

SENT OUT – OR JUST LEAVING?

Aims:

1. To tackle the problem of why most Christians expect to meet God in Worship, but not to be sent out by him.
 2. To look at Scripture, especially Christ's sending-out of groups and individuals.
 3. To understand worship's role and to see the many factors that perpetuate *cul-de-sac* worship, and its failure to U-turn.
 4. To reassess, and perhaps rearrange, the final items of worship, to enable Christ's Recommissioning to be more real and relevant.
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Part I: ON-GOING HEALTH – DYNAMIC CYCLES

This article is likely to lead some, ultimately, to reconsider the structure of their worship. So it is necessary straightaway to understand the *dynamic* place of worship in the Christian life.

1. Nature

God's natural dynamic for our lives is a balance of **in-put** and **out-put**. We are able to function well only when our in-inputs of rest and refreshment are regular and adequate.

Our days, for instance, have their own **cycle** (governed largely by darkness and daylight):

- First we sleep (during which our healing and repair processes mainly take place), then -
- We wake, periodically eat, and work then -
- We sleep, then -
- We wake, periodically eat, and work then -
- We sleep,

and so the cycle goes on and on and on and on and on, repeating itself endlessly.

We would soon cease to function if the cycle was broken and there was endless sleep and no waking, or endless waking and no sleep. The process works well only because it works in a cycle and keeps turning like a wheel. (There are other cycles of in-put and out-put beside the 24 -hour one; some are longer, some shorter. Our eating cycle is shorter than our sleep-cycle; the weekend cycle is longer – and the *annual holiday* cycle unbearably long!)

2. Wheel

There are for Christians various spiritual cycles. There are the long pre-arranged annual cycles of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost; and there are the short less formal cycles of personal prayer or 'Quiet Times'. The cycle most relevant to this article is the weekly cycle of Christian Sunday worship.

In this seven-day cycle, Sunday worship serves (among other things) to 'service' worshippers - much as vehicles need regular 'servicing'. This aspect of worship may not be widely recognised or talked about. To understand it, we need to remind ourselves of the Christian calling to –

**...manfully fight under Christ's banner,
against sin, the world, and the devil,
and continue Christ's soldier and servant
unto his/her life's end.**

[From the Baptism Service of the Book of Common Prayer]

A number of Christians (not all) who Monday to Saturday have actually *done* that, may well come to worship as to a Field Hospital – tired, battered, bruised, wounded, traumatised, nearly exhausted and probably depressed! One of the roles of Church worship is to be the time and place where God ministers to the Army of Christ both as a body and as individuals. He binds up its wounds, re-equips it, and sends it out into battle once more.

3. Into Battle?

Some Christians will dislike my military language, but we cannot ignore it, for it is too closely linked with being sent-out to avoid or gloss over it.

In one version of *Hymns Old & New* [*Complete Anglican* Edition, Kevin Mayhew, 2000] the stated policy ran thus:

'We recognise that military imagery is used in the Bible, but history including current events, shows only too clearly the misuse to which these images are open. All too often in the Christian and in other religions texts advocating *spiritual* warfare are used to justify the self-serving ambitions behind *temporal* warfare. Christian triumph is the triumph of love, etc...'

The famous hymn '*Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war*' was axed by the editors in favour of a modern offering to the same tune '*Onward Christian pilgrims, Christ will be our light, see the heav'nly vision breaks upon our sight...*'

Quite nice – but in an anaemic sort of way! A useful question to ask of any Christian change is who in the long-run will benefit most – God or the devil?

Christian history demonstrates the importance of the principle -

- *the best response to wrong use is **right use** – not non-use.*

(The misuse of anointing, for instance, led most Protestants not to use it at all rather than use it Biblically. This resulted in their sick being deprived of such ministry for three centuries!)

'Militarism' may be horrid, but I cannot envisage this world devoid of things that Christ would not want us either

- to fight *for*

or

- to fight *against*.

(In general terms, our New Testament shows us what to fight *for*, and our newspapers what to fight *against*.)

It has a great bearing on our subject, since any local congregation that thinks it has nothing to fight for or against, will be loathe to move from Christian comfort out into Christian conflict!

When I first read *Onward Christian pilgrims, Christ will be our light*, etc, I quickly scribbled down these lines:

Sit down Christian soldiers. Just forget the war!
For the Cross of Jesus differs from before!
Christ, the Royal Master's fight against the foe
Has been reinterpreted – there's now no need to go!
Sit down Christian *pilgrims*, ('soldiers' we deplore,
for the word reminds us of sacrifice and war).

Evil is not real, it seems. There is no need to fight
if it makes you queasy, or does not feel quite right.
Words mean what we say they mean. We're misunderstood.
Life to us is nice, clean, pure, right, lovely, true and good.
Sit down Christian pilgrims, for fighting's out of date.
Army terms engender wrong thoughts of war and hate.

*

Satan shouted 'Onward!' to helpers down below
'With the Church not fighting, we're now free to go!
Spread the usual evils - work for your dear life –
persecution, anarchy, lust, envy, murder, strife!'

*

Christian folk stay seated, unless you think it odd
to aid the powers of darkness and to hide the light of God!

I will - as you may by now have guessed! - *continue* to use military language here and elsewhere.

I have faith in Christian worshippers, and I do *not* think that they will rise up and garrotte their Muslim or Jewish neighbours as a result of the use of the word 'soldier' by folk like myself and St. Paul! Nor, I am happy to record, would either Muslims or Jews expect such terror to arise from our use of such imagery.

4. Into Worship

One role of good worship is to return people prepared and equipped for further battle.

In worship, it is as if the Christian:

- Meets his/her Commanding Officer face to face, and is able to talk one-to-one.
- Has wounds bound-up; hurts shared, understood and their healing begun.
- Receives personal encouragement and attention.
- Receives inspiration from other Christians, past or present.
- Gets guidance from the writings or witness of the most experienced soldiers.
- Becomes aware of past battles won, and is reminded of the wider context of his/her fighting.
- Is enabled to see his/her battles in the light of the Victory already won.

- Has the pain of his/her isolation ended by the company of others fighting the same war.
- Receives fresh orders, and the reasons for them.
- Is re-equipped and given everything necessary to obey the orders given.
- Has his/her morale and sense of purpose restored.

(The analogy holds good, although it is beyond the scope of this article to spell out which items of worship do what - a good subject for a study group!)

Some readers may feel, correctly, that many Christians do not experience worship in this way.

My point is that

- **this is one of the proper roles of good worship for Christians who have fought valiantly under Christ's banner against sin, the world and the devil.**

(If worship seems *not* to play this sort of role, it may be because in a particular local situation that role is hardly needed as so many of those who attend worship have not been on really *active* Christian service since the last time they gathered! But that is another issue which I must also pass over here.)

When the Christian worship is right and real, and the Christian fighting is right and real, then they each have their place on a healthy cycle of in-put and out-put; of receiving and of giving. Each makes the other necessary.

Worship heals, cheers, sustains, guides, and encourages the Christian soldier and sends him/her back into battle

- re-assured by God's Presence,
- newly empowered by his Spirit,
- freshly rearmed with his Word

to fight for Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and to bring God's Kingdom of peace, forgiveness, love and justice here on earth as it is in heaven.

Battle cannot be endlessly sustained without refreshment and re-armament. As good Worship should drive us into battle, so good fighting should drive us back to Worship. For it is in Worship that we are -

- reacquainted
- refreshed
- revived
- restored
- renewed
- retrained
- rebuked (yes! - if necessary)
- re-equipped
- re-armed
- redirected
- re-commissioned.

The prefix 're-' underlines the pattern of the on-going healthy cycle of worship and witness: it has all happened before, is happening now, and will need to happen again, and again, and again...

- Good Worship of God *in* the church should drive us to -
- Good Service for God *outside* the church.

That is the **in-put to out-put** part of the cycle.

Then comes the **out-put to in-put** part of the cycle

- Good Service of God *outside* the church should drive us to -
- Good Worship of God *in* the church

Then the cycle is ready to begin again.

In-put and out-put each balance the other.

Worship without witness is unhealthy and distorted.

Witness without worship is unhealthy and distorted.

(The former can drive the Christian towards religious mania; the latter towards personal breakdown.)

Now that we have established the place of Worship and Witness on an endless cycle of in-put and out-put, we are now in a position to understand the basic topic of this article.

I shall make one claim and ask two questions.

My claim is:

We are undoubtedly sent out by God.

My questions are:

Why do Christian not know this and expect this?

Why does Christian worship so rarely express it?

In Part II we look at my claim, and it will provide some of Christ's basic attitude to **sending** – the lack of which accounts for my two questions above.

Part II: OUT-GOING GOSPEL (PAST)– CHRIST SENT

1. Christ Sends

The Christ who Welcomes is the Christ who Commissions.

Coming to God the Father through coming to Jesus Christ is a vital Christian theme that is rightly and frequently expressed in Christian worship. Such coming has two sides to it:

- Christ first welcomes us,
- but then **sends us**.

Being **sent-out** by Christ is all-too rarely mentioned in ordinary Sunday worship, and is usually reserved for Commissioning-style services like 'Confirmation' or special 'Missionary' occasions.

The New Testament is abundantly clear. Here is John's account of the Risen Christ –

...the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you.'

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit...'
[John 20:19-22]

Note the two **sendings**:

- **God sends Jesus,**
- **Jesus sends us.**

The relationship between the **Holy Spirit** and **sending** is important. Jesus first commands them to **go**, and only *after that* does he breathe the **Holy Spirit** on them – to enable them to do as he commanded.

Had they received the Spirit *first*, they might have been tempted simply to enjoy the Spirit behind church doors – a present-day temptation! But the **Holy Spirit was necessary because fear was making obedience impossible**. The Spirit is given not for our pleasure but for our obedience!

The Holy Spirit is not given primarily to enrich Christians for fellowship but to equip them for witness and service. The transformation of worship by the Holy Spirit – lovely as that is – is not, therefore, his ultimate goal, it is only a by-product.

The Holy Spirit's goal is that the world comes to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and through him to know God as Father. This the Holy Spirit makes possible through the empowered witness and the reconciliation by Christians sent by Jesus. In them the Spirit enables Christ to live, to work and – wonder of wonders - to be recognised.

God does not empower and sanctify the Church for the Church's own sake but for the *world's*.

Jesus made the same link at his Ascension between the **Spirit** and **witness** as he had done when addressing the disciples behind locked doors. He said:

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.' [Acts 1:8]

2. Groups

That the Risen Christ should **send** the disciples from the Upper Room was nothing new. He had repeatedly done it before. During his earthly ministry Jesus had

- sent out the Twelve
- sent out the Seventy

Let's look at these two events.

Jesus's Commission of the Twelve

Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles on their mission in pairs, with instructions to travel light and take no money. He gave them authority over evil.

[Mark 6:6-11. See also Luke 9:1-6, and Matthew 10:1,9-11,14.]

They –

*...went out and proclaimed that all should repent.
They cast out many demons,
and anointed with oil many who were sick
and cured them.*

[Mark 6:12-13. For why they used oil but Jesus did not, see the article:
Anointing With Oil – in the Bible and Today, also on this website.]

Jesus's Commission of the Seventy

Later in his ministry Jesus sent out a group of Seventy on a similar mission with similar instructions and similar results. [Luke 10:1-20]

Jesus realistically warned them that they were going out as lambs among wolves, and prepared them to face rejection. He taught them a good spiritual and psychological therapy. If a town rejected them, they should shake off its dust from their feet.

[Luke 10:11]

The results were, for the team, surprising and spectacular. They returned with joy. Jesus interpreted their mission in vivid spiritual terms '*I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority...*' [Luke 10:18]

Jesus's 'Great Commission' of the Church

Like John's account, quoted earlier, Matthew also has an account of Jesus sending out his young Church.

*'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember I am with you always...'*

[Matthew 28:18-20. One of the endings of Mark has a somewhat similar account in 16:13-18.]

3. 'Mission'?

We have noted the '**missions**' of the Twelve, and of the Seventy, and Jesus's '**Great Commission**'. It's time, then, to check out the word '**mission**'.

Some Christians are afraid of the word. Let's not avoid it because of uncertainty or misunderstanding. Let's understand it aright and teach others to do the same. It does not belong to any particular Christian group within the Church. It is of the essence of the Church itself.

The word **mission** comes from a Latin word (the same word is the root of *message*, *missile*, *missive*, *transmit* and *emissions*). It simply means '**to send**'.

This same Latin word comes twice in the Scripture quoted above when Jesus says: '**As the Father has SENT me, so I SEND you.**'

[John 20:21. Latin: Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.]

**Each of us, every single Christian therefore, past and present,
has been sent by Jesus.**

Of that there is NO DOUBT WHATEVER!

**The only area of doubt comes when you ask the question: 'We know all have been
commanded to go – but who have obeyed and actually gone?'**

The answer can be in doubt not only as regards individuals, but of entire local Christian communities. Hence this article!

4. Christ & Individuals

If being **sent-out** is so basic an ingredient of the Church one would expect to see this reflected in Jesus's treatment of *individuals* as well as *teams*. Let's see what the Gospels show us (space precludes any study of the rest of the New Testament.)

Jesus met individuals to heal them, to deliver them from evil, or sometimes even to raise them from the dead. If we group these events together, there are twenty-six such incidents of healing in the Gospels.

[A list of the Gospel references to all these healing encounters of Jesus with individuals, and his sending out of them is in the *APPENDIX* at the end of this article.]

Twenty-six occasions when Jesus meets individuals

In just over half of the 26 incidents there are obvious reasons why Jesus is not recorded as sending the person away.

Thus, five incidents were reported so briefly that there is no record of Jesus saying anything, and three more were healings at a distance where Jesus could not say anything directly.

Sometimes it would have been inappropriate for Jesus to send folk away. Prominent in this group are the three youngsters who belonged with their parents: the epileptic lad belonged with his dad, Jairus's daughter belonged at home, and the widow's son needed to stay with his mother. When Lazarus was raised from the dead he too belonged with his relations, Martha and Mary.

To the dozen above we might add those who were at church, i.e. synagogue, when Jesus healed them, the man with the withered hand and the woman with a 'spirit of infirmity'. As they were healed by God, their appropriate initial response was probably to give him thanks – like the tenth leper. They were already in the best place to do that. I think it unlikely that Jesus would have wanted to send them away.

Of the dozen remaining times where sending-out might have been possible and appropriate, there are only three occasions when it does not take place.

The paralytic at the Pool was not told to leave Jesus – although there is actually mention of Jesus leaving *him* and disappearing into the crowd. [John 5:1-16]

The other two incidents when Jesus did not send folk away involved a deaf man with a speaking difficulty, and a pair of blind men. [Mark 7:32-37; Matthew 20:30-34]
Jesus told them not to tell anyone. They all disobeyed, and put Jesus's programme in danger. It makes sense that Jesus did not send them off to tell others as he usually did.

Jesus commands folk to go.

In the remaining nine incidents Jesus sent them all away.

Thus the accounts show that in *three-quarters* of the cases when sending-away was not impossible or inappropriate, Jesus sent away those who came to him.

- A blind man at Bethsaida - Jesus *sent him away to his home* [Mark 8:22-26].
- A man suffering dropsy - Jesus *took him and healed him, and sent him away.* [Luke 14:1-5]
- One who was paralysed - Jesus commanded '*...take your mat and go to your home!*' [Mark 2:1-12]
- To a fearful woman who suffered internal bleeding, Jesus said, '*Go in peace, and be healed...*' [Mark 5:25-34]
- To the formerly-blind Bartimeus Jesus said, '*Go, your faith has made you well.*' [Mark 10:46-52]
- Jesus commands an individual leper. '*Go, show yourself to the priest,...*' [Mark 1:40-45]

The following are not only sent away, but their healing depends upon their obeying, for it was in their going that they were healed.

- Jesus commands a group of lepers, '*Go and show yourselves to the priests.*' [Luke 17:12-14]
- The man born blind Jesus commands '*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.*' [John 9:1-41] (St. John adds with delight that the name of the Pool meant *Sent* – almost a title of Jesus, as well as a characteristic of his ministry).

Jesus and 'Legion'

The beautiful account of Jesus sending 'Legion' is written in more detail and deserves more than a summary. [Mark 5:2-20]

*...the man who had been possessed by demons
begged him [Jesus] that he might be with him.
But Jesus refused, and said to him,*

*'Go home to your friends,
and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,
and what mercy he has shown you.'*

We read that 'Legion' ... *went away and began to proclaim...how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.*

Jesus's commissioning of 'Legion' provides, in my opinion, one of the best arguments for a U-turn in Christian expectancy and worship. Any preacher who wants to trigger new thoughts in their congregation about their being sent-out might use this story for the following text:

He begged that he might be with Jesus. But Jesus refused, and said to him, 'Go...' [Mark 5:18-19] It will almost certainly be the first time that they have ever heard a sermon on *that* text!

When Jesus's words are seen in context, of course, Jesus had just gone aboard a boat, and had the former demoniac gone with him, he would have been taken away from his 'home' area and such friends as he had. Instead of leaving him desolate on the shore, Jesus gives him this inspiring agenda to get to work on:

- *'Go home to your friends,*
- *and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,*
- *and what mercy he has shown you.'*

This gave 'Legion' a positive new aim and purpose, and something with which to kick-start his new life. [For a song based on this see 'Go and Tell' in the HYMNS section of this website.]

Jesus gave 'Legion' no encouragement to talk about the demons and their fate, but what the Lord had done to *him*. It was sound advice which he obeyed (verse 20). The fact that 2,000 years later he is known only by the name 'Legion' may indicate that those who heard his story were more interested in what happened to the demons than what happened to the possessed man.

Christian 'ministry' springs from love, and, when God gives blessing, it can evoke love in return. Such new energy needs to be channelled aright. 'Legion's' gratitude to Jesus must have been immeasurable, and his new ties with Jesus already strong and deep. Jesus's command to him was to redirect his adoration outward into proclamation.

Jesus and Mary

On Easter morning, the Risen Jesus did much the same with Mary as he had with 'Legion'. Mary, like 'Legion', had suffered from multiple demonic possession until Jesus had delivered her. [Mark 16:9] Her deep love had prompted her to come first to the tomb while the others were in bed and it was still dark. She was distraught at the assumed death of her Master. The Risen Christ comes to her and speaks her name, whereupon she probably flung herself at the feet of her Master. She was the first to know of the Resurrection!

As he did with 'Legion', Jesus firmly turns the mighty force of her love outward [John 20:17]. The traditional words are *'Do not touch me'*. The New Revised Standard Version has *'Do not hold on to me.'* The words can be – and perhaps should be – translated:

'Do not keep clinging to me... but go and tell'

Jesus redirects her love from himself to those who needed to hear the Good News about him. Jesus transforms her static adoration by adding movement to it which will show itself in proclamation. *Mary Magdalene went and announced...*(verse 18)

Adoration and proclamation belong to each other.

- Adoration needs the outlet of proclamation;
- Proclamation needs the fire of adoration.

Jesus makes Mary do a U-turn, to prevent her becoming trapped in a *cul-de-sac* of devotion.

We need Jesus regularly to do the same for us, but we have many pressures working against us – as we shall see in Part III.

This account of Mary at the Tomb, like the account of 'Legion' also provides an unexpected text for Church witness -

Jesus said:

'Do not keep clinging to me ... but go and tell!'

The rest of the New Testament, on which I have no space to elaborate, not only underlines this theme, but owes its very existence to Christ's commission to Christians to **go out**.

Part III – IN-GOING RELIGION – *Cul-de-sac* Worship

1. Roots of *cul-de-sac* Worship

One reason why Christian worship is like it is today is because of its roots.

Prayers of the Jews

Jesus was a Jew, and his first followers were mainly Jewish. Their patterns of worship were Jewish – and will not have changed much even when Christian Jews opted to worship on Sunday – the Day of Resurrection, not on the Sabbath (Saturday).

Although Jews were religious, they were Jews not because of belief, but because of *race*. (This makes them very different from the Church which is a community bound by *belief*.) The future of their 'church' did not rest on getting other folk to accept their beliefs and join, but simply in Jewish parents having kids. Children were, therefore, paramount among God's blessings.

What the Jewish Church needed for survival were fruitful parents, not fruitful evangelists! The growth of their race meant the growth of their church - for they were one-and-the-same.

The relevant point here is that the Jews had no incentive to go out and get converts, because even if a Gentile accepted Jewish beliefs he was not a Jew as he had no Jewish parents – and you cannot reinvent parents!

[I acknowledge, of course, the existence of 'proselytes', of whom Ruth was the most noteworthy, and to which the New Testament refers, e.g. Matthew 23:15, Acts 2:10, 6:5 & 13:43, etc. It does not alter my main point nor warrant explanation here. The inquiring reader is referred to articles on 'Proselytes' in Biblical dictionaries.]

When we bear in mind that to be a Jew was based on *birth* not *belief*, we realise afresh how particularly apt it was that Jesus should say to Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher, that to be a member of the New Covenant, the new Israel - '***You must be born again/born from above.***' (It can be translated either way.) The agents of life this time round could not be Mum and Dad - but something entirely different, and not physical - *water* and God's *Spirit*. [John 3:3-8]

The local Jewish worshipping community survived *without* its members being sent-out, and its worship – based on Scripture, exposition of Scripture, intercessions, and the Psalms – reflected that, and formed the basis of worship for the earliest Christians.

Prayers in Community

By the sixth century Christian communities were established which existed to be centres of Prayer. The Jewish habit of regular times of prayer had been taken over by Christians [see Acts 10:9 (noon) 16:25 (midnight)]. These times of prayer and meditation centred on the Psalms, hymns and Scripture, and there were usually eight of them, one at night. [Called Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None (pronounced 'known'), Vespers, Compline, and Matins.] These were established in Britain in the 7th. century, and are still in use.

The so-called 'invention' of printing [It was the invention not of printing but of moveable type] brought the words of Scriptures and Christian worship to people in their own language. While prayers eight times a day worked in religious communities, it was not practical for the average Christian. The compilers of the Book of Common Prayer (1662), therefore, condensed the essence of the eight 'Divine Offices' (as they were called) into just two – Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

[The former is essentially Matins plus Prime, the latter, Vespers plus Compline.]

The Prayer Book's services of Morning and Evening Prayer have been of enormous influence since the 17th. century on worship far beyond the Anglican Church. Their roots, Jewish and Christian, governed their content. There was

- no sermon or teaching required,
- there was no final blessing given,
- there was no sending out.

The monastic prayer-times on which Morning and Evening Prayer are based served Christians in close communities and had only to uphold them spiritually during the three or four hours before the next prayer time!

Today, it is not surprising if, say, a woman finds Morning Prayer less than ideal to sustain her for seven whole days of coping with pregnancy, two small children, part-time work, a shaky marriage, ageing parents, vandals, a troublesome car, rising costs, a blocked drain and a mortgage!

Just because there was *cul-de-sac* worship in history, it did not mean that Christians had *cul-de-sac* minds! Christians made a *massive* contribution to Western medicine, education, relief of the poor, etc. Christian action is nothing new, and one of the finest DIY (Do-It-Yourself) *send-out* prayers ever written is the 13th. century Prayer of St. Francis:

**Make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred let me sow love,
where there is injury, pardon,
where there is discord, peace, etc...**

In earlier centuries they *did* serve their Lord outside of the church building! **My point is that their worship was not structured to encourage them.** They were impelled by God. Had their worship times been as spaced-out as ours it would have needed to focus, encourage, feed, strengthen and enhance that prompting.

For centuries Christians were encouraged to love their neighbours by two means –

- prayer, and
- giving ('alms').

The prayers were good –

*...that it may please thee to comfort and help the faint hearted
...to raise up them that fall
...to succour, help and comfort all who are in danger, necessity or tribulation*

Although the services sent the prayers of the people and the alms of the people off in their respective directions, they did not send off the people themselves!

Even when in the Prayer Book (1662) the Conversion of St. Paul was celebrated, the prayer for the occasion only encouraged worshippers to believe Paul's doctrine, not to go and witness as he did. The beautiful weekly prayers ('Collects') were never orientated to witness and mission, but to the defence of the Church and the holiness of its members *en route* to their heavenly reward. Even at Confirmation there was no sending-out! The peace of God would guard the hearts and minds of the 'new' Christians. That was important, but it was a defensive and static concept. It was not equipment to *go*!

Action Stations!

In the late 1920's, after a quarter of a millennium, there was opportunity to revise the Prayer Book. An immense development had taken place since 1662.

- **It was recognised that it was not enough in worship to ask God to help others.**
- **God's helping of others often required his worshippers doing it for him!**

(It all sounds obvious – and so it is – but most of our public worship today *still* does not begin to make this clear.)

A mighty call to action replaced the previously static blessing at Confirmation. It began at the same place, but moved on. The words broke new ground. Read them for yourself – and experience the sheer *thrill* of them!

GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD IN PEACE;
BE OF GOOD COURAGE;
HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD;
RENDER TO NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL;
STRENGTHEN THE FAINT HEARTED;
SUPPORT THE WEAK;
HELP THE AFFLICTED;
HONOUR ALL MEN;
LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD,
REJOICING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AND THE BLESSING OF GOD ALMIGHTY,
FATHER, SON AND HOLY GHOST,
BE UPON YOU AND REMAIN WITH YOU FOR EVER.

This is one great way that God answers prayer! It was a mighty step, and a powerful sending-out of God's people. It was excellent as far as it went (even if it was a bit short on the Good News itself.)

The enormity of the change can hardly be exaggerated.

It is one thing when worship

leads you to ask God to support the weak and help the afflicted.

It is quite another when the worship

commands you yourself to go and do it for him!

To which of the two eras does your worship belong?

Is it still in the time-warp of the first era?

If it is, you are reading the right article – stay with it!

No Go!

Parliament had the power to veto revision of the Prayer Book, and did so. Their 'No' meant that God's 'Go' had little chance of taking-root in worship, and no U-turn has ever got into the blood-stream of English-speaking worshippers. The sending-out prayer remained only a 'proposal' and was not widely used as it was (technically) illegal!

That did not stop many of us adopting it. I remember in the late 1960's as a young curate using it (when my Vicar was away!) and blasting my congregation forth from the building with every ounce of volume, energy and authority that I could muster! It was not the most wonderful thing I did as a priest, but it was certainly among the most *exciting!*

I believed passionately, then as now, that if God's Family, the Church, **went out** – it would live; if it didn't – it would die. It was as simple as that!

Not that the death of the Church would matter overmuch in *itself*, except that if that happened God would lose his major instrument by which he makes his Son's saving work known. God's offer of rescue would not become known to those in need of it.

By the 1970's churches were not only getting the message of being *sent out*, but beginning to express it. Words like these began to be used:

**Send us out into the world in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.**

[*'Into the world'* is often omitted now, due - so the story goes – because of the then Anglican Archbishop saying that he would resign if it was retained! Ramsey was a theologian, and his reason was sound but wrongly applied. True, the Church cannot reconcile the world to God if it is totally divorced from it – and he wanted to avoid any such impression. But in his enthusiasm he seemed to have forgotten that *'into the world'* would only be said by those *inside a church building!* From *that* stand-point *'into the world'* makes sense and implies no complete divorce between the two, and should have been retained.]

A U-turn from worship began to be further encouraged by such final dismissals as:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The wording of the Blessing, however, seems not to have changed. It is nowadays still usual to invoke God's peace for the guarding of our hearts and minds, but with no reference to being sent out in service.

In the next section I shall indicate some of the reasons why Christian worship and Christian worshippers tend to get stuck in *cul-de-sac* worship. Once they are recognised, they can be tackled. Only if they are tackled can there be any positive change from *cul-de-sac* worship to worship with a healthy U-turn.

A word of warning. I feel that if worship were redesigned to do a U-turn to send people out *before* they were convinced of its centrality and importance, then such moves might only bring resentment and division. Right changes require right timing. Without a spiritual miracle of transformation, hearts and habits are much slower to change than heads. Knowing, intellectually, that a change is appropriate is not enough to make a person go along with it without protest!

Every congregation and local Christian situation is different, so there will be many exceptions to any generalities. But I will risk a generality and say that I would expect that no real emphasis on **sending-out** can get into the blood stream of a local congregation in under two years of hammering away at it. What follows will give indications of the areas to be understood and tackled.

2. A Dozen Factors which Prevent any U-Turn in Worship.

If you bake a cake and it is no good, an expert may tell you the four things you did wrong. But suppose the expert thought, 'I don't want to appear negative and discouraging, I shall only mention *two* of the four things.' The next time you met him/her, you would be cross because his/her advice hadn't worked – you had corrected the two things that were mentioned but still the cake was a flop!

Only by giving *all* the reasons why it went wrong could you have a good chance of getting it right.

Now that I have established that as a principle, I shall apply it. What follows are a dozen of the factors that prevent worship sending-out its worshippers, and that keep them from going even when sent!

My belief is that only if *each factor* is understood and tackled can a healthy U-turn from worship to witness begin to take place, and begin to replace the *cul-de-sac* worship which has taken root among Christians in the West.

Do not be discouraged! The more reasons I indicate for the failure of Christians to be sent out, the more successful you can be in tackling the problem. Don't be put off by the number of factors – the more you tackle the sooner and surer the good results will come.

1. Past Patterns

As I have shown, Christian worship – whether informal or formal – has not in the past sent-out the assembled Christians. Some worshippers may have had such patterns deeply imbedded for decades, so that what in this article is regarded as 'odd' is to them completely normal.

To reverse their thinking is not easy, and will take time.

A leading Christian advised me to follow his example, and never talk of 'change' only 'development'. With that in mind what we are considering here is not how worship should be 'changed' but how God might want worship *developed* more appropriately and effectively.

It is probably a good idea in principle for leaders to take steps to ensure that patterns of behaviour and worship among Christians are never allowed to fossilize. A certain amount of ringing the changes prevents people from over-relying on such patterns. Folk need sufficient that is *not* changing around them to feel at ease, but sufficient *change* to prevent them from becoming over attached to the pattern.

2. False Security

Folk come to Christ because they need him. That is right and proper. Christ welcomes the weary and heavy-laden.

Many Christians find their security in the *things* of God, and need constantly to be weaned off them in order to find their security in God himself. When Christians find their security in the things of God, they become in-secure and feel threatened if these things change. The enormous 'steam' raised by some folk against change is not the voice of reason speaking but the voice of fear. To be sent-out when Church provides you with, perhaps, your only place of shelter may seem hard – and it is made all the more hard by pastors and priests who constantly fail to teach that we are members of a pilgrim Church – and our home is not here.

A hymn-book editor once boasted that he had axed all hymns that would have us hide in rocks, bosoms and other such places. His point was valid. But he was wrong to omit *Rock of ages*, and *Jesu, lover of my soul*, for there is nothing wrong in fleeing to God for shelter (and what better place to spent the night when asleep?). What *is* wrong – is *staying there!*

For those who have retreated to Church for shelter and into God to escape life, Christ's message to Mary Magdelene: '***Stop clinging to me, but go and tell...***' demands a whole new attitude – perhaps, of necessity, triggered by a new experience of the living Christ.

3. Social beliefs

For many of us society has changed so that it is now multi-faith and multi-cultural. The greater respect for those of other faiths and for their integrity is wholly good. The negative side of this is the spreading assumption that all faiths are therefore equal, and, like milk and plain chocolates with hard and soft centres, their variety exists simply to suit all religious tastes!

When statements like 'all faiths are equal' and 'all faiths lead to God' are assumed to be true, then the Church seems to have no really distinctive 'mission'. Christians should 'love one's

neighbour' but that is not *distinctively* Christian, and non-Christians appear to do it equally well – sometimes better.

If we ever allow ourselves to think that all religions are equal, then we have perhaps reached the summit of human arrogance. To say that all religions are equal boils down to this:

You see God's Son on the Cross,
and you say to God,
'You made a mistake -
his sacrifice was unnecessary!'

(There is no need for further argument about the exclusive claims of Christianity. If God thought in his plan for salvation that the Cross was necessary – it *was*! God cannot be wrong. That being so, then any religion *without* the Cross, without the Saviour, lacks something that God regards as necessary. Therefore it must be not completely adequate for God's *saving* purposes, whatever other uses he has for it, and however satisfying humans find it.)

Outsiders think that Christian claims to the 'exclusive' nature of our Christ-centred faith are promoted out of self-interest. No! Far from it. To stand on the exclusive nature of the Christian Gospel is to invite persecution; to deny it is a sure way to avoid it. Any *self*-motivated Christian would deny it – and live a safe life!

4. Mission misunderstood

The mistakes and atrocities committed down the years by Christ's followers in his name have rightly alerted modern Christians to the danger of doing the wrong things for the right reasons. The necessary re-think about mission and outreach can undermine the conviction of its necessity and make folk unsure of its content.

People will not readily go or be 'sent out' if there is an underlying unease about the goal of going, and the style and content of any 'message' that they should deliver.

What is mission? Christians can (with demonic intensity) get easily divided on this essential issue, so it is wise to stick to the essentials.

The heart of Christian Mission is Jesus Christ.

Who he is, what he has done and why, and his living presence today are all part of that message which we call the Good News.

Christ cannot actually be seen by non-Christians, so God uses those who acknowledge him as Lord as Christ's replacement body. At once there is a snag. Christians are not, for the most part, obviously like Christ, because we are weak and sinful. God's solution is to offer the Spirit of Christ to change and transform his followers, so that between them they can present the Person of Christ to the world.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to make us holy – like Jesus. The 'fruit' of holiness in our lives which the Spirit enables, together with the gifts ('charisms') he gives and allocates among us,

mean that Christians as a local body enable the world to see the life of Jesus Christ himself, whose 'Body' the Church now is.

If we compile from the New Testament a list of the gifts and graces that the Holy Spirit offers us and enables – a wonderful thing happens. The picture and person of **Jesus Christ himself** begins to emerge!

Here are the lists run together:

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;
prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, compassion;
apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers;
wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues;
speaking, serving.*

[from Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11,
1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and 1 Peter 4:11]

Christians in whom the Holy Spirit is active, and when working *together*, show Jesus to the world. (That is why disunity among Christians is so deadly serious, because it is as if what should be the picture of Jesus has become, like an unmade jigsaw, just a heap of pieces – so that no true likeness can be seen. Jesus goes unrecognised, because disunity splits apart his likeness, and disfigures him grotesquely.)

I believe that the Mission of the Church is simply that non-Christians should have the opportunity to meet Christ in and through the lives of their local Christians.

This article is written in the belief that many do not know this, do not feel it, and that their particular Christ-like-ness, though real enough, is hemmed-in by the walls of the place in which they worship, and/or cut off from other Christ-like-nesses because of disunity.

So many Christian have yet to discover the immense importance and significance of that most humble but essential bit of Church equipment – I mean the **Door!**
(If you are Sunday School teacher or are taking children around a church building – explain the **door** to them in the light of this article.)

Worship is like a game of football – at halftime the original goal gets changed to one in the opposite direction entirely! Christian worshippers also 'change ends' – after *eating* and *learning* (focused on the Table/Altar and the Bible) they switch to *going* – focused on the door.

5. Church consuming

Another factor in the failure of Christians to go is that for so many in the West their 'church' consists of great structures, both of people and of stone (not always distinguishable!).

In the West it is possible – indeed, likely – that so much time and energy of devout Christians are consumed by the Church, that they have little left for service in the world. The demands, in terms of time, talents and money, of the Christian building and the maintenance of the 'plant' should rightly occupy the Christian, but they frequently have to *pre-occupy* the Christian.

Small groups have to raise tens of thousands of pounds simply in an attempt to keep the church running. And this before any thought is given to what it is running *for*...or its mission to those outside it.

The upkeep of 'the church' in its widest sense can be so great as to absorb all the energy left over from work and home.

It is as if the running-repairs to keep the 'lifeboat' of the Church from sinking take the full-time efforts of all the crew. Getting it moving is hardly possible, and to use it for actually saving others almost out of the question!

A look at the local church accounts is likely to demonstrate why Christians are not being sent-out. The resources required to keep the church afloat are massive. Many churches need a radical change before they can fulfil their calling to change the world.

Most denominations are in financial and other difficulties. Perhaps the shaking of the foundations (which so many Christians are feeling) is part of a demolish-to-rebuild plan that God has for us. Peter, after all, claimed that he had no silver or gold but what he had was spiritual authority – and he ministered life to the lame. [Acts 3:6] The Church in the West has turned the Church of Peter upside down! It has largely lost its authority and is crushed by what it owns.

6. False Division

Many Christians, probably most, use their particular gifts to help others in various ways, large or small. What Christians do and what 'the Church' does are inseparable, because Christians are the Church. Often there is a false division between what is regarded as the Church's outreach and care and the outreach of its individual members. What individual Christians do, ought to be made known to the local church family and recognised as part of its outreach. It may appear that the Church does nothing, yet individual Christians are very busy in their own spheres being 'instruments of peace', etc. They are the Church. Such care is part of the Church's service.

This is good news! Part of the muddle of not feeling sent-out is because what Christians do as Christians goes largely unrecognised by the local Christian Family. Regular articles in the church magazine, interviews in church of churchgoers, and projects in Sunday School would reveal the extent of this 'mission'. It provides a good foundation, but needs to be recognised first.

7. T.V. Worship

For many, the attitudes they have towards the television can be the same as those they have to worship. Worship is done by 'them' over 'there'. We sit back and we like it for an hour. We don't expect it to change us in any way, although the rest from responsibilities of home or work may have refreshed us.

We may believe in the truths of worship, but many do not expect the truths to touch them.

I remember at school, after Sunday morning worship – in which confession and the declaration of God's forgiveness formed a regular part – that a group of other Christian boys would gather for prayer after lunch. The first thing they would do would be to confess their sins! Their sincerity was unquestionable. They believed in confession and in the reality of God's forgiveness, but could not, or *would* not, see those realities when expressed in worship. I did, and resolutely refused to confess twice what I knew God had already forgiven! Having first heard my call to the priesthood at the age of nine, I had always believed that God is faithful, and so God's words in Christian worship must do what they say they do! (Why aspire to lead Christian worship if, say, the words of forgiveness were only true one week, but not the next?)

Worship is not just allowing others to offer our praises to God for us, but is a time when God in a special way promises to offer *himself* to us. If worship seems not to deliver the goods, it is not because God is withholding them, but because we are not accepting them. Just because worship is spiritual it doesn't mean that it needn't *work*. I expect that a large number of Christian worshippers expect to get little out of worship, and find that it usually lives right down to their expectations!

Worship is meant to *work*! The old adage that it ‘*is not what you get out of it but what you put into it*’ is dangerous pious clap-trap if it results in worshippers assuming that the power of God in corporate worship to heal, forgive, unite, refresh, restore, renew, re-equip, and recommission is neither true, nor to be expected.

If worshipping Christians do not experience God's transforming and equipping them in *cul-de-sac* worship, they will not readily believe that God will equip them to do a U-turn and go out for him!

8. The 'Christian' Society

You might have expected me to head this *The 'Secular' Society* as undermining the Church's call to mission. Not so. In many parts of the West members of society think themselves to be 'Christian' for two main reasons.

- (i) Their behaviour is generally 'decent' and
- (ii) they have been born in, or live in, a 'Christian' country.

This is an enormous mental hindrance to the Church's mission. The 'Christian' label used outside of the Church can mislead Christians into thinking like this:

- Most folk in society call themselves 'Christian'.
- If they assume they are, I'm sure they must be.
- Anyway it would be arrogant of me to question it!
- They must, therefore, be basically just the same as I am.
- They don't go to Church, but church is an off-putting extra anyway.
- I wouldn't presume to tell them anything.

If the term 'non-Christian' is used, it is usually assumed to be a slur on a person's character and behaviour. This is because the term 'Christian' appears to non-Christians to indicate some standard of *behaviour*, not a commitment to a religious *belief*.

If a Buddhist calls me a non-Buddhist because I don't worship the Buddha, it is not a slur on me – and full marks for accuracy!

In the same way, it is no slur on a non-Christian to be called a non-*Christian* if he/she does not worship and follow the *Christ*. It is a fact, and one, furthermore, which respects their religious stance – whatever that may be. The indiscriminate labelling of non-Christians as 'Christians' is disrespectful to them. It fails to accept people as they are; it slaps a comforting label on them which suggests that they are really someone else – much more like you and me! Fortunately our multi-cultural and multi-faith society cannot but alert us to the utter foolishness, and sin, of it.

It is this never-ending confusion that bedevils Christian mission in the West. It leads to those outside of – and sometimes within – the Church to believe that active Christians have no Good News for the millions of those who are indifferent, because they think they are 'Christians' also. (This state of affairs has not been helped by years of careless policy over infant baptisms.)

9. Private Affair

Linked to the above is the 'private affair' view of religion. If 'religion' is a private affair (so the thinking goes) the faith of others - or their non-faith – is none of my business. And, folk go on to argue, others should be left alone, their privacy respected, and their ultimate destiny need not concern me.

It needs a massive re-education and/or personal transformation by the Holy Spirit to know and feel that the eternal destiny of others is something for which, as a Christian, I am partly and personally responsible. Christ's Great Commission, '***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit***' [Matthew 28:19] can become the Great *Omission* – because religion is wrongly believed to be a private affair.

I suspect that the 'private affair' stance arises from

- (a) uncertainty about one's own religious faith and position, and
- (b) fear.

Above all it is love that is missing. If you see a person drowning in the river – you take action if you care, but do nothing if you do not care. Christians will leave others well alone

- if they do not know that they are perishing [John 3:16]
- and if they do not love them.

Perfect love casts out fear [1 John 4:18].

10. The Building

Any architect will believe that environment influences peoples' behaviour. Sadly, buildings which are built for Christian worship are almost invariably *cul-de-sacs*, so they tend to strengthen all the thinking behind *cul-de-sac* worship rather than question or correct it.

Christians enter the building and generally face a focal area for God's Presence and communication with us by Word and Sacrament.

After *cul-de-sac* worship has ended, Christian worshippers usually find themselves in an architectural *cul-de-sac*. There is nowhere to go, other than to turn around *away* from where the truths about God have been focused (in music, speech and actions). So Christians have physically to turn their back on all that has reminded them of God, and go off into the pagan world.

Some churches have an area mid-way between the sanctuary and the outside world with such 'love-thy-neighbour' items as loos and tea-facilities. After centuries of being confined in loo-less buildings with pointed arches, Christians may understandably feel that such areas are revolutionary in the extreme. They certainly enable informal social mixing which should be a very important element of every Christian fellowship.

But as far as the subject of *this* article is concerned, it does need to be said that the prime purpose of God's **sending-out Christians from worship** is *not* that they should simply have tea and biscuits with other Christians! It can be a spring-board for action, and if so all well and good, but it can begin subtly to replace *out-reach* by *in-reach*.

We leave church to serve Christ in his *world*, not in his Church.

11. Spiritual Pressures Against

Imagine you were told that a potential terrorist group meets regularly in the next door house – and would you report back to the authorities whether they were to be taken seriously or not. The first thing you would do would be to try and find out whether they 'meant business' and were to be taken seriously or whether they just 'talked shop' and need *not* be taken seriously. It would cause no concern to the authorities if they just gathered for the sake of meeting and chatting rebellious things – and did not feel themselves to be sent out to *do* anything!

The analogy applies to the Church also. A Church that gathers just to 'talk shop' and doesn't spread its message and witness to others is no threat to anybody or anything. In spiritual terms, if the Devil cannot stop us worshipping, he will not be unduly concerned unless he sees the worship spilling over into service and witness outside of the building. As long as we are not sent out and obey, then the local Christian community is not much of an instrument of God and therefore no threat to the devil.

Scripture, reason and experience point to the spiritual pressures against the Church and individual Christians to disobey Christ's command to 'Go'; pressures not to go out, but to keep their faith to themselves, and to view their religion as a 'private affair'. The devil must fear any U-turn that moves worship into witness, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he encourages all the factors that keep congregations chained to the unchanging.

It makes strategic sense that there is considerable spiritual pressure upon us to retain *cul-de-sac* worship and *cul-de-sac* assumptions. It is obvious that there will be even more pressure against any Church that wakes-up to Christ's command to '**Go!**'

12. Unclear Leadership

If a leader has clear answers to such basic questions as -

- What is the Church?
- To whom does it belong?
- What is it for?

then he/she will have reasonably good ideas of what Christians should be doing inside and outside of their building.

If, however, a leader is not sure that the Church belongs to God, that God created it as an instrument of his will, and his will is the reconciliation of the world unto himself in, and through, his Son, then he/she will have very little reason to send people out from worship (should any attend under such leadership!).

The dozen topics that I have raised are not easy ones, but they are the ones which in my view prevent worship and worshippers from responding to Christ's command to 'Go.' I stress again that it may be that these larger issues will need to be tackled before any real advances can be made to change *cul-de-sac* assumptions into U-turn action.

The whole issue of the sending out of God's people is inextricably tied-up with one's views of God, of his Gospel, of his Church and of his World. Perhaps that explains better than anything else why Christians who have inherited *cul-de-sac* worship hardly ever question it! It is easier to leave the big questions alone and to let things tick over as they have always done, and to present a united – if dwindling – front.

In the final part I will put forward some ideas to encourage your thinking about the outworking of Christ's sending out the local Christians from worship.

Part IV: OUT-GOING GOSPEL (PRESENT)– CHRIST SENDS

Part III outlined many reasons for the *cul-de-sac* mentality that stops *cul-de-sac* worship from developing into something more appropriate.

My many reasons and comments on them should alert local Christians – worship-leaders and worshippers – to the forces they are up against, and the need to tackle them if worship is to take Christ's commissioning of those present seriously.

Every local Christian worshipping community is so different in its position, its plant and its people that any suggestions in a general article such as this can only serve as stimuli to find what is appropriate locally. Items I mention are not a programme to be adopted, but just ideas to help you re-think your local situation.

Here are some of the things that *I* would be thinking about were I responsible for developing *cul-de-sac* worship into something which better reflected Christ's sending-out of his Church. Though bear in mind that tinkering around with worship will not change God's People very much until individual members are clear in their minds the answer to the question: 'Suppose Jesus did send me out, how would he want me to be? what would he want me to do?'

1. Sitting

To go from sitting to standing is to change from passive reception to being ready-for-action. A number of authors need to pace up-and-down to think, and some write standing up. This is because when we are standing the body and mind are in active mode, not passive. The phrase '*get-up-and-go*' says it all. 'Sitting down to go' would be a contradiction in terms not only physically but mentally as well.

When Christians are standing they are in action mode. This is the mode they are in when they sing the final hymn of a service. What then usually happens? The sequence is often a yo-yo pattern – up-down-up-down-up, like this:

stand	to sing final hymn
sit/kneel	for the blessing
stand	to indicate the end of the service, indicated by the exit of minister(s)
sit/kneel	down yet again, ostensibly to pray
stand	to leave

There are two sitting/slumping/kneeling times. The *final* time switches the congregation back into non-active, resting, listening mode. It needs to be closely examined and questioned once the **sending-out** of a congregation is accepted as the proper aim for the end of a service.

I remember once visiting a church, where the choir and clergy processed out at the end of the service. As the leaders were moving, the Rector indicated that the congregation should *sit*.

I sat, and expected to hear a special announcement of something – probably a national tragedy of some sort. Had the Queen been assassinated? Such was the effect on me of so unscheduled and unexpected a shift from moving-out to sitting down. There was no such notice. I never fathomed out any reasons why the standing congregation – all ready for off - were told to *sit*. It was the wrong thing at the wrong time; it stopped dead both the momentum of the worship, and the natural rhythm of the worshippers.

Sitting down, unfortunately, is the exact opposite of sending out! It jams on the brake instead of pressing the accelerator hard to the floor!

The minister may have been simply pandering to the inevitable. By that I mean the widespread habit of many (but not younger) Christians automatically to sit, slump or kneel in quiet when worship is over - ostensibly for prayer.

Has anybody ever *asked* what actually is taking place when folk do this? I must confess that I have never understood the need for it. Folk have been worshipping for probably an hour or more. What can they gain by two more minutes that was not within the worship? If the worship has been rightly led and constructed it will have equipped them to leave without their adding further devotional bits to complete it. If it has to be spent in 'collecting their thoughts' then the worship was badly arranged! Perhaps the worship was too fast or wordy? If such folk need to intercede or give thanks, then why did they not use the intercessions and thanksgiving of the service?

If the service is properly structured, there should be no need for the majority of the worshippers to have to 'round it off' by sitting down for additional Do-It-Yourself (DIY) devotions.

Here is an analogy. If you have just enjoyed a fine four-course dinner, you should not need to go off to a little room by yourself to nibble a biscuit that is in your handbag/pocket. If that was necessary the dinner would have been at fault.

Worship ought not to be so rushed and over-wordy that folk need to add a time of recollection at the end of it. Such a time would be better integrated *into* the worship (see below) than to be allowed to immobilise the going-out and natural movement of the congregation.

It would be interesting to find out what is *actually happening* during these additional 'prayer times'. I suspect very little – if anything! It would be easy to find out.

Give all the members of a congregation a slip with options to tick.

A form (not to be signed) but filled-in by every member of the congregation might reveal that there is very little of any religious significance going on at all! It would be interesting to try something like this (see below):

Tick the item(s) closest to what you experience – and add your own if it is not listed:

- Just getting together coats, books.
- Finding my handkerchief.
- Having a quiet chat with the person next to me.
- Just listening to the organ.
- Finding my last cough sweet.
- Just having a breather.
- Reminding myself what God has told me in the service that I must act upon.
- Resting my legs from too much standing.
- Worrying about lunch.
- Making notes so that I do not forget God's main message to me.
- Just avoiding everyone.
- Hoping it is not now raining.
- Looking again at the main Scripture passage(s).
- Looking around to catch the eye of a person I want to talk to.
- Nothing at all.

etc and etc...

Such a response might indicate

- that the majority of folk sit down for the simple, but hardly adequate, reason that **the majority of folk sit down!**
- for the great majority it has very little Christian significance or content.

Some worshippers, I am sure, would fight tooth and claw for the retention of this habit, but that says more about their fear of change than the usefulness of the item itself. Folk find security in that which does not change (see above). Indeed, the concept of 'crisis' almost invariably arises when something has changed.

'Development' rather than 'abolition' would be the best way forward, so here is a suggestion.

What about moving such a time for reflection back *into* the worship itself? Perhaps just before the final hymn?

'Before we sing our final hymn we will have a couple of minutes in quiet to spend in any way you wish. Perhaps you will want to remind yourselves of what God may have been telling you in this service; perhaps you have a special need you want him to meet when he blesses you and sends you out.'

This would encourage **all the congregation** to use such a time profitably, and would be better in every way than the muddled and vague situations that usually follow services at present, in which 95 % are doing nothing – but are convinced that it is significant and important!

It would underline the end of the service's 'get-up-and-go' theme instead of cutting-off its outgoing movement. If such a time was put into the service itself, then there would be no need for everyone to slump back into their seats – but they could literally be sent out and go.

(Any compulsive pray-er could, of course, find the quietest part of the church for an additional DIY (Do-It-Yourself) time of recollection, or if it is *that* vital for them they can stay in the building when the rest leave – or arrive 15 minutes early. The devotional preferences of such individuals should not be allowed to dictate to an entire congregation, and should certainly not be allowed to jeopardise the general going-forth of God's people.)

Worship's 'little ups and downs'

If the Blessing comes *after* the final hymn, then the folk sit/kneel down again as my outline above indicates.

Why not place the final hymn *after* the Blessing?

The yo-yo sequence that is *usually* like this:

stand	to sing final hymn
sit/kneel	for the blessing
stand	to indicate the end of the service, indicated by the exit of minister(s)
sit/kneel	down yet again, ostensibly to pray (or search for gloves, etc.)
stand	to leave

instead becomes like this:

sit/kneel	for quiet recollection and for the blessing
stand	for final hymn, the exit of ministers and to leave

Instead of five shifts there are only two. The progression is clear and simple, spiritually, theologically, physically and psychologically. It shifts from sitting to standing, from receiving to going.

2. 'After Communion'!

Many services today have Sections – Preparation, Ministry of the Word, Communion, etc.

Folk would be helped to be aware of the shift of focus of worship to the outside world if the final part was a section in its own right. My own denomination is so vague about the content of the final section of a Holy Communion service that they label it 'After Communion' - thereby defining it by what it is *not*! (At least I suppose that is one step better than 'Before Lunch' !)

Other titles for a final section of a service can include 'The Dismissal'.

Although the word has the great send-out '**mission**' word within it, I think it has even stronger associations with school, and would probably mean that for many it spoke mainly of something nasty being *over*, rather than of being *sent out*. If a person is 'dismissed' from school he may have been expelled, and if someone is 'dismissed' from work he may be unemployed.

'The Dismissal' is used for Holy Communion services in *Common Worship* (AD 2000), although for Baptism with Holy Communion it does actually have as a heading –

The Sending Out

The section is very short and consists simply of

- a blessing
- the giving of a lighted candle
- dismissal

Its blessing has the traditional format.

The words accompanying the giving of the candle provide a U-turn to the worship:

*God has delivered us from the domination of darkness
and has given us a place with the saints in light.*

*You have received the light of Christ;
walk in this light all the days of your life.*

(All say) *Shine as a light in the world
to the glory of God the Father.*

I want to consider the Blessing itself.

'Recommissioning'

Every Christian has already been commissioned by virtue of their being Christ's followers, and in the majority of cases this will have been publicly stated at Baptism and/or Confirmation, or similar occasions. The heading 'Recommissioning' –

- relates strongly to the Biblical theme of sending out and 'mission'.
- relates to the past of every Christian present.
- upgrades the status of the final section of the service.
- does not indicate anything *new* – and therefore need not cause panic!

The traditional 'Blessing' is usually short, e.g. **The Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you, always.**

It is very easy for Christians to regard the final Blessing as an empty action that does little more than switch-off the service. To many present – even sincere Christians - the raised hand

in blessing may be regarded as little more than, say, the parting wave of an entertainer leaving the stage.

The heading '**Recommissioning**' could help remind those present (backed up by adequate teaching of course – see the article on *Laying on of Hands* also on this website) that when hands are raised over them, the action reaffirms and rekindles the divine Commission that they are likely already to have received.

- It re-confirms their life of service for Christ, and
- re-assures them of God's continuing provision and power to accomplish it.

Hands raised in blessing over a crowd differs in no way whatever from hands laid in blessing on an individual – it is simply the convenient and time-saving way of doing the same thing.

God's Blessing as we go out to serve him is essential – we certainly cannot serve him without it. And in many cases the Blessing given in God's name in worship will be the main expression and vehicle of this.

The Blessing, for from being an empty tail-piece to a big event, should be its climax! It summarises all that God has given in the worship, and, based upon that, it focuses on all that God has promised for what lies ahead.

The Blessing is the 'punch-line' of worship.

When I was well enough to take services, whenever I gave the final Blessing I always felt it was the start of something, not the end. I always had a feeling akin to 'Now let's get this show on the road!' Or, to express it with a little more theological precision – 'For God's sake, GO!'

Some priests not only raise their hands in blessing, but also move their hands forward in a symbolic 'pushing-out' of their congregation by God.

The Blessing is a great symbol. It is the touch of God upon an individual life. It is important, not because of the status of the person privileged to give it, but because God is faithful and God is generous. He knows our needs before we ask them, and longs to give us far more than we can either desire or deserve, and (did we but know it) frequently expects more from us than we could ever imagine!

3. The Final Hymn

It was not that long ago that Charles Wesley's *Forth in thy name, O Lord I go...* was almost the only sending-out hymn with which to conclude a service.

[Revised by Jubilee Hymns in 1962 to 'Forth in your name O Lord I go.']

The situation has improved, although few hymn books can match the American *Worship & Rejoice* having a section entitled 'Going Forth' with a eleven titles in it.

[*Worship & Rejoice*, published by Hope Publishing Company, Illinois, 2001.]

Its 'Going Forth' hymns are –

Go forth for God, go to the world in peace	(J.B. Peacey)
Hallelujah! We sing your praise	(Anon. South African)
The Trees of the Field	(S.G. Rubin)
Saviour, Again to Your Dear Name ...	(J. Ellerton)
Sent Forth by God's Blessing	(O. Wessendorf)
Send Me, Jesus	(Anon. South African)
Shalom, My Friends	(trans. D.P. Hasted)
God be with You	(J.E. Rankin)
Go Now in Peace	(B. Wren)
Forth in Your Name	(C. Wesley, revised)
Go, My Children, with my Blessing	(J.J. Vajda)

One of them, 'Go Forth for God', is a metrical version of the commissioning words of the 1928 Prayer Book that I have quoted and stressed so much in Part II. ('Go forth into the world in peace, etc...') It begins –

*'Go forth for God, go to the world in peace,
be of good courage, armed with heavenly grace,
in God's good Spirit daily to increase...
...strengthen the faint,
give courage to the weak
help the afflicted...'*

It is masterly, and beautifully done. It would be fine as a sung blessing, sung by the priest/minister. But when an entire congregation apparently *sing to God* the words originally *God addressed to them*, then its 'direction' has been reversed, but without the necessary change of words. That is a mistake.

For example, when a parent says to a child 'Go and collect the mail', the child does not naturally respond with the words 'Go and collect the mail!' He/she changes the wording sufficiently to make a *response*, e.g. 'Okay, I'm just off to get it.'

You can see, can't you, that when God's words to us are –

'Go forth in peace',

if we want to *respond* to that the words need to be changed to something like

'You have sent us forth'.

That expresses God's commissioning from the *congregation's* point of view. (I will pick up this theme again shortly when dealing with my hymn: *So now we go!*)

Readers will have their own selection of hymns and songs which **send-out**, for there are now an increasing number:

G. Hutchinson's *Give me a heart that will love the unlovely...*

G. Kendrick's *Shine Jesus shine* [*Lord the Light of your Love...*]

G. Kendrick's *Go Forth in his name*. [*We are his children...*]

D. Bilbrough's *Go in Your Name* [*Lord we come in adoration...*]

If you are short of such going-forth material most of my own hymns on this website have some section which attempts to alert worshippers to the reality of **being sent out**. (They show, incidentally that the problem of *cul-de-sac* worship has been bothering me for at least thirty years!) The full versions of all of them can be found in the HYMNS section of this website - from which they can be downloaded and freely used (with copyright waived).

My **New Year** hymn concludes –

*Send us out, therefore, by your Spirit, lives renewed, so they make clear
that, through Christ, the father offers love, joy, peace – so Hope is here!*

My **Holy Communion** hymn has –

*Holy, Spirit, God's empowering, by whose life the church is led,
in your mercy, send us strengthened from the Breaking of the Bread.*

My hymn for **Commissioning/Confirming**, etc. has -

*Father, Son , and Holy Spirit, send us out, empower'd. We pray
for the Spirit's inspiration in our witness – day by day.*

My hymn on the **Anointing of the Spirit** ends –

*Heal your church. Unite, anoint us with your Spirit's power to tell
to the world the Gospel message how, in Christ, all can be well.*

My **Hymn to the Spirit** contains the 'sending' verse –

*Spirit, breathed on the disciples, giving peace where there was fear:
come among us, touch us, send us, making Jesus' presence near.*

My Hymn on the appearance of the **Risen Christ** (John 20:19-23) has -

*Risen Christ, sent by your Father, Spirit-filled to do his will;
you send forth your church in mission, and command your servants still.*

My hymn on **Sending Out** has –

*Praise to you O Holy Spirit, from the Father and the Lord;
send us out to work and witness, in your strength on us outpoured.*

My hymn **Spirit Empowered** has the verses –

*Come, Lord God, upon your Chosen, send us out among the lost,
to proclaim Christ's full salvation, and the Spirit's Pentecost.
Then the world will meet and witness Christ through us in word and deed;
showing them the Way to follow – and the answer to their need.*

My rewording of '**Jerusalem**' has two verses based on the concept of the Kingdom of God being the answer to a country's needs. Its second verse runs:

*Lord, send us out, to give and serve,
teach us to build and to unite
not cause division or oppress
but in all things to do the right.*

*So shall we be your instruments
of peace, diminishing life's pain
and we shall build your Kingdom here
and bring on earth your heav'nly reign.*

My hymn '**The Healing God**' ends with a quote from St. Francis's Prayer -
*For creation's reconciling gifts of love in us release,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Make us instruments of peace'.*

Also among the HYMNS is a song I wrote '*Go and Tell*' based on Jesus's command to Legion.
[Mark 5:19 *Go home to your friends, and tell them how much
the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.*]

When I was writing this article I was aware that no hymn I had come across appears to have been written as a **final hymn**, or acknowledges or affirms **what God has already done for us in the worship** to equip us to be sent out.

I wanted to write a hymn that did three things –

- 1) Establish and remind worshippers of Jesus's **sending out** in Scripture.
- 2) Allow the worshipper to state the reality of God's work in the earlier part of the worship.
- 3) Express the Church just on the verge of going out – '**So now we go!**'

The first six verses of my hymn are based on Jesus's healing encounters with 'Legion' (verse 1), the Woman in the Crowd and the Woman who Anointed Him (verse 2), the Man at the Pool (verse 3), the Blind Men and the Ten Lepers (verse 4), Mary at the Tomb (verse 5) and the Disciples in the Upper Room (verse 6).

[For these stories, their references and their significance see Part II above.]

The second half of each verse begins with the refrain **So now we go**.

- These words do not repeat the phrase used by the local Christian leader in **commissioning** the congregation: '**Go forth in peace...**'
- They are instead the words expressing the congregation's **active obedience to that commission** – '**So now we go!**'

Such wording is, sadly, very unusual for a hymn.

Because it is written to come right at the end of worship, when virtually everything has been done, it contains no requests for God's help.

My assumptions are that

- such requests have already been made, and
- God has answered such requests within the service.

The hymn makes the worshipper affirm God's faithfulness in giving and the reality of his gifts.

Any verse illustrates my points. For example -

'Go now in peace' were Christ's healing words to send
those sinful, fearful or too-long condemned.
So now we go, forgiven and restored,
to reconcile the world to God its Lord.

If we do not leave worship 'forgiven and restored' then something is wrong – and it most certainly is not God! My hope, in forcing worshippers to sing words like 'now we go, forgiven and restored', is to alert them if their experience of worship falls short of what it should be. I hope the words remind them that when we claim God's promise and say 'The Lord is here, and his Spirit is with us' that they are *active* among us – not just looking down on us, as if from a Royal Box!

The hymn appears in the HYMNS section of this website with an introduction and a note about the music. Musicians need to note that the scansion of the first line is written solely for the tune *Woodlands* by Walter Creatorex. See under the HYMNS section for further information.

HYMN : SO NOW WE GO

(Bible quotations in **bold type**.)

1.

'Go home and tell what good things the Lord has done,' [Mark 5:19]

Christ said to 'Legion' – whom he'd made at one!

So now we go, delivered, for our role

to tell our friends, **Christ Jesus makes you whole!** [Acts 9:34]

2.

'Go now in peace', were Christ's healing words to send [Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50]
those sinful, fearful, or too long condemned.

So now we go, forgiven and restored,

to reconcile the world to God its Lord.

3.

'Take up your mat, go, start walking. Sin no more,' [John 5:8, 5:14]

Christ said to one who'd spent years on the floor.

So now we go – released! No longer still!

Fresh life we're given to do the Father's will.

4.

'Go and obey.' The blind and the lepers learn [John 9:7, Luke 17:14]
that going brings the health for which they yearn.

So now we go. Our worship has sufficed

to send us out equipped to live for Christ.

5.

'Go, cling no more' Thus Christ redirects the love
of Mary prior to his ascent above.

[John 20:17]

So now we go – God frees our love from chains -
to tell his world its Risen Saviour reigns!

6.

'So I send you, as my Father has sent me!'

[John 20:21]

'Receive the Spirit!' Take authority.

[John 20:22]

So now we go, empowered by God's breath,
to share Christ's victory over sin and death.

7.

God's world awaits, in sin, darkness and in strife,
to hear of rescue and eternal life.

So now we go, sent from our seats or pews

to tell the world: **Jesus** is God's **Good News!**

[Mark 1:1]

The hymn is designed as a resource; use it as a pick-and-mix. Select whatever verses are most appropriate at a given time. Our love for hymns ought not to lead us to treat them rigidly as single units. We love Scripture, yet we split it up outrageously! Selected verses from hymns can provide powerful enrichments to worship by their special aptness. (Even first verses are not compulsory.)

In dealing with the end structure of the service I have suggested -

- that instead of bobbing up and down, the transposition of the final hymn and the blessing from their usual places makes things much better with minimum upset.
- the moving back into the service of the 'quiet recollection' which folk habitually add will make it a richer experience for many and will stop it destroying the outward move of worship and worshippers.
- the use of hymns (in whole or part) or songs which underline the sending-out of God's people.

The above can be done with the minimum of change, and could, I believe, be very effective.

Readers wanting their imaginations prodded by more adventurous moves could reflect on the following.

4. Word Reminder

The attention span of folk is short, and the ability to retain what was said early in the service until the end should not be assumed.

What about giving the congregation a 1-minute introduction/preparation to its final section? (A minute could be lopped off the Ministry of the Word section if it was thought necessary.)

In teaching it is essential to remind and to reinforce the material given. There are many reasons why a 'recap' near the end of a service would be appropriate. It would need to be precise, short and disciplined. (If it was ad-libbed it would most likely be none of these!)

If, say, it was Bible Sunday, it might go something like this, and what follows takes less than a minute.

*As we prepare to be sent out by God from the service,
we call to mind what God has done for us and taught us.
For his presence made known,
for forgiveness received,
and for fellowship shared.*

*We thank God especially today for the gift of his Holy Word,
for the way it enables us to meet God,
to know him and to obey him..*

*In the quiet you might review your use of Scripture...
You might feel God prompting you to look at the Bible notes
on display at the back as you leave...*

*You might ask God when he blesses you and sends you out in a few moments time,
to give you a deeper love for his Word, and
fresh grace to use it as a light upon your own way and the way of others..*

The value of such a time could be considerable, especially if it was disciplined and folk did not feel that it lengthened the service. It could -

- help to bring the theme of the service back into focus, and stop it disappearing altogether.
- help the worshipper to apply the theme to his/her life.
- give worshippers guidance for thought and prayer during the short 'recollection' time of quiet.

This, coupled with a proper sending-out could go a long way to offset the tendency for God's Word to be forgotten – often given early in the service – becoming eclipsed by, or submerged under, the words and weight of the service.

Have you ever asked yourself where all our Christian preaching and teaching ends up? How much of it actually takes root in the hearts and lives of those attending? The answer, I suspect, is –

- very little,
- very rarely.

Christian leaders usually scatter the Ministry of the Word just like the Sower's seeds in Jesus's parable. (Perhaps Jesus knew how Christians would not, generally speaking, plant the seeds carefully and nurture them!!)

5. Conclusion? No!

It is usual for the end of an article to wrap-it-up, but my purpose has been to open up the subject. It is now that the theme is just beginning, and you are the ones to carry it forward.

Each local Christian family should make its own responses, and act in its own time and in its own way. If the concept of U-Turn worship is correct, then I can see that we have hardly begun to apply it.

Here are some thoughts – just 'off the top of my head' as we say, simply to show that no 'conclusion' is appropriate, and to stimulate ideas.

Some Christian groups are used to using their feet in worship, and **move** around. Others are static. The former are at an advantage. I remember having the privilege of taking a Holy Communion service at a theological college according to the form of another Christian tradition. The Gospel reading was not read in the sanctuary of the Church, but the Bible was taken to the end of the Church, the doors opened, and I bellowed the Gospel-reading out through the open door. Truly Evangelistic! The message was for Birmingham; the congregation of theological students behind me had already heard it and accepted it.

In many churches the Bible (or a book of Bible passages) is symbolically carried towards the **door**. In traditions which do this, the congregation turn and face the Scripture as an acknowledgement of the authority of Scripture – and in order to hear it better. How might such a Christian tradition – given their head-start – develop and deepen Christ's sending out at the end of a service?

Perhaps the minister would go to the door of the church; the congregation would turn towards him/her; the choir would lead the departing congregation by singing 'So now we go' as they went down the church and left through the main door followed by the congregation. The minister (weather permitting) might, instead of a general blessing, bless individuals and families outside the door as they left – an action visible to the 'world' and taking place within it. (This would not be very different from the occasions when, at large celebrations of the Holy Communion, communicants file *past* the ministers with the Bread and Wine, and communicate almost as they walk by. A style that is acceptable for communicating ought to be acceptable for blessing.)

Passers-by would see Christians being recommissioned – and might even ask what was happening? and why? The Christian might even be able to tell them!

In an urban situation (and weather permitting) the church's coffee/tea-making facilities might be used to serve passers-by with free drinks, visibly financed by the Christians present. 'That's O.K. I'll buy you a cuppa!' The usual after-church *in-reach* might be turned towards *out-reach*.

If your church has taken any useful steps to develop U-turn worship and the sending out of its folk, perhaps you would like to share it and encourage others? You could let us know and we'll at some stage put-up the main points on the site for the use and encouragement of other web-users.

You can contact the webmaster at:
webmaster@helpforchristians.co.uk

(Anything confidential please mark it clearly so that we do not inadvertently make it public.)

APPENDIX: JESUS SENDS THOSE HE HEALS

These are some notes I compiled prior to writing this article, and I reproduce them here in case any reader finds them of use.

The paragraph numbers (preceded by §) refer to the section numbers in Throckmorton's *Gospel Parallels*. (NRSV version) Nelson '92.

1.

§12 DEMONIAIC in SYNAGOGUE

Mark 1:21-28, // Luke 4:31-37

Record only of Jesus's words to the demon.

Sufferer already in 'Church'.

2.

§13 PETER'S MOTHER-in-LAW

Mark 1:29-31, // Luke 4:38-39

Brief. No actual words recorded.

Rebuked the fever (might have been treated as demonic
and suffered not addressed. cf 1)

3.

§45 LEPER

Mark 1:40-45 // Matthew 8:1-4 // Luke 5:12-16

***'See that you say nothing to anyone;
but GO, show yourself to the priest, and
offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'***

[Mark 1:44]

Healed before going, unlike 21.

4.

§52 PARALYTIC BROUGHT BY FRIENDS

Mark 2:1-12 // Matthew 9:1-8, // Luke 5:17-26

'I say to you, stand up, take up your mat and GO to your home.'

***And he stood up, and immediately took the mat
and went out before all of them.*** [Mark 2:11]

Matthew's nice summary

'Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.'

And he stood up and went...[Matthew 9:6]

5.

§70 MAN WITH WITHERED HAND IN SYNAGOGUE

Mark 3:1-6 // Matthew 12:9-14 // Luke 6:6-11

Records only Jesus asking him to come forward, and to stretch forth his hand.

[Mark 3:3 & 5]

6.

§106 GERESENE DEMONIAK(S)

Mark 5:1-20 // Luke 8:26-39.

(compare Matthew 8:28-34 shorter account
but with *two* demoniacs, and no 'Go' recorded)

*As Jesus was getting into the boat,
the man who had been possessed by demons
begged him that he might be with him.*

*But Jesus refused, and said to him, (Luke: but Jesus sent him away, saying)
'GO home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,
and what mercy he has shown you.'*

And he went away

*and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him;
and everyone was amazed. [Mark 5:18-20]*

7.

§107 JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER

Mark 5:21-43 // Luke 8:40-53 (see also Matthew's summary 9:18-26)

Raising of the dead a Command: *'Little girl, get up!'*

And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about... [Mark 5:41-42]

Inappropriate to send her – her place was with parents.

8.

§107 WOMAN WITH THE HAEMORRHAGE

Mark 5:25-34, // Luke 43-48 (see also Matthew's very short summary – 9:20-22)

*'Daughter, your faith has made you well; GO in peace,
and be healed of your disease.'* [Mark 5:34]

9.

§116 SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER

Mark 7:24:30 // Matthew 15:21-28

Healing at a distance, so Jesus said nothing directly to the one he healed.

Belonged with Mother anyway, like 7.

10.

§117 DEAF MUTE

Mark 7:32-37 only

Jesus ordered them to tell no one... [7:36]

11.

§126 EPILEPTIC DEMONIAK LAD

Mark 9:14-29 // Luke 9:37-43a

Jesus addresses only the Father and the demons.

Inappropriate to send, lad belonged with father. Like 7, 9.

12.

§121 BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA

Mark 8:22-26 (no parallels)

***Then he SENT HIM AWAY to his home, saying,
'Do not even go into the village.'*** [8:26]

13.

§193 BLIND BARTIMAEUS

Mark 10:46-52 // Luke 18:35-43 (see also 14 below)

'GO; your faith has made you well.'

Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

[Mark 10:52 – omitted in Luke]

14.

§56 TWO BLIND MEN

Matthew 9:27-31 only

Jesus sternly ordered them, 'See that no one knows of this.'

But they went away and spread the news... [9:30-31]

15.

§57 DUMB DEMONIAK

Matthew 9:32-34 only

Brief account. No comment of Jesus is recorded.

16.

§46 CENTURION'S SERVANT

Matthew 8:5-13 // Luke 7:1-10

Matthew only: ***And to the centurion Jesus said,***

'GO, let it be done for you according to your faith.'

And the servant was healed in that hour. [Matthew 8:13]

17.

§85 BLIND & DUMB DEMONIAK

Matthew 12:22 // Luke 11:14

Brief one verse account. No words recorded.

18.

§80 WIDOW'S SON RAISED

Luke 7:11-17 only

***'Young man, I say to you, rise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak,
and Jesus gave him to his mother.*** [Luke 7:17]

Son belonged with mother, so inappropriate for Jesus to send him away.

19.

§163 WOMAN IN SYNAGOGUE WITH SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY

Luke 13:10-17 only

*When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said,
'Woman, you are set free from your ailment'
She was in 'church' – inappropriate to send her away.*

20.

§168 MAN WITH DROPSY

Luke 14:1-6 only

Jesus took him and healed him, and SENT HIM AWAY. [Luke 14:4]

Away from negative reaction.

21.

§182 TEN LEPERS

Luke 17:11-19 only

They called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'

When he saw them, he said to them,

'GO and show yourselves to the priests.'

And as they went, they were made clean.

The TENTH LEPER –

He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him... [Luke 17:16]

Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up and GO on your way;

your faith has made you well.'

[Luke17:19]

Nine were cured, one was healed, i.e. found the Saviour and gave thanks ('euchariston')

22.

§240 MALCHUS EAR

Luke 22:50-51 only

And he touched his ear and healed him.

Too brief to record Jesus's words.

23

§n/a OFFICIAL'S SON WITH FEVER

John 4:46-54 only

'Sir, come down before my little boy dies.' Jesus said to him,

*'GO; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him,
and started on his way.*

As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive.

Jesus tells him to go because he belongs with his child.

Healing at a Distance, so nothing could be said face to face.

24

§n/a PARALYTIC AT POOL

John 5:1-16 only

Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.'

*At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat
and began to walk.* [5:8-9]

No command to go, but Jesus actively leaves him.
Jesus *disappeared in the crowd...* [5:13]

25.

§n/a MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1-41 only

'GO, wash in the Pool of Siloam' (which means Sent)

Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

Deliberate overtones of Christian baptism,

Jesus is the one Sent – his usual description of the Father in the Gospel

is the one who sent me, and of himself as the one sent

(see e.g. 4:34, 5:24, 30, 36, 37, 38, 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57,

7:16, 18, 28, 29, 33, etc...)

26.

§n/a RAISING OF LAZARUS

John 11:38-44 only

'Unbind him, and let him GO' [John 11:44]

Interesting but not quite sending out in the usual sense!