

- 4 op. cit. p 14.
- 5 *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*, Akademi, 1968; forlaget, Goteborg, Vol 2, chap 1.
- 6 p 252, *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, S C M, 1964.
- 7 Quoted in, Peters, T, "Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutic and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method", *Journal of Religion*, Autumn, 1975, p 40.
- 8 p 401, H G Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Sheed & Ward, 1976.
- 9 p 90, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, S P C K, 1975.
- 10 p 131, *The Understanding of Faith*, Sheed & Ward, 1974.
- 11 op. cit. p 91.
- 12 p 166, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, Macmillan, 1979.
- 13 pp 210-211, "The Causal Theory of Names" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. vol xlvii, 1974.
- 14 p 77, *The Aims of Jesus*, S C M, 1979.
- 15 H G Gadamer, op. cit. p 463.
- 16 *Belief and History*, University of Virginia Press, 1977.
- 17 p 194, "The Causal Theory of Names", op. cit.
- 18 Preface, *Christology of the New Testament*, S C M, 1980.
- 19 We would like to thank Mr Ian Walker of Dulwich College for his help in writing this essay.

Hope and Optimism

Adrian Hastings

[A University sermon preached at Leeds, 24 January 1982]

What hope does 'the hope that is in us' (I Peter 3:15) offer to the world in which we live today? That is the question to which I will address myself.

Jesus said 'when it is evening, you say, it will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times' (Mt 16:2-4).

The Pharisees and Sadducees had just asked Jesus for some extra 'sign from heaven', and with these words he refused it to them: sufficient signs are already there, if they choose to see them: the signs of the times. Good Pope John frequently made use of this phrase, appealing to the modern church to read correctly to-

day's 'signs of the times'. Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus is reported as prophesying extensively about 'signs' in the future – nearly all of them very fearful signs: earthquakes, wars, famines, and 'all this is but the beginning of the sufferings' (Mt 24:8). We have certainly no proof that we are now in the age when 'the end will come' (Mt 24:14), and it would be foolish to leap to that conclusion: Christians have tended to do so time and again in times of human disaster and have, afterwards, often been left looking a little silly. Nor can we begin to surmise what the last age, described uneschatologically, will be like when it arrives. Nevertheless it is unquestionable that when Jesus refers to signs of this sort, they are for the most part highly cataclysmic, and this is true not only for the far future but also for his immediate generation. The destruction of the temple, infinitely the most beloved and sacred thing for his hearers, is proclaimed as the first of the signs with ruthless clarity: 'Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down' (Mt 24:2). Whatever 'signs of the times' are available to us are to be located between the casting down of the stones of the temple and that ultimate terror when 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken' (Mt 24:29). While there is no reason to deny that some signs may be a great deal easier than these to live with, more positive, more encouraging – such were surely the signs to which Pope John was principally concerned to direct our attention – it would show a blindness to scripture as well as being unrealistic not to recognise that the signs of the times most pressing upon our consciousness today are phenomena only too horribly close to those which Jesus spoke of as he left the temple: signs of terror.

Indeed, incredible as it should appear, even the final reassurance which is given to our own society by its secular guardians that the temple will not again be cast down, stone upon stone, deep freeze upon hifi, is still nothing gentler than a 'balance of terror'. To escape even for a moment from a conscious world of terror is for our generation and, so far as we can see, for all who will come after us no longer possible. Man has always had power to harm and has always used it, but adept as man has been in the past at torturing, massacring, ravaging the land, yet it has been essentially a limited and localised power of hurt. Today some men do actually possess the power to destroy all mankind, probably all life on this planet, and in a mere matter of minutes. The possibility is not a nonsensical one and it is hardly imaginable that it will ever again not be there so long as human history lasts.

Nuclear destruction, however, is only one of the major factors in the global crisis that encompasses us. The population explosion; the food crisis; the exhausting of material resources and devastation of the environment; the erosion of employment; the threat of scientific control and manipulation of human life (politically motivated human engineering); nuclear weapons of destruction. These six great threats face us, singly and collectively, with a crisis already so vast – and yet still most probably so small in comparison with what it will be like in even twenty years time – as should make us either crumble in agony or draw together to overcome them with such a will, such a spirit of determined co-operation, as – to look back a generation – our own nation only saw in 1940. Yet in fact it produces in most of us neither the one nor the other. Do we not still close our eyes to the signs of the times, kidding ourselves that at least our own little world of middle-class Britain will not really ever be greatly altered? The society we love, the villages, the towns, the trees, flowers and fields, the books, the breakfasts, parliament and free universities and civilised conversation, the Royal Shakespeare, ‘this earth, this realm, this England’, all this will go on indefinitely, we feel. Perhaps the major threats still seem unreal and remote; perhaps ours will be one of the last citadels to fall, yet fall it will, and even in this generation, unless, unless What can we say after the ‘unless’ which is adequately improbable and yet not impossible, near miraculous yet not naive?

Take the dangers I have listed individually and, in rational terms, there is certainly a possible way of resolving every one of them. Moreover something not at all insignificant is being done in each case to cope with the threat. Yet in each case too what is being done is woefully inadequate in relation to the continually escalating scale of the threat especially within the context of the complex interaction of all these issues. Thus to discuss the population explosion on its own in merely numerical terms makes no sense when in fact it is chiefly an immediate reality in parts of the world already encountering a food crisis, often in famine proportions, and also the destruction of the ecological environment. Theoretically there are separate issues. In practice in the Sahel, Amazonia or Calcutta they become all one great problem. Some people will fiercely object to the inclusion within the list of the advance of scientific knowledge and control, actual or potential, of every aspect of life. This factor does, of course, provide us with most of our tools for battling with the other threats. Yet it has in fact already provided the technology not only for nuclear weapons, biological engineering and the steady elimination of the scope for ordinary mass employment, but also for the plundering of natural

resources and the devastation of the environment. It is modern technology which is making possible the fearfully rapid destruction of the surviving great rain forests of the world, in Brazil and West Africa. Moreover, it is increasingly creating a highly sophisticated technology for political repression, from direct torture to the mass control of people by information storage and the manipulation of the media.

Ronald Higgins in *The Seventh Enemy* has summarised with awful clarity the scale of our predicament and, while he may properly be faulted upon many an important detail, including the too limited time-scale he suggests for the arrival of global breakdown, I doubt whether the over-all analysis is really open to question. 'The human cost of the decades of neglected desolation among the poor of the world' he wrote in his Introduction, 'has been even higher than the deliberate atrocities committed from Auschwitz to Hiroshima, from the Gulag Archipelago to Vietnam. Yet we blindly resist the mounting evidence that worse is almost certainly in store. We have erected line upon line of psychological defences to avoid recognising the realities and the demands of our time.... The gathering crisis is unique, the first in history involving the whole earth and the entire species' (*The Seventh Enemy*, 11).

Higgins' seventh enemy is man himself. Man has not only, in one way and another, created the first six horns of the beast he has now to encounter, he is also himself its seventh horn: as ideologist, as obedient servant of the totalitarian state, as bourgeois traveller upon the road of the crime comfortably looking the other way. It is hard to believe how easily man turns into torturer, into senior civil servant arranging the co-ordination of the final solution, into urban guerrilla murderer, into you and me who never saw it happen. You may chat agreeably at a diplomatic cocktail party with the torturer of Sheila Cassidy, with the cool military operators who planned and carried out the massive bombing of Vietnam, with scientists employed full time inventing new weapons of destruction of a potency almost incredible to the layman. All nice guys. All subject to superior orders. All needing a job. All blind to the wider web. All attending their local church. Keep religion out of politics, out of work, out of the inherent ruthlessness of the secular city once caught in a fix. Man is the seventh enemy, wearing a perennial mask of innocence. You will not see in your neighbour's face that he is a torturer or even perhaps, in your own; the multiple rapist can seem a nice, quiet person at work and at home. We are, all of us, a bit too like Dorian Gray. In a world of incessant intellectual make-up and the most sophisticated double-talk, we learn to hide our true face in the attic and to carry to the

cocktail party a liberal mask of genuine concern. Politically and publicly every major move to get to grips with the world's troubles, be it disarmament negotiations, the New International Economic Order, or the Brandt Report, becomes just another talking point, hopelessly and deliberately bogged down at international conference tables by the almost universal national resolve of each state to put its own seeming short term interests first.

Meanwhile wider and wider areas of the third world, and some areas of the second world too, as well as the fourth world within the first, are subject to a scarcity of goods of all sorts, famine, the breakdown of law and order, or the maintenance of 'law and order' only through the machinery of the 'national security state': arbitrary arrest, torture, the disappearance of the outspoken. The gap between north, white and rich upon the one hand, south, black and poor upon the other grows actually wider, at the same time the world's most evident strains can be isolated less and less within the global south – as seemed to be the case in the 50s and 60s – and are only too manifestly increasing within the rich north. Slight as the problems of Britain today may still be in comparison with those of Bangladesh, Ghana or El Salvador, they are frightening and intractable enough to us: unemployment, inflation, the growth of expenditure on arms, the reduction of expenditure on education and almost every other aspect of the liberal life. Are they not all signs that, in Paul's words, 'the world as we know it is passing away' (I Cor 7:31)?

It is true that if we remain as a whole amazingly placid and almost bored in relation to most of the more seemingly remote aspects of mankind's crisis, our collective mood has all the same changed enormously over the last few years. We belong today to a pessimistic society. The optimism characteristic of the later 1950s and 1960s changed in the course of the seventies into a mood of ever deeper depression: gone indeed are the flowers of spring, of the extraordinary elation of the sixties, when hope appeared triumphant because man had, we were told, 'come of age', not only with Pope John, but in the wake of the image making of Kennedy and Khrushchev, the facile optimism underlying Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* with its 'acclamation' of 'the emergence of secular urban civilisation', the way in which the writings of Teilhard de Chardin almost swept the christian world off its feet. The flowers of Portugal's revolution, were, perhaps, the last bewitching expression of that exciting age, gone, alas, like the Kerry dance, too soon. But gone it certainly has.

Note, in passing, a seemingly cyclical pattern across the last hundred years as three times the optimism of the Victorian legacy

of progress has been pierced by the contradictions of twentieth century reality to generate pessimism. First, the late Victorian age itself and its Edwardian tailpiece, expressed in the comfortable liberal theology of a Harnack, went down before the holocaust of the first world war, the dismemberment of empires and the human pessimism of the theology of Barth. Then the brief optimism of the 1920s succumbed to the economic depression and fearful ideological conflicts of the thirties and the second world war. The third wave of optimism attained its high point in the early 1960s but slowly faded as things fell apart more and more uncontrollably from 1968 on, until we are now unmistakably within a very deep wave of collective pessimism. Nor are we by any means at the turn of the tide.

From the gloom of the 1980s, we might turn back forty years to hear a word offered to the Britain of the second world war. It was just after the fall of Crete in May 1941 and probably, all in all, Britain's lowest point in the war and indeed in modern history. *The Times* endeavoured to encourage the nation with a leading article based on the famous and often quoted lines of Chesterton put in the mouth of Mary in Alfred's vision in the *Ballad of the White Horse*.

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.
Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yea, faith without hope?

It seemed quite the right word in 1940; it would have appeared a ridiculously misplaced one in 1960; now in the 1980s it may be again the best message we can dare to offer: I tell you naught for your comfort ... Do you have joy without a cause, Yea, faith without hope? What hope have we to proclaim today?

It seems plain that with ages of secular optimism there comes to correspond in rough harmony a rather cheerful, 'Pelagian', theology: a theology which, in one idiom or another, sees in the history of the world, a continuous, almost inevitable progress, the providential development of the kingdom. It is a view, liberal Protestant at one moment, Teilhardian at another, in which original sin and the agonised battle of the Crucifixion appear far less significant than the affirmation that this is God's world in which nature and grace cohere in the evolutionary realisation of salvation.

A theology of optimism. With the ages of disaster, upon the other hand, coheres a very different theology, in this century most typically Barthian. Nature in all its aspects – religion, culture, natural optimism – is here condemned as, even at its most apparently positive, a snare and a delusion in which proud man is caught. A corrupt and sinful world has to be challenged instead by the utterly supernatural intervention of God in Christ, symbolised by the natural disaster of the cross, the entirely non-natural victory of the resurrection. In a Teilhardian theology natural optimism almost merges with supernatural hope. In a Barthian theology, there is an unbridgeable division between the two. Christian hope here says nothing about the foreseeable future of our society. On the contrary, the fall of man and the universal fact of sin should rather persuade us to combine supernatural hope with natural pessimism.

Are we to be swayed, then, by every wind of fashion, a Teilhardian when the world's going is good, a Barthian when it is bad? Or should we perhaps more dialectically and paradoxically take the opposed tack – preach Barth to the cheerful sixties, Teilhard to the gloom-ridden eighties? How should our christian hope relate to the hopes and fears of this our present society? Has it anything special to say to us when our most realistic assessment of humanity's future is also a most pessimistic one? Can it alter that assessment? Does it operate upon a wholly different plane? Or can it, without altering it in its own terms, somehow significantly relativise it by altering the context of its understanding?

Hope is for the Christian the insuperable conviction that God who is love without limit, lives and conquers throughout his world in his own way; that present and future are in his hands, that evil, hatred, destructiveness cannot absolutely prevail either in the future or even – whatever the appearances – in the present. God prevaieth, even in Auschwitz. Hope, a conviction in some circumstances really impossible to sustain naturally, makes despair in all circumstances impossible.

Hope like faith accepts some contrast between the present age, the penultimate state of mankind, and a beyond, the ultimate. It admits the contrast but it refuses to absolutise it; while it affirms that in the ultimate, the realised Kingdom of God, the triumph of love will be manifest, it recognises that in the ambiguity of the present age while love is never absent, its triumph is anything but manifest.

Hope distinguishes itself from two temptations, with each of which it does nevertheless have a good deal in common: the optimism which is set on victory now and the pessimism which abandons any expectation of earthly victory at all. As we have suggest-

ed, in an age of success the characteristic theological temptation is to squeeze out sin, the principalities and powers of this world and the cross, and to transform hope into optimism. But the sign of the Cross stands sharply between the two, and fool is the christian who would ignore that sign. In an age of depression the characteristic theological temptation is to write off all present achievement, religion, culture, terrestrial hopes, as but high-flown expressions of sin and pride, no less condemned than anything else by the judgment of the Cross. It can seem for the religious man tempting indeed to stress Tertullian-like a severely binary pattern of redemption: there the vision of the Kingdom; here patience and suffering; there the fulfilment of Hope in victory. But here too, the religious pessimist must be reminded on grounds of gospel faith itself, there is and shall be some initiation of the kingdom, some hope fulfilled. The Crucifixion is not the whole guide to our condition in this present age, apt as it seems when the signs of the times are as painful as they may appear today. To know Christ is not only to know him crucified, whatever the preacher may remark in a moment of enthusiasm. It is also to know him as he was in the days of his ministry, upon which the gospels put so much meticulous stress: the experience of welcoming him into one's house, being healed by his word, washing his feet, picnics on the hills, fishing by the lakeside, breaking bread and drinking wine in fellowship. All things of here and now, things of hopefulness, things of joy, things to be remembered and cherished.

We must, I believe, avoid each of these temptations and be carried away theologically and practically neither by optimism nor by pessimism. Yet our hope, rightly lived, will make us in some way both pessimists and optimists, and realistic in both. It will make us pessimistic because we will not easily be taken in by the showy glamour of any golden age or swinging city. We have seen, my friends, in every glittering age, the faces of the outcast, the inside of a prison, the view on a cold night from beneath the arches of Westminster Bridge. We do not forget that the 'signs of the times' foretold for us are famine, war, earthquake; we know that hope did not save the Turkish Armenians or the European Jews from genocide; or the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima from the bomb engineered by the clever scientists in Los Alamos; we know that our Hope is and must be compatible with the probability in the coming decades of mass starvation, the fall of liberal government in land after land, nuclear war. We know it is only too likely to come to that.

Yet optimists too. How in such a world can we be optimists? How can Hope still makes us so? First of all, it transforms the total

A spirit of hope prevents one from writing off man. Man is seen to be not just a *massa damnata*, not just Higgins' 'Seventh enemy'. He is also the unconquerable ally. Poor and oppressed man, quite especially. The poor seem less corruptible than the rich. If there is a secular ground for hope in our generation it is the humanity and sound judgment, the incorruptibility, of the Polish *povo* after decades of Stalinist indoctrination, of Zimbabwe's *povo* after decades of white racialism. It is the unconquerability of Russia's dissidents, and El Salvador's too. Man is certainly the enemy time and again, the traitor who betrays the city from within, in the devising of Nazi concentration camps and Gulag Archipelago, or perhaps still more depressingly in the sheer comfortable blindness of the affluent, for whom thirty pieces of silver are still sufficient, whether in 1930s' Germany or today's South Africa. A cool, uncommitted judgment may not be able to choose between man the traitor and man the incorruptible hero as to which really represents the species. It is hope that convinces one that man is judgment. However great a disaster may be looming ahead, Hope assures us that it is but a piece – and finally a checkmated piece – in the larger drama of creation. Ultimately there is truth and joy beyond. Believe this and the torturers are immeasurably reduced in their power over us even now, for such conviction is itself a present thing, affecting the present realities, making a smile of victory possible even at the moment of the most absolute defeat.

Secondly, it prevents man's perennial celebrations of optimism from being a silly, cynical, drunken bit of escapism. I had a letter recently from a young black student in this country: a thoughtful girl caught between the hopes and disillusionments of her generation and, indeed, our own:

'For New Year's Eve we went up to Trafalgar Square, there were masses of people, and the atmosphere was something out of this world I tell you. There was an intense feeling of tranquil happiness. Everyone was so friendly and happy, kissing everyone else happy New Year, even the police were joining in. You really have to have been there to fully appreciate what was going on. I never knew that people could be so nice and, momentarily, it really filled me with great hope for the New Year. But, on reflection, it was so depressing . . .'

Depressing to return to the ordinary world of unfriendliness, conflict, human hardness. Mankind desperately wants to hope, and celebrates it in moments of intense communitas, but what can sustain such celebration in the face of a realism of gloom, except for an eschatology of victory? We shall overcome . . . some day. All manner of things shall be well.

finally represented not by the guards at Auschwitz or Robben Island but by the prisoners; not by the apparatus but by Lech Walesa, not by the feeble corrupted image of the Old Adam but by the mighty figure of the New, and no less mighty for dying on a criminal's cross.

The confidence of hope does actually alter not just the over-all judgment, but the way we see even the little things. The big barbarities become less oppressive, the little humanities grow in significance, rescued and redeemed and eternalised by the hope that undergirds them. This little gesture, the pouring out of ointment in affection by one woman on one man's feet, will be recorded everywhere. Even at execution Thomas More could crack his little joke: most inappropriate levity, some solemn commentators have judged. Not so. His hope in the ultimate enabled him even on the knife edge of the penultimate, the very scaffold of the principalities and powers, to make their triumph appear ridiculous, insignificant. Hope fastens upon even the trivial. It generates present joy, upsets the hierarchies of gloom and doom, the cohorts of Satan, and can cry out even to the executioner 'O death, where is thy sting?' James Cameron has been quoted¹ as remarking that 'while other people's deaths are deeply sad, one's own is sure to be a bit of a joke'. Can it really be so? Does it tally with the Cross? Yes, indeed. However seemingly ultimate in awfulness, the sheer destructive end to the most wonderful of lives, the Cross was, it was not ultimate. It was superseded by the Resurrection, not only for the dead but for the living, so that Easter Day – a real day in the lives of Peter, John, Mary Magdalen – became a sort of April Fools' Day. They had got it all wrong, looking for the living among the dead. Even the Cross is good for a laugh. Hard as it may be to believe, if there is a nuclear conflagration, it will in the end appear to all of us not only as tragedy but also as part of one great joke – and we have, in hope, already been allowed just a little to enter into that joke. And that breeds joy, even now, and a sort of optimism.

With such a horizon man can recover his nerve and even set himself, while still anticipating the worst, to struggle yet one time more for immediate victory. That, after all, is the message of the *Ballad of the White Horse*: the broken king on Athelney had nothing realistically to turn to any more. Only hope and visions, the courage of a few, unconquerable obstinacy. But they worked. 'And the king took London Town.' Hope just does help one to hang on when it is hopeless. In Nadezhda Mahdelstam's superb memoir of the life of her poet husband, Osip, one of Stalin's victims of the thirties, *Hope against Hope*, she speaks of another

man who was with Osip in the camp. 'A man who never lost heart. The worse the conditions, the stronger his will to live. He went around the camp with clenched teeth . . . single-mindedly bent on one thing; not to allow himself to be destroyed . . . I know this feeling very well, myself, because I too have lived like that for about thirty years, with clenched teeth.' (pp 394-5).

Hope can enable one to *Hope against Hope*, to be a realist yet battle through 'with clenched teeth', to be, even as Nadezhda Mandelstam herself claimed to be, in spite of everything, 'an incorrigible optimist'. (p 328)

It is proper and necessary that hope should do such things, perpetually skirmishing in this twilight penultimate age with the principalities and powers, challenging here and now the shadow of their despair, ensuring a sacramental presence of the kingdom, a will to go on, an unconquerable optimism. Optimism is not hope, but it can be, it should be, generated by hope as smoke by fire. Where there is absolutely no optimism it is fair to conclude there is no hope. Optimism is a sort of sacrament of hope, bubbling up in the human spirit in the things of here and now. It does not cloud the often pessimistic judgment of realism, but it discovers that however right pessimism may be on this or that, there is always something else about which one can be optimistic and that just because one can be, that thing becomes the more important. Bonhoeffer in his *Last Letters and Papers* has some pages entitled 'a few articles of Faith'. We are left, he says, 'with only the narrow way, a way often hardly to be found, of living every day as if it were the last, yet in faith and responsibility living as though a great future still lies before us'. 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet be bought in this land', cries Jeremiah just as the Holy City is about to be destroyed . . . 'The essence of optimism,' Bonhoeffer continues, 'is that it takes no account of the present, but it is a source of inspiration, of vitality and hope when others have resigned; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy . . . the optimism which is will for the future should never be despised, even if it is proved wrong a hundred times'. (pp 146-7).

Hope is not optimism, but Hope is not Hope without some optimism. Be a Barthian in reading the signs of the times, but be a Teilhardian still in your endeavours: claim the future. Do not abandon it to the enemy. Clench your teeth and laugh. True as it may be that there is 'naught for your comfort, yea naught for your desire', the answer must still be —

Even though the fig tree does not blossom,
nor fruit grow on the vine,

Even though the olive crop fail,
and fields produce no harvest,
Even though flocks vanish from the folds
and stalls stand empty of cattle
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. [Habakkuk 3: 17-18]

Tell the false prophets of easy good news, as Jeremiah told them, the city is to be cast down. But tell the prophets of gloom, as Jeremiah told them, 'houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought' (Jer 32:15). There are still a billion blades of grass to rejoice in, and even if there be not, if we are driven back to the last wall of all, if we have only our own execution and that of the world before us, if even the last blade of grass turn black and wither, 'yet I will rejoice in the Lord'. Such is, I believe, 'the hope that is in us'.

1 In *The Observer*, 17 January 1982.

Turner on 'Operative Rituals':

A Sociological Response

Kieran Flanagan

In a rather bleak essay, Charles Davis observed in 1970 that 'the general verdict upon liturgical reform is that it has failed to solve the problem of worship in a secular age' and 'that the chief effect of the reforms has been to uncover an insoluble problem'.¹ Any sociological response to liturgical renewal came after the late sixties as a critical reaction to changes implemented as a result of Vatican II. There was certainly no sociological participation in the demands for liturgical change prior to 1963. As a result the Conciliar reforms did not so much answer a sociological scepticism as generate one that has developed increasingly since. The attempt to relate the shape of rite, to what were perceived as the cultural and social needs of a secular modern society, merged with a wish to maximise the active participation of the laity in the liturgy, whose simplicity and clarity of form, would enable a worshipping community to develop as a witness to an increasingly sceptical society.

Pre-Conciliar forms of rite were rigid in shape, objectively secured in complex rubrics, but were considered as implausible and irrelevant to contemporary needs. The tenor of the new rites was a