The Ninth

ERIC SYMES ABBOTT

Memorial Lecture

delivered by

The Revd David Conner

In 1994

(not published in booklet form)

Christian Counsel and the Meaning of Wholeness

It was just under a year ago that I received a letter from Eric James asking if I might give the lecture this year. "We would" he wrote, "like you to lection on 'The Priest as Counsellor' or some closely allied subject that reflects Eric Abbott's own concern with that subject." In the event I have chosen a slightly different title though what I have to say comes from reflection on the day-to-day pastoral work of a chaplain and parish priest and, I suppose, might well have been delivered under the suggested title. I cannot of course tell precisely how much sympathy Eric Abbott would have with the line that I shall take. Certainly it feels daft for me to trespass so much on his territory. What I think I can be sure of however is that he would encourage the business of thinking about these things and, perhaps for me tonight much more important, would be generous in his forgiveness of some inevitable and desperate shortcomings. What I have to offer is really no more than a modest statement of where I find my mind and heart today.

Just about 25 years ago, in 1969, I was coming to the end of my undergraduate years and was about to embark on a two-year course of preparation for ordained ministry at theological college. One of the components in our pastoral training was a *group-work* course at the local psychiatric hospital which was aimed at equipping us with some basic skills in counselling and maybe also at encouraging us to think about the under-girding theory. For some reason or other my name never appeared on the list of those who were expected to take part in this course. Maybe I felt deprived because, in spite of the fact that my fellow students seemed frequently to be driven to fits of rage and despair because of their experiences in *the group*, as soon as I was ordained I enrolled for a course in counselling and found myself (week by week) sitting in just such a group, offering and receiving the dreaded *feed-back* and having my fair share of tantrums too. Gradually however I took to it and became one of these early seventies clergy for whom *counselling* was all the rage!

And what a lot of it there then seemed to be around! There was Rogerian non-directive counselling, and behavioural counselling, and re-evaluation counselling; there was Gestalt therapy, an reality therapy; there was transactional analysis. There was of course much more besides, even before the student might have got down to developing some real acquaintance with Freud or Jung or any of the big names. In a way of course it is plain silly to lump it all together and, in what I say tonight, I am bound to offer something of a caricature. Nonetheless there *was* a good deal of confusion disguised by the label *counselling* – confusion that is between what you might call therapy, comfort and guidance. Much of that confusion remains today. Be that as it may, out of the profusion and confusion of theory and practice, there did emerge a generally-accepted view of what sort of person a person might be who had benefited from our counselling. We had an idea of an end product.

To begin with we seemed to want people to become *well-adjusted* to the world about them. It seemed important that people should be enabled to *cope*; to fit in somehow with the already-existing scheme of things. There were voices to be sure that pointed to the danger of such a seemingly innocent intention (seeing counselling as an agent of the status-quo but they were voices on the whole crying in the wilderness. Adaption to *reality* seemed then to be a sign of health.

Then perhaps it was the case that our image of the person who had benefited from the care we had to offer was the image of one whose life was nicely balanced, free from anxiety and stress. People needed to be *centred*. There was still in the air some whiff of the previous decade's flower-power policies which intoxicated us and made us feel that the gentle voice and enigmatic smile were signs of a person's having got to journey's end. Certainly we were most suspicious of people who did not appear to be *together*.

And *personal fulfilment* (sometimes known as *self-actualisation*) was a taken-for-granted desire we had for those to whom we offered any kind of assistance. To *be yourself* and to *express yourself* and to *discover yourself* – these were the phrases which revealed the underlying common wisdom of the day and reinforced a message that the focus of attention must be the individual and the individual's well-being.

It is not surprising therefore that, in many circles, there developed an idea that the whole and healthy individual was the one who was *autonomous*. Self-reliance and independence came (as I remember it) to be prized increasingly and such counsel as was offered was considered sound only in so far as it encouraged those same qualities. Dependence on another was seen to be a sign of immaturity and weakness. What was somehow touching was the naïve assumption that autonomous and independent people would naturally get on together.

In all of this of course I am trying to identify what was *in the air* at the time – the air that we young clergy breathed as we tried to come to terms with what it might mean to be a priest and pastor. I understand that the adherents of particular theories might object to such description. But *in the air* there was what I now see (I think) to be a stark individualism and an idea of human wholeness defined in terms of the autonomy of the individual. It was a generally accepted base line.

I suppose I ought to mention just one other bit of common currency. I think we were all encouraged to believe that all religion (and especially the Christian religion) should carry a serious health warning. No doubt it was all part of the anti-establishment tendency and dislike of institutions which always seems to go with the rise of individualism. But it was supported by the suggestion that religion induces guilt and therefore causes neurosis. People claimed (and claim of course) that too much religion is what brings vast numbers of people to sit in the psychiatrist's chair. While there is much truth in this, there was a tendency I believe for us to become too apologetic and uncritical in our acceptance of such criticism.

What was in the air of course did not originate especially within the Church. Indeed, there were many Church voices which expressed deep reservations about the way that things were going. All too glibly maybe, the speakers were often dismissed as being either *threatened* or *irrelevant*. These were insults which were bound soon enough to erode the confidence of those who were keen to make proper alliance with the secular world. It was not long before many Christians (in the name perhaps of a *Kingdom theology* and of *learning from the world*) baptised the secular wisdom of the day, harnessed it to their own ends, and gave it blessing. Of course there is absolutely nothing new in this. It just seems to be part of a continuing process of the Church's coming to an understanding of itself in relation to a world of which it is a part and over against which it stands.

I think this *baptism* of which I speak took at least three forms. The first (though I confess that what I say is rooted merely in impression) concerns the way in which Jesus was commended to people. Here was a man who might express the spirit of the age (as of course he is almost bound to do) by being for us an example of one who was most honestly himself, truly individuated, totally developed. He had authority, went his own way, and could be seen increasingly as the autonomous and independent individual.

The second form that the baptism took can be seen in what was an explosion of interest in a particular kind of pastoral care. If Jesus was now the model of one who was *fully himself*, then the aim to help people simply to *become themselves* became a deeply Christian aim. There was great optimism about the direction in which people would *grow* given an accepting and non-judgemental context. There need be nothing overtly *religious* about the kind of care a priest might offer. Indeed that very care might release people from the tyranny of their religion and set them free to *be themselves*.

The third form that the baptism took is perhaps less obvious. It is to be found in the proliferation of literature and courses about spirituality which we have witnessed in the last 15 years or so. In one way of course this trend seems to mark a decided move away from the secular suspicion of religion. Well, that is undeniable. But what to my mind is equally certain is that some of the underlying assumptions (so far as our spirituality is concerned) simply mirror the taken-for-granted ideas that I have spoken of. Prayer is commended as a kind of therapy which might bring about inward peace, self-understanding, and individual wholeness. It is a way of giving nurture to ourselves so that we, in turn, might be able to nurture others. It is a religious *trickle-down* theory is this! Take care of yourself first and then you might be able to offer something to others. It is advice often given by those who claim to be giving Christian counsel.

In these three ways (and in others too no doubt) many Christians seem to have baptised the prevailing emphasis and focus on the individual; the idea that it is the wholeness of the individual that must first and foremost be pursued.

I think that that baptism has been something of a mistake. I believe that there are serious objections to the basic assumption. Those objections are rooted in the question of what it really means to be a human being. The prevalent contemporary attitude focuses on the human being being [sic] as a discrete individual unit, essentially separate from other human beings. There is a significant strand within the Christian tradition however which must at least be set along-side such a view.

The doctrine of Co-inherence is, I believe, a doctrine relating to the nature of the Trinity. Simply, it points to the mutual indwelling and inter-penetration of the three Persons of the Trinity. Each is in the other. There is a profound and mysterious inter-connectedness. In some Christian circles this picture of the Trinity has shed light on the nature of what it is to be a human being, to be made in God's image. Far from being separate entities, we are deeply connected to one another. What one person does has been at some level or other caused by what others have done and, in turn, will affect what others will do. We live out of and from and for each other. There is a kind of interflow of mind or spirit. To be a human being is not to be an individual but to be part of a process which we call *community*.

There are secular as well as religious voices which suggest that there might be some wisdom here. If I have pointed to a kind of individualism which has emerged from the world of counselling, that is not to say that all theories of counselling are individualistic. The theory of Group Dynamics or the theory of undergirding Family Therapy point precisely in the direction of its being impossible to understand ourselves simply as individuals. And of course much thinking about Systems points to the same conclusion.

The quest for autonomy then must be an illusion. It is rooted in what someone called salvation fantasy – the idea that somehow we might, as individuals, extricate ourselves from the pains and complexities of corporate life and from our dependency (at the deepest of levels) on other people. The illusion might have its roots in fear. Perhaps a harsher criticism is that it expresses a lack of charity. To seek for rest while others labour, for peace while others suffer conflict, or for a kind of elevated wholeness while others are in pain seems a less than noble aim. No wonder that the *spirituality movement* is so roundly criticised by those who believe that Christians should be more involved in life's rough and tumble. Wholeness, they say, is not something to be achieved by the individual here and now; rather it is that state towards which the whole creation struggles. It is, they say, our responsibility to be part of that struggle. I think that I now accept both the criticism and the challenge. But where, I have to ask, does that leave one involved in Christian counsel? If my aim is not to facilitate the wholeness of the individual, what is it to be?

Counselling, as I said at the start, is a confusing and umbrella term. It can, so far as I can see, refer to therapy (the releasing of past blockages) or comfort (the communication of care and assurance) or guidance (help given to another in finding the right path into the future). When I speak of Christian counsel in this lecture I mean to refer to the work of the pastor or director in the guidance of another person. Edges are blurred and there is much confusion but it is not my intention to say more about this now. One of the things however that all counselling seems to value and demand is the art of *listening*.

There is a poem by the Welsh priest R.S. Thomas called The Word. Let me read it to you, if only to change the tempo for a minute.

A pen appeared, and the god said:
'Write what is to be
man'. And my hand hovered
long over the bare page,

until there, like footprints
of the lost traveller, letters
took shape on the page's
blankness, and I spelled out

the word 'lonely'. And my hand moved
to erase it; but the voices
of all those waiting at life's
window cried out loud: 'It is true'.

The fact that we are part and parcel of each other, profoundly inter-connected does not mean that we do not feel lonely. It feels as if we *are* separated from our sisters and brothers; in some way beyond their reach. Maybe that is what makes us sometimes fantasise about autonomy; who knows? Certainly it is what makes us want to be understood. Listening is the beginning of our understanding of another person. It is the start of Christian counsel.

To listen to another person is to know yourself well enough to ensure that the person's story is not drowned out by the noise its telling awakens in your memory. But it is also to know yourself enough to be able to recognise in another person something that is familiar. It is the beginning of real sympathy. It is the start of understanding. To tell the other person what it is that you have heard (that old non-directive attitude) is to communicate the fact that you have understood. To some extent the loneliness has been met; a gulf has been bridged between one human being and another.

But what do you hear when you listen? What do you hear when you really listen; when you listen deeply to another person? Here I have to speak with great reserve. Dealing in such personal and precious themes it is almost crude to speak in generalities. And anyway, there is much truth in the accusation that we all hear what we expect to hear. Let me nonetheless suggest an answer to the question of what begins to be discerned beneath the surface of particular stories and particular expressions of them; what begins to be discerned through the words of those who come seeking Christian counsel. Remember that the fact that they have come to *you* and not to another is significant.

Certainly you hear a hankering after some kind of wholeness. Yet that wholeness that is hankered after does not seem to be the wholeness of a separated and autonomous individual. From the first expressed desire to be understood and heard, a person is groping after some unity or other; some

sense of relationship and place and harmony. There is little doubt about it. Where the person has touched the fringe of religious experience maybe a deeper thirst for unity and wholeness will have been awakened. I think it might be maintained quite properly that almost all experience which is claimed as *religious* contains to a lesser or greater extend, some enjoyment of, or anticipation of, a state of unity and reconciliation with others and with the world around. It is as if the deeper the religious experience the greater the sense of the apparent distinctions and contradictions of this world being drawn into some kind of harmony. Ordinary examples of human kindness which enshrine a reaching out to embrace another in love and understanding; moments when it is given us to feel *at one* with nature; times when the disparate threads of a piece of music are drawn together in sublime reconciliation; such experiences rise like answers to a call heard deep within the human heart and convince us of the destiny for which we were made. No, it is not autonomy we hanker after. It is a proper unity.

But the unity we want, we want *now*! There is a clamour in the voice. It is maybe understandable that that becomes the be all and the end of things and that the one involved in Christian counsel might collude with the desire to hold on to those moments (especially maybe by encouraging a certain kind of prayer life) as if it were possible to live life at some sort of elevated level *now*.

Yet there is another voice. Sometimes it is hard to hear or we do not take the time to listen to it. It is the voice that cries out for release from the tyranny of self. It is the voice that gives expression to the deep conviction that to know life's secret is to have found what it might be worth the *waiting* and the *suffering* and the *dying* for. There is in each of us what might be called a *noble impulse*, something self-forgetful; some knowledge of the fact that there is something far more precious than my own life and concerns; than my own happiness, fulfilment, wholeness, now; my own personal salvation.

Then there is a third voice. It is the cry for *meaning*. Give me some picture of the world, it seems to say that will embrace both my desire for *wholeness* and my understanding of the *place of sacrifice*. It is this third voice (or so it seems to me) that the one involved in Christian counsel must respond to. It asks, or seems to ask, for what someone once called a *moving metaphor* – some image or other that might evoke recognition and generate energy. It asks that the various experiences of what it is to be a human being might be drawn together and harnessed to a sustaining vision. In the telling of the Christian story the Christian counsellor has a great resource that will answer that cry for meaning. It is the task of the one involved in Christian counsel, when the time is right, to commend the story as a framework within which a person might live with *integrity*. And it is, I suggest, the profound wholeness of *integrity* that we most desire.

I say the story is to be commended *when the time is right*. The one involved in offering some Christian counsel (guidance and direction to those who ask for it) will, we hope, have learned enough to know that a person's hearing of the story might depend on the previous clearing of a whole host of misconceptions or the attending to a range of old wounds inflicted maybe by careless Christians somewhere along the way. Some people will need the help of a psychiatrist or professional therapist. Those involved in Christian counsel will need discernment. But that having been acknowledged, they will then reject any idea that all religion is somehow suspect (!) and will rejoice that the Christian story might provide the key to wholeness for one in search of it.

The story hangs upon the poles of creation and redemption. God, it says, is creating the universe of which we are a part and intends that it shall reach its Sabbath end. One day all shall be complete; all shall be whole and each single one a part of it. The story takes seriously our longing for a corporate wholeness.

In and through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, so the story continues, God has shown us His way of *making whole*. It is quite simply to re-weave the freely-chosen acts of human being into a new pattern and to bring order out of chaos. This is the meaning of the cross. This is the work of Jesus. This work of re-weaving (of redemption) is what we are invited (called) to do. The work is strenuous and we cannot tell what the consequences might be for those who start upon it. For Jesus it was crucifixion and being torn apart; no apparent or immediate wholeness here! The story takes seriously that inner voice which expresses a desire to be self-forgetful, maybe self-sacrificing.

In the light of that story it is the task of the Christian counsellor to help a person to explore how his or her own story might be re-woven (redeemed). It is not a matter of seeking release from the complexities of life. It is not a matter of looking for instant happiness or quick salvation. It *is* a matter of understanding that this one person's story (as are all stories) is part of a creative process and, at every step along the way, the costly and the patient task of *making the very best of things* is required of us. The cross at the centre of the story becomes a *moving metaphor* – a sustaining image.

The story calls on a person to take part in the work of redemption and thereby to find *meaning* in life. The work is costly. There is no disguising that. But the cost is not generally romantic. Sometimes it might be no more than the cost of tiredness. Sometimes it will be the cost of illness – the cost of sharing in the strain and stress of what it means to hold things together and to turn them to good. It can be the cost of apparent failure. It is the cost of what it means (in the profoundest terms) to be *patient*. It is the cost of joining in the struggle to achieve a future wholeness – with all the personal and social and political implications of those words. Always working, you might say, for a better situation.

Two things will undermine our confidence. In our present culture there has arisen an ancient idea that any sign of tiredness or stress or illness is a sign that you are in the wrong. (The punishment of God – or of the gods.) Usually today we complain that a person has not looked after herself or that his life-style has been wrong. In the light of the story the one who offers Christian counsel will not automatically collude with this *ancient superstition*. There might be meaning and purpose and dignity in paying a certain price and bearing a certain burden in the attempt to do what is right. The one involved in Christian counsel might offer encouragement rather than implied criticism. Certainly he or she will not fly immediately to the relief of someone whose activities in life have taken their toll.

The second undermining of our confidence will be the accusation that our chosen course is rooted in nothing more or less than masochism; our guilt-inducing religion is urging us upon the path of self-destruction. Such criticism must be taken seriously. The Christian counsellor will be on guard. On the other hand, however, it *is* possible to make some sacrifices because of *hope* (not only because of guilt and the desire for self-punishment). Discernment is of course quiet necessary. The outcome must not be too pre-judged.

I asked the question: what is my role as pastor or director (my role as Christian counsellor) to be? The answer so far that I have given is: to listen to the voice that asks for *understanding*; to listen to the voice that cries out for *wholeness* and for *healing*; to listen to the voice that asks for *release from the tyranny of self*; to listen to the voice that asks for some *meaning* and some vision; and to tell the Christian story in such a way as to embrace the various tendencies within the hearts and souls of human beings and to call them to redemptive work – even though that might involve some kind of suffering and militate against the common shared assumptions of the world in which (just at this moment) we live.

I feel embarrassed by the fact that I have to speak in generalities. Would that I could be more specific and particular. However, for all that we are part and parcel of each other, our stories have to be unique. The ways in which each of us will take part in the redemptive work of God (the patient re-weaving of *what comes our way* into a new pattern) will of course depend upon our quite specific circumstances. But there is one kind of work in which we all can share. And it is this work which the Christian counsellor will, somewhere along the line, commend to those in search of that meaning that I've mentioned. It is the work of intercession.

The prayer of intercession has, in some ways, become trivialised by our use of it. Sitting on the sidelines, we call on God to meet our various needs and answer each request. But the prayer of intercession is much more than this. Because we are all (at the deepest level) united with each other, every impulse of the heart carries and supports a multitude. In the prayer of intercession, we offer ourselves to cooperate with our fundamental co-inherence, and we lift those with whom we are connected (in body, mind and spirit) towards the destiny that God has in mind for them – towards the Sabbath rest; towards the wholeness that we all desire. It is heavy *work*! But it is redemptive *work*! It is *work* that, at some level or another every Christian must take part in. But it leaves its mark! It takes its toll! It costs a lot! The one who knows the secret of what it means to interceded always bears some signs of crucifixion.

To put it bluntly: in the end the Christian counsellor will seek to answer the deepest cries of other people by calling on them to engage in a life which will be costly. Only such a call will be consistent with the vision that alone can embrace the various tendencies of what seems to be involved in being human.

And there *is* encouragement to be found. For my part, one of the most uplifting stories is the story of the famous Abbé Huvelin. It was told by Rowan Williams in his Oxford University Sermon of November 1981. I quote: "High on the list of those great 19th Century churchmen who might rightly be said to deserve the name of 'saint' must surely stand the Abbé Marie-Joseph Huvelin. For over 20 years, he served as curate in one of the great Parisian parishes, and performed the ordinary duties of a vicaire of the day – catechism classes, sick visiting, and so forth. And, in addition, he bore the load of the spiritual direction of countless people, French and foreign, and included among his penitents both Baron von Hugel and Charles de Foucauld. Two drastically different spirits: the intense affirmative, humanist intellectual, and the radical ascetic and solitary, moving inexorably towards his Jerusalem and his Calvary in the Sahara Desert. Yet these two men met in Huvelin: there was enough of both in him for both to feel themselves at home in him. And that alone is indication of the man's stature."

Rowan Williams continues: "Many will know von Hugel's famous description of Huvelin, prostrated with gout, migraine, God knows what besides, lying on a couch in a darkened room, receiving his flock for hour after hour, and giving the same patience and attention to each. Huvelin ministered in circumstances of chronic and debilitating ill-health; and our admiration grows still more. But less well known are the facts documented in the most recent French monograph on his life and work. It is not surprising to discover from his private letters and journals that he suffered acutely from depression. More disturbing is the knowledge that the thought of suicide was a recurrent obsession (the word is not too strong). And most startling of all is a section of one of his notebooks, 11 pages long; every page is covered with his signature, scribbled again and again in various forms, interspersed with chilling phrases. 'Il n'est: he does not exist' … Huvelin, in other words, was not what many would call a whole man."

So preached Rowan Williams in 1981. I find encouragement in the fact that one who (so it seems) was so in touch with God could apparently be so flawed. I cannot help but ask whether this might

be the way that God does treat those who most share in his redemptive work. Perhaps it is not surprising that those who intercede seem to be marked.

If this should be the case however; if the wholeness after which we hanker is to be found only at the end of a process of redemption that involves for some at least much suffering; and if the Christian counsellor is called upon to commend the way to others (to make such possible demands on them), the question then arises: what gives to him or her the right? Why should I be allowed to ask another person to forego the apparently immediate satisfaction of individual fulfilment and, rather, to head for a course that might involve both sacrifice and pain in the name of redemption?

I only have the right of course if I am prepared to share the burden. Here is the crux (*the crux* I say) of what it means to be the one who offers Christian counsel. I only have the right if I am prepared to share the burden. I wonder just what this might mean?

In his biography of C.S. Lewis, A.N. Wilson writes of the "eerie phenomenon" of Lewis' apparently being able to bear the pain and suffering of his wife Joy whom he had recently married and who was dying from cancer. Wilson writes: "By September, (Joy) could move about in an invalid chair. By the end of 1957, she was walking with a stick, and by the time a year had elapsed from her hospital wedding day, when the doctors had pronounced her case hopeless, she was told that the cancer had been arrested. X-rays revealed that the cancerous spots in her bones had disappeared. Lewis on the other hand, had developed osteoporosis, not a fatal bone disease, but one which brought with it excruciating pain. He had to wear a surgical belt and sleep on a board for four or five months of 1956. This he confided to Coghill, and to another Christian intimate, Sister Penelope. 'I am very crippled and had much pain all summer, but am in a good spell now' he told the latter in November. 'I was losing calcium just about as fast as Joy was gaining it, a bargain (if it was one) for which I am very thankful.'"

The idea that we can 'bear one another's burdens' in a literal (or almost literal) sense, what is sometimes called the doctrine of Substitution, was an idea of course at the forefront of the thinking of Charles Williams, poet, dramatist, novelist, literary critic, theologian, friend and contemporary of C.S. Lewis. T.S. Eliot wrote of Williams after his death: "There are many good Christians who believe in spiritual reality but have no experience of it; their Christianity is rather an aspiration than an awareness. To be brought face to face with what Williams *saw* is a need for those who call themselves Christians as it is for everyone else." Williams believed that two people could make a pact in which one of the partners agreed to take on himself or herself the weight of the other's emotional burden.

He went even further and believed it possible for one person to take on the physical burden of the other. At the time, a number of responsible and sensible people who knew Williams well believed that it worked. Williams himself saw it all as being entirely consistent with Christianity – Christ's crucifixion being the ultimate Substitution. At the same time, as Humphrey Carpenter points out in his biographical work <u>The Inklings</u>, "It did have the air of the magical".

Whether or not Williams' extreme ideas are too magical, or C.S. Lewis' "eerie phenomenon" is really to be explained in terms of the possibility of human co-inherence, I believe that there is enough in the idea that, in some way or other, we do *bear one another's burdens* for us to require of the Christian counsellor that he or she (through no doubt the prayer of intercession) should offer to be part and parcel of the pilgrimage of the counselee or directee; of the friend.

In all this we begin to see that the journey is a corporate journey. We are fundamentally dependent on each other. Wholeness is the goal towards which towards which we all proceed. The one who offers Christian counsel is no detached giver of direction but is essentially committed to, and

involved in, the redemptive work of those who receive counsel. Within the human family there is constant give and take.

I think I have just two more things to say. The first is this. Perhaps from the line that I have been taking it might seem that, at the end of the day, the whole stage will be strewn with nothing but wounded bodies! Not an appealing picture! Yet there is some truth in it. But only half a truth. For it is part of the continuing redemptive process that pain should serve only to deepen compassion. What we endure is the source of new feeling for each other. The community might be one of broken people but they will be people who are whole in their love for one another. This is, if you like, a picture of heaven. Here we shall find no highly-polished, self-contained and autonomous individuals – knocking against one another like billiard balls on a table. Rather heaven is the promise of a future time when creation will be done and the whole complex of interrelations within creation ordered harmoniously according to God's love. It will be that love which will have emerged in and through the redemptive process that will (in its free flow) hold us together. As we practise now some bearing of each other's burdens (and of course sharing of each other's delights) we anticipate heaven and find ourselves sustained by a picture of all that will one day be.

The second thing I want to say is, in a way, an extension of the first. I have said that it is the task of Christian counsel to respond to that deep cry for meaning which seems so often to emanate from the hearts of those who come for guidance or direction. The response comes in the form of commending the Christian story as a framework within which life can be lived with integrity – the various tendencies of the human heart taken seriously and catered for. That story is essentially expressed through the drama of the eucharist and, where it is appropriate, it seems to me that attention should be focussed on the eucharist as a means of a person's participating in the *moving metaphor* that will excite recognition and generate energy.

For it is here that we most express a desire for wholeness. Bread and wine are offered as tokens of our lives and of all creation. We ask that they should be transformed into the risen body of the Lord – in other words that they should be drawn upwards to their destiny (become heaven). And so they do of course (for those with eyes to see). And what *is* that heaven? It is a group of needy people, kneeling down and sharing something broken.

How very far away it now all seems from that picture of the well-adjusted, self-contained, independent and autonomous individual who once we might have thought to be the embodiment of all we most aspired to – the one whose birth it was the task of any counsellor (Christian or otherwise) to bring about. It simply seems another world.

David Conner
April 1994