated by pluralisation.

Until recent times, religion provided a comprehensive range of symbols for the meaningful integration of society. Meanings, beliefs and values were formerly cohesive; religion making man feel at home in the universe. It is now increasingly difficult for religious institutions to integrate the plurality of 'life-worlds'. Pluralisation forces the individual to take notice of others who do not share his beliefs. His life is dominated by contradictory values and beliefs.

Therefore, pluralisation weakens the hold of religion on society and the individual. Religious definitions have lost their certainty and have become matters of choice, and man suffers from the condition of 'homelessness'.

9.4.5 Moral Nature of the Lapsed Individual (refer to 4.5)

Our survey asked those who were lapsed if they had a life-style which was inconsistent with churchgoing. Non-attending and infrequently attending males (38.5 per cent) and 30.6 per cent of females believed this to be true. 82.1 per cent males and 87.1 per cent females thought that personal choice should govern obedience to the rules laid down by the Church.

Did the Church demand too much from erstwhile adherents? Non-attending and infrequently attending respondents revealed that this was true for 12.8 per cent of males and 19.3 per cent of females. Non-attending and infrequently attending males (48.7 per cent) and 37.1 per cent of females thought that pastoral care was inadequate, but those

who expressed satisfaction with pastoral care were quite moderate. In the non-attending and infrequently attending category, 29.2 per cent of males and 30.6 per cent of females expressed satisfaction.

It was discovered that when people lapse, they do not always support philanthropic institutions. Of the non-attending and infrequently attending respondents, 23.1 per cent of males and 17.7 per cent of females declared affirmatively.

9.5 EVALUATION OF FAITH, BELONGING AND VALUES IN THE LAPSED

9.5.1 Introduction

A low degree of faith, not belonging and negative values are often the basis from which lapsation springs. As will be noted, not having a sense of belonging is one of the more serious reasons for defection today.

9.5.2 Faith (refer to 5.2)

Faith is a gift of God which cannot be extinguished. Philosophical agnosticism can occur, leading to a decision to reject religious faith. On the other hand, church leaving is connected with experiential agnosticism in which the individual feels that he has been let down by God.

9.5.3 Practical Matters (refer to 5.3)

Lapsation can be promoted by practical matters such as:

- a consideration of the costs and benefits of being a member of the Church. Do the benefits outweigh the costs?
- Do the Church's ideals and expectations coincide with the individual's?

Our research revealed that 43.6 per cent of males and 45.2 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group had become disenchanted with the Church. In terms of worship, 48.7 per cent of males and 31.1 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category recorded dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, 1.3 per cent of males and 5.3 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group believed that worship was too traditional, but whether their view influenced their departure is not conclusive. Males (48.7 per cent) and 37.1 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group stated that pastoral care was satisfactory.

In the non-attending and infrequently attending group, 6.5 per cent of males and 6.4 per cent of females admitted that they had experienced conflict with the priest.

Males (4.3 per cent) and 3.2 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending category believed that the Church was closed to outsiders. In the same category, 1.3 per cent of males and 8.5 per cent of females preferred the company of friends rather than attending church.

It was found that 15.6 per cent of weekly and monthly practising males in the up-to-and-including-14 year age group disagreed with the teachings of the Church, while in the 15-19 years age group 6.3 per cent of males and 12.5 per cent of females recorded disagreement with Church teachings.

In the non-attending and infrequently attending within the up-to-and-including-14 year age group, there were 4.7 per cent of males and 10.9 per cent of females. In the 15-19 years age category, 10.9 per cent of males and 14.1 per cent of females registered disagreement with the teachings of the Church.

It was revealed that 68.4 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group displayed the greatest degree of distrust with the decisions of the Church.

9.5.4 **Belonging (refer to 5.4)**

A sense of not belonging can be attributed to not being welcomed into the Church, especially in urban areas.

Our researches discovered that 6.4 per cent of non-attending and infrequently attending females expressed the view that they were not welcomed into the Church. Our research also found that 38.5 per cent of males and 50 per cent of females, who practised

infrequently or not at all, felt that they did not belong to the Church, which may have influenced their decision to leave. A sense of not belonging may also be attributed to the congregation being too old. Our investigations realised that 13 per cent of males and 6.4 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group registered this view.

A sense of not belonging sometimes occurs when an individual is not asked to participate in the activities of the Church. Over 6 per cent of both males and females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group believed this to be true. A loss of the sense of belonging can be induced by an unfriendly atmosphere. Non-attending and infrequently attending respondents recorded 2.1 per cent in this aspect.

Those who feel that they are not appreciated for their services can feel a sense of not belonging. However, only 2.1 per cent was recorded in the non-attending and infrequently attending category.

A person's sense of belonging may depend on whether he wishes to be involved or to act as a spectator. Our survey established that 3.2 per cent of females in the non-attending and infrequently attending group alleged that the style of worship was too participatory, and 6.5 per cent of males thought it was too passive. Some may leave the Church either because it has too intimate a style of community or because it supports an impersonal style.

The size of the congregation can promote church-leaving, either by being too small, which fosters claustrophobia, or by being too large, which introduces an impersonal atmosphere.

Whether the Church is open or closed to outsiders, or its style of worship is inclusive or exclusive, these features can influence a person either to stay in the Church or to leave it.

9.5.5 **Values (refer to 5.5)**

Young people may wish to belong to their peer group instead of to the Church, which may be devoid of individuals of a similar age. They may also find a lack of meaning in the Church. Our investigations informed us that in the non-attending and infrequently attending group, 12.3 per cent of males in the up-to-and-including-14 years age category alleged a lack of meaning in the Church. Males in the 15-19 years age category registered 10.75 per cent in the same aspect. Females in the up-to-and-including-14 years age group expressed 4.6 per cent lack of meaning in the Church whilst females in the 15-19 years age category indicated 7.7 per cent.

Respondents were asked whether they felt guilty by not attending church. Males in the non-attending and infrequently attending group in both the up-to-and-including-14 years age group and the 15-19 age group registered 9.68 per cent. Females registered 17.74 per cent.

Baby-Boomers (age 45-55 at 2000) distrust institutions and believe that religion is ossified. Self-fulfilment is important to them and it is obtained through autonomous personal experience. They believe sex outside marriage, gay and lesbian relationships and drug consumption to be amoral.

Baby-Busters (age 19-29 at 2000) also seek autonomy, but they are pragmatic rather than idealistic and seek openness and honesty. Loyalty and self-expression are also important to them, although they suspect manipulation and they are unwilling to be regarded as passive individuals.

Teenagers believe that the Church is irrelevant in today's society although they may revert to it for their marriages and for their children to be baptised. Young adults who attend university or college are likely to share the values of their peer group, whereas those whose education ceased at secondary school level are more likely to share their parents' views. Personal morality is a private affair and those who left the Church did so because of different cultural values.

9.6 A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS OF LAPSATION

9.6.1 Introduction

A description of the process of lapsation is important for the understanding of this phenomenon. If any of the stages of this process can be identified in the individual, then this can inform the possible action that may be taken in order to prevent its occurrence.

9.6.2 The Process (refer to chapter 6)

The closest descriptions of the process of lapsation drawn from those which were examined are detailed below.

9.6.2.1 First view (refer to 6.2)

One view commences with a crisis of belief or disillusionment. The individual thus affected will then reflect on his future commitment and in what manner its loss would affect him. If he arrives at a judgment concerning his future commitment to the Church, he will then distance himself from his emotional involvement with it. Eventually, he will curtail his allegiance to it, at the same time entering a period of transition during which he will shed his identity and attempt to find new sources of meaning and purpose in his life, although they may have been discovered already. He may relocate himself in a new institution and assume a different life-style. However, if he does relocate himself in a different religious institution, he cannot be regarded as lapsed.This view assumes a crisis of belief, although not all lapsed individuals experience this.

9.6.2.2 Second view (refer to 6.5)

A second analysis of the process of lapsation is one in which pre-dispositions, influences, personal consequences and facilitators are introduced as the factors involved in the process.

According to this view, pre-dispositions are: tension in the family; a rejection of church practices; a life practice which conflicts with the dictates of the Church; a rejection of the moral teaching of the Church; a consideration of the Church as boring, with a loss of interest shown in it; the unfriendliness of the Church; and a lack of support from a spouse or family. The individual feels emptiness or perceives a lack of meaning in

religious practice, sensing a void in his life or having a spiritual need not satisfied by the Church.

The influences which cause lapsation are: dissatisfaction with the teachings of the Church; a feeling of the irrelevance of religion to daily life; inadequate Bible study; boredom expressed with church services; and changes in the Church, causing dissatisfaction.

The personal consequences of ceasing religious practice are: tension within the family, although, on a personal level, someone thus afflicted feels more optimistic and happy, believing that he has more autonomy and freedom from rules and restrictions. He may believe that he is more spiritually fulfilled. Even though he may have changed his personal life practices, he may still believe that religion is important to him. His defection will not be a rejection of religion; in fact he may think he is as religious as ever. Lapsation is a consequence of his feelings about the Church rather then a rejection of God.

The facilitators or instruments in an individual's defection are: a priest, a religious, a member of the congregation, friends, relatives, engaged partner, participation in a charismatic prayer group, family problems, emphasis on money and a partner or spouse. Facilitators can be persons or events.

9.7. THE NATURE OF RETURNING TO THE CHURCH

9.7.1 Introduction

An analysis of the characteristics inherent in returning to the Church informs us about key events facilitating such a movement. At the same time, while scriptural principles equip us with the basic causes of lapsation, an overview of its history informs us of the trend of this phenomenon. A study of these features will enable us to suggest suitable strategies for its alleviation.

9.7.2. **Scriptural Principles of Lapsation (refer to 7.2)**

From our study of scripture, the following principles were derived.

- The individual is called to faith by God, but faith may wane if he does not persevere in his calling.
- A danger subsists in making friends with the world and being driven by its values, cares, joys and riches.
- Similarly, one can be driven by the responsibilities of life in such a way as adhesion to one's religious persuasion is harmed.
- False teachers, doctrines and empty speculations can be harmful influences.
- Dislocation from the Christian community occurs if one resists the known truth (apostasy) or follows superstitious practices and philosophies that may seem attractive.
- The cost of discipleship can appear unreasonable. The demand on one's time, energy and resources may be thought unrealistic and unbearable.
- A return to the Church after a period of lapsation can occur through a realisation of the Father's love (conversion) or an acceptance of one's wretchedness or failure.
- Consorting with a syncretistic community can pose a danger to one's faith.
- Personal and communal repentance must be made to God since sin strikes at the heart of the community's religious adhesion.
- The individual should not expose himself to moral laxity and licentiousness.
- Luxurious and licentious living hampers the person's love of God.
- Lethargy and complacency can lead to a dependence on wealth. Tepidity and self-satisfaction can spring from this.
- Pride perverts access to God and leads to spiritual death.
- Poverty can be a harbinger of lapsation if the individual attempts to alleviate his condition at the expense of religious practice.
- To separate oneself from the Christian community involves the loss of the experience of the love of Christ.
- One should repent of a lack of love for God and neighbour.

These principles underline individual experiences prior to lapsation or disengagement from his faith.

9.7.3 Analysis of Lapsation from an Historical Perspective (Refer To 7.3)

There has been a record of lapsation over the last one hundred years in which the Christian community as a whole has decreased from 86 per cent of the population in 1900 to 64 per cent of the population in 2000. Over the same period church membership has declined from 33 per cent of the population in 1900 to 12 per cent of the population in 2000, while church attendance was 11.1 per cent of the population in 1980 compared with 7.4 per cent of the population in 2000. Over the same period, the Anglican Church has suffered a decrease of 1, 370,400 to 960,800 and the Roman Catholic church a decrease of 2,064,000 to 1,240,200 respectively.

Sunday attendance statistics in the up-to-and-including 15 year age category show a decrease of 1,416,000 in 1979 to 712,100 in 1998. Similarly, the 15-19 year age group saw a decrease of 489,700 to 210,000 over the same period, while those in the 20-29 year age category decreased from 598,200 to 326,600, the most stable group being the 65+ age group.

Many churchgoers no longer attend weekly, which suggests that the Church is less cohesive than formerly.

The decline in churchgoing is reflected in the number of baptisms and marriages performed in Church. In 1900, 73 per cent of all births were baptised, whereas in 2000 this had declined to 35 per cent. The Church of England suffered the most. In 1900, 564,000 baptisms were recorded but by 2000 this had declined to 122,000.

The number of marriages performed in church has also been affected. In 1985, 51.2 per cent of all marriages were performed in church, whereas this had been reduced to 37.9 per cent in 2000.

The number of male ministers declined from 21,239 to 19,891 over the period 1985 to 2000, although the number of female ministers more than compensated for this.

However, the number of church buildings in use declined by 383 over the same period, thus reflecting the downward trend in church attendance.

9.7.4 **Returning to Church (refer to 7.4)**

We discovered that those who return to church do so because:

- they are anxious for the religious education of their children;
- they sense a spiritual need;
- they have experienced a lack of meaning in their lives;
- they experience feelings of guilt arising from their religious inactivity;
- they have been influenced by their spouse.

Those who have returned:

- have received a religious education as children;
- possess more liberal views on moral questions than active Catholics;
- have a close relationship with either one or both practising parent(s);
- have received a college or university education.

From our research, the death of a loved one and the influence of friends facilitated the return to church practice of young people. We believe that a return to church is more likely in the up-to-and-including-14 year age group than in the 15-19 year age category. We also concluded that a return to church was more likely in the 45-64 and 65+ age groups than among the 20-29 and 30-44 age categories.

The main types of returnees are:

- 'Marriage-life', in which a return is facilitated by the individual's spouse.
- 'Family-life', in which the individual is influenced by the need for the religious education of his children.
- 'Guilt-feeling'. An individual may have left the Church because of a conflict with its teaching, but he rejoins through feelings of guilt.
- 'Seeker-returnee', in which the individual has a spiritual need or void in his life which he hopes will be satisfied by the Church.

9.8 FORMULATION OF STRATEGIES THAT MIGHT BE EMPLOYED FOR MINIMISING THE EFFECTS OF LAPSATION IN YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

9.8.1 Introduction

The strategies proposed for limiting or eradicating this phenomenon are based on the results of our research. Some of the strategies are fundamental and will require both a thorough review of present practices and an agreement on and determination to implement the proposals.

9.8.2 Proposals for the Minimisation of Lapsation in the Young Person (refer to Chapter 8)

Our view is that the present method of education and formation of youth in Christianity is deficient in forming them in the faith. It has not developed them through the psychological stages of their development as individuals so as to attain maturity.

9.8.2.1 The Present method (refer to 8.2)

The present policy of education assumes an homogenous community, which is far from being true. Due to personal mobility, most communities are unstable and the Church has ceased to be the centre of people's lives.

Modern education is a vehicle of control and it teaches Christian and other religions in an impersonal manner. Education centres on Christian knowledge rather than on faith, and as an instrument for inspiring, fostering or sharing faith, it has proved bankrupt. On the other hand, faith can be inspired by the Christian community and can be furthered by sharing its experiences in a tradition-orientated community.

9.8.2.2 The Proposed method for minimising lapsation in the young person (refer to 8.3 and 8.4)

For the proposed method to work there must be a universal substantial agreement on essential matters of belief. The community must be small enough to allow interaction among its members so that there can be a genuine exchange and sharing of faith experiences.

Since the faith community expresses its relationship to God in both the liturgy and ritual, it is important that young people should be introduced to this from an early age so that it can transmit to them the meaning of faith. Indeed, liturgy and ritual need to be expressed in the community's experiences so that they will learn.

Faith manifests itself in both the individual and corporate action in society which is itself educational. Personal development should be encouraged through the ability to create, wonder, dream, imagine, and employ the gifts of singing, dancing, painting, and acting in order that an appreciation of the marvellous, mysterious, sensual and kinaesthetic may be experienced. Storytelling should also be at the centre of Church life. The religion of the head should hold equal importance with religion of the heart. Education and formation in the community should be complemented by a high quality of family relationships in which parental harmony, commitment and love are expressed by parents to young people. There should also exist privacy for the young person, as well as an intimate relationship with parents for the healthy running of family life. Faith is encouraged and formed through close family relationships, parental harmony, effective communication and parental control. A high degree of care will promote autonomy in the young person, who should be encouraged to foster a close relationship with God, whose love and care the individual exhibits. At the same time, parents need to be gospel orientated, committed to moral values, sharing their faith at home and involving themselves in service projects more than at present.

The proposed strategy envisages the replacement of the presentation of information at school with the learning of historical data and memorisation of biblical and doctrinal material, since many young people today are ignorant of the Bible and have little knowledge of the tradition to which they belong. The development of an awareness of a faith-focused personal Christ is also required. Today, personal ability is stressed at the expense of grace, which should be supplanted by an orientation **towards** grace. In order to consolidate this, parents need to be taught to pray with their children and to raise them as morally upright individuals.

The traditions and rituals of the Church should be taught and families encouraged to celebrate their own personal faith stories. The Christian community should be regarded as a family whose role is to extend and receive care and help from individuals, and it should support the youth sub-culture so that their faith may be sustained.

Members of the Christian community ought to witness to Christ and continue his mission in a more intentional way than at present. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit to act as a leaven in society by preaching the gospel by word and example.

9.8.2.3 **The Proposed method for minimising lapsation in the adult (refer to 8.7)**

The present writer proposes the establishment of a network of cell-groups in a parish, especially in large urban communities, the purpose of which will be to stimulate love, community spirit and care among its members. Such an arrangement can foster the sharing of deep concerns and faith, a provision which is thought necessary because large urban communities have a higher turnover of members than rural communities. They also sometimes exude an impersonal atmosphere and carry a greater number of 'passengers' and unused potential leaders. Parishioners are more likely to be integrated into a smaller parochial system than into a large urban community. Thus, each person feels he has a place, a role, friends, and is wanted. Cell-groups would attempt to discover the nature of community and address the spiritual and social needs of its members.

Newcomers are hard to recognise in large communities, and if they are not welcomed or have made no friends they are likely to cease attendance. Hence, a welcome team should be instituted in large communities, to watch for newcomers and fringe attendees, in order that they can be integrated into the community.

The arrangement of the Church community could therefore assume the form of a network of cell-groups which would constitute the 'primary community'. The second level, the 'congregation', is for those who wish to engage in social action and would form the secondary group; and the tertiary group, the 'celebration', would draw everyone together (on Sunday) to celebrate the word of God in the community. This arrangement could encompass intentional cell-groups or basic communities comprising participants who not only share their talents and possessions but also themselves. A team ministry comprising the pastor and core members of the parish, who have specialisms, would be set up to monitor the running of the network of cell-groups.

It could be argued that small groups have a tendency to be inward-looking and sometimes narcissistic, but it would be the responsibility of the core team to ensure that this does not happen. It can also be argued that the stress and pace of modern life have increased in recent years to such an extent that people are worn-out and have a greater need to receive than to give.

There are certain categories of lapsed individual who can be accommodated within the cell system. They are: the weary or bored or those who can offer no reason for their defection, life-style lapsed, those who feel they do not belong, those who disagree with the teachings of the Church, those who have a spiritual need or experience a lack of meaning, those who object to change or hold views antithetical to those of Christianity.

However, those who have a distorted view of Christianity would be difficult to reclaim. If the individual has just moved into the community, it would be essential to introduce him into the Church as soon as possible, but if he has already settled down he can only be reached through the community in which he lives and by committed Christians cultivating his friendship. It is thought by the present writer that an engagement with contemporary spirituality is essential.

Religion can be private but it needs to communicate effectively to the world and should make a contribution to the individual's yearning, spiritual meaning and engagement with the Spirit.

9. 9 THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

Lapsation has always existed to some extent, but a review of it over the last one hundred years, and particularly in recent times, shows that it has accelerated to such an extent that huge numbers of both young people and young adults have left the Church. Clearly, if this continues the Church will eventually consist of individuals of middle and late age. There will be, at the least, little possibility of growth, and at the most, a dying Church. This cannot be allowed to continue and therefore some procedures are required to stem the tide of defection.

9.10 FINAL CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 examines the various types of member encountered in a parish who vary in their degree of religious practice and commitment to the Church. The highest degree of commitment is the core member, followed by the modal and marginal member. Our primary aim was to define a lapsed individual in relationship to parish membership. The definition of a parishioner who fulfilled the conditions of being baptised, of possessing an intention to commitment, of observing religious practices frequently and of participating in the social events of the parish was thought optimum. Although a lapsed individual may reside in the parish, he cannot be considered a parishioner, since by our definition, he does not have a personal intention to commitment, does not participate in either the religious services of the Church or in the social life of the parish.

The differentiation of the causes of lapsation in both the young (≤ 21) and adult (21+) was considered in Chapter 3.

In the young person, tensions in the family, lack of parental consensus, parental distance, conflict or antipathy toward parents, family disorganisation, and inconsistent messages are the main sources of defection. Our field study did not detect a huge degree of conflict, with family disorganisation (3.7 per cent) being the highest and antipathy toward parents (1.23 per cent) being the lowest. Clearly, the cause of young people's defection from the Church is poor parental relationships. The corresponding characteristics of conformity with parents' wishes - birth order; acceptance of the authority of parents; those who take more notice of parents than friends; those who take more notice of friends than parents; those who want to be different from parents; those who want to be like their parents; those who willingly attend church; those who attend church under protest; parental over-enthusiasm; those who attend willingly and are bored (this was the highest as 36.6 per cent) and lack of religious training - are correlating features in the reasons given for lapsation. These are usually found to be lower in the infrequently or non-attending males and females rather than in the corresponding weekly or monthly attending group.

The common reasons for lapsing are weariness or boredom (the highest feature at 36.6 per cent); lapsation due to life-style; spiritual need; changes in the Church; mixed marriages; the personality of the priest; trauma; drifting and disillusionment; changes in

life that affect churchgoing; moving home; divorce (the lowest -1 per cent); the work schedule; illness and old age; burn out; disagreement with the teachings of the Church; experiencing antagonism exerted by the partner or spouse; and no reason offered. Although the latter reason was not investigated, is believed that it is probably equivalent to boredom. Although statistics for the reasons for lapsation were obtained from those who were old or ill, they were eliminated due to the fact that their intention would be to attend church.

In Chapter 4 the spiritual, psychological, sociological and moral nature of the lapsed individual was investigated. The lapsed person's spiritual nature varies from either a belief in God to belief in some higher power. It is therefore possible that he is open to consideration of other religious beliefs. If he was forced to attend church as a child and, in consequence, may have lost his personal spirituality and even rejected the Church, he has not rejected God. Our survey indicates that three- quarters of the lapsed still believe in God.

Many in our research believed that the Church is oppressive and that traditional religion is stale. An unfulfilled spiritual need occurred in a small number of young people, but it was quite high in adults (41 per cent in males and 29 per cent in females). A feeling of guilt arising from lapsation was marked (43.6 per cent in males and 40.3 per cent in females).

The psychology of lapsation was assessed in the individual either mechanistically or existentially; the former in a deterministic manner, the latter in an experiential, behavioural and social way that revealed his identity as a free, responsible person. He can view reality in a sacred or profane mode, whereby the latter is closed to transcendence and the world functional. Lapsation occurs when a shared style of thought, feeling and action is absent. The development of science and technology contributes to this state.

An alternative view of the psychology of lapsation sees mankind as exposed to the tensions of technology in work and leisure, allowing little time for religious reflection. When the rhythm of his life is changed, then religious transformation can take place. Human behaviour is related to the culture in which it operates and the latter can influence a person to revise his attitudes and ideas. This introduces new judgments and

values which, accompanied with data from technology, imposes a de-sacralising language. The individual tries to correlate his view of things to external reality. His cognitive process results in his being either religious or irreligious.

Sociologically, the lapsed individual fulfils a number of roles in society, each one having its own symbols. These roles are called 'life-worlds', each having discrepant areas of meaning and experience. Religious institutions find it difficult to integrate this plurality, which weakens the hold of religion on both the individual and society. The individual is forced, consequently, to retreat into a private domain. In our survey, many of the lapsed believe that their life-style is incompatible with religious practice, and obedience to the Church was tempered by personal choice. Inadequacy of pastoral care attracted a high response (48.7 per cent for males and 37.1 per cent for females), while satisfaction with the style of leadership only generated 28.2 per cent for males and 30.6 per cent for females.

Chapter 5 outlined some other factors affecting church leaving, such as: disbelief, either temporary or permanent; the cost of religious commitment, which might outweigh the benefits that can be received; religious services falling below one's ideals and expectations; the style of worship being at odds with one's wishes; the inadequacy of pastoral care; the style of leadership; the individual's feeling of not belonging to the church, even though he may believe; the degree of passivity or involvement and intimacy or anonymity being unrealisable; the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the congregation; and whether young people prefer to belong to their peer group rather than attending a church which does not attract them. All are contingent factors in the decision a person makes in his commitment. Church leaving may also occur as a result of conflicting values taking precedence over received beliefs.

We endeavoured in Chapter 6 to discover the process through which an individual progresses to the state of lapsation. This did not reveal a consensus, but we favour the analysis which maps out a gradual progression from a crisis of belief to a review and reflection, leading to disaffection, withdrawal, and departure from religious commitment. The individual may enter a period of transition in which he may relocate to another to another denomination, although this does not always happen. While this provides us with a useful guide to the process of lapsation, it must be pointed out that it does not always start with a crisis of belief. A second view of the process of lapsation

commences from pre-dispositions and precipitating factors, the influences and facilitators of the phenomenon, and the consequences arising. The pre-dispositions may comprise family tension, boredom, mixed marriages, spiritual need, conflict - either in the family or in the church, divorce, changes of life-style, movement to a new parish, the unacceptable atmosphere in the church and objections to the Church's moral teaching. The consequences of these states are either reduced church attendance or lapsation. A combination of these two facets of the process provides us with a guide which can be used to facilitate an amelioration of this phenomenon.

Lapsation is not a new phenomenon and Chapter 7 examines disengagement from religious practice in Biblical times and in the history of the Christian Church over the last one hundred years in the United Kingdom. Biblical teaching informs us that faith can wane if the individual does not persevere in his calling; he must not form alliances with the world or be driven by its values, cares, joys and riches. Religious commitment can be damaged by the responsibilities of life and by the influences of empty speculation, false teachers and doctrines. One's commitment may appear too costly at times. Moral laxity, luxurious and licentious living, complacency, lethargy and self-satisfaction can pervert access to and love of God, and may lead to spiritual death. The influence of poverty can also introduce defection, if the alleviation of it is made at the expense of religious practice. Furthermore, abandonment of the fraternal love of the community entails the loss of the experience of the love of Christ.

Lapsation over the last one hundred years is supported by statistical data. The church community has decreased from 86 per cent in 1900 to 64 per cent of the population in 2000. Membership over the same period has decreased from 33 per cent to 12 per cent of the population. In a similar way, church attendance which was 11.1 per cent in 1980 decreased to 7.4 per cent in 2000. These decreases are reflected in the up-to-and-including-15 year age group in which there was a decrease of attendance of 49.7 per cent from 1979 to 1998. A decrease of 57.1 per cent occurred in the 15-19 age category over the same period and the 20-29 age group suffered a 45.4 per cent reduction in church attendance. The most stable group comprised the 65+. This trend is reflected in the number of church marriages and the number of baptisms conducted. In 1900, 73 per cent of all births of the population were baptised. This was reduced to 35 per cent of the population in 2000. In a similar way, the number of Christian ministers has declined by

1,348 over the period 1995-2000 and the number of church buildings in use by 383 over the same period.

Chapter 7 also examined the possibility of a return to religious practice, although this appears slight. From our field studies involving young people it was clear that a return to churchgoing was more prevalent in both males and females in the up-to and-including- 14 years age category than in the 15-19 years age group. In the adult group, more females than males were reported to have returned to the practice of their religion. This occurred mostly in the 45-64 years' and 65+ years' age categories. The returnees were classified as those who cited marriage-life, family-life, guilt-feeling and seeker returnees. They returned because: they were anxious for the religious education of their children; they had a spiritual need; they had a lack of meaning in their lives; and they felt guilty about their lack of religious involvement. They may have been influenced by their partners or spouses.

In order that a strategy for the eradicating or minimising of lapsation may be devised, it was necessary in Chapter 8 to consider young people and adults separately. In the former, the present strategy of education and formation was investigated and a proposed strategy of education by both parents and the Christian community suggested. Strategies for the reclamation of the adult lapsed became our second consideration. The present strategy for the education of young people is based on the 'schooling- instruction' paradigm, which teaches minors Christian knowledge. Sometimes this is available in Voluntary-aided faith schools and in parishes as part of a specific sacramental programme. This procedure has proved to be bankrupt since so many young people have ceased practising their religion. Often, lapsed Catholics are sent to these schools in the mistaken opinion that they will become adult practising Christians. It has been demonstrated that a mixture of practising and non-practising Catholics is counter-productive, yet such schools need to enrol both non-practising Catholics and Christians from other religious persuasions for the school to remain viable numerically. Voluntary-aided schools have become less confessional with changes in the philosophy of education, so that nowadays many educationalists believe that school is not the place for fostering a pupil's faith, but an establishment providing a wide curriculum, whereby the pupil is guided to formulate his own views on the meaning and purpose of life. Indeed, many educationalists exclude the study of Christianity from the aims and purposes of education. They think that society is too heterogeneous to have a concept of the

common good and therefore a policy of pluralism is favoured. Even if voluntary-aided schools were permitted to function in a confessional manner, it would be impracticable for them to do so due to lack of committed, practising teachers. Thus modern educational practice tends to be secular in state schools, whilst in voluntary- aided faith schools, instruction rather than faith development pervades. Our view is that lapsation could be stemmed by a revised parental approach and greater assistance offered by the faith community.

For the faith of the young person to develop, he must live in a faith community having an identity which exhibits agreement of belief. The community must be small so that meaningful, purposeful actions can exist among its members, who accept responsibility for the Christian nurturing of the young. This is a special form of cell-group. This faith community should celebrate ritual and discuss personal experiences. Patterns of behaviour are learned from 'significant others' who are sometimes the parents. However, in many cases, parents are failing to provide a clear religious example to their children.

The performance of rituals and liturgy, both at home and in the Church, expresses the meaning of personal experience and one's relationship with God and the world. They are a major component of Christian education and help to sustain and transmit the individual's understanding and application of meaning to crises and transitional moments of life. Personal, inter-personal and social activity is the life-blood of a Christian community and has a significant influence on the young person. The Church should teach Christian values and through parental involvement, children and youth will learn not only the values of faith, but also feel a sense of caring from one another.

Personal development should involve the promotion of wonder, dreaming, imagination, singing, dancing, painting and acting. This implies that the community will recover its ability to express itself both emotionally and nonverbally. Storytelling, the development of an historical awareness and a certain amount of factual knowledge are also important elements. Enculturation follows the process of inter-personal engagement, in which each person acts in an adult manner towards the other. Through the process of education and formation by both the parents and the community, the young person is enabled to pass from 'experienced faith', which is found in pre-school children and early childhood, to 'affiliative faith', in which the person seeks to act with others with a

clear sense of identity. This stage occurs in adolescence. Faith may deepen into 'searching faith', characterised by doubt and critical judgment. This stage often evolves into 'owned faith', where the individual wants to be a witness to his faith by word and deed.

Education and formation are insufficient in themselves to prohibit lapsation since the quality of relationships in the family are fundamental. They should be intimate and happy, but offering also a degree of personal independence. Disregarding the structure of the family, parental warmth and effective communication are essential. The form of discipline, the way boundaries are set, parental acts, parental attitudes to each other and their children determine the emotional climate in the home and enhances the well-being of their offspring. Close relationships with their children should foster an intimate encounter with God, a relationship which involves an affair of the heart, a commitment of the mind, resulting in Christian action. This will only happen if parents are more intentional in words and actions, more gospel-orientated, sharing their faith at home and involving themselves in service activities more than at present.

Having outlined the present methodology of education, in Chapter 8 we develop our strategies for the amelioration of this phenomenon. The imposition of adult concepts on children before they can be understood has resulted in distaste for memorisation, so that children have become biblically illiterate. Consequently, they do not possess an appreciation of the importance of scripture in the life of the individual or the Church. Since the Bible is the word of God, such an omission is serious.

Education should be holistic, so that it helps every person to enter into a personal relationship with Christ. To this end, a grace orientation should be inculcated; otherwise, children will regard Christianity as a religion of expectations and demands. It will become achievement orientated. Parents should pray frequently with their children, teach them moral responsibility and, at an early age, encourage them to be involved in service projects, both local and missionary. It is also important that the family practises rituals, such as grace before and after meals and at other holy moments.

The Christian community can support individual families and become a surrogate family to lonely, divorced, single and dysfunctional individuals. At the same time, the youth need a support group, (a cell-group), which will engender loyalty and commitment.

Various attitudes can be assumed regarding the relationship between culture and Christianity. They range from: separation of the Christian from society; an accommodation of the Christian to contemporary culture; a synthesis of Christianity and Culture; a dualistic approach towards Christianity and culture; and the ethic of Christianity as the transformer of culture: we favour the latter.

A common vision between parents and the Christian community is essential, otherwise any procedure for the minimising or eradication of lapsation will be nullified. To achieve a common mind, consultation and commitment are necessary and, once agreed, can give rise to specific, realistic objectives to be acted upon. Concern must be given to those who are hurt, families that are breaking up and young people who are not interested in the Church. The employment of cell-groups is suggested to care for these people.

Our final proposal concerns the reclamation of the lapsed adult. We believe that the urban parish should imitate rural ones by the creation of cell-groups, house groups and interest groups, in order to sustain the life of a large congregation. It might be possible to divide the parish into a number of small inter-related worshipping communities that can assemble on important occasions, such as on Sundays, for corporate worship. The evangelisation of the lapsed could be attempted on an individual level by the cultivation of friendships with persons with whom the individual has some acquaintance. Alternatively, a class could be conducted on a non-religious subject that, in turn, could provide opportunities for the development of relationships and, at the proper time, the introduction of a gentle process of evangelisation could be inaugurated.

Lapsation focuses on the decline of the Christian community, whereas the Church should concentrate on growth. Decline in membership has made the Church inward-looking, whereas it should look outwards and concern itself with growth. Whilst in a 'maintenance' mindset, the Church finds it difficult to make a contribution to an individual's yearning for spiritual maturity and personal engagement with the Spirit.

However, such an engagement is possible through the provision of cell-groups. These enhance the feeling of belonging and, provided their objectives are clear and the leader self-motivating and inspirational, they can activate the participants' gifts, which can then be utilised in ministries.

A typical parish format would comprise a number of primary cell-groups, each one including up to 12 members. They would pursue agreed, separate objectives; a secondary group, comprising 13-175 members would engage in social activity, which would be task-orientated; the tertiary group, having a membership of 175+, would exist for celebratory events and be composed of both the primary and secondary groups.

The primary groups could forge points of contact with the lapsed and the unchurched. Their aim would be to discover the nature of the community and address the spiritual and social needs of its members. A variant of the cell-group is the 'basic community', in which participants share their lives, possessions and talents in a single household. The cell-group's programme may consist of prayer, faith – sharing, scripture and spirituality. However, it will be the leader's responsibility to plan, summon, and direct meetings, conduct celebrations of the word of God, facilitate social events, encourage ministries and share the joys, sorrows, problems and achievements of the participants. A permanent leader should conduct the meetings once the group is firmly established. It is anticipated that cell-groups would engender self-enrichment in the Bible, the social teachings of the Church, in leadership skills, and in counselling their members. The cell-group could be of the neighbourhood or the homogeneous type. If the latter, a common interest or need is the focal point. It may not be easy to form cell-groups in a parish, due to opposition or the lack of enthusiasm, perhaps arising because of previously bad experiences. An important development of the cell-group is the ALPHA course. This has been run in many parishes and is seen as a source of new life, generating parish growth.

Cell-groups have some dangers. They can become inward-looking, developing into 'talking shops' or protest gatherings and becoming *cliques*. Power may go to the head of the leader, or the group could award itself unwarranted status. Unless there is an external stimulus, cell groups could fail to operate effectively. Hence, it is crucial to appoint a leader possesses the appropriate skills.

Subjects for further study

- **The relationship between secularisation and lapsation.**

- **The cohesiveness of the small community**

ANNEXURE 1 Questionnaire 1 Survey of Religious Practice

(Up to 20 years)

QUESTIONNAIRE 1 SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE (UP TO 20 YEARS)

Please tick the appropriate box. You do not need to state your identity

Q.1.0a

Age	Up to 14	15-19	20-29
Male			
Female			
Married			
Single			
Divorced			
Do you attend Church?			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Twice yearly and special occasions			
Not at all			

Q 1.0.b

	Roman Catholic	Church of England	Methodist	Baptist	Presbyterian	Other	No religion
Your religion							
Your spouse's religion							

Q. 1.1. (S) Why did you cease to attend church regularly? Was it because

There was tension in the family?	
There was a lack of parental agreement? (where each parent had different religions)	
There was a lack of emotional intimacy of parents towards me? (parental distance)	
There was conflict between my parents? (i.e. persistent disagreement between them)	
There was antipathy towards parents?	
The family was disorganised? (i.e. a breakdown in family relationships)	
(inconsistent messages) The communications between parents and me were at odds with the gospel?	

Q. 1.2. (S) Do you

(Gender) Conform to your parents' religious faith?	
(Birth Order):	
Have a close relationship with your parents?	
Accept their authority?	
(later siblings)	
Take more notice of your parents than your friends?	
Take more notice of your friends rather than your parents?	
Want to be like your parents?	

(Stage in life) Want to be different from your parents?	
Go to church under protest? (Parental over-enthusiasm)	
Go to church freely?	
(Lack of religious training) Go to a religious school or receive religious instruction at church or home?	
(Children of faith) Go to a church different from your parents?	
Disagree with the moral teaching of the church?	
Find the church services boring?	
Think there is a lack of meaning in the church?	
Think you have a spiritual need that is not satisfied by the church?	
Think that you receive no support from you partner/spouse in order to attend church?	

If you have returned to practising your religion, please tick the appropriate boxes below in Questions 1.3, 1.4, &1.5:

Q. 1.3(R) Have you returned to your original religious denomination?

Yes	No

If yes, please answer the following questions:

Q. 1.4 (R) What event caused you to return to the church? Was it

Marital or family crisis	Personal crisis (e g illness)	Birth of child	Religious experience	I moved to a new community	Death of a loved one

Q. 1.5 (R) Who prompted you to return? Please tick

Your spouse or partner	Friend	Priest or minister	Children	Family	Others

Q. 1.6 (Sp) Do you have a spiritual need or feel a lack of meaning in your life?

Yes	No

Q. 1.7 (M) Do you feel guilty about being absent and thus not practising your religion?

Yes	No

Q. 1.8 (M) If you have children, do you have a concern for your children's religious education?

Yes	No

Thank you for completing this Questionnaire. You have been most helpful.

The information you have given will be treated in confidence

ANNEXURE 2 : Questionnaire 2 on Religious Practice (Adult)

QUESTIONNAIRE 2 ON RELIGIOUS PRACTICE (ADULT)

Q. 2.0a Please tick the appropriate box. You do not need to state your identity

Age range	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Male				
Female				
Married				
Single				
Divorced				
Do you attend Church?-				
Weekly				
Monthly				
Twice yearly and special occasions				
Not at all				
Professional/clerical				
Manual				
Unemployed/ Retired				

Q. 2.0b

	Roman Catholic	Church of England	Methodist	Baptist	Presbyterian	Other	No religion
Your religion							
Your spouse's/ Partner's religion							

Q. 2.1. (S) Why did you cease to attend church regularly? Was it because

You were weary or bored?	
You believed your life-style was inconsistent with the teachings of the church?	
You disagreed with the teachings of the church?	
A spiritual need that was not being met by the church?	
You objected to changes being made in the church?	
You were experiencing pressure or antagonism by your partner or spouse to practice your religion?	
You did not like the personality of the priest?	
You had a bad or traumatic experience in the church?	
You can give no reason?	
Your children influenced your leaving?	
You had a change in routine? e.g. a change of job or addition to the family	
You moved home?	
You were divorced?	
There was a change in your work schedule?	
You were ill or old?	

Q. 2.2. (S) Have there been any changes in your life resulting from ceasing to church attendance?

Yes	No

Q. 2.3. (S) If there has been a change or changes, can you please tick as below:

Improved family relations	
Tension in the family/disunity?	
The religious education of children has been affected	
There has been a change in my personal life	
I have a more positive outlook	
I have a less positive outlook	
I am more fulfilled spiritually	
I have changed my belief in God	
I have not changed my belief in God	
I have joined another religious denomination	

Q. 2.4. (B) BELONGING

Did you feel you did not belong to the church community?

Yes	No

Q. 2.5. (B) If yes, what was the reason for this?

You were not welcomed	
The congregation was too old	
The congregation was too young	
Because the congregation was female-dominated	
Because the congregation was male-dominated	
You were not asked to take part in the life of the church	
You could not make friends	
You were not appreciated for your services	
You were in conflict or did not agree with the church leadership	
You found that the worship style was too passive	
You found that the worship style was too participatory	
You did not find the church conducive to praying	
The style of worship was too modern	
The style of worship was too traditional	
You thought that the church was closed to outsiders	
You thought that the church was open to outsiders	
You prefer to belong to your friends than the church	

VALUES

Q. 2.6.(V) Do you distrust or are you unsure about the decisions of the church?

Unsure	distrust	neither

Q. 2.7.Please tick the appropriate box.

	Yes	No
7.(M) Do you think that the traditional church is oppressive?		
7. (S) Do you think that traditional religion is stale?		
7. (F) Do you believe in God?		
7.(M) Do you believe that your life-style was incompatible with churchgoing?		
7.(M) Do you think that personal morality is a matter of choice rather than rules being imposed by the church?		
7.(S) Do you actively support local or national organisations on social or ethical issues?		
7.(F) Do you base your faith on personal experience?		
PRACTICAL MATTERS		
7 (S) Do you think church membership demanded too much from you?		
7. (V) Did your ideals of the church fall short in practice?		
7. (V) Did your expectations of the church's worship fall short in practice?		
7.(S) Was the level of pastoral care and support adequate?		
7.(S) Did the style of church leadership fulfil your expectations?		

Q. 2.8.(R) Have you returned to your original religious denomination?

Yes	No

If yes, please answer the following questions: Please tick.

Q. 2.9.(R) What event caused you to return to the church? Was it

Marital or family crisis	Personal crisis (e g illness)	Birth of child	Religious experience	Moving to a new community	Death of a loved one

Q. 2.10.(R) Who inspired you to return? Please tick

Your spouse or partner	Friend	Priest or minister	Children	Family	Others

Q. 2.11. (Sp) Do you feel you have a spiritual need or a lack of meaning in your life?

Yes	No

Q. 2.12.(M) Do you feel guilty about being absent from practising your religion?

Yes	No

Q. 2.13.(M) If you have children, do you have a concern for your children's religious education?

Yes	No

Thank you for your help. The information you have given will be treated in confidence

ANNEXURE 3 : Questionnaire 3 Formal Personal Interview

QUESTIONNAIRE 3 FORMAL PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Age	Up to 15	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Male						
Female						
Married						
Single						
Divorced						

Q.3.1. (F) Do you believe in God?

Yes	No

Q.3.2. (B) To what denomination do you belong?

	Roman Catholic	Church of England	Methodist	Baptist	Presbyterian	Other	No religion
Your religion							
Your spouse's/ partner's religion							

How frequently do you attend church?	monthly	yearly	N ot at all

Q.3.3. (B) Do you think you have an attachment to the church?

Q.3.4. (B) If yes, can you describe this attachment?

Q.3.5. (Sp) Do you consider yourself spiritual?

Q.3.6. (Sp) If so, how would you describe this?

Q.3.7.(M) Do you have a moral code by which you live?

Q.3.8. (M) If yes, could you describe what it is?

Q.3.9.(F) Do you believe that the visible/natural cosmos is the work of God?

Q,.3.10. (Sp) Now that you are no longer an active church member, do you think that you look at the world in a different way to that formerly?

Q.3.11. (Sp) Do you believe that your way of life is more plausible than it was formerly?

If yes, in what way

Q.3.12. (P) When you left the church, was it due to a crisis of belief, disillusionment, uncaring church, conflict church, you felt that you did not belong, or to a lack of a friendly environment?

(Review)

Q.3.13. (P) Did you believe there was no advantage in belonging to the church?

Q.3.14. (P) Were you attracted by other religions?

Q.3.15 (P) Were you influenced by non -churchgoers, or non -believers to cease attendance?

(Disaffection)

Q.3.16 (P) Was there an event that disaffected you from going to church?

If yes, what was it?

(Withdrawal)

Q.3.17. (P) Did you leave suddenly or slowly?

(Transition)

Q.3.18. (P) Did you feel lost when you left the church?

(Relocation)

Q.3.19. (P) With what did you replace the church in your life when you left it?

ANNEXURE 4: Sample letter to correspondents

Rev Tony Whitfield
88, Mantlefield Road, Corby,
Northants, NN18 0AT
Tel: 01536 266765
e-mail: Tony@oundlechurch.freeserve.co.uk

Date as postmark

Dear

I am conducting a survey into religious practice in England, covering the mainline religious denominations, and I wonder if you would be so kind as to complete the enclosed questionnaire. It applies only to those who attend church at Christmas, Easter and on other special occasions during the year such as a baptism, confirmation, marriage and funeral. The completion of the questionnaire will only take a few minutes.

If you would post the survey to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelop, I will be most grateful.

Many thanks for your help,

Yours faithfully,

(Rev) Tony Whitfield

ANNEXURE 5: An Appeal to Parishes

This is an appeal: not an appeal for money, but for your help.

You know that one of the biggest problems facing the Church today is that of lapsation. Huge numbers of people, especially the young, are leaving it. We all know of such people. They are most likely Catholics or those of other denominations who have been baptised and do not follow any form of mainstream worship. They can be our neighbours and often members of our families. I think we need to make an effort to try and stem this drift away from the Church and try to bring back to Church those who once sat beside us. You know how important the Church is to you. You would not be here this morning if it were not important to you. It does not appear to be important for those who have left.

Maybe they have been hurt in some way.

I have decided to try to discover why people leave the church and, just as importantly, to seek ways in which the tide of lapsation can be reduced so that those who do not sit beside us will do so again. There is no guarantee that it will be entirely successful.

In order to find out why people leave the church I have compiled a questionnaire – one for adults and one for young people. It is a tick-box type of questionnaire and does not require the individual to write down anything. I therefore invite you to take one of these questionnaires and ask someone you know – either your neighbour or a member of your family to complete it. It will not take more than a few minutes to do so. Do please return it to the presbytery here when you come to Church.

Please let me know which type of questionnaire you want. You can take both types if you wish. I am not confining this exercise to one parish but I am visiting the parishes of Kettering, Corby (St Brendan's, St Patrick's St John Ogilvie and Our Lady of Walsingham), Rushden, Rothwell, Desborough, Wellingborough, Northampton and Oundle, and am contacting individuals in the Lincoln area.

I think that this exercise is worth-while and that we can gain some important information. Hopefully, we can use this to work out ways to alleviate this problem.

Thank you for listening to me and thank you in anticipation for your help. This exercise cannot succeed without it.

Thanks also to Fr (X) for allowing me to make this appeal.

ANNEXURE 6: Distribution and returns of Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire 1 Table of Questionnaires issued and returned

Date	Distributed to	No printed	No issued	Returned
01/06/05	West Glebe Centre	2	2	
03/06/05		40..	23	
07/06/05	High School, Corby		70	60
11/06/05	Kettering		11	
18/06/05		31		
19/06/05	Kettering		28	3
22/06/05	Rushden	50		2
24/06/05	Kiki	20	20	—
27/06/05	Desborough/Rothwell		6	
27/06/05	Kettering	5	11	
03/07/05	Wellingborough		26	
17/07/05	Rushden		4	
18/07/05	Kettering			1
23/07/05	St Bernard/s School, Slough		70	68
24/07/05	Corby St Brendan's		27	
28/07/05		22		
31/07/05	Corby St Brendan's		41	1
02/08/05	Wellingborough			1
03/08/05		45		
06/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			1
07/08/05	Corby St John's		9	
19/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			1
21/08/05	Corby St Patrick's		27	
31/08/05		15		
07/09/05	Cardinal Newman School, Luton	253		
07/09/05		57		
09/09/05	St Joseph's Slough	20		
11/09/05	St Patrick's Duston		39	
15/09/05	St Brendan's Corby			1
02/10/05	Corby Our Lady's		3	
24/10/05	Cardinal Newman School, Luton			217
Totals		560	417	356

ANNEXURE 7: Distribution and returns of Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 2 (Adults) Table of issues and returned

Date	Issued to	No printed	No issued	No returned
01/06/05	K & K	2	2	2
08/06/05	M	1	1	1
08/06/05	Rushden	200	126	
		230		
07/06/05		30		
11/06/05	Kettering		56	
19/06/05	Kettering		137	3
20/06/05		50		
22/06/05	Rushden			11
26/06/05	Desborough & Rothwell		59	
26/06/05	Kettering	100	16	4
03.07/05	Wellingborough		67	
08/07/05	Kettering		5	12
17/07/05	Rushden	32	30	1
18/07/05	Kettering			8
21/07/05	Kettering			1
27/07/05	Corby St Brendan's		112	1
28/07/05		100		
29/07/05	Corby St Brendan's			3
30/07/05	Corby St Brendan's			5
31/07/05	Corby St Brendan's		100	3
01/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			1
02/08/05	Wellingborough			1
03/08/05		100		
03/08/05	Kettering			1
06/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			1
07/08/05	Corby St John's		46	
17/08/05		60		
19/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			4
20/08/05	Kettering			2
21/08/05	Corby St Brendan's			2
21/08/05	Corby St Patrick's		85	
24/08/05	Kettering			1
24/08/05	Rushden			8
26/08/05	Corby St Patrick's			2

30/08/05		35		
03/09/05				2
07/09/05		30		
11/09/05			35	
19/09/05	Corby St Brendan's			3
21/09/05		87		
22/09/05		50		
22/09/05	Corby St John's			9
24/09/05	Corby St Brendan's			3
26/09/05		62		
30/09/05	Corby St Brendan's			3
02/10/05	Corby Our Lady's		156	
06/10/05	Corby Our Lady's			4
23/10/05	Corby Our Lady's			35
27/10/05	Cprby St Brendan			1
30/10/05	Corby Our Lady's			3
09/11/05	Duston St Patricks			15
24/12/05	Kettering			3

Questionnaire 2 Table of issues and returns (postal)

Date	Delivered to	No Printed	No issued	No returned
14/05/05	Oundle	42	37	1
17/05/05	Oundle			4
22/05/05	Oundle		1	1
23/o5/05	Oundle		1	1
24/05/05	Oundle			2
06/06/05	Lincoln			1
18/06/05	Oundle			1
19/06/05	Lincoln			1
29/06/05	Oundle	2	4	
06/07/05	Oundle			1
27/07/05	Corby		4	
Totals		1169	1033	172

ANNEXURE 8: Table of Interviews given on Questionnaire 3

Depositions arising from Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 3 Table of Interviews

Date	Person interviewed	Nationality	Religious denomination	Location	Age	Marital status	Cause of lapsation
01/05/05	Fred	British	Church of England	Haworth	65	Widower with no children	No reason given
04/05/05	Alex	British	Church of England	St Albans	64	Widower with one child	Conflict with the priest
08/06/05	Margaret	Irish	Roman Catholic	Corby	42	Married with two children	Conflict with the priest
10/06/06	Elizabeth	British	Roman Catholic	Esher	44	Married with two children	Husband unsupportive of wife. Priest having affair with sister.
29/06/05	Marion	Irish	Roman Catholic	Corby	60	Widow with one child	Uncertainty concerning faith. Unsure about God
04/07/05	Richard	British	Church of England	Mansfield	72	Married with two children	No reason. Probably marginal
05/07/05	Samantha	British	Roman Catholic	Farnborough	35	Single living with partner. No children	Unhappiness Seeking fulfilment in the wrong place
04/11/05	John	British	Roman Catholic	Corby	28	Single, living with partner. No children.	Work schedule but wants to attend church. Perhaps not really lapsed
05/11/05 -	Tom (Returned)	British	Roman Catholic	Corby	71	Single	Wanted a change

16/11/05	Helen (Returned)	British	Roman Catholic	Corby	44	Divorced with two children	Work schedule. Did not feel belonging

Depositions arising from Questionnaire 2

Date	Name	Religion	Location	Age	Marital status	Cause of lapsation
19/05/05	Jane (Returned)	Roman Catholic	Lincoln	70	Married with two children	Rebelled against authority.
21/06/06	Albert	Roman Catholic	Corby	50	Divorced with two children	Church's attitude to divorce
28/06/05	Stanley	Roman Catholic	Corby	44		Consequences of divorce
30/06/05	Christina	Roman Catholic	Rushden	35		
31/10/05	Geoffrey	Roman Catholic	Rushden	65		
31/10/05	Joy	Roman Catholic	Corby	17		Feels she does not belong. The Church does not cater for young people
06/11/05	Rebecca	Roman Catholic	Corby	30		Mixed signals from exogenous parents
13/11/05	Angela	Roman Catholic	Kettering	40		Does not feel she belongs
20/11/05	Alice	Roman Catholic	Kettering	75		Married outside church and thought excommunicated
27/11/05	Jennifer	Roman Catholic	Corby	28		Does not believe in rules of Church
04/12/05	Bridie	Roman Catholic	Kettering	55		Does not feel belonging

07/12/05	Jane	Roman Catholic	Corby	55		Conflict with priest
12/12/05	Yvonne	Church of England	Lincoln	50		Lack of time

ANNEXURE 9 Details of age categories of young peoples' and adult responses to Questionnaires

Appeal locations and dates

The number of young people who returned their questionnaires was 356. Of these, 324 were Roman Catholics. The remainder (32) comprised responses from Anglicans, Methodists, and those of no religious belief, which were too few to consider. Table 1 below distinguishes the sex and age into which these completed questionnaire fall.

Response to Questionnaire 1 came as a result of parish appeals. This is shown in Appendix 5.However the bulk of responses came from the Cardinal Newman School, Luton, Pope John and Our Lady's School, Corby and St Bernard's Convent Grammar School, Slough.

An introductory letter to the School is shown in Appendix 4.

Age range	≤ 14	15-19	20
Infrequent and non-attending	29	24	1
Weekly and monthly attending	88	32	—
Totals	117	56	1

Table 1 Distribution of males in age groups who responded to questionnaires

Total number of males: 174

Age range	≤14	15-19	20
Infrequent and non-attending	20	88	—
Weekly and monthly attending	25	17	—
Totals	45	105	—

Table 2 Distribution of females in age groups who responded to questionnaires

Total number of females: 150

The number of adult questionnaire returned was 172, which was disappointing. Of these, 140 were completed by Roman Catholics, the remainder by Anglicans, Methodists, Muslims and those with no religion. Seven were disallowed due to the paucity and inaccuracy of the information given. The disappointment is even more singular considering that appeals for

contributors were made in eleven parishes, some of which have a population of 1,500 or more. The appeal (shown in Appendix 5) and the date of the appeal made to the following parishes:

Rushden: May 29th; July 16th 2005

Kettering: June 11th; June 19th; July 3rd 2005

Corby: July 23rd; July 30th 2005

Wellingborough: July 2/3rd 2005

Corby: St John Ogilvie: August 7th 2005

Corby: St Patrick: August 20/21st 2005

Northampton, Duston: St Patrick: September 10/11th 2005

Corby: Our Lady of Walsingham: October 1/2nd 2005

The information contained in both questionnaires was processed using a specially designed Microsoft database.

ANNEXURE 10: Microsoft Database Statistics

GENERAL STATISTICS for Young People **General St**

Number (1)	Sex (2)	Religion (3)	Age (4)	Church Attendance (5)
1	F	A	B	I
1	F	A	B	M
1	F	A	B	N
1	F	C	A	I
3	F	C	A	N
1	F	C	A	W
2	F	C	B	I
1	F	C	B	N
1	F	N	A	N
2	F	N	B	I
2	F	N	B	N
12	F	R	A	I
16	F	R	A	M
8	F	R	A	N
72	F	R	A	W
20	F	R	B	I
6	F	R	B	M
5	F	R	B	N
11	F	R	B	W
2	M	A	B	M
1	M	A	B	W
2	M	C	A	N

Number (1)	Sex (2)	Religion (3)	Age (4)	Church Attendance (5)
1	M	CB	I	
1	M	M	B	N
1	M	M	B	W
1	M	N	A	I
7	M	N	A	N
17	M	R	A	I
18	M	R	A	M
12	M	R	A	N
70	M	R	A	W
20	M	R	B	I
11	M	R	B	M
4	M	R	B	N
21	M	R	B	W
1	M	R	C	N

Key to symbols

Column 2: M= male

F=female

Column 3: R= Roman Catholic

C= Church of England

N= other

A= no religion

M= Methodist

Column 4: A= ≤ 14

B= 15-19

C=19+

Column 5: W= weekly

M= monthly

I = infrequently

N= non-attendance

GENERAL STATISTICS for Adults G

Statistics

Number	Sex	Religion	Age	Church Attendance
_ (1)_____	(2)_____	(3)_____	(4)_____	(5)_____
1	F	N	B	N
1	F	A	B	N
1	F	R	D	M
1	F	C	C	T
1	F	A	C	T
1	M	R	D	N
1	M	C	A	W
1	M	R	D	T
1	M	A	C	W
1	M	N	B	N
2	F	C	B	T
2	F	C	C	N
2	F	R	D	T
2	F	R	D	N
2	F	R	B	W
2	M	A	B	T
2	M	N	C	T
2	M	R	A	N

2	M	R	B	W
2	M	R	B	M
2	M	R	C	T

Number	Sex	Religion	Age	Church attendance
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2	M	R	C	M
3	F	R	C	M
3	F	R	B	M
3	M	R	C	W
3	M	C	C	T
4	F	R	C	W
5	M	R	C	N
6	F	R	A	N
6	M	R	A	T
7	F	R	D	W
7	F	R	B	N
9	F	R	C	T
9	M	R	B	T
10	F	R	A	T
10	M	R	D	W
11	F	R	C	N
13	M	R	B	N
15	F	R	B	T

Key to symbols

Column 2: M= male
F=female

Column 3: R= Roman Catholic
C= Church of England

Column 4: A= 20-19
B= 30-44

A=no religion C=45-64

N=other D=65+

Column 5: W= weekly

M= monthly

T = twice-yearly

N= non-attendance

The complete database on the different statistics is available from the author.

e-mail: Tony@oundlechurch.freeserve.co.uk.

The database is also available as a hard copy.

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