melodies of community
Towards a Theology of Christian Community through the metaphor of music, with particular reference to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Iona Community.

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Most Revd. Dr. Rowan Williams

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Melodies of Community
Abstract

This thesis articulates a theology of Christian community through the metaphor of music. It makes particular reference to the concept of polyphony, in which differing melodies and countermelodies sound simultaneously in a unity of musical composition. This metaphor offers the key to new ways by which the Church might affirm their unity in Christ while concurrently celebrating diversities of theology and praxis.

A theology so configured feeds from and into two other main sources: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (1906-1945), and George MacLeod, (1895-1991) founder of the Iona Community. The thesis is founded upon a polyphonic Christology based upon Christ’s participation in the diverse unity of the Trinity. It grows out of the Son’s unique union of humanity and deity. This co-existence of the heavenly and the earthly becomes a paradigm for a community who are both ‘in Christ’ and in the world. Christ becomes the solid line of music, (cantus firmus) around which God calls diverse melodies of community into being.

Alongside the musical imagery three further metaphors are examined. These are: the colony of heaven, fragments of epiphany and a worldly monasticism. These metaphors may each be likened to a countermelody found in the greater symphony of the Church.

These ‘melodies of community’ are performed in both the Church and world in such a way that each remains distinct and yet informs the other. To do so, requires a particular discipline. This is developed in a Discipline of Counterpoint which, contemporises the Disciplina Arcani of the early Church.

The concluding chapters examine how the counterpoint of worship, ecumenism and healing is performed within the Church, and how the melodies of peace, justice and ecology are realised in and with the world. They confirm the importance of polyphony as a metaphor through which a new theology of Christian community may be articulated.
**Abbreviations**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English Translation.**

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<th>Work</th>
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<td><em>Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,</em> Vol. 1,</td>
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**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Secondary Literature.**

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*  

*A Testament to Freedom*  

*The Cambridge Companion*  

*I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*  

**Literature by George MacLeod.**

*Only One Way Left*  
*Only One Way Left*, (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1956).

*We Shall Rebuild*  

*The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*  

*Speaking the Truth in Love*  

*Govan Calling,*  
*Govan Calling*, (London: Methuen, 1934).

*Abundant Life*  

**Literature on George MacLeod and the Iona Community.**

*Daily Readings*  

*Chasing the Wild Goose*  

**This Is the Day**  Paynter, Neil, ed., *This Is the Day: Readings and Meditations From the Iona Community*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2002).

**Coracle**  *The Coracle, The Magazine of the Iona Community.*  Of recent years this has been published as *Coracle.*  All are herein cited as *Coracle.*

The first three editions of *The Coracle* have been reprinted together as *The Coracle: Rebuilding the Common Life, Foundation Documents of the Iona Community*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1988).


Then Iluvatar said to them:

'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will.'

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Paul Klee, *Ad Parnassum*, 1932 Oil on Canvas
Kunstmuseum, Berne

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2 *Ad Parnassum* is regarded as the *magnum opus* of Paul Klee’s ‘polyphonic painting’ a style inspired by his love of music, particularly that of Mozart and Bach. Klee layered areas of composition in much the same way as a composer layers parts in a score to create a simultaneity of distinct themes. The title is taken from the mythic seat of the muses, to which painters had no access, and from a famous treatise on music entitled, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725) by Johann Josef Fux, which taught generations of musicians the technique of polyphonic harmony. See Hajo Düchting, *Paul Klee: Painting Music*, (Munich / London: Prestel Verlag, 2002), p65-79.
Acknowledgements:

Writing a PhD is famously a solitary task. Attempting to write one on community is therefore not without its ironies. But in undertaking this endeavour, there are some communities and many individuals to whom appreciation and thanks must be extended. Firstly, thanks are owed to the Baptist Union of Great Britain, without whose generous financial support none of this might have been possible. Thanks also must be extended to the staff, past and present, of South Wales Baptist College, and all those at the Department of Theology in Cardiff University. A University grant made it possible to visit the Bonhoeffer Archive at Union Theological Seminary, New York where Claire McCurdy helped my research and Larry Rasmussen and Ralf Wüstenberg offered useful advice. Over lunches in Oxford, the late F. Burton Nelson provided insight on Bonhoeffer’s thought and I am grateful for other conversations with Ian Bradley, Mary Grey and Ray Simpson.

My indebtedness to members of the Iona Community must be acknowledged: the late Ulist MacDonald provided insight to the ‘early years’, and Duncan Finlayson Snr, gave access to his collection of Coracle and personal papers. Similar courtesies were extended by Ian Fraser who also kindly commented on final drafts of the work. Good advice came from Graeme Brown, Ron Ferguson and Norman Shanks and Kathy Galloway has not only shaped the writing but the writer too. Wardens and staff on Iona, together with those at Camas have regularly ensured enriching visits and appreciation is due to Carol Dougal, Dafydd Owen, Peter Millar, Philip Newell, Jan Sutch Pickard, Nancy Cocks, and Brian and Sheila Woodcock. Thanks too to successive Abbey musicians and the Wild Goose Worship Group, particularly Alison Adam, Mairi Munro, Graham Maule and Gail Ullrich. Special appreciation is due to John Bell, who introduced me to the Iona Community, (and so indirectly to my wife), for his hymns, humour and wisdom, and whose every conversation leaves me with the gentle but persistent thought that life can be deeper.

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Deep thanks must go to my parents, Singleton and Ann, for singing the song before I knew how to listen, for the sacrifices made to help the music-making of my youth and for their steadfast love and encouragement through the diverse directions of more recent years. Thanks too to Ian & Jennifer Currie for their support and for sharing their daughter.

Words have never been enough to express how much I owe to Meredith, but it has been my deepest joy to listen to the melodies of her heart and the rhythms of her soul. It is my greatest privilege to join my faltering harmonies to the music that we share.

In the beginning was the song, the song was God and the song was given for all. And there is the reason to sing: Laudate Dominum: Cantate Domino canticum novum.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to the people,
the place,
the purpose
and the promise of Camas,
in whose stones,
(both old and new),
horizons sing.
Out of silence, a voice speaks.

It's saying...

the economy of God is different
listen to the ground bass
listen to the bottom line

I listen, and I hear it, endlessly repeated...

don't be afraid. Beyond the judgements of the world,
you are precious. You need no value addition.
I am for you.

I begin to hear differently. The faint refrain becomes a
silver clarion horn:

never less than justice
never less than justice

And there are grace notes, dancing, generous:

Yes, you too
Yes, you too

This is the music of the kingdom.
And I don't mind that many will go in before me.
Now, when I am afraid, I will listen for the ground bass,
the bottom line.
And my soul will sing.³


chapter one:
Introduction

Have I spoken something, have I uttered something worthy of God? No ... if I did say something, it is not what I wanted to say.
Augustine ⁴

For we are not trying to build community. We can never do that. God sets us in community and it is man's sin that he is always breaking it.
Ralph Morton ⁵

The music is simple. A simple idea - the way life is simple - a woman produces an egg and receives a man's seed into her womb and grows a baby and brings another person into the world. Utterly simple. Or so amazingly complex that it cannot be understood. So far beyond us that it is a mystery. And yet it happens every minute of very day. How can something be utterly simple and amazingly complex at the same time? Things are simple or complex according to how much attention is paid to them. She has reached down into the tabernacle of herself for this music and feels something sacred in its performance.

'Catherine', in the novel, Grace Notes.
By Bernard MacLaverty ⁶

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.
John Dryden ⁷

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Melodies of Community 12
This thesis explores the nature of Christian community by drawing upon the fertile but under explored synergy of theology and music. Its focus is on Christian community: it does not seek to offer a theological appraisal of music but rather, through the metaphor of musical theory and practice, particularly its potential for allowing differing notes and melodies to sound together in unity, presents a theology of how Christians might seek to live together. It declares no intention to theologise about music but rather engages in a theological discourse on community through the metaphor of music. It is sympathetic to Aristotle’s dictum that ‘midway between the unintelligible and the common place, it is metaphor which produces knowledge’. And as Jeremy Begbie has noted, using music in this way can ‘liberate our theology from some of its worst bad habits, and refresh it for the future’. Music is the metaphor by which the theology of community will be re-examined and articulated. Arthur Koestler would call such an interaction between two disciplines ‘a bisociative’ methodology. He argues that bringing together previously unrelated subjects of discourse often precipitates a ‘eureka moment’ a sudden ‘moment of truth’ which shows a familiar situation or event in a new light. Frances Young claims this insight is the basis of ‘all creative activities, artistic originality, scientific study, even the

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8 In so doing, this thesis affirms J. S. Begbie’s assertion that ‘music can serve to enrich and advance theology, extending our wisdom about God, God’s relation to us and to the world at large’, but like Begbie’s work, this thesis does not aim to offer a systematic theology of music which situates it within a particular doctrinal environment. See Jeremy S. Begbie, Theology, Music and Time, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p3 ff.


good joke\textsuperscript{14} and has herself adopted music as a metaphor with which to investigate hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to the metaphor of music, this thesis will employ many other metaphorical images through which the nature of Christian community will be explored. The richness of metaphorical reflection, particularly when the metaphors are mixed, provides new horizons of thought and experience.

Developing the idea of bisociation further it is possible to bring together the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and George MacLeod, two 20\textsuperscript{th} century Christians who never met yet shared a passion for community. While separate attention has been given elsewhere to both of these individuals, and indeed to using musical bisociation to explore theology and hermeneutics, much less has been directed at using the metaphors of music in the creation and praxis of Christian community. This thesis will examine how music can illuminate the nature of Christian community. It does so by bringing together the vision and discipleship of Bonhoeffer and MacLeod. In these men there is an opportunity to re-discover the nature of communal Christian discipleship. The thesis does not attempt a comprehensive examination of Christian community nor indeed does it offer a complete biography of Bonhoeffer and MacLeod but it does hope to offer a fresh perspective on what it means to be Christian.

**MUSIC, THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH**

The bisociative relationship by which music is used as a metaphor to illuminate theology is largely untested, particularly in examining the nature of Christian

\textsuperscript{14} Frances Young, *Virtuoso Theology: The Bible and Interpretation*, (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993), p2. Francis Young is specifically commenting on Koestler's ideas.

\textsuperscript{15} Frances Young, *Virtuoso Theology*, generally. Pythagoras is the paradigmatic example of creative bisociation: according to tradition he is supposed to have discovered that musical pitch depends on the ratio between the length of vibrating chords - the starting point of mathematical physics - by passing in front of the local blacksmith... and noticing that different rods of iron of different lengths gave different sounds under the hammer. Koestler asserts that instead of ascribing this to chance it may have been obscure intuition that made Pythagoras stop at the blacksmith's shop but either way the moment provided him with the necessary flash of insight. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, p111.
community. This is because theologians have historically been more concerned with the moral nature of music and its effects on society than they have been in its potential as an explorative metaphor. This is perhaps unusual given how throughout history communities have made music in a myriad of ways to reflect and express their experiences of celebration, anger, or lament. Music had a place in almost every activity and at almost every event in ancient Jewish life and was included in the worship of the Temple and Synagogue. Early Christianity evolved out of Judaism and while direct musical connections are ambiguous, music quickly became an inherent part of worship in Churches such as those at Colosse and Ephesus where Paul exhorted the people to ‘sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’. While music played an active role in the early Church, no-one considered how it might be a resource through which a theology of Christian community might be articulated. Indeed as the Church evolved, music was

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19 Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16. Other New Testament writings may well contain extracts of early hymnody, e.g. 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 Tim. 3:16, Phil. 2:6-11.

20 The Classical world had reflected philosophically and theologically on the relationship of music and the created world. Boethius, (480-524) recorded their thoughts in his work *De Institutione Musica*. This sixth century work was the authoritative document on Greek music-theoretical thought during the Middle Ages and articulated a three-fold distinction of music. The first of these was ‘Musica Mondana’ (Music of the Spheres) which was produced by creation itself. Pythagoras argued that the
viewed with some suspicion: attention habitually gravitated towards the ethical propriety of a particular instrument or performance. This suspicion of music may be because Genesis records Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the lyre and pipe, as being a descendant of the murderously sinful Cain. However, it is more realistic to think that the Christian hostility to music, especially instrumental music, came from its association with the debauched entertainments of Graeco-Roman Society. (Jewish theology had often displayed open antagonism to music for this very reason.) But the embryonic Church may not have followed the example of its Jewish cousin as readily as is often supposed. The first hint of a polemic against music did not appear until late in the second century. Thereafter, the criticism grew in intensity throughout the third century, as evidenced in the writings of Tertullian (c160-c225) and Arnobius (d. 330) and it became commonplace in the fourth century theology of John Chrysostom (345-407), Ambrose (c340-397) and Augustine (354-430). Chrysostom interpreted music as 'sensual and pagan, obstructing our progress toward the real world of the spirit' and Augustine expressed deep concern about being taken up into the universe was constructed along a musical and mathematical ratio. He conceived the cosmos as containing a series of rotating crystal spheres upon which the heavenly bodies were fixed and whose rotation produced perfect music. Aristotle claimed that such music was inaudible to humanity but Plato had argued that sin prevented people from hearing it. Secondly there was also 'Music Humana' which governed the relationship between body and soul and finally, 'Musica Instrumentalis' that was music as we know it. See Boethius, De Institutione Musica: The Principles of Music: An Introduction, translation and commentary by Calvin M. Bower, (Michigan: Ann Arbor, Michigan University Microfilms, 1979). See also Catherine Pickstock, 'Ascending Numbers: Augustine's De Musica and the Western Tradition', in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, eds., Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community, (London: Routledge, 1998), p185-215 and Catherine Pickstock, Ascending Numbers: Augustine's De Musica and the Western Tradition, (New York: Perseus Books, 2004).

22 Michael Sadgrove, 'Foreword' to J. Astely, et al., eds., Creative Chords, pxviii.
23 McKinnon notes Plato's objection to 'many strung' and 'many keyed' musical instruments in the (Republic 399), and cites Livy (39.6.7.) as one Roman philosopher who objected to women harpists at banquets as an undesirable luxury imported from Asia. He adds to these classical sources, comment from Rabbi Johanan which illustrates a Jewish suspicion of music, 'Whoever drinks to the accompaniment of the four musical instruments brings five punishments to the world'. (Sotah 48a), as cited in James McKinnon, Music in Early Christian Literature, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p2.
emotion of music. But earlier Church writers had been more sympathetic and even hinted at the possibility of doing theology through the metaphor of music.

Ignatius (c35-c107) wrote in a letter to the Ephesians:

Your justly respected clergy, who are a credit to God, are attuned to their bishop like the strings of a harp, and the result is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ from minds that are in unison, and affections that are in harmony. Pray, then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a whole symphony of minds in concert; take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that He may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of His Son's Body.

In Pseudo-Justin's Hortatory Address to the Greeks, he speculates through the metaphor of music on God's revelation through the prophets.

For neither by nature nor by human understanding is it possible for men [sic] to know the things so great and divine, but by the gift descending from above ... so that the Divinity itself, coming down from heaven like a plectrum and using just men as an instruments like the cithara or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly things. Therefore, as if from one mouth and one tongue, in conformity and harmony (συμφωνίας) with another, they have taught us about God, about the creation of the world, about the fashioning of man...

And even Augustine, a theologian who so reflected the patristic unease with music, fascinatingly compared the 'unified diversity of the soul' with music. He reflected upon:

that marvellous creation of Archimedes — ... the hydraulis (organum hydraulicum) — with its many parts, sections, connections, passages - such a collection of sound, variety of tone (commercia modorum), array

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of pipes (acies tibiaram) – and yet it all constitutes a single entity. So too the air, expelled from below by the agitation of the water, is not thereby divided into parts because it is distributed to different places; rather it is one in substance though diverse in function.\textsuperscript{30}

These images of diversity and unity are a helpful metaphor for the nature of God and community, a metaphor that is adopted and modified later in this thesis. But such a metaphor was redundant to medieval theologians who were still concerned with whether developments such as Gregorian chant and polyphonic composition could claim the favour of God. In the sixteenth century Luther (1483-1546) adopted a more positive approach to music. He had 'no use for cranks who despise music'\textsuperscript{31} and argued that: 'Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise' because 'whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate ... what more effective means than music could you find'.\textsuperscript{32} Calvin was less accommodating. He feared anything that might distract the congregation from Scripture and felt that music remained 'tainted by association with the unacceptable practices of the Roman Church or linked with singing and dancing. In the first case, one's soul was at risk; in the second, one's morals'.\textsuperscript{33} Insisting that only the Psalms and one or two canticles were appropriate for worship Calvin forbade harmony and banned instrumentation. In later years the Church became a great patron of music, commissioning works from composers such as J.S. Bach (1685-1750), J. Hayden (1732-1809) and W.A. Mozart (1756-91). New styles of music were not without controversy but the disputation were rarely concerned with divine approval or preoccupied the minds of theologians. However, while the Church appreciated how theology might endow musicians with material with which to work their skill, it remained inconceivable that the reverse could occur and music might furnish the theologian with a way to interpret God or Christian community.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{33} See Andrew Wilson-Dickson, A Brief History of Christian Music, p101.

\textsuperscript{34} See Richard Viladesau, Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric, (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), p4. The exception here is Jonathan Edwards who spoke of the
This position persisted into the congregational hymnody of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when music was co-opted to bear the message of theology. Inspired by Isaac Watts (1674-1748) more than 250 different hymn books were published during the eighteenth century. However, this was no uniting of equal disciplines. Music was important only as a bearer of doctrine. The hymns of Watts, John Wesley (1703-91) and his brother, Charles, (1707-88) made no attempt to engage in theological reflection through music, their purpose was to carry Christ’s offer of salvation and to warn of the dangers of damnation. The contribution of these writers to hymnody is perhaps unsurpassed, even by the Victorians, but music as a method of theological reflection remained redundant.

In time, music sought inspiration beyond the Christian narrative and with that the potential for a fecund bisociation faded. In the 19th century, Romantic painters, poets and above all the makers of music came to be revered as, 'the supreme discerners of transcendent truth'. So by the early 20th century, theology and music rarely communicated: 'the corridors of theology were not generally alive with the sound of music', and 'apart from a few notable exceptions, twentieth century theologians paid scant attention to the potential of music to explore theological themes'.

Recently, however, the potential of a fruitful relationship between theology and music has received renewed attention. Contemporary composers such as John Tavener (b. 1944) and Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) have written music that unashamedly explores theological themes to critical acclaim and widespread popularity.

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eschatological perfection of creation as a 'very complex tune, where respect is to be had to the proportion of a great many notes together'. Jonathan Edwards, 'Miscellanies', (unpublished) p182 as cited in Robert W. Jenson, Systematic Theology, Volume 1, p235.

35 Andrew Wilson-Dickson, A Brief History of Christian Music, p178.


38 Jeremy S. Begbie, Theology, Music and Time, p3.

39 For instance, in Tavener’s The Protecting Veil the composer strives to capture some of what he considers to be 'the almost cosmic power of the Mother of God'. The work commemorates the
Similarly Henryk Górecki’s (b. 1933) *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* draws inspiration from a prayer to Mary scratched on the wall of a Gestapo prison. A different music but one that is equally bisociative of theology is the work of James MacMillan. MacMillan is by self-declaration, a ‘practising but not pious’ Roman Catholic who believes that the more tranquil compositions of Tavener, Pärt and Górecki turn their back upon the ‘corporeal nature of man’s humanity’ and are lacking a ‘dialectic in the normal western sense’. That MacMillan’s music contains more conflict and even violence reflects his deliberate theological position and while he acknowledges a redemptive aspect to his music, he stresses how, ‘it needs to have that conflict gone through and fought through before it is reached’.

**THE METAPHOR OF POLYPHONY**

One musical practice in particular, that of polyphony, (literally sounding many notes at the same time) provides theology with a rich metaphor for exploring the nature of Christian community. For most of the first eight hundred years of Christian worship the music employed was monophonic, i.e.

> whether it took the form of a cantillated prayer of extreme simplicity or of an ornate Gradual for a solemn occasion, a single line of melody untainted by any accompaniment, was the most perfect and satisfying symbol of Christian unity.

appearance of the Mother of God in a vision in the 10th century. She was seen spreading her veil as a protective shelter over the Christians in Constantinople who were under threat of Saracen invasion. The vision inspired the Greek Christians who repelled the Saracen army. John Tavener, *The Protecting Veil*, Naxos CD 8.554388 Liner notes, adapted from notes by John Tavener. Other works include, *Akanthist of Thanksgiving*, *The Annunciation*, *We Shall See Him As He Is*, and *The Myrrh-Bearer*. Arvo Pärt’s religious works include *St. John Passion* (1982), *Te Deum* (1984-86, rev. 1993) and *Litany* (1994). Works for SATB choir such as *Magnificat* (1989) and *The Beatitudes* (1990) have proved popular with choirs around the world.

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40 Liner notes, Górecki *Symphony No 3*, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, Op. 36, Naxos CD 8.550822.
However, the advent of notation led to the development of monody (melodies with accompaniment) and then polyphony; the simultaneous sounding of many interweaving melodies. In polyphonic music, more than one 'melody' happens at any given time. If a chord of C major 7th is sounded on a piano, then the notes C, E, G, and B will all sound together, as in the first bar of Fig. 1.

![Fig. 1.](image)

There can then be a progression of one block chord to another, (See Fig.1) but there may also be sequence of melodies overlapping and interweaving with one another over long periods of time. (See Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2.](image)
The Thomas Tallis' motet, *Spem in Alium* has forty different voices arranged in eight five part choirs, all interweaving in counterpoint, exchanges of block harmony and massed outbursts. As Begbie notes, 'Despite the sonic profusion, it never sounds "jammed" or crowded. There is a multiplicity without dissipation, togetherness without mutual overwhelming, each voice being enabled to become more fully itself. As though being ourselves we’re more capacious'. Indeed not only might there be a variety of interweaving vocal melodies but in orchestral music different instrumentation might be assigned to particular melodies, calling forth different timbres that are attached to respective melodies. In the latter case, each is distinct, not only in their melody, but also in their particular sound. But these remain undivided in their character and purpose with neither denying the other their right of differential existence. So, a melody introduced by a solo horn does not prevent a countermelody of strings beneath it. The strings may themselves be polyphonic in nature, comprising violins, violas, cellos and double basses, nor is anything ‘lost’ when the solo theme is developed by three further horns playing in harmony. The difference-in-unity extends when, perhaps, the strings share their multifaceted counter-melody with a further polyphony of woodwind (oboes, clarinets, flutes, bassoons etc.) It is entirely usual for such a symphonic piece to be additionally punctuated by percussion (triangle, cymbal, xylophone, side drum and timpani) and be joined by the remaining brass (trumpets, trombones and tubas). Indeed it can work with each of three instruments working in different keys. This is polyphony.

It can theoretically be either 'harmonious' (i.e. attaining certain culturally conditioned aesthetic standards) or 'dissonant' (displaying an apparent lack of

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46 See Jeremy S. Begbie, 'Through Music: Sound Mix', in *Beholding the Glory*, p152.

47 Hans Urs von Balthasar makes similar insights, noting that symphony means 'sounding together' drawing parallels with an orchestra who must be pluralist in order to unfold the wealth of the totality that resounds in the composer's mind. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic*, p7. Cunningham notes that, 'one of the words for a musical performance (concert) actually reflects this multiplicity (from *con+certare*, "to act together"). David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, p127.

48 Gustav Holst's *Terzetto* is written for flute, oboe and viola with each instrument playing in a different key, although initially the composer himself was not quite sure about whether it was real music. See Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: A Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p114.
agreement or tension between the notes). As Cunningham notes, the chief attribute of polyphony is, 'simultaneous, non-excluding difference: that is, more than one note is played at a time, and none of these notes is so dominant that it renders another mute'. 49 Hence polyphonic music permits and encourages individual difference, yet unites them in what might be deemed a community of melodies. Drawing on this metaphor provides a valuable insight for a theology of community and enables an examination of diverse melodies of belonging.

In early polyphonic music there was often a cantus firmus, (lit. the firm song), which was usually a pre-existing melody such as a chorale tune around which the other countermelodies were then arranged. Kemp notes how musically:

the contrapuntal voice in a cantus firmus composition owes its existence to the Tenor upon which it is erected; ... It is distinct from the Tenor... If heard without the Tenor it would seem self sufficient in motion, ambit and material; but its source of generation and control would remain the cantus firmus; it cannot operate beyond the ultimate “barrier” of the Tenor’s dictates. 50

The cantus firmus then lent its form to derivative melodies that fragmented, mirrored, echoed, and retextured the original melody in other voices. These counter-melodies and harmonies could weave their way together with or even against one another, but as long as each remained in relation to the cantus firmus the music could continue. This thesis will employ this metaphor of cantus firmus and polyphony to investigate the nature of Christian community: if Christ is conceived as the cantus firmus of all Christian living, then His ‘solid song’ will be fragmented, mirrored, echoed and re-textured within a variety of people whose own diverse and individual melodies only find their unity, indeed their community, in Christ.

This musical metaphor of polyphony will bisociate with two major theological sources, both of which have their genesis in the early decades of the 20th

49 David S. Cunningham, These Three Are One, p128.
century. The first of these is the life of George MacLeod (1895-1991) and the work of the Iona Community that he founded. While MacLeod had a fine singing voice\textsuperscript{51} and could accompany himself at the piano he would never have considered himself a musician. Furthermore, while he was an inspirational preacher and a dedicated pastor he was no systematic theologian\textsuperscript{52} and showed no predilection to theologise through music. He did, however, have a natural instinct for leadership and a longing for authentic Christian community. The Christian community he founded now comprises some 250 members who are dispersed primarily throughout the UK but with others living around the world. Male and female, cleric and laity, they live by a five-fold ecumenical rule of discipleship:

1. Daily Prayer and Bible-reading
2. Sharing and accounting for the use of our money
3. Planning and accounting for the use of our time
4. Action for Justice and Peace in society
5. Meeting with and accounting to each other.\textsuperscript{53}

Although MacLeod was too autocratic a leader to perceive the full polyphonic potential of the community in its early life, today, men and women of differing races, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientation and Christian denominations have found their own individual melodies gathered in counter-point around the vision of Christ they share.

The second source for this study draws upon the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (1906-1945) the German pastor / theologian imprisoned and

\textsuperscript{51} He sang in the chantry choir while at school at Winchester, and while at St. Cuthbert’s Church in Edinburgh loved to sit at the piano and sing songs in the Church’s Mission Centre for the Poor. See MacLeod, p83. Friends recall him ‘doing his turn’ with aplomb at parties.

\textsuperscript{52} When he studied theology in Edinburgh ‘he enjoyed flirting with ideas and communicating them in exciting and vivid language, but although he was clever, he was not a scholar in the sense of disciplined and systematic study’. George MacLeod, p56. MacLeod was not anti-intellectual, indeed he revelled in stimulating debate but the ideas had to be followed up by action if they were to hold his attention. Ferguson notes that MacLeod used to tease intellectuals saying they were "someone who can hold a vital issue at arms length for a life time." George MacLeod, p194.

\textsuperscript{53} The Iona Community Members Book: 2005, (Glasgow: Iona Community, 2005), p22.
subsequently executed by the Nazi regime. Much of his work concerned the nature of Christian community but he was also a talented pianist who loved music all his life. It was perhaps inevitable that in time his theological reflections would be informed by music and it is from his writing that the metaphor of polyphony is taken. MacLeod and Bonhoeffer never met but both men believed in a new vision for Christian community.

GEORGE MACLEOD: FOUNDER OF THE IONA COMMUNITY

George MacLeod was born in Glasgow, on the 17th June 1895, the third child in an upper-class Victorian family. His father came from a distinguished Scots ecclesiastical dynasty but had become ‘a good accountant’ rather than ‘a mediocre minister’. George inherited many of the family characteristics:

The MacLeod house not only represented power in the Church of Scotland, but also a particular — and very influential — ethos. The distinctive MacLeod style was marked by attractiveness, tolerance, breadth, humour and gaiety. Theologically it was broadly evangelical, inclusive and ecumenical. Politically it was sympathetic to the establishment, yet concerned for the poor. Combined with Celtic romanticism and poetry, skilled oratory, confidence in the presence of all ranks of people and a popular touch, the MacLeod style was bound to be a potent force for change in the Church.

Church attendance was compulsory and religion was part of the family fabric, but at the core of family life was the aristocratic notion of gentlemanly duty, a

54 See his doctoral thesis, Sanctorum Communio, and one of his most widely read books is Life Together, his reflections on the community of seminarians at Finkenwalde.
55 His ancestry contained five Moderators of the Church of Scotland and a Chaplain to Queen Victoria.
56 George MacLeod, p17. John MacLeod later became a local Conservative MP.
57 George MacLeod, p16.
concept summed up in Christmas 1901 when George (aged 6) and his brother Norman (aged 10) received from their father a scroll entitled ‘Do Your Duty’. It read:

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the awful Will,
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses, or who wins the prize?
Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail or if you rise
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.  

George’s education at Winchester College reinforced this ethos, but the task of Winchester ‘was to train not just gentlemen, but leaders’. Thus, when George left to study law at Oxford, he knew that he was ‘not only born to rule but born to serve’. The opportunity came quicker than imagined: after his first year, war broke out and he signed up with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

The war revealed his skill of leadership and he was decorated twice for bravery. But it also affected him in two vital ways. He was impressed with the community spirit shared between officers and soldiers at the front and ‘having shared terrifying danger with such men, he could no longer simply accept the social assumptions he had taken for granted at home and at school’. Secondly, the war made him reconsider his faith. He wrote to his sister Ellen: ‘I have heard it said that a man comes out of this war with a very real religion or no religion at all ... personally I think that any man who sees this war must come out with a very real religion or cut his throat’. Years later he recounted how when on leave he realised that he was ‘going to hell in a hurry’ and so knelt down in a railway carriage and ‘surrendered his life to Christ’.

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58 George MacLeod, p23.
59 George MacLeod, p25.
60 George MacLeod, p29.
61 George MacLeod, p42.
62 A letter written from George to Ellen in 1917, as cited in George MacLeod, p39.
After the war he resolved to become a minister. He studied in Edinburgh and then accepted a scholarship to Union Seminary, New York. There he met the man who shaped his future: Rev. P.B. (Tubby) Clayton. Clayton had been a chaplain in the war and established Toc H, a hostel that ministered to soldiers. Its motto was 'abandon rank all ye who enter here' and after the war, survivors reconvened in an attempt to keep alive the trench-time spirit of cooperation among different classes. They met for ecumenical fellowship and initiated small communities for voluntary work. Clayton’s energy and purpose impressed MacLeod and within a short time he had not only recruited the Scot as acting secretary for Toc H, but without either man knowing, had sung to him an overture of the Iona Community.

MacLeod returned to Edinburgh as the Assistant Minister to St. Giles Cathedral. In the overcrowded slums that surrounded the Cathedral he was challenged by the gulf that existed between the ‘two nations’ living on his door-step: the rich and respectable classes and hard-pressed workers who thought that Church was not ‘for the likes o’ them’. It offended the ideal of a classless community he had known in the trenches and which many had hoped would shape the post-war reconstruction. He felt the Church should take the lead in modelling such new forms of community life and began informal micro-communities modelled on Toc H fellowships. A short time later, Clayton secured funding for a Toc H padre in Glasgow and offered the post to MacLeod. He relished the opportunity to join this self-proclaimed, ‘aristocracy of comradeship’. The organisation had a ‘hearty, practical simplicity about its life and fellowship’ and for MacLeod it embodied the future of Christian community. He loved the work, but all did not go well. A heated debate over segregated communion left MacLeod hurt and compelled him to leave the community he had hoped would be a model of

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64 George’s personal interest in the Church predated this event. As a teenager he and Ellen had visited the minister of St. Cuthbert’s Church, Edinburgh and George had questioned him about how well the Churches were attended in the industrialised areas of the city. Although neither the minister, Dr. MacLean, nor MacLeod could know it at that time George would become an assistant to Dr. MacLean in 1926.
65 George MacLeod, p68.
66 George MacLeod, p69.
67 George MacLeod, p70.
68 George MacLeod, p70.
ecumenical hospitality. He returned to Edinburgh and threw himself into the work with the poor around St. Cuthbert’s Church. He also began a club for the ‘up and outs’; young professionals who were as absent from Church as their poor parish neighbours. MacLeod would no more abandon the middle class to an undemanding Christianity than he would ignore the condition of the poor. Then in 1930 he accepted a call to Govan Old Parish Church, Glasgow.69

Here he again experimented with the nature of Christian community. The Church stood in the middle of one of the largest docklands in Britain, a place that the Great Depression had left silent and whose craftsmen had nothing profitable to do. Adjacent to the Church was a community centre given to the people by Lady Pearce, the widow of a wealthy shipbuilder. He refused the manse and moved into the Pearce Institute70 writing to his former congregation that: ‘here was the chance of an experiment offered to one who has constantly referred to the need for such an experiment’.71

In Govan he worked tirelessly in the parish and developed new approaches of structure and worship within the Church.72 But despite his industry, the poverty of Govan persisted and it all left him close to breaking point. While recuperating for some months in the Middle East, MacLeod attended a Russian Orthodox Easter Sunday Service. There he encountered worship like he had never before experienced it and a renewed sense of the Church as the corporate body of Christ. Ferguson comments:

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69 MacLeod had been invited to Govan six months previously, but thinking he still had work to complete in Edinburgh had recommended his friend Bruce Nicol. Nicol had accepted, but within six months was dead of T.B. It was perhaps then with some feelings of guilt that MacLeod went to Govan and threw himself into the work. There were also historical reasons why MacLeod would accept the call from Govan: his ancestor, John MacLeod (1840-98) had been a popular community figure as minister of Govan for 23 years before his premature death in 1898 and MacLeod undoubtedly felt he had much to live up to. See George MacLeod, Chapter 7 generally.

70 The P.I. as it had become known, not only provided a place for the unemployed to meet during the day, but it offered cheap food, together with facilities for reading and recreation. See George MacLeod, p101.

71 George MacLeod, p97.

72 He radically reduced the numbers of parishioners on the roll, but increased the numbers attending and serving in leadership. He also encouraged the observance of the Calendar of the Christian Year.
For George MacLeod, lukewarm, conventional Presbyterianism finally died in the Holy Land on Easter Sunday, 1933. The old structure of individual devotion and duty had cracked in the crucible that was Govan in the hungry thirties, and he knew in his heart of hearts that it could not be repaired by more work, or even by more faith. He needed, for his healing, a new way of seeing, and he found new vision in the midst of overwhelming, mysteriously beautiful worship. It was a vision which was personal, political and cosmic all at the same time, and it appealed to the Celt in him. Holiness had become wholeness had become holiness. It was as if the spiritual and the material fused in a never-to-be-forgotten rapturous moment of revelation.

The rest of George MacLeod’s life would consist in the acting out of this compelling vision, and Iona Abbey would in time become his theatre for the glory of God.73

He returned enlightened and empowered, telling his assistant that there was going to be in Govan a ‘community of the will of God’. In uncompromising terms he proclaimed his intention to lead it: ‘That community I am going to make: with or without you: it’s not going to be great fun, and it’s going to be difficult. It’s not going to be a miracle, but it’s going to be real’.74

MacLeod re-immersed himself in the congregation and in the parish. Its humour reminded him of the sociality of the trenches, but its poverty still frustrated him. A few miles from Govan, MacLeod found the ruins of Fingalton Mill and invited the unemployed labourers to rebuild it as a local holiday centre. As the men worked with one another they shared their thoughts on matters both trivial and important: so was heard another overture to the founding of the Iona Community. But despite the success of Fingalton, MacLeod knew that the gospel demanded and the people longed for something more. To find it, MacLeod would have to leave Govan and travel to Iona.

He had spent holidays on Iona since childhood. It was rich in Christian history and symbolism. In 563, St. Columba founded a community of monks there75 and

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73 See George MacLeod, p110.
74 See George MacLeod, p112.
75 The facts that precipitated the journey of Columba to Iona are now obscured by accretions of hagiography and are subject to much debate. What is certain is that Columba was of Royal Irish
it became a centre of work, worship, hospitality and evangelism. Columba had been an aristocratic and single-minded leader of men who dedicated themselves to the mission of God. He was an icon of Scots Christianity. MacLeod found in this ancient monk not only an historical soul mate, but also an unimpeachable precedent for his experiment. The men were not unalike: Bradley notes that MacLeod ‘shared his predecessor’s combination of deep prayerfulness and humility, imaginative insight and poetic flair and charismatic leadership qualities accompanied by a somewhat autocratic and dominant manner’.76 MacLeod shamelessly exploited his aristocratic contacts when seeking support, persuading friends in high places to part with their money ‘as much as Columba had persuaded kings and princes to give land and endowments for his monastic foundations’.77 It appears that for MacLeod at the heart of it all was the prophecy spoken by Columba shortly before his death:

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\text{Iona of my heart, Iona of my love,} \\
\text{Instead of monks’ voices there shall be lowing of cattle:} \\
\text{But ere the world comes to an end} \\
\text{Iona shall be as it was.}^{78}
\]

With the gradual demise of Celtic Christianity the voices of monks did indeed give way to the lowing of cattle. In 1203 a Benedictine Community had built a stone Abbey on the site, but after the Reformation the decaying building was left to the cattle again. In 1899, The Duke of Argyll gifted the ruins to a public trust with a proviso that when the Church was renovated it should be open to members of all Christian denominations. By 1910, the Abbey Church had been restored and MacLeod subsequently became a popular speaker at the many retreats conducted on the island.79 The rebuilding of the other monastic buildings

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76 Ian Bradley, *Columba*, p102.
77 Ian Bradley, *Columba*, p102.
78 Cited in George MacLeod, p142.
79 For a more complete history of the island see E. Mairi MacArthur, *Columba’s Island: Iona From Past to Present*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).
had often been discussed on such occasions, and MacLeod was not the only one with the idea,\(^8^0\) but he was the man who would make it happen.

There are several versions of what finally motivated MacLeod to risk his audacious experiment, but clearly he was frustrated with the bias toward individual salvation offered from pulpits whose Church life made little or no impact on the social problems people faced. He saw the restored Abbey Church with its ruined living quarters as a contemporary parable; here was a well-kept Church surrounded by the ruins of a common life. It needed a counter-parable. MacLeod often retold the particular "kairos" moment.

*Firstly, one of our local Clydeside brilliantists, a quasi-Communist who has smoked more of my cigarettes than any other man alive, suddenly burst into my room unexpectedly to proclaim, "You folk have got it: if only you knew that you had it, and if only you knew how to begin to say it." It was his certainty that rebuked me; his implied need that moved me. What in effect he said was, "You know you could save me and you know you aren't doing it."*\(^8^1\)

This was not a criticism of MacLeod, it was directed at all the clergy and at the Church. MacLeod's response was the living counter-parable that combined the rebuilding of living quarters of Iona Abbey with training ministers to rebuild the common life of the nation's population. The otherwise unemployed craftsmen would be put to the work of rebuilding while the ministers would assist them by serving as labourers. It was to be a:

*brotherhood within the Church of Scotland, of no permanent vows, into which men of such a mind could come for the first two or three years of their ministry. The first six months after leaving college would be spent in community life: they would then be ready "to be drafted out - still as*

\(^8^0\) David Russell, a paper mill owner and lover of Iona had talked with MacLeod about the possibility of reconstructing the Abbey buildings in 1931 and had previously had plans drawn up. The trustees of Iona had decided not to proceed in the height of the Depression. Earlier, in 1926, an American group had wanted to found a Celtic College on the Island and one of their supporters was MacLeod's former Senior Minister Rev. Norman MacLean. Indeed, MacLeod had the idea of rebuilding another Abbey, Inchcolm, in 1929. Even in 1904, the first appeal leaflet of the Iona Cathedral trust indicated their hope to restore, the chapter house, the cloisters and St. Oran's Chapel, as well as the Church. See E. Mairi MacArthur, *Columba's Island*, p148 ff.

\(^8^1\) George F. MacLeod, *Speaking the Truth – In Love*, p13.
members of the brotherhood - to the congested areas and the housing
schemes where they would carry their ideas into practice."\textsuperscript{82}

It would be 'a micro-cosmic witness that "Christianity works" not only on
Sundays but on everyday of the week:'\textsuperscript{83} ... 'a tiny symbol that the thing can be
done'.\textsuperscript{84}

MacLeod's personal commitment was intense. And he told his congregation that
he could not remain with them, preaching risk and faith, if they knew that he
had had the opportunity for such adventure, but had remained in 'a much safer
billet'.\textsuperscript{85} He told the Iona Trustees:

For the purpose of its inception, I would myself be prepared to leave my
present work at any time now and I would undertake to stand by the
Experiment full time, resisting any conceivable inducements, for a term
of five years. For such time during that period as I remain unmarried, I
would offer my services without reward, but would ask for the payment
of my essential expenses when travelling in the name of the
Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{86}

MacLeod had been seeking some such kind of fellowship ever since the war: Toc
H, the Pearce Institute and Fingalton Mill were all preliminary attempts to
establish a 'new, disciplined regiment trained and equipped for a new fight'.\textsuperscript{87} By
July 1938, men had been recruited and sufficient funds were in place to begin.\textsuperscript{88}
Wooden huts were erected beside the ruins and as they met for worship on their
first evening visitors and islanders joined them. The inclusion of these
symbolised to the men that their new community must be lived within and for

\textsuperscript{82} Chasing the Wild Goose, p51-52.
\textsuperscript{83} Coracle, No.2, p20.
\textsuperscript{84} Coracle, No.2, p20.
\textsuperscript{85} George MacLeod, p152.
\textsuperscript{86} Cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p53.
\textsuperscript{87} George MacLeod, p139. Ferguson notes how MacLeod drew not only on his experiences of army,
Church and Toc H but was attracted by more experimental communities such as the Cotswold
Bruderhof. And while MacLeod does not mention Bonhoeffer's contemporaneous work on community
life at the seminary Finkenwalde, he was more than likely aware of it and may have seen it as an
example of the radical experiment he himself wished to attempt. See George MacLeod, p139-140.
\textsuperscript{88} Characteristic of a man often long on energy and commitment but short on diplomacy, MacLeod had
neglected to consult or even inform those living on the island of his intention. See E. Mairi MacArthur,
Columba's Island, p148.
the concrete realities of the world.\textsuperscript{89} However, the Community was not without conflict. It was almost as if they tried too hard to create community; ministers adopted the idealised image of a builder and the craftsmen were worse: 'Thinking they were embarked on a religious work, they tried to discard their humanity'.\textsuperscript{90} In the ensuing arguments an important truth was affirmed: confession, forgiveness and reconciliation were necessities for true community. These difficulties reflected the problems in the wider Church and world: 'how to live corporately, sharing life and its resources in a spirit of interdependence, while preserving the rights of the individual'.\textsuperscript{91}

The Community attracted criticism for being hapless romantics playing at being monks and were accused of being 'half way towards Rome and half way towards Moscow'.\textsuperscript{92} MacLeod defended the project asserting that they only sought 'to remain part of the world in which we find ourselves and yet not be of it. We have definitely barred the cloistered life'.\textsuperscript{93} He claimed the Community were:

\begin{quote}
\textit{an exceedingly calculated movement within the normal purpose of the Church. Poverty is not our aim, far less is the principle of celibacy involved. Those who come here will claim no "sacrifice"; we only claim a privilege to make the sacrifice of those who work in really difficult places a little less acute.}\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

The following year, in the face of European war and criticisms for the continuance of the experiment, MacLeod asserted that such a crisis demanded, 'not a battening of the hatches but rather a crowding on of more canvas ... the problem is not whether the Community should continue, but into what new channels it should regulate its forces'.\textsuperscript{95}

But the war changed everything. Few young ministers would wish to spend months on Iona while the hostilities in Europe continued, so while the craftsmen

\textsuperscript{89} Coracle, No.1, p6.
\textsuperscript{90} George MacLeod, p161.
\textsuperscript{91} Chasing the Wild Goose, p55.
\textsuperscript{92} Chasing the Wild Goose, p56.
\textsuperscript{93} Coracle, No.1, p12.
\textsuperscript{94} Coracle, No.2, p18.
\textsuperscript{95} Coracle, No.3, p6.
continued the re-building, their huts were also used as a retreat centre for visiting clergy and laity. Thus, 'round the tight, little community of full members the war brought another community, much larger, much looser, a very mixed assortment of men and women, old and young. It was indeterminate in limit. You could not say who belonged and who did not'. Iona became a place where people of differing denominations could come and learn discipleship and community living and, 'once embarked on this road, there was no way back to the original simplicities of the Iona Community'. The young ordinands were then based in Edinburgh, and so, despite this war-time diversification, the Community still fulfilled its primary task of preparing ministers for urban parishes. Such men had no ready answers for the problems they would encounter, but they could affirm a new way of finding solutions:

Christ is a Person to be trusted, not a principle to be tested. The Church is a Movement, not a meeting house. The Faith is an Experience, not an exposition. Christians are Explorers, not map makers. And the New Social Order is not a blue print which someone must find quickly. It is a present Experience made possible at Bethlehem, offered on Calvary, and communicated at Pentecost.

MacLeod seemed to know instinctively where the next step should be taken. Weekly courses on Iona were well subscribed and there were soon 3000 'Friends of the Community' supporting the work financially. A group of Minister Associates was established to meet for prayer and discussion and soon Youth and Women Associates would follow. Ferguson notes that: 'These developments

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96 See The Iona Community, p57.
97 George MacLeod, p175.
98 MacLeod knew that the ministers held no instant solution for the Church or society and likened the Community to a 'blind scout with one arm in a sling, and a gammy leg; it has unwittingly got over the hedge with its right leg and still has its gammy leg stuck in the old order of things'. See George MacLeod, p180.
99 Coracle, June 1942, as cited in George MacLeod, p195.
100 There were as many if not more who would criticise MacLeod and his Communitarian experiment. The then Iona Church of Scotland minister, Rev. Donald MacCuish was wary of the developments in his parish. In 1940 the Kirk Session complained to the Cathedral Trustees about the un-Presbyterian worship being conducted in the Abbey Church and the new minister, Rev. Murdo MacRae was antagonistic to MacLeod's experiment. See E. Mairi MacArthur, Columba's Island, p157.
MacLeod's outspoken pacifism was deeply regarded as subversive and unpatriotic in a time of war. See George MacLeod, p180 ff. Ministers who were Iona men were sometimes blacklisted when looking for a Church. See Chasing the Wild Goose, p62.
arose not because the Community planned them but because hungry people were looking for bread.\(^{101}\)

In each successive year, the Iona Community commissioned more ministers to urban parishes. As they did so, the membership proved to be tenacious.\(^{102}\) The original plan would have ensured a balance of artisans and ministers, with new ministers joining every two years. But it was quickly apparent that the ministers who had supported and befriended one another on Iona were now scattered throughout Scotland and wanted to continue their belonging in a more permanent community, albeit one that remained geographically dispersed. Ralph Morton notes that at this stage, ‘the members took the destiny of the Iona Community into their own hands’.\(^{103}\) They began by asking what it was that bound them together. On Iona it had been easily identifiable, living together in one hut, the communal sharing of work and worship and a common income of £50 per annum for each man. Away from Iona, their struggles to maintain some accountability to one another, led to the creation of a Rule of Life that in its expanded form, is now followed by its contemporary members.

One final event would shape the embryonic Iona Community. In 1943, attendant on the Community’s youth work on Mull, came a gift to the Church of Scotland of £20,000 per annum for seven years to establish experiments with young people along the lines of the Iona Work. The money was used for a variety of causes but most importantly for the establishing of a centre at 214 Clyde Street, Glasgow.\(^{104}\) While the Abbey remained the iconic centre of the Community, 214 Clyde Street became ‘its city counterpart’.\(^{105}\) Monica Stewart writes:

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\(^{101}\) *Chasing the Wild Goose*, p62.

\(^{102}\) While MacLeod intended the artisans to remain for ‘such periods as their labour was required’ it was anticipated that the ministers would only serve within the ‘brotherhood’ for two years. See *Coracle*, No. 36, (March 1960), p6, and *The Iona Community*, p18.

\(^{103}\) *The Iona Community*, p39.

\(^{104}\) The story of the various projects is told in detail in *The Iona Community*, p62 ff.

\(^{105}\) See *The Iona Community*, p71. Morton is keen to point out that Community House was not named ‘Iona Community House’. The name ‘Community’ was chosen to emphasis what it was trying to offer – ‘a place where men and women could meet and talk and, hopefully find community for themselves’. p67. When the Youth Trust had run its seven years the Iona Community assumed the responsibility for 214 Clyde Street and the Youth Camps.

**Melodies of Community**

35
It is difficult to capture, in just a sentence or two, the richness and diversity of life within Community House! It became a centre of education for people of all ages; a place of worship; a cultural base where people experimented with art, drama, music and film; a place where people relaxed and shared meals together; a refuge for homeless folk; a place where people were encouraged to talk openly about religion and politics. And of course a home for those who lived there.\textsuperscript{106}

Community House incarnated the idea of polyphony in community, a gathering of political, artistic, charitable and religious melodies around an open hospitality, centred in Christ.

At the same time, the weeks held on Iona added to the richness of the Community witness. Such weeks were unlike any holiday: guests were expected to share in the daily chores as well as attend lectures and worship. Prayer and politics, work and worship and a weekly pilgrimage around the island were all vital to Christian community. Such weeks were intended to offer people a glimpse of Christian community: ‘This was - and is - the secret of Iona’.\textsuperscript{107}

MacLeod remained the leader until 1967 when he inherited a peerage. Throughout these years the deputy leader, Ralph Morton, once described as a ‘virtuoso of the second string’,\textsuperscript{108} worked slowly and steadily to develop the structures of the community. Although MacLeod remained a formidable presence in the Community until his death in 1991, Ian Reid was given the immediate and unenviable task of being his successor. He quickly addressed the tensions members detected between life in the Church, life in society and the place of the Community. He wrote:

\textit{The Community exists to help its members together to receive both vision and encouragement. At the present time there are those who, in obedience to Jesus, feel dissatisfied with the institutional Church as it is. Some of them know that they must remain within the institutional

\textsuperscript{106} Monica A. Stewart, \textit{T. Ralph Morton: A Biographical Pamphlet}, (Glasgow: The Iona Community, 2001), p4. Ralph and Jenny Morton were the warden. In 1951 Peny Jones, the then industrial secretary of the Community, joined them on staff at Community House and offered regular teaching on politics. See \textit{The Iona Community}, p76.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Chasing the Wild Goose}, p72.
\textsuperscript{108} George MacLeod, p294.

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Church trying to help it to become the kind of Church He wants. Others, still committed to Jesus, believe that they must work outside it. These two groups need one another.\(^{109}\)

In 1988, another leader Ron Ferguson would similarly argue that:

The need for a supportive network of people committed to radical spirituality and radical politics will grow, and it will require to operate within and outwith the institutional church ... God has provided resources for us beyond our limited imaginings. The resources are there for a purpose — building and rebuilding the common life.\(^{110}\)

The inspiration behind MacLeod’s vision of community was primarily clerical, male, and shaped by his military background and particular social conditioning. The Iona Community acknowledges the debt owed to its founding father, but in its adulthood, has moved into an understanding of community that reveals a depth and breadth beyond the original vision of 1938. However, the emphasis remains on building the common life.

**DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: THEOLOGIAN OF POLYPHONY**

Like Macleod, Bonhoeffer was not only passionate about the nature of community but saw the great strength derived from life together. However he knew that community did not simply mean living together or sharing common ideas but was participating in the divine reality that God had already called into existence. Like the family in which he grew up, Bonhoeffer believed that community was a gathering together and a unity of diverse opinions and personalities.\(^{111}\)

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111 Thomas Day argues that the foundational views on Christian community Bonhoeffer articulates in his doctoral thesis, *Sanctorum Communio* are in effect nothing but a description of his family. Thomas
Dietrich was the elder twin to Sabine with whom he shared three elder brothers, two elder sisters and one younger sister. The family has been described as cultured and humanistic, a place of ‘self-control, objectivity and balance’.112 Each member was expected to display the ‘empiricism, rationality and liberalism’113 personified in their father Karl, a Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology. But Dietrich inherited from his mother’s family both a love for theology and music. His grandmother Clara von Hase loved to sing and had taken piano lessons from Franz Lizst. Her father had been an eminent Church historian who had once been imprisoned for subversive political activities114 and her husband, Karl Alfred, was a professor of practical theology who had resigned as a chaplain to Emperor Wilhelm after a disagreement with the Kaiser.115 But despite these ecclesiastical connections, Dietrich rarely attended Church. His mother Paula had received a strongly Christian upbringing and had been connected with the Moravian brethren. She determined that Christian learning should be handed on to her children, but felt no need of the Church to do so.116 When religious ceremonies in the family required a clergyman, it was a family member, usually Karl Alfred von Hase, who presided. The children were, however, taught the Bible, learnt hymns, and offered grace before meals, as well as participating in evening prayers. In due course they were baptised and confirmed. Paula governed their instruction in religion, but the remainder of their early education came from

governesses Käthe and Maria Horn, who were dedicated followers of the Herrnhut community. While their spirituality was undoubtedly of secondary importance in the culture of family life, it would be foolish to disregard the influence that these ‘intelligent, humorous and beloved women’ had on Dietrich.\textsuperscript{117} Thus, there remained a Christian tone to family life without their feeling ‘a need for any ecclesiastical guidance’\textsuperscript{118} or participation in a community of faith. Yet, something of the Church and a relationship in Christ would beckon to Bonhoeffer.

In his youth Dietrich displayed a precocious musical talent,\textsuperscript{119} playing Mozart Sonatas by the age of ten. When he was in the fifth form he composed a trio on Schubert’s song, ‘Gute Ruh’ which may have marked the beginnings of his desire to bring together music and theology.

Bonhoeffer children were encouraged to form their own opinions and to choose their own careers, while respecting the choices of those who differed from them. In this freedom of choice the teenage Dietrich devoted himself to theology. For all the familial tolerance his decision was not well received. Paula accepted it, but with little enthusiasm. Karl had strong misgivings but kept them to himself.\textsuperscript{120} His brothers were less restrained, but Dietrich was a match to their criticism: Karl-Friedrich thought that theology was redundant in a scientific world now coming

\textsuperscript{117} Maria and Käthe joined the family 6 months after Dietrich and Sabine were born and Maria remained with them for 17 years. See Mary Bosanquet, The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968), p28 ff.
\textsuperscript{118} Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p35. Years later Bonhoeffer’s students learned that ‘good advice and support was to be had not only from Dietrich but even more from his mother’. See ‘Marienburger Allee 43’, in E. Bethge, Friendship and Resistance: Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (Geneva / Michigan: W.C.C. Publications and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), p76-7.
\textsuperscript{119} Dietrich was not unique in the family in this regard. Bethge notes that Klaus later played the ‘cello with great sensitivity’ and records how, ‘none of his brothers or sisters ever wanted to miss the family music evenings’. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p25.
\textsuperscript{120} Karl Bonhoeffer clearly regretted that his son would be wasting his abilities on a redundant profession working outside the heart and core of life. In a letter written to Dietrich in 1934, his father admitted that his preconception of a ‘quiet, uneventful minister’s life’ as he knew it from his Sabian uncles had been incorrect. Letter dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} February 1934, cited in E. Bethge, Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr, (London: Collins, 1975), p43. However at the time of Dietrich’s decision, Adolf Stocker, court preacher for Kaiser Wilhelm I and Wilhelm II had already proclaimed that ‘German Protestantism was no longer capable of doing or accomplishing anything’. See Georg Huntemann, The Other Bonhoeffer: An Evangelical Reassessment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, trans. Todd Huizinga, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p18-19.
of age, but Dietrich told him: 'You may knock my block off but I still believe in God'.

Klaus condemned the Church as an impotent and peripheral phenomenon and Dietrich retorted, 'If the Church is feeble, I shall reform it!'

His choice to study theology seems to have been influenced by the death of his brother Walter in W.W.I. It devastated the whole family. Paula moved into a neighbour's house for some weeks and was absent from family life for the ensuing year. Karl ceased to write the family annual memoirs for ten years. But Walter's death had an especially decisive affect on Dietrich. Until he was aged twelve, he and Sabine had shared a bedroom and often conversed about death and eternal life. Then, around the time of Walter's fatal wounding, Dietrich moved into a room of his own. Here he struggled on his own to reflect on Walter's death. He felt a deep loneliness at this time, and it was then that he composed a cantata on the Psalmist's lament 'My soul is cast down within me'. Like many others, in his grief Bonhoeffer had turned to both music and Christian faith. Sometime after Walter's death Dietrich tested a vocation in music by auditioning before Leonid Kreuzer, a virtuoso pianist. The outcome was indecisive but then, aged fifteen he began to study Hebrew and occasionally attended Church accompanied by his mother. After this, while music remained a constant presence, in Bonhoeffer's biography the references to it are incidental, as if his passion for it is constrained so to leave room for the more important tasks of life. K.E. Morris speculates on that more important task and why it was theological. He argues that consciously or otherwise there was a

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121 See Mary Bosanquet, *The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p45.
122 See Mary Bosanquet, *The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p45.
123 Sabine recalls how Dietrich and she had previously meditated on eternity until they were dizzy and how, once separated, Dietrich would drum on the wall between them to remind her to “think of God.” Sabine Leibholz, 'Childhood and Home', in *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p23-25.
124 Morris makes a compelling analysis of evidence provided by Sabine to assert that the meditations on death conducted by Dietrich and Sabine began in the period around their twelfth birthdays (February, 1918) and continued through the period immediately following April 1918 when their mother was absent from the house after hearing of Walter's death. K.E. Morris, *Bonhoeffer's Ethic of Discipleship: A Study in Social Psychology, Political Thought, and Religion*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p88 ff.
125 Bethe suggests that without too much exaggeration it might be said that it 'was because he was lonely that Bonhoeffer became a theologian, and because he became a theologian he was lonely.' See *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p37.
126 *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p37.
bargain struck within the family when Walter died. The older brothers, whose careers were already chosen, would continue in the paternal world of science and law. In return, and with the hope of comfort to Paula, Dietrich would be allowed to pursue a future in the Church. There may even have been some hope that Dietrich's religious pursuits could bring healing to the family through the one enterprise that offered hope in death, namely Christianity. At this time Dietrich was given Walter's Bible. In accepting it he may have been acknowledging that his would be the task of realising the hope offered to a family fractured by death: 'if the sting could be snatched from death, harmony in his childhood world could once again prevail'. None of this is to say that Walter's death or the family drove Bonhoeffer to be a theologian, but Bethge is certain that Dietrich's 'childish spirit' not only responded to the event with a 'fervent longing for the life beyond' but that he also had a strong, if unarticulated wish, to convey this faith to the others.

Bonhoeffer was seventeen when he left home to study theology at Tübingen. The only lecturer who seems to have influenced him was Adolf Schlatter, whose unambiguous dedication to scripture was formative in Bonhoeffer's theology particularly his dedication to the Sermon on the Mount. Of greater influence than Tübingen was the trip to Rome taken with his brother Klaus in 1924. There, Dietrich was captivated by the glory of the Church. Easter Day in St. Peter's made him appreciate how 'nationalistic, provincial and narrow minded were the

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128 K.E. Morris, *Bonhoeffer's Ethic of Discipleship*, p91. Morris speculates that this bargain was only settled in terms of his personal position when Bonhoeffer joined his family in political resistance. Then was the first time in his life that he had stood as a peer and an equal to his father and brothers. In joining them in resistance he was, on one hand obeying them. But, on the other hand, he was affecting his life plan to prove to them the value of faith. If he had to accept them for the first time as equals and co-workers, rather than opponents, they too, had to accept him on his own terms... Standing in quasi-identification with his dead brother Walter, he might also risk a wartime death. But his death, unlike Walter's would be the death of one who fights against war, not in war ... thus the constellation of events in the resistance paralleled these in the Bonhoeffer family of 1918 and allowed Dietrich to re-enact that primal drama – this time to break free of it, p131-132.
129 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p38.
130 Martin Rumscheidt has described in detail the debt Bonhoeffer owes to Schattler, particularly in regard to being accountable in all decisions in faith and Church to the Bible. See M. Rumscheidt, 'The Formation of Bonhoeffer's Theology' in *The Cambridge Companion*, p52. It was also from Schattler that Bonhoeffer developed a respect for the Jewish culture of Jesus and the New Testament.

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confines of his own church'. Until then his Christian education had been in the home and the academy. Now, 'before his dazzled sight there blazed out the visible symbol of the Church Universal; the Church of Rome, the Church at the heart of the world. Without prejudice or anxiety, Bonhoeffer gave himself up to this new experience'. He wrote in his diary, 'I am beginning to understand the concept of church'. On the same trip he visited Africa where he noted:

*In Islam everyday life and religion are not kept separate, as they are in the whole of the church, including the Catholic church. With us one goes to church and when one comes back an entirely different kind of life begins again.*

How life and religion could be manifest together in the Church became the subject of Bonhoeffer's doctoral studies in Berlin under Reinhold Seeberg. Seeberg encouraged Bonhoeffer's volitional understanding of theology, gave him a strong Christo-centrism and awakened an appreciation of the sociality of human existence. The thesis, *Sanctorum Communio* articulated a powerful sociality of Church as 'Christ existing as community' but below the capable theology lay a vivid description of his family before his brother's death. Subconsciously it seems that he was seeking for a way in which life and religion, the worlds of his father and mother, could be profitably united and heal his fractured family. As he worked on this thesis his longing for un-fragmented community compelled him to the fellowship of the Church: teaching Sunday School and then a 'Thursday Group' which not only discussed religious and political topics but also attended opera and concerts.

He pursued a career in the Church accepting a call to be an Assistant pastor to a German congregation in Barcelona. While Church and theology were the

135 Although the Berlin Faculty was anti-Barthian, Bonhoeffer was strongly influenced by the Swiss theologian, particularly his rejection of 19th century liberalism. However, he felt Barth's theology to be too transcendent, and in *Sanctorum Communio* sought to articulate a theology in which the Word of God was concretely encountered by humanity in the Church.
136 *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p70.

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dominant concerns of his life at this time, still his interest in music did not wane. Before agreeing to go he asked whether there was a piano he could play and if there were an Opera House and later recorded how much he enjoyed the concerts there. On his return to teach in Berlin he befriended Franz Hildebrant, a young theologian who significantly shared Bonhoeffer’s lively musicality.

As MacLeod before him, in 1930 Bonhoeffer accepted a scholarship to study at Union Seminary, New York. While there, he made a number of friendships, the first of which was Erwin Sutz, a Swiss student with whom he often played piano and debated doctrine. He also enjoyed a significant friendship with Albert F. Fisher, an African American who brought him to the Abyssinian Baptist Church, in Harlem. Here he experienced and was appalled at America’s racial segregation. But he was deeply impressed with the fervour of their worship, quickly acquiring a record collection of Negro Spirituals. Another friendship which developed at Union had no musical connection, but it is difficult to underestimate the influence of Jean Lasserre: he crucially shaped Bonhoeffer’s views on pacifism and his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.

When Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin, both Germany and he were changing. He saw that: ‘an easily led citizenry was content to bask in the Teutonic pride that Hitler was proclaiming ... They sheltered, not in Jesus Christ, but under the political wings of Hitler’s military might and Nazism’s promise of unparalleled prosperity and national security’. Bonhoeffer experienced a deep personal transition, a ‘great liberation’ in which it became clear that ‘the life of a servant of Jesus Christ should belong to the Church’. As Bethge interprets it,

137 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p99.
139 Erwin Sutz was a Swiss student who had studied under Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. It was Sutz who subsequently brought Bonhoeffer and Barth into contact with one another and made possible Bonhoeffer’s two-week stay with Barth in Bonn, 1931. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p153.
140 Jean Lasserre was a pacifist who challenged Bonhoeffer to accept the concrete commands against violence found in the Sermon on the Mount. Traditional Lutheran interpretations had argued against the Sermon as literal exhortations. Lasserre’s challenge provided much of the initial stimulation for Discipleship.
Bonhoeffer was moving from being a ‘theologian to a Christian’.\textsuperscript{143} As he did so, he quickly identified the threat of Hitler's Nazism and was immersed in the early stages of the Confessing Church and opposing Hitler’s anti-Jewish legislation. But as Hitler’s power grew, Bonhoeffer became frustrated by the lack of decisive opposition in the Confessing Church.\textsuperscript{144} He left Germany to accept a pastorate in London.

Bonhoeffer was diligent in his responsibilities in London and worked tirelessly in ecumenical circles in opposing Nazism and promoting pacifism.\textsuperscript{145} He also imported his Bechstein piano and used the manse as a rehearsal room for the parish music group and invited its youth group to listen to his large collection of gramophone records.\textsuperscript{146} He was only there for eighteen months and in 1935, after a fact-finding tour of Christian communities, he returned to Germany to establish a new Seminary for the Confessing Church.\textsuperscript{147} It was here, at Finkenwalde, that Bonhoeffer experimented with the praxis of life together in Christian community. ‘It served as a catalyst for everything that had been preoccupying Bonhoeffer during the past few years: a theology of the Sermon on the Mount, a community in service and spiritual exercises, a witness to passive resistance and ecumenical openness’.\textsuperscript{148} But it was also a testament to balance in life. As well as rigorous study, Bonhoeffer reserved time for games and ensured the presence of two grand pianos in his impoverished college. He also placed his

\textsuperscript{143} E. Bethge’s biography is subtitled ‘Theologian, Christian, Man for his Times’, indicating three phases of Bonhoeffer’s life.

\textsuperscript{144} The Church in opposition argued that a \textit{status confessionis} was precipitated by Nazism i.e. they represented a challenge to the fundamentals of faith to which the Church must confess its opposition if it were to remain the Church of the Christian Gospel.

\textsuperscript{145} It was during his time in London that Bonhoeffer attended the Ecumenical Youth Conference at Fanø, Denmark and spoke passionately on behalf of Church opposition to the Nazi Regime. In his Sermon, ‘The Church and the Peoples of the World’, he called for decisive ecumenical action to ensure peace between nations.

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p328.

\textsuperscript{147} He hastily contacted his confidant Bishop George Bell and arranged visits to Anglican seminaries / Communities such as The Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham and the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Oxford to understand something of communal life. See J. Rieger, ‘Contacts With London’, in \textit{I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p97-98. E. Bethge notes that additionally Bonhoeffer visited seminars of other denominations including the Quakers at Selly Oak. See \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p412.

\textsuperscript{148} See the proposal to the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union Church, 6th July 1935 \textit{Gesammelte Schriften}, Vol. II., p448 ff, cited in E. Bethge, \textit{Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr}, p54. Here the influence of Anglican Monasticism and Jean Lasserre are evident.
gramophone records, including his collection of Negro Spirituals at the disposal of all the students. And while the emphasis of Finkenwalde was understandably biased to life in the Church, the students knew that their time in seclusion offered no escape from the increasing tensions in Germany. This time was an intensive period of preparation, the lessons of which they would soon have to practice within the dangerous world beyond. It should not come as a surprise that when Bonhoeffer wished to comment on this relationship of Church and world beyond the seminary, he did so in a powerful and contextual bisociation of theology and music: 'Only he who cries out for the Jews can sing the Gregorian chant'.

One final incident from the time at Finkenwalde is important for understanding a theologian who later came to practice his discourse through the metaphor of music. Johannes Goebel recounts being present when Bonhoeffer was improvising at the piano. He claimed:

> I asked him [Bonhoeffer] whether he had ever tried, or was trying, to compose anything. In a distinctly reserved tone he said he had stopped doing so since he had become a theologian, or something to the effect. This seems to me a typical trait of his nature. Bonhoeffer was a passionate preacher and theologian, as Bethge confirms. To sit down at an instrument and improvise or even compose - and not just play Mozart with exactitude ... - this can only be done in passion, and out of passion. Bonhoeffer cast this passion out of his life for the sake of the call to a greater 'passion'. This too is a contribution to the theme of 'Call and Discipleship'.

> That it was a 'casting out' is quite clear to me from the picture which rises in my memory ... while he was sitting at the piano something which I had not known in him and have never seen again, an expression of natural force, of something primeval, came over him, a Dietrich different from the one known to us ...

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149 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p427.
150 Much of the theological teaching and reflection was written up in his books Discipleship (1937) and Life Together, (1939).
151 E. Bethge notes that Bonhoeffer himself did not write this anywhere but cites as his source H. Traub, 'Two Recollections', in I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p156. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p441. The British publication of I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer, locates Traub's article at the same page, but does not include the quotation. It is referred to in E. Bethge, Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr, p52.
It is strange that this should have been so preserved by my memory; this lightening up of a rudimentary 'non-Bonhoeffer', and after that the short, harsh, sharp overcoming of himself, in the way he broke off his playing so suddenly, in his answer to my amiably condescending question implying such a subtle criticism of my curiosity, in the vigorous turning back to 'work'; to the 'essential Bonhoeffer'... an overcoming of self which, in principle, had been accomplished long before. To him this may have been a trifle then, not worth mentioning. To me it remains a contribution to 'sanctification', to 'discipleship', and surely as such a precious memory.\textsuperscript{152}

In much the same way as he broke off a romantic attachment to focus on the community at Finkenwalde,\textsuperscript{153} it seems that Bonhoeffer gave up the childhood ambition of musical composition for the sake of unequivocal devotion to theology. Still he could only conceive of theology and music as 'either / or choices' competing for his love and commitment. Perhaps he feared that a choice for music would have led him away from others down the path of 'inner emigration;' an accusation he levelled at composers attending a Festival of Church Music in Berlin that year.\textsuperscript{154} Only later does it appear that a metaphor of polyphony would enable him to overcome such dichotomised thinking.

In 1937 the Gestapo shut down Finkenwalde.\textsuperscript{155} The following year, on 9\textsuperscript{th} November, the Nazis destroyed Jewish shops and synagogues, killing ninety Jews

\textsuperscript{152} Johannes Goebel, 'When He Sat Down at the Piano', in \textit{I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p124-125.

\textsuperscript{153} Bonhoeffer reflected on this from Tegel Prison when he was then engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer, He wrote; 'I was once in love with a girl; she became a theologian, and our paths ran parallel for many years; she was almost my age. ... We didn't realise that we loved each other... More than eight years went by ... I sensed at the time that if I ever did get married, it could only be to a much younger girl, but I thought that impossible, both then and there after. Being totally committed to my work for the Church in the ensuing years, I thought it not only inevitable but right that I should forgo marriage altogether'. D. Bonhoeffer and M. von Wedemeyer, \textit{Love Letters from Cell 92: The Correspondence Between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer}, R. von Bismarck and U. Kabitz, eds., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p246. If Bonhoeffer had known this girl (Elizabeth Zimm) for eight years and since he was 21, this places his decision to carry things no further with her in 1935, the year in which he returned to Germany to take his responsibilities at Zingst / Finkenwalde.

\textsuperscript{154} MacLeod also thought in a similar way, at least before he was married. Ferguson notes how a colleague asked MacLeod what to say about sex to a young couple in his Church youth group. MacLeod answered, 'The fellow who goes with his girl is fundamentally showing his desire to become creative in the highest sense of the word, and quite right too! But until he is in a position to do this - that is, marry her, - he is much better with his creative power employed elsewhere, where it can obtain full outlet'. See \textit{George MacLeod}, p197.

\textsuperscript{155} See \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p586.

\textsuperscript{155} Although the buildings were closed, the work of training pastors for the Confessing Church continued for a few years through the \textit{Sammelvikariate}, literally a 'collective curacy' whereby Confessing Church students were nominally attached to obscure parishes as a cover for continuing to
and sending 20,000 more to concentration camps. To Bonhoeffer’s outrage there was no concerted opposition from the Confessing Church. Things deteriorated in 1939 when hardly any pastor refused to sign an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Bonhoeffer’s anxiety grew when conscription raised the possibility of having to fight in Hitler’s army.

Bonhoeffer was persuaded that a way round conscription was to accept an invitation to America. But within days he regretted it:

_I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people ... Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilisation may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilisation. I know which of the two alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security._

Within a few weeks of Bonhoeffer’s return, Hitler invaded Poland. Bonhoeffer was forbidden to teach, publish or preach. As his work for the Confessing Church became impossible Bonhoeffer was increasingly taken into the confidence of a dissident group within _Abwehr_, German Military Intelligence. For the next four

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156 Bonhoeffer wrote the date in his Bible beside the words of Psalm 74:8. ‘They say in their hearts; “We will crush them completely!”’ They burned every place where God was worshipped in the land’. (N.I.V.), see further _Dietrich Bonhoeffer_, p607.

157 There was no right of ‘conscientious objection’ in Germany and Bonhoeffer had made his position against war repeatedly clear. With the Confessing Church in atrophy, the risk by their association was that his inevitable resistance to conscription would embarrass matters. See K.W. Clements, _A Patriotism for Today: Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer_, (Bristol: Bristol Baptist College, 1984), Chapter 2 generally.


159 Earlier that year, before his trip to America, Bonhoeffer had been approached by his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi about an attempt by individuals within _Abwehr_, the Justice Department and the Army to use the Fritsch affair to precipitate an over-throw of Hitler. General Fritsch had been dismissed from the army on charges of homosexual behaviour. There was a military investigation into the affair by the Military Security Department and by the Minister of Justice Franz Gurtner. The dissident Admiral Canaris headed the military security department and Hans Oster, an officer sympathetic to removing Hitler, led their investigation. Dohnanyi was a personal assistant to Gurtner and together, he and Oster found themselves involved in a plot to use Fritsch’s dismissal to incite the military command to overthrow Hitler. It was at this time that Dohnanyi began a meticulous record of Nazi crimes in his _Chronicle of Scandals_.

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years, Bonhoeffer lived a double life, ostensibly using his international contacts to gather intelligence for the Nazis, but all the while risking imprisonment and death for his subversion of the Regime.

During this time he worked on what he hoped would be his magnum opus, Ethics, but in April 1943 he was arrested on suspicion of helping Jews escape to Switzerland.\textsuperscript{160} It was just weeks after he had announced his engagement to Maria von Wedemeyer.

It was in prison that Bonhoeffer began to see music and theology not as rivals for his commitment but as companions: he began to sketch a bisociative method for doing theology through the metaphor of music. In his isolation, music evoked memories of happier times, often times of strong community. These recollections were a source of great encouragement to him and through them, and news of recent family concerts, he felt connected to his friends and relatives.\textsuperscript{161} He often recalled songs, psalms and hymns learnt and sung at Finkenwalde\textsuperscript{162} and there are frequent prison references to the hymns contained in Das Neue Lied,\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{160} Part of Bonhoeffer's double life in the German Resistance led to him participating in the 'U7' venture; a scheme to help Jews escape into Switzerland. It was for this reason that Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi were both arrested, not because of their participation in the first plot to assassinate Hitler.

\textsuperscript{161} A letter from Karl Bonhoeffer dated 11\textsuperscript{th} April 1943 and Dietrich's reply dated 14\textsuperscript{th} April 1943 refer to a Cantata organised by Dietrich for his father's birthday. A year later, he recalls how, 'the picture of the many children making music together will be very present to us all as a real joy during this year'. Letter dated 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 1944. Dietrich’s letter to his parents (mistakenly) dated 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1943 speaks of his encouragement at receiving Bach cantatas and recites a song by Hugo Wolf. The song is repeated in his letter to Hans von Dohnanyi, also dated (mistakenly) 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1943. In November 1943 Bonhoeffer feels connected to the world beyond his cell, aware that on Repentance Day his friends will all be listening to Bach's B Minor Mass. It also brings to mind happier times of community when he first heard it as a student in Berlin. Letter dated 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1943. Bonhoeffer's friends and family often reciprocated the music reflections. See letter from Bethge dated 9\textsuperscript{th} January 1944 and in his father dated 27\textsuperscript{th} March, 1944, in Letters and Papers.

\textsuperscript{162} On 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1943 Bonhoeffer wrote again to Bethge comparing his cell with Finkenwalde saying, 'There is nothing I miss here – except all of you. I wish I could play the G minor sonata with you and sing some Schütz, and hear you sing Psalms 70 and 47; that was what you did best'. Letter dated 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1943. The following week Bonhoeffer wrote again saying, 'When I was in bed yesterday evening I looked up for the first time 'our' Advent hymns in the Neues Lied. I can hardly hum any of them to myself without being reminded of Finkenwalde, Schönhütz and Sigurdshof'. In the same letter he recalls and notes Altdorfer's 'Nativity'. Letter dated 27-28\textsuperscript{th} November 1943. On his birthday in 1944 he recalls Bethge's present of the D major violin concerto to him eight years previously when they were together in Finkenwalde. Letters and Papers, p207.

\textsuperscript{163} This is the title of a Protestant Youth Hymn Book.
Heinrich Schütz and Paul Gerhardt. When he laments that he has not heard a hymn sung in a year he goes on to add that ‘the music that we hear inwardly can almost surpass, if we really concentrate on it, what we hear physically. It has a greater purity, the dross falls away, and in a way the music acquires a “new body.”’

However in two crucial passages to which we shall return throughout this thesis Bonhoeffer adopts music as a metaphor through which to engage in theological reflection. In a letter dated 23rd February 1944 Bonhoeffer wrote to Bethge lamenting the fragmentariness of contemporary living:

*What chance have any of us today of producing a real magnum opus? ... The important thing today, however is that people should be able to discern from the fragments of our life how the whole was arranged and planned, and what material it consists of. For really there are some fragments that are only worth throwing in the dustbin (even a decent ‘hell’ is too good for them), and others whose importance lasts for centuries, because their completion can only be a matter for God, and so they are fragments that must be fragments – I’m thinking, e.g., of the Art of Fugue. If our life is but the remotest reflection of such a fragment, if we accumulate, at least for a short time, a wealth of themes and weld them into a harmony in which the great counterpoint is maintained from start to finish, so that at last, when it breaks off abruptly, we can sing no more than the chorale, ‘I come before thy throne’, we will not bemoan the fragmentariness of our life, but rather rejoice in it.*

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164 Bonhoeffer became aware of Heinrich Schütz, “the father of German Music” through Bethge during their time together in Finkenwalde. Significantly Schütz’s Kleine Geistliche Konzerte, which Bonhoeffer and Bethge comment was written during the Thirty Year War was a musical protest against the conflict. See Andreas Pangritz, ‘Point and Counterpoint - Resistance and Submission’ in Lyn Holness & Ralf K. Witzenberg, eds., *Theology in Dialogue: The Impact of the Arts, Humanities & Science on Contemporary Religious Thought, Essays in Honor of John W. de Gruchy*, (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), p30 ff.


166 *Letters and Papers*, p240. The experience is similar to that referred to by the former hostage Terry Waite on BBC Radio 4 in November 2002.

167 *Letters and Papers*, p219, translation slightly altered. This passage is Bonhoeffer’s personal lament that the turbulent politics of his time had prevented him completing his own great treatise *Ethics* and perhaps his *Outline for a Book*. However, Bonhoeffer refused to allow the worth of his works-in-progress to be diminished because of their fragmentary nature. In fact he had already written to Bethge arguing that, ‘The common denominator must be sought both in thought and in a personal and integrated attitude to life. The man who allows himself to be torn into fragments by events and by questions has not passed the test for the present and the future’. *Letters and Papers*, p200.
Here Bonhoeffer considers the 'exceptional prophetic possibility' of the musical imagery of polyphony; how melody and counterpoint might enable theological reflection on the increasingly fractured condition of modern humanity. Bonhoeffer argues that the cantus firmus for the Christian and their community is Jesus Christ but that around Him concrete living in and for the world might exist in a variety of ways. Shortly before his execution Bonhoeffer returned to the image saying,

God wants us to love him eternally with our whole hearts - not in such a way as to injure or weaken our earthly love, but to provide a kind of cantus firmus to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint. One of these contrapuntal themes (which have their own complete independence but yet are related to the cantus firmus) is earthly affection... Where the cantus firmus is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limits. The two are "undivided and yet distinct", in the words of the Chalcedonian Definition, like Christ in his divine and human natures. May not the attraction and importance of polyphony in music consist in its being a musical reflection of this Christological fact and therefore of our vita christiana?...  

Some sixty years after Bonhoeffer wrote this, philosophers and theologians have adopted the metaphor of 'fragmentation' to characterise the social malaise of post-modernity. Perhaps it was with prophetic wisdom that Bonhoeffer proposed the musical metaphor of melody and counterpoint to help theology respond to such fragmentation with polyphonic living. Such living would allow for and even rejoice in the possibility of a community able to maintain difference within a unity assured by varying relatedness to the cantus firmus of Jesus Christ. While this thesis will suggest a new theological paradigm of polyphony through which to examine community and Christian discipleship it seeks only to offer a trajectory of purpose rather than a detailed analysis of application.

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169 Letter dated 20th May 1944, Letters and Papers, p302-303. Earlier, Bonhoeffer had hinted at the theme, instructing his God-son nephew, 'Music, as your parents understand and practise it, will help dissolve your perplexities and purify your character and sensibility, and in times of care and sorrow will keep a ground-bass of joy alive in you'. Letters and Papers, p295.
170 See below, chapter 4, ‘Fragmented Epiphanies’.
In chapter two, entitled ‘Mixing Metaphors and Making Melodies’, the nature of metaphor as a methodology for examining Christian community is explored. It examines not only Bonhoeffer’s metaphor of polyphony, but looks at how an understanding of the Christian community is best served through a polyphony of metaphors.\(^\text{172}\) So while the musical metaphor of polyphony remains at the core of the thesis, the ability and necessity for other metaphors to be woven around this foundational concept will be shown to be an integral part of the thesis’ argument; namely no individual metaphor can claim a singular sufficiency in articulating the complexities of Christian community.

Chapter three, ‘Polyphonic Jesus; Cantus Firmus of Melody Making’, will establish the polyphonic character of God through Christ, the cantus firmus. This chapter argues that a polyphonic Christ is expressed in the gospel narratives that bear witness to him as one cantus firmus. It will show that this polyphony of God can be detected through the Jewish scriptures and forward throughout the remainder of the New Testament and the traditions of the Church. The chapter explores the nature of a Christocentric community and how a polyphonic Christology affects ecclesiology. It will establish that the Church ought to be the paradigmatic example of a polyphonic community, wherein the melodies of God are heard and proclaimed, but the people are in solidarity with the songs of an un-Church world.\(^\text{173}\) For a community to learn to do this the thesis suggests that it may adopt and adapt the early Church practice of Disciplina Arcani, or the Discipline of the Secret.

Chapters four, five and six examine as additional melodies of community the metaphorical imagery of ‘fragmented epiphanies’, ‘worldly monasticism’ and the concept of Christian community as a ‘colony of heaven’. It is hoped that these

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\(^{172}\) See Letters and Papers, p303. Hans Urs von Balthasar adopts a similar metaphor and suggests that, ‘In his revelation, God performs a symphony, and it is impossible to say which is richer: the seamless genius of his composition or the polyphonic orchestra of Creation that he has prepared to play it. Thus he continues, in today’s society, ‘perhaps the most necessary thing to proclaim and take to heart is that Christian truth is symphonic’. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, Truth is Symphonic, p8 and 15.

\(^{173}\) The books Life Together and Discipleship illustrate the experiments in Finkenwalde where Bonhoeffer sought a new monasticism woven to the melodies of God while his unfinished Ethics and Letters and Papers illustrate his attempts to discern the melodies of God found within the world beyond the Church.
metaphorical melodies might be creatively mixed around the *cantus firmus* of Christ, allowing the ‘sound’ of the community to move from one theme to the next, changing in response to their solidarity with the changing world but yet still retaining the foundation of Christ’s revelation.

Chapter seven entitled; ‘Performing the Discipline of Counterpoint’ will concern the way in which Christ as the *cantus firmus* of polyphonic community living is shared responsibly within the Church and world. The chapter begins by examining how the early Church practised the *Disciplina Arcani* through which they kept hidden from the pagan world, the mysteries of the faithful such as Baptism, Eucharist, Lord’s Prayer and Creed. It will then argue that a 21st century re-appropriation of this practice, as the way in which the mysteries of Christ might be shared responsibly both in the Church and world, offers the key to a Christocentric and polyphonic community.

Chapter eight, ‘Melody Making in the Church’ examines how some of the melodies of God are expressed with the life of the Church, particularly its worship. Such an examination offers no attempt at articulating a complete or systematic framework for Christian worship. Neither does this particular examination aspire to represent the completion of any such endeavour. It is undoubtedly arbitrary in those aspects it chooses to examine in detail, and in those upon which it offers little comment, particularly the practices of Eucharist and Baptism. It has chosen to concentrate on those aspects of Christian worship that may be most readily appropriated in polyphonic form by all members of varying Christian denominations. Thus, while it has not directly addressed practices such as Baptism and Eucharist, it is hoped that the examinations that have been undertaken do provide a trajectory of thought that will illuminate a more far reaching debate. The thesis therefore includes an exploration of the melodies of ecumenism within the Church and the polyphony of Christian healing.
Chapter nine, entitled ‘Melody Making in the World’ affirms that the melodies of Christ are to be discerned beyond the boundaries of the Church and asks how those who inhabit the polyphonic Christian community might responsibly share the cantus firmus of Christ’s mystery with those people in the world whose lives may perform the music of peace, justice and ecological integrity without acknowledging God as its source.

Chapter ten, ‘Cadenzas and Conclusions’ acknowledges the limitations of the thesis and offers some final reflections on the theology of community proposed.
Chapter Two: Mixing Metaphors and Making Melodies

If someone concentrates his attention solely
on the metaphors used of God’s majesty,
he abuses and misrepresents that majesty,
and thus errs
by means of those metaphors
with which God had clothed Himself for his benefit.

St. Ephrem

A great deal hinges on the sort of understanding we have of metaphor... metaphors are an essential part of the way we grasp reality; in other words, they yield real information, which cannot necessarily be gained or understood in any other way.

Dave Tomlinson

Music is, at best, only a parable; but it is, or may become, truly a parable. As a parable, it has an exterior form which locates it unproblematically alongside other 'secular' practices and disciplines ... But for those with ears to hear, music may on occasion speak of that which lies beyond it; not of an undifferentiated and formless transcendence, but of the God who enacts and speaks comfort and consolation on behalf of his people and his world.

Francis Watson

[Metaphor] erupts at the surface of consciousness when the crust of reality is too weak to support the status quo.

Derric de Kerckhove

Moody solos. Unique. The stamp of one voice;
The pure concert as an ensemble improvises,

Hearing in each other harmonies of cross-purpose
As though being ourselves we’re more capacious.

Micheal O’Siadhall


SPEAKING METAPHORICALLY

The Church has expressed the nature of Christian community in many and various ways throughout its 2000 years of history, often seeking to articulate its character through a variety of metaphors, many of which have been mixed together. This fact was acknowledged during Vatican II when the Council observed that the Church had not been described 'so much by verbal definitions as in the light of images'. The light of these images, or the sound of the melodies in which their metaphors were mixed was considered preferable to ossifying definitions of verbal certitude. But that has made it difficult to arrive at one authoritative statement on the nature of the Church or indeed to find one single paradigmatic metaphor of ecclesiastical choice. This is perhaps no bad thing, for it has allowed the Church to perpetually describe itself afresh, often choosing imagery and mixing metaphors that are uniquely meaningful to a community's particular social context. In so doing the choice of metaphors expressed an essential part of how they grasped their reality as Church. So when the early Church community variously described themselves as the 'body of Christ', or 'the bride of Christ' or 'a temple of living stones', or one of the many other New Testament descriptions they were expressing some fragment, albeit never the whole, of their central convictions of what it was to be 'Christ existing in community'. There is antecedent precedent for such 'biblical polyphony'. Ricoeur noted that:

the naming of God, in the originary expressions of faith, is not simple but multiple ... not a single tone, but polyphonic. The originary expressions of faith are complex forms of discourse as diverse as narrative, prophecies, laws, proverbs, prayers, hymns, liturgical formulas and wisdom writings. As a whole, these forms of discourse name God. But they do so in various ways.\(^8\)

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8 Paul Ricoeur, 'Naming God', in Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination, trans. David Pellauer, ed., Mark I. Wallace, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p224. The musical imagery of polyphony and symphony in Biblical studies has been developed in Frances Young’s Virtuoso Theology where Young compares Scriptural interpretation to various performances of one orchestral
If this were true of describing God, then it is also true for the naming of the Church that God calls into being and that subsists as Christ existing as community. Any descriptions of Church can best be understood as no more than a gathering together of partial expressions of God’s encounter with the world. Time after time it is the Church’s task to gather together the fragments of God’s revelatory melody. But as McFague notes: ‘The most that can be said is that some aspect or aspects of the God-world relationship are illuminated by this or that model in a fashion relevant to a particular time and place.’9 Interpreting the constant of God and of God’s community is a perennial task.10 And it is one in which the community is compelled to speak metaphorically.

Finding such metaphors was a novel exercise for the early Church. Jesus had rarely offered any metaphors for the community of disciples that gathered around him and the gospels reveal little of the nature of their group. He offered little teaching on the nature of the Church that would follow him. He did however use the language of metaphor to speak frequently about the Kingdom of Heaven / God. It was, he said, like a mustard seed, a grain of yeast, or a pearl of great price. Or it might be like a fishing net, a wedding feast or a farmer sowing seed. The Kingdom of God was undoubtedly fixed at the core of Jesus’ mission11 but he never described it directly, preferring to hint at it through this ‘bisociative’ imagery. He relates the world of his listeners; (images of farming, fishing, family etc), with the kingdom values of love, forgiveness and justice. He expands this use of secular, non-religious language to express the character of the Kingdom in

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10 Sallie McFague, Models of God, p41 ff.
his teaching through parables.\textsuperscript{12} In these stories of the kingdom, Jesus enables people to associate the familiar things of their world with the mysteries of heaven, but simultaneously he also reveals to them the dissimilarity between the values of their world and those of God. There is here a tension between what the kingdom is and what it is not; this tension is reflected by the often unexpected conclusion of each story; the unfamiliar 'sting in the tail' which says the Kingdom of God is radically different to what is. This 'is and is not' in the parables results from Jesus speaking metaphorically; that is to say, no one believed that the Kingdom of God was literally like any one of the images he offered, but they knew that the kingdom of God was and yet at the same time was not, a mustard seed, a grain of yeast, or a pearl of great price. This is the power of a metaphor, it 'always contains the whisper "it is and it is not."'\textsuperscript{13}

Literally the word means 'meta' - transfer and 'pherin' - to carry,\textsuperscript{14} and may be understood as a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance.\textsuperscript{15} In scripture it is an apposite vehicle to bring together heaven and earth. In due course, the gospel writers gathered together the metaphors invoked by Jesus and the early Christian communities wrestled with the 'is and is not' of each: discerning its divine meaning for their context, and, from their many fragments, understanding the greater whole.

When first spoken by Jesus, and when shared within the new communities of post-resurrection people, the metaphors invoked were original and provocative, and their imagery were full of much implied resemblance. His use of metaphor provided glimpses of the reign of heaven with which he was familiar but which others had not fully witnessed. By associating the mystery of the Kingdom of God with the familiar world of their own experience, the bisociative tension, the

\textsuperscript{12} McFague acknowledges that parables are by no means the only form in the New Testament which deal with the Kingdom but adds that: 'as the dominant genre of Jesus' teaching on the kingdom, they suggest some central, albeit indirect clues to its reality'. See \textit{Metaphorical Theology}, p14.

\textsuperscript{13} Sallie McFague, \textit{Metaphorical Theology}, p13.


\textsuperscript{15} Jeremy Begbie examines how metaphor can be used in articulating a theology of the arts in, \textit{Voicing Creation's Praise}, p233 ff.

Melodies of Community
'is' and the 'is not' of the metaphors, carried the transfer of God's alternative values into the world of the disciples and the early Church community. Dulles even suggests that the 'psychology of imagery' might enable this to speak to humanity existentially: in effect God's image finding 'an echo in the inarticulate depths of (their) psyche'.

This is the Psalmist's 'Deep calling unto deep', the mystery of God finding its image in humanity. If so, then this was a most adept way for Jesus to describe a 'kingdom' that had come among them, and yet was not fully realised.

The Kingdom of Heaven was, but it also was not yet. It is the unique blessing of a vibrant metaphor: to provide in one image the tension of the 'now and not yet', to transfer the meaning of mystery of one through the familiarity of the other. It is why this thesis seeks to speak metaphorically in examining the character of Christian community.

DEAD METAPHORS

There is, however, the danger that any metaphor can lose power, that it can stagnate and die. In today's language there are ready examples of such 'dead metaphors'; phrases such as the 'neck of a bottle' or the 'hands of a clock' that are so familiar as to have passed into common parlance. In these, the tension is lost: the image has died because the metaphor has become the thing itself.

This is the 'substitution view of metaphor:' a view much lamented by poet Micheal O'Siadhail. He notes that most people have forgotten the subtle differences between the ancient tools of rhetoric; metaphor, irony, hyperbole, synecdoche and metonymy and think of them only as 'a sort of decoration to

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16 Avery Dulles, S.J., Models of the Church, p20.
17 Thus Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven being among them (Luke 11:20) but also instructs them to pray 'your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is on heaven'. Matt 6:10.
19 See Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation. Sallie McFague notes that Koestler’s extensive study of bisociative ideas, in which he detects the previously unnoticed similarities in two matrices of thought is not only the essence of discovery, but is 'metaphor in its most obvious and brilliant form'. See Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p36.
21 For a brief discussion of these see Bruce Fraser, 'The interpretation of novel metaphors', in Andrew Ortony, ed., Metaphor and Thought, 2nd edn., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p329-
make our language high-flown’. He laments the poverty that such an undiscriminating approach to language has wrought particularly this substitutionary perception of metaphor. By this he means simply that if the reader is conditioned to merely substitute ‘the thing itself’ every time the metaphor is invoked, then the tension of ‘is and is not’ is lost and the interplay between the known and the mystery is forgotten. The hands of the clock have become a thing in itself and the metaphor has collapsed.

This can happen in metaphors for the Christian community as well. For instance, in the poem, ‘The Come-as-you-are Ceilidh’ the poet employs the traditional Irish / Scottish gathering of people to sing, dance, and make merry as a metaphor for a Christian community.

It’s a Come-as-you-are kind of Ceilidh,
beginning today around twelve;
They’ll be flinging and swinging
to reels of redeeming
where angels will shout
to those inside and out
The steps of the ‘Now and Not Yet’
over flashes of fiddles all dreaming
of grace and abandon,
Embraced in the rhythm
of swing and be swung as they come
as they are,
to a come-as-you-are kind of Ceilidh
whose promise sings clearly
of loving more dearly
than any have loved before.23


22 Michal O’Siadail, ‘Crosslight’, p57.
The bisociation allows the reader to imagine the unknown mystery of the Church community as being in someway like the welcoming and energetic celebration of the Ceilidh. But if the reader readily substitutes 'Christian community' in the poem every time it reads 'The Come-as-you-are Ceilidh' then the 'is and is not' vanishes, the thinking becomes literal. If this occurs with a religious metaphor, the image becomes idolatrous. For instance, if people can only conceive of the community of faith through the Pauline metaphor of the 'family of God', but equate the Church to their literal experience of family life along with the social conditioning and personal histories that may attach themselves thereto, then they will become 'ultimately concerned with that which is not ultimate'.

They will focus on the literal meaning of the finite medium rather than the reality of mystery beyond it to which the metaphor directs them. When people point to the 'is' of the metaphor, declaring with certainty that they have fully grasped what was originally at best an attempt to describe the glimpse of a mystery, then the metaphor becomes the thing itself and hence idolatrous. What once seemed like a key becomes a lock by which their understanding of the mystery is controlled.

Jesus seems to have been aware of the danger in which, for instance, any one metaphor for God might become 'reified, petrified or expanded to exclude other models' and 'pretend to the status of definition'. If any one metaphor for the kingdom were 'canonised' with authoritative certainty it could become idolatrous and dead. Wisely, he articulated a number of interpenetrating images that together mitigate against any one acquiring definitive status. By mixing metaphors for the Kingdom together he kept alive the strength and fecundity of the reality beyond the 'is' of metaphorical speech. As such, the metaphors were much more than idle linguistic decoration. They were one of the few methods by which he could tell humanity about those things of which they had no direct knowledge: he used imagery with which humanity were already familiar. As St. Ephrem wrote:

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26 Sally McFague, Models of God, p39.
Do not let your intellect
be disturbed by mere names,
for Paradise has simply clothed itself
in terms that are akin to you;
it is not because it is impoverished
that it put on your imagery;
rather, your nature is far too weak to be able
to attain to its greatness,
and its beauties are much diminished
by being depicted in the pale colours
with which you are familiar.\footnote{27}

The metaphor thus becomes unique in articulating that which may be said in no other way and to speak metaphorically becomes ‘a strategy of desperation not of decoration’. For the Church it becomes the desperate method by which they can describe something of which they have had a glimpse, something that they cannot yet comprehend fully and yet of which they must speak. Such speech blurs the usual logical boundaries and uncovers new likenesses.\footnote{28} Eugene Peterson argues that, live metaphor ‘does not so much define or label as it does expand, forcing the mind into participating action ... Metaphor keeps us from being spectators of language by forcing us to be participants in it’.\footnote{29} It enables the Christian community to make tentative stabs at describing their unfolding participation in the reality of the Kingdom of God. It is a method as old as the Church itself.

**MIXING METAPHORS IN THE BIBLE**

It is no surprise then that as the early Christian community attempted to describe the nature of the Church, they struggled to express the mystery of their new reality and so chose to do so through a mix of metaphors. The Apostle Paul used a variety of metaphorical imagery to illustrate the characteristics of the

\footnote{28} Micheal O’Siadhail, ‘Crosslight’, p58.
ekklesia, the Greek word adopted to describe the Christian community. They were not religious words, but everyday words infused with a new and potent religious significance. Paul frequently adopts an architectural metaphor; sometimes it is by referring to himself or other apostles as the ‘master builders’ of local Christian communities and on other occasions illustrating the interdependence of community members. On occasion Paul uses the particular metaphor of the Temple, drawing the community’s attention to requirements to be holy. He also speaks of communities of Christ being the foundation for the building of the Church (I Cor. 3:10). This architectural imagery is also used by Peter who speaks of Christ as the ‘living stone’ which the builders rejected, but which now forms the capstone for Christians being built into the spiritual house of the Church. (I Peter 2:4-10). In the same way as Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God using agricultural metaphors Paul also refers to the community as ‘a field’ and a ‘tree’ most powerfully in his description of the Gentile Church as branches in-grafted to the root of Judaism. Similarly, he uses domestic metaphors, referring to sin as the yeast that can work its way through the ‘dough’ / Church. When Paul writes to Christians at Phillipi claiming that they are a ‘colony of heaven’ he deliberately employs language that they will associate with the privileges of citizenship recently conferred by Rome upon them. Banks rightly notes that one of the inadequacies of these metaphors is that they ‘lack the dynamic element characteristic of human and divine-human relationships’ and significantly Banks adds: ‘This leads Paul on several

30 Originally this referred to the regular assembly of a city’s citizens gathered to decide matters of mutual concern. Banks notes that Paul chose the word to distinguish it from the assembly of Jews, or the gatherings found in Hellenistic mystery cults. Robert Banks, Paul’s Idea of Community, p29. Banks reviews Pauline metaphors for community in Chapter 5, and see David Watson, I Believe in the Church, chapters 6-10.
31 I Cor. 3:10-14; II Cor. 10:8; Rom. 15:20, Gal. 2:18;
32 I Cor. 14:5-12, 26; Rom. 14:19; Col. 2:7; Eph. 4:16.
33 I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2: 21-22.
34 Dulles notes that while within this metaphor there is a logical incoherence (in 1 Peter 2:5 Christians are referred to as a Temple built of living stones whereas Paul in Ephesians 4:16ff says that the body is still under construction) the combination of images remains theologically opposite. Avery Dulles, S.J., Models of the Church, p32.
35 I Cor. 3:9
36 Rom. 11:17-24. See also Col 2:7 and Eph 3:17.
37 I Cor. 5: 6-7 and Gal. 5:9.
38 Phil. 3: 19-20.
occasions ... to mix his metaphors so that the deficiencies of one may be remedied by the advantages of another'.\textsuperscript{40} So, too, Paul Minear argued that the 'profuse mixing of metaphors' in the New Testament 'reflects not the logical confusion' but 'the theological vitality' of the early Church.\textsuperscript{41}

Clearly no one metaphor may profess an entirety or eternity of understanding. The Church is a mystery of which humanity can only offer fragments, pieces of the whole that will defy integration to one 'single synthetic vision'. \textsuperscript{42} And so, 'in order to do justice to the various aspects of the Church, as a complex reality, we must work simultaneously with different models ... (keeping) several ... in the air at once'. \textsuperscript{43} What is needed is a paradigm of Church that not only permits but also celebrates the multiple descriptions of Christian community, acknowledging them to be each but a fragment of the greater whole, a paradigm that permits the mixing of metaphors, for this will reflect 'not logical confusion but theological vitality'.\textsuperscript{44} Of course there is a danger of mixing metaphors. Mixed metaphors such as 'clouded in a sea of controversy' can render the creative tension of the metaphor meaningless through their internal inconsistency. Examining the nature of Christian community requires a model within which to mix metaphors without loosing the power of the bisociation. Here we see the rich potential in the Bonhoeffer's musical metaphor of polyphony; the idea of many melodies mixing together, separate yet distinct, but grounded around the root theme or \textit{cantus firmus}. Here we see both the fecundity of the metaphor of polyphony and the need for a polyphony of metaphor.

\textbf{THE METAPHOR OF POLYPHONY AND A POLYPHONY OF METAPHOR}

Bonhoeffer's metaphor of polyphony which he believed gave life a 'wholeness', provides for a multidimensionality of discipleship in a Christian's life, for the possibility of holding in tension a mix of illuminative and interpenetrating

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{40}] Robert Banks, \textit{Paul's Idea of Community}, p48. See II Cor. 9:10; Col 2:7-19; Eph. 2:19-22; 3:17; 4:12-16.
\item[\textsuperscript{42}] Avery Dulles, S.J., \textit{Models of the Church}, p10.
\item[\textsuperscript{43}] Avery Dulles, S.J., \textit{Models of the Church}, p10.
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metaphors. His ability to bring together metaphors of a fragmentary life with *The Art of Fugue* allowed him to consider how a wealth of biographical themes might be welded into a harmony in which 'the great counterpoint is maintained from start to finish'.\(^45\) Adopting this imagery of music is a compelling metaphor for our times. It need not be constrained to Bach and *The Art of Fugue*, for the concept of polyphony is recognised throughout diverse forms of musical expression. Music also remains one of the few subjects capable of bearing the weight of the numinous in contemporary society. For Bonhoeffer this metaphor of polyphony enabled him to conceive how to bring together the spiritual, 'loving God eternally with our whole hearts', and the material, doing so in a way that strengthens that heart's love for the things of earth.\(^46\) These two melodies were 'undivided yet distinct' like 'Christ in his divine and human natures'\(^47\) and they, like their corollaries of Church and world, could be inter-mixed throughout a lifelong performance that arose in response to Christ's *cantus firmus*. And when their *cantus firmus* is both clear and plain in the life of a Christian, then such contrapuntal melodies could be developed to their limits,\(^48\) to a 'full and perfect sound' that remained distinct in its own right but which cannot 'come adrift or get out of tune'.\(^49\) Only a polyphony of this kind, wrote Bonhoeffer, 'can give life a wholeness and at the same time assure us that nothing calamitous can happen as long as the *cantus firmus* is kept going'.\(^50\)

However, despite the personal insight gained through this metaphor, Bonhoeffer did not make the subsequent leap to appreciate the value polyphony could bring to the 'undivided yet distinct' nature of people in community. This is surprising for someone whose early theological reflection asserted that the Church was 'Christ existing as church-community'.\(^51\) For if Christ is then conceived not simply as the *cantus firmus* of an individual's polyphonic life, but as the *cantus firmus* of the Christian community, then that 'solid song' can be fragmented, mirrored,


\(^{46}\) *Letters and Papers*, p303.

\(^{47}\) *Letters and Papers*, p303.

\(^{48}\) *Letters and Papers*, p303.

\(^{49}\) *Letters and Papers*, p303.

\(^{50}\) *Letters and Papers*, p303.

\(^{51}\) *Sanctorum Communio*, p121.
echoed and re-textured within a variety of people. Their own diverse and individual melodies and metaphors will then find a unity in Christ existing as community. Such a polyphony of descriptive melodies can hear within each other, ‘harmonies of cross-purpose’ and in so doing become a ‘more capacious’ community. Bonhoeffer’s musical metaphor of polyphony can be transposed into a communal key.

It has remained only the sketch of a rich theological vision that regrettably Bonhoeffer was not granted the years to develop. Karl Barth criticised these theological thumbnails claiming that Bonhoeffer was no more than ‘an impulsive visionary thinker who was suddenly seized by an idea to which he gave lively form and then after a while he called a halt’. But what Barth criticised in Bonhoeffer, particularly the sketches of subjects such as ‘religionless Christianity’, ‘a world come of age’ and ‘polyphonic living’ were actually his most fecund thinking: namely a variety of interweaving metaphors all of which must be sounded together if we are to better understand God and the Church. Bonhoeffer was clear: if indeed all things hold together in Christ (Col. 1:17) then

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he becomes the *cantus firmus* in whom the contrapuntal melodies of God, as revealed in the Church and encountered in the world, are performed in bisociative tension.

Within each of these contrapuntal themes there may be contained a wealth of varying metaphors and harmonies that help illuminate the music of the Christian community. These harmonies might be 'sung' simultaneously or at different times in history, but importantly, while each can be recognised as having Christ as their foundational *cantus firmus*, no one theme can dominate the others into the exclusion of muted silence. Polyphony enables a non-excluding difference in which none of the many notes may render another mute.\(^{54}\) Hence, polyphonic music permits and encourages individual difference, yet unites them in what might be deemed a community of interweaving melodies. That Bonhoeffer's later theological reflections needed to employ a variety of metaphors and that his thinking was never systemised simply emphasises the need to mix together new melodies and live metaphors that help illuminate the mystery through which God reveals God's self both in the Church and world.

It is on that premise that this thesis therefore employs not simply the central metaphor of polyphony, but also a polyphony of 'new-ancient words'.\(^{55}\) This polyphony of new-ancients includes the metaphor of the Church as a 'colony of heaven' the concept of a 'worldly monasticism' and the idea of the Christian community as a gathering place for the 'fragmented epiphanies of God'. In understanding each of these as a diverse melody of community united through the single metaphor of polyphony and mixed together round the *cantus firmus* of Christ, it is hoped to uncover new likenesses and helpful insights into the nature of the Christian community. In seeking such new metaphors there is no rejection

\(^{54}\) David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, p128.

\(^{55}\) The phrase 'new-ancient words' is taken from the tradition of Jewish mysticism known as the 'Kabbalah'. Daniel C. Matt notes that 'On the one hand, Kabbalah refers to tradition, ancient wisdom received and treasured from the past. On the other hand, if one is truly receptive, wisdom appears spontaneously, unprecedented, taking you by surprise ... Its vocabulary teems with ... "new-ancient words" ... Many of its formulations derive from traditional sources – the Bible and rabbinic literature – but with a twist'. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism*, (New Jersey: Castle Books / HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), p1.
of the traditional Biblical imagery (indeed the first of them is taken from the scriptures), but rather therein to ask the question: 'Do they offer a helpful perspective for a theology and praxis of Christian community today?' But even if the answer to that question is affirmative, all such metaphorical description remains open to the charge of lying 'somewhere between nonsense and truth' and as Sally McFague has noted, any theology based upon them 'will be open to the charge that it is closer to the first than the second'.\(^{56}\) Her point is well made, but she nevertheless asserts that the risk of such accusations must be taken: 'no language about God [and by extension the community of God's people] is adequate and all of it is improper and new metaphors are not necessarily less inadequate or improper than old ones'.\(^{57}\) Hence, a new metaphor of polyphony and a new polyphony of metaphor is to be sought 'not because such ways are necessarily better than received ways but because they cannot be ruled out as not better unless tried'.\(^{58}\) Such a search can only be enjoined with a recognition of the provisionality of its goal. Any better ways discovered must disavow any pretension to permanent universality for in the words of Rowan Williams:

\[\text{in attempting to show the world a critical truth ... [it is] dealing not with the "insertion" of definable blocks of material into a well-mapped territory where homes may be found for them, but with events of retelling or reworking traditional narrative patterns in specific human interactions; an activity in which the Christian community is itself enlarged in understanding and even in some sense evangelised ... the Church needs both the confidence that it has a gospel to preach and the ability to see that it cannot readily specify in advance how it will find words for preaching in particular new circumstances.}^{59}\]

This shares with Bonhoeffer a realisation that the traditional language employed for God and Church have lost their force and meaning\(^{60}\) and hopes to be part of the process by which people might 'once more be called so to utter the word of

\(^{56}\) Sally McFague, \textit{Models of God}, p34.
\(^{57}\) Sally McFague, \textit{Models of God}, p35.
\(^{58}\) Sally McFague, \textit{Models of God}, p35.
\(^{59}\) Rowan D. Williams, 'Postmodern Theology and the Judgment of the World', p95.
\(^{60}\) \textit{Letters and Papers}, p300.
God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. Bonhoeffer claimed that such a retelling would entail:

A new language, perhaps quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming – as was Jesus’ language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God’s peace with men [sic] and the coming of his kingdom.

The retelling of the traditional language for Church will need to gather to itself new metaphors that meaningfully bisociate an ancient, but now often barren, language with a lexis of reality relevant to 21st century contexts. This process will transform not only the language but the actual nature of Christian community, drawing it into ‘a new kind of life and a new identity ... for as people are drawn into encounter with God, ‘they do not receive an additional item called faith; their ordinary existence is not reorganised, found wanting in specific respects and supplemented: it is transfigured as a whole’. The metaphors employed, and how they are allowed to mix, play a vital part in shaping the community transfiguration. For whether it occurs in the Church or elsewhere in the world the metaphors selected to describe reality in turn shape our understanding of reality. The point is well made by Neil Postman. He argues that Marshall McLuhan’s famous aphorism ‘the medium is the message’ is redundant now that the medium has become an insidious metaphor. In critiquing the media in general and television in particular Postman argues that:

A message denotes a specific, concrete statement about the world. But the forms of our media, including the symbols through which they permit conversation, do not make such statements. They are rather like metaphors, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication to enforce their special definitions of reality. Whether we are experiencing the world through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera,

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61 Letters and Papers, p300.
62 Letters and Papers, p300. Avery Dulles echoes Bonhoeffer’s words claiming ‘In times of rapid cultural change, such as our own, a crisis of images is to be expected. Many traditional images lose their former hold on people, while the new images have not yet had time to gain their full power. The contemporary crisis of faith is, I believe, in very large part a crisis of images’. Avery Dulles, S.J., Models of the Church, p21.
our media-metaphors classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, color it, argue a case for what the world is like.64

Thus, as we describe the Christian community through the metaphor of polyphony and with a polyphony of other metaphors, then the Church will in turn perceive reality in a polyphonic paradigm. The point is reinforced by Stanley Hauerwas:

We are as we come to see and as that seeing becomes enduring in our intentionality. We do not come to see, however, just by looking but by training our vision through the metaphors and symbols that constitute our central convictions. How we come to see therefore is a function of how we come to be since our seeing necessarily is determined by how our basic images are embodied by the self – i.e., in our character ... The moral life is not first a life of choice – decision is not king – but is rather woven from the notions that we use to see and from the situations we confront.65

As long as it is acknowledged that having chosen metaphors by which to describe the Christian community we do so cognisant that such metaphors will precipitate a particular way of perceiving and defining God, humanity, and the Church then the ensuing task is clear: ‘theologians must think experimentally, must risk novel constructions in order to be theologians for our time’. 66 The following chapters detail some such novel constructions in the hope of finding a better way through which to describe and participate in the Christian community. The polyphonic mix of metaphors proposed is no more than one model of a new theology of community. For the already noted reasons of necessitous provisionality the thesis does not aspire to be the dictum for a theology of community,67 but rather it seeks to provoke a new understanding of God and the nature of the Church.

67 The distinction relies on the comment of Sallie McFague, who understands the rich and diverse metaphors and concepts of the Bible as ‘models or exemplars of theology, rather than as dictums for theology’. Models of God, p33.

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Chapter three:
Polyphonic Jesus, Polyphonic Church

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring, like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves - goes itself, myself it speaks and spells;
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is -
Christ - for Christ plays in ten thousand places
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Uniqueness need not be exclusive.

W. Paul Jones

"Sing the song!" the heavens seemed to cry
"We never could have been without
the melody that you alone can sing."

Calvin Miller

Unity in multiplicity is the most commonplace problem facing all philosophies and all our attempts to come to grips with daily life. Theology should not act as if - all of a sudden, in the last twenty-four hours - it had to bear the entire burden itself. Theology always has the task of showing that the living God is free enough to utter his most particular word in many languages.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

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4 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Truth is Symphonic, p89.

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While theologians must undoubtedly risk novel constructions of vocabulary and image through which to describe the character of God and the Christian community, it is their word-wielding cousins, the poets, who often initiate such pioneering work. For it is poets who best distil life\(^5\), it is they whose ‘mother tongue’ of metaphor gently stoops to testify to God’s glory amidst a world of grey familiarity.\(^6\) And it is in the words of such a poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, that we glimpse a polyphonic Christ, one who ‘plays in ten thousand places, lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his, to the Father though the features of men’s faces’. The many melodies of this Christ are revealed in the faces and lives of numerous people who encounter one another in Church and world and whose very being is an act of worship to the Father. Indeed, the melodies of Christ’s revelation are not restricted to the realm of human creation, for ‘all things hold together in Christ\(^7\) and so ‘the voice of the Lord thunders over the mighty waters ... and shakes the desert\(^6\)’, while ‘the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands.\(^9\)

While poets rightly perceive an immanent polyphony of revelation through the sustaining work of Christ within creation, there is a deeper economy of polyphony located within his person. It is the task of the theologian to perceive how Christ is by his very nature polyphonic, precisely because God in God’s own being is so.\(^10\)

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\(^5\) Gwendolyn Brooks’ assertion that ‘poetry is life distilled’ became the title for a collection of her works, see Maria Mootry and Gary Smith, *A Life Distilled: Gwendolyn Brooks, Her Poetry and Fiction*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).


\(^7\) Col. 1:17.

\(^8\) Ps. 29:3.

\(^9\) Ps. 19:1.

THE POLYPHONY OF CHRIST’S PERSON

Theologians have caught glimpses of this task, as ‘contemplation of music’ has led them into ‘the contemplation of the eternal’.11 Augustine’s treatise on music, *De Musica*, sought to uncover the ‘vestiges left by the hand of the creator’ in the material world of music.12 Nicephorus of Constantinople (c758-829) spoke of the knowledge conveyed in the singing of that ‘venerable and thrice-illumined melody of theology’ the Trisagion13 and Aquinas thought that music represented ‘the exaltation of the mind derived from things eternal bursting forth in sound’.14 Martin Luther greatly admired the choral works of the time in which the melody of Gregorian chant was elaborated with polyphonic counterpoint. He wrote:

*But when natural music is sharpened and polished by art, then one begins to see with amazement the great and perfect wisdom of God in his wonderful work of music, where one voice takes a simple part and around it sing three, four or five other voices, leaping, springing round about, marvellously gracing the simple part, like a square dance in heaven with friendly bows, embraces, and hearty swinging of partners. He who does not find this an inexpressible miracle of the Lord is truly not worthy to be considered a man.*15

One especially imaginative work that reflects on the implications of hearing God through music and sound is by Nóirín Ní Riain. She has coined the phrase, ‘theosony’, the sound of God.16 But it is David Cunningham who has most helpfully articulated a doctrine of a polyphonic God: a theology of the Trinity developed through the metaphors of music. He notes how the Christian claim that in God, ‘these three are one’, purposely calls into question ‘the common assumption that oneness and difference are mutually exclusive categories’.17 If the existence of

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17 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p127.
Christ the Son does not in anyway exclude or reduce the presence of the Father or Holy Spirit in the Godhead, then all the Three-as-One act together, each distinctly different but all uniquely united.

The most appropriate metaphor for this Trinitarian phenomenon is the polyphony of music. Cunningham perceives in the Trinity a polyphony of persons, whose existential melodies demonstrate the perfect paradigm of non-excluding difference existing in unity,\textsuperscript{18} i.e. more than one note is played at a time, and 'none of these notes is so dominant that it renders the other mute'.\textsuperscript{19} He goes on to assert that:

\textit{Christianity proclaims a polyphonic understanding of God - one in which difference provides an alternative to a monolithic homogeneity, yet without becoming a source of exclusion. Attention to any one of the Three does not imply a diminished role for the others; all three have their distinctive melodies. And all are "played" and "heard" simultaneously without damage to God's unity.}\textsuperscript{20}

Each member of this perichoretic unity participates in the life and music of the other much as the different notes and melodies connect together in a performance of music. The Trinity is the mutual participation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit so that each partakes fully in the life of the others and so renders illegitimate any attempt to isolate them as individuals. Each dwells in and is indwelt by the others so that, as Balthasar asserts, 'eternal Truth itself is symphonic'.\textsuperscript{21} Robert Jenson equally perceives that: 'God is a melody. And as there are three singers ... the melody is fugued ... There is nothing so capacious as a fugue'.\textsuperscript{22} If the one God found in the community of Trinity is by nature polyphonic then each One of the Three is polyphonic too: the person of Christ, in so far as Christ may be isolated from the others, is then also polyphonic.

\textsuperscript{18} David S. Cunningham, \textit{These Three are One}, Chapter 4, p127 ff.
\textsuperscript{19} David S. Cunningham, \textit{These Three are One}, p128.
\textsuperscript{20} David S. Cunningham, \textit{These Three are One}, p129.
\textsuperscript{21} Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Truth is Symphonic}, p12.
\textsuperscript{22} Robert W. Jenson, \textit{Systematic Theology, Volume 1}, p236. The master of the capacious Fugue was J. S. Bach. His mastery of polyphony as a vehicle through which the Divine was encountered earned him the title, 'the fifth evangelist'.

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\textbf{Melodies of Community}
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It is in Christ, the incarnation of the Word of God, that humanity encounters the most comprehensive performance of divine polyphony. Cunningham notes that ‘Christ bears witness to a God of harmonious flux and superabundant donation – a God in whom difference can exist without contradiction or confusion’. The most apparent contradiction and confusion that preoccupied the early Church was that of Christ’s simultaneous divine and human natures. To the ancient mind there was perhaps no more unlikely a concept than one in which deity and humanity were bound together as one. The two ought not to mix, even metaphorically. Yet the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.) affirmed that Christ was complete in his deity and complete in his humanity. ‘He was undivided and without confusion but yet remained distinctly possessed of two natures, human and divine’. Søren Kierkegaard later called this twofold nature of Christ the ‘absolute paradox’. It is also the ‘Supreme Bisociation’, the bringing together of Divinity and Humanity. In Christ the melodies of heaven and earth are performed in a unique polyphonic unity collapsing the former dualisms of spirit and matter into one unique fugue. Through him the purposes of heaven are performed.

When Bonhoeffer was in prison he was much taken with the similarities in form between the Christology of Chalcedon and the polyphony of fugue. His primary concern was not with the nature of Christ per se, but with the character of Christian living. He wrote:

*May not the attraction and importance of polyphony in music consist in its being a musical reflection of the Christological fact and therefore of our vita Christiana?*

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23 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p143 ff.
24 Bonhoeffer cites the Chalcedon definition, ‘*ana kai ton auton Christon - en duo physesin; asynchytos kai areptos, - adiaretos kai achoristos*’. *Christ the Center*, p87.
26*Letters and Papers*, p303. In his ‘Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge’ he hinted at this theme. He instructs his God-son nephew: ‘Music, as your parents understand and practise it, will help dissolve your perplexities and purify your character and sensibility, and in times of care and sorrow will keep a ground-bass of joy alive in you’. *Letters and Papers*, p295.

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Earlier, in his work on *Christology*, Bonhoeffer had asserted that it was not only 'useless to contemplate a Christ for himself, it is even godless'. Christ was never Christ as Christ in himself but always in his relation to the world and in his standing *pro me*. Christ could only be thought of existentially, i.e. in the Church. As Balthasar has noted, 'We cannot wrench Christ loose from the Church, nor can we dismantle the Church to get to Christ. If we really want to hear something intelligible, we are obliged to listen to the entire polyphony of revelation.'

**THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S POLYPHONY**

The purpose of the polyphony of Christ is to call humanity into participation with the melodies of divine being made known in the world. It is a call to discipleship. For Bonhoeffer this was the vital key in articulating a theology through which God could be acclaimed in praxis as much as in dogma to be the Lord of the World and Lord of the Church. Doctrinally, of course, the Church affirmed the boundarilessness of Christ’s Lordship over all. But in reality it had long detached the realm of one from the other, affirming separate ‘spheres’ of the spiritual and the temporal, spheres that were paralleled in the institutions of Church and state. In the classic Lutheran theology that Bonhoeffer inherited, each sphere/realm was supposed to let the other proceed unhindered about its ordained business, but neither was to interfere beyond its remit. From an early age, perhaps due to fragmentation of his family life into similar realms, this dichotomy seems to have dissatisfied Bonhoeffer. As a student, he remarked upon the difference between this and Islam, particularly how in Islam, everyday life and religion were not kept separate as he had experienced life to be in the Church. Later Bonhoeffer blamed this same dualism for the Church’s unwillingness to interfere in the politics of Germany under the Third Reich. It was while in prison

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27 *Christ the Center*, p47.
28 *Christ the Center*, p47.
29 *Christ the Center*, p47.
31 In the 2005 edition of *Ethics* the German ‘raum’ is translated as realm rather than sphere. See p36.
for his own opposition to the Nazis that Bonhoeffer made the tentative connections between the pronouncements of Chalcedon, the world of political resistance and music, particularly Bach’s *The Art of Fugue*. In the already noted letter from Prison, he made the critical insight that Christ’s divine and human natures are analogous to melody and countermelody in a fugue; each melody unique, but each inclusively interrelated, held together in polyphonic unity.

He wrote:

*God wants us to love him eternally with our whole hearts - not in such a way as to injure or weaken our earthly love, but to provide a kind of cantus firmus to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint. One of these contrapuntal themes (which have their own complete independence but yet are related to the cantus firmus) is earthly affection ... Where the cantus firmus is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limits. The two are "undivided and yet distinct", in the words of the Chalcedonian Definition, like Christ in his divine and human natures.*

Bonhoeffer argues that the attraction and importance of polyphony in music might consist particularly in its being a reflection of the divine and human natures bisociated in the one person of Christ. His polyphony of heavenly logos and earthly incarnation was the music that Christ alone could sing. Music was a ‘vestige’ of Christ left remaining in the world: an eternal echo of the divine epiphany. Bonhoeffer could hardly have been aware that within the Welsh folk

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33 The opening melody was given to Bach by Frederick the Great. Bach composed a series of pieces in which the original theme was incorporated. They did so in a polyphony that included not only the repetition of the theme and dependant variations, but its reversal and inversion, its being slowed to half speed and doubled in meter. He even managed to spell out his name within its melodic notation. Bach understood his music theologically, seeking to address though music, the nature of humanity’s fallen state and the possibility of ‘redemption’ in an equilibrium of music’s horizontal (melodic) and vertical (harmonic) manifestations. Thus for Bach, post-lapsarian humanity, having tasted the ‘delights and despair of harmonic duality’, would no longer be ‘fulfilled in justly intoned monody’. Bach’s harmonic polyphony becomes a *demonstratio* of the workings of Christian grace more revealing than any theological text. See Wilfred Mellers, *Bach and the Dance of God*, (London / Boston: Faber and Faber, 1980), p36 ff.

34 Letters and Papers, p303.

35 The phrase ‘Vestige’ comes from the Latin *vestigium* meaning a footprint or mark. It has been adopted in Christian theology as *Vestigia Trinitatis*, illustrations or analogies of the Trinity found within the created order. See for instance the many analogies offered in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and the more developed *Thomistic Analogy* proposed by Aquinas. In David Cunningham’s creative review of the theology of *Vestigia Trinitatis* he rightly notes the criticism offered by Karl Barth (namely that it allows human reason to overshadow divine revelation) but concludes that while God reveals God’s self primarily through Christ, additional revelation occurs through the Church and the created order. See David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p90-126.
tradition there exists a most apposite echo of this Christological polyphony. In
the practice of *Pennillion*, an instrumentalist, usually a harpist begins to play a
pre-existent melody. The singer may begin at any point thereafter, not only
adding extemporary words and an improvised melody, but also ensuring that the
duo conclude the performance simultaneously. To participate in the music of
Christ is to perceive how his belonging to heaven does not restrict his belonging
on earth and how both ‘belongings’ can be ‘sounded’ simultaneously. To increase
in deity does not reduce Christ’s humanity and to reduce his divinity does not
increase his humanity. Christ exists with full divine freedom to act as he chooses,
but he chooses to bind God’s self to humanity, to be free not from them, but for
them. As such, to become Christ-like, for the individual and for the Christian
community, is to acknowledge the human longing to live an authentically
polyphonic life, to participate in the performance of God’s melodies on earth as
they play out in heaven while simultaneously belonging to each through their
relationship in Christ.

But there is a second and more subtle polyphony within the person of Christ. If
Christ, in whom resides the unique bisociation of heaven and earth, chooses to
bind God’s self to creation, then in this he becomes not only an active subject
but is also a passive object. He is acted upon by humanity; nurtured by Mary and
Joseph, rejected by his home town, betrayed by Judas, abandoned by the
disciples, arrested by the Jewish leadership, tried by the Roman Governor and
finally executed on Calvary. Cunningham suggests that this inter-play of action
and passion where Christ acts and is acted upon is also Christ polyphony.36 He
notes three examples of this polyphony. Firstly, with regard to the Law of God,
Christ is simultaneously revealed as the one who offers humanity the gift of Law,
the one who liberates humanity from the Law and the one who forgives
humanity its transgressions against the Law.37 Likewise the life of Christ reveals
one in whom there exists the polyphony of complete power, willing obedience

36 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p143.
37 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p142-149.

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and genuine temptation. Finally and most obviously in Christ’s life, death and resurrection all concurrently occur in God: God acts (by raising Jesus); God is acted upon (by being raised); and God is the vehicle of the action (the Spirit in and through whom Christ is raised). All these are taken up into the polyphony of God and so into Christ who offers humanity the gift of eternal life. Cunningham argues that this claim, and the assertion that the life eternal will be one of embodied existence, can only be understood through ‘a “musical” mode of thought’, through the metaphor of polyphony in which ‘life and death and body and soul can be “sounded” simultaneously’.  

THE POLYPHONY OF CHRIST’S COMMUNITY

It follows from this that a community based upon the polyphonic Christ will be polyphonic themselves: a community as rooted in the melodies of the world as it is informed by music of heaven and a community in whom the two melodies are ‘fugued’. It will also be a community of both action and passion: as much acted upon as acting. The love of God, experienced and expressed by such a community, will be concretised in their choosing to live the values of heaven and by binding themselves in solidarity with the earth, rejecting any flight from it that sought only to secure their own purity or salvation. In choosing to do so, the community will not only act as subjects, but will also engage with the vulnerabilities of being acted upon by the world. In being acted upon, the community are then challenged to respond in a Christ-like way. This is at the heart of Bonhoeffer’s idea of stellvertretung, a concept best translated as ‘deputyship’ or ‘vicarious responsible action’. This is primarily the ‘free initiative and responsibility for humanity that God takes in Jesus Christ; in God’s becoming

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38 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p149-151.
39 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p153.
40 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p153.
human, in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God acts to reconcile and re-create humanity. 42 Bonhoeffer wrote that Christ is the 'very embodiment of the person who lives responsibly', ... who [does not] seek to attain his own ethical perfection [but] instead lives 'only as the one who in himself has taken on and bears the selves of all human beings ... He stands in the place of all human beings ... All that human beings were supposed to live, do and suffer falls on him'. 43 Christ is the 'man for others', and so his Church is the Church, only when it exists for others'. 44 The Christian community is then called into a life that consciously and responsibly is lived out of God's love for others and within the reality of the world.

When this unique presence of the post-Ascension Christ was first revealed among believers, it noticeably did not unite them in monophonic homogeneity, but rather revealed a rich polyphony of incarnation that has been present in the Church since its inception. Luke says it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians 45 and describes a diverse community made up of Jews, (probably speaking Greek and Aramaic), and a multiplicity of Gentiles. This community shared little commonality of race, culture or language. 46 What they claimed to have in common, the foundation of their unique and novel third race, the genus tertium 47, was their encounter with Christ. 48 The community was

42 Clifford J. Green, ‘Editor’s Introduction’ to Ethics, p12.
43 Ethics, p231-232.
44 Letters and Papers, p382.
45 Acts 11: 26b.
47 Those gathered in the Circus of Carthage are reported as shouting out against the Christians, ‘Usque quo genus tertium’ / How long must we endure this third race. It was a term of derision used to refer to Christians, who were neither Graeco / Roman nor Jews but a new race of people who defined their communal identity through belonging to Christ. See ‘Persecution’, in The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia Vol. IV, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1939, 1986 reprint), p2327.
polyphonic and Christ was fixed as their *cantus firmus*. Their encounter with Him led them beyond their existing boundaries of belonging and into the new phenomenon that would be called Church: a multiplicity of persons-in-community seeking to become Christ-like.\(^49\)

For the individual Christian and the community who seek to be Christ-like in the world, their task is to participate in the performance of the polyphonic melodies of Christ on earth as they are sung in heaven. And as with the nature of a jazz ensemble, the way in which any one improvised melody is performed in dialogue with the foundational progression of chords or melodic hook (the *cantus firmus*) can affect the direction of the whole music.\(^50\) This is the polyphonic abundance of life: a life in which Christ remains at the beginning and the end and may be simultaneously present in every note, bar and movement, and in every voice, as its core, generating infinite possibilities of action and passion. This does not deny the reality of cacophonic action or intentions; those whose noise seeks to deny, conceal, or silence the melodies of God. However, even the most virulent cacophony cannot over-come the persistent hope present in Christ’s *cantus firmus*.

The content of such possibilities will depend much upon the context in which Christian disciples find themselves located. Neither every individual disciple nor every Christian community will manifest the polyphony of abundant living in identical ways and indeed some may find themselves in apparent tension or discord with others. But as Balthasar notes, ‘Great music is always dramatic;

\(^{49}\) The name Christian is not likely to have been self-designated. It came from those outside the group who would have regarded ‘Christ’ as a proper name not laden with meaning as a religio-political title.


there is a continual process of intensification, followed by a release of tension at a higher level. But dissonance is not the same as cacophony. And while for a moment dissonance may exist in the melodies of the community, the Church's affirmation has always been that in and through Christ as *cantus firmus* all melodies will, in the fulfilment of time, be resolved and reconciled. As the Christian community seeks to participate in this reconciling truth, they ought then to proleptically accommodate such internal tensions, becoming on earth, a reflection of heaven’s eternal polyphony. Indeed the performance of polyphony should become the identifying mark of Christian discipleship. The Church as ‘Christ existing as community’ should be the people whose love and faithful obedience to God is concretised in their communal freedom to live for the world and in their service to others.

**PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN CHRIST’S POLYPHONY**

Whatever melody of service the Christian is called upon to perform within the world it is already part of the polyphony of God in Christ, a part of the living exchange between Father, Son and Spirit. Jenson notes that the Christian’s enjoyment of God is that they are taken into this triune singing and are ‘allowed to double the parts’. The Christian community join their voices to those already performed in and through God. It is to this earthly doubling of the melodies of heaven that the community of God is called.

Balthasar argues that this participative calling has been present since the beginning: God has performed a ‘cosmic symphony’ in which people have heard ‘the seamless genius of the divine composition’ and participated in the polyphonic orchestra of God’s Creation. Before Christ’s incarnation this divine symphony could be heard by the people through the ‘ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets’. (Hebrews 1:1). But Balthasar argues that it is only after the birth of Christ that the music can begin in earnest; the pre-incarnation orchestra have been merely ‘tuning up’ and playing to themselves. However,

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while it must be true that the birth of Christ marks a critical development in what might be better described as God's 'cosmic opera' it is insufficient to declare its overture as no more than a cacophonous humanity playing to themselves, even if somehow the tuning note of God is only heard through all the mêlée. Too much more of God has been revealed in these fragments of epiphany for them to be so easily dismissed. Too much has been learned of God through participation in this pre-emptory music. Its contrapuntal elaborations, variations and inversions are now an integral part of the human whole. It is as Rowan Williams notes in a different regard:

*rather like the simple theme given to Bach by Frederick the Great, that forms the core of The Art of Fugue. When we have listened to the whole of that extraordinary work, we cannot simply hear the original notes picked out by the King of Prussia as if nothing had happened. We can't avoid saying now: 'This can be the source of that'—and that is a fact of some importance about the simple base motif.*

While the *cantus firmus* remains distinct it has already called into being melodies that shape the character of present participation. But here some further qualification is necessary: participation in this sense is not so much a participation in the performance of some task or other, even participation in the unfolding melodies of heaven, but rather, participation in the *someone*, namely participation in the polyphonic person of Christ. Cunningham makes this point well in his discussion on Trinitarian perichoresis. Each person of the God-head dwells in and is indwelt by the others. Participation, when understood in the light of such relational considerations eschews its standard definition, 'to take part in' because such a designation suggests some activity in which one individual is joined by others to perform together some common activity. Cunningham's examination of participation rejects this idea and focuses on

*those instances in which we take part not in something, but in someone, - an other. For example, to "participate in the sufferings of another" is to make another's pain one's own ...*

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54 Rowan Williams, 'Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the World', p93 ff.

55 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p166 ff.
Similarly, if I ask you to "take part in" my life, I am asking for a very significant degree of emotional, physical, and spiritual intimacy. If the community is to perform the polyphony to which Christ calls them, then it must be a participative polyphony that takes part in the life of Christ and in the otherness of life in the world beyond the Church.

Bonhoeffer captured something of this theology of participation: both the participation of Christ in the lives of others and the participation of the Christian community in the polyphonic life of Christ. His dictum that 'Christ is the man for others' reveals his appreciation of Christ's willingness to participate in the pain and otherness of humanity, both generically through his incarnation (where he participates in all flesh) and the crucifixion (where he takes upon himself the sins of the world), but also by example in personal specifics such as his weeping over the death of Lazarus. Christ was the exemplar of one who participated with emotional, physical and spiritual intimacy, in the 'someone-otherness' of the world. Christ's bisociative participation in God and humanity is unique, but his place as the cantus firmus of the Christian community places upon it the privilege and responsibility of a derivative relationship with God. There is, through Christ, an intimacy between God and the Church community. Cunningham notes a number of biblical examples: Christ's encouragement to the disciples to pray to God his father as their father, together with numerous references to those who are called 'children of God' or are understood to have been adopted and made co-heirs with Christ. The Church participates in the life of God through the person of Christ. Indeed, participation in Christ's suffering was at the core of repentance; 'not in the first place thinking about one's own needs, problems, sins, and fears', but allowing oneself to be 'caught up in the sufferings of God in the secular life ... fulfilling the proto-melody of Isaiah 53. This is also seen in Bonhoeffer's reflections on Gethsemane. There, Christ's question to the disciples,

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56 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p166.
57 References for those named as the children of God include Matt 5:9; Luke 20:36; John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-21; Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1 and Rev. 21:7. References to adoption include Rom. 8:15, 23 and 9:4; Gal. 4:5 and Eph. 1:5. See David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p182-183.
58 See *Letters and Papers*, p361-362. Is. 53 refers to the suffering servant that Christian theology has traditionally interpreted as referring to Christ.
'could you not watch with me one hour?' is for Bonhoeffer, 'a reversal of what the religious man expects from God. Man is summoned to share in God’s sufferings at the hands of a godless world'. The theology is distilled in his poem, 'Christians and Pagans'.

Men go to God when they are sore bestead,
Pray to him for succour, for his peace, for bread,
For mercy for them sick, sinning, or dead;
All men do so, Christian and unbelieving.

Men go to God when he is sore bestead,
Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,
Whelmèd under weight of wicked, the weak, the dead;
Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.

God goes to every man when sore bestead,
Feeds body and spirit with his bread;
For Christians, pagans alike he hangs dead,
And both alike forgiving.  

Participation in the life of God is not to be considered arrogant presumption, for without daring to elevate humanity to the status of sicut deus the Church must affirm that she shares in the unfolding purposes of Christ.

Bonhoeffer is clear:

We are certainly not Christ; we are not called on to redeem the world by our own deeds and sufferings, and we need not try to assume such an impossible burden. We are not lords, but instruments in the hand of the Lord of history; and we can share in other people’s sufferings only to a very limited degree. We are not Christ, but if we want to be Christians, we must have some share in Christ’s large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes, and by showing a real sympathy that springs not from fear, but from the liberating and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer.

The Christian community must participate in this ‘large-heartedness’ of Christ, dwelling in and being indwelt by the performance of God’s polyphony, doubling the parts in both the Church and world. Participating in the Church will mean believers being open to the changes brought upon them through their

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59 Letters and Papers, p361.
60 Letters and Papers, p348-349.
relationship with other Christians. This is a repeated theme in Bonhoeffer’s consideration of Christian community, *Life Together*. There he writes that Christian community is ‘a reality created by God’ in which believers ‘may participate’ and stresses the need for each person to be characterised by their service to others and bearing one another’s burdens. Here, ‘bearing the burden of the other means tolerating the reality of the other’s creation by God - affirming it, and in bearing with it, breaking through to delight in it’.

Similarly, participating in and performing Christ’s polyphony in the world does not simply mean an engagement with the world on monophonic terms dictated by the Church, (sing our melody or be damned for we will countenance no other) but, in much the same way as Christ was acted upon by earthly events, will mean that the Christian community displays not only a willingness to be in the world but an openness to let the songs of the Church be shaped by the concern and suffering of the world. Such an openness to the world under-girds the prayer of the Iona Community that ‘hidden things may be revealed ... and new ways found to touch the hearts of all’. In these words there is an acceptance that the melodies of the Church community will be shaped by subtleties in the *cantus firmus* that have been hitherto undetected. The same is also reflected in the Iona Community prayer; ’O Christ ... wield well your tools in the workshop of your world, so that we who come rough-hewn to your bench may here be fashioned to a truer beauty of your hand’. Again there is an acceptance of the potential for personal and corporate refashioning through the community’s presence in and being acted upon by the world. The Christian community can only be the Church when the performance of its melodies is open to perpetual modulation through their participation in the Christ who is the man for others.

The concept of performance also merits some consideration. It is a metaphor which has attracted increasing attention in the area of biblical interpretation, but

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62 *Life Together*, p38.
64 *Life Together*, p101.
its parallel fecundity seems not to have been readily appreciated in theologies of Christian community. Nicholas Lash argues that the performance of a musical score might provide a helpful analogous paradigm for biblical interpretation\(^67\) suggesting that a full interpretation of a piece of music required more than the ability to read the notes or play the instruments. Nor was it sufficient to know the socio-historic context of the composer and their composition. While these things were important, Lash argued that the central interpretative action was the performance, which was a matter not just of technical proficiency but necessitated a creative fidelity to allow the score to come alive once more for the community of conductor, orchestra and audience.\(^68\)

Bonhoeffer has been singled out as an archetypal 'performer of scripture', one whose life displayed a close relation between the reading and biographical embodiment of the Bible.\(^69\) But Scripture is but one witness (albeit a vital one) to the \textit{cantus firmus} that has invited participative performance since the beginning of time. While not at all disagreeing with the assertion of Bonhoeffer as an exemplary performer of scripture, it is more helpful to understand him as a participative performer of the divine polyphony. He understood that performance necessitated being acted upon as much as acting on others, to listen as much as to be heard: he knew what it was to participate in the human community of faith and the divine polyphony of Christ. Lash agrees that in the end, the 'fundamental form of the \textit{Christian} interpretation of scripture' comes through the performed 'life, activity and organisation of the believing community'.\(^70\) Critically though he

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\(^68\) Nicholas Lash, 'Performing the Scriptures', p40 ff.


\(^70\) Nicholas Lash, 'Performing the Scriptures', p42.
adds that it is not 'the script that is "holy", but "the people": the company 'who perform the script'. 71

But even this recognition of the importance of the faith community does not go far enough, for people participated in performing God's song before the script was ever written, the performance predates the script, even the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the script that bears witness to the participative performance of God's music. What the community performs is not the written script but their participation in and with God, the music that existed from before notation. As Lash writes elsewhere, 'The practice of Christian faith is not, in the last resort, a matter of interpreting, in our time and place, an ancient text. It is, or seeks to be, the faithful "rendering" of those events, of those patterns of human action, decisions and suffering, to which the text bears original witness'. 72 In other words reinterpreting a performance of the melodies of divine epiphany and human testimony for a contemporary context.

Invoking the metaphor of performance should not permit any notion of 'play-acting', taking on 'a role' rather than becoming 'transformed into a different kind of person or a different kind of community'. 73 That would fail to grasp 'the risk and radical contingency, the open-endedness .. of the performance being given'. 74 Such a 'radical contingency' in performing the polyphony of God is vital because the participative performance of the Christian community can never constitute the whole of the music, for its melodies are constantly re-informed by the otherness of the world and the eternity of Christ's cantus firmus. The music heard within the midst of human community inevitably calls to them from beyond the boundaries of their context and beckons them further towards eschatological fulfilment. As Balthasar has noted:

71 Nicholas Lash, 'Performing the Scriptures', p42.
72 Nicholas Lash, 'What Might Martyrdom Mean?' in Theology on the Way to Emmaus, p90.
73 Barton accepts but distinguishes the significant and valid place of play acting as 'a symbolic communicative, enterprise .. of culture' and play-acting scripture which can help people "find themselves" in the biblical text'. Stephen C. Barton, 'New Testament Interpretation as Performance', p189.

Melodies of Community
the world cannot get an overall view of its own pluralism, for the unity has never lain in the world either formerly or now. But the purpose of its pluralism is this: not to refuse to enter into the unity that lies in God and is imparted by him, but symptomically to get in tune with one another and give allegiance to the transcendent unity.\footnote{Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Truth is Symphonic}, p9.}

The listening community will need to be open to the possibility of a renewing and evolving plurality within the communal unity made possible through Christ. Milbank argues that this means:

\textit{the freedom of people and groups to be different, not just to be functions of a fixed consensus, yet at the same time it totally refuses indifference; a peaceful, united, secure community implies absolute consensus, and yet, where difference is acknowledged, this is no agreement in an idea, or something once and for all achieved, but a consensus that is only in and through the inter-relations of community itself, and a consensus that moves and "changes": a concentus musicus.}\footnote{John Milbank, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism": A Short Summa in Forty-Two Responses to Unasked Questions' \textit{Modern Theology}, Vol. 7, No. 3, (April 1991), p227.}

Christian discipleship is then the responsibility and willingness of individuals and communities to move into a participative performance of the counter-melodies which is based on Christ's \textit{cantus firmus}. The variety of such counter-melody can be heard in and through the life-music of the Christian saints, canonised or otherwise. Their performances still resonate within the polyphony of the Christian community and while the Church might regularly remember the exemplary melodies of canonised individuals the deepest counter-melodies are perhaps heard in the assured presence of the Church Triumphant within the life of the Church Militant. This real presence of the Communion of Saints was a distinguishing mark of the Celtic Christianity that often inspired MacLeod and the Iona Community. In these traditions, members of the Church militant invoked the aid of saints triumphant in much the same way as assistance might be sought from a pastor, friend or family member\footnote{A collection of such prayers and hymns enjoying a resurgent popularity in recent times is the \textit{Carmina Gadelica}. These incantations were gathered by Alexander Carmichael in the course of his work as a 19th century excise man in the Scottish Islands and Highlands. See Alexander Carmichael,} or an old song might be performed and interpreted afresh.

\textit{Melodies of Community}
Performing these melodies of God also necessitates a personal and corporate askesis through which transfiguring practices can be regularly revisited. This repeated balance of the 'life alone' and the 'life together'\(^78\) is very similar to how an ensemble musician must simultaneously develop personal and interpersonal disciplines (individual practice and corporate rehearsal) so to participate in a public performance. So if we consider the Christian’s responsibility to participate in the performance of the divine melody of mercy, L. Gregory Jones argues that it requires a ‘habit of forgiveness’ that must be ‘practiced over time within the disciplines of the Christian community’.\(^79\) The repeated practice of forgiveness enables the Christian as an individual and in community to hear again with clarity the compelling song of God, Christ as cantus firmus, rising above the activities of both Church and world. The regular repetition of the Eucharist is one such important moment through which the community can hear repeated the melody of divine grace.\(^80\) And in that re-listening God reveals to the community, individually and corporately, the appropriate counter-melodies to be performed within the polyphonic particularities of their context.

Some of the tensions found within the creative polyphonies of world and Christ are explored in the works of W. Paul Jones. He posits five ‘theological worlds’ that are inhabited by Christians. Each is normally present in any given Christian community as its members respond to the ‘multiform Christ event’. Through this event Christ is encountered as a guide or a liberator, model-friend or redeemer, or as a suffering companion. Each of the worlds premised on these fragments appears mysteriously ‘as a composite confession of multiple and converging

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\(^74\) Bonhoeffer devotes a chapter to each of these disciplines in his book _Life Together_. Here he warns that ‘whoever cannot be alone should beware of community and whoever cannot stand being in community should beware of being alone’. _Life Together_, p83.

\(^75\) L. Gregory Jones, _Embodying Forgiveness_, p164. Jones acknowledges that his concept of practices owes much to that developed by Alasdair MacIntyre in _After Virtue_.

\(^76\) Jeremy Begbie draws attention to the practice of Eucharistic repetition through the metaphor of music in, ‘Play it (Again): Music, Theology and Divine Communication’, p56-64 and in _Theology, Music, and Time_, p155-175.
metaphors’ each seeking to ‘heal the uncommonly diverse wounds of the world’.⁸¹ He, too, adopts a musical metaphor: asserting that none of his posited worlds has a claim on ‘reality in toto’ but that their multiplicity ‘resembles a fugue, permitting little tolerance for a cheap pluralism of easy choices. Such an invitation is to play in counterpoint ... establishing all five [worlds] as alternatives, insisting upon each as a viable and legitimate place in which to set up housekeeping’.⁸²

At no point in these worlds would the fragmented epiphanies of Christ be confused with his full and eternal richness, but each moment of revelatory encounter and the world it calls into being, would be derived from and connected to the cantus firmus. What emerges in each ‘world’ are not only differing perceptions of humanity and self-identity but also varying understandings atonement.⁸³ Thus as well as the roles of Christ noted above, atonement is experienced as Revelation (love shows us the true way), Victory (love takes our place), Affirmation (love fills and heals emptiness), Propitiation (Love forgives offence), and Reversal (love outlasts suffering). Again the goals of salvation are also diverse: the purpose of Christ’s mission may be variously understood as one of Home Coming, Justice and Freedom, Wholeness and Belonging, New Birth and Reconciliation, or Survival and Integrity. None of these worlds are exclusive to the others, and, indeed, one of the strengths of Jones’ typography is that it remains fluid: adaptive to the varying narratives of an individual’s evolving biography.

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⁸¹ W. Paul Jones, Worlds Within a Congregation: Dealing With Theological Diversity, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), p37. The fundamental rhythm of each ‘theological world’ is characterised by the fluid interaction between the differing ‘obsessios’ (dilemmas), and their contrasting ‘epiphanias’ (resolutions). The dilemmas for each world are variously described as separation, conflict, emptiness, condemnation and suffering. These are countered with resolutions of reunion, vindication, fulfilment, forgiveness and endurance’. See W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p19.
⁸² W. Paul Jones, Theological Worlds, p44.
⁸³ I am indebted to Nancy Cocks, a former Warden of the MacLeod Centre on Iona, for introducing me to the work of W. Paul Jones and for her analysis of his theological worlds.
Jones' approach is then preferable to personality typographies, many of which suggest a 'polyphony' of personality type within the humanity of Christ.\textsuperscript{84} For instance Stephen Barton detects four distinct spiritualities of Christ that attach to each of the gospels.\textsuperscript{85} While he does insist that each portrait lacks the richness of all four taken together, the danger with such typologies is their tendency to become prescriptive rather than descriptive. Others have sought to assess the Jesus of each of the gospels in terms of personality typologies such as Myers-Briggs.\textsuperscript{86} Jones' model specifically allows for movement between and within an individual depending on the presenting dilemmas and their contrasting resolutions. Thus it admits the possibility that individuals and communities may simultaneously occupy a number of worlds, each world possessed of their own particular melody, but each still addressed by the \textit{cantus firmus} of Christ who appears in 'fragmented epiphanies' to the world and Church. More than simply tolerating such difference it must become the irresistible option that the Christian community affirm gratefully. Thus, 'rather than seeing diversity as an anaemic reduction of the theological task, it is a rediscovery of how the Church once came into being, and how its heritage is a continuation.'\textsuperscript{87} To do so, says Jones:


\textsuperscript{85} Stephen C. Barton, \textit{The Spirituality of the Gospels}, (London: S.P.C.K., 1992), p147. Barton draws on Robert Morgan's analogy of a 'biblical paint box'. See R. Morgan, 'The Hermeneutical Significance of Four Gospels', in J.L. Mays, ed., \textit{Interpreting the Gospels}, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p41-54. They suggest that there is always the possibility of delighting in the variety of colours out of which the reader draws images of faith. One of the weaknesses in the analogy to painting is that it is not possible for colours to simultaneously exist in the same place in the way that polyphony can. It is more difficult to conceive of communal participation and performance within this model.

\textsuperscript{86} See Loyd Allen, 'A Brief History of Christian Devotion', in \textit{Faith and Mission}, (Spring, 1990), p3-18. However within all people there is a polyphony of personality choices and Jesus had open to him the full extent of possibilities that can be found in each person. So it was that Jesus seemed to know how to respond appropriately for each context and person he encountered. This is the approach favoured by Malcolm Goldsmith, \textit{Knowing Me Knowing God}, p102.

\textsuperscript{87} W. Paul Jones, \textit{Worlds Within a Congregation}, p17.
What is needed ... is passionate conviction within a Christianity authentically variegated. Such an effort would have as its goal a transforming faith that is without inflexible content, and a diversity of content without the indifference bred of relativism ... the goal could only be expressed paradoxically as "open conviction" "formed passion" [and] "disciplined freedom."88

In the following chapters a diversity of metaphors and apparent paradoxes are considered with the intention of moving towards a theology of Christian community that is so authentically variegated.

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88 W. Paul Jones, Worlds Within a Congregation, p25.
chapter four: 
fragmented epiphanies

Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine;
And through the turnings intricate of Verse,
Present themselves as objects recognised,
In flashes, and with glory scarce their own.

William Wordsworth 1

Everything beckons to us to perceive it
Murmurs at every turn "Remember me!
A day we passed, too busy to receive it
Will yet unlock us all its treasury.

Rainer Maria Rilke 2

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

W. B. Yeats 3

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed

I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,

with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

Adrienne Rich 4

No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid,
which is Jesus Christ.

I Cor. 3:11


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Having noted how the polyphonic Christ might be discovered playing in 'ten thousand places', attention is now given to three descriptors by which those counter-melodies of human participation in Christ’s performance may be explored: fragmented epiphanies, worldly monasticism, and the colony of heaven. No one descriptor is exclusive and indeed each in itself may be thought of as but one melody sounding in harmony with the others, metaphors that may be mixed with integrity.

The first of these metaphors is that of the epiphanal melody. God’s epiphany, the divine disclosure to the world, comes from heaven upon the earth like phrases of music, echoing the rich polyphony of Christ. Gerard Manley Hopkins noted that the purpose of all creation is to be what it already is, in and through God’s eye. He wrote:

\[
\begin{align*}
As \text{ kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;} \\
As \text{ tumbled over rim in roundy wells} \\
\text{Stones ring; like each tuck’d string tells, each hung bell’s} \\
\text{Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;} \\
\text{Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:} \ldots
\end{align*}
\]

\textit{Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is} \quad 6

To act in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is, may be transposed from a visual to an aural metaphor: to be in God’s ear the melody that God already hears for us. The purpose of humanity is to play out these melodies that God hears in the reality of the world. As the polyphony of Christ is so performed, moments of epiphanal revelation emerge within the common life of participating people. Emily Dickinson called such moments ‘bulletins from immortality’\(^7\) and George MacLeod spoke of them as ‘the glory in the grey’.\(^8\) They are occasions of the

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\(^6\) Gerard Manley Hopkins, ‘As Kingfishers Catch Fire’.
numinous\textsuperscript{9} when materiality 'flashes with a glory not its own'\textsuperscript{10} and God's 'mysterium, tremendum et fascinans' invites humanity to participate in the divine polyphony.\textsuperscript{11} In such moments people are not taken up and out of this world into some ethereal seventh heaven. Rather, having participated in the polyphony of Christ they attain an awareness of his \textit{cantus firmus} that permeates their otherwise everyday experience. They, and their common life, are transfigured into reality as God perceives and sustains them. In such moments humanity hears itself and the world as God hears them. People perceive the particularity of their melody. They recognise its relation to the \textit{cantus firmus}, to others and its place within the polyphony of God's creation. John V. Taylor described this as an experience of the ordinary 'seen through the context of an otherness which enfolds them all and lies with them all'.\textsuperscript{12} The 20\textsuperscript{th} century theologian and poet, Thomas Merton, described an epiphanal moment in Louisville, Kentucky:

\begin{quote}
\textit{at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.}\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

For Merton this is clearly a moment of epiphany: an occasion of heaven's melody breaking in upon the world. But such moments are just that: moments. They are only pieces of a greater whole: fragments of the divine epiphany and glimpses of heaven's polyphony. The Christian only ever has a fragment of the whole. So while every person may hear something of the \textit{cantus firmus} and experience the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{10} William Wordsworth, 'The Prelude, Book V', line 629.
\textsuperscript{11}'Mysterium, tremendum et fascinans' is the phrase Otto Rudolph uses to describe the mystery of God who is totally other to humanity, \textit{(mysterium)} the awesomeness of the divine \textit{(tremendum)} and the fascination and attraction humanity exhibits towards God, \textit{(fascinans)}. See Rudolph Otto, \textit{The Idea of the Holy}, chapters IV, V and V1., p12-42.
\end{footnotesize}
richness of their own counterpoint they can never hear the totality of music as it was in the beginning and will be in the end. It is not given for any human to hear the bars that heralded creation's birth, nor to guess at the chords that will conclude existence on this side of the eschaton. That is both the privilege and the burden of humanity. They are privileged to be cognisant of their place in the music: they know that they come after the beginning and appear before the end. But it is their burden to also know that there is a music that they can only hear in part. The condition of being human is that they can only ever participate in the performance of the middle fragments: it is to be limited and conscious of the limitation. The Genesis narrative claims that these limits were established in Eden where humanity was created in the image of God.

This image was not an *analogia entis*, something 'like God' that humans possessed. Rather it was located in the relationship of humanity to each other, creation and God. According to the Biblical narrative, this societal relationship established Adam and Eve as created beings with a proper and limited place within creation. But in the Fall Adam and Eve sought to reach beyond their limits, becoming *sicut deus*, like God. In this they became self-referent fragments, acting out of their own knowledge rather than being in relationship with the whole that God established for them.\(^{14}\) Sin is that choice to become a self-referent fragment separate from the God-addressed whole. Each fragment sets up boundaries to denote its distance from the whole, each separation blocks off the patterns that connect body and spirit, humanity and nature.\(^{15}\)

Since 'The Fall', sinful humanity has both resisted and despised the burden of this limitation and has sought to overcome the fragmented nature of their existence. As *sicut deus*, they have acted out of their own resources and ever hungered after the unity located in the divine whole. But because humanity is

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\(^{14}\) 'Imago Dei - humankind in the image of God in being for God and the neighbour, in its original creatureliness and limitedness; *sicut deus* - humankind similar to God in knowing-out-of-its-own-self about good and evil, in having no limit and acting out-of-its-own-resources, in its aseity, in its being alone'. *Creation and Fall*, p113.

made in the image of God they remain uniquely perceptive to the numinous and to the unity that exists beyond them. This perception of a greater whole that lies beyond them, but which only echoes in their midst serves to remind them that they are not God and were driven from the garden precisely to prevent them becoming like God. And so, humanity is both attracted to the melodies of the numinous while at the same time being repelled by the boundary established by the *cantus firmus*. These fragments are not revealed to humanity so that they may presume to fashion them into the whole and so again grasp after divinity. For God is not a finite whole the fragments of whom might be arranged together. Each fragment speaks of the wholeness of God but the wholeness is a mystery into which humanity is drawn to participate. The fragments are gathered together to inspire a communal vision of reality that participates in the performance of divinely ordained counter-melodies. To be Christian is to accept the privilege and the burden of being human before God. It is to accept the limitations of the human performance and to live in humble affirmation that ‘the whole’ is always both before them, beyond them and yet present with them in the fragments revealed within their midst.

The tension between this attraction to the melodies of God, but the denial of the limits established by Christ’s *cantus firmus*, is played out in contemporary western civilisation between the homogenising forces of globalisation and the fragmentation experienced within the post-modern condition. These forces influence the Christian community. As Trans-national corporations seek to homogenise the global market-place they fashion the identity of the world in their own unifying image. They, *sicut deus*, aspire to mimic the unity of the divine. But the rejection of the limits placed upon the individual through encounters with the other has led to the deification of the self and social and personal fragmentation. As each person becomes increasingly intent on composing and performing the one tune, their tune, few are willing to listen to others or to listen in community. Fewer still wish to be addressed by the *cantus firmus*. In such conditions the tension is not one of the ‘person versus
community, but between personal community and massified individualism'.

Personal community is established when distinct melodies are woven together into a polyphonic whole. It is made possible in the Christian community that acknowledges the limits set upon them by the otherness of Christ's *cantus firmus* and the differing melodies that are called to sound in 'ten thousand people and places'. Mass individualism can only ever beget a self-referent cacophony that knows little of such otherness or community.

In the context of post-modernity's mass individualism many wonder if polyphony can hold cacophony at bay. Yeat's insight: 'Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold' has become a popular diagnosis for the *zeitgeist* of post-modern society. Fragmentation has been turned into a metaphor of choice in much political, philosophical and theological discussion. Grenz and Franke inform us that 'We are living in the midst of a widespread fragmentation and perhaps disintegration that appears to be affecting all dimensions of Western culture, including the theological enterprise'. So where once Paul Tillich lamented that the 'foundations had been shaken' Mary Grey now asserts that 'there simply are no foundations any more!' They are fractured and fragmented and the very endeavour of their re-assembly is discredited. Post-modern theorists reject universal foundations, arguing that interpreting the world by imposing upon it some under-girding explanation or meta-narrative is not only historically calamitous, but is also morally suspect. For them, such foundationalism can only

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exist when a dominant group suppresses or discredits dissenting voices of otherness. As such post-modernity is too humble to forbid and too weak to banish the foundational excesses of modernity's hubris, yet its criticism means that the truth for any given community becomes no more than the truth constructed by them. In this brave new era, everything that has provided the foundations for western society in the last four hundred years (from philosophy and economics to physics and theology) appears to be dismantled, critiqued and left fractured: seemingly beyond the possibility of any meaningful re-assembly. Even in science the bedrock Cartesian and Newtonian Physics has shifted under Einstein's Theory of Relativity and as Werner Heisenberg commented the very foundations of science have started to move.\textsuperscript{22}\ And in the midst of such dislocation science has also turned to metaphor and to music. The physicist and astronaut, Chet Raymo, has commented on the evolving scientific paradigm: 'we find ourselves awash in a sea of cosmic music – surging, billowing animating, never at rest'.\textsuperscript{23}\ If there is still a centre, can it hold?

The contemporary Church rarely regards this process of fragmentation positively. Most Christianity is affirming of some form of foundationalism and perceives the phenomena of fragmentation as both a cause and effect of the contemporary decline of Christianity in the West and its waning influence in the world. It is perceived as a rejection of Christ's \textit{cantus firmus}. But this negative appraisal of fragmentation is not fully merited. It is possible to hold to Christ as \textit{cantus firmus} and yet engage positively with the metaphor of fragmentation. The realities of fragmentation in no way debar the Christian community from making claims that assert a universal character in which God is acknowledged as the ground of all truth.\textsuperscript{24}\ Christ is the \textit{cantus firmus} in which every fragment holds together.

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\item \textsuperscript{24} Grenz and Franke posit a ‘Chastened rationality’ by which foundationalism is rejected and Christian theology is reinterpreted as a ‘belief mosaic’ or ‘perichoretic dance’ made up of three sources; namely the Spirit speaking in scripture, the traditions contained in Christian history and its cultural context. The diverse specifics of varying Christian positions are held together by the ‘family resemblance’ of
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One of the difficulties in understanding fragmentation is that the historical foundations, whose demise the Church often laments, owe more to the Enlightenment agenda of Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon and Descartes than they do to the epiphanies of God appearing in the world. In the 16th century, the move from the pre-modern to the modern world was based upon the supposition that epistemology guaranteed ontology. In other words, there existed one single, foundational mode of representation that if it were uncovered, would provide the rational secular basis for all subsequent human belief and action. As science took upon itself the mantle of responsibility to provide that one foundation, Christianity challenged its claim over ownership of the epistemological bedrock. It is true that post-Constantinian Christendom had ensured a strong relationship between religious belief and public policy, but no homogenised foundation had ever truly been achieved and in truth, it had never been the Church’s proper task. The task of the Christian community had not been to establish foundations for the world, but to participate in the performance of Christ’s polyphony as it was played out in ten thousand pieces. Granted, the polyphony was stronger as the fragments of epiphany were gathered together but establishing a foundation and assembling the whole always exceeded the human purpose.

The performing of this polyphony has never been anything other than a persistent encounter of divine epiphanies and a gathering together of their fragments. Even in its most monolithic moments, the Church has always been comprised of various people and communities who appear to have heard the cantus firmus, but who bore witness to differing revelations of God’s presence. In the beginning, each personal encounter with the incarnate Christ was a unique fragment which the disciples brought together in community so to better understand its meaning and to participate in performing its purpose. At Pentecost, people heard the message of God spoken in their own tongues. There was present on that day both the unifying mystery of God encountered and the fragments of language expressed in diversity. Indeed James D. G. Dunn notes

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Trinity, community and eschatology. See S. J. Grenz and J. R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, p23 ff. While the language may differ from that employed in this thesis, the task is largely similar.

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that from its inception Christianity knew no uniform concept of orthodoxy at all, contending that the stream of first-century Christianity was broad, with ‘many currents and crosscurrents running in it, and that its banks crumbled away at many points’.25 Dunn argues that the early Church was in fact a multiplicity of contextually relevant expressions of encounter with and longing for God26 and that their common strand was the affirmed unity between Jesus, the man, and Jesus, the exalted one.27 Each early Church community was an epiphanal fragment of the Christ’s polyphony, identifiable only by its relationship to the cantus firmus. What they also shared in common were the tensions that existed between being a disciple of Christ and a citizen of the state.

Under the Emperor Constantine that tension changed. After his conversion, the Christian religio illicita became the faith of the establishment,28 the Church became the bearer of civilising culture, and the Emperor quickly moved to resolve perpetuating divisive theological acrimonies at the Council of Nicea in 325. He moved towards a monophonic Christendom in which membership of the Church and of civil society was almost identical. But as he did so ‘the conditions of church membership, which had once been stringent, became accommodating’.29 The formation of Christendom as a societal paradigm began to collapse the bisociative tensions that were essential to the Christians ‘being in the world but not of it’.

But no sooner had this homogenisation of the fragments been established than a fresh and counter cultural epiphany was heard through the melodies of St. Antony and the phenomenon of monasticism. Monasticism was a radical

26 See James D.G. Dunn, Unity and Diversity, Chapters II-V.
27 James D.G. Dunn, Unity and Diversity, p371.
28 Strictly, the pact between Empire and Church did not come into being until an edict was issued in 380.
response to the secularising Church and, Eoin de Bhaldraithe notes Cassian’s observation that it was not long before monastic renunciation rather than Baptism became the great divide of the human race.30 Here was a fresh epiphany, the introduction of another melody in counterpoint to Constantine’s desired monophony. A number of new and diverse counter-melodies were performed within the emerging monasticism. In adding their music to that of the established Church they continued the rhythmic tensions that existed between the centrifugal forces of worldly order and the prophetic epiphanies of heaven that erupted in their midst. While some sought to preserve the fragments of the past, weaving towards a homogenised whole, others sought to continue the journey through fresh epiphanies and new melodies. Over time the tension of this rhythm threaded its way into the very existence of Christian community. To be Christian was to perpetually move between order and prophecy. In time, the prophetic epiphany of monasticism moved toward order and was duly brought ‘under the roof of the institutional church’.31 The Rule of St. Benedict became a standardised guide for religious life.

Yet, in the British Isles, the fragments of epiphany found in the Celtic Churches differed substantially from their European counterparts. And in time, fresh revelations arose both within and outside the institutional Church in Europe; movements such as the Waldenses, in the 12th century and the Mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans in the following century. Added to these was a flourishing polyphony of mysticism in the fourteenth century as seen in Meister Eckhart, Catherine of Sienna, and others in the Rhineland, and, in England, Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kemp. All these were fresh epiphanal fragments of the melodies of heaven performed on earth. The contrapuntal melodies introduced by mystics were not always appreciated nor welcomed at the time. Nor were the themes that came from reformers such as Wyclif and Hus. In the 14th and early 15th centuries such melodies were declared heretical but the music they performed only anticipated the fresh themes that

30 Eoin de Bhaldraithe, ‘Early Christian Features Preserved in Western Monasticism’, p166.
would flourish under Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer and the Anabaptists in the 16th century. Each was but a new epiphany and a fragment of the whole. Each led the Church into new experiences of God. However, the mistaken assumption of each was that their fragment of epiphany was the whole: each beginning as a prophet but ending up as a policeman.32

A myriad of post-reformation developments, from the Puritans to Pentecostalism could all illustrate this same point: namely the Church has perpetually been renewed and reformed through fresh epiphanal encounters of Christ in which they were encouraged to participate in his polyphony. But each epiphany has been no more than a proleptic fragment, an echo of the whole. As people have participated in these fragments of God's polyphony, they have ever sought to bring their particular epiphany into harmony with what has historically come to pass and what is anticipated in eschatological fulfilment.

Thus rather than bemoan the fragmentariness of life, these Christians have sought to rejoice in the possibility of participating in fragments of God's epiphany and in the fact that they, in community, can perform the pieces in a rich and present harmony. Bonhoeffer understood this when he wrote:

_The important thing today, however is that people should be able to discern from the fragments of our life how the whole was arranged and planned, and what material it consists of. For really there are some fragments that are only worth throwing in the dustbin (even a decent "hell" is too good for them), and others whose importance lasts for centuries, because their completion can only be a matter for God, and so they are fragments that must be fragments — I'm thinking, e.g. of the Art of Fugue. If our life is but the remotest reflection of such a fragments, if we accumulate, at least for a short time, a wealth of themes and weld them into a harmony in which the great counterpoint is maintained from start to finish, so that at last, when it breaks off abruptly, we can sing no more than the chorale, 'I come before thy throne'; we will not bemoan the fragmentariness of our life, but rather rejoice in it._33

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33 _Letters and Papers_, p219, translation slightly altered.
Living polyphonically enables the Christian and their community to maintain multiple differences within a unity assured through a common connection to the *cantus firmus*, Jesus Christ. This rescues people from the tyranny of their isolating, self-referential fragment and calls them into belonging with a polyphony of otherness. Of course the totality of the heavenly Fugue in its eschatological fulfilment remains beyond the limits of fallen humanity. But the unifying ground bass and echoes of the harmonies continue to be encountered in God’s fragmented epiphanies. So these fragments ought not to be despised. They are to be celebrated, for it is from them that it is possible to discern how the whole music of heaven is arranged and planned, and of what material it consists. As Brueggemann notes, the Christian task is ‘the voicing of a lot of little pieces out of which people can put life together in fresh configurations’.\(^3^4\) In gathering the fragments together the Church deepens its communal participation in the performance of Christ’s polyphony and establishes Christ in the world. In so doing it establishes a location and a people in whom others can experience a healing of their brokenness: gathering the fragments is part of the process of redemption and healing.\(^3^5\) Mary Grey makes this point by drawing on the Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*. She argues that social and personal fragmentation of the former foundations that is experienced in post-modern society is expressed by the Kabbalistic story of sin, understood as the broken fragments of the vessels of creation. Redemption, conversely, is seen as gathering the fragments together, as *tikkun olam*, or cosmic repair, creating whatever wholeness is possible.\(^3^6\) Re-interpreting this within the Christian community means that all the fragments are gathered around Christ’s *cantus firmus* in a process of re-entering the polyphony, becoming the melody that God hears for each person. This move towards wholeness, while at the same time accepting the necessary responsibility to remain a counter-melody to the *cantus firmus*, gives people the voice and the place to sing their melody with a confidence. If Christ remains acknowledged as the *cantus firmus* then fragmentation need not mean the end

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\(^{3^6}\) Mary C. Grey, *Beyond the Dark Night*, p42.
of all cohesion. The Christian community becomes the place in which the fragments of Christ’s epiphany can be gathered together and they can become the people in and through whom his melodies are performed.

It is important that in gathering these fragments the Christian community remain open to the fresh epiphanies. Alistair MacIntyre has imagined a society where people live only with fragments of a once coherent morality. In such a place he seeks ‘another – [though] doubtless very different - St. Benedict’ who will help re-construct ‘local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages’. The image is a powerful one, not least because MacIntyre acknowledges that his chosen archetypal gatherer of this fractured morality was also open to new fragments of epiphany. That Benedict’s monasticism played a great role in preserving Christianity and the fragments of other cultures through ‘the Dark Ages’ is beyond doubt. However Benedict’s monasticism was concerned with more than simply gathering up the pieces of the past, he turned aside from the task of shoring up the civility of the Roman imperium ... to construct ‘new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained’. Christian Monasticism therefore sought to participate in the fresh fragments of epiphany, to sing a new song along with the older melodies. ‘The Lord had yet more light and truth, to break forth from his world’.

If this is true, then rather than having to ‘get used to a world of multiple realities’ as Walter Truett Anderson suggests of post-modernity, it is more accurate to suggest that the Christian community will have to live in a world

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37 Alisdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, p263.
38 Alisdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, p263.
39 Alisdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, p263.
40 George Rawson, ‘We limit not the truth of God’, in Baptist Praise and Worship, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), No. 107. The Hymn is based upon the words spoken by John Robinson to the English Puritan Pilgrims as they departed for the ‘New World’. See Alexander Young, Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth, from 1602 to 1625, (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), p87. MacLeod used a similar phrase; ‘Follow the Light you have and pray for more light’.
made up of 'multiple fragments of reality', fragments of the reality that is Christ's polyphonic whole. Thus reality for the Christian community must be the way in which Christ takes form in the world. For Christ's *cantus firmus* underpins all of creation: 'through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made' and 'no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ'.\(^\text{42}\) Christ is then the Real One, 'he is the origin, essence and goal of all reality ... the lord and the law of the real'.\(^\text{43}\) In Christ the reality of God enters the reality of material existence. As such, questions of truth and reality are made concrete in the question, 'how Christ may take form among us today and here'.\(^\text{44}\) Bonhoeffer was in no doubt as to how Christ took such form. 'The church is the place where Jesus Christ's taking form is proclaimed and where it happens'.\(^\text{45}\) The Christian community is that part of the world in which Christ has taken form: it is the earthly locus in which people have chosen to participate in the performance of Christ's polyphony. The purpose of such participation is not to turn the world into the kingdom of God by imposing upon humanity a Christian foundationalism that owes more to Constantinian imperialism than to the humble servant-hood of Christ.

Perhaps the greatest service post-modern fragmentation has offered to the Christian community is to have broken the Constantinian linkage between religion and society. Bonhoeffer correctly noted that the time when people could be told everything 'by means of words, whether theological or pious [was] over:' ... the time of religion was over.\(^\text{46}\) In this new era of a religionless world, the Church was no longer required to explain itself to the world: not through claims of foundationalism nor by somehow reserving a place for God, even a *deus ex machina*, in its midst. Free of the Constantinian linkage the Church could return to interpreting the world before Christ. Its purpose was not to change the world into itself but to allow the world to be the world, a world over which Christ still remained as Lord. This brings the world into a new self-understanding: showing

\(^{42}\) John 1:3 and I Cor. 3:11.  
\(^{43}\) Ethics, p263.  
\(^{44}\) Ethics, p99.  
\(^{45}\) Ethics, p102.  
\(^{46}\) Letters and Papers, p279.
that it is indeed godless, and in so doing, bringing it closer both to God’s judgment and God’s grace. The Church must, for its own sake and for the sake of the world, recognise its own finitude.\textsuperscript{47} Its theology must be ‘suitably humble in its claims, repenting of any imperialist claims for universal truth, resisting foreclosure, creating a flexible discourse, ready not only to dialogue but to be continually under criticism, and judgement’.\textsuperscript{48} Yet it must also participate in the counter-melodies that Christ calls into being through them in the world. The task of the Christian community is simply to play the next notes of the music as they are revealed. The Church becomes a people in which God’s melodies are gathered not primarily for the sake of the world but for the sake of the Church. In this way the Church can truly be the people of God, i.e. that bit of a lost and godless world, which is qualified by God’s revealing, gracious Word ... ‘Really in the world, really the presence of God’.\textsuperscript{49} Only when the Church is the Church, the gatherer and performer of Christ’s fragmented epiphanies, can she be of service to the world.

Only then will the fragments of epiphany be gathered in an authentically redemptive manner,\textsuperscript{50} only then can the community participate in the melodies of Christ’s salvation and ‘cast their lot with those who age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world’.\textsuperscript{51}

The work of George MacLeod on Iona may be understood as a physical manifestation of this metaphor. He sought to reconstitute the world and rebuild the fragments of the common life around Christ. Years before he began his experiment, the Abbey Church had been rebuilt. But the buildings of the common life remained in ruins: left lying in fragments. This was MacLeod’s

\textsuperscript{47} No Rusty Swords, p156.

\textsuperscript{48} Mary C. Grey, The Shaking of the Foundations Again! p2. Stephen Pattison in arguing for Christian theology to be more ‘publicly focused, useful, credible and accessible’, suggests that it can no longer pretend ‘to ultimacy or depend upon the dominance of the grand, unified narrative’. He adds that if theology shows ‘proper humility and egalitarianism’ it may be able to contribute ‘theological fragments of insight and wisdom’ to public debate. He suggests that such fragments would help both individuals and society to flourish. Stephen Pattison, ‘Public Theology: A Polemical Epilogue’, Political Theology, Vol. 2, (2000), p57-76.

\textsuperscript{49} No Rusty Swords, p153-4.

\textsuperscript{50} Mary C. Grey, Beyond the Dark Night, p35.


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parable in stone: Churches were busy and in good repair, but their witness was monophonic. They were not affecting the wider polyphony of the common life wherein communities and individuals were falling apart. MacLeod argued that:

*It is the week-day life of men that lies in ruins. The economic structure - the industrial, the international ... these are the grave concerns bereft today of Spirit. These are the places where men have to live and move and have their being - and the roof of them is falling in!*

Yet Christ was Lord of that ruined world as much as he was Lord of the Church. What was needed was a gathering together of the pieces: a bringing together of the worlds of work and worship around the *cantus firmus* of the Christ. What was needed was a community in which clergy and craftsmen could weave into polyphonic harmony the melodies of epiphany experienced by both.

Iona became the place in which these fragments were gathered. It was ‘a tiny symbol that the thing could be done’. And indeed much of the members’ time would be spent literally gathering stones together to reconstruct the ruined buildings. MacLeod was well aware that the re-building had been embarked on partly for its own sake, but also as a symbol of the Church building itself up again with ‘modern material on an old foundation’. In so doing, they would discover the fragment-gathering nature of community living. Even as they brought wood and stone together, to reconstruct the buildings, so ministers and laity together learned from each other’s experiences of Christ in Church and world.

But for all their gathering of epiphanal melodies on Iona, members were soon scattered again. Just as grain is gathered into one Eucharistic loaf and then scattered among the people, the aim of the Iona Community was that each minister should spend twenty-one months out of twenty-four in one of the difficult parishes of Scotland. The aim of gathering them together on Iona was

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52 *Chasing the Wild Goose*, p61.
54 Sermon by George MacLeod, cited in *Chasing the Wild Goose*, p61.
not to take them out of their situation but rather to listen to the differing melodies in which each was called to participate and weave together a polyphony that would sustain them all. In the preface to his book, *We Shall Re-build*, MacLeod reflected that it was 'what to do there, in the modern situation, that alone draws us together for a very short period on the Island, to set our compass and intensively experience in Work and Worship the Redeemed Community that we would preach'.

The gathering together of ancient stones and modern materials in the rebuilding of the Abbey became a living metaphor for the rebuilding of the common life with which the Church was charged. The Iona Community was to be 'a laboratory of co-operative living' a living countersign in which the members hoped to discover more of the Church's place within the world.

And as new members gathered year by year and as associates, pilgrims and even tourists added their melodies to those fragments already gathered, so they brought together fresh expressions of Christ existing as a community, new counterpoints to an established *cantus firmus*. And as they returned to the contexts of their common life, they took with them new melodies through which they might participate in performing fragments of Christ's epiphanal polyphony. Rasmussen argues that in our increasingly mobile world this is exactly what may be needed: communities of moral character with multi-layered interactions among its people, communities where, 'traditions and rituals are developed and preserved, skills are learned and utilized, discipline is expected and nurtured, and fidelity and accountability to community members is practiced'. Such communities can gather in and send forth members with ease because while strong dimensions of belonging and loyalty are necessary, 'not everyone need

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55 *We Shall Re-build*, p5.
56 *Oracle*, No. 1, p3.

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know everyone else’, as long as each feels a sense of personal presence and contribution.\textsuperscript{58} He concludes:

Not all members need hold all purposes in common nor act as a unit on every matter. But there must be an overlapping of members’ interests, a ‘comm-unity’ of interest. The community is not simply each individual member’s interests writ large; rather, collective interests draw the individual beyond the place she or he started and into a network of open response and responsibility.\textsuperscript{59}

Shanks comments in similar terms with regard to the island centre work of the Iona Community:

We stand, as a global community, at a place of enormous possibility and also of overwhelming threat. In it all, our islands work is a tiny fragment in the multiple purposes of God. But what is so important is that it is a fragment and in its own particular way is recovering social holiness and a recognition that the fate of the soul is the fate of our social order.\textsuperscript{60}

As MacLeod himself admitted in the Iona Community at the end of the rebuilding of the Abbey, this is a challenge:

We must find the techniques of the devotional life adequate to the make-up and needs of Modern Man. If all we have built is a shell, we shall deserve to be shelved. By grace alone, signs are not wanting that this will in fact be our next Building Project.\textsuperscript{61}

The ‘technique’, or perhaps more accurately the melody that will sustain such a devotional life is to be found in a new monasticism, a worldly monasticism.

\textsuperscript{58}Larry Rasmussen, Moral Fragments, Moral Community, p128.
\textsuperscript{59} Larry Rasmussen, Moral Fragments, Moral Community, p129.
\textsuperscript{60} Iona- God’s Energy, p220.
\textsuperscript{61} We Shall Re-build, pvi.

Melodies of Community
chapter five:
worldly monasticism

Since my early youth I have seen myself as a monk, but one without a monastery, or at least without walls other than those of the entire planet. And even these, it seemed to me, had to be transcended - probably by immanence - without a habit, or at least without vestments other than those worn by the human family.

Raimundo Panikkar

The monk proposed to himself no great or systematic work beyond that of saving his soul. What he did more than this was the accident of the hour, spontaneous acts of piety, the sparks of mercy or beneficence, struck off in the heat, as it were, of his solemn religious toil, and done and over almost as soon as they began to be.

Cardinal Newman

During the last year or so I've come to know and understand more and more the profound this-worldliness of Christianity. The Christian is not a homo religiosus, but simply a man, as Jesus was a man - in contrast, shall we say, to John the Baptist. I don't mean the shallow banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable, or the lascivious, but the profound this-worldliness, characterised by discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

What is missing ... are some interim models of community that don't require a lifelong or a common purse commitment ... or necessitate relocating into communities of poverty ... We need a whole spectrum of models of what the Wild Hope of God might look like as expressed in communities that are clearly at counterpoint to the dominant culture.

Tom Sine

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

John 17:15

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3 Letters and Papers, p369.
The idea of a ‘worldly monasticism’ appears on first encounter to be an oxymoron. The perceived character of monasticism is usually one in which the world is specifically rejected so that the monk may pursue the cloistered life and the spiritual perfection of their soul. It would appear to be impossible for a person to pursue this monastic aim and simultaneously be fully present in the world. Yet, the tensions inherent to this apparent contradiction are those same tensions that are bisociated in Christ: he who was both human and divine, belonging to heaven and yet fully present on the earth. As such, these are the tensions that are necessarily reflected within the reality of the Christian community as they seek to participate in performing the polyphony of Christ. In bisociating monasticism and worldliness we find a further insight and another metaphor into how the Church might become the polyphonic community of Christ.

This re-visititation of the monastic life as an inspiration for the wider Church is no new idea. Bonhoeffer spoke compellingly of the need for ‘a new type of monasticism’ that had in common with the old ‘only the uncompromising attitude of a life lived according to the Sermon on the Mount’.5 MacLeod specifically rejected the suggestion that the Iona Community was pursuing ‘the cloistered life’6 but consciously placed the iconic centre of his experiment in Christian community on the site of both a Celtic and Benedictine monastic settlement. Richard Mouw has argued that the Church would benefit from a ‘remonasticization’ that called all Christians to a clearer and more radical witness,7 as has John Stott8 and Eugene Peterson who argues for ‘monasteries without walls’ wherein ‘an imagination large enough to contain all of life, all worship and work in prayer (is) set in a structure adequate to the actual

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6 MacLeod wrote; ‘One of the great purposes of the Iona Community is to experiment with a project that shall steadfastly remain part of the world in which we find ourselves and yet not be of it. We have definitely barred the cloistered life’. Coracle, No. 1, p12.
8 Uncited reference in Tom Sine, Wild Hope, p280.
conditions in which it is lived out. Tom Sine suggests that ‘the only way any of us at any age can hope to be successful in reordering our lives and begin to flesh out something of God’s future is in community and that ‘a return to such radical Christian community is essential to the renewal and survival of a vital church in the Western nations’. He concludes that what is needed are ‘interim models of community that don’t require a lifelong or common purse commitment ... or necessitate relocating into communities of poverty ... we need to develop “enclaves of the future.”’

What is envisioned by such a new and worldly monasticism is a community in which the devotional disciplines that nurtured the radical spirituality of traditional monks are adequately reinterpreted so that the Christian community can participate in the performance of the melodies of God in the midst of contemporary society. This will adopt the best of ancient disciplines many of which retain rich value in contemporary society but clothe them in no vestments ‘other than those worn by the human family’ and inhabiting a monastery ‘without walls other than those of the entire planet’. Its purpose is to nurture Christians who practice a worldly holiness, for as Bonhoeffer noted, ‘it is only by living completely in the world that one learns to have faith ... [by] living unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities.’

But traditionally the Church and particularly the melodies of monasticism have not valued the idea of worldliness. Concerns with the material, the earthly, the here and now have been perceived as being entered into at the expense of the transcendent, the heavenly and the here-after. The world has been predominantly understood as the antithesis of the Church’s purpose, namely the

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10 Tom Sine, Wild Hope, p278.
11 Tom Sine, Wild Hope, p280.
12 Tom Sine, Wild Hope, p281. I am also grateful to Ray Simpson, Guardian of the Lindisfarne based Community of Aiden and Hilda for conversations shared in 2002 and a copy of his unpublished paper, ‘Shoots of a New Monasticism.’ See also Ray Simpson, A Pilgrim Way: New Celtic Monasticism for Everyday People, (Buxhall, Suffolk: Kevin Mayhew, 2005).
13 Raimundo Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity, p6.
14 Letters and Papers, p369-370.
development of the spiritual.\textsuperscript{15} The dualism that puts spirit and matter in opposition to one another rather than bisociating them as they are found together in Christ is in no small amount due to the influence of Neo-Platonic and Gnostic thought in early Christianity.\textsuperscript{16}

The first source of this dualism came from Neo-platonism. Its main protagonist, Plotinus (204-270 C.E.) argued that all objective existence was but the self-expression of a transcendent and inherently contemplative deity that he called 'the Unity' or 'the One'.\textsuperscript{17} From this immaterial and impersonal 'One' everything overflows; moving out and down in graded hypostases. Firstly the One begets its own image, the Nous, which in turn begets the Psyche (world-soul) as the fruit of its contemplation of the One.\textsuperscript{18} It is from the Psyche that all physical matter is derived. Each new hypostasis represents a different level of being, of awareness and of value. Each level strives to return to the primal unity of the One through a contemplative negation (\textit{theoria}) that, by removing all the non-essentials to material existence, leads to ecstatic union. Thus, while the descent of a soul into a material form is not intrinsically evil the ultimate purpose of all materiality is an inward journey of self-discovery and re-uniting with the One.\textsuperscript{19} This philosophy shaped the early Christian concept of the world, elevating the experience of the individual soul to the status of an actualisation of a divine form. Hence Origen argued that the soul nearest to God was a soul for whom the highest good was the knowledge of his own self\textsuperscript{20} and St. Antony argued that the life of a Christian monk was a 'constant struggle for self-knowledge, self-purification and through these, the return of the soul to unity with God'.\textsuperscript{21} Retreat from the world and


\textsuperscript{16} A third influence, Stoicism was also important, particularly its concept of apatheia, which sought to control the inclinations of nature through a solemn renunciation of the world.


\textsuperscript{19} D.J. O'Meara, \textit{Plotinus}, p100 ff.


isolated contemplation of the self / soul was the pathway to the One, a praxis that is summed up by the monk Arsenius, who even avoided contact with other hermits saying 'I cannot live with God if I live with people'.

Gnosticism was the second great influence on how Christianity understood materiality. It claimed to impart a special knowledge of God and redemption the possession of which enlightened the initiated and guaranteed the salvation of their souls. At its core was 'a cluster of systems generally representing a commitment to the fundamental unreliability of the empirical environment and of the god responsible for it ... there is always and necessarily a gulf between the world and the truth, between appearance and reality, between wisdom and convention or communal life'. Gnosticism operated a rigid dichotomy that set the spiritual condition in opposition to the material world. Matter was understood to be intrinsically evil and Gnostics sought to escape 'from everything except the self' in their quest for spiritual enlightenment.

To the adherents of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism the idea of God becoming human and the spirit condescending to material existence was inconceivable. Their world-renouncing critiques affected an embryonic Christianity that displayed bewildering inconsistencies in its stance towards material reality was it an evil from which the spirit longed for liberation or was it a blessing that should be celebrated? Should they submit to earthly authorities or separate themselves entirely from society? Such inconsistencies were born in the Christian struggle to live the gospel paradox, what the Epistle to Diognetus called being

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22 Eoin de Bhaldraithe, 'Early Christian Features Preserved in Western Monasticism', in Alan Kreider, ed., The Origins of Christendom in the West, p164. De Bhaldraithe comments that Arsenius echoes the last phrase of Plotinus in The Enneads: 'alone with the Alone'.

Melodies of Community
'alien citizens'.

While they participated in the earthly society around them, they confessed that their conduct was guided by their citizenship in the coming Kingdom Of Heaven. This paradox of 'alien citizenship', was a common and defining metaphor for the early Church but it was a balance that Christians found difficult to define in theory or to perform in practice. Tertullian claimed that Christians were an integral part of his society, 'living among them, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, under the same necessities of existence ... not exiling themselves from ordinary life,' and indeed ... 'praying for the well being of the Empire which in God's providence it has been ordained to restrain evil'. However, he also insisted that Christians ought to break all ties with a world totally corrupted by idolatry. Conversely, Clement believed that Christians ought to live 'in the city as in a desert'. He also went on to assert that a Christian's citizenship was this-worldly, requiring a re-structuring of the earthly Empire.

This re-structuring became the avowed purpose of the Imperial Christianity initiated by Constantine in 313 and established in 389 under Emperor Theodosius: all non-Christian worship was forbidden by the State. The Church welcomed such a move after long periods of suspicion and persecution. But in making Christianity a legal requirement of Imperial citizenship the hitherto distinctly 'alien' character of Christian citizenship was jeopardized, compromised and lost.

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27The Epistle to Diognetus refers to Christians as living as though 'they are residents at home in their own countries, their behaviour there is more like that of transients; they take their full part as citizens, but they also submit to anything and everything as if they were aliens. For them, any foreign country is a homeland, and any homeland a foreign country'. Epistle to Diognetus 5.4; in 'Loeb Classical Library: Apostolic Fathers', Eng. tr. & ed. Kirsopp Lake, Vol. 2, (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1912-13), p358, cited in Rowan A. Greer, Broken Lights and Mended Lives, p141.
28See below, Chapter 6, 'The Colony of Heaven'.
30Tertullian, 'Apology' 32, 39; cited in Rowan A. Greer, Broken Lights and Mended Lives, p143.
31Rowan A. Greer, Broken Lights and Mended Lives, p144 ff.
33In the west of the Empire, Augustine (c354-430 C. E.) who lived through the fall of Rome in 410, understood that the Church could survive without the protection of State approval. In The City of God he describes the City of God as a 'pilgrim among the wicked' that was rooted in the 'stability of (its)
conditions of Church membership were reduced drastically in order to accommodate all people.  

David Knowles suggests that:

_The church became what it has been in a large measure ever since, a large body in which a few are exceptionally observant and devout, while many are sincere believers without any pretension to fervour, and a sizeable number, perhaps the majority are either on their way to losing faith or retain it in spite of a life which neither respects or obeys in all respects the commands of Christ nor shares in the devotional and sacramental life of the church with regularity. Under such conditions there has always occurred a revolt of some or many against what seems to them prevailing laxity._

Monasticism was the first significant revolt against such secularised laxity. Those who embraced the life of a religious, both men and women were anxious to maintain their status as alien citizens believing that even under a baptised Emperor, the Empire and the Kingdom of God were far from synonymous. But their objections resulted in them spurning not just the worldliness that they felt had infected the Church, but all contact with the world.

**ST. ANTONY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONASTICISM**

The etymology of monasticism comes from the Greek ὑπαύγος / monos = alone / solitary. Monks fled the world to be alone with God. Their emergence has various suggested origins and certainly not everyone who fled the world did so from eternal resting place'. In the East however, Constantine and his successors ruled over both Church and world, understanding their vocation to make the people of their kingdom fit for that of God. See Rowan Williams, _Christian Spirituality: A Theological History from the New Testament to Luther and St. John of the Cross_, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p91.

34 Eoin de Bhaldraithe, 'Early Christian Features Preserved in Western Monasticism', p154.


spiritual motivations. Some may have fled persecution or to avoid the civic obligations incumbent upon peasants bound by land and local aristocrats to discharge ruinous ‘liturgies’ or civic obligations.\textsuperscript{38} But what cannot be denied is that after the Constantinian Settlement there was a dramatic increase in the monastic movement as many Christians sought after a radical and demanding discipleship.\textsuperscript{39}

Much monastic development was inspired by the example of St. Antony. In 271, Antony had already renounced his claims to earthly wealth and sought instruction in the spiritual life. Initially, he dwelt in solitude among the tombs outside his village. Later, he retreated into the desert,\textsuperscript{40} where thousands of women and men followed his example hoping to isolate themselves from anything that would distract them from the conquest of sensuality and union with God.\textsuperscript{41} Gradually as the empire of Christendom was established the tension of faithfulness to heaven while being present in the world dissipated. Christians either accepted the idealism of the new dispensation in which God’s kingdom and Constantine’s Empire were seen as one, or they renounced the world and the Church of its Empire. No one imagined bisociating the two.

After Athanasius wrote a ‘Life of St. Antony’ in the fourth century, the ascetic life of the solitary became popularised as the choice of life for the committed Christian. Undoubtedly this crystallised values long held in solution within the Church, but the deepening dichotomy between radicalism and compromise\textsuperscript{42}

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\textsuperscript{38} Rowan A. Greer, Broken Lights and Mended Lives, p108, and see Marilyn Dunn, The Emergence of Monasticism, p2.
\textsuperscript{39} Constantine and the Settlement makes an easy scapegoat for increasingly lax standards in the Church but corruption was already deeply rooted in a Christian community by the time of the Council of Elvira (c300). See H.B. Workman, The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal, p6, f.n. 2.
\textsuperscript{40} It is disputed whether Antony went to the desert to do battle with the forces of evil and the flesh or to find solitude and silence. See Stuart G. Hall. Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church, (London: S.P.C.K., 1991), p174.
\textsuperscript{41} See C. H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, p2.
\textsuperscript{42} David F. Ford draws on Bonhoeffer’s analysis to assert that a false choice arose between a ‘wrong radicalism’ and a ‘wrong compromise.’ Monastic radicalism had chosen a wrong radicalism that sought the ultimacy of God without an appreciation of the penultimate of the world, while Imperial Christians chose a wrong compromise, celebrating the penultimate without acknowledging the priority of the ultimate. The responsible action required the proper bisociation the two poles of choice. David F. Ford, ‘Polyphonic Living: Dietrich Bonhoeffer’, in Self and Salvation, p247.
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forced people to choose between one monophony and the other. And so despite
the tradition that God revealed to Antony that in the city he has a spiritual equal,
an ordinary layman living no less in sacrificial poverty and humility\textsuperscript{43}, there was
no suggested polyphony in which monastic disciplines might be practiced in
relation with the world. Nor was the material world conceived as a locus
redeemed in Christ and pregnant with epiphany. Monastic lives simply remained
too conscious of themselves to seek the redemption of the world or the
purification of the Church\textsuperscript{44} their world-renouncing disciplines were undertaken
for the spiritual condition of the individual. Thus St. Antony exhorted monks:

*Just as fish die if they remain on dry land so monks, remaining away
from their cells, or dwelling with men of the world, lose their
determination to persevere in solitary prayer.*\textsuperscript{45}

So even as hermits began to gather in communities each monk remained
diligently separate from the others. If the community had an Abbot or Abbess,
his or her counsel usually reinforced that of Abbot Allois: 'Unless a man shall say
in his heart, I alone and God are in this world, he shall not find peace.'\textsuperscript{46} A
rigorous asceticism of poverty, fasting and all night vigils was adopted to help
each monk conquer the distractions of the world, the body and the self and lead
him to enlightenment. While not denying the importance of a religious vocation
devoted to a life of prayer and discernment, historically it may be argued that at
times the monastic vision was myopic, failing to see the world beyond itself.

Such world-renouncing individualism remained a dominant theme even as a
more communal monasticism evolved. Gradually solitaries realised that their
souls could be saved from seduction and deceit only if they allowed for the
presence of others who might be prepared to 'undertake a drastic surgery upon

\textsuperscript{43} The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection, trans. Benedicta Ward, p5, as cited
in Rowan Williams, Christian Spirituality, p97.

\textsuperscript{44} See H.B. Workman, The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal, p12.

\textsuperscript{45} Cited in Thomas Merton, The Wisdom of the Desert, (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1997),
p32.

\textsuperscript{46} See Apophthegmata Patrum, in 'Patrologia Graeca', 65, 134, ed., J.P. Migne, as cited in C. H.
Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, p6. The most eccentric withdrawal from the world came from
Simon Stylites who lived on top of a pillar for forty-seven years.
the fantasizing and dominating self. Communal monasticism was founded by St. Pachomius. (c292-346). His monks shared common accommodation, prayer and manual labour. One of the strengths of such community was the way in which its members 'could sustain one another in their ascesis'. Community was needed but only to perfect the individual's salvation. So while the products of their labour were sold in the market-place they remained primarily committed to withdrawing from the world and perfecting their souls. Communal monasticism developed further under St. Basil (329-379). As Bishop of Caesarea, Basil, later became a social reformer, but he nevertheless perpetuated the monastic antithesis to the world. For him the defect in the solitary life was not its negative attitude to the world but that, by definition, it provided no opportunity to fulfil the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour. "If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?" The question was how a monk was to learn to perfect patience without the irritation of other people around them who might upset or resist them. This limited approach to community monasticism was later reinforced by John Cassian who stressed the monks' need for ... "imperturbable peace" and "uninterrupted prayer" and the nous flying home to God.

St. Benedict (c480–c547) synthesised the wisdom of Basil, Cassian and others to become 'the patriarch and founder of all institutes of western monasticism'. His Rule balanced simplicity and practicality, encouraging a charitable life of communal harmony. He brought together spiritual development with the earthiness of manual labour, but, while he claimed to 'speak of what is common, universal and basic to all Christians', his Rule was written for and practised by monks, not the wider Church. Indeed, while Benedictine monasticism as an

47 Rowan Williams, Christian Spirituality, p98.
48 Marilyn Dunn, The Emergence of Monasticism, p27.
49 See Marilyn Dunn, The Emergence of Monasticism, p32.
51 'Cassian Collationes', IX.2, cited in Rowan Williams, Christian Spirituality, p101.
54 That it is now a rich source for 'common Christians' does not reduce the force of the point.
institution was often involved in the affairs of the world, Benedict himself had
taken pains to ensure that monks remained isolated from the outside world,
appointing a door-keeper to minimise contact with visitors and giving the Abbot
charge of all contact with the outside world.55 Too much can be made of the
differences between this continental monasticism and that practiced by the Celtic
monks living in the British Isles. Benedictine monasticism was not unconnected
to the affairs of the world. And yet, while the penitential Celts could be as
austere as any of their continental cousins, overall, their monasticism was much
more interwoven with the high political intrigues of their time and the struggles
of ordinary people. They were free to marry and travel in the world and did so
often. Their monasteries were integrated with local communities. Significantly
Iona was one of the centres of this Celtic monasticism but in time it was forced
to retreat by the homogenising practices established at the Synod of Whitby in
664.56

Benedictine monasticism was effectively universal by 818 but the monks were
becoming increasingly preoccupied with spiritual concerns and less involved in
the manual labour that Benedict so valued. Periods of reform from Cluny and
through the Carthusians and Cistercian Orders sought to return to the original
tenets of Benedict57 but in so doing unquestioningly retained its characteristics of
a specialised and world-denouncing elite. Pope Urban II spoke of this dichotomy
between Church and monastery as if it were an explicit gospel concept: ‘From
the beginning the Church has always offered two types of life to her children:
one to aid the insufficiency of the weak, the other to bring to perfection the
goodness of the strong’.58 But by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the laity

Dunn notes how the relationship between monastery and the outside world was ‘carefully regulated’
and that this not only maintained the independence of the monastery but also reinforced the abbot’s
power. Marilyn Dunn, The Emergence of Monasticism, p124-5.
56 See Ian Bradley, The Celtic Way, and Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams,
(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) and Philip Sheldrake, Living Between Worlds: Place
57 See C. H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, chapter 9 and David Knowles, Christian Monasticism,
chapters 8 and 12.
p53, cited by Gerald A. Arbuckle, From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation,
(London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), p20. Other movements such as the Dominicans replaced the
became less satisfied with clerical authority and the ostentatious wealth of ecclesiastical bodies. In this environment the friars evolved as a movement that renounced the pivotal monastic principle of personal holiness nurtured in isolation in favour of a ministry to the world.\(^5^9\) Gerald Arbuckle notes that:

*This did not downgrade the importance of holiness, but it was to be seen now as a requirement for effective ministry for others. The friars abandoned the geographical isolation of monasteries and enclosures in order to minister especially to the new urban populations. They developed a passion for the ministry of preaching and the simplicity of the gospel: there were to be no spiritual elites in the Church, but all were called to holiness in whatever state they were living.*\(^6^0\)

While this brought radical discipleship out of the monastery and into the world such prophetic movements faced a constant struggle with the forces of ecclesiastical order that seemed capable of imagining radical discipleship only within traditional monasticism. For instance, the movement begun by Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) embraced voluntary poverty and sought to minister to the poor, not as many monasteries had done, from the strength of their enclosures, but to live in vulnerability among them. The whole world was their cloister. But while Francis captured the imagination of the people, after his death the movement became a predominantly clerical community. Parallel 'second order' communities such as the 'Poor Clares', and the Beguines\(^6^1\) were similarly unable to withstand the ecclesiastical pressure to place radical discipleship within a traditional cloistered life.\(^6^2\) A similar fate befell the Brethren of the Common Life, a 14\(^{th}\) century lay movement for men and women, begun by Geert de Groote. As

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elitism of monasticism with that of a celibate and mendicant clergy, again leaving the majority of Christendom with the impression that costly discipleship remained the reserve of someone other than themselves.

\(^5^9\) Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission*, p17.

\(^6^0\) Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission*, p17.

\(^6^1\) Similar attempts to form a non-cloistered community of women appeared in Italy with St. Angela Merici (1474-1540) and in Reformation England, Mary Ward (1586-1646) sought to 'evangelise' the country with a community of women who would take no vows and be directly responsible to the Pope as were the Jesuits. See Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission*, p26-27.

\(^6^2\) Clare Offreducio joined Francis in 1212, when she was eighteen. She established a separate but parallel community of women but by 1219 they were obliged to accept a Rule and convent property imposed from the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It was not until the 19\(^{th}\) century that active congregations gained official recognition from the Roman Catholic Church. See Thomas P. Rausch, *Radical Christian Communities*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1990), p79. A 'third order' was added for lay people seeking to follow the example of St. Francis in 1289.
well as embracing poverty, they practised a life of communal prayer, individual
meditation and self-examination. However, they took no formal vows and
rejected the mendicant lifestyle. Members continued to ply their trade (most
often book production) to supply their meagre needs and while clergy were
welcomed they were afforded equal status with others. In short, they sought to
incarnate that elusive vision of living in the world but not being of it.63 Again
such a communal group attracted the critical suspicions of the ecclesiastical
establishment and after his death a more traditionally monastic community with
permanent vows evolved. But they did for a while manifest the possibility of
communities whose monastery was the urban neighbourhood.

In Ralph Morton’s reflections on the early Iona Community he quotes directly
from the Brethren of the Common Life; ‘We are not members of an Order, but
religious men trying to live in the world’.64 But a vision for a worldly monasticism
found little resonance in the reformation taking place in the 16th century.
Protestantism was ill-disposed to any form of vowed life. Luther and Calvin
condemned it as an attempt at self-justification before God65 and monastic
communities all but disappeared from the Lutheran and Reformed traditions until
the mid 20th century.66 Monasticism did continue in Roman Catholicism but
perpetuated its otherworldly and elitist characteristics. The Jesuit movement
developed a spirituality that affirmed that God was to be found in all things, not
just in prayer or the solitude of their rooms.67 Their ‘world-affirming’ spirituality68
had a ‘new asceticism’ which was not dependant on self-imposed austerities, but
on the ‘rigors and hardship imposed by total dedication to an ideal of ministry in

63 See C. H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, p284 ff.
64 Quoted by R.W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages, (Penguin, 1970),
p344, as cited in The Iona Community, p86.
65 See Francois Biot, The Rise of Protestant Monasticism, trans. W. J. Kerrigan, (Baltimore: Helicon,
1963), Part One, p7-46. Pietistic movements did grow out of Lutheranism in the 17th century and
formed communities such as the Moravians and Herrnhutt.
66 Biot distinguishes Protestantism from Roman Catholicism, and Anglicanism, which proved more
cenobitic revival in the mid-twentieth century in France, Germany, Italy, in the Ashram Protestants in
India, and specifically mentions the Iona Community, p105.
67 Ignatius, Constitutions, 228, cited in John O’Malley, ‘Early Jesuit Spirituality: Spain and Italy’ in
Louis Dupré and Don E. Sayers, eds., Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern, (New
the world of ordinary people'. But even this perpetuated the concept of an itinerant Christian elite taking on a role on behalf of the wider Church. As long as Christendom remained, the dichotomy seemed unavoidable.

Yet there are fragments of the divine melodies found within this history of monasticism that can be used to nurture a non-elitist community with an open anticipation of meeting God in the world. These fragments of epiphany can be reclaimed and performed in ways that affirm the bisociation of heaven and earth in its *cantus firmus*. They can be forged into a new monasticism that is desirous of worldly presence and earthly engagement. For while traditional monasticism often envisions discipleship as something practiced in freedom *from the world* what is needed are communities that enable every Christian to maintain a polyphonic life that is *fully within the world and in freedom for the world*.70

Such an endeavour must refute a negative appraisal of the world. MacLeod often did so with a story of the electric slot machine. In funfairs there was a machine in which a person would place a coin and then hold on to a brass bar for as long as they could stand the machine's increasing voltage. MacLeod noted that if a person were properly insulated, by standing on some india-rubber or other insulating material, then the electricity had no effect, not because the machine was faulty but because the person was not earthed. He then described the incarnation as God's choosing to be earthed and argued for the Church to be the extension of that incarnation.71 The Iona Community was his attempt to incarnate such an extension, barring the cloistered life and seeking steadfastly to remain part of the world in which they found themselves and yet not be of it.72

Being part of the world but not of it was Bonhoeffer's intention for Finkenwalde. He had been impressed by intentional Christian communities in England but

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70 Bonhoeffer states that God is free not from human beings but for them. See, *Act and Being*, p90-91.
71 See *We Shall Rebuild*, p92.
72 *Coracle*, No. 1, p12.
wanted to nurture a community for worldly engagement. He wrote to Karl Friedrich:

The restoration of the church will surely come from a sort of new monasticism which has in common with the old only the uncompromising attitude of a life lived according to the Sermon on the Mount in the following of Christ. I believe it is now time to call people to this.\textsuperscript{73}

Finkenwalde was not to be a retreat from the world. Christians belonged 'not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the midst of enemies. There they find their mission, their work'.\textsuperscript{74} And it was not to be a community of the elite. The cost of discipleship learned in the community was to be available to the whole Church. Bonhoeffer argued that in the past:

The expansion of Christianity and the increasing secularisation of the church caused the awareness of costly grace to be gradually lost. The world was Christianised; grace became common property of a Christian world. It could be had cheaply. But the Roman church did keep a remnant of that original awareness. It was decisive that monasticism did not separate from the church and that the church had the good sense to tolerate monasticism. Here, on the boundary of the church, was the place where the awareness that grace is costly and that grace includes discipleship was preserved ... Monastic life thus became a living protest against the secularisation of Christianity, against the cheapening of grace.\textsuperscript{75}

But, continued Bonhoeffer:

because the church tolerated this protest and did not permit it to build up into a final explosion, the church relativized it. It even gained from the protest a justification for its own secular life. For now monastic life became the extraordinary achievement of individuals, to which the majority of church members need not be obligated ... the mistake was that monasticism essentially distanced itself from what is Christian by permitting its way to become the extraordinary achievement of a few, thereby claiming a special seriousness for itself.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{73} Letter to Karl Friedrich, dated 14\textsuperscript{th} January 1935, in A Testament to Freedom, p 424.
\textsuperscript{74} Life Together, p27.
\textsuperscript{75} Discipleship, p46-47.
\textsuperscript{76} Discipleship, p47. A similar analysis is found in T. P. Rausch, Radical Christian Communities, p187 ff.
Finkenwalde was to be ‘a place of the deepest inward concentration for service outside’\(^77\) not a secluded monastery wherein was found a *collegium pietatis*\(^78\) who could claim a ‘special meritoriousness’ for themselves. But while the seminary experimented with the potential of a new monasticism within Christendom, Bonhoeffer’s understanding of worldliness during this period was predominately negative. While his world was not one to be renounced and forgotten, it was one with which Christians were ‘to engage in a frontal assault’,\(^79\) ‘conquering territory for Christ’.\(^80\) He argued that the Finkenwalde community must follow Luther’s example and return to the world, not because the world merited affirmation but because Luther’s action in rejecting a specialised monastic endeavour represented ‘the sharpest attack that had been launched on the world since early Christianity’.\(^81\) ‘What had been practiced in the special, easier circumstances of the monastic life as a special accomplishment now had become what was necessary and commanded for every Christian in the world’.\(^82\)

This antithesis to the world had not always been so clear to Bonhoeffer nor did it prove to be long lived. His youthful theology contained an oscillating mix of positive and negative attitudes to worldliness\(^83\) but he believed that Christians who evaded the earth to find God found only themselves. The Church was not ‘a consecrated sanctuary, but the world, called by God to God’\(^84\) and anyone who would leave the earth and depart from her present distress lost their connection

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78 Bonhoeffer argued that, ‘life together under the Word will stay healthy only when it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society, a *collegium pietatis* but instead understands itself as being part of the one holy, universal, Christian church, sharing through its deeds and suffering in the hardships and struggles and promise of the whole church. *Life Together*, p45.
79 *Discipleship*, p244.
81 *Discipleship*, p48.
82 *Discipleship*, p48.
83 For a discussion on Bonhoeffer’s historical understanding of the world see Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p99 ff.
84 *No Rusty Swords*, p154.
with the eternal and mysterious forces of God.\textsuperscript{85} At Finkenwalde he was less optimistic about finding God in the world and understood the Christian community to be akin to ‘a sealed train passing through foreign territory’.\textsuperscript{86} At that time the world was dominated by Nazism and so it is perhaps ‘not surprising that in many of Bonhoeffer’s assessments of the world, anything that could encourage church leaders in their facile incensing of the Nazi altar was avoided in favour of a more counter-cultural perspective’.\textsuperscript{87}

However even at this time there are fragments of a more positive appreciation of the world. He spoke of Christians who are so certain of their ‘heavenly citizenship’\textsuperscript{88} that they are truly free to ‘live in the world without losing themselves in it’.\textsuperscript{89} But this was only possible in the world. While the goal of early monasticism was to know and to be known by God, it often became an exercise in discovering the true self. This goal can only be realised through a series of encounters with the otherness of God, and the otherness of the world; with creation in general and people in particular.\textsuperscript{90} Each fresh encounter brings into sharp relief the new boundaries of the other’s otherness and the boundary of a person’s own self. For the individual to exist at all Bonhoeffer argues that such “others” must necessarily be there.\textsuperscript{91} The otherness of every human encountered becomes ‘an image of the divine You’.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, Christians do not simply need other Christians to be the bearers of Christ’s otherness, but, the

\textsuperscript{85} No Rusty Swords, p47.
\textsuperscript{86} Discipleship, p260. The allusion here is to Lenin’s passing through Germany on his way from Switzerland to Russia in 1917. The German audience would have been aware of sealed trains travelling through the ‘Polish corridor’ to East Prussia during the 1920s.
\textsuperscript{87} Editor’s Introduction to Discipleship, p16. But see Willmer’s argument that Discipleship and Life Together should not be thought of as political resistance literature. Haddon Willmer, ‘Costly Discipleship’, in The Cambridge Companion, p173.
\textsuperscript{88} The phrase ‘heavenly citizenship’, with its distinct echoes of Philippians 3:20 is the translation offered by the 1959 edition of Cost of Discipleship, p47. In the more recent translation by Barbara Green and Reinhard Kraus, the rendering ‘heavenly home’ is less evocative. See Discipleship, p55.
\textsuperscript{89} Discipleship, p55.
\textsuperscript{90} Alistair I. McFadyen has used the image of the ‘sedimentation of a significant history of relations’ as that which creates identity within the Trinity and thus creates identity in the humanity made in God’s image. So, ‘persons are a manifestation of their relations, formed through though not simply reducible to them’. See Alistair I. McFadyen, The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p40.
\textsuperscript{91} These assertions from Chapter 2 of Sanctorum Communio, remain at the core of Bonhoeffer’s thinking throughout his life. Sanctorum Communio, p52 ff.
\textsuperscript{92} Sanctorum Communio, p55.
community of the whole world becomes this epiphanal bearer. Responding to Christ's *cantus firmus* with counter-melodies of integrity requires 'a properly orientated individuality and a genuinely responding relation'. This results in a conformity to Christ which is forged amidst these 'dual moments of individuality and relation'. Such conformation to Christ can neither be an autonomous self-constitution nor a heteronymous imposition. And while monasticism rightly encouraged its adherents to pursue personal holiness by becoming more like Christ, its error was in understanding Christ-likeness as requiring separation from people and the otherness of the world. Christ is revealed in the world of which he remained both Lord and Saviour. Within the Iona Community, similar thinking was developing, particularly under the influence of John Macmurray's philosophy of persons in relation. He claimed that human life was inherently a common life and that the freedom offered to humanity in Christ is then the freedom from the false and inwardly focused relationships, perhaps especially, the religious self, preoccupied with personal and spiritual perfection.

**ENCOUNTERING EPIPHANIES IN THE WORLD**

Bonhoeffer adopted a more positive theology of the world in the final years of his life. This may have been in some part due to his work with *Abwehr*, beyond the immediate boundaries of the Church. In *Ethics* he refutes the Christendom dichotomy of secular and spiritual and argues that Christ is the 'one place in the world where God and human kind are at one'. Christ is Lord of the world as much as the Church and might be revealed in each. This is a new understanding of worldliness; all creation carries in it the possibility of epiphany and a potential performance of the melodies of Christ. In such Christianity, the humanity of the world is not only affirmed as being its fellow humanity, but is understood as the

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93 Alistair I. McFayden, *The Call to Personhood*, p58.
95 Historically monasticism had sought to counter the spirit of autonomous self-constitution through the vow of obedience. But often this replaced self-centred autonomy with the heteronymous authority of the abbot.
97 T. Ralph Morton notes Macmurray's importance to the early Iona Community as they too sought to hold faith and action together in life. *The Iona Community*, p54.
98 The quotation comes from a letter to Theodor Litt, cited in Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p139.
'sacrament of an encounter with God'.

Within this sacrament Christians ought not to try and be more spiritual than God himself by seeking to flee the world because it is in Christ that we see God and the world in one. The world that God loves is affirmed, not as an ideal world, with a perfect humanity upon it, but the real world, as it is, and as Christ is present in it. The Church, Christ existing as community, is no longer understood as a religious community of worshippers of Christ 'but Christ who has taken form among human beings'. It is 'nothing but that piece of humanity where Christ really has taken form', and so does not exist 'in order to fight with the world for a piece of its territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world'. In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world and allows us to share and participate in the melodies performed in that encounter. Thus the task for the 'worldly monastic' is to live before Jesus Christ in whom the world and God have come together, avoiding the misguided radicalism of the otherworldly isolation at the expense of this-worldly encounter and escaping the errant compromise of a this-worldly life lived bereft of any heavenly character. In this understanding of the world it is a false choice to be asked to ally oneself to either the world or Christ because that forces people to abandon one pole of the essential bisociation, either the reality of Christ or that of the world. Rather Bonhoeffer's worldliness asserts that, in Christ, there can be only one realm: in Christ the world is offered 'the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time', but not in the one without the other. As MacLeod asserted: 'In the light of the Incarnation, nothing is secular', but added that we need to 'handle each paper token of the seeming secular and hold it till we see its true value in

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100 *Ethics*, p82.
101 *Ethics*, p96.
102 *Ethics*, p97.
103 *Ethics*, p63.
105 Bonhoeffer argues that if forced to choose between 'wanting Christ without the world or the world without Christ', humanity either deceives itself or tries to stand in both realms at once and thereby becomes people in eternal conflict. See *Ethics*, p58.
106 *Ethics*, p55.
the light of the glorified humanity.'\textsuperscript{107} This engaged process is vital for community because as Gorringe notes,

\textit{there is no pure meeting with the Thou ... there are only meetings mediated through the awkwardness of families, places of work, schools, churches, across sexual, racial and class divides, full of tensions, dislikes and misunderstandings.}\textsuperscript{108}

He adds,

\textit{When community is understood in terms of this process then it becomes 'sacramental' in the Augustinian sense of being a means or channel of 'grace', a mediator of the forgiving, healing, restorative power of God.}\textsuperscript{109}

In \textit{Letters and Papers from Prison}, Bonhoeffer developed his understanding of the world further,\textsuperscript{110} arguing that worldly / human love and heavenly / divine love cannot and should not be either collapsed into one nor kept apart from each other because together they are undivided and yet distinct, and thus comprising 'the polyphony of life'.\textsuperscript{111} That which is of heaven does not 'injure or weaken' that which is in the world, but rather provides the \textit{cantus firmus} around which the melodies of a fully earthly life may be gathered in counterpoint.\textsuperscript{112} In an illuminating letter to Bethge he asserts this positive theology of worldliness:

\textit{Redemption now means redemption from cares, distress, fears and longings, from sin and death, in a better world beyond the grave. But is this really the essential character of the proclamation of Christ in the gospels and by Paul? I should say it is not. The difference between the Christian hope of resurrection and the mythological hope is that the former sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way which is even more sharply defined than it is in the Old Testament. The Christian, unlike the devotees of the redemption myths, has no last line of escape available from earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal, but, like Christ himself ('My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'), he must drink the earthly cup to the dregs, and only in his doing so is the crucified and risen Lord with him, and he crucified and risen with Christ. This world must not be prematurely written off.}\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Only One Way Left}, p161.


\textsuperscript{109} T. J. Gorringe, \textit{Discerning Spirit: A Theology of Revelation}, p74.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p280-2.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p303.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p303.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p336-337.
Here Bonhoeffer replaces Christianity's aversion to the world with a critique of religiosity and a positive theology of worldliness. He does so by reasserting the balance of heaven and earth that is uniquely found in Christ. The task of the Christian is to learn how to responsibly participate in performing these melodies of Christ in the world.

George MacLeod had come to similar conclusions in 1948. He asked;

*What really is the gospel?*

*Is it really the declaration of a spiritual world over against a material world?*
*Is it really that this physical world is a vale of woe, and we must keep our spirit clean so as to bear up in it and finally find freedom in heaven?*
*Is it that this material world is doomed to destruction, but there is a way of escape even in this life, and happy are they that find it?*

*Is it that the physical, the earthly, is of very passing account whether it be physical bodies, or physics or bodies politic, and that matter does not matter, while spirit matters everything?*

*I just cannot find it in the Bible. What I find in the Bible – which differentiates our faith from all other world religions - is precisely that God is to be found in the material. And that He came to redeem man, soul and body. The Gospel claims the key to all material issues is to be found in the mystery that Christ came in a body, and healed bodies and fed bodies, and that he died in a body, and rose in a body: to save man body and soul.*

The Christian community must therefore adopt an accountable and communal discipline that embraces the worldliness of life and calls it into relationship with heaven. And if the Christian community is to offer plausible structures in which such discipleship can happen then as Andrew Walker notes, it will require something akin to ‘the monastery, the religious community and the sect’.

In the pre-Constantinian Church, such discipline began in the catechumenate, a discipleship programme that socialised pagans into the alternative values of

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114 George MacLeod, a sermon entitled; ‘The Church in the Modern World’, cited in Daily Readings, p60.
gospel living. It was often analogised through the Greek concept of ‘askesis’, a term employed for the training of athletes.\(^{116}\) A spiritual askesis nurtured Christians in resisting the original temptation to place themselves in the centre of existence. Communities who resist this temptation affirm Christ at the centre of their Church and world, in their work and their worship.\(^ {117}\) Peterson argues that ‘the most conspicuous construction of a workable askesis is the monastery.'\(^ {118}\) And while he is writing primarily in terms of a discipline for Pastors, only a slight variation of vocabulary is needed to render his reflections applicable to all Christians. He writes, ‘pastors [Christians] are not monks and do not live in monasteries’ but ‘the only substantial difference between the monks’ monastery and the pastor’s parish [to which we might add the Christian’s place of daily activity] is that the monastery has walls and the parish [or again, the daily place of interaction] does not.’\(^ {119}\) But, continues Peterson, ‘walls are not the critical factor in either praying or not praying. What is critical is an imagination large enough to contain all of life, all worship and work as prayer, set in a structure (askesis) adequate to the actual conditions in which it is lived out.’\(^ {120}\) Peterson’s imagery of a ‘monastery without walls’ echoes Pannikar’s idea of the ‘monk to all the earth’ and clearly assumes that the radical discipline of monasticism can be reconfigured in a this-worldly way. For as Nicholas Lash has noted:

\begin{quote}
If, in thirteenth-century Italy, you wandered around in a coarse brown gown, with a cord round your middle, your ‘social location’ was clear: your dress said that you were one of the poor. If, in twentieth-century Cambridge, you wander around in a coarse brown gown, with a cord round your middle, your social location is curious: your dress now says, not that you are one of the poor, but that you are some kind of oddity in the business of ‘religion’. Your dress now declares, not your solidarity with the poor, but your amiable eccentricity.\(^ {121}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{116}\) See I Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-15; II Tim. 2:1-13 and Heb. 12:1.

\(^{117}\) Michael Riddell notes that the Church’s widespread inability to resist cultural pressures such as individualism and consumerism is due in large measure to failures in worship and community. He argues that if a community is to be Christian then it must be one which coheres around the crucified Saviour whose challenge to societal values resulted in his death; it must, claims Riddell be a community of resistance. See Michael Riddell, Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the Post Christian West, (London: S.P.C.K., 1998), p154-155.

\(^{118}\) Eugene H. Peterson, Under the Unpredictable Plant, p98.

\(^{119}\) Eugene H. Peterson, Under the Unpredictable Plant, p98.

\(^{120}\) Eugene H. Peterson, Under the Unpredictable Plant, p98-99.

\(^{121}\) Nicholas Lash, Theology on the Way to Emmaus, p54.
But the monastic vocation if understood as a universal archetype for the longings of all humanity means that the values of monasticism can be and ought to be adopted by all people, not simply a religious elite.

The three disciplines of western monasticism were the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience,122 understood as the responses to 'worldly' values of money, sex and power.123 Property was forsaken through poverty, sex was renounced in celibacy and personal will was relinquished in obedience. As H. A. Williams noted in a Cambridge sermon:

Most [people] will probably have preconceived notions of what poverty, chastity and obedience mean. If so, you will almost certainly regard them as negative, kill-joy qualities by which tight-arsed old maids of both sexes try to stifle the life which is in you. Poverty, chastity and obedience, it is true, have sometimes, perhaps often, been presented in those terms because they have misused as weapons against life by those who have been too cowardly (only they think it too virtuous) to go out and try to get a life. But it would be a pity to allow poverty, chastity and obedience to remain the illegitimate preserves of cowardly stay-at-homes, and to conclude that there was nothing more to them than those craven caricatures. For, properly understood, they are the breath of life itself.124

These vows need not be the traditional 'no' spoken against a world perceived as being evil. They can be enjoined to heaven's emphatic 'yes' to the world in Christ and his calling to the Church to live as alien citizens.125 Then any 'no' that is spoken against the world is only uttered in the name of a greater 'yes' for this-worldliness. Diarmuid O'Murchu is critical of the destructive reductionism and supercilious perfectionism that has virtually stripped the traditional vows 'of all

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122 To this is often added the vow of stability. In the Benedictine tradition the vow of stability has accompanied those of obedience, and conversatio morum (a vow which essentially involves an openness to ongoing conversion in one's life to the monastic way).
123 Richard Foster makes this specific parallel in Money, Sex and Power, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), p2-12.
sense of global and earthly engagement’. He proposes their reappraisal within a framework that affirms the greater ‘yes’ to the world. He writes that,

*those called to live the vowed life are the recipients of a vocation that belongs to all God’s people, even to those who have no explicit faith in God ... to live out more deeply the values that all people yearn for ... values ... which relate to the human search for meaning.*

Christians accepting the responsibility of performing the melodies of these vows would then not regard themselves from a religious point of view, as specially favoured, but rather as belonging wholly to the world. They would be calling the world to realise its true worldliness, understanding the world, as Bonhoeffer once suggested, better than it understands itself. They would do so in a new polyphony of poverty, chastity and obedience that was re-interpreted for the world, an askesis that could be practiced by those who do not choose to live in a permanent residential community, who have jobs and receive income from them, who are sexually active, who have to make decisions amidst the this-worldliness of life.

The traditional vows offer a suitable access point to such an askesis. They arose in direct response to abuses of money, sex, and power in Christendom. Such abuse was usually a male preserve and it is clear that through the centuries many women appreciated the vows for different reasons. Their understanding of poverty, chastity and obedience cannot be simply elided with male interpretations: for many the vowed life offered liberation from patriarchy. However, as Richard Foster notes, these issues are inseparably intertwined throughout history and were often made manifest as power. Sex is used to acquire both money and power, and power is often called ‘the best aphrodisiac’. These are the false-gods of this world; expressions of ‘The Powers’ that dominate the world and stand in opposition to the Reign of God. They need to be unmasked as such, named, engaged and redeemed to their true

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126 Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience*, p68.
purpose under the Lordship of Christ. To do so, Foster suggests that the
traditional vows be developed into disciplines of simplicity, fidelity and service.
In a similar, but more radical endeavour, O'Murchu begins by changing the
preposition of monastic choice from 'of' (vows of poverty, of chastity and of
obedience), in favour of vows 'for'. Echoing the insight of Bonhoeffer’s dictum
that God is not free from the world but free for the world, O'Murchu argues
that 'of' is a word that indicates how something is defined in terms of its
boundaries (a glass of water) whereas the word 'for' has 'echoes of freedom,
creativity, initiative, possibility, exploration, search and the expansion of
horizons'. It denotes 'movement, action, growth, change and possibility, but
not necessarily an eventual outcome'.

Thus rather than a vow of poverty, which sought to detach itself from the this-
worldliness of property, the Christian community might adopt a new vow for
mutual sustainability in the face of global consumerism. Such a vow would
accept the responsibility for handling personal and collective wealth conscious of
both the blessings and dangers of that activity, acknowledging that the

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130 See Walter Wink’s work, Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament,
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine
Human Existence, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Engaging the Powers: Discernment and
Resistance in a World of Domination, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Wink does not specifically
identify money, sex and power as ‘The Powers’, of his work, but the way in which these three issues
integrate around idolatrous values to form a system of Domination, fits well with his analysis.

131 See Richard Foster, Money, Sex and Power, chapters 5, 9, and 13.

132 Diarmuid O’Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p28 ff.

133 Act and Being, p90-91.

134 Diarmuid O’Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p29.

135 Diarmuid O’Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p29.

136 Diarmuid O’Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p37.

137 Diarmuid O’Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p65 ff.

138 Foster refers to this as the dark and the light side of money. See Richard Foster, Money, Sex and
Power, chapters 2 and 3.
poverty of traditional monasticism might be achieved but still leave an individual imprisoned by nostalgia or envy.\textsuperscript{139} This askesis will constantly probe the ethics and extent of personal and corporate ownership, not just of money, but of other material resources as well. In developing this askesis the community affirms the tensions between the negative and the positive characteristics of wealth in the Bible and seeks to be present in the world that handles money without being controlled by it. As a positive value lived in and for the world this affirms that Christ is Lord of all the (limited) resources of the world.\textsuperscript{140} As such the Christian concern should not be about losing or acquiring these resources for themselves but ensuring that they are used for the benefit of all people.

In the mid 1980s, John Bell, Graham Maule, and voluntary staff of the Iona Community, experimented with such an askesis.\textsuperscript{141} They lived among the socially marginalized as mini-communities known as Columban Youth Houses.\textsuperscript{142} They lived in solidarity with the poor, living in the same accommodation, shopping in the same places and queuing on the same dole lines, with hopes of the same jobs. They sought to live less materialistic, simpler lives. In the midst of this they reflected:

\textit{It has been our own repeated experience that when we give up notions of ourselves as the "givers" to the poor and get close enough to be "receivers" from them, two things happen. One is that they discover that a value is being put on their lives ... the other ... is that we realise the poverty of our own experience, limited as it has been by the constraints of wealth.}\textsuperscript{143}

The vow of chastity / celibacy has for centuries fallen prey to that dualism that inferred that spiritual growth and bodily pleasure, particularly in sexual

\textsuperscript{139} H. A. Williams makes the point that I may own nothing and yet 'spend a great deal of my time either being jealous of people more affluent than myself, or lamenting the days when I was more affluent than I am now, and this would block rather than promote my growth into human selfhood.' H. A. Williams, \textit{Poverty, Chastity and Obedience}, p39-40.
\textsuperscript{140} H. A. Williams argues that, 'perhaps one of the greatest blessings God has bestowed upon this earth is to have made its resources limited.' H. A. Williams, \textit{Poverty, Chastity and Obedience}, p38.
\textsuperscript{142} In the late 1960s and 1970s the Jesus Movement practiced a similar project of communal living. See E. Plowman, \textit{The Jesus Movement}, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971).
\textsuperscript{143} John L. Bell and Graham Maule, \textit{Poverty, Chastity and Obedience}, p10.
intercourse, were incompatible. But Christ is Lord of body and spirit and offers an abundance of life in both. Both O'Murchu and Foster propose new disciplines of fidelity in human relationships, sexual or otherwise. Both note how the sexual act is rapidly usurping the place of God in the world by placing its self at the purported centre of human experience. This has focused humanity inwards, on the satisfaction of the individual's experience, often worshipping at altars of performance and conquest, but divorced from any relational context.

While this imagery may accord with the predatory sexual activity of some men and women in the West in the 21st century, it is not necessarily how others, in particular how many women, now and in preceding centuries will have experienced sex. However, it is still true that in a worldly monasticism, a vow for relational fidelity would place others at the centre of the human experience and thus, in otherness, find a locus for Christ. A commitment to such relational fidelity does not require the traditional celibacy: 'All believers – whether male or female, whether single, married, divorced, widowed or remarried - are called to fidelity in their sexual relationships'. Reinterpreting the vow of celibacy in terms of related faithfulness also moves the consideration away from purely sexual matters and into faithfulness to the calling placed by God upon an individual or a community.

In this endeavour there is the need for emotional and intellectual chastity as well as its physical expression. The first is concerned with Christians being faithful to their emotions, not being ruled by them but being honest about them before God and the world. The second is concerned with fidelity to our minds' ability to discern truth and authenticity. In this the language of Christianity must be faithful to the world in which it is being spoken and to the eternal God of whom it speaks. Bonhoeffer was aware that the Church of his time had cheapened its ancient language of 'reconciliation and redemption' and thus its earlier words

\[144\] Richard Foster, *Money, Sex and Power*, p151.
were now 'bound to lose their force'.\textsuperscript{146} What was needed was a fidelity to language, history and present context.

The Columban Houses also reflected on what chastity meant in a worldly context. They agreed that the focus on sexual practice was an unhealthy narrowing of a discipline that was applicable to all of life.\textsuperscript{147} They embarked upon a refinement of life and a reassessment of the priorities revealed in their fidelity to themselves, others and God. This precipitated a deepening of personal relationships but also brought about job sharing or giving up work altogether, for others it meant deciding not to drive a car, or resolving to share their special skills or insights. For all it meant a review of leisure time, not always because they had too much of it but because many had none.\textsuperscript{148}

The vow of obedience stands in stark contrast to the lust for power that pervades the world from school playgrounds to the U.N. and from Trans-national Corporations to Church leaderships. Power is routinely misused so that instead of sharing strength and setting people free to live abundant lives it is used to divide and conquer. So endemic is this that Foster comments, 'The very idea of somebody – anybody – having any kind of say in our lives runs so counter to everything in our society that anger and even hostility is our almost automatic response'.\textsuperscript{149} What is then required is an askesis that nurtures an alternative and Christ-centred obedience as the automatic response. The monastic vow of obedience was designed to show the desire of a Religious to exemplify a Christ-like laying down of self-will\textsuperscript{150} emptying him / herself and becoming an obedient servant.\textsuperscript{151} However the obedience revealed in the Son of God was not the result

\textsuperscript{146} Letters and Papers, p300.
\textsuperscript{147} John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, p11 ff.
\textsuperscript{148} John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, p15-16.
\textsuperscript{149} Richard Foster, Money, Sex and Power, p10.
\textsuperscript{151} See Phil. 2:1-11. See Chapters 5 and 68 of the Rule of Benedict (p299-300 and p335) for how a monk is to respond when instructed to complete an impossible task. While he is allowed to explain his inability to carry out the command to the superior, if the superior insists then the monk is to obey and trust to God for help. In fairness, Benedict’s Rule exhorts the Abbot to not act harshly, striving to be loved rather than feared and to receive advice from other monks but he is not to be bound by their counsel.
of a divine diktat from the Father, but was rather the collaborative result of freely made decisions within the life of the Trinity. To construe Christ's obedience without acknowledging the collaboration in God misunderstands how and why God become flesh. Christ gave himself to the world because of love, not out of blind submission or required service.\textsuperscript{152} The traditional vow of obedience risks missing this distinction. Monasticism did not replace the societal hierarchies of Christendom with a communal structure of service but rather retreated from the world and then replicated its power structures within the monastery. Bonhoeffer believed that voluntary service to one another, bearing others in their freedom, could take the place of the vow of obedience.\textsuperscript{153} In the post-resurrection world, obedience ceases to be about submitting our will to a higher authority ... 'but about exploring and proffering ever new ways to engage responsibly, collaboratively, and creatively with the issues of power and powerlessness that we encounter in daily life'.\textsuperscript{154} 'Obedience' becomes a discipline for 'mutual collaboration'\textsuperscript{155} with God humanity and creation.

In reinterpreting obedience for a this-worldly context the Columban Houses were led to affirm the communal nature of their faithfulness to God. Communal discernment and mutual accountability were in contrast to the prevailing individualism of contemporary society. The praxis was unpacked in each micro-community in which four people shared a common lifestyle, domestic tasks, local responsibilities, Church activity, devotional life and personal development. This placed privacy in a communal environment and presented the challenge of accepting responsibility for others. It meant having to admit their failures in obedience both to God and to others. That in turn meant taking seriously the promise of forgiveness declared by God and the community each day. Critically they came to realise that no community would ever be perfect. Bonhoeffer also

\textsuperscript{152} Richard Foster reinterprets the traditional vow of obedience as a vow of service. However, he does so with nuanced care, noting that the obedience of Christ flows not from hierarchical status but intimacy with the Father. However he does sufficiently emphasise the participative collaboration that the Church enters into by being Christ existing as community in the world. See p228 ff.
\textsuperscript{153} Life Together, p100 ff.
\textsuperscript{154} See Diarmuid O'Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p16.
\textsuperscript{155} Diarmuid O'Murchu, Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience, p88 ff.
realised the impossibility of perfection in community. As he wrote from Finkenwalde:

*On innumerable occasions a whole Christian community has been shattered because it has lived on the basis of a wishful image ... But God’s grace quickly frustrates all such dreams. A great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves, is bound to overwhelm us as surely as God desires to lead us to an understanding of genuine Christian community. By sheer grace ... God will not permit us to live in a dream world even for a few weeks and to abandon ourselves to those blissful experiences and exalted moods that sweep over us like a wave of rapture ...*

Only that community which enters into the experience of this great disillusionment with all its unpleasant and evil appearances begins to be what it should be in God’s sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this moment of disillusionment comes over the individual and the community, the better for both.156

Those living in the Columban houses did not take formal vows of poverty, chastity or obedience, but they did try and live the values behind those vows in the world and for the world.157 In their own way and context, they had captured something of the essence of Bonhoeffer’s hope for the Church of the future, sharing ‘in the secular problems of everyday life, not dominating but helping and serving’158, and never under-estimating ‘the importance of human example’.159

They were a group hidden in the midst of the world, with nothing to distinguish them or their home from the surrounding culture except the nature of their living which was shaped by a rhythm of regular worship, reflection and involvement in projects within the wider community.

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156 *Life Together*, p35. An example of this disillusionment is given by Kathy Galloway recalling a similar community in an inner city housing scheme in Edinburgh in the 1970s. With the community in disarray there arose a critical moment when they realised that must live with ‘the community we actually had and not with our agenda for community’. See Kathy Galloway, ‘Put Your Hand in my Side’, in Maxwell Craig, ed., *For God’s Sake ... Unity: An Ecumenical Voyage with the Iona Community*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1998), p14.


159 *Letters and Papers*, p383.
This type of worldly askesis is incorporated in various ways in the disciplines of the Iona Community, particularly in their reinterpretation of stability. The concept of stability lay at the core of Benedictine monasticism. It required the Religious to commit to the same place and community for the remainder of their life. This was designed to empower the life of continual conversion and offered a communal accountability to that process. The holiness envisaged by Benedict is inseparable from the common life with others as governed by the Rule; thus the workshop of Rule and Common Life becomes the very stability of the community.

The Iona Community share such a vision as part of their daily office, but extend the boundaries of the workshop beyond their neo-monastic community to include the presence and handling of these tools within the world. The prayer says,

> O Christ the Master Carpenter, who at the last through wood and nails purchased our whole salvation, wield well your tools in the workshop of your world so that we who come rough hewn to your bench may here be fashioned to a truer beauty of your hand.\(^{160}\)

In this way the community becomes the workshop wherein Christians learn to handle the tools of spiritual askesis,\(^{161}\) and as Rowan Williams notes, for the seasoned worker such tools become the 'extension of the hand',\(^{162}\) and the performance of a worldly askesis becomes for the Christian 'an extension of their bodies and words that they no longer notice'.\(^{163}\)

Accountability remains important in the this-worldly expression of a new monasticism. Bonhoeffer emphasised the need for each member to 'bear the burden of the other, tolerating the reality of the other's creation by God -

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\(^{160}\) Iona Abbey Worship Book, p19.


\(^{162}\) The allusion to the tools of the seasoned worker comes from Simone Weil. See Rowan Williams, God's Workshop.

\(^{163}\) Rowan Williams, God's Workshop.
affirming it, and in bearing with it, breaking through to delight in it'.\textsuperscript{164} He acknowledged that there were times when the community must ‘admonish one another to go the way Christ bids [them] to go’.\textsuperscript{165} For ‘nothing can be more cruel than that leniency which abandons others to their sin’ and ‘nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin’.\textsuperscript{166} But valuable as such bearing one another is, few people in today’s mobile world seek such accountability in a traditional monastic community. However a community Rule such as that practiced by the members of the Iona Community can provide a stabilising askesis appropriate for a this-worldly discipleship. Members find a stability in their practice of a common askesis provided through the Rule. Indeed Norman Shanks, a former leader of the Iona Community, draws specific attention to the attraction exercised by the Community’s Rule in offering members the ‘possibility of discipline in highly pressurised lives’.\textsuperscript{167} In such a community not all members express their askesis in an identical fashion, for there will be a polyphony of as many countermelodies as there are personalities and contexts of expression. But still there is a unity through the Rule.

The goal of Iona Members is not the traditional vowed life itself, or indeed the purity of the Rule, but the performance of a polyphonic counterpoint that bears witness in the world as to how the Church and world might be if Christ were allowed to truly take form within it. From the beginning MacLeod argued that the Iona Community was:

\textit{an exceedingly calculated movement within the normal purpose of the Church. Poverty is not our aim, far less is the principle of Celibacy involved. Those who come here will claim no “sacrifice”; we only claim a privilege to make perhaps the sacrifice of those who work in really difficult places a little less acute.}\textsuperscript{168}

And a mark of the Community’s ‘worldliness’ was detected from the beginning;

\textsuperscript{164} Life Together, p101.
\textsuperscript{165} Life Together, p104.
\textsuperscript{166} Life Together, p105.
\textsuperscript{167} Iona - God’s Energy, p65.
\textsuperscript{168} Coracle, No, 2, p18.

\textbf{Melodies of Community}
Evening Worship on that first night in the half light of a dying day was our first confirmation that the thing would go on. Some folk from the island, visitors and residents, came and by their presence there symbolised, from its very inception, the truth that this was no "community apart" but an experiment within the world community as it is.  

Although Iona members have never taken vows of poverty, chastity or obedience, they have in the Rule a common and worldly discipline that seeks to express the values of simplicity, fidelity and service and to do so in way that reveal how 'work and worship, prayer and politics, sacred and secular' are all one under the Lordship of Christ.

As noted earlier the Rule begins with a commitment to daily devotions, requiring Bible reading, prayer and intercession for named Community members, areas of concern and countries around the world. The same prayers are included in the act of worship each morning in Iona Abbey.

The second melody of the Rule deals with accountability in personal economics. MacLeod and the Community knew how easy it was for the Church to preach about the responsible use of money. They also knew how difficult it was to achieve in practice and how easy it was to avoid examination by others. Lex Miller joined the Community in 1943 and developed an Economic Discipline in which members committed give five percent of their income to the Church and five percent to the Community. An alternative devised by Jenny Morton was later implemented and the current Economic Discipline involves an agreement of individual 'baseline commitments, special circumstances and expenses' after which the accountability can be as rigorous and flexible as those involved choose to make it. However Miller's early work precipitated many searching discussions concerning personal finance and his influence has meant that the Community has never disregarded the accountability to one another for their use of money.

169 Coracle, No. 1, p6.
170 Ralph Morton subsequently wrote a book in which he explained the necessity for some economic discipline to be adopted in the Church, see The Household of Faith, p114 ff.
A third 'melody' of the Rule is a member's commitment to account for their use of time. The genesis of this lay in the conversations between the first artisans and ministers to work on the Abbey reconstruction. The clergy conceded that unlike the craftsmen they were accountable to no one as to how they spent their day. Lazy ministers might delude themselves as to their industry while a workaholic pastor could leave no time for relaxation. The remedy was a discipline of accountability in which members are to plan their time 'in such a way that proper "weighting" is given, not simply to work, but equally to leisure, to time for family, to developing skills or acquiring new ones, to worship and devotion, to voluntary work - and to sleep!'\textsuperscript{171}

The importance of this askesis was noted by Ralph Morton:

\begin{quote}
The determining factors in any discipline, especially for a group of men [sic] who have not given up their individual responsibilities in family, work and society, are the use of time and money. We see this from the two unanswerable excuses that people give: "I haven't the time" and "I can't afford it." For time and material possessions are the only things that are ours to use. Our use of them determines how we live. In a convent or a religious order use of time and money is taken care of. In secular life they are matters of thoughtless convention or of everyday decision. In the discipline of a society like the Iona Community they must always remain central and matter for unending discussion.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

Attendant on this accountability was the discipline of meeting together in localised Family Groups and together in plenary. The Family Groups (comprising between 7 and 14 men and women of different ages and social backgrounds) usually meet monthly and each year the whole Community meet for 2 weekend plenary sessions and a 'Community Week' on Iona. Additionally, at the beginning of each year members return a 'With-Us' card indicating their on-going commitment to follow the Rule, together with a personal assessment of how they have maintained their discipline in the previous year.

\textsuperscript{171} This is in effect a 'chastity of time'.

\textsuperscript{172} See The Iona Community, p44-45.
In 1966 the Rule was expanded to include a commitment to work for peace and, as the Community realised that one could not be achieved without the other, it soon amended the Rule further to reflect a need to work for justice in the world. This is the most detailed aspect of the Rule and while it strives to offer a comprehensive praxis its most arresting provision remains the statement that: 'Our act of commitment on justice and peace is ... a point of departure. It will remain no more than a pious hope (and a false witness) unless we seek, separately and together, to put it into practice'.\textsuperscript{173} Norman Shanks comments that 'it is this commitment that in many people's eyes gives the Community its distinctiveness, in not just believing that peace and justice are "good things" but being prepared, within a framework of mutual accountability, to do something about it.'\textsuperscript{174}

The Rule, which addresses both the spiritual and the worldly, enables the Community to live out the tensions of alien citizenship in the Church and world. In so doing the Community becomes akin to a colony of heaven in the world, a metaphor that itself requires further investigation.

\textsuperscript{173} Rule of the Iona Community, see Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{174} Iona - God's Energy, p69.
chapter six:
the colony of heaven

But we are a colony of heaven, and we wait for the Saviour who comes from heaven, Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:20

Like Ulysses bound to the mast, Christians are freed from the lethal effects of the old songs of custom and idolatry and able to join in the harmony of the New Song, the harmony that ordered Creation and now brings the order of Redemption.

Rowan A. Greer

For if we are set upon being citizens here, we shall be so neither here nor there; but if we continue to be sojourners, and live in such wise as sojourners ought to live in, we shall enjoy the freedom of citizens both here and there.

John Chrysostom

But we might learn to like the Heaven, As well as our Old Home!

Emily Dickinson

The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing ... if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited ... Heaven is, by definition, outside our experience, but all intelligible descriptions must be of things within our experience.

C. S. Lewis

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2 Rowan A. Greer, Broken Light and Mended Lives, p146-147.
A further metaphor through which the character of Christian community might be understood is that of the 'colony of heaven'. Again this metaphor makes no claim to exclusivity and asks only that it be mixed with the other melodies of investigation adopted so far and gathered around Christ's polyphonic cantus firmus. But the colony of heaven does invoke an image of how the kingdom of God may be located upon the earth, how Christ is bisociated on earth as he is in heaven, how the Church participates in the melodies of God amidst the world.

THE BIBLICAL COLONY

The idea of the Church as a colony of heaven is noted in the New Testament, but despite this authority, it has not often captured the imagination of the historical Christian community. It seems to have been invoked first by Paul in his letter to the Philippians. There he exhorts the Church that 'if they have any encouragement from being united with Christ' then they should regard themselves as 'a colony of heaven'.6 Most English translations render this as an encouragement for the Church there to consider 'their citizenship to be in heaven' but Paul chooses the Greek word πολίτευμα (politeuma) to describe this 'citizenship relationship' between the earthly Christian Community and their belonging to heaven. The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament and while the translation of it into English as, 'citizenship' or 'commonwealth' is accurate it does not capture the contextual richness of Paul's deliberate choice of vocabulary.7 His use of politeuma is an appropriation of a term that owes its origins to the language of the socio-politics of the Roman Empire. The political

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imagery was deliberate;⁸ politeuma was used to describe an outlying colony of Rome. Philippi was such a colony,⁹ an ius italicum.¹⁰ The populations of such 'colony cities' were not made up of conquered peoples but instead housed Roman citizens, often retired soldiers who had, through service, earned their citizenship.¹¹ There were similar outposts of 'Little Rome' established throughout the Empire and their purpose was to establish centres of Roman custom and law.

J.C. Carlile notes that:

> The colonists ... reproduced the social order, the religion and all that came in their train as they existed in imperial Rome. The colony was a witness to something greater than itself. It was but a fragment, but it represented the whole. It possessed an importance not simply for what it was, but that for which it stood.¹²

If we think of each of the Roman colonies as a distinct refrain, we can see how it was possible to discern from them, the symphony of the Empire and the character of its cantus firmus. By referring to the Philippian Church as a 'colony of heaven', Paul encouraged the Christians at Philippi to draw positive parallels between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Empire. They were encouraged to participate in the performance of customs and freedoms that came not from

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¹⁰ ius italicum was the highest legal privilege obtainable by any provincial municipality and extended to its citizens identical rights and privileges to those born in the imperial capital. See further, Gerald F. Hawthorne, Word Biblical Commentary, 43: Philippians, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p170.
¹¹ A city of foreigners who were adopted under the standard of Rome after being subjugated was called a municipium, not a colonia. Philippi, a colony, was composed principally of Roman citizens, primarily military men and their families, who had fought bravely for Augustus during campaigns in the area. They were then transplanted to protect and defend the interests of Rome. See Ralph P. Martin, New Century Bible: Philippians, p147.
¹² J.C. Carlile, A Colony of Heaven, p3. William Barclay makes the same point, 'the great characteristic of these Roman colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome ... no matter where they were ... these colonies remained unshakably and unalterably Roman'. Barclay concludes 'wherever the Christian is, his conduct must prove that he is a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven'. William Barclay, The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians: The Daily Study Bible, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1961), p85-86.
Rome, but from heaven through Jesus Christ. As an alien colony, they were 'mandated to carry out the instructions of the home [i.e. heavenly] government' and, as with other colonies, this would often place them 'in tension and even open conflict with purely secular loyalties, methods and goals'.\(^{13}\) The authority for the colony did not come from the surrounding culture but from heaven. Colony living was a conscious witness to something both among and beyond its self: the Kingdom of heaven that had come among them in Christ and which paradoxically was yet to be fulfilled in the Parousia.\(^{14}\) The Christian colony would confess the 'now and not yet', character of living 'in but not of' the dominantly pagan world. So while the Roman colony maintained the *Pax Romana* in anticipation of receiving the Emperor, Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to analogous tasks: to propagate the peace and justice of heaven in anticipation of the return of Christ.

In adopting the metaphor of a colony, Paul may also have been drawing parallels to those who were part of the Jewish Diaspora scattered throughout Asia who were granted permission by the Romans to live:

> a more or less independent existence as small colonies surrounded by ethnologically different populations. He [Paul] knew that the Jews made up their politeuma wherever they settled and that they were permitted to live according to their own laws and follow their own religious practices.\(^{15}\)

Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon refer to Paul's colonial metaphor and draw specific lessons for the Christian community from its Jewish cousins:

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\(^{14}\) The phrase 'colony of heaven' draws Christian Community into an eschatological awareness that they belong 'both to a heavenly Church that is permanently in session and to a local Church that, though it meets regularly, is intermittent in character'. For further discussion on how the image of heavenly colony is related to the *ekklesia* metaphors of Colossian and Ephesian letters see Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p39-41.

\(^{15}\) Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary, 43; Philippians*, p171.
The Jews in Dispersion were well acquainted with what it meant to live as strangers in a strange land, aliens trying to stake out a living on someone else’s turf. Jewish Christians had already learned, in their day-to-day life in the synagogue, how important it was for resident aliens to gather to name the name, to tell the story, to sing Zion’s songs in a land that didn’t know Zion’s God.  

They develop the imagery arguing that:

A colony is a beachhead, an outpost, an island of one culture in the middle of another, a place where the values of home are reiterated and passed on to the young, a place where the distinctive language and lifestyle of the resident aliens are lovingly nurtured and reinforced.

However, Paul wants to make a definite theological distinction between the historical Jewish and the evolving Christian colonies. Hawthorne asserts that:

Paul believed that these Jews irrespective of what they themselves might have speculated about themselves, belonged only to colonies that were linked to Palestinian Jerusalem, earthbound, time bound colonies without any enduring quality. By contrast, he says that Christians are a colony of heaven, living here on earth, to be sure, but belonging to a heavenly city that is enduring.

So if Paul did have Jewish colonies in mind when writing to Philippi then he would have been keen to distance the Church from Jews who already thought of themselves as ‘a heavenly community on earth’ with no need for any ‘future hope’. In effect, by selecting the term ‘colony of heaven’, Paul specifically refutes any influence of those who might wish to collapse the bisociative and eschatological tension of living in the ‘now and not yet’, a tension that should in fact characterise the Christian colony. The citizens of Philippi knew that while the colony must remain distinctively Roman, it would nonetheless have to engage with the surrounding culture. Carlile argues that Paul’s image of the Church as

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colony will not tolerate a separatist *ekklesia* but rather notes that those in the colony are called to:

>a strenuous life, challenging the world for an ideal which had never been attained. They were the representatives of another order, the citizens of a better country, whose business it was not to flee from the sinful world, but to introduce into it a new way of life – a higher social state.*20

Hauerwas and Willimon agree but warn:

>To be resident but alien is a formula for loneliness that few of us can sustain. Indeed, it is almost impossible to minister alone because our loneliness can too quickly turn into self-righteousness or self-hate. Christians can survive only by supporting one another through the countless small acts through which we tell one another we are not alone, that God is with us.*21

It is to counter the isolation of ministering alone that Christians are called to belong in community, through small acts of encouragement to be together in the colony of heaven made manifest on earth. In the midst of a contemporary western culture that is not always attuned to melodies of God’s kingdom, the existence of the colony gives a place of belonging wherein Christ’s melodies may be repeated and affirmed.

**COLONIES AT FINKENWALDE AND IONA**

In an early radio broadcast, MacLeod specifically chose the image of the Christian colony to describe what he had been attempting on Iona with his experimental community.*22* In his book *We Shall Rebuild*, he argued that, ‘this or that local congregation ... is an embassy in an alien land, representing the dictates of the King to whose heavenly court we already belong’. He continued, ‘Like this world’s embassies, which used to be built actually on soil carried from the home country, our very Church buildings are, so to say, built on heavenly soil’.*23* Philip Yancey has attributed to Bonhoeffer the statement, ‘In the world

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*22* *Abundant Life*, p126.
*23* *We Shall Re-build*, p29.

Melodies of Community
the Christians are a colony of the true home’. But while Bonhoeffer may not have expressly adopted the metaphor for the Christian community he understood its character. For instance, he describes the Finkenwalde community, as a ‘peculiar people’ people who ‘cannot conform to the world because their concern is the peculiar, (περισσον), the extraordinary life that is found only in Christ.

While Bonhoeffer worked on the nature of community at Finkenwalde and MacLeod experimented with similar aims on Iona, they both recognised that the Christian colony was not so much about the place as it was about the people. The Community exists whether its members are gathered together or scattered apart because each individual belongs to Christ and participates in performing his polyphony. In each individual fragment, something of the greater whole and of its cantus firmus can be discerned. The colony has no fixed abode but the melodies of its people can for a time be gathered in one place; its purpose being to offer to God’s people, an outpost of heaven in the world. Gathering in this outpost brings into one space the fragmentated epiphanies of Christ that each person has encountered in their mix of work and worship. The colony is an earthbound locus in which the fragments of Christ’s epiphany come together as one.

There is an undoubted strength to be found in such a gathering. Together its people share in the ‘alien righteousness’ of Jesus Christ and participate and perform the melodies of Christian discipleship. The melodies of such alien righteousness do not transform humanity into the divine, but do take them up into the polyphony of the Christ who became human, and so enable them to be transformed into the fullness of human community. The benefit of gathering these melodies in the colony were readily apparent to Bonhoeffer who joined with the Psalmist in proclaiming: ‘How very good and pleasant it is when kindred

24 See Philip Yancey, What’s So Amazing about Grace? (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1997), p262. I have been unable to authenticate Yancey’s source.
25 Discipleship, p144.
26 Discipleship, p144.
27 See Ethics, p96.
live together in unity'.

However, the people who gather into the Christian colony do not do so simply to experience the unmediated joy of being together, or to escape there from the hazards of the world. The colony is established so that Christ may be known in the people, strengthening their hearts and minds, enabling them to participate in the melodies of heaven through times of isolation, vulnerability and attack. Such times are not only inevitable, but are an inherent part of being Christian. As Christ lives in the midst of the world, so Christians do not belong 'in the seclusion of a cloistered life' but ought to be found 'in the midst of enemies'.

At the Seminary in Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer and the students knew first hand about living amidst the enemy and how difficult it was to sing the Lord’s song in the foreign land of the Nazi regime. The Confessing Church was already under attack from the Third Reich and the support of the community was vital if Christians were to continue to perform the polyphony of Christ after they left the Seminary. Finkenwalde was to be a colony in which the melodies of heaven were reinforced. Bonhoeffer organised 'retreats' uniting the incoming seminarians with those who had just finished. He did so with the deliberate hope 'of influencing the spirit of the new candidates from the outset'. He dedicated a chapter of Life Together to the practice of living with others and bearing their burdens and sent regular letters to those who had left to enter ordained ministry. Even they were expected to gather together again. To be absent from the Seminary's reunion was almost inexcusable: Bonhoeffer wrote, 'I probably don't need to remind you that we committed ourselves to this meeting when we left one another ... whoever thinks he doesn't need to attend, please write me immediately so I can convince him that he does have to come'.

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28 Ps. 133:1 as cited in Life Together, p27.
29 Life Together, p27.
30 Bonhoeffer told his students that ‘Whoever does not want to be in community should beware of being alone’ and in the chapter entitled ‘The Day Alone’ carries the exhortation, ‘Whoever cannot be alone should beware of community ... If you do not want to be alone, you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community of those who are called’. Life Together, p82.
31 He organised five such retreats between April 1936 and June 1938. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p518.
32 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p517.
33 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p517.
The colony of Finkenwalde was always about preparing Christians to sing the melodies of God beyond its boundaries and in vicarious solidarity (stellverter) for the world. Bonhoeffer reminded his students that the Christian 'could not take for granted the privilege of living among other Christians' but even when scattered they would remain 'held together in Jesus Christ alone, having become one because they remember him in the distant lands, spread out among the unbelievers'. And as Christ had acted vicariously towards humanity and granted us an 'alien righteousness' so the Church, his body, was to continue to act vicariously on behalf of others; to do as a colony of people upon the earth as it is done by God in heaven.

The colony of the Iona Community served the same purpose. MacLeod reflected that for them, it was what was done in the city parishes, in the modern situation, that drew them together for a period on the island, 'to set our compass and intensively experience in Work and Worship the redeemed Community that we would preach'. So while during the summer months they celebrated how 'good and pleasant it was to live together in unity', for the rest of the year the community was geographically fragmented, each member detached from the others as lone voices seeking to perform the melodies of the colony in 'alien' parishes.

But the members were no idealised body of men living out a wishful image. They quickly experienced what Bonhoeffer refers to in *Life Together* as 'the great disillusionment', that moment which shatters each person's imagined perfections of a community. Such 'disillusionment' enables the members of a community to leave behind the dream of idealism and enter the reality that God is calling into being. The members of Iona became part of a true community as much in the

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35 Bonhoeffer specifically calls on the Reformer's term 'fremde Gerechtigkeit' to talk about an 'alien righteousness, ... a righteousness that comes from outside of us (extra nos)'. *Life Together*, p31, f.n. 10.
36 *We Shall Re-build*, p5.

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communal nature of their disagreements as in their prayers. Many of those disagreements were between its founder and the capable men who joined him in his experiment. MacLeod’s idealism dominated the Community in the early years and his dreams of uniting everyone behind ‘a demanding common task’ (usually one of his discerning) had to be balanced with the gentle and deeper reflection of Ralph Morton:

For we are not trying to build community. We can never do that. God sets us in community and it is man’s sin that he is always breaking it. God has set us in inescapable community, in our family, in our neighbourhood, in all the relationships with others that life brings.

Christian community is not an ideal to be realised, but rather a ‘reality created by God in Christ in which [the people] may participate’. The reality of participating in the performance of the music of community into which God had already called them remained the task of the colony members even as they were scattered throughout the parishes of Scotland. Each was an ambassador of Christ, a performer of his melodies and a member of the Christian colony. Years after founding the Iona Community, MacLeod specifically invoked the metaphor of the ‘colony of heaven’ to explicate his thoughts on the experiment:

Now (in earthly parable) we know the duty of an ambassador; it is to represent the King, to care for his nationals and to spread his country’s ideals in a foreign land. Equally we know the peculiar vantage of an embassy on foreign lands. It is recognised as a piece of British ground:

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37 Bonhoeffer criticised those who demand that their idealised community be fulfilled by God, others and by themselves. He wrote that such people ‘act as if they have to create the Christian community, as if their visionary ideal binds the people together. Whatever does not go their way they call a failure’, Life Together p36. It would not be inappropriate to suggest that these criticisms could, on occasion, be levelled at MacLeod. For all his vision, determination and pastoral sensitivity, MacLeod was undeniably autocratic and impatient and could quickly run roughshod over the opinions of others. The first member to leave the Community informed MacLeod that he should have called it ‘I own a Community’. See Chasing the Wild Goose, p63. Jack Kellett told MacLeod that his next book should be entitled, ‘Democratic Communities and how to run them’. See George MacLeod, p293. Other stories of MacLeod disregarding the voice of the Community include one where the Community voted for a green carpet whereupon he stayed up all night nailing down his preferred red one.


39 This is reiterated in Life Together, p38.
the foreigner cannot enter it: it is an island of home in the midst of an alien people. ... We are a colony of heaven; In the world but not of it; pledged to be the ambassadors of Christ.\textsuperscript{40}

Sustaining the melodies of the colony needed times of reflection and refreshment: occasions when the people might gather together the fragmented melodies of Christ's revelation in the life of world and Church. These were the times in which epiphanal melodies could be listened to, affirmed and participation in the purposes of God discerned. They facilitated accountability and encouragement in discipleship, acknowledging that it is only in this gathered colony of others that the epiphanal fragments could be woven into a polyphony of life that renews and sustains the members for their life as ambassadors of heaven engaging with the world.

Both Bonhoeffer and MacLeod realised the paradigm of Christendom was in decline. Institutional Churches of the West had imagined themselves not as a colony of resident aliens amidst a foreign land, but as co-rulers of the world, in co-operation with the benign power of states, co–governing a world of two kingdoms. But the State no longer welcomed the Church and the Church had too easily acceded ground to secularism accepting their role to be concerned with piety not politics. There was, as Bonhoeffer said, 'no ground under their feet'.\textsuperscript{41} The cultus of Christendom had been rendered faulty 'by the shifting subsoil of this evolving world'\textsuperscript{42} and as Karl Barth noted, 'what the world needed was not to be confirmed and strengthened by another variation of its own way, but to be pointed beyond it in unambiguous practice'.\textsuperscript{43}

It was the task of the colony to stand in deputyship for the world, in 'unreserved participation in its situation'\textsuperscript{44} and in unambiguous performance of heaven's

\textsuperscript{40} Abundant Life, p126.
\textsuperscript{41} Letters and Papers, p3.
\textsuperscript{42} George MacLeod, in a private paper to the Iona Cathedral Trustees in 1938, cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p52.
\textsuperscript{43} Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics 4.3.2. The Doctrine of Reconciliation, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), p779.
\textsuperscript{44} See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics 4.3.2. The Doctrine of Reconciliation, p773 ff. Bonhoeffer wrote that: 'Inasmuch as we participate in Christ, the incarnate one, we also have a part in all of humanity,
polyphony to direct the world toward its cantus firmus. But to do so there was a desperate need for some new theologically firm ground on which such a truly heavenly colony might be built. The Christian community needed to rediscover the cantus firmus, upon which his peculiar people might participate in the polyphony of Christ, performing the Lord’s song in an alien land. The Christian colony was divinely created through God’s revelatory action in Jesus Christ, concretely existing as a community located in humanity, with an ethical responsibility to be a realisation of the will of God. It is both a means to an end and an end to itself: it exists to do God’s will, while at the same time, is in itself a performance of that will: a perpetual and ontological epiphany of earth participating in heaven’s polyphony.

There is, of course, a danger that members of the Christian colony will misunderstand the purposes of heaven and seek to collapse the bisociative tension between heaven and earth, the ‘now and the not yet’, hoping to make concrete and audible on the earth, the extraordinary melodies of heaven. The jeopardy in this is that the Christian community then establishes boundaries that separate themselves from the world, boundaries that it must guard and protect. In detaching from the world the Christian community ceases to be a faithful witness to the world and can no longer act in vicarious responsibility for its people. In refusing to accept the tensions that exist in Christ’s bisociative belonging in heaven and the world, they absent themselves from both and are no longer aliens at all. The colony can no longer offer the fullness of life to the world because it is no longer relationally amidst its people. As Kcherside notes; ‘There is a difference in “the life of the church” and the community of the Life’. The Christian colony can be no more than that ‘part of humanity in which Christ has really taken form’. As Bonhoeffer concluded in his Ethics:

which is borne by him. Since we know ourselves to be accepted and borne within the humanity of Jesus, our new humanity now also consists in bearing the troubles and sins of all others. The incarnate one transforms his disciples into brothers and sisters of all human beings. ... [and] transforms the Church-community into the Body of Christ upon which all of humanity’s sin and trouble fall, and by which alone these troubles and sins are borne’. Discipleship, p285.


Ethics, p97.

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In Christ we are invited to participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, the one not without the other. The reality of God is disclosed only as it places me completely into the reality of the world. But I find the reality of the world always already borne, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God.  

Participating in the life of the Christian colony is then ‘the essential preliminary to Christian conduct ... (because it) enlivens the meaning of the two great duties that are demanded of Christians – our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbour’. Both duties are melodies that interact around the community’s confession of Christ as the cantus firmus, both of the Church and of the world.

The Church becomes the home of the colony of heaven; the embassy building of the King of Kings; the earthly home of God: and we, as ambassadors of Christ, assemble there from our work in the world, to proclaim our allegiance; to receive fresh instructions; and to go out into the alien world more conscious of our real citizenship.

CONFESSIONING CHRIST IN THE COLONY

For Bonhoeffer, the idea of the Church as a confessing people was a vital one. It was because of his confession of Christ that, in 1933, he was at the forefront of opposition to Nazi legislation that excluded those of Jewish descent from public office. He was among the first to realise that a Church that excluded the Jews could no longer be the Church: its boundaried exclusivity rendered illegitimate any claim it may have had to be a genuine colony of heaven. In July 1933, on the morning of Church elections in which the Deutsche Christen took control of key ecclesiastical positions, Bonhoeffer preached about the rock against which the gates of hell could not prevail and exhorted: ‘Let the church remain the church! But church confess, confess, confess! Christ alone is your Lord, from his grace alone you can live as you are. Christ builds’. In the critical time of September 1933, when many of the delegates at the General Synod of the Prussian Church appeared in Nazi uniforms and had endorsed the Aryan

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47 Ethics, p55.
48 Abundant Life, p127.
49 Abundant Life, p128.
50 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p272 ff.
51 ‘Peter and the Church Struggle’, in A Testament to Freedom, p216.

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legislation, Bonhoeffer wrote to Barth seeking advice concerning a *status confessionis* in Germany.\(^{52}\) Barth had previously argued that if the Church were to adopt the Aryan clause it would cease to be a Christian Church. Bonhoeffer was sure that the Aryan incursions had precipitated a *status confessionis*; a point at which Christians must confess their allegiance to Christ and their separation from the Nazi apostasy. Although Barth counselled that Bonhoeffer and others should wait until they were expelled, this marked the beginning of the Confessing Church in Germany.

And, drawing on the experience of that Confessing Church, John Howard Yoder has made a powerful argument for the *status confessionis* to represent a new and radical norm for the Church.\(^{53}\) Yoder claimed that while the early Church was a confessing one, two other forms of Church evolved under the Constantinian framework, namely the ‘activist church’ and the ‘conversionist church.’ Neither of these are an adequate witness to a people who seek to be a colony of heaven. Significantly, Hauerwas and Willimon draw on Yoder’s work for their own reflections on the Church as a colony of resident aliens.\(^{54}\) They note that the activist form of Church is ‘more concerned with the building of a better society than with the reformation of the church’, hoping to glorify God through the ‘humanization of social structures’ and encouraging its members to ‘join in movements for justice wherever they find them’.\(^{55}\) They distinguish this from the conversionist form of Church which, they suggest, argues that ‘no amount of tinkering with the structures of society will counter the effects of human sin. The sphere of political action is shifted from without to within, from society to the individual soul’.\(^{56}\) But, ‘Because this church works only for inward change, it has no alternative social ethic or social structure of its own to offer the world’... and degenerates into ‘a religiously glorified conservatism’.\(^{57}\)

\(^{52}\) Letter to Karl Barth, 9\(^{th}\) September 1933, in *A Testament to Freedom*, p389-390.


In reflecting on the nature of the Christian community as a colony of heaven, Hauerwas and Willimon argue for a confessing form of Church. This would not be 'a synthesis of the other two approaches ... [but] rather ... is a radical alternative ... that finds its main political task to lie, not in the personal transformation of individual hearts or the modification of society, but rather in the congregation's determination to worship Christ in all things'. As Barth similarly argued, Christ awakens them as a community to confess him and gives Himself to be known by the community so they may confess him.\(^{58}\)

In a critical passage Hauerwas and Willimon continue:

\textit{The confessing church, like the conversionist church so calls people to conversion, but it depicts that conversion as a long process of being baptismally engrafted into a new people, an alternative polis, a counter-cultural social structure called church. It seeks to influence the world by being the church, that is, by being something the world is not and can never be, lacking the gift of faith and vision, which is ours in Christ ... [it] seeks the visible church ... in which people are faithful to their promises, love their enemies, tell the truth, honor the poor, suffer for righteousness, and thereby testify to the amazing community-creating power of God. ... [it] has no interest in withdrawing from the world, but is not surprised when its witness evokes hostility from the world. ... This church knows that its most credible form of witness (and the most "effective" thing it can do for the world) is the actual creation of a living, breathing, visible community of faith.}\(^{59}\)

To be a colony of heaven, the Christian community must confess Christ and participate in the performance of the polyphonic life he calls into being. For as MacLeod suggested: 'The Christian does not primarily look at the world with its myriad problems, but concentrates on appreciating the man Christ Jesus. Only by appreciating Him ... will we see the world in a true perspective ... and to determine every action from His viewpoint.'\(^{60}\)

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58 See Karl Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics} 4.3.2. p796.
60 \textit{Abundant Life}, p125.
THE PROBLEM WITH THE COLONY

No one metaphor is ever sufficient to describe the Christian community and a colony of heaven is no exception. The negative associations that the word 'colony' shares with historical imperialism leave it weakened and even discredited among many. For the members of former colonies of nation states, the term can evoke memories of personal and cultural abuse through the wholesale imposition on them of an alien culture. (There was similar resentment on occasions from the indigenous islanders to the way in which MacLeod and the expanding 'Iona Community' colonised the island community). And however clearly we may articulate the difference between geo-political colonisation and the diametric theology of a community who seek only a place for themselves within a dominant culture that will always be alien to them, the negative historical associations will remain.

Moreover, Hauerwas and Willimon are right to note further unease with the metaphor when they say, 'to be a colony (of heaven) implies that God's people settle in, stake out a claim, build fences, and guard their turf'.\(^{61}\) They rightly fear that if the Church thinks in this way then it implies that the Church is 'somehow satisfied with (their) little corner of the world, (their) little cultivated garden of spirituality or introspection, or whatever crumbs are left after the wider society has used reason, science, politics or whatever other dominant means it has of making sense of itself'.\(^{62}\) Such an entrenched community, primarily concerned with preserving its boundaries can never be the colony of heaven. It cannot reserve some special place for God over and against the world. There can be no place to which it can withdraw from the world, rather it must become that piece of the world 'where Christ's taking form is proclaimed and where it happens'.\(^{63}\) The only boundary that separates the colony from the world is that which the world creates by refusing to listen to and participate in the melodies of God.

\(^{63}\) *Ethics*, p102. This was no new theology for Bonhoeffer; it is effectively a restatement of the theology of *Sanctorum Communio*, where he wrote; 'The Church is God's new will and purpose for humanity ... directed towards the concrete, historical human being'. *Sanctorum Communio*, p141.
So when Bonhoeffer argued that whoever knowingly separated themselves from the Confessing Church also separated themselves from salvation, it was not with the ambition of determining their boundaries. Rather, this asserts that when Christ takes form in the world, there is the colony of heaven. Those who do not wish to participate in its melodies draw boundaries against it from outside. To suggest that 'outside the Church there is no salvation' can only be construed as sectarian or exclusivist if predicated on Constantinian presumptions. These are that the Church should, as activists, change the world into being a place that is in agreement with itself, or, as conversionists, retreat from the world. But as Hauerwas notes, if the Church is faithful, then she always exists on foreign or alien ground. It will always point the world to the polyphony of Christ that is present in the midst of the now and calls to them from the beyond of the not yet. The purpose of the colony is to invite the world to root itself in the cantus firmus of Christ and participate in the performance of his polyphony of life.

The colony cannot remain static. The Christ whom they confess, is 'the beyond in their midst', he is 'a fast God' ... always before them and leaving as they arrive. As in the gospels, he is always on the move, a peripatetic pilgrim, whose every end is a beginning, and whose disciples were physically, mentally and spiritually trying to keep up with him. The incarnated Christ claimed that foxes had holes and birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. His disciples likewise became a nomad community with 'the beyond' at their centre. And a colony whose centre is always 'beyond' it, cannot stake out a claim, build fences, and guard their turf. This colony of heaven, this city of God, is a nomad city ... the civitas Dei peregrina. The colony will be in perpetual

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64 The Way to Freedom, p93-4.
68 See Matt. 8:20.
69 Augustine conceived the Church, militant and triumphant, as being a City of God and referred to those members of the City of God who are alive on earth at any time as the civitas Dei peregrina, the City of God on Pilgrimage among the ungodly. See R.W. Dyson, Editor’s introduction to Augustine:
pilgrimage. Christ will be their centre, but will simultaneously call them beyond the borders of their own experience and existence.

Such a colony can propose no permanence of melody for itself. It can have no long-term strategies for participating in the performance of Christ’s polyphony because the concept of strategy ‘postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats ... can be managed’. For pilgrims, there can be no boundaried location, any sense of place must reflect the life of a people caught up in a perpetual rhythm of arriving and leaving. The colony disavows any ambition of permanent settlement. Hauerwas’ work on the Christian colony notes with approval Michel de Certeau’s distinction between strategy and tactics in this regard. De Certeau argues that tactics are actions determined by the absence of a proper locus, where there is ‘no delineation of exteriority’ that ‘provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of the tactic is the space of the other, thus it must play on and with the terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power ... it is an art of the weak’. However, while the analysis offered by de Certeau is helpful in challenging the Christian colony to operate without a permanent geographic locus, the distinction only takes us so far. The colony is a people informed of heaven’s strategy but they perceive it only as through a glass darkly and are informed only in part. Nevertheless, fragments of heaven’s great apotheosis find a place in the melodies of time and space. In this way heaven does possess a strategy, a longing for its will to be done on earth, for a day to come when ‘at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’. The establishing of the Kingdom of Heaven is not the responsibility of the earthly colony. However, the

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1 Cor. 13: 9-12.

Phil. 2: 10-11.

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colony is required to share the fragmented epiphanies of heaven's melody in the here and now. The colony responds tactically to participate in the performance of Heaven's strategy. Only in Christ's cantus firmus are these melodies held in tension. The colony therefore exists as aliens who do not seek a place for themselves, but hope to reveal to the world the reality of itself wherein Christ has taken form.

In this way the colony:

*does not have a sight, or walls, or gates. It is not, like Rome, an asylum constituted by the "protection" offered by the dominating class over the dominated, in the face of an external enemy ... Instead of a peace "achieved" through the abandonment of the losers, a subordination of the potential rivals and resistance to enemies, the church provides a genuine peace by its memory of all the victims, its equal concern for all of its citizens and its self-exposed offering of reconciliation to enemies.*

The place of the Christian colony is its people. There is no fortified position, be it theological or geographical, to which one may point and say 'there is the colony of heaven'. The locus for heaven's epiphany is the people who share in the performance of Christ's polyphony and it cannot be restricted to any land, mountain, temple or other building. As humanity understands it, revelation comes primarily to people and through one person, Jesus Christ in particular. It is through their relationship with that person that the people of God become the place of God in the world.

And yet, as citizens of the colony come together, they do so in a geographical space: as the fragments of epiphany are shared between the community, they are gathered in a particular location. Over time this gathering space of the people becomes invested with a sense of place. Walter Brueggemann argues that:

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75 This point is made by Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 2001), p37.
Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. ... Whereas pursuit of space may be a flight from history, a yearning for a place is a decision to enter history with an identifiable people in an identifiable pilgrimage.  

A place, then, serves as a reminder of where the epiphanies of heaven have been manifest on earth. A theology that takes seriously the incarnation of Christ into spatially and temporally specific contexts must afford due import to an understanding of place. When there is an occasion of human participation in the performance of Christ's polyphony a space becomes a place: it becomes the 'home of being' where people have learnt to be fully present to God, to themselves and to the world. Such places are where the Christian colony is most keenly aware of the cantus firmus and of the contrapuntal melodies in which they are invited to participate in Church and world. They become 'holy sites', often because of their association with a particular person or community. But their existence and attraction generate a tension for the colony. How does a pilgrim colony honour place without returning to boundaries that encourage the community to settle in, stake out a claim and guard their turf?

If the community is continuing to participate in the performance of Christ's polyphony in a given place, then they and the 'hallowed' place will display two important characteristics: first, both it and the people gathered there will be possessed of a certain liminality, and secondly, they will be renewed in their sense of journey and pilgrimage.

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THE LIMINAL COLONY

Holy Places are revered because of their associations with people and events in which the boundaries of heaven and earth draw close together and the fragmented epiphanies of God can be heard most clearly. Perhaps no people group was so fascinated by this liminal encounter than the Celts who occupied parts of the British Isles from the fourth to tenth centuries. Among them was St. Columba the founder of the first monastic site on Iona. The Celts had an extraordinary sense that: "the other-world", of saints, the dead, angels, demons and God was close at hand.⁷⁸ The liminal edges between these worlds enveloped these people who had a keen awareness of the persistent ‘presence and protection of God’.⁷⁹ Nonetheless particular locations were considered to have a special quality of liminality. Their pagan ancestors had displayed a keen sense of the boundaries between the worlds of the material and the spiritual and often erected standing stones as the axis mundi, a linkage between the realm of the now and that of the beyond. When the Celts embraced Christianity the practice of using stones evolved into standing crosses that symbolised not only the locus of contact between heaven and earth, but also the place of Christ as the centre and source out of which all blessings would flow. The crosses were often a focal point around which the people gathered for worship and affirmed that Christ took form among them. Many such crosses were sited in the midst of a monastic community.

Ian Bradley has recently adopted the image of a colony of heaven to specifically describe these ancient Celtic monastic sites.⁸⁰ He asserts that the metaphor powerfully conveys; ‘the thin dividing line between the physical and the spiritual

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⁷⁸ Philip Sheldrake, Living Between Worlds, p46.
⁸⁰ Ian Bradley adds a cautionary note, arguing that ‘Because virtually all of our sources for this period, both written and archaeological, tend to come from monasteries, there is a danger of over emphasising its monastic character. We know virtually nothing of the Christian life that took place outside the monasteries, but that does not mean it did not exist or was insignificant’. Nevertheless he adds: ‘even among revisionist historians there is a general consensus that the monasterium was the key ecclesiastical institution in the British Isles until the development of parish Churches and territorial dioceses in the aftermath of the Norman conquest’. Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven: Celtic Models for Today’s Church, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), p2-3.
and the need to establish on earth places which speak of heaven'.

Such places are where the world becomes as it should be and at the same time, reveal the world as it is in reality. For the Celtic Christians, such as the monks on Iona, their community was just that: a colony of the world as it should be and a microcosm of the whole of society. So, while these monastic sites were physically enclosed, their boundary vellum was not established in order to shelter monks from the world, but to mark out an area that was to be regarded as the colony of heaven, existing for the world. It was a 'privileged space within which a particular vision of the world could be lived out'; a place wherein people participated in the performance of the polyphony of Christ. In such a place there existed:

> anticipations of paradise in which the forces of division, violence and evil were excluded. Wild beasts were tamed and nature was regulated. The privileges of Adam and Eve in Eden, received from God but lost in the Fall, were reclaimed.

The living out of this vision of an alternative world involved all the people who were brought within the enclosed space. It was not something that concerned merely the 'professional' ascetics. The Columbanian tradition, for example, believed that all people were called from birth to the experience of contemplation. So, 'monastic' enclosures were places of spiritual experience and of non-violence and also places of education, wisdom and art. Within the enclosures there took place, ideally speaking, an integration of all elements of human life, as well as all classes of human society.

Such places were open and inclusive of the surrounding society who understood the colony to be 'the way of being Church'. They socialised their members into coherent vision and praxis. This contrasts favourably with medieval and post-medieval monasticism of Europe whose boundaries were perceived 'as a means of protecting "spiritual persons" from everyone else'. The boundaries of these communities were seen as the demarcation point for those retreating from the world, a view that is depicted graphically in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and

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81 Jan Bradley, *Colonies of Heaven*, px-xi.
theologically critiqued by Bonhoeffer in *Discipleship*. Hugo's novel refers to 'the cloister filled with the black effulgence of death ... mouths closed, brains walled up, so many hapless intellects incarcerated in the dungeons of eternal vows'.

This is undoubtedly a negative caricature of monasticism that gives no credit to the genuinely deep spirituality of the cloister or to the charitable initiatives undertaken by such monastics. However, it does reflect a prevalent public (mis)conception of monasticism that Bonhoeffer also censures. He criticises communities who distanced themselves from what was truly Christian by exalting the extraordinary achievement of the few ... and allowing the 'humble work of discipleship' to become 'the meritorious work of the holy ones'. When the colony so excludes the world from its presence, then it ceases to be the colony of Christ. For if, as Gorringe suggests, 'a non-engaged God is no God' then a non-engaged colony is no colony of God. God is free not *from* the world but free *for* the world, and as such, the colony of God's Heaven must exist as the *stellverter* for humanity, to be free to act in deputyship for the world. It must be present in and to the world. The Celtic enclosures were consciously 'planted on earth to point as a sign and harbinger of the kingdom that was yet to come'. These were proleptic epiphanies of redeemed relationships whose colony was open to all and whose boundary paradoxically became a new centre. Bonhoeffer's Christology reflects a similar understanding:

*It all depends upon Christ being present to his Church as person in space and time ... Where does he stand? He stands pro me. He stands there in my place, where I should stand, but cannot. He stands on the boundary of my existence, beyond my existence, yet for me. That brings out clearly that*

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86 *Discipleship*, p46 ff.
88 *Discipleship*, p47.
90 'In revelation it is not so much a question of the freedom of God - eternally remaining within the divine self, aseity - on the other side of revelation, as it is of God's coming out of God's own self in revelation. ... It is a question of the freedom of God, which finds its strongest evidence precisely in that God freely chose to be bound to historical human beings and to be placed at the disposal of human beings. God is free not from human beings but for them'. *Act and Being*, p90-91.
91 Ian Bradley, *Colonies of Heaven*, p19.
I am separated from my "I", which I should be, by a boundary which I am unable to cross. The boundary lies between me and me, the old and the new "I". It is in the encounter with this boundary that I shall be judged. At this place, I cannot stand alone. At this place stands Christ, between me and me, the old and the new existence. Thus Christ is at one and the same time, my boundary and my rediscovered centre. He is the centre, between "I" and "I", and between "I" and God. The boundary can only be known as a boundary from beyond the boundary. In Christ man [sic] recognises it and thereby at the same time finds his new centre again. ...

Christ is also our centre when he stands, in terms of our consciousness, on our periphery... In the fallen world the centre is also the boundary.\textsuperscript{92} 

Christ now stands where the world should stand but cannot. He stands within the colony and in the new centre of heaven-redeemed relationships made proleptically present on earth. The heavenly colony exists to be as the world should be but cannot. These colonies are ‘thin places’ as MacLeod once described Iona, places where the line between creator and creation is ‘gossamer thin’ and the tension between the now and the not yet is palpable. In such places the melodies of heaven and earth can be heard in clear polyphony and the \textit{cantus firmus} is distinct. Everything within the boundary of such places is caught up into Christ’s capacious ‘boundarilessness’, where all things are reconciled to God through Christ and all boundaries collapse into Christ who is found both at the edge and in the centre. As such, the reality of the colony made possible through Christ is different from what we think of as natural communities, because as Rowan Williams notes, the Christian community is one whose limits are at the same time ‘the ultimate natural “limits” –“the ends of the earth.” The world we inhabit is the potential scope of the community that is created by relation to Jesus’.\textsuperscript{93} It is a boundariless reality and Christ’s presence at its centre means that he is also its limit and accordingly the judgement of humanity. But he is also the beginning of its new existence, its new centre.\textsuperscript{94} Indeed, in the colony humanity can learn to perceive themselves to be a border location. Here they cease to be the perpetual self-referent centre of existential

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Christ the Center}, p59-61. 


\textsuperscript{94} See \textit{Christ the Center}, p61.
investigation, but instead accept their creatureliness, affirming their limits and the unending Otherness of the Creator God who addresses them through Christ's epiphanal revelation. Here humanity must accept the liminality of its own creaturely existence, and the fact that the boundaries of such existence are located in and through Christ who also is their centre. This leads the colony into a new reality. For as Bonhoeffer notes:

*Jesus Christ does not encounter reality as someone who is foreign to it. Instead, it is he who alone bore and experienced in his own body the essence of the real and who spoke out of knowledge of the real like no other human being on earth ... As the Real One, he is the origin, essence and goal of all reality ...*

*Action in accordance with Christ is in accord with reality because it allows the world to be the world and reckons with the world as world, while at the same time never forgetting that the world is loved, judged and reconciled in Jesus Christ by God.*

This new reality of colony and world is as open and capacious as a fugue but it remains one in which the *cantus firmus* is clear. And Christ's *cantus firmus* beckons the colony to journey beyond itself and into pilgrimage toward a new reality of the fullness of humanity.

**THE PILGRIM COLONY**

The Celtic tradition within Iona not only helps us to understand the liminality of colony, but also the journeying *civitas Dei peregrine*. The epic journey was an important aspect of the Celtic pre-Christian tradition and pilgrimage was a favourite metaphor for how they later expressed a dynamic aspect of Christian discipleship.

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95 *Ethics*, p263-264.

As it has evolved, the term pilgrimage implies a deliberate journey to and from a place perceived to be sacred on account of its association with an epiphanal event. However, for the Celts, pilgrimage was ‘first and foremost an inner state of mind expressed in outward terms in a life of physical exile and journeying’.97 As the risk of genuine martyrdom declined, Celtic monks often sought a life of ‘white martyrdom’, a commitment to extreme asceticism, often involving a journey of permanent exile from their home.98 This deliberate forsaking of home was sometimes undertaken as a penalty for some sin committed99, but more commonly was understood to be a way of bearing witness to Christ and discovering what St. Columbanus100 sometimes called one’s ‘place of resurrection’.101 This concept of resurrection and place evokes a particularly earthed spirituality, one in which Christ might take form in the pilgrim or the pilgrim community.102 Bradley argues that despite a certain strain of unworldliness in Celts such as Columbanus, his understanding of Christians as ‘colonists of heaven’ demanded full engagement with the life of earth.103 Celtic Christians were a people ‘unable and careless to know where the secular began

97 Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p200.
98 ‘Red martyrdom’ was understood to be dying for one’s faith. In addition there was the ‘Green martyrdom’ of the penitentials that required a life of austere inner discipline, penance, fasting, labour and physically demanding prayer. See D. O’Laoghaire, ‘Celtic Spirituality’, in Jones, Wainright and Yarnold, eds., The Study of Spirituality, (London: S.P.C.K., 1996), p221.
99 A classic example of penance is Columba himself, who is traditionally understood to have been banished from Ireland for his part in the battle of Cul Dreben. His arrival on Iona may however be as much political as penitential. See Ian Bradley, Columba, generally. When Mochonna was denied permission to journey with Columba into exile he is reputed to have replied, ‘You are my father and the Church is my mother and the place in which I can give most service to God is my country’. A. O’Kelleher & G. Schoepperle, Betha Colaim Chille: Life of Columba, (Chicago: J.A. O’Donnell, 1918), p136, cited in D. O’Laoghaire, ‘Celtic Spirituality’, in C. Jones, G. Wainright, E. Yarnold, eds., The Study of Spirituality, p221.
100 Columbanus is not to be confused with St. Columba. Columbanus was born in Ireland in 540 and was ordained in 572. In 591 he left Ireland and travelled to Gaul, Switzerland and Bobbio in Italy where he died in 615.
102 Occasionally, Columbanus came close to pietistic elitism when he spoke of remaining disentangled from earthly desires. Esther de Waal notes a sermon, in which he exhorts his listeners, ‘Therefore, let us concern ourselves with heavenly things, not human ones, and like pilgrims always sigh for our homeland, ... because we are travellers and pilgrims through this world, it is the road’s end, that is of our lives, that we should always be thinking about. ... Don’t let us love the road rather than the land to which it leads, lest we lose our homeland altogether’. Columbanus, ‘Sermon 8’, cited in Esther de Waal, A World Made Whole, p54.
103 Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p201.
and the religious ended and easily integrated the world of heaven with the daily vicissitudes of earthly life. Not only did they disavow a world dichotomised into the material and spiritual, but they also knew the dangers of overly individualised discipleship. While the Celtic saints often spent time in solitude, the need for an anamcara / soul-friend in the life-journey meant that even exilic pilgrimages were often taken communally, in effect travelling as a mini-colony. Blessings were thought to be received, not only by those on pilgrimage, but also by those who remained behind and any communities visited along the journey. Thus, while there were occasions of personal separation, there was also support and communal responsibility. Thus, Bradley notes that, 'for all its lonely isolation and painful penitential character, pilgrimage, like other aspects of Celtic Christianity, was also a matter of balance and rhythm'. According to Columbanus, 'Every day you depart and every day you return'. Such pilgrims carried the cantus firmus of Christ, their centre, with them and every day it called them to participate in melodies of departure and return, the now and not yet of heaven and earth.

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105 The ‘Caim prayers’ with which the Celtic Christian would draw an area of God’s particular protection around themselves are especially illustrative of this. The most famous example of this is St. Patrick’s Breastplate Prayer but good examples may also be found in the Carmina Gadelica, p344. David Adam argues that these prayers reminded the Celts that God was always present in the midst of life. David Adam, The Cry of the Deer: Meditations on the Hymn of St. Patrick, (London: Triangle / S.P.C.K., 1994), p13.
106 Anamcara literally means ‘soul friend’. This was the person to whom you could reveal the hidden intimacies of your life. Anamchairideas was ‘an act of recognition and belonging … cutting across all convention and category … which joined you in an ancient and eternal way with your friend of the soul’. John O’Donohue, Anam cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World, (London: Bantam / Transworld Publishers, 1997), p16. Its significance to the Celtic Christians can be summed up in the phrase variously attributed to St. Comgall, St. Brigid and others, ‘a person without a soul friend is like a body without a head’, cited in Ian Bradley, The Celtic Way, p73.
109 Even though Celtic pilgrims did not always consider the possibility of returning home, a rhythm of departing and returning, or more accurately gathering and scattering remained present in their practice of pilgrimage. Monks would often stop in an area so as to be near and serve people. In doing so they would establish another community from which in time another group would depart on their own journey.
This motif of departure and return is strongly represented in the later medieval idea of pilgrimage, wherein pilgrims left home to travel to a holy site seeking a blessing and then returned. This, too, has import for contemporary considerations of the colony of heaven. Bradley notes how the revival of journeying to sacred places has been one of the most striking and surprising religious movements of recent years.111 He is rightly critical of some aspects of this 'spiritual tourism'112 and it is true that on occasions the phenomena has led some communities away from their vocation in Christian socialisation and into becoming 'booth keepers in an emporium of transcendence'.113 However that not withstanding, Bradley continues to argue that:

we should not perhaps be too censorious about this mushrooming new branch of the package tourist industry. They are, after all, blurring the lines between tourism and pilgrimage and encouraging those who may be literally attracted by the lure of the holy place and the romantic destination to think about their lives and the inner journey which was at the heart of the Celtic understanding of pilgrimage.114

In the contemporary revival of pilgrimage, there is the potential for people to depart from their own particularity and journey to a place where they encounter and participate in a community who celebrate the melodies of liminality and the rhythms of pilgrimage.115 In order to arrive at the centre they must go the way of the boundary's edge. If having then gathered for a time, and learnt to be fully present to heaven and earth in that place, they may then scatter from it and

111 Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p212. Bradley goes on to offer an informative review of these developments in pilgrimage to various sites as an important contemporary symbol of the journey of faith as well as shared physical activity.
112 In particular he criticises their focus on seeking to attain a spiritual high from one particular visit rather than 'cultivating a lifelong spirit of exile and finding one's desert place of resurrection'. Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p216.
114 Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p216.
115 John Macmurray notes the importance of the 'Rhythm of Withdrawal and Return' to individual and communal development. He argues that a person's rhythm of withdrawal and return to 'the Other' (including occasions when the Other withdraws specifically 'for the sake of the return' throwing the person back upon themselves), constitutes the universal and necessary pattern of personal development and states that such rhythm does not cease with the achievement of organic maturity but is the permanent form of the life of personal relationship. See John Macmurray, Persons in Relation, p86-105.
return to their own particularities, taking with them, something of the art of participating in Christ's polyphony.

This journey into place particularly resonates with the rootless character of the post-modern condition and the many people who now dwell in what Marc Augé calls 'non place': these locations do not integrate with a past and in them no true community is possible.\textsuperscript{116} Such non-places precipitate a 'fragmentation of awareness that leads to incoherence in relation to "the world."'\textsuperscript{117} Amidst such ontological dislocation, the rhythm of departure and return enables colonies of heaven to facilitate an encounter with the reality of place. This offers the pilgrim a community, a place, in which they might learn to live, fully present to the now, but informed and inspired by all that is not yet. The art and the rhythm continue with them in their journey back. So as Michel de Certeau has commented:

\begin{quote}
Both elements, the place and the departure, are interrelated, because it is the withdrawal from a place that allows one to recognise the enclosure implicit in the initial position, and as a result it is this limited field which makes possible a further investigation. Boundaries are the place of the Christian work, and their displacements are the result of this work.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

Iona is especially equipped to take on the mantle of being such a place. It is well qualified to be the place that incorporates both the Celtic, medieval and contemporary understandings of pilgrimage. It is in fact a living metaphor for such an endeavour; the ancient Celtic site was specifically chosen to be the place where the medieval Benedictine buildings were built. The presence of the

\textsuperscript{116} Augé draws on the imagery of bass line and polyphony in his articulation of place, as that which connects to the past. He cites the reflection of Jean Starobinski:

\begin{quote}
'the possibility of a polyphony in which the virtually infinite interlacing of destinies, actions, thoughts and reminiscences would rest on a bass line that chimed the hours of the terrestrial day, and marked the position that used to be (and could still be) occupied there by ancient ritual'.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{117} Philip Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred, p8.

contemporary Iona Community similarly indicates a desire to build something connected to these histories but yet still be altogether new. MacLeod gathered the early Community together to learn how to participate in the polyphony of Christ and then to scatter again, returning to their urban parishes. He instinctively discerned what Sheldrake suggests is essential for a good theology of place: ‘a balance between God’s revelation in the particular and a sense that God’s place ultimately escapes the boundaries of the localized ... Place is both this, here and now, and at the same time more than “this”, a pointer to elsewhere.’\textsuperscript{119} MacLeod knew that ‘thin places’, like Iona, enabled such a balance to flourish. In such a colony of place, realms of work and worship, the secular and the sacred, of Church life and common life would gather around the Christ into one polyphonic experience of reality and symbolism. The Christian colony on Iona was to be a symphony of gathering and scattering and gathering again. Each movement brought together new fragments of God’s epiphany, each fragment bearing witness to the whole around the \textit{cantus firmus}.\textsuperscript{120} This dialectic movement continues to be affirmed through the Iona liturgy in which members affirm: ‘Gathered and scattered, God is with us’.\textsuperscript{121}

Because of the changes of direction forced upon the Community during World War II, Iona became a colony for more than the few apprentices handpicked by MacLeod. As hundreds visited the island on retreat, lay people learnt of the character of the colony and many wanted to join. The Community proceeded pragmatically but were left with having to discern what the rich diversity of new members meant for a community whose effective purpose until then had been

\textsuperscript{119} Philip Sheldrake, \textit{Spaces for the Sacred}, p30.
\textsuperscript{120} This is similar to the religio-cultural movement of orientation, disorientation and re-orientation detected in the Psalms by Walter Brueggemann. Brueggemann argues that the Psalms display a movement of personal or national disorientation as they were forced by events to re-imagine God and their relationship to God. There then follows a period of re-orientation as new certainties emerge. In due course this becomes the new period of orientation into which will come a new time of interruption. See Walter Brueggemann, \textit{The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary}, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1984), p19 ff. See also Mike Regele and Mark Schulz, \textit{Death of the Church}, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing, 1995) where they posit a generational cycle of 80 years made up of four 20 year eras, p34 ff.
ministerial formation. Ralph Morton perceived the potential for Iona to nurture
the whole people of God into colonies of heaven.\(^{122}\)

Many others who did not seek to become members of the Community still
returned home having heard something of the melodies performed within a
colony of heaven. Guests would have shared their own fragments of epiphany,
the Abbey had become a boundariless boundary, a reconciling place, where
guests and members heard the echo of heaven’s music not yet heard. The place
and the Community began to understand themselves as a gatherer of epiphanies
and as a departure point for pilgrims to return to their world infused with a
deeper reality of life in all its fullness. Having learnt to participate in the melodies
of God on Iona, they began to nurture the art of performing the polyphony of life
in whatever space or place they found themselves.

Indeed even day-tourists can be touched by the place of Iona. Bradley notes that
for many of the tourists who go there every year,

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\text{the few hours spent on Iona may not differ from a visit to any other ancient monument or historic site} \ldots \text{Yet most visitors can hardly be left unaware of the Iona Community’s presence and its lively Christian witness and concern for contemporary issues. Those going into the Abbey are quite likely to find it adorned with banners and posters drawing attention to some campaign for peace and justice ... it is impossible to eat or drink at the café opposite the Abbey without being made aware of the issues of fair trade and environmental sustainability.}^{123}\]

And it is not coincidental that the time in which Iona draws tourists, guests,
residents and members together most is on the weekly pilgrimage around the
Island. This seven mile walk is more than a guided trip around the island, it is
a ‘peripatetic act of worship’;\(^{124}\) involving shared conversations and short
periods of silence and a picnic meal. The six-hour walk is punctuated with

\(^{122}\) Ronald Ferguson describes Morton’s insight as ‘how to mobilize and train the whole people of God for mission, and how to train ordained men for this kind of enabling mission’. Chasing the Wild Goose, p81.

\(^{123}\) Ian Bradley, Colonies of Heaven, p217. Although the café is no longer open, (it now houses the Iona Community shop) the point was well made at the time and remains apposite in all other respects.

\(^{124}\) Iona - God’s Energy, p93.

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stops for prayer, song and brief meditation at places of historic and religious significance. Norman Shanks comments that:

The Pilgrimage is at the heart of the Iona experience not only because of its timing in the middle of the week – often indeed at a critical point in the programme when some of the novelty has worn off and people are starting to ask difficult questions! The Pilgrimage is also an integrated and integrating embodiment of the Community’s understanding of and approach to spirituality - described before as "an energising kind of connectedness." ... It affords opportunities, within a framework of worship and sharing, for reflecting and exploring, for discussing new ideas and old, for forging and deepening relationships, for discerning and engaging with the struggles of the world and the purposes and promises of God, for looking to the future as the journey goes on. 

At the heart of the Pilgrimage are fragments of the bisociation of heaven and earth, the now and the not yet, what Emily Dickinson called the 'the beautiful but bleak condition' of wonder ... 'not precisely Knowing and not precisely Knowing not'. This is the proleptic mystery of the melodies of heaven breaking into earth. This eschatological aspect is strong within the Celtic tradition and Bradley

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insists that it is the central key to understanding not only pilgrimage, but the metaphor of the colony of heaven.\textsuperscript{127} He writes:

\begin{quote}
We are brought back to the notion of colonies of heaven that has provided the theme for this book. Christians inhabit the in-between times, living in a perpetual Advent state, waiting and hoping for the glory of God to be revealed. Unfulfilled as this condition of "not yetness" may be, it is also suffused with those glimpses of glory that we already have in our sacramental world so thinly divided from the world to come.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

On Iona, and with the Community, pilgrims encounter in the Christian colony, fragments of Christ's boundariless polyphony and therein learn to participate in its performance. It becomes a place where people proleptically practice the eternal melodies of heaven in the here and now. It is a place from where the \textit{cantus firmus} beckons people to share not only in the fragments of epiphany they have listened to so far, but to enter into the echo of a polyphony they have not yet fully heard.

A former warden of the Abbey sums it up in poetry:

\begin{quote}
'A place of hope';
they say:
and in their thousands
they journey, year by year,
to this tiny island
on the margins of Europe.
Sunswept and windswept,
yet always deeply
a place for transformation.
a sacred spot on earth:
a pilgrim's place
of light and shadow
energy and challenge.
\end{quote}

We need you, Iona,
with your alternative vision,
with your ever-present questions
your often uncomfortable silence.

For you are a place of prayer,
of Christ's abiding:
wavering a rainbow of meaning
through the endless busyness of our days,
holding together the frayed threads
of our fleeting devotion,
opening a path for healing
and for peace.

Not momentary healing
nor easy faith,
but struggle, commitment,
and an ongoing conversion
are your gifts for our
broken yet beautiful lives.

The peace of God
The peace of Aidan, wisely
Walk with you this day, and always.\textsuperscript{129}

Chapter Seven: 
the discipline of counterpoint

"Back to devotionalism" would be as fatal as if our agricultural community went "back to the land" by selling their tractor and yoking bullocks to the plough. As it must be forward to the land so it must be forward to the new devotionalism: or rather the recovery of primitive holiness. The key is in a serious review of the challenge of the Incarnation.

George MacLeod ¹

This World is not Conclusion. 
A Species stands beyond- 
Invisible as music - 
But positive, as Sound.

Emily Dickinson ²

Mysticism does not mean estrangement from action; it is a preparation for public, political discipleship.

Jürgen Moltmann ³

Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics.

Charles Peguy ⁴

Christians should restrain their spate of words, their pious and theological jargon, and keep quiet until they have proved in their commerce with the life of the world which of their words ring true.

Alec Vidler ⁵

The religious act is always something partial; 'faith' is always something whole, involving the whole of one's life. Jesus calls men, not to a new religion, but to life, ... [a] participation in the powerlessness of God in the world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer ⁶

¹ Only One Way Left, p151-152.
⁴ Charles Peguy, un-cited reference, in Only One Way Left, pvi.

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One of the greatest difficulties for a community seeking to be a colony of heaven on earth is maintaining the tension of being in the world, but not of it. As the Church seeks to belong in the world and express its solidarity with it, it faces the danger of becoming indistinguishable from it. The result being that the melody of the gospel appears to be lost in the cacophony of fallen life. If this happens, the fear of those within the colony is that the melodies of God will be lost from the world. Hence, at times they try to protect what they believe to be the gospel melody. Their fear of losing the melodies of God is fuelled by the mistaken belief that they have heard and possessed the complete symphony of God. In reality, they, like those before them have only ever heard a fragment. For some, this desire to protect the gospel leads them to separate the colony from the world, and indeed from other expressions of the Christian community. In extreme form, claims to the exclusive rite to perform the polyphony of Christ leads such communities into religious and inward looking isolationism and the condemnation of other melodies.

But these extremes of being indistinguishable from the world or living in isolationism arise out of the false premise that the call to alien citizenship upon the life of Christians requires them to struggle between these two competing realms. However, if Christ's regal anthem sounds within both realms, then the Christian is to no longer think in terms of two realms. This means Christians must learn to celebrate the counterpoint God calls into being in all places of creation. The Church needs to sing this counterpoint in ways that invite the world to participate in a deeper awareness of Christ as cantus firmus and to encounter the fragments of melody into which they are called. This means that Christians and their communities are to perpetually seek to find harmonies of Christ in others. In so doing they discover that in Christ all things are reconciled to God\(^7\) and the boundaries of existence are eternally transcended.

There are many examples of this boundary crossing in the life and ministry of Jesus. According to Luke, his manifesto of mission was initially proclaimed on the

\[\text{7 Col. 1:20.}\]
Sabbath within 'the realm of the religious' before the Synagogue congregation. This was the announcement of 'good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' The reality of this was revealed in his willingness to befriend the marginalised; lepers, women, Gentiles and include them in the polyphony of the kingdom of heaven on earth. This transcendence of boundaries was offered to all people on earth through Christ's work upon the cross. At the foot of a cross erected at the behest of the religious realm, it was a 'worldly' Roman Centurion who recognised the crucified one as creation's cantus firmus. In the cry of dereliction the separation of God from God is revealed, and the paradox of being in the world but not of it is made known. At the cross the boundary that separated the holy of holies from the world was rent in two and, three days later, the boundary that had appeared to separate life from death was overcome in the resurrection.

The early Christian Church struggled to come to terms with the mystery of Christ, and, as has been noted, with being a colony of heaven. In the communities of the New Testament, the performance of Christ's regal anthem increasingly became associated with the peculiar practices of the colony: Baptism, Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer, etc. In the face of persecution and the potential corrupting influence of the pagan world these practices were conducted in secret. It was this private discipline that enabled them to live with the tensions of alien citizenship; to be present to the Empire while belonging to the Christian colony. In order to protect these mysteries New Testament Communities were encouraged only to share their content and meaning with the initiated. At this time it was important and proper that these melodies were rehearsed within the colony and not performed to a public who were unprepared for the profundity of

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10 As Moltmann argues: 'The cross was an event between God and God. It was a deep division in God himself, in so far as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and at the same time a unity in God in so far as God was one with God who corresponded to himself'. The Crucified God, trans, R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974), p244.
the music. While the story of Jesus was proclaimed in word and deed and people were urged to listen and respond, the deeper mysteries of discipleship were not to be regarded lightly. Hence, the gospel writers said: 'To you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables' and 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine lest they trample them underfoot'.\textsuperscript{11} The understanding of this practice can also be seen in the words of Paul's first letter to the colony at Corinth:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.\textsuperscript{12}

The early Church began to practice a discipline over the mysteries of the faith that meant that they kept a qualified silence before the world until such matters could be spoken of responsibly.\textsuperscript{13} This did not mean that they were concealing Christ from the world rather, until the appropriate time had come, a discipline was needed that enabled the Christian to live in and for the world as a citizen of heaven but which spoke to the world only as a participant of their secular estate. This concern for an appropriate time and place in which the Christian could declare in words the contrapuntal melodies of Christ ran consistently through the early Church. The discipline is evidenced in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, Innocent I, and Cyril of Alexandria.\textsuperscript{14} The first Christians developed such a discipline not least because careless talk could cost them and others their lives. Romans were suspicious of anyone who threatened the safety of the Empire by refusing to worship their gods. Care had to be taken by Christians to protect the people and


\textsuperscript{12} 1 Cor. 2: 6-8.


\textsuperscript{14} John W. Matthews, 'Responsible Sharing of the Mystery of Christian Faith: Disciplina Arcani in the Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', p115.

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the unique practices of the faith. Thus, when Chrysostom wrote to Pope Innocent I over an act of irreverence in Constantinople, he stated clearly that, 'the most holy blood of Christ was split'. However Palladius, reporting the same incident in a book intended for a readership beyond that of the Church, provides a more vague reference: 'They overturned the symbols'. It was not appropriate to speak of the mystery of the Eucharist before the world. In the same way Cyril of Jerusalem declared: 'Should a catechumen ask what the teachers have said, tell nothing to a stranger; for we deliver to thee a mystery ... see thou let out nothing, not that what is said is not worth telling, but because the ear that hears does not deserve to hear it'.

The development of this *Discipline of the Secret* or *Disciplina Arcani* was not however, simply a response to the threat of persecution in the early Church. It was also a response to the dangers of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. Not only did such philosophies deny the incarnate Christ in their continual affirmation of the split between the spiritual and the material, but they claimed an intellectual elitism for the initiated that was rejected by the early Church. There are obvious and inherent difficulties in finding evidence for any secret practiced by a community, but it does seem that the *arcanum* of the early Church was more strictly enforced immediately after the cessation of persecutions rather than at their height. It seems likely that this was in response to these philosophies that undermined the incarnation and the potential for creation to bear the revelation of God. Barnes argues that it is,

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18 In German, Bonhoeffer referred to the practice as the *arkandiszielin*, but John Williams notes that this term can be misleading, precipitating English translations of ‘the arcane discipline’ or ‘secret discipline’ that tend to describe the practice as the pious counterpart to his ideas on this worldliness. See ‘Responsible Sharing of the Mystery of Christian Faith: Disciplina Arcani in the Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’, p125, endnote 3.
probable enough that the discipline was growing more strict all through the second and third centuries on account of the pressure of persecution, and that, when persecution was at last relaxed, the need for reserve was felt at first, while the Church was still surrounded by hostile Paganism, to be increased rather than diminished.\textsuperscript{19}

Thus, during the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, as Christendom was becoming more firmly established, Cyril of Alexandria still could tell a class of Catechumens:

These mysteries, which the Church now explains to thee who art passing out of the class of Catechumens, it is not the custom to explain to heathen. For to a heathen we do not explain the mysteries ... but many things we often speak in a veiled way, that the believers who know may understand and they who know not may get no hurt.\textsuperscript{20}

The Catechumenate was a formal initiation programme, normally lasting three years, through which people were gradually guided into a deeper understanding of Christianity. Catechumens would be present in the regular liturgy, but would not share in the mysteries of faith. There was both doctrinal and practical training throughout an initiation period and individuals were assessed as to their worthiness to share in the deeper mysteries such as Baptism and Eucharist. The institution of a catechumate reveals a Church community conscious of their responsibilities. Here were a people who took their discipleship seriously and courageously laid down clear conditions for those who wanted to become her members.\textsuperscript{21} But in contrast to the mystery religions of the time, the Discipline was not an elitist privilege whereby the baptised lorded their knowledge over the catechumate and unbelievers. Harmless notes how Augustine was bothered by any such divisions in his congregation and used every opportunity to encourage his listeners to be baptised and enter the community of the faithful. When the baptised shouted in affirming response to one of his sermons, Augustine replied, 'those of you who have cheered have understood; but, you who have


understood, bear with me a little longer for the sake of those who have not, that I may open it up to them'.\textsuperscript{22}

However, as Christendom expanded to include the people of the Empire and the threat of Paganism retreated, the mysteries became public knowledge. As this occurred, the perceived need for a \textit{Discipline of the Secret} disappeared. Under Constantine, the mysteries of committed discipleship became profane. Apathy and religious banality gradually infected the Church, reducing the polyphony of alien citizenship to a drone of comfortable convention. The mysteries of a radical performance of Christ were re-located in the monasteries that, largely and erroneously, accepted a place of isolation from the world. The Church had nothing to conceal from unbelievers because everyone was now understood to believe. Since then, argues Georg Huntemann, 'the established church and arcane discipline have been mutually exclusive'.\textsuperscript{23} In a strict understanding of how the early Church practiced the \textit{Discipline of the Secret} Huntemann is correct. There is no way to return these mysteries of the Christian Church to secrecy. They became and are now publicly well documented.

While the mysteries may now be well established, there continues to be a need for a \textit{Discipline} which the Christian colony practices in secret; a \textit{Discipline of Counterpoint}. That is, there needs to be a responsible sharing of the mysteries within the Christian community, an opportunity for the colony to bring together fragments of epiphany and rehearse the polyphony revealed in their gathering. This is an important practice for a community that claims that its authority comes from heaven but is simultaneously engaged with God, who is in the world. The importance of such a discipline in Christian community inspired MacLeod and the Iona Community and shaped the practices of Bonhoeffer and the Finkenwalde seminarians. For Bonhoeffer the need for a \textit{Discipline} occupied his mind,


especially in his later years, as he sought to collapse the traditional Christendom dichotomy of two separate spheres or realms. He articulated a theology that affirmed how all reality was taken up into Christ's Lordship and sought an accompanying praxis of discipleship. At the core of his response was what he identified as the *Discipline of the Secret*.

Bonhoeffer earnestly sought a discipline by which he and the community at Finkenwalde might reclaim the alien citizenship possessed by the early Church and re-appropriate it for his time. So although he refers to it only briefly in his writings, commentators agree that it was central to his theological orientation. It was at the heart of the praxis of discipleship he sought to introduce to the colony of worldly monasticism and it remains instructive for how contemporary Christian communities might participate in the performance of the polyphonic Christ.

In Finkenwalde, under Bonhoeffer's leadership, the Seminarians sought ways to maintain the practices of word, sacrament and community untainted by the heresies of Nazism and ecclesiological complacency. Bonhoeffer had a negative theology of the world at this time. So, it is not surprising that the *Discipline* was used to enable Christians to share the mysteries primarily within the community of faith and in so doing they did battle with a pernicious world. But in time, as Bonhoeffer's theology of world expanded, he came to understand the *Discipline* not simply as something which protected the mysteries of faith from the world, but which enabled the community of faith to responsibly perform the mystery of God's melodies for the world, in and before the secular community. Was there a this-worldly way of affirming the polyphonic Christ in a world that seemed to have outgrown the comforts of religion?

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24 *Ethics*, p63 and 73-74.
25 John W. Matthews, 'Responsible Sharing of the Mystery of Christian Faith: *Disciplina Arcani* in the Life and Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', p114. Bethge agrees that the question of the arcane discipline was not as peripheral for Bonhoeffer as the infrequency of the phrase might suggest. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p881.
26 In his lectures on Christology, Bonhoeffer affirmed that the central mystery of the Christian faith was Christ's eternal presence in the Church, through the Word, the Sacraments and the Congregation, *Christ the Center*, p46.
To this end, he posed the question:

_What do a church, a community, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life mean in a religionless world? How do we speak of God - without religion, i.e. without the temporally conditioned presuppositions of metaphysics, inwardsness and so on? ... In what way are we the ἐκ-κλητοί, those who are called forth, not regarding ourselves from a religious point of view as specially favoured, but rather as belonging wholly to the world? In that case Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, really the Lord of the world. But what does that mean? What is the place of worship and prayer in a religionless situation? Does the secret discipline ... take on a new importance here?_

Bonhoeffer clearly believed in the importance of re-appropriating the _Discipline of the Secret_ while seeking to remain within established Lutheranism. He could not have been suggesting a return to the _Secret_ as it was once practiced, but clearly saw something within it, that suggested to him, the possibility of a renewed and renewing faith. In much the same way, MacLeod sought to form the Iona Community as a disciplined brotherhood within the established Church of Scotland, and did so seeking to address the threats posed to institutional Christianity in his particular context. MacLeod’s vision paralleled Bonhoeffer’s conviction that there was scope for the established Church and a _Discipline_ to sound together in a new polyphony that affirmed the bisociating Christ in Church and world. A new discipline of worldly monasticism could arise within the Church and be present in the world affirming the greatest mystery of all: the polyphonic Christ was the _cantus firmus_ for all reality.

So while Bonhoeffer argued that ‘a secret discipline must be restored whereby the mysteries of the Christian faith are protected from profanation’ 28 the subject of the _Discipline_ was no longer as the early Church perceived it to be: the mysteries of Baptism, Eucharist, etc. Now the mystery is, as it always should have been, the performance of the polyphonic Christ in the Church and world. Andreas Pangritz follows Hanfried Müller to insist that, “the concept of ‘arcane’ undergoes a change in Bonhoeffer in comparison to its meaning in the ancient

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28 _Letters and Papers_, p286.
church." Christ is now to be affirmed not as the object of religion but really Lord of the world. Accordingly, rather than focus on the ancient particulars of the Discipline, what Bonhoeffer valued was safeguarding the integrity of the Church community against pagan corruption. What was necessary was the Church's affirmation of Christ as cantus firmus and their continuing participation in the performance of the countermelodies he called into being, counter-melodies that would sound in both the Church and world. Hence, to appreciate the value Bonhoeffer found in the Discipline of the Secret, 'it is not enough simply to take over the dictionary definition of "arcane"; rather, attention has to be paid to the contrapuntal context in which the "cantus firmus" rings out.' It is a Discipline of Counterpoint. For each community these counterpoints may differ. The context in which MacLeod sought 'a serious review of the challenge of the incarnation' was not identical to the context in which Bonhoeffer affirmed that it was only in Christ that we are invited to participate 'in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, the one not without the other'. Yet the purpose of the Discipline remains the same: to participate in performing the polyphony of Christ in both Church and world.

The contrapuntal context in which Bonhoeffer operated was one in which the unique claim of Christ to be both Lord of heaven and earth, was under physical threat from the Nazi empire, theological threat from the Reich Church and the spiritual threat of falling for a cheapened grace. In place of the Kingdom of God that transcended the boundaries of otherness came the thousand year Reich, intent on the exclusion of any non-Aryan. Their physical persecution of any opposition resulted in Bonhoeffer's execution. The threat of heretical corruption came through the Reich Church's belief in the German Nation as a second source of revelation. The Confessing Church at Barmen repudiated as 'false doctrine' the

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30 Letters and Papers, p281.
31 Andreas Pangritz, Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p5.
32 Only One Way Left, p152.
33 Ethics, p55.
claim that there were areas of life that would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords but ten years later, they seemed gripped by a third and final threat, a preoccupation with their own security. They sheltered behind a corrupted Lutheranism in which they acceded the ground of public affairs to the state, seeking to preserve for themselves some private sphere of spiritual activity beyond the world of politics.

For Bonhoeffer the integrity of the Church was at stake; the authenticity of a colony of heaven depended on the performance of the mystery of the incarnation, which for him was the way in which Christ took form in the world. This Christological cantus firmus could not be sublimated into doctrinal discussions but must be made concretely manifest. This was and is the mystery of the Christian faith. Bonhoeffer argued that the concrete incarnation of Christ in time and space was 'the holy mystery which theology is appointed to guard'. But when he asked where that mystery was being shared amidst his world, 'who Christ really is, for us today?' he could find increasingly few examples of 'humanity being remade and redeemed as a result of God's creative grace'. The Reich Church was apostate and the Confessing Church had compromised the place of Christ in the world. Bonhoeffer concluded that the mystery of the incarnate Christ was 'disappearing from sight'. In response, Bonhoeffer first sought to protect the mystery from his godless context because as he argued in 1937 'For its own sake, for the sake of the sinner and for the sake of the community, the Holy is to be protected from cheap surrender'. The melodies of Christ needed to be performed authentically in the Church community and the Discipline was the Secret by which Christians participated in the polyphony.

34 However at Barmen, Hans Asmussen, claimed that the protest against Hitler's influence on the Church did not imply any opposition to the 'most recent history of the German people ... to the new State... to our new Government'. See E. Bethge, Prayer and Righteous Action, p38.
36 Letters and Papers, p279.
38 Letters and Papers, p381.
39 'The Powers of the Keys and Church Discipline', in The Way to Freedom, p151. This idea can be traced back to Bonhoeffer's exploration of the Discipline of the Secret during his time in Finkenwalde. See Discipleship, p45 and 54.
Increasingly Bonhoeffer became convinced that while the Church could never abandon their responsibility to perform the melodies of Christ within the Church, neither could they separate their ultimate identity in Christ from their penultimate solidarity with Christ who was present in the world. Bonhoeffer perceived how the true Christian identity entrusted to the Church had been squandered by their failure to engage the mystery of the polyphonic Christ with a religionless world now seemingly come-of-age.

When Bonhoeffer referred to his context as a world-come-of-age he did not mean that the world had reached a moral maturity: this was clearly untrue given his imprisonment by a totalitarian regime involved in global warfare and mass genocide. But what it did mean was that humanity had attained its majority: i.e. it was independent in thought and was responsible for its own actions. Humanity was no longer dependent on God as a Deus ex Machina⁴⁰ or the 'omnipotent stop gap' explanation of religion, adopted when human knowledge reached its limit. In this world come-of-age Bonhoeffer perceived that 'the time when people could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or pious' to be over.⁴¹ The time of religion was over. Bonhoeffer welcomed this. He followed Barth's technical critique of religion,⁴² namely, that everything religious was a human attempt to reach beyond themselves and their ordained boundaries, and engage in an exercise in self-justification before God. Religion was identified as being those practices that dichotomised reality into the secular and sacred, a position that was denied in the Biblical affirmation that all reality was reconciled

⁴⁰ Green notes the origins of this phrase in Lucian, the 2nd Century pagan satirist, who alluded to it as the mechanical device by which the god was made to appear on stage in a drama and resolve that which had hitherto been incapable of resolution. Clifford Green, 'Bonhoeffer's Concept of Religion', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 19, No. 1, (November, 1963), p12.
⁴¹ Letters and Papers, p279.
to God in Christ. Bonhoeffer posited the possibility for a religionless Christianity.
As Dumas sums up the differences:

Religious Christianity unrealizes, provincializes, interiorizes and makes Jesus more remote. A non-religious Christianity realizes, universalizes, and makes Jesus public and present, at once extraordinary and hidden.43

Bonhoeffer rejected the dichotomised reality of privatised religion in favour of a religionless epoch in which the Church admitted that ‘everything got along just as well without God’.44 He argued that the Church could no longer be honest to themselves unless they recognised that they had to live in the world ‘etsi deus non daretur’ (as if God did not exist) but do so before God!45 The Christian community then must engage in a discipline whose ambition was the opposite of religion, it must respect the world and then seek to relate it to God.46 Not so much to explain God to the world (religion) but to explain the world to God’s people. Worship in word, sacrament and community was not being replaced by worldly caritas. Bonhoeffer hoped that the Discipline would still enable the Christian community to ‘preserve and foster those practices and conventions that constitute the Church as a distinctive polity in the midst of a world caught in the throes of arrested adolescence’.47 This non-religious interpretation would not precipitate a loss of identity for the Christian community, indeed, on the contrary, this was precisely what was to be re-won.48 A religionless Christianity would accept the world on its terms, but it would still seek to be authentically Christian in such a context. Bonhoeffer put the questions so sharply because he

44 See Letters and Papers, p326.
45 Letters and Papers, p360.
48 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p882.
believed 'the church would soon face a new possibility itself to be a real Christian community'.

So it was that religionless Christianity, or more specifically Bonhoeffer's search for a 'nonreligious interpretation of biblical and theological concepts' was not simply a search for a more relevant language with which to talk to the world about Christ. Indeed, Bonhoeffer seems to have wanted to make it more difficult to speak of Christ, but to ensure that when such conversations began that they were full of meaning for the world. As L. Gregory Jones notes with accuracy: 'Bonhoeffer's "new" language ... is not so much "new" as it is radically purified and renewed through the arcane discipline'. He clearly hoped that the Discipline would be the askeis by which traditional Christian doctrines such as reconciliation and redemption would enable the Church to once again speak meaningfully and with integrity of Christ to a world-come-of-age. And what doctrine could not be interpreted nonreligiously was to be allowed to remain as it was, of enduring value within the Christian community, but retained by them in secret. To express it beyond the colony would violate the maturity of the world and profane the concepts themselves. They would speak of a Christ who refused to inhabit the peripheries of life to which liberal theology and scientific rationalism had conspired to relegate him. And in so doing, the Discipline protected the world from violation by religion and acquired the important function of protecting Christianity from lapsing into religion.

This Discipline of Counterpoint is essentially an attempt to return Christ to the centre of living, to make Christ Lord of the religionless world that has come-of-

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50 Letters and Papers, p300, 344 and 362.
51 Rowan Williams asserts that in the Letters from Prison, Bonhoeffer was not seeking to make religious language easier but rather hoped 'to make it more difficult to talk about God'. See Bonhoeffer: the Sixties and After, Unpublished Paper delivered at the Consultation on Bonhoeffer, Britain and British Theology, 1991, p1. Copy held in the International Bonhoeffer Society Archive, Union Theological Seminary, New York.
53 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p883.
age as well as the Church. This is a Christianity which collapses all attempts of humanity to think in bipolar terms of secular and sacred, because such a 'static distinction between one domain [Bereich] as belonging to the devil and another as belonging to Christ denies the reality that God has reconciled the whole world with himself in Christ'.\(^{54}\) As long as Christ and the world are conceived as two realms [Räume], bumping against and repelling each other we are left with a choice. Either we place ourselves in one of the two realms, wanting Christ without the world, or the world without Christ – and in both these cases we deceive ourselves. Or, we try to stand in both realms at the same time, thereby becoming people of eternal conflict. There are not two realities but only one reality, and that is God's reality revealed in Christ in the reality of the world'.\(^{55}\) Under this reality, Christians find God and the world reconciled. Their worldliness does not divide them from Christ, and their Christianity does not divide them from the world. Rather, because they belong wholly to Christ, they belong wholly to the world.

The danger for a Christian colony is that establishing solidarity with the world through such a Discipline abandons the very ground that has been won, re-establishing boundaries that were supposed to have been transcended in Christ. If there is a community practicing the Discipline of Counterpoint and affirming Christ as Lord of all, how can they remain in solidarity with those for whom such things remain unknown? The solidarity seemingly collapses. Kenneth Surin makes this point in regard to Bonhoeffer's appropriation of the Discipline of the Secret. He claims that those who seek to affirm their participation in a divine solidarity with the world through the Discipline simply 'cannot retain their identity as members of the corpus Christi in a world that has effectively extirpated the charismatic basis of this membership'.\(^{56}\) Additionally, he argues that those who maintain the Discipline cannot then fully identify with the profane world as the full nature of the world's disenchantment is concealed from them. These are

\(^{54}\) Ethics, p66.  
\(^{55}\) Ethics, p58.  
valid criticisms if we accept the social rationalisation which directs Surin's argument. But by Surin's own admission, this same rationalism has left the world 'weary of life' leaving them a choice of 'a stoical and sober acceptance of things as they are or a flight into religion'. Neither of these options seems palatable: the world is clearly not as it ought be, but no flight into religion will resolve that. Surin's ideological preclusion of any involvement of the truly transcendental leaves him righteously critical, but in the end dissatisfied with life. Conversely, it is exactly because the colony of true worldliness derives its ultimate meaning from the heavenly beyond that those who practice its Discipline avoid a flight into religion and can work within the world through self-interpreting acts of justice. Christ continues to break into human reality from beyond and stand in its centre, between the old existence and the new. Within that boundary and at its rediscovered centre, is a boundarilessness that eludes the world. This is the mystery that must be shared with the world. In a reversal of Bonhoeffer's famous dictum, here, it is the other world of heaven that cannot be prematurely written off.

So Bethge admits: 'No one can deny that arcanum ("mystery") separates, and that disciplina distinguishes'. Its people remain distinctively different from the world and there is 'probably no way of constructing a safeguard against a new boundary, unless the safeguard would come from the real and present Christ himself, who is our sole concern in the dealing with the arcanum'. Bethge follows Jörg Martin Meier to offer a possible resolution to this boundary dilemma: 'by worldliness Bonhoeffer testifies to Christ as the real one, and by the arcane discipline as the present one. Worldliness and arcane discipline "are correlated attitudes of the Christian resulting from the presence of the real one." This seeming paradox derives from the essential bisociation we find in Christ's divinity and humanity. The Discipline creates a Christological identity within which there

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57 Kenneth Surin, 'Contempus Mundi and the Disenchanted World', p395.
58 Letters and Papers, p337.
59 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p883.
60 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p883.

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are no boundaries between Church and world. Within its boundary resides the only space in which divisions are transcended and all reality is taken up into the undivided whole of Christ.\textsuperscript{62} It is in such a space that the community affirms that religious boundaries are untenable for the Christian colony: ‘there is no real Christian existence outside the reality of the world and no real worldliness outside the reality of Jesus Christ’.\textsuperscript{63} The believing community then become the concrete manifestation of Christ through an identity that is created and sustained by the practice of the Discipline. If, as Ray Anderson suggests, ‘the normative character of the ontic relationship is not to find Christ concretely, but to be Christ concretely in the world, the problem is resolved’,\textsuperscript{64} ... by the Christian ‘moving out of his “secret place”, where he knows Christ as community, and becomes Christ in the world’.\textsuperscript{65} Thus the Discipline ‘completes itself in worldliness, not by becoming worldly, not merely “non-religious”, but by taking the place of Christ in the world’.\textsuperscript{66}

Even as Christians gather to rehearse a Discipline of Counterpoint, and perhaps especially at that time, they bring with them the fragments of their epiphanal encounters with Christ in the world and a non-religious interpretation of them. This is important for if a nonreligious interpretation of the world and the Discipline do not mutually correct each other, then the Discipline lapses into a ghetto of ‘liturgical monasticism’ and nonreligious worldliness becomes no more than ‘a boulevard’, preoccupied with intellectual games.\textsuperscript{67} Those who follow the Discipline begin to have realised within themselves the boundariless way of living that comes of being Christ-like. Their identity is this paradox: their distinguishing character exists only so that ‘barriers of privilege ultimately should be removed’.\textsuperscript{68} It is through the Discipline that Christ takes hold of the Christian

\textsuperscript{62} See Ethics, p62.
\textsuperscript{63} Ethics, p61.
\textsuperscript{67} See \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p884.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p883.
colony and leads them back into the world to greet him there in the ‘ten thousand faces’ of humanity.

This leads us back to Bonhoeffer’s idea of polyphonic living and the *Discipline* as a practical *cantus firmus* to life. Bonhoeffer posits Christ as the central source and limit of the contrapuntal themes of life. In his lectures on Christology Bonhoeffer asserted that Christ stands on the boundary of human existence and yet at its centre. Christ is:

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\text{between me and me, between the old and the new existence. Thus Christ is at one and the same time, my boundary and my rediscovered centre. He is the centre, between ‘I’ and ‘I’ and between ‘I’ and God. The boundary can only be known as boundary from beyond the boundary. In Christ, man [sic] recognizes it and thereby at the same time finds his new centre again.}^{69}
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The *Discipline* then keeps the colony centred on Jesus as the *cantus firmus*, enabling them to become Christ existing as religionless community in the world. This is genuine transcendence, humanity directed by Christ towards God and the world, in all its fragmented dimensions, at the same time. Members of the colony ‘make room in themselves for God and the whole world, refusing to let life be boundaried into single realms, but keeping life multi-dimensional and polyphonous’.\(^{70}\) This allows for the stability of the Christ ‘beyond’ to remain concrete in the multidimensional and fluid ‘midst’ of reality and enables the participative performance of the counterpoint of life found in Christ. Participating in this performance of Christ not only enables the colony to transcend false boundaries but, by re-centring humanity in Christ, the *Discipline* preserves the ordained limits between humanity and God. Indeed, Paul Ballard argues it will also be the means whereby the specific relationship between heaven and the world is articulated.\(^{71}\) In its concealment, the *Discipline* enables the colony to keep the distinction between this world and the realm beyond. The Church is not dissolved into the world, but lives in solidarity with it, sharing in its action for

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\(^{69}\) *Christ the Center*, p60.

\(^{70}\) *Letters and Papers*, p310-311.


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justice. The Church’s identity as colony is affirmed in its gathering for worship, which becomes not an escape from worldly tasks and difficulties, but a retreat for the world ‘that then sends the Christian back to drink the earthly cup to the dregs’. The contrapuntal lines of action, if heard without the *cantus firmus*, are what the world hears of the melodies of Christ. They may sound complete in themselves, but yet they could not operate without connection to the *cantus firmus* and indeed they invite the world to listen for him.

Clearly the *Discipline* is not the pious counter-balance to worldly, non-religious Christianity. Rather worldly Christianity is an important implication of a disciplined participation in the performance of the melodies of Christ. It is the dialectical movement between the twin poles of worship and solidarity with the world that provides the vital key to participating in the performance of Christ’s polyphony. Bonhoeffer’s hope was that this movement not only prevents either pole eliding into the other but also acts against any dualistic tendencies for Christianity to dichotomise into pietism or activism. While he himself seems to have remained dissatisfied with his own formulations on this subject Bethge notes how ‘he never considered the dissolution of one in favour of the other’.

The provisionality of practising the *Discipline* is an inherent part of its very character. Bonhoeffer anticipated a ‘melting pot’ period of transition in which the *Discipline* would help the Christian community move into a non-religious and worldly discipleship, and warned against emerging too quickly from the process. Ballard warns that this provisional aspect of the *Discipline* ‘must be taken seriously: first against panic and desperation to find instant solutions to our problems, or to hail each new (and valuable) experiment as the longed for answer; and secondly against despair, to resignation that all that is left is wilderness’. However, he also notes that it would be wrong to see the *Discipline* as no more than a ‘temporary expedient’: its practice in varying forms will remain an essential key to performing the polyphony of Christ as Lord of

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72 *Letters and Papers*, p337.
73 *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p884.

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heaven and earth. Those who seek to practice the *Discipline of Counterpoint* will be cognisant of their performance of the melodies of Christ in the Church and also aware of the ways in which this music is connected yet different to that heard and performed within the world. While the two cannot exist in isolation, yet for the purposes of clarity, the two realms must be examined in their own particularity.

The first arena in which Christians may seek to perform the polyphony of *Discipline* is inside the boundary of the Christian colony. They will do so through practices such as a sermon, a liturgy, worship and prayer. Bonhoeffer never envisioned the Church without these traditional practices. He advocated religionless Christianity precisely to preserve their unique value over and against religious profanation. Religionless Christianity was thus never intended to become Churchless Christianity: the goal was a radically purified and renewed Church whose practice of the *Discipline of the Secret* forged them into a distinctive community whose deeds in the world interpreted themselves. But the inspiration for these deeds was to remain a secret affair; it was not to be flaunted triumphantly before the world or forced upon its uncomprehending people. But the colony remained a place for worship. Bonhoeffer practiced regular prayer, meditation on scripture and hymns. His last action with others was to conduct a worship service, albeit only after his fellow prisoners had insisted on it. Thus, concludes Rasmussen, 'Cultus counted for Bonhoeffer in his life and thought, in his last days, and for the future he envisioned'.75 Perhaps more importantly this reveals the significance of his practice of the *Discipline*: it was only after the prisoners had heard something of the *cantus firmus* in the counterpoint of his actions that he acceded to share with them his understanding of the mystery of Christ. This, too, was a gathering of fragmented epiphanies, a revelation of the suffering God for whom no boundaries existed. For Bonhoeffer, 'only a suffering God' could help.76

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75 Larry Rasmussen, ‘Worship in a World Come of Age’, p269.
76 *Letters and Papers*, p361.
In a world of ecclesiastical compromise such non-religious worship with the crucified Christ in its centre, will not be welcomed by everyone. Indeed, it is not those initiated into the Church through Baptism, but those initiated in Christ through suffering, who are invited to gather. It may be the established Church who will be the strongest opponent of the rediscovery of Christianity in its non-religious roots and it will fight to save a space for itself and its God. Bonhoeffer criticises such responses as pointless, ignoble and unchristian. Pointless because it is 'an attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence, i.e. to make him dependent on things on which he is no longer dependent and thrusting him into problems that are in fact, no longer problems to him'. It is ignoble because it attempts to 'exploit man's weakness for purposes that are alien to him and to which he has not freely assented'. Finally, it is unchristian because, 'it confuses Christ with one particular stage in man's religiousness, i.e. with a human law'.

Rasmussen declares that;

Arcane discipline means that worship in a world-come-of-age is ... only for small groups of clearly committed Christians who comprise an intense community on the basis of their intense loyalty to Christ; and their expression of the meaning of that loyalty as members of the one Body is communicated with one another in worship, but not and with all. Worship as an arcane discipline is not for the streets, the posters, the media, or the masses. It is certainly not Hollywood Bowl and drive-in Easter sunrise services, nor Sunday East Room exercises in American civil religion, nor Astrodome rallies of religiosity. It is not bumper-sticker and slick-paper Christianity. If Bonhoeffer were to have his way, the church would begin by giving up its property for the sake of the needy, would be devout in its practice of disciplines and demanding in its stipulations for participation. It would be a poor and apparently powerless church that would dispense costly grace, rather than a rich and privileged church that would offer only cheap grace.

Ballard provides a powerful summary of the performance of the Discipline when he writes; 'The Christian presence in the world should not be seen in terms of

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77 Letters and Papers, p327.
78 Letters and Papers, p327.
79 Letters and Papers, p327.
80 Larry Rasmussen, 'Worship in a World Come of Age', p278.
the sanctuary or "going to church" as the primary activity, but as a community whose inner life is nourished in secret. ⁸¹

If the first arena for the performance of the *Discipline* is the Christian colony then the second is that of 'worldly solidarity' or deputyship. This theme of deputyship or *stellvertretung* (literally standing in the place of another) is a unifying thread in all of Bonhoeffer's work and is 'a reversal of what the religious man expects of God ... participating in the sufferings of God in the secular life'. ⁸² Its roots can be found in the early theology of *Sanctorum Communio* ⁸³, but are perhaps most powerfully articulated in the later poetry from Prison where he writes;

> Men go to God when he is sore bestead,  
> Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,  
> Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;  
> Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving. ⁸⁴

Rasmussen suggests that this will mean 'groups of Christians operating rather incognito in the world, making common cause with the non-Christian and the non-religious, all without ecclesiastical and theological pretence and qualification'. ⁸⁵ As the Christian participates in the performance of Christ in the world they discover blessing, (in no longer thinking that they need to be more pious than the worldly Christ), along with suffering, (as they give themselves into the service of others and discover what it means to stand by God in his time of need) and also strength, (as Christ equips them for the melodies they are called to perform). ⁸⁶ And the further the Christian community moves from their

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⁸¹ Paul Ballard, 'Worship in a Secular World: Bonhoeffer's Secret Discipline', p31. Aspects of this secret nourishment are explored in more detail in chapter 8 below.

⁸² *Letters and Papers*, p361.

⁸³ See especially the sub-section entitled 'Ethical Collective Persons' where Bonhoeffer writes 'it does not matter how many repent, and in actuality it will never be the whole people, the whole Church; but God can regard the whole 'as if' all had repented. “For the sake of ten I will not destroy them” (Gen. 18:32).’ God can see the whole people in a few, as God could see and reconcile the whole of humanity in one man. Here arises the problem of vicarious representative action [Stellvertretung].' *Sanctorum Communio*, p119-120. See further K. W. Clements, 'Community in the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, Vol.10, No.1, p19 ff.


⁸⁵ Larry Rasmussen, 'Worship in a World Come of Age', p279.

religious notions of God, the closer they come to participating in this blessing, suffering and the strength of Christ, being caught up into his polyphonic purposes. In other words, it is in singing songs of protest and freedom, songs that are not readily identified with the Church, or the realm of the religious, that the Christian participates in the performance of Christ.

The Rule of the Iona Community in its initial form was not a conscious attempt to re-interpret the *Discipline of the Secret*. Even now, as it has evolved, it cannot be directly equated with a performance of the mystery of the polyphonic Christ. However the Rule does seek to enable its members to live in the world while not being of it. An examination of the disciplines of The Iona Community reveals some indication of how the practice of such a *Discipline of Counterpoint* might appear in a contemporary context. For instance the fourth part of the Community Rule deals with the commitment to work for justice and peace and affirms their decision that as individual members and Family Groups they will engage in forms of ‘political witness and action, prayerfully and thoughtfully, to promote just and peaceful social, political and economic structures to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation’. For members, this part of the Rule is a point of departure, the place from which members of the colony launch themselves into worldly solidarity. Some will engage in such action through the Church or other faith based organisations but, many others will do so as part of ‘secular’ groups, such as local councils, political parties, *C.N.D.* the *Campaign Against the Arms Trade*, or the coalition to *Make Poverty History*. Much of this work is hidden in the world in the sense that those who engage in such righteous action make no overt claim to be acting in the name of God, but do so, before God, as if God did not exist. These are deeds that interpret themselves, melodies that are performed before the world, with the world, and for the sake of a better world.

There is then within the Christian community, an acknowledged dialectic between the melodies that occur in worship within the boundary of the colony

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87 *Rule of the Iona Community* 4:8. See Appendix A.
88 Aspects of these melodies of worldly solidarity are explored in more detail in chapter 9.
and those which are sung beyond it, in solidarity with the world. The cantus firmus underpins them both and the fragmented epiphanies of counterpoint that Christ calls into existence may be encountered in either realm. Performing Christ’s full polyphony requires the community to gather together the fragments into one realm, under one Lord, so that each informs the other. Prayer and work for justice form a counterpoint to Christ’s cantus firmus. Bethge seems to have understood this when he wrote:

"Doing the just thing among men" keeps praying from escaping into self-sufficient piety, and praying keeps the doing of the just thing from self-righteousness. Second, doing the just thing keeps praying from that hypocrisy which the children of the world have discovered in the pious at all times, and praying keeps the doing of justice from the fanaticised ideologising which makes those who work for change most of the time bad representatives of their own cause. Third, doing the just thing keeps praying from pessimism, which is not faith, and praying keeps doing of the just thing from resignation, which is not Christian either. And fourth, doing keeps praying within the reality of this earth, and praying keeps doing justice in line with the truth of the Gospel.89

This dialectic is performed in the Iona Community through regular gatherings of the membership, both in Community Week on Iona and on other occasions around the UK for plenary discussions. But perhaps more importantly this discipline is practiced in the smaller and more accountable Family Groups. It is here that the fragments of Christ from world and worship are brought together. Their meeting for worship and accountability in these groups is important, because the members realise that for all MacLeod’s contention that community was formed by the ‘demanding common task’ in reality, ‘the most vulnerable element, and usually the first to go, is not shared action but the constant holding of the other in love and respect’.90 It is through the discipline of accountability to one another of their performance of the Rule that the Lordship of Christ in Church and world is affirmed, not simply in the words of pious hope, but in reality. Many Church fellowships remain entrenched in Christendom and an understanding of reality as existing in two distinct realms. The discipline

practiced by the Iona Community enables their members to remain as a colony of heaven within the Church as much as in the world, slowly working for change.

As the closing responses for Iona Family groups the liturgy affirms:

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\text{In work and worship} \\
\quad \text{God is with us} \\
\text{Gathered and scattered} \\
\quad \text{God is with us} \\
\text{Now and always} \\
\quad \text{God is with us.}\]

The *Discipline* of performing the polyphony of Christ requires that the Christian community gather together, bringing to worship what melodies they have learnt of Christ in their solidarity with the world. But it also requires a commitment to allow themselves to be scattered back into that world, performing the polyphony of Christ to a cacophonous humanity. The world is hence invited to listen to the music and if they desire, to participate in its performance. As they do so, the world hears within itself, echoes of the *cantus firmus* and begins to discover Christ for themselves and in themselves.

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The early Members of the Iona Community engage in a *Discipline of Counterpoint*: affirming that 'to work is to pray' and 'to pray is to work'.

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92 Photograph taken from *We Shall Rebuild*, p.4.

**Melodies of Community**
chapter eight:  
making melodies in the church.

The Church service is the most important, momentous and majestic thing which can possibly take place on earth.  
Karl Barth ¹

A mighty God;  
We bless You for the mystery of the Church.  
No human society is she, striving to be like You.  
No accidental throwing together of struggling human is she.  
She is bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh.  
She is Your substantiation here on earth.  
A great mystery is Your Church.  
George MacLeod ²

The present-day Church is Christianity celebrating only from afar.  
It thereby stands at the periphery and not at the center of life.  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer ³

² George F. MacLeod, ‘A Great Mystery is Your Church’, in The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory, p37.

Melodies of Community
CHAPTER 8: A PRELUDE

Christian patterns of worship flow from an encounter with the polyphonic Christ. Faith, argued Bonhoeffer, was all about human participation in Christ. He wrote, ‘Our relation to God is not a “religious” relationship to the highest, most powerful and best Being imaginable - that is not authentic transcendence - but our relationship to God is a new life in “existence for others”, through participation in the being of Jesus.’ The sharing of this mystery is characterised by people and communities participating in the melodies that Christ already performs in both the Church and world, this is the ‘doubling of the parts’ through Christ. The Christian community is invited to participate in the counter-melodies of heaven and earth that are already called into being through Christ’s polyphony. And once the polyphony of Christ as cantus firmus has been established and affirmed, then the varying countermelodies of his worship may be explored.

Such melodies are encountered as fragmented epiphanies, snatches of heaven’s song that hint at the greater whole that is held together in Christ’s cantus firmus. As we have noted such melodies may be encountered as much ‘in work as in worship, as much in politics as in prayer and as much in the secular as within the sacred’. The contemporary community of faith may as a colony of heaven, double the parts of Theo-sony, the sound of God, within the life and worship of the Church.

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4 See Letters and Papers, p381.
5 Letters and Papers, p381.
6 Bonhoeffer hoped to re-consider the biblical concepts such as ‘creation, fall, atonement, repentance, faith, the new life, the last things’. Such an examination is beyond this work but, as we have already noted, the imagery of music has been adopted in hermeneutics. See the work of Frances Young in Virtuoso Theology, as well as that of Nicolas Lash, Stephen C. Barton and Gordon Giles, noted above at p86, fn.67. See also Rowan Williams, ‘Postmodern Theology and the Judgement of the World’, in Frederic B. Burnham, ed., Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World, (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), p93 ff, and Howard Marshall, ‘Climbing Ropes, Ellipses and Symphonies: The Relation between Biblical and Systematic Theology’, in Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright, eds., A Pathway into the Holy Scripture, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), p199-219.
7 See The Iona Community Home Web-page: www.iona.org.uk
8 It is acknowledged that the apparently unavoidable necessity of examining first the melodies of God within the Church and then subsequently the melodies of God in the world as if they were two distinct concerns represents a false and misleading dichotomy. The two must be allowed in practice to interweave as counter-harmony to the cantus firmus of Christ in whom all things are held.
The key to this polyphony of worship lies in understanding and appropriating the nature of Christ that is celebrated in the *Discipline of Counterpoint*. It will facilitate the gathering together in worship of those epiphanal encounters that have occurred both within and without the Church community. It will not seek to explain the mystery of these encounters, but rather will preserve a space for their sharing and a place from which the people may offer God their response. This response is explored below: firstly through some reflection on the character of polyphonic worship, then in an examination of how a polyphonic God calls the Christian community to ecumenism and finally through a discussion of healing in the worship of the Church.
CHAPTER 8, FIRST MOVEMENT:
POLYPHONIC WORSHIP

The core of worship is God acting to give his life to man 
and to bring man to partake of that life. 

Paul W. Hoon

Prayer does change us. Our convictions, our activities, our perspectives on our fellow 
human beings, the nature of life, the nature of God, can be radically altered through 
giving up time to prayer. And it is the same with music. I think our perspectives are 
fundamentally changed through the power of music. There is an analogy there, and I 
think it is because they are from the same source: we are talking about the same thing. 

James MacMillan

If music is the most contemplative of the arts it is not because it takes us into the 
timeless but because it obliges us to rethink time: it is no longer time for action, 
achievement, dominion and power, not even time for acquiring ideas ... It is simply time 
for feeding upon reality; quite precisely like that patient openness to God that is 
religious contemplation. 

Rowan Williams

Worship is 'an exasperatingly difficult word to pin down' and determining what 
makes such human behaviour particularly Christian can be even more complex. There are, for instance, many practices of worship that Christians share with 
other faiths; viz. an annual cycle of symbolic events, dedicated space and 
buildings, prayer, singing, and the reading of Holy Scriptures, all of which take 
on a particular identity when done within a Muslim, Jewish, Christian or other

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11 Rowan Williams, 'Keeping Time', in Open to Judgment: Sermons and Addresses, (London: Darton, 
proposes three methods of defining Christian Worship; firstly a phenomenological study, second is to 
look at the definitions offered by Christian thinkers and finally an examination of key words used by 
Christians to express what they experience as worship, p22.
paradigm. There are practices, particularly Eucharist and Baptism that are definitively Christian, but are celebrated by the Church in diverse ways. What makes this diverse worship uniquely Christian is its consciously Christological centre. Christ is the cantus firmus of each practice. Christian worship is humanity's response to the perceived understanding of God's fragment of self-revelation in Christ. Thus, as a whole, and as separate practices, expressions of Christian worship should reflect the polyphonic nature of Christ.

The Church does not have a reputation for a polyphony of worship. Each denominational division of the Church has historically tended toward a monophonic homogenisation that dismissed variant worship practices. In such a paradigm every move towards 'oneness' in worship is understood as a distancing from 'differentiation' and vice versa. A particularly conspicuous instance of this is in what North Americans have labelled the 'worship wars'. These 'wars' are examples of conflict between those with a more conservative, traditional and usually more liturgical approach to worship and those advocating a more contemporary and / or charismatic style of service. Christians have been urged

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15 J.D. Crichton notes that 'Because it is God who always takes the initiative, Christian worship is best discussed in the terms of response'. See J.D. Crichton 'A Theology of Worship', in C. Jones, et al., eds., The Study of Liturgy, p9.


17 Rather than being the subject of theological reflection these battles have often been decided by a synthesis of zero sum logic and a western combination of democracy and free market philosophy: in effect victory has gone to the style that attracts the most 'consumers' of worship.
to choose between one ‘camp’ or the other and often congregations have split with acrimony.

Ironically, given the central metaphor of this thesis, many of the battles in the worship wars have been fought over the nature of singing and music, its style and instrumentation in the Church.\(^{18}\) This is not surprising, because of all ways that Christians worship, singing together is perhaps the most genuinely communal. As Eleanor Kreider notes, ‘Singing is something we do together. We agree on the tune, the pitch and the speed. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, can take part. Of all the things we do in worship, singing is the most corporate’.\(^{19}\) And notable attempts have been made to find a ‘Third Way’ through the zero sum dichotomies of America’s Worship Wars. In particular Robert E. Webber\(^{20}\) has argued for what he terms ‘blended worship’ and Thomas G. Long has articulated nine characteristics of congregations who have successfully united traditional and contemporary worship.\(^{21}\) But there is lacking in these works a sufficiently robust foundational theology on which to construct worship that genuinely bisects unity and difference. For instance Webber’s thesis is clear, ‘Worshipping Churches respect their own tradition, are in dialogue with the worship traditions of other Churches, and draw from the Church’s worship practices throughout history’.\(^{22}\) His context has been the competing traditions of North American worship wars: the liturgical tradition, the traditional Protestants,

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\(^{21}\) Thomas G. Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship*, (Herndon, VA.: The Alban Institute, 2001). See also Ronald P. Byars, *The Future of Protestant Worship: Beyond the Worship Wars*. Long examines nine characteristics of varying congregations who have all successfully converged traditional liturgy with contemporary language music and imagery into a creative ‘third way’ of worship. These are ‘an experience of mystery, practicing hospitality, recovering a sense of drama, excellence and eclecticism in music, creatively adapting the worship space, connecting worship to mission, encouraging worshippers to develop a range of worship responses, moving towards a joyous festival as worship concludes and employing strong gifted leaders. It is interesting to note how these nine characteristics were and continue to be distinctive marks within the Iona Community.

the Creative / Contemporary model and the Praise and Worship / Charismatic tradition. But his laudable proposals for 'blended worship' leave the impression that it is a pragmatic solution to an embarrassing conflict rather than a direct response to a revealed understanding of the nature of God. It is the metaphor and the theology of polyphony that rises to the challenge of this otherwise unmet task.\textsuperscript{23}

Polyphonic worship will gather into a single unity the differing worship practices of the past, the present and the future. It begins with the past, acknowledging the debt owed by the contemporary community of faith to the historical Communion of Saints. It is their worship, their liturgy and their hymnody that has kept alive the story of salvation and nurtured the Church since the days of Christ and his first disciples. Polyphonic worship will discern that while some of their practices may be no longer relevant to contemporary this-worldly worship, the wealth contained in these traditions cannot be quickly relegated to books of history. Polyphonic worship will search the past and treasure what of its history still speaks to the world and Church in the present. It will acknowledge that the best of the past may need to be re-contextualised for the present and it will work at such a task.

Gathering the fragments of what has gone before and re-arranging them for a new time and place is a classic mark of today's post-modern culture. Musical examples are legion, but might include Jacques Loussier's jazz reinterpretation of Bach, Jan Garbarek's fusion of saxophone with the medieval choral sound of the

\textsuperscript{23} C. Michael Hawn has suggested that a more appropriate metaphor for this idea can be drawn from his experiences of polyrhythm in a West African drumming ensemble. He argues that as drummers play together 'each rhythm of a polyrhythmic collaboration has a distinct pattern, yet combines with other rhythms to produce a larger aural experience'. C. Michael Hawn, \textit{Gathering into One: Praying and Singing Globally}, (Grand Rapids, MI. / Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), p273. Hawn specifically rejects the images of 'unison singing', 'harmonic blending' and 'contrapuntal complexity' because they are 'essentially Western terms that describe the priorities of Euro-North American musical traditions', p272. Hawn's criticism is well made but what is lacking in his alternative account is an equivalent locus for a Christological centre such as that offered in the imagery of the \textit{cantus firmus}. The same metaphor of polyrhythm is adopted by Mark Taylor, 'Polyrhythm in Worship: Caribbean Keys to an Effective Word of God', in Brian K. Blout and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, eds., \textit{Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship}, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p108-28.
Hillard Ensemble, Enigma's synthesis of 1990s pop music with Gregorian chant and the deliberate cultural fusions of Afro Celt Sound System. To carry the past with them, but to re-imagine it for the journey, is also a process incarnate in the biography of worship in the Iona Community. MacLeod was always clear that the Iona Community was not the resurrection of a dream of the past: Celtic or Benedictine. It was an experiment for today and one that was always conscious of the future. It was a "John the Baptist" movement: singing songs in the desert, crying out to make smooth the rough places of the world and calling others to prepare for a new coming of the Lord.

Given Bonhoeffer's reflections on theology, community and music, one might have expected the worship in Finkenwalde to have displayed some polyphonic characteristics. He was, in fact, strongly critical of the students singing in parts. He may have been following the example of early Church Fathers such as Clement of Rome and Clement of Alexandria who understood unison song as symbolic of the unity found in Christ. He certainly notes that unison singing avoided conflict and competition in music. There was, he believed,

no place in the worship service where vanity and bad taste can so assert themselves as in the singing ... the improvised second part that ... kills both the words and the sound ... the bass or the alto voices that must call everybody's attention to their astonishing range ... the solo voice that drowns out everything else ... and those who will not join in the singing because they are particularly moody or nursing hurt feelings.

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25 MacLeod referred to Iona as a 'John the Baptist movement', cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p68.

26 Clement of Rome urged Christians to join their praise with the multitude of angels by crying out to God 'as if with one voice'. Clement of Rome, commenting on 1 Cor. 14:5-7, Patrologia Graeca, ed., J.P. Migne (Paris, 1857-66), 1:276-77, trans. James McKinnon, in Music in Early Christian Literature, p18 and cited in C. Michael Hawn, Gather into One, pxvi. Clement of Alexandria wrote, 'We want to strive so that we, the many, may be brought together into one love, according to the union of the essential unity ... the union of many, which the divine harmony has called forth out of a medley of sounds and divisions becomes one symphony, following the one leader of the choir and teacher, the Word, resting in that same truth and crying out "Abba Father",' Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus 9, in Music in Pagan and Christian Antiquity, trans. Boniface Ramsey, (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), p67, cited in C. Michael Hawn, Gather into One, pxvi.

27 Life Together, p67.
While Bonhoeffer's reasons for singing in unison are laudable he failed to address the fact that musical conflict in worship has, at its root, a refusal to recognise the unique unity and diversity that exists within the polyphonic Christ. Such conflict represents a lack of theological imagination in our conception of the Christ. The polyphonic singing of one song is an apposite and concrete expression of that truth. As Cunningham points out, modern theology has interpreted oneness and difference as a zero sum game, and:

\[\textit{to set these two categories against one another is to force Christian theology to work against itself: the more one argues in favour of difference, the less one is committed, it seems, to a specifically Christian identity. And on the other hand (according to this way of thinking), the more one seeks to merge everything into a single, undifferentiated whole, the more remote one's theology becomes from the obvious differences that mark the world in which we dwell.}\]^{28}

There is therefore a need to discover a polyphonic practice of worship in which diverse melodies of the Church remain rooted in the \textit{cantus firmus} of Christ but learn to complement rather than compete with one another. Indeed, despite these comments from Bonhoeffer, in other ways a distinctive polyphony is apparent during the time in Finkenwalde. While there he insisted that it is not the voice of the individual but 'the voice of the church' that should be heard in song and that all true singing together served to 'widen the spiritual horizon' of the community.\(^{29}\) This enabled gathered communities of faith to recognise their membership of the wider Christian Church on earth\(^{30}\) and the need to stand in solidarity with suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus, in Finkenwalde, he taught students the Negro Spirituals he had sung in Harlem and spoke of the struggles out of which they were born. His eclectic adoption of worshipping practices from beyond his Lutheran tradition, disciplines such as confession and meditation, clearly mark him as one who was instinctively moving towards what

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\(^{28}\) David S. Cunningham, \textit{These Three are One}, p270. Cunningham argues that the doctrine of the Trinity ("the divine processions mark God's eternal self-differentiating movement, while the indivisibility of God's external works mark the harmonious convergence of the Three"), provides humanity with an archetypal account of differentiation and convergence. He sums up this thinking in the verb 'to pluralize' and goes on to discuss the possibilities of reflecting a pluralizing God in the Christian practice of worship, p271-284.

\(^{29}\) \textit{Life Together}, p68.

\(^{30}\) \textit{Life Together}, p68.
was in essence polyphonic worship: a gathering of worshipping fragments around a *cantus firmus* of the *Discipline of Counterpoint*. But it also brought criticism from some, including Karl Barth, who believed that he was leading his seminarians down the road to Roman Catholicism.\(^{31}\)

George MacLeod was similarly accused of leading the Iona Community to Rome because of his equally eclectic approach to worship. He was criticised for his adoption of non-Presbyterian practices such as twice daily services that employed candles, liturgical responses\(^{32}\) and his weekly celebration of communion in the Community.\(^{33}\) But MacLeod was a man with a passion for worship. The celebration of Easter he experienced in the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem captivated his imagination. He was overwhelmed by the combination of ‘action, mystery and theatre’ and by the way ‘the spiritual and the material fused in a never-to-be-forgotten rapturous moment of revelation’.\(^{34}\) This was worship that reflected the bisociation of heaven and this-worldliness in its Christological centre; this was worship that appealed to the personal, the political and the cosmic in MacLeod.\(^{35}\) It was an epiphanal fragment that would inspire him for the rest of his life and it particularly enthused the worship of the colony of heaven he founded on Iona. In time, Iona Abbey became the theatre in which this compelling vision of God’s glory was often expressed.

 Returning to Scotland, in 1933, an enlivened MacLeod had argued that the Reformed scheme of private and public worship was increasingly redundant and in need of a new experiment that would ‘infuse with the Christian spirit every department of life’.\(^{36}\) He wrote:

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\(^{32}\) Although such practices are common now, at the time such innovations from other denominations, especially anything linked to Roman Catholicism were regarded with suspicion in Scots Presbyterianism.

\(^{33}\) Many of the practices adopted by MacLeod were (or at least were represented by him) as being firmly located within the history of his own Reformed tradition or that of the ‘Celtic Church’ of yesteryear.

\(^{34}\) *George MacLeod*, p110.

\(^{35}\) *George MacLeod*, p110.

\(^{36}\) Unpublished paper by George MacLeod, cited in *Chasing the Wild Goose*, p53.
Is the truth not that the old cultus has splendidly served its day and generation; it is our modern environment that has rendered it outmoded. It is not the old Reformation timbers that are in criticism, it is that they survive from a day of wooden houses. It is not the building of the old channels that has rendered them faulty, but the shifting of the subsoil of this evolving world.37

MacLeod instinctively appreciated that ‘the infusion of the Christian spirit in every department of life’ must be grounded in the relation of heaven and earth that was located in the Christ. It was the way of Columba and the Celtic Church. It was the experiment that was needed for his time. And so it was with the specific intention of embodying a spirituality that ‘broke down the barriers between everyday life and language, and the life of the worshipping community’ that the first members of the Iona Community arrived to rebuild the medieval Abbey on Iona.38 In time, the Iona Community would incarnate a multiplicity of practice that illustrates the idea of polyphonic worship. MacLeod realised that worship must unite the realms of heaven and earth. He argued that:

The key to all material issues is to be found in the mystery that Christ came in a body: and healed bodies and fed bodies: and that He died bodily and Himself rose in His body, to save Man body and soul.39

The worship must be this-worldly. It will seek out the ‘hidden things’ of heaven that are yet to be revealed on earth and the new ways that might be discovered to ‘touch the hearts of all’.40 Thus the concerns of a this-worldly discipleship, matters such as peace, justice, racism, economics and ecology must find a place in the worship of the Church.

There will be a wide number of people involved in such worship. If in Christ there is ‘neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female’ if all are ‘one in Christ

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37 Unpublished paper by George MacLeod, cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p52.
39 George MacLeod, Sermon; ‘The Church in the Modern World’, cited in Daily Readings, p60, and see Chasing the Wild Goose, p72-73.
Jesus\textsuperscript{41} then polyphonic worship will be inclusive of people, not only in who might be permitted to participate in worship, but in how and with whom it is planned and facilitated. There will be united around one \textit{cantus firmus} the differences of people lay and ordained, male and female, married and single, rich and poor, gay and straight, young, old and middle aged. Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde community was an exclusive brotherhood of unmarried clergy from a particular denomination. The early Iona Community reflected a similar exclusivity\textsuperscript{42} but with one notable exception: it was deliberately devised to place clergy and laity in community with one another.\textsuperscript{43} From the beginning the craftsmen participated in daily worship in the Abbey and their presence was vital: 'time and time again', wrote MacLeod, 'we [ministers] were reminded that artisans are better men than parsons - not just at their jobs but at piercing through by instinct to those real issues which mental acrobatics so often utterly confuse'.\textsuperscript{44}

In time, the Community expanded to include other interested lay people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. They were not craftsmen and did not have the time to spend three months re-building the Abbey, but they were in sympathy with the work of the Community. Despite its reputation for social justice the Community remained an all male preserve until 1969 when Dr. Nancy Brash became the first woman member. The inclusion of women into the Community only came because of female persistence and the delay does not represent one of the Community's finer hours of inclusion.\textsuperscript{45} Its current membership is almost half female and it has its first female leader, Kathy Galloway.

\textsuperscript{41} See Gal. 3:28.
\textsuperscript{42} The first Community members were all male, single and belonged to the Church of Scotland.
\textsuperscript{43} It must be acknowledged that its main purpose focused on educating the ministers in a this-worldly discipleship and the artisans were primarily present for that purpose. Ronald Ferguson notes that as the number of ministers expanded but the numbers of craftsmen remained limited and stable, some artisans felt that despite the image of participation, they were no more than 'audio visual aids for the training of ministers'. See \textit{Chasing the Wild Goose}, p80.
\textsuperscript{44} George MacLeod, cited in \textit{Chasing the Wild Goose}, p55. While the craftsmen participated in worship, it was led by the clergy, MacLeod believing that each vocation had their expertise and that the richness of a community was found in their balance.
\textsuperscript{45} For further details on the inclusion of women members see \textit{Chasing the Wild Goose}, p112-13.
Today, the planning and facilitating of worship in the Abbey mostly involves women and men who are not actually members, but who work in the Abbey on behalf of the Iona Community. They come from a variety of countries, races and Christian traditions who are part of the Residents' Group or who have volunteered to work on the Island for a few months. Every week it will also include a number of guests staying at the Abbey and MacLeod Centres. Few of these people have any theological training or are ordained. Indeed as Kathy Galloway notes, 'the worship is as likely to be led by a 20 year old volunteer cook as by the warden'. And everyone will be encouraged to participate in the worship, returning the idea of 'the liturgy' to its original meaning, the work of the people.

A recognition of difference will also require the community of faith to reflect upon their generational differences; the varying needs and gifts of people at different stages of life. Hawn is right to argue that 'The bright voices of children and changing timbres of young persons should be just as common as the softer voices of senior adults'. But this is a particular challenge with regard to children. As Cunningham notes, 'children tend to be the first victims of an excessive quest for homogeneity in the worship service' and making space for the melodies of children means more than carving out a particular niche for them in the service. 'It also requires adults to re-think their own expectations about the worship service, and to recognise that – if it is to be an act of the whole Body - it will require all members to accept the "otherness" of the other members.'

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46 Kathy Galloway, 'The Worship of the Iona Community', p225. This does not undermine the significance of ordination or theological education but rather reminds the community of faith that each Christian has gifts and a vocation that may expand beyond the boundaries of their employment. On Iona those ordained or possessed of theological education may play an enabling role in the planning and facilitating of worship, particularly in the Wednesday night 'Guest Service'. However at the services involving Eucharist, the celebrant must be either ordained or a recognised person within their own denomination.

47 C. Michael Hawn, *Gathering into One*, p274.

48 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p279.

49 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p280. The Iona Community employs full-time children's workers in the Abbey and MacLeod Centres who work with those planning daily worship. Efforts are made to include children as an integral part of corporate worship. But Cunningham’s proposals would undoubtedly be a catalyst for further reflection.
'Otherness' is a key concept in the polyphony of ritual that is also to be found in this worship. All worship has within it certain prescribed and symbolic actions that mark epiphanal points in the story of the community and / or enable its people to manage change. Some of these rituals will be familiar, 'common rites', that affirm the community culture and enable the personal and communal flux endemic of the human condition to encounter an epiphanal fragment of divine order. Within the Church, these are moments like baptism, weddings or funerals, rites whose particular words and symbolic actions 'are a special kind of doorway into a new stage of life'. They may also include regular moments of worship such as reciting the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and celebrating Eucharist. These 'common rites' are properly understood as epiphanal fragments, and are regarded as sacred. Within the worship life of the Iona Community the daily responses contained in the weekly cycle of morning liturgy, (especially the daily prayer of confession, intercession for members and the Community Prayer) mark such occasions. So too, the weekly rhythm of services dedicated to Welcome, Quiet, Justice and Peace, Prayers for Healing, Acts of Commitment and Communion. The monthly cycle of Psalms, the annual Community Week Gathering and the Hallowing Service for new members also mark important common rites.

However, polyphonic worship will also include 'innovative rites' actions that speak to the community of an 'otherness' that draws the community beyond its normative paradigms of belonging and commitment. The evening services in the Abbey are more open to such innovative rites. Thus while there exists a set liturgy for the various evening services (the common rite) there is within that a large degree of freedom for creative expression. For instance, the Liturgy for the Service of Welcome leaves a space for 'Signs of Welcome' in which guests and staff are invited to greet one another, but the sign may change every week. Similarly in the Service for Justice and Peace, after the reading of Scripture, provision is made for the readings to be 'highlighted by other expressions of the

51 The Iona Abbey Worship Book, p57.
Word, such as other readings, newspaper reports, drama, poetry, testimonies, comment and chants\textsuperscript{52} and the response to the Word may include a symbolic action in which the people are invited to ‘declare their engagement with the concern’ by lighting candles, placing stones, ringing a bell, planting seeds or writing.\textsuperscript{53} The evening service of Commitment is usually planned and led by guests who will draw from their own wealth of experience and the issues discussed in their week. This openness allows for the innovation of ‘the other’ to enter the worship.

Such innovative rites may be divided into those of comfort and those of disturbance. Innovative rites of comfort may be those designed to bring assurance and reorientation in times of disorientation. Alternatively innovation may be designed as an opportunity to deliberately disturb the people beyond the comfortable orientation of their common rites into some new commitment of discipleship. Two brief examples may illustrate the point. In a service held immediately after the events in America on 11\textsuperscript{th} September 2001 the congregation were in a season of shocked disorientation and needed both to express their grief over those who had died and their solidarity with those working in the on-going emergency relief operation. At the front of the Church were placed newspaper pictures of the disaster and a large pile of unwashed stones. As a lament was sung, people were invited to come and move the stones, in solidarity with the rescuers who were still at that time removing rubble from Ground Zero. As they did so they were further invited to build the stones into a cairn of remembrance for those who had died. After this a prayer of assurance was offered. This was both a comfort to disturbed people and an opportunity for them to move beyond disorientation. Contrastingly, in a Service of Commitment entitled ‘Pushing the Boat Out’ the sermon challenged the people to a risky faith on the basis of Jesus’ words to his disciples to push the boat into deeper water.\textsuperscript{54} As they arrived the people were given a picture of a boat tied to

\textsuperscript{52} The Iona Abbey Worship Book, p73.
\textsuperscript{53} The Iona Abbey Worship Book, p74.
the jetty and in a subsequent action of response they were invited to exchange that picture for one of a boat in full sail which they could take home.

Of course, in other responses, the symbolic action may itself be polyvalent, allowing for different members of the congregation to respond according to their own context of personal orientation, disorientation or reorientation. In this way the same action may be comforting to one and disturbing to another. And if appropriate a number of different symbolic actions may be offered at separate 'stations’ located around the one worship space so that many people may be enabled to respond in different ways at the same time.  

This raises questions over a polyphony of space in worship; can many things happen simultaneously in the same space without distraction and chaos? Musically, if one note is played and a second and a third is added, each occupies the same 'audio-space’, but each is heard distinct from the other. So, in polyphony the different melodies are united, but distinct. Cunningham cites the medieval cathedral as an architectural incarnation of the musical metaphor. He notes how its architecture of side chapels, foyers and aisles enables:

> a beehive of activity, in which many people are doing many different things at once. In the midst of their diverse activities, they are held together by their common focus on Christian worship and the Christian life. They do all meet under the one roof; but their activities are many and various, and no-one seems particularly concerned that other people, in other parts of this great room, may not be doing the same thing. Rather then being distracted by this great swell of activity, people seem to thrive in it, and to concentrate their attention all the more fully on their own particular acts of participation in the Christian life.  

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55 One service entitled ‘Down to Earth’ focused on the Gospel and Ecology and was based around the Parable of the Four Soils (Luke 8:4-15) the people were asked to reflect on which soil most represented their response to issues of global climate change. Seeds were available at four different ‘stations’ and, if appropriate, people could then take a seed from their particular station and plant it in good soil. This approach to a polyphony of worship is often adopted in ‘Last Night Out’ a monthly evening time of workshops and worship held in Glasgow and inspired by members of the Iona Community’s Wild Goose Resource Group. The ‘Down to Earth’ service referred to above was inspired by this approach.

56 David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One*, p272.
This does not require a modern replication of such medieval constructions, not least because they often reflected an unhealthy separation of people and clergy, but worship space should reflect the polyphonic character of the Christ who is worshipped. But it is not always the case. James White notes that: 'Church architecture not only reflects the ways Christians worship but architecture also shapes worship or not uncommonly misshapes it\(^5\) and while he admits that the Church could 'worship only with difficulty without buildings' he adds 'often we worship with difficulty because of them'.\(^6\) Theology and Church architecture have consistently influenced one another through the centuries\(^7\) and usually interact around the varying arrangements of six different liturgical spaces and three or four liturgical centres from which worship is facilitated.\(^8\) But usually the congregational focus has united in one space and centre at one time. Rarely has the arrangement of Church space sought to reflect the plurality that is revealed in the polyphonic Christ.\(^9\) Graham Maule, one of the facilitators in the Iona Community's Wild Goose Worship Group has a particular interest in this area having originally trained as an architect. He argues that much of a congregation's difficulty in worship comes from the restricting architecture of the building.\(^10\) His thinking has provoked the creative polyphonic use of space in events like 'Last Night Out' (mentioned above) and in the less flexible arena of Iona Abbey. The

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7. The first major changes occurred when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire moving from a private and persecuted activity conducted in homes to a public act in the secular architecture of the Basilica wherein it acquired the splendour of the Empire. Architecture more than theology may have influenced the worship; what are now liturgical terms, nave, apse, ambo, were originally architectural descriptions. Over time the architecture of nave (for the people) and sanctuary (for the priest) separated by Rood Screens saw an increasingly passive worship by the congregation.
8. The Protestant Reformers knew that the Church buildings they inherited reflected a theology of Christian community and its worship that they now rejected. Thus they reformed not only doctrine but the practice of worship also in various attempts to make a space to enable fully participative community worship. The changes in Roman Catholic Architecture in Vatican II reflected a similar intention. See Peter Hammond, *Towards a Church Architecture*, (London: Architectural Press, 1962).
9. See James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, p93 ff. These are: a gathering space, a movement space, congregational space, a choir space (or in a contemporary setting, space for a music group), a baptismal space and an altar / communion table space. The main liturgical centres are a baptismal font / pool, a pulpit, an altar / communion table. The traditional presider's chair from which much of the service was conducted may now be occupied by a worship leader / facilitator.
10. David S. Cunningham argues that the tendency to reduce each space in Church architecture to only one activity (particularly what happens in the 'sanctuary') is connected to historical neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a failure to transpose Trinitarian values into concrete worshipping practice. See *These Three are One*, p274-78.

The author first heard these comments made by Graham Maule during a plenary on Church architecture at The Third Iona School of Music, August 1997.
creative and multiple uses of available space have brought rich rewards in forms of worship that have been truly polyphonic. If the Church architecture were designed upon a theology of a polyphonic Christ then new possibilities for building design and worship planning would unfold.63

If the Christ worshipped is both Lord of Church and World then considerations of space cannot be limited to ecclesiastical buildings. If a single note is played upon a piano, the note fills the whole of the audible space; there is no holy space reserved for sound any more than there is some arena from which the note is absent. Christ’s cantus firmus fills the whole of creation. So, Christian theology affirms the Church as ‘the gathering of believers’64; not the building but a congregation that can occur ‘in a dining room, a hospital ... or in an open field’.65 If those believers are Christ existing as a community, and Christ is not only polyphonic but a boundariless epiphany of heaven, then reflection will be needed on how worship might reflect the claim that Christ is Lord of all space. This might involve worship being deliberately located in ways that transcend traditional boundaries of sacred space. Acts of worship may be held in pubs66 or shopping-centres or places of public significance. Or it might involve acts of worship that occur without buildings at all. For instance, on Iona, worship has been held around the standing stone cross67 and in events like the Christian Arts Festival

63 One creative consideration of how a Church creates its space for worship is R. Giles, Re-Pitching the Tent: Reordering Your Church Building for Worship and Mission, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1999). See also a short but helpful article by Ian Green, “‘Build my Church’ – Some Theological Considerations on the Theme of Church Design”, Ministry Today, Issue 11, (October 1997), p27-36.
67 This is how the Celtic Christians themselves may have worshipped. The large crosses would act not only as a gathering point for congregations but the illustrations of biblical stories carved into them would be used as teaching aids. Further more it may be that the crosses took on for the Christians the same symbolism as older standing stones had been for the ancestors, namely as a marker point between the worlds of heaven and earth.
'Greenbelt', 10,000 people have shared Eucharist in a field. Outside worship has also formed an integral part of some acts of political resistance. A good example is the regular protest outside the Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base. Outside worship may also incorporate public acts of procession and pilgrimage. For instance on Good Friday on Iona there may be a public procession through the Stations of the Cross from the centre of the village to the Abbey Church. Every week the pilgrimage journeys around the island stopping for reflection, song and prayer at various points of significance.

The prayers of the Community at worship will also allow for diversity, such as an open time for spoken prayer, opportunity for silent prayer and meditation, body prayer, praying with icons, praying with the psalms and sensory prayer. Space for silence is particularly important in a frenetic world which offers little room for reflection on their relationship with others or God. Such quiet space is necessary if Christians are to hear the melodies of heaven and listen with discernment to their performance in the world as God hears it. So any one act of polyphonic worship may include a combination of this diversity of practice along with spoken prayers that may be liturgical, prayers written for that particular event and / or extempore prayer. Indeed extempore prayer may afford the polyphonic opportunity for the community to pray simultaneously as a number of smaller groups. But in any event, all such prayers should be those of the community and not simply those personal to the individual. Bonhoeffer wrote that even

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68 Greenbelt Festival has met in various locations the most recent of which is the Cheltenham Race Course. For more information on Greenbelt see http://www.greenbelt.org.uk.
70 In the late 1980s to early 1990s ‘The March for Jesus’ events saw up to 250,000 Christians parade through British towns and cities and in 1994 a worldwide ‘March’ involved an estimated 9 million people. These were strongly evangelical events with a theology of the Church taking on and overcoming ‘the world’.
71 Indeed even in heaven there is a silence kept (Revelation 8:1). Rachel Muers takes this verse as a beginning for her work on ‘responsible silence’. She claims that this silence in heaven is a ‘listening silence’ that when undertaken by God ‘forms an integral understanding of who God is both in relation to Godself and in relation to the world and that this in turn shapes who people are in relation to God and one another’. This is, she says, ‘God hearing God’s own Word’. See Rachel Muers, *Keeping God’s Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p15 ff.
extemporaneous prayer should not be 'the chaotic outburst of a human heart, but the prayer of an internally ordered community'.

Bonhoeffer was correct. Often prayer within the Christian community is erroneously understood as being at its best when it begins with the individual and when it is both personal and spontaneous, a sharing of one's private hopes and fears with God. This fails to realise that first and foremost prayer is a response to God and so should begin with God rather than with the individual. If it begins with the individual and the sounds of human desire, then it risks drowning out any epiphanal fragments of heaven's song that may seek to draw near. Humanity dare not so risk or presume to address God first with a song of its own making for true prayer is not concerned with revealing or attaining human desires, it is about learning to participate in all that God wishes for them. Prayer leads the praying person(s) to discover their part and to participate in the mysterious symphony of the company of heaven, the communion of saints, angels and archangels. It is only the melodies of heaven that can lead humanity into the revelation of God's purposes. As such there can never be any truly 'private prayer' because any individual prayer is only ever but a part of this greater communal music. It is in this way that the individual or community of faith participates in the unfolding melodies of heaven. Christians participate in the melodies of God by first learning in an internally ordered community how to listen and sing the melodies of heaven. Prayer then is a disciplined response, a response that is taught. This is not to suggest that heaven remains resolutely deaf to the well-intentioned prayers of an untutored but sincere heart. Grace will find a space for such prayer in the symphony of heaven. But it is to argue that prayer, when understood as the discernment of heaven's melodies for the people of God, necessitates disciplined instruction.

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72 Life Together, p70. Bonhoeffer's thoughts on community prayer however placed the responsibility for such prayer of one person, usually the 'head of the house' (Hausvater). He felt this safeguarded the prayer from 'the wrong kind of scrutiny and from false subjectivity' but admitted that it placed an unexpected responsibility on that individual. Life Together, p69.
That the melody of prayer is a tutored discipline should come as no surprise. After all it was the first disciples who asked Jesus to teach them to pray.\textsuperscript{73} In doing so, they acknowledged that discerning the melodies of heaven required a rehearsing discipline. In this way, Christ increasingly became the ground bass of their own being. The disciples sensed that they could only learn this from Christ. And similarly, through the centuries when people have sought to pray they have apprenticed themselves to those who have themselves distinctly heard the song of Christ. But any such masters of prayer can in the end only direct the novice pray-er beyond themselves and into the company of Christ; encouraging an attentiveness to the \textit{cantus firmus}. In the Christian community this ground bass of Christ is sounded most clearly through the reading of the Scriptures. It is there that the song of Christ addresses the community of faith. And so those seeking to learn the discipline of praying with Christ may best begin by praying with the Scriptures. Down through the centuries, when the Christian community has sought to pray through the words of Scripture, as steps to find their way to God, they have looked for instruction from the Bible's own book of prayer; the Book of Psalms.\textsuperscript{74} This is not to claim, in some pre-critical fashion, that the Psalms must be read with an overt Christological agenda\textsuperscript{75}, but is to suggest that if Christ was in God, the Word within the words which constitute the scriptures, then we might expect a prefiguring fragment of him in the words of the Psalms in much the same way as an overture may hint at the themes which will be later

\textsuperscript{73} This point is made in \textit{Life Together}, p155 and see Luke 11:1.


\textsuperscript{75} Such pre-critical readings of the Psalter (in which Christ is anticipated in every line) do not take account of the Psalms as they were used in the life and worship of Ancient Israel. Such works would include Bonhoeffer's own \textit{Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible}. However this pre-critical position does not render their discussions inferior for 'The Word of God is too profound to have its depths unlocked only by intellectual analysis.' (See John L. Bell, \textit{Battering the Babies Heads}, Unpublished Lecture, Swansea University, 2000). And indeed while Walter Brueggemann argues that critical analysis aids rather than detracts from a faithful hearing of the Psalms he is equally assured that many 'pre-critical' works provide a perceptive power and vitality to their understanding. Along with Bonhoeffer in this regard he would also include C.S. Lewis, \textit{Reflections on the Psalms}, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1958) and Thomas Merton, \textit{Bread in the Wilderness}, (Collegville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1963). See Walter Brueggemann, \textit{The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary}, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1984), p178, f.n. 2.
developed in an opera. In this way 'The words that come from God become the steps on which [they] find their way to God'.

The Psalms are epiphonal fragments of heaven's melody that lead the Christian into the discipline of prayer. Their words were the prayer book of Jesus and were often found upon his lips. But before that they were, of course, the prayers of David and of others. In both they become the Word of God in Scripture. When the Psalms are prayed by a polyphonic Jesus, he who is the living bisociation of humanity and divinity, the human words of David simultaneously become the Divine Word, spoken to the community of faith. And likewise when the community of faith pray along with the words of scripture, then through Christ, God's Word becomes again a human word, placing the fullness of human experience before God. The Psalms become not only the melody of God that heaven wishes the human community to hear, but also and simultaneously the music of humanity that God longs to hear voiced from the community: it is the Word of Christ and the Church is Christ existing as community. Immersed in their words the Christian community finds an askesis of learning that helps them attune the experiences of this world to music in the key of God: to pray with Christ and sing in harmony with his cantus firmus. In this way the Psalms have become for the Christian community a vast repertoire of the melodies of God and the regular incorporation of them into the worship of the people becomes the one rehearsal hall in which their melody is learned. It is only through

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76 The analogy is borrowed from John L. Bell, Battering the Babies Heads.
77 The Prayerbook of the Bible, p156.
78 This is essentially the argument proposed by Bonhoeffer in, The Prayerbook of the Bible, p157.
79 A cursory eavesdrop on many a Church prayer meeting will reveal how the language of the Psalms has found its way into the language of prayer via hymnody and contemporary worship songs. However whether the depth of human experience found in the Psalms, from praise and assurance through to doubt and lament is adequately represented in contemporary hymnody is doubtful.
80 In the past the Psalms have been similarly likened to a school by Augustine. Ambrose thought of them as being like a gymnasium, the training place for the spiritual athlete. It is for this reason that the Psalms have played a vital role on the daily office of many monastic communities down through the years. They continue to play this role within the new 'this-worldly monasticism' of the Iona Community being afforded a specific place within the liturgy for family group worship and in the daily morning worship in the Abbey.

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learning to rehearse the sounds of the Psalms that the minds of Christians have learned to sound in harmony with the music of heaven their voices repeat.81

Prayer in this way is akin to those who learn to play music by ear.82 The musician first learns to play because they hear and are attracted by the music that has already been played. They then learn to participate in that music through an askesis of repeating, developing and improvising upon what others have played to them. So the Christian community learns to sing to God because God has first sung to them, and in repeating the music of God, God’s children learn to sing with God. By repeating God’s own music, the community of faith begin to pray with and to God.83

Bonhoeffer tried to tutor his students in Finkenwalde to this end. He encouraged the praying of the Psalms in both the corporate times of morning and evening times of worship and in solitude. He was convinced that a truly Christian community developed a prayerful relationship with God by praying through the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms. He approvingly quoted Luther to the effect that other prayers seemed ‘bloodless’ when compared to the ‘juice, the strength, the passion, the fire’ of the Psalms84 and wrote, ‘Whoever has begun to pray the Psalter earnestly and regularly, will “soon take leave” of those other, light and personal “little devotional prayers.”’85 This was true of Bonhoeffer’s own prayers. Often, it was through the Psalms that he not only encountered the presence of God in life but made connections between God’s Word and the events of his time. Bethge illustrates this when commenting on the many marginal notes Bonhoeffer made in his Bible. The most poignant example refers to Psalm 74. Beside verse eight “They said in their hearts, “We will crush them completely!”

81 This is a paraphrase of The Rule of St. Benedict in which the Saint suggests that the Psalms enable the mind to echo in harmony with the voice. See Rule 19, ‘The Rule of St. Benedict’, in Western Asceticism, ed., Owen Chadwick, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958), p309.
82 The analogy also works with those who learn to play music ‘by sight’ except in that instance they learn to participate in what other musicians have written down, not what is being performed.
83 This is a development of the analogy Bonhoeffer uses in Prayerbook of the Bible, p156.
84 Bonhoeffer is citing Luther, ‘Vorrede zur Neuburger Psalterausgabe’ (Foreword to the Neuburg Edition of the Psalms), 1545, Deutsche Bibel, Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, (Martin Luther, Weimar Ausgabe), 10/2: 157. See, The Prayerbook of the Bible, p161.
85 The Prayerbook of the Bible, p161.
They burned every place where God was worshipped in the land’ Bonhoeffer wrote the date, 9th November 1938, the occasion of Crystal Night, when Synagogues were burned, Jewish shops and houses attacked and Jews were assaulted.86 Significantly he then added, ‘That takes us right into prayer’.87 Later, from prison he would write to his parents, ‘I read the Psalms every day, as I have done for years; I know them and love them more than any other book’.88

For Bonhoeffer the Psalms were the prayers of Jesus Christ, the one who, ‘stands in our place and prays for us ... who knows us better than we know ourselves and was truly human for our sake’.89 The Psalms become the prayer of Bonhoeffer and the prayers of the community of faith because they are, ab initio, the prayers of Christ. Thus Bonhoeffer concludes;

Who prays the Psalter? David (Solomon, Asaph, etc.) prays. Christ prays. We who pray are, first of all, the whole community of faith in which alone the entire richness of the Psalter can be prayed. But those who pray are also, finally, all individuals insofar as they have a part in Christ and in their congregation and share in the praying of their prayer. David, Christ, the congregation, I myself - wherever we consider all these things with one another, we become aware of the wonderful path that God follows in order to teach us to pray.90

If the Christian community is praying with and to Christ, hearing the melodies of heaven through the Psalms as prayed within their midst, then their prayers will inevitably direct them back into this world to which God has chosen to bind God’s self. They draw the Christian community back into the real world, ‘outside the camp’ and as MacLeod said:

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86 Later (in November 1938) he again reflected on the plight of the Jews through scripture in a Circular letter to Finkenwalde graduates. He used the same Psalm, along with Zechariah 2:8 (he incorrectly cites this as Zechariah 2:12 (Whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye), with Romans 9:4 and Romans 11:11-15.
88 Letters and Papers, p40.
89 The Prayerbook of the Bible, p160.
90 The Prayerbook of the Bible, p160.
Outside holiness,  
Out to where soldiers gamble  
and thieves curse,  
and nations clash  
at the cross roads of the world.\(^{91}\)

And the Psalms further encourage a this-worldly discipleship of prayer by employing a melody of language that is drawn directly from the physical realities of God's creation: God is compared to a rock, a shield, a shepherd, etc; things with which the ordinary person, pray-er or otherwise, would be familiar. The metaphors of Psalmody unite the melodies of heaven and the music of the human condition so that what is known in this world evokes fragments of the world to come. The created world was 'the theatre of God's glory'\(^{92}\) and 'the dominant diction in this theatre is metaphor ... the visible and the invisible put asunder by sin, are joined by metaphor ... metaphor is the characteristic language of prayer'.\(^{93}\) Such this-worldly language militates against the Neo-Platonic / Gnostic tendencies. It is manifest in the prayers of George MacLeod; prayers where God's eternity, 'seeps through the physical', redemption is akin to being 'bought back from the pawnshop of death', the separation of death is 'a veil thin as gossamer' and the difficulty of Christian discipleship feels like the 'Steepness of the brae'.\(^{94}\) Such language urges those who pray to ground their communion in the images of earthly experience.

\(^{91}\) 'A Temple not made with Hands', in *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*, p44 ff. This prayer is repeated in a slightly amended form every Friday in the worship in the Abbey. See *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, p21. MacLeod argued that it was only by such a this-worldly discipleship that the Abbey on Iona could continue to be justified. It is perhaps for this reason that the Psalms continue to play a central role in the regular worship of the Iona Community. The liturgy for Iona Members Family Group worship specifically offers a space for the reflection on a Psalm and the regular morning service of worship contains a 6 week cycle of some 36 Psalms arranged around daily themes of justice and peace, healing, commitment, communion, leaving, and creation and welcome.


\(^{94}\) See *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*, p11, 29, 60 and 58.
Such earthly metaphors also enable the community of faith to affirm that all creation is 'charged with the grandeur of God.' They unite the every day world with God, and by including the common world in the life of prayer, this sanctifies every realm so that all creation has the potential to be a fragment of God’s epiphany. In this way, ‘the whole earth cries God’s glory.’

_With earthly eyes we see beneath us stones and dust and dross, fit subjects for the analyst’s table._
_But with the eye of faith, we know You uphold._
_In you all things consist and hang together:_
_The very atom is light energy,_
_The grass is vibrant,_
_The rocks pulsate._
_All is in flux; turn but a stone and an angel moves._

When the Christian community use such earthly metaphors in communion with God, they use the same language in their prayer that non-Christians use with clarity and meaning in their common speech. This then takes the prayer and the pray-er into lively solidarity with the language of the world. It deprives both prayer and pray-er of any refuge within a pious ghetto. It is, as Bonhoeffer knew, easy for ecclesiastical language to be unconnected to the world and so be largely evacuated of any meaning for the un-Churched person; words lose their force and are no longer capable of taking ‘the word of reconciliation and redemption to the world’. In such a case, the community must search for a new language, one that would be:

_quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming - as was Jesus’ language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power, it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth._

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95 ‘Man is Made to Rise’, in _The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory_, p16. MacLeod knew that ‘Creation was not enough’ to understand God’s glory in the world around. It was perceived only through Christ; ‘Christ above us, beneath us, beside us, within us’. It was only when earthly eyes could see with the eyes of faith that they would know themselves to be ‘all dirt about of eternal stuff’. See, ‘Man is Made to Rise’, in _The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory_, p17.
96 MacLeod once prayed ‘Prayer is the same word as pray-er, Lord. You can’t begin to answer us till we are the words we pray,’ ‘The Galilean Language’, in _The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory_, p62.
97 Letters and Papers, p300.
98 Letters and Papers, p300.
Such a new language will bring the pray-er and the prayer into solidarity with Christ and, through him, with all humanity.\footnote{Bonhoeffer’s theological quest for a language of authentic stellvertretet living, standing in vicarious responsibility for humanity, in which the Church lives responsibly for others is not dissimilar to that envisaged by George MacLeod in the prayer, ‘Galilean Language’. There he prays that the Church might speak for the world on its search for reconciling peace and justice with honesty and authority. See “The Galilean Language”, in The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory, p62-63.} This language is overtures within the Psalms in melodies clearly grounded in the \textit{cantus firmus} of Christ. Through the Psalms, Christ plays to humanity in ten thousand places, the many melodies of human experience and emotion. He is found amidst the songs of sadness, doubt and confusion as much as those of happiness, trust and well-being.\footnote{Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: ‘Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men’s faces’. See ‘As Kingfishers Catch Fire’, in The Complete Poems, p52. Walter Brueggemann refers to three main human conditions paralleled in the Psalms: periods of orientation in which ‘life consists in satisfied seasons of well being that evoke gratitude’ times of disorientation in which life consists of ‘anguished seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering and death’ and then reorientation in which life consists in turns of surprise with the new gifts of God and ‘joy breaks through the despair’. Walter Brueggemann, The Message of the Psalms, p19. He also acknowledges that life is too spontaneous to easily fit into any neat grid system. See p10 and 22.} The Psalms offer inimitable instruction in such polyphonic prayer because uniquely in the scriptures they mirror life with all its highs and lows.\footnote{It was because the Psalms offered the full reach of human emotion that Bonhoeffer would not allow for them to be edited in any way, particularly by the practice of omitting some of their darker and more problematic phrases. See Editor’s Introduction to The Prayerbook of the Bible, p147.} They provoke the Christian community to place their emotions with those which the Psalmist invites them to imagine may be owned by others. That is the purpose of polyphonic prayer. It is not the means by which Christians may express what they want to say to God but rather it leads the community of faith to where God is and where God is found in others. Such prayer becomes the steps by which the Christian community find their place in the melodies of God’s unfolding purposes.

And so, if the Christ worshipped by the community is acknowledged as Lord of both the Church and World then their prayers will move beyond a parochialism of ecclesiastical care. The community will pray not just for those known to them personally, but in polyphonic prayer will connect to the Church beyond itself, to the world who do not know the Christ and, in these times of ecological degradation, to the planet itself. It will speak to God, in solidarity with places and
people of suffering and brokenness or joy and celebration. Such polyphonic prayer will bring the diverse concerns of many into one.

In the daily liturgy of the Abbey worship, a monthly cycle of prayer addresses the needs of the world and the life of the Church, concerns of the Iona community, its members and their families. This discipline is shared by individual members dispersed around the world. This is a further evocation of the polyphony of prayer: the one prayer is shared by different people in multiple places on the same day. Add to this polyphony, the daily prayers in the Abbey for Justice and Peace and a weekly cycle that includes prayers for healing and a Quiet Service and a rich polyphony is revealed.

But these reflections only concern the idea of spoken prayer. We have already suggested that polyphonic prayer is more than this. The cataphatic melodies of prayer tend to be ‘left brain’ activities that neglect the more intuitive sides of the human condition. For some personalities this is welcome and comfortable but for others it can leave the spoken prayers of worship, and therefore their experience of prayer in general, as a largely un-engaging practice. There needs also to be an apophatic space that takes people into the mystery of an encounter with God. The meditative use of the rosary as well as the use of prayers such as ‘The Jesus Prayer’ can have this effect. So too can the practice of ‘praying in tongues.’

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104 On any one day a member of the Iona Community might pray for ten other members along with 30 Associates. Added to this they may pray for issues such as equal opportunities, or the environment, fair trading organisations or Base Christian Communities throughout the world. Their intercession may move from Eritrea to Honduras or to the United Nations.

105 Some of these Abbey services only continue during the periods when guests are living at the Island Centres, normally from around Easter to late October each year.

106 Other practices of prayer might include the imaginative exercises of Ignatian spirituality or involve the uses of the senses. For instance, the traditional use of incense is a sensory metaphor by which worshippers can appreciate their prayers rising up as a fragrant offering to God, but other examples might include tasting honey as a reflection on Psalm 81:16 or praying as in silence we shape clay in response to Jeremiah 18. A good example from the Wild Goose Worship Group that combines such symbolism with spoken prayer, involves the Story of the Haemorrhaging Woman, (Mark 5:21-32). Each person was given a paper cut-out hand and a long cloak placed in the centre. At the end of evocative bidding prayers a chant was sung:

Lord Jesus Christ
Lover of All
Trail wide the hem of your garment
Bring healing, bring peace.

Cont.
Praying with icons has been an approved discipline of prayer in the Orthodox Church since the ninth century.\textsuperscript{107} The icon depicts a scene or person from history or the Bible. In using them in prayer, they become more than pieces of art or an aid to prayer, but actual channels of grace.\textsuperscript{108} The icon is not the object of worship, but rather, spiritually connects the worshipper through Christ to the person or scene portrayed. Thus icons become open doors through which the music of another time and place can be heard. They give to the worshipper not so much a melody of heaven, but of a different earth. Importantly the Seventh Ecumenical Council argued that it was not only legitimate but essential to make icons of Christ because they ‘guarantee that the incarnation of God the Word is true and not illusionary’.\textsuperscript{109} In effect icons remind the worshipper of the bisociative and polyphonic character of Christ. When this is linked to the doctrine of creation, icons can be understood as ensuring the potential for all material creation to carry a fragmented epiphany of God.

Rowan Williams notes that with the icon we see, ‘that the boundary between God and creation is not a line between two bits of territory but the difference between the composer and the symphony, between the cloud and the rain’.\textsuperscript{110}

Another ancient practice that has re-emerged as a popular form of prayer in recent years is the labyrinth. The labyrinth is similar to a maze with the one crucial difference that there are no wrong turns or dead ends. The journey undertaken is a twisting, but consistent route, looping closer to and further from

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As different bidding prayers took worshipers to different people and places of their imagination they were invited to lay the cut out hands along the hem of the garment as an act of faith in the healing power of Jesus. See There is One Among Us, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Worship Group, 1998), p50-52. See further John Pritchard, The Intercessions Handbook: Creative Ideas for Public and Private Prayer, (London: S.P.C.K., 1997), and Sue Wallace, Multi-Sensory Church, (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2002).

\textsuperscript{107} From 726 C.E. until the middle of the ninth century, the Byzantine world disputed the use of Icons, particularly the question of whether they constituted idolatry. While it was endorsed at the seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 C.E. the issue was not fully resolved until 843 C.E.


Melodies of Community
the centre but steadily moving there. There is then a similarly meandering return journey towards the exit. It is a pre-Christian act of meditation which was later adopted by the Church as a reflective metaphor for the journey of faith. Often the journey inwards is one of prayer and personal reflection, while the outward path considers this-worldly acts of discipleship. At the centre, the *cantus firmus* of the design, is the encounter with Christ, often symbolised by Eucharist. Recent interest was sparked by the discovery of a large labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France, but the idea of using the labyrinth has been adapted by many in the Alternative Worship Movement and can be found in Christian Retreat Centres, at Festivals and even on the internet.\(^\text{111}\) Usually the labyrinth is physically walked by the worshipper but it is possible to gather a small group around a labyrinth and metaphorically make the journey in the imagination.\(^\text{112}\) Brian and Kevin Draper, themselves pioneers in recreating the labyrinth for contemporary worship note that:

*The Labyrinth is truly multifaceted, offering many layers of meaning and numerous metaphorical connections with the Christian pilgrim in their life journey … [it is] a wonderful example (and physical demonstration) of how prayer can be both corporate and individual at the same time – people walk individually, yet everyone is involved … It can incorporate less obvious ‘Christians’ and allow for safe, inspiring and authentic spiritual exploration. And it can transform lives - by helping pilgrims to enact their walk with God visually, and physically and spiritually move closer to the divine.*\(^\text{113}\)

Finally there will be a diversity of sound and music within such worship. We have noted how polyphonic worship is open to ‘otherness’ in ritual and people, and such openness will also characterise the ‘soundscape’ of worship:\(^\text{114}\) particularly the readings, the preaching, the music and singing of the people.

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\(^{111}\) For instance The Christian Conference Centre in Swanick, Derbyshire has recently constructed a labyrinth in its grounds. There has been a labyrinth with ‘stations’ along the journey for a number of years at the Greenbelt Arts Festival and Youth for Christ has taken a similar event to the National Eisteddfod in Wales. There is an on-line labyrinth with interactive ‘stations’ at [http://www.yfc.co.uk/labyrinth.htm](http://www.yfc.co.uk/labyrinth.htm).

\(^{112}\) The author has used this method to good effect with groups of 15-20 people on a Guided Retreat.


\(^{114}\) The phrase ‘soundscape’ is borrowed from C. Michael Hawn, *Gathering into One*, p274.
The homogenising tendencies within Church worship means that Scripture readings usually are taken from one translation of the Bible, read by one person and in one language. Polyphonic readings of scripture may wish to vary the translations used as deemed appropriate for the worship context and may involve two or more people, of different gender, age, social backgrounds. It might also include reading the passages in a variety of languages. If so then polyphonic worship will seek to express that diversity in the different people used to proclaim the scripture.\(^{115}\)

This may lead to an exploration of polyphonic preaching: what does it mean to expound the scriptures polyphonically? Literally it means that there should be more than one voice present in the revelation of the meaning and application of the Bible. This does not deny the place of a singular proclamation undertaken by an individual, but it offers the possibility for periods of dialogue with the community on the text before the preacher prepares the sermon, or it might invite such interaction within the sermon. This enables the preacher to listen to what God says through the people. The full potential of polyphonic preaching cannot be examined here but there is much that might be explored.

Likewise in hymnody, English-speaking congregations think nothing of singing the words ‘Amen’ and ‘Alleluia’, and many will regularly sing a *Kyrie Eleison*. All these are of a language other than English but have been made familiar by repeated use. Simple chants such as *Mungu ni mwema*\(^{116}\) from the Democratic Republic of Congo or *Tatanaca, mamanaca, Sarantanani*\(^{117}\) from Bolivia, can be taught easily to English speaking congregations. To sing such songs in English speaking Churches serves two aspects of polyphonic worship. Firstly it acknowledges that Christ is the Saviour and *cantus firmus* of Christian people all around the world. By singing their words in their language, the polyphony of

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\(^{115}\) As well as various sources of dramatic readings there is Michael Perry, *The Comprehensive Dramatised Bible*, (London: Collins, 2004).

\(^{116}\) (Know that God is Good). This song is found in the collection, *One is the Body*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Worship Group, 2000), p96.

\(^{117}\) (Men and Women Let Us Walk Together). This song is found in the collection, *Sent by the Lord Am I*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Worship Group, 1991), p32.
Christ's incarnation into other cultures is affirmed. Secondly, by singing the songs of other Communities of Faith, solidarity is expressed with their context. Thus to sing the words of a South African lament written during the Apartheid regime, 'Senzeni Na / Sono sethu' (What have we done? / What is our sin?)\textsuperscript{118} is to join in the cries of suffering people there and all over the world.\textsuperscript{119} The point is well made in the rhetorical comment of hymn writer Eric Routley, 'How will Christians of the future sing? As members of the universal Church, or not at all'.\textsuperscript{120} The worship of the Iona Community has long attempted to celebrate this diversity of song from the global Church. John Bell comments: 'When we sing, however falteringly, in another tongue, we represent and experience both the universality of the Church and the grandeur of God who is not limited by anyone's mother tongue'.\textsuperscript{121} If Christ is the \textit{cantus firmus} of such 'other' peoples then all melodies of hymnody are bound together through Him.

Thus, in each aspect of the Church's worship its polyphonic character should be revealed. It will be evidenced in the bringing together of the historical traditions of the past with the creativity of the novel. It will be seen in a wide understanding of place and it will unite through the person of Christ a wide diversity of people in terms of their gender, race, age, socio-economic status, etc. In its practices of prayer and hymnody it will bring together a people who have learned to listen and value the melodies of God in the prayers and hymnody of others. And nowhere is such polyphony more evident (or noticeably absent) than in the ecumenism practiced by a Christian community.

\textsuperscript{118} See \textit{Sent by the Lord am I}, pp66-67.
\textsuperscript{119} When the same words are sung within the context of an un-persecuted Church in the West the question turns around to become an enquiry as to what Christians there have done to relieve or add to the burden of others.
\textsuperscript{120} Comment by a committee member, quoted by Eric Routley in his introduction to ‘Cantate Domino: An Ecumenical Hymnbook’ as cited by C. Michael Dawn, \textit{Gathering into One}, inside cover.
\textsuperscript{121} John Bell, Editor's Introduction to \textit{Common Ground: A Song Book for all the Churches}, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1998), p7.
CHAPTER 8, SECOND MOVEMENT:  
THE POLYPHONY OF ECUMENISM.

The Church is like a table  
Set in an open house  
No protocol or seating  
A symbol of inviting  
Of sharing, drinking, eating  
An end to ‘them and us.’

Fred Kaan 122

Only Christ can save us now, body and soul: politically and ecclesiastically ... May Iona become an ecumenical centre for the new holiness - personal as well as corporate!

George MacLeod 123

I pray also for those who will believe in me ... that all of them may be one ... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20-23 124

The prayer of Jesus for future believers was that ‘they may be one’ so that their unity would speak to the world about the love of God. A polyphonic understanding of Christ, and therefore of the Church, is of vital importance if this prayer is to be realised. Its concept is crucially instructive for the Church which wishes to ‘speak to the world of the love of God’ and whose gospel claims to speak to the world concerning personal and cosmic reconciliation,125 but whose own history and current practice remains deeply divided within its self. One contemporary prayer sums up this reality in the Church: ‘We are one in spirit but not in fact, history and hurt still dismember us’.126 The world can plainly see a

123 George MacLeod, un-cited reference in Chasing the Wild Goose, p94.
124 John 17:20-23.
125 See II Cor. 5:19 and Col. 1:15-23. Colossians chapter 3 further posits a cosmic Christ in whom there is a boundariless unity that transcends religious, cultural, national and economic differences.
variety of dismembering divisions (and on occasions open hostilities) that exist between the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed and Pentecostal traditions of the Church. Until such division is overcome, the world may well be justified in doubting the authenticity of the gospel. As George MacLeod once commented, ‘The world is dying for the lack of the reconciling Word ... We [the Churches] may have the word ‘on paper’ but until we are the word, men will not listen, nor should they’. Almost without exception these differences within the Church, particularly the doctrinal disputes which have caused division through the centuries have been premised upon the ‘zero sum’ logic in which the acceptance of one understanding of God’s revelation must negate any and all other possible interpretations. Thus, at critical times of difference the Church has divided over issues that include the nature of the Trinity, Apostolic authority, the practice of the Eucharist, the methodology of Baptism, and the role of the Holy Spirit. But any utopian homogeneity of the first century Church must be acknowledged as owing more to wishful thinking than to the facts of history. James Dunn’s study

127 The hostilities in Ireland over the last 40 years are regularly cited as one example of conflict between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians. There are many other instances of violent inter-Christian conflicts around the world. And indeed there are often matters of conflict within the same tradition. As this chapter considers only those melodies performed within the Church, it is restricted to ecumenism and does not address interfaith conflict and dialogue. The issue is not addressed in the subsequent chapter, melodies in the world due to restrictions of space, although some parallel applications will be clear. Many members of the Iona Community are engaged in aspects of such dialogue. For a brief review of Bonhoeffer’s Interfaith encounters see Stephen J. Plant, ‘Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Inter-Faith Encounters’, Discernment, Vol. 3, No. 2, (1989), p19-23.
128 George MacLeod cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p93.
129 See David S. Cunningham, These Three are One, p99, 128-129 and 142-157.
130 The Filioque Controversy (c1054 C.E.) saw Greek and Latin Christian traditions divide over the procession of the Holy Spirit within the doctrine of the Trinity (However the more prosaic rivalries of power and politics were never far removed from the split.) In the 14th century there was opposition to the authoritarian homogeneity of Roman Catholicism through movements such as Waldensianism and those loyal to individuals such as John Wyclif (1325?-1384) and Jan Hus (1372?-1415) Such movements of difference were condemned and forcibly eradicated from the monolithic Roman Church. But the history of Church diversity changed radically during the reformation of the 16th century. In 1517 Martin Luther’s (1483-1546) indirect challenge to Papal authority over the practice of indulgences led his followers to break with Roman Catholicism and form the Lutheran Denomination. Subsequently under leaders such as Huldrych Zwingli, (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564) the Reformed Tradition emerged as a new and separate third stream. At the same time the more radical Anabaptists dissented over matters such as paedobaptism and the connection between Church and state. In the 1530s England saw theology and politics combine under Henry VIII (1509-1547) and Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) to give birth to Anglicanism as England also broke with Rome. Later divisions would see the rise of the Puritan Movement, the growth of Methodism and at the beginning of the 20th century the birth of Pentecostalism in Los Angeles in 1906.
of the early Church argues that while it is possible to identify a ‘unifying core for the post-Easter kerygma’, the emerging communities of faith actually displayed considerable ‘difference and disagreement’ over the proportional importance assigned to varying aspects of belief and practice.\footnote{James D.G. Dunn, \textit{Unity and Diversity}, p30.} Critically he states that ‘in different circumstances’ these communities of faith, ‘can agree to differ and respect these differences as acceptable and valid’.\footnote{James D.G. Dunn, \textit{Unity and Diversity}, p30.} He concludes that ‘Diversity is much more obviously a feature of the beginnings of Christianity than the unity’.\footnote{James D.G. Dunn, \textit{Unity and Diversity}, p230. Indeed the fact that the contemporary factions of the Church all claim scriptural authority for their given positions indicates just how diverse the early Church was in matters of belief and praxis.} Even when apparent unity was achieved, such as that contained in the great Creedal formations of the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} centuries\footnote{The Nicene Creed was formulated in 381 C.E. although not formally adopted as an official statement of faith until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E.} the unanimity contained therein often owes more to the political expediency of Empire than the discerned theological accord of the Church. Initially the creeds were localised and narrative affirmations of faith rather than what they became, namely formulaic tests of universal orthodoxy by which ‘zero sum logic’ could identify and control conformity or heresy. Frances Young has argued that the enforced unity that results from the concept of orthodoxy could not but ‘breed an intolerance’\footnote{Frances Young, \textit{The Making of the Creeds}, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1991), p15 ff.} which would inevitably and paradoxically exacerbate division. Thus, in time, the global community of Christian faith fractured over the years into what now includes hundreds of separate denominations, some of whom consciously exclude others from their midst.\footnote{For instance, it is not accepted practice for a Roman Catholic priest to allow Christians of other denominations access to the Eucharist. And conversely some Reformed traditions would disassociate themselves from joint ecumenical projects involving Roman Catholics.} Yet each denomination would wish to claim a ‘unity in belief’\footnote{‘Unity in Believing’ is the title of an informative essay by Jean Mayland to which this section is indebted. See Jean Mayland, ‘Unity in Believing’, in Maxwell Craig, ed., \textit{For God’s Sake... Unity: An Ecumenical Voyage with the Iona Community}, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1998), p51-74.} through their relationship to the \textit{cantus firmus} of Christ.

Likewise Dunn’s conclusions in respect of the early Church indicate that amidst their wide diversity there remained a central unity that was located in an encounter with the person of Christ. Christ was the \textit{cantus firmus} for the

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  \item \footnote{James D.G. Dunn, \textit{Unity and Diversity}, p30.}
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\end{itemize}
energetic fugue of Christian community. We have already shown that adopting 
the musical metaphor of polyphony allows for a radical reinterpretation of 
difference; enabling counter melodies and even dissonance to remain within 
relationship to the cantus firmus. The Trinitarian God, revealed to the Church 
and world through Christ is both polyphonic and boundaryless. Christ is the 
earby revelation of that God. The Church, as Christ existing as community is 
then offered an opportunity to participate in God, to be a living alternative to 
monolithic homogeneity. The community of faith is called to practice a 
polyphonic diversity wherein difference does not become the ground on which to 
justify exclusion or destruction but a celebration of God’s diverse revelation. The 
denominational differences are then, as Frank Burch Brown once stated; 
‘different performing ensembles’ of the same ‘Christian classic.’ 138 If each 
‘performance’ is understood within the context of a musical metaphor then 
particular denominational differences are not ‘heresies’ to be denounced and 
overcome but fragments of the mystery of a polyphonic God revealed in human 
flesh. If each tradition has earnestly sought to respond with counter-melody to 
Christ’s cantus firmus in their midst then their differing traditions are not bound 
 to a conflict of mutual exclusivity, but are fragments of melody remaining from 
Christ’s great song of prayer; that the Church may be brought into complete 
unity with one another as he is one with the Father. 139

Bonhoeffer took seriously Jesus’ prayer for the Church to live in unity. In time, 
he hinted at a theology of ecumenism that while not being conceived within 
musical metaphors still owed much to their underlying polyphonic principles. He 
appreciated that Christ did not plead for Christian unity to benefit the community 
of faith but on behalf of those not within the Church, so that they might know 
the love of God. The Church existed for others and it was called to be for others, 
in what we have called the colony of heaven, the place of boundarylessness 
wherein human differences such as race, language and nationality were 
transcended in a Unity established through their belief in Christ.

138 Frank Burch Brown, Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning, (Princeton, 
139 See John 17:20-23.
It was during his Easter trip to Rome in 1924 that Bonhoeffer encountered an epiphanal fragment of the boundariless 'concept of the church'.\(^{140}\) It came to him amidst the multi-national gathering of seminarians, monks and priests of every colour that attended High Mass in St. Peter's. He was not unaware that almost every person present was Roman Catholic, and few would have had no Christian allegiance, but the event nevertheless impressed itself upon him so that in his diary he simply noted 'universality of the Church'.\(^{141}\) National Socialism and the Deutsche Christen threatened such transcending universality in the 1930s. Their philosophy directly opposed the international and inter-racial unity that Bonhoeffer argued made the Church truly unique. The transcendence of boundaries and the polyphonic embrace of difference Bonhoeffer sought in the Church were disappearing beneath a monophonic Nazi hatred that was marching inexorably toward conflict. Bonhoeffer was convinced that only the Church could stand as an international colony of peace in such a world of conflict. But that would place the Church in direct opposition to the State; an unnatural position for a Lutheran such as Bonhoeffer. The dichotomy was reinforced by the 'dialectic theology' of Karl Barth who emphasised God's otherness from the world.\(^{142}\) But all that changed for Bonhoeffer during his first trip to America. There, Bonhoeffer came to the critical realisation that if the universal Church was Christ existing as community then that Church was called to be present and united in and for the world so that the love of God could be made known through it.\(^{143}\) God's otherness needed to be confessed in a this-worldly

\(^{140}\) See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p58 ff. Although the significant German ecumenists where located in Berlin and especially in the same faculty wherein Bonhoeffer completed his Doctoral Studies in 1927, he does not seem to have been particularly influenced by them. See Konrad Raiser, 'Bonhoeffer and the Ecumenical Movement', in John W. de Gruchy, ed., Bonhoeffer for a New Day, p321.

\(^{141}\) Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p58. Bonhoeffer was not uncritical of Roman Catholicism and his encounters in Rome made him reflect more deeply on his own experience of Church. See p60-61.

\(^{142}\) Barth reacted against the liberal theology that had flourished since Schleiermacher and assumed an inherent human capacity for numinous consciousness by which they may establish a point of contact with God. WWI had left many disillusioned with the optimism that underpinned such theologies. Barth's commentary on Romans had stressed the absolute separateness of God and the world. Eventually Bonhoeffer rejected this dialectic otherness and asserted that Barth's God had become so transcendent as to become invisible and intangible to a world that needed him.

\(^{143}\) Bonhoeffer's first visit to America was an ecumenical experience in itself. Here he met a diverse group of friends drawn from other races, nations and other theological persuasions but who nevertheless found a unity in their Christian discipleship. Of his four best friends in New York one was a French pacifist, one was a Swiss student of Barth, one was an African American Baptist and one was an Evangelical. It was his friendship with Jean Lasserre, and particularly conversations concerning the
discipleship and it was the Church, fragmented as it was, who needed to embrace this challenge together; ecumenically and internationally.\textsuperscript{144}

It was important that such a this-worldly witness emerged out of the ecumenical movement that understood itself to be the Church militant for others. Bonhoeffer argued that it was only qua Church that Christians could confess Christ as Lord and speak to the world with the authority of Christ. It was all about the search for an integral Christian truth.\textsuperscript{145} But the ecumenical movement did not conceive of itself in those terms. It claimed to be an association of Churches from around the world not the world Church.\textsuperscript{146} Bonhoeffer feared that much good ecumenical work could collapse the moment its ecclesial authority was challenged.\textsuperscript{147} And he was critical of the ecumenical philosophy of mutual tolerance, calling it a ‘romantic, aesthetic liberal idea’ that ‘did not take the truth seriously’.\textsuperscript{148} He claimed that Christians concerned with truth should first themselves be questioned about this truth.\textsuperscript{149} The liberal tolerance of 1930s ecumenism was, for Bonhoeffer, a denial of the Christ’s truth precisely because it was failing to concretely confess the falsehood of the Deutsche Kirche’s Nazi philosophy.\textsuperscript{150} The

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Sermon on the Mount that convinced Bonhoeffer of the urgent need to make concrete this otherness of God for the world. For a good account of all Bonhoeffer visits to America see Ruth Zerner, ‘Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s American Experiences: People, Letters, and Papers from Union Seminary’, in \textit{Union Seminary Quarterly Review}, (Summer 1976), Vol. 31, No. 4, p261-282.

\textsuperscript{144} This is the thrust of his paper ‘A Theological Basis for the World Alliance’, delivered in July 1932 in Czechoslovakia. Here, in a comparison with how socialism was internationalised by the common ideals of workers, Bonhoeffer stated that, ‘Christians too will only learn to think internationally when they have a great common message. We need today more than anything else in the ecumenical movement the one great reconciling message’. \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p171.

\textsuperscript{145} W. Kuhns notes that for Bonhoeffer the ecumenical struggle was, ‘not a matter of “dialogue” in the talkative, compliant sense, nor of an easy concession of doctrinal conflicts for a cheap unity; it was the source for integral Christian truth’. See W. Kuhns, \textit{In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p69.

\textsuperscript{146} Bonhoeffer was not suggesting a move toward one global super-Church but was calling for the collected Churches to act as one Church with the authority of the historical Ecumenical Councils. For a good account of Bonhoeffer’s historical and current relationship to the Ecumenical Movement see Konrad Raiser, ‘Bonhoeffer and the Ecumenical Movement’, in John W. de Gruchy, ed., \textit{Bonhoeffer for a New Day: Theology in a Time of Transition}, p319 ff.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p333 ff.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p336.

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p340.

\textsuperscript{150} There had been considerable disagreement between Bonhoeffer and the organisers of the Fanø Conference as to whether he and any other member of the Confessing Church would attend unless at least one person was invited as an official representative. His point was to call the Ecumenical movement to stand by or reject the Barmen Declaration that the Confessing Church and not the German Evangelical Church was the true Church in Germany. See \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p377 ff. For a very helpful account of Bonhoeffer’s struggles at this time see John A. Moses, \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Struggle for the ‘True Church’ in Germany Under Nazi Rule}, unpublished seminar held at St. Mark’s

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ecumenical unity of Christ’s Church could not be achieved ‘in abstracto’ through some vague compromise on doctrinal assertions that were less than relevant for the world. It could only be made known through a concrete living for others as Christ had done.\textsuperscript{151} That could only be done as the global Church, as Christ existing as an international and inter-racial community engaged in costly this-worldly conduct. What was needed was a theology of ecumenism that would support such a concrete international confession.

But neither ecumenism nor internationalism was popular in the Teutonic fervour of Germany to which Bonhoeffer returned in 1931. Despite this opposition, he readily accepted the invitation to the Cambridge conference hosted by the World Alliance of Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. From then on he devoted large amounts of time and energy to the ecumenical movement; devotion that continued during his time in London\textsuperscript{152} and Finkenwalde.\textsuperscript{153} But for all his involvement, he remained critical of the ecumenical movement and was to continue to argue that it must reach beyond itself as a group of like-minded Christians engaged in conversation towards agreed courses of social action and begin by developing a theology sufficient for the tasks of the time.\textsuperscript{154} In 1932, in Czechoslovakia, he famously delivered an appeal for a coherent theology of ecumenism. He wrote:

\textit{As often as the church of Christ has reached a new understanding of its nature it has produced a new theology, appropriate to this self understanding.}\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{152} It was during his time as a Pastor in London (October 1933-April 1935) that he developed a long and deep friendship with fellow ecumenist Bishop George Bell. It was a friendship which itself crossed boundaries of denomination and nationality.
\textsuperscript{153} Bonhoeffer took up directorship of the Seminary at Zingst in April 1935 and then Finkenwalde in June 1935 and last participated in ecumenical events in London in February 1937, seven months before the Seminary was closed by the Gestapo.
\textsuperscript{154} While Bonhoeffer was critical of those who looked with disregard on the work of theology but celebrated the advances in practical ecumenical projects, he was not unmindful of the need for action.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p157.
But Bonhoeffer could find no such theology within ecumenical self-understanding. What was needed was a 'theological anchorage' a centre which would hold 'while the waves dash in vain'.

As we have hinted at already, for Bonhoeffer, this central theological anchorage was located in Christ and the doctrine of the Church that he had already articulated in the dictum of Sanctorum Communio: 'The church was Christ existing as community'. As Keith Clements notes, what Bonhoeffer now did was 'transpose this communal emphasis into a transnational key'. If Christ was Lord of every people group then the community who bear his name must include every race and nation. Only within a fully international and ecumenical community could the Church make its concrete confession with authority, a confession that in this context demanded action in favour of peace.

Clements' musical reference for the theological evolution is most apposite because even though Bonhoeffer had not yet adopted the musical imagery of cantus firmus, melody and counter-melody, what he proposed by way of an ecumenical witness for peace at Fanö clearly fits that polyphonic model. He wrote then:

_There shall be peace because of the church of Christ, for the sake of which the world exists. And this church of Christ lives at one and the same time in all peoples, yet beyond all boundaries, whether national, political, social, or racial. And the brothers [sic] who make up this Church are bound together, through the commandment of the one Lord Christ, whose Word they hear, more inseparably than men [sic] are bound by all the ties of common history, of blood, of class and of language. All these ties, which are part of our world, are valid ties, not indifferent; but in the presence of Christ they are not ultimate bonds. For the members of the ecumenical church, in so far as they hold to Christ, his word, his commandment of peace is more holy, more inviolable than the most revered words and works of the natural world._

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156 No Rusty Swords, p159.
158 In this Raiser notes that Bonhoeffer was 'clearly ahead of his time and also of the ecumenical discussion with his position that today the order of international peace is God's commandment for us'. Konrad Raiser, 'Bonhoeffer and the Ecumenical Movement', in John W. de Gruchy, ed., Bonhoeffer for a New Day, p329.
159 No Rusty Swords, p290.
Thus, we can see in Bonhoeffer’s theology of ecumenism an embryonic hint of his polyphonic thinking: each melody of human belonging, national, political, social and racial is transcended into the boundless colony of heaven, and held in place with the others through its ‘ultimate bond’ to the cantus firmus of Christ. The unity that is discovered in this polyphonic Church is not for the benefit of the Christian community but for the witness of reconciliation, peace and a witness to the world of God’s love. For Bonhoeffer, only this concrete confession of a Church for others would suffice:

Only the one great Ecumenical Council of the holy church of Christ over all the world can speak out so that the world, though it gnash its teeth, will have to hear, so that the peoples will rejoice because the Church of Christ in the name of Christ has taken the weapons from the hands of their sons, forbidden war, proclaimed the peace of Christ against the raging world.\(^{160}\)

It would be a further ten years before Bonhoeffer wrote to Bethge of the ‘little invention of polyphony’.\(^{161}\) By then he was in prison. His hopes for the Church confessing a concrete example of peace to the world had collapsed into a war now five years old. In the few remaining months before his execution, ecumenism seems to have remained at the forefront of his mind. Indeed, his last known words were directed to his friend and fellow ecumenist Bishop George Bell. ‘Tell him ... that with him I believe in the principle of our universal Christian brotherhood [sic] which rises above all national interests, and that our victory is certain’.\(^{162}\)

Bonhoeffer died without ever articulating a comprehensive theology of ecumenism by which the Church could concretely declare the love of God in the world. It has largely eluded the global Church ever since, but the struggle has been enjoined. Visser 't Hooft is convinced that Bonhoeffer’s arguments have had a considerable influence in this regard, particularly in moving ecumenism from a forum of conversation and cooperation, to a people grappling with the task of

\(^{160}\) No Rusty Swords, p291.
\(^{161}\) Letters and Papers, p305.
\(^{162}\) Cited in Mary Bosanquet, The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p277.
confessing faith in Christ amidst the this-worldly realities of life.\textsuperscript{163} But despite far reaching post-war developments in ecumenism, particularly the foundation of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.),\textsuperscript{164} no-one has yet completed Bonhoeffer's unfinished task.\textsuperscript{165} The W.C.C. has as its purpose the 'visible unity of one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and common life in Christ'.\textsuperscript{166} This is stated as being not an end in itself, but, to 'give credible witness so that the world may believe and to serve the healing of the human community and the wholeness of God's entire creation'.\textsuperscript{167} But as with the ecumenical movement of Bonhoeffer's time the W.C.C. has never conceived of itself qua Church, Christ existing as community. The W.C.C. is a 'fellowship of churches' and is self-consciously beholden to the vision of the participating churches.\textsuperscript{168} According to one commentator this understanding leaves the W.C.C. destined to be 'a consultative forum, not an instrument to make decisions and implement them'.\textsuperscript{169} As such the W.C.C. retains no ecclesial character of its own; it remains an instrument of autonomous and territorial denominations working toward agreed ends. Laudable as those ends may be, the W.C.C. has no pretension to being an Ecumenical Council of the Church or any intention to articulate a theology of ecumenism.

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\textsuperscript{164} The World Council of Churches began with its first assembly in Amsterdam in August 1948. To begin with two ecumenical foci emerged, ‘Faith and Order’ and ‘Life and Work’. A third missionary focus emerged in 1961. It now includes over 340 denominations and fellowships from over 100 countries and represents 400 million Christians. See www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/index-e.html.
\textsuperscript{165} The point is well made by Ulrich Duchrow, 'The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement', in \textit{The Ecumenical Review}, (1981), Vol. 33, No.3, p216ff, particularly his critique of the W.C.C.
\textsuperscript{166} The Constitution of the W.C.C. See www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/con-e.html.
\textsuperscript{167} See www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/con-e.html p2.
\textsuperscript{168} Institutionally, and at their request, the Roman Catholic Church remains outside the full fellowship of the W.C.C. although it retains a regular working relationship with it and is a full member of many national ecumenical organisations. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity appoints 12 representatives to the W.C.C. Faith and Order Commission. And while many of the Orthodox Churches have been part of the W.C.C. since its beginning there have been recent tensions over mechanisms of decision making and conduct of worship. This has resulted in the 2002 'Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the W.C.C'. See www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/special-01-e.html.
\textsuperscript{169} See Ernst Lange, \textit{And Yet it Moves ... Dream and Reality of the Ecumenical Movement}, (Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1978), p10.
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\textbf{Melodies of Community}
The ecumenical melodies to be found in the Iona Community have no such pretension either. Iona's membership is drawn from a wide range of Christian denominations but the Community itself has no self-conscious theology of ecumenism nor has it any declared desire to act with ecclesial authority. Indeed, like the W.C.C. it rejects notions of itself qua Church. But unlike the W.C.C., the Iona Community is not beholden to varying denominational concerns. Its membership is premised upon an immediacy of regularly accountable relationships gathered around the person of Christ and the Rule of the Community. As such the Iona Community offers fragments of melodies and a polyphonic ecumenism that may yet prove helpful for the tasks of our time.

The ecumenical roots of the Community can be traced to 1899 when the Duke of Argyll gifted the ruins of Iona Abbey to Church of Scotland Trustees, but with the caveat that the restored Abbey Church should be open for worship by all sections of the Christian Church. Some thirty-six years later with that work completed, George MacLeod began discussing a vision of what would in time become the Iona Community. In some ways MacLeod's initial vision was firmly ecumenical in character. He wanted to reclaim the 'catholic heritage' and 'collective witness' of the Church. He argued that 'the world was in need of that sense of Universal Church which was so profound a belief in our own Roman days'. But he intended to achieve this not by way of an avowedly ecumenical community, but by way of a brotherhood located firmly within the Church of Scotland. Apart from the artisans necessary to lead the construction work, the group that arrived on Iona in 1938 were either Church of Scotland Ministers or Divinity students. It

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170 Although since 1951 the Iona Community has had a formal relationship with the Church of Scotland's General Assembly it is an autonomous charity and limited company.
171 See Chasing the Wild Goose, p51.
172 See Chasing the Wild Goose, p53.
173 Indeed MacLeod's argument to the Iona Cathedral Trustees played on their bias toward the Reformed / Presbyterian witness in Scotland and hints at anti-Roman Catholic sentiment. In characteristic style he invoked the memory of Columba's initial mission and declared that his experiment would be the modern counterpart, 'the New Light of Protestantism would be lit to meet our day as his Lamp met his'. To this he added, 'I understand that the late Duke of Argyll refused over £100,000 for the island from representatives of the Roman Church. What they would have made of the island had they obtained it, we all know well. As in fact the Church of Scotland holds it, is there not a duty upon us to make more use of it - or at least to attempt to make more use of it - than so far we as a Church have contrived to do?' Private paper, cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p52.
is ironic that this stoutly Presbyterian affair was soon accused of being closet Roman Catholics playing at being monks.¹⁷⁴

However, the Community soon became more truly ecumenical. The outbreak of war in 1939 changed its denominational bias forever. Thinking it unlikely that young ministers would apply to work on Iona while war raged in Europe, MacLeod changed the summer programme into twelve weeks of retreat for clergy, divinity students and laity. From that point on Iona became 'a place of study, community learning and training in discipleship for the wider Church'¹⁷⁵ and the Community's work and worship soon attracted people from a wide range of Christian traditions.¹⁷⁶ This ecumenical character continues today with membership being drawn from all the main denominations in Britain and some from overseas. It is also committed collectively and through the work of individual members to participating in many local and global ecumenical initiatives.¹⁷⁷ Its worship draws on liturgy and hymnody from numerous traditions around the world and although there remain tensions, particularly around the ecumenical celebration of Eucharist,¹⁷⁸ Norman Shanks argues that Iona’s 'kind of belonging together transcends denominations'.¹⁷⁹ Importantly, key moments in the life of the Community have been marked by great ecumenical services.¹⁸⁰ Ian Fraser has noted that such times of worship were not just times of celebration for the Community but 'provided a sign and promise of the great United Church still to come'.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ See George MacLeod’s defence against such accusations in Coracle, No. 2, p18.
¹⁷⁵ Chasing the Wild Goose, p58.
¹⁷⁶ By 1947 in addition to its members there were 5700 signed up Friends of the Community from varying traditions, all supporting the work financially.
¹⁷⁷ The Iona Community is a ‘Body in Association’ with the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and individual members have served as consultants at W.C.C. events.
¹⁷⁸ This is perhaps inevitable in a community encompassing the ecumenical spectrum from Quakers to Roman Catholics and all points in between. No study of Eucharist is attempted in this Thesis, although clearly it offers rich and complementary imagery to the metaphors of fragmentation, diversity and unity, and wholeness.
¹⁷⁹ Iona - God’s Energy, p194.
¹⁸⁰ The Iona Community video, Sermon in Stone, includes brief footage from a number of these occasions including the completion of the Abbey Cloisters, the Queen’s visit in 1958 and the 1400th anniversary of Columba’s arrival on Iona in 1963.
¹⁸¹ Ian M. Fraser, Living a Countersign, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1990), p12.
Fraser’s reference to ‘signs and promises’ may contain the key to a functioning polyphony of ecumenism. What Bonhoeffer hoped for in 1933-34 was an anchoring theology sufficient for the new context in which the Church found itself. The modern world and pre-war world in which Bonhoeffer called for such a new theology still believed in the compelling power of the overarching metanarratives of modernity. And at that time Bonhoeffer still believed in the authority of a comparable systematic and ecumenical theology that could equip the whole Church for its confessional task. In the context of Germany in the 1930s, Bonhoeffer concretised that theme ecumenically, particularly at Fanö. He believed that only the Church could confess Christ and voice the necessary international approval of the Barmen Declaration. For that to happen, the ecumenical movement had to move beyond its role of association and develop a voice qua the Church. But a few years later he admits that there is little of the ‘old ground beneath his feet’. Grand schemes for theological anchorage seem less compelling. Life is now ‘fragmentary’, the day of the ‘intellectual magnum opus’ is over what is important in life is that ‘we should be able to discern from the fragment of our life how the whole was arranged and planned, and what material it consists of’.

Bonhoeffer was rightly never keen on idealism as a philosophy. It tends to flee this-worldly reality. He wrote about the ‘great disillusionment’ that must break through idealism in communities: ‘Every human idealised image that is brought into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be

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182 ‘After Ten Years’, in Letters and Papers, p3. George MacLeod used similar imagery in 1938 when reflecting on the precarious state of witness of the Church in Scotland. ‘Is the truth not that the old cultus has splendidly served its day and generation; it is our modern environment that has rendered it outmoded. It is not the old Reformation timbers that are in criticism, it is that they survive from a day of wooden houses. It is not the building of the old channels that has rendered them faulty, but the shifting of the subsoil of this evolving world’. Cited in Chasing the Wild Goose, p52.

183 Bonhoeffer adopted the imagery of fragmentation throughout his time in prison. See Letters and Papers, p16, 215, 219, 297 and 310.

184 Letters and Papers, p219.

185 Letters and Papers, p219.

186 In Sanctorum Communio he had written against idealism arguing that it was inherently individualistic and thus unable to comprehend the concrete other person. In denying the reality of the true ‘You’ the true ‘I’ was lost because the real ‘I’ did not exist in an unmediated entity but only in responsibility vis à vis an ‘other’ (p50). Following much the same argument the idealised ‘I’ eliminates not only the true ‘You’ but also means we miss God, whose image resides in every created and concrete ‘You’. See Sanctorum Communio, chapter 2 generally.
broken up so that genuine community can survive'.\textsuperscript{187} But when earthly communities are visited by concrete epiphanies of Christ’s ecumenical ideal (‘I pray that they might all be one’) then some fragments of the \textit{cantus firmus} may indeed prove sufficient to compose the concrete melodies of a this-worldly confession. These fragments may be sufficient to inform the Church as to how the ecumenical whole is planned and arranged. And if ecumenical communities such as that of Iona are understood to contain such fragments then the communities themselves become the sign and promise of the united Christian community that is to come. They represent epiphanal fragments of the boundariless colony of heaven in which all Christians truly belong. They reveal something of its greater song on the earth by seeking to confess Christ across the boundaries of denominationalism in the concrete realities of this-worldly living. Those who belong in such communities may know these melodies now only as the first stirrings of a beckoning theme: ‘the beyond in our midst’\textsuperscript{188} but they are as fragments of the great symphony of the Church and of the Kingdom.

In such an understanding, Iona functions as a community which, gathered and scattered, lives by a Rule whose purpose is to encourage a personal and communal concrete confession of Christ. If that is the task then perhaps the time has not yet come for an Ecumenical Council to proclaim a new anchorage of ecumenical theology. Perhaps that is altogether too ambitious a project for the Church today. For as the world surveys the Church in the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century it cannot fail to note the persisting truth of Bonhoeffer’s earlier analysis: ‘the Church is yet incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to the world and because of that their earlier words have lost their force’.\textsuperscript{189} If so, then according to Bonhoeffer, being Christian, including being ecumenical, should be limited to two things, prayer and righteous action.\textsuperscript{190} And until all

\textsuperscript{187} Life Together, p36.
\textsuperscript{188} The phrase is Bonhoeffer’s, Letters and Papers, p282.
\textsuperscript{189} Letters and Papers, p300.
\textsuperscript{190} Letters and Papers, p300.
Christian 'thinking, speaking, and organising is born anew', then perhaps the 'Christian cause should be a silent and hidden affair'.\textsuperscript{191}

If this is so, then the ecumenical task of communities of faith for the moment may be no more than to gather the fragments in prayer and release them into action for justice. The new theology for the fragmented world of today may not require an all embracing system of ecumenical thought and sufficient anchorage may be provided by a \textit{Discipline of Counterpoint} or a Rule of Life the like of which is followed by the Iona Community. Tellingly, in Iona, the members' Rule mentions no grand ecumenical imperative\textsuperscript{192} although the Community Prayer does echo Bonhoeffer's concerned vision when it speaks of 'hidden things being revealed' and new ways being found 'to touch the hearts of all'.\textsuperscript{193} The focus of the Rule is not on ecumenism but on repeatedly calling its members to confess Christ amidst the realities of this-worldly living. It then offers a space and a relationship through which such confession can be made accountable. Each member knows that neither they nor the Community have 'arrived' in this regard and acknowledges that each prayer or action undertaken is but a point of departure, but a point that remains 'a pious hope and a false witness' unless they seek 'separately and together to put it into practice'.\textsuperscript{194} In this way the Community knows that it is never the totality of the Church but nevertheless accepts its responsibility to be the confessing fragment of the ecumenical polyphony that is to come. It is anchored in the \textit{cantus firmus}. It sings to the world the melodies revealed among it and invites all who are willing to participate in the music. One such melody is the song of healing.

\textsuperscript{191} Letters and Papers, p300. Eleanor S. Neel has written a provocative paper that adopts Bonhoeffer's \textit{Arcane Discipline} to comment on the hidden nature of the Church. See E. S. Neel, "'Incognito" as key to the Future Church's Way of Being and Working in the World', Unpublished Paper, copy held at Bonhoeffer Archive, Union Theological Seminary New York.

\textsuperscript{192} It does contain a specific commitment to contribute to the wider work of the Church at all levels and bodies concerned with promoting justice and peace. Additionally there is a specific sub-group within the Community (Called to be One) who are responsible for the consideration of ecumenical matters.

\textsuperscript{193} 'The Rule of the Iona Community' See Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{194} 'The Rule of the Iona Community' See Appendix A.
CHAPTER 8, THIRD MOVEMENT: THE MELODY OF HEALING.

Bring a broken heart that's bleeding,  
Bring a body racked with pain, 
Bring a mind and spirit needing 
Power to live and love again.  
Come to Jesus, come to Jesus, come to Jesus and be healed.  

I. Gillespie 195

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel 
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart. ...

T.S. Eliot 196

If the Church is 'Christ existing as community' and its task is to participate in the unfolding melodies of God on earth, then actions undertaken by the community of faith ought to sound in harmony with the earthly ministry of Jesus. One of the notable characteristics of Jesus' ministry was that he healed the sick; with over forty incidents of healing mental and physical illness recorded in the gospels it was a key identifying characteristic of his Messianic purpose. 197 When the disciples of John the Baptist ask if Jesus is the one their teacher anticipates, Jesus responds: 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the

blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor.\textsuperscript{198} But these accounts of healing differ in detail; there is no single methodology of healing adopted by Jesus: on some occasions Jesus used touch, but in others he did not, in some, healing seems dependant on the faith of the afflicted, on others it does not, in some cases he healed in public, while with others it was done in private.\textsuperscript{199} Furthermore, while Jesus healed many of those whom he encountered he did not heal all those around him who were also clearly in need. The gospels offer no explanation or apology as to why one was chosen and others were not.\textsuperscript{200}

There is then no simple methodology or guaranteed mechanism in the healing works of Jesus. The only thing they have in common is Jesus himself. His approach to the melodies of healing is decidedly polyphonic: he finds for each occasion a counter-melody of healing that is relationally particular to the individual. And what was true and necessary in the time of the historical Jesus is perhaps all the more apposite today. As Stephen Pattison has rightly noted: 'We live in a complicated and sophisticated society; simple or mono-dimensional responses to complex multi-dimensional phenomena such as healing and illness may betoken a lack of faith in a God who somehow continues to create and reveal himself in the chaos of contemporary existence.'\textsuperscript{201} The Church response to much multi-dimensional phenomena is to incarnate a polyphonic Christ as a community through an engaged ministry of healing. That ministry must engage in a polyphony of practice that focuses not upon method but upon the fluid

\textsuperscript{198} See Luke 7:21-22.
\textsuperscript{200} For instance, in John 5:1-9 Jesus heals a lame man by the Pool of Bethesda in the midst of 'a great number of disabled people'. There is no indication that he healed any of the others who were present.
\textsuperscript{201} Stephen Pattison, \textit{Alive and Kicking: Towards a Practical Theology of Illness and Healing}, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1989), p2. Pattison goes on to suggest that an adequate healing response whether 'secular' or overtly 'religious' must be two eyed, not monocular or myopic, a metaphor he borrows and adapts from J.A.T. Robinson's \textit{Truth is Two Eyed}, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1979). This image has much in common with the proposed bisociation located in Christ, but stops short of the full bodied polyphony suggested herein. However, it is such a diverse approach that Pattison feels may offer a 'kaleidoscope' of perspectives on illness. See \textit{Alive and Kicking}, p21 ff.
relationships that may exist between God, the healer, the healed and society.\textsuperscript{202} This will necessitate the community of faith engaging with the difficult discipline of listening to and participating in his \textit{cantus firmus} within the world. In each encounter fresh discernment will be necessary to hear the epiphanal melody appropriate for the occasion.

The Church has not always risen to such a task.\textsuperscript{203} While healing was a regular feature of the ministry of Jesus its melodies have not always been a customary refrain in the Church that bears his name. This is not to say that healing has been entirely absent from the Christian community: undoubtedly, wherever faith has been expressed, melodies of healing have continued to be heard.\textsuperscript{204} Historically the hospitality of healing was especially nurtured by Christian monastics.\textsuperscript{205} But locating such melodies within communities that remained self-consciously separated from the world did little to encourage the ordinary Christian or Church community to regularly participate in the melodies of Christ’s healing. When healing did occur, within or beyond the boundaries of the monastery, it was often regarded as a supernatural anomaly, an invasion of the world accomplished through a particularly saintly individual, holy relic or occasioned at an especially holy site. Healing was neither regarded as a normative experience or the common responsibility of the local community of


\textsuperscript{204} Kate McIlhagga argues that healing has always been present ‘where the Church has offered sanctuary, forgiveness and, above all, Eucharist in any community’. However, she also adds that the situations of our time call for a particular focus on the Church to engage with the particular problems of suffering and pain in the world. See Kate McIlhagga, ‘The Church’s Healing Ministry’, in Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway, eds., \textit{Praying for the Dawn: A Resource Book for the Ministry of Healing} (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2000), p14.

\textsuperscript{205} From the beginnings of communal Western Monasticism, St. Benedict encouraged the practice of medicine among monks in a hospice at Montecassino and it became a widespread ministry of most monasteries. For instance, the monastery of St. Gall in 820 had a medical herb garden, rooms for sick people, a pharmacy, and special lodging for a physician. The Benedictine order founded an early and important hospital at Salerno in the 7th century. But by 1130, the Church Council of Clermont and the Council of the Lateran in 1139 forbade monks from practicing medicine.
faith. Matters declined further from the 13th century onwards. As medical and scientific knowledge increased during the Enlightenment, medicine evolved into a science that saw itself as being increasingly independent of the Church and matters spiritual. Such an approach believed that healing owed more to Hippocrates and Galen than to Jesus. It separated the mental from the somatic in the classic mind and body dualism that ignored the possibility of a third and spiritual dimension. All this precipitated an extended era in which it became progressively difficult for intellectually sophisticated people to believe in the possibility of direct intervention by God in this world, including the world of illness and healing. While such people would perhaps admit to gaps of knowledge existing in areas such as medicine, both Church and world considered the opportunities for God’s continuance in these gaps to be increasingly rare.

But in the later 20th century, notwithstanding many great advances, trust in scientific rationalism began to erode and medicine faced new challenges as quickly as former enemies were overcome. At the beginning of the 21st century there are a plethora of alternative medicines and healing practices running in parallel with conventional western medicine. At the same time in differing ways there has been a new anticipation of a ministry of healing taking place within the Church. If that healing ministry of the Church is to incarnate

206 Ian Cowie has argued that the healing works of Jesus are not supernatural interventions in the laws of nature but rather signs towards what should be truly natural for the children of God. See Ian Cowie, Jesus’ Healing Works and Ours, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2000), p11.
208 This reached its zenith in the progressive optimism of 19th century Europe and the corollary of liberal theology that emerged alongside it. See Morton T. Kelsey, Healing and Christianity, p346.
209 Bonhoeffer was critical of the Christian Church for trying to reserve some space for a God of the gaps in the face of advancing secularism of a ‘world come of age’. He claimed the weakness of 19th century liberal theology was that it ‘conceded to the world the right to determine Christ’s place in the world; in the conflict between the church and the world it accepted the comparatively easy terms of peace that the world dictated’. Letters and Papers, p327. See also p280-282, 341 and 361.
210 Thus while diseases such as Small Pox may effectively be consigned to history, others notably HIV / AIDS have taken their place.
211 Methodologies of healing within the contemporary Church are diverse. These may range in caricature from the highly charged environment, complete with emotional music and testimonies of previous healings that were accomplished through a particularly charismatic individual to the quiet
the diverse approach adopted by Jesus, then it must be rooted in the polyphonic nature of the healing *cantus firmus*: in Christ the spiritual and the material are interwoven to the sound of polyphonic harmony. Indeed, all creation vibrates at a sub-atomic level and therefore may be understood as ‘sounding’ within the universe. Following what Christian theology names as ‘The Fall’, creation and particularly humanity, has become cacophonic. This is true of both individuals who are physically, mentally, or spiritually unwell, and in societies that are oppressive and unjust. The salvation accomplished for the world through Christ’s death and resurrection is redemption into health or wholeness. If healing occurs, at either a personal or societal level it may be understood as redeeming that which has fallen and restoring it to a true relationship with the *cantus firmus* of Christ and the polyphony of God.

It is through Christ that such healing occurs and in Christ we have seen how those things that appear to be in apparent opposition may be combined in a positive and creative tension. The first consequence of this must be that in the healing of Christ, both modern medical techniques and the prayers and comfort of the community of faith are of value. It is a communal process. As Lambourne suggests, healing can be understood as ‘a satisfactory response to a crisis, made by a group of people, both individually and corporately’. And as Michael Wilson notes in response: ‘This definition ... emphasizes how those who surround the patient - family, friends, doctor, nurse, minister, probation officer and others - are all involved in the situation with him’. Seen in this way the Christian ministry of healing is not set in opposition to the practice of modern medicine: if the polyphonic Christ is Lord of all then both medicine and prayer ought to both

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213 The Greek word sozo, from which the English term ‘salvation’ is derived, means to heal or to be made whole. It had both spiritual and medical associations in the time of Jesus. Indeed the name ‘Jesus’ a derivative of Joshua (Yē-Shua) also means God saves/heals.


part of the corporate response. There may well be times when the limits of modern medicine are exhausted and the only hope may lie in prayer but Christ ordains and remains Lord of both. Both prayer and medicine and other forms of healing can therefore be affirmed as channels of God’s healing purpose. And if Christian healing is rooted not simply in prayer and spirituality but in the practical world of doctors, nurses, waiting lists, and limited resources then polyphonic healing must be similarly concerned with the this-worldly life of public health, politics and economics.\textsuperscript{216}

Thus a second consequence of the Church seeking to incarnate the polyphony of Christ’s healing ministry is this: time after time in Christ’s healings what can be discerned is not simply the cure of presenting personal ailment, but a challenge toward a public / political healing. It is not simply that the illness is removed, but it also precipitates a collapse of the social-religious boundaries that have limited the recovery of the ill person or separated them from the ‘healthy’ community. Along with the varying physical cures offered by Jesus there is almost always a restoring of the individual into the socio-religious community from which they have previously been excluded. The healings point beyond their physical evidences towards the coming Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{217} This fact is important if we are to truly understand a polyphony of healing. In polyphonic healing the concern is not simply focused on curing the presenting affliction, but it is about the wholeness of the person, bringing healing to their society and bringing the earthly society closer to the Kingdom of Heaven. So when Jesus heals, one melody is concerned with physical cure, but a distinctive counter-harmony heralds a coming Kingdom that is equally concerned with justice for those who have been marginalised by society’s association of sickness with sin. Clearly Jesus intends the former boundaries to be removed and new melodies of a boundariless community to grow up around his \textit{cantus firmus}. Thus when a

\textsuperscript{216} For pertinent comment on the issues affecting the National Health Service see Allan Gordon, ‘The National Health Service and the Health of the Nation’, in Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway, eds., \textit{Praying for the Dawn}, p31 ff.

\textsuperscript{217} Again see Ian Cowie’s argument that the healing works of Jesus are signs towards what should be truly natural for the children of God in the Kingdom of God. See Ian Cowie, \textit{Jesus’ Healing Works and Ours}, p11.
Gentile Roman centurion intercedes with Jesus for the health of his servant, the healing not only cures the servant, but hints at a new concept of belonging that crosses racial and political boundaries. And when Jesus heals the crippled woman in the synagogue no doubt he could have done so privately later or then from a distance, but he deliberately calls her into the male only assembly and addresses her as a daughter of Abraham; he intends to establish a new societal norm; a community without boundaries. Likewise, curing the haemorrhaging woman is not simply about stopping her bleeding, but about publicly restoring her place in society. Indeed the fact that Mark places her story inside the narrative of healing Jairus’ daughter further emphasises the point: healing from Jesus goes beyond curing the external illnesses of both and moves them into a boundariless community in which the melody of the rich socially empowered centred Jairus and this melody of a poor and marginalised woman, are polyphonically bound together in a new community rooted in Christ’s cantus firmus.

Something of such a boundariless new community is cited with approval by Bonhoeffer in one of his rare comments on the healing ministry. In Spiritual Care he argues that health and illness are both part of normal human life and cites with approval the practice of the Healing Centre established at Bethel bei Bielefeld, where ‘the sick and the healthy live with one another, sharing as a matter of course daily life and worship: a continual reminder to the sick of wholeness’. However, despite (or perhaps because of) his father’s medical pedigree Bonhoeffer offers us little else of substance in regard to a Christian theology of healing. The only practical advice offered to novice pastors in his book Spiritual Care simply instructs that while ‘Healing of the sick in the form of

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218 Matt. 8:5-13. A poignant ‘healing’ of socio-political division occurs with the Syro-Phoenician woman who kept asking Jesus to cast out a demon from her daughter. See Mark 7:24-30. The point is repeated in the healing of the ten lepers, see Luke 17:11-19.
220 In this case a community without the boundaries of gender prejudice.
221 Mark 5: 21-43.
222 Spiritual Care, p56.
223 In Spiritual Care, he offers practical advice to seminarians regarding visiting parishioners who are sick or on their death-bed but he constructs no theology of healing.
laying on of hands should be made available’ the pastor ought to guard against ‘glorying in it and invoking dangerous and exotic concepts’.224

Clearly a polyphonic healing ministry of the Church community addresses both the presenting patient and the social issues that precipitate or attend upon them. While Bonhoeffer is somewhat illusive on the first he provides ample reflection elsewhere on the need for the community of Christ to minister healing through socio-political inclusion. In his first pastorate in Barcelona he had spoken of the ‘unending worth of the apparently worthless and the unending worthlessness of what is apparently so valuable’ in society.225 In 1943, shortly before his arrest, Bonhoeffer again appealed passionately for the Church to learn to ‘see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the oppressed, the reviled - in short, from the perspective of those who suffer’.226

George MacLeod had experienced something of that perspective during his years of parish ministry in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He brought it into the theology and praxis of the Iona Community. Since its beginning, the Iona Community adopted a polyphonic approach to healing that combined in harmony the praying for the cure of the person together with working at the social issues surrounding them. MacLeod began this work with no clear idea of what theology or praxis might be required for such a service, but on the simple basis that Christ had authorised his followers to ‘Preach the gospel and heal the sick’.227 Instinctively and almost from the inception of the Community, MacLeod sought assistance and instigated specific prayers for the sick but worked tirelessly to improve the conditions that rendered people unwell. He urged others to do likewise.228 His polyphonic

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224 *Spiritual Care*, p59.
228 Requests for prayers for healing came from far and near, but as Ralph Morton recollects, while there was a latent memory of Iona as a place of healing it was not the place but the new life found there
approach to healing is summed up well in the oft recited maxim that to pray for Mary suffering from T.B. while she is living in a dilapidated tenement in Govan and yet not be politically active in doing something about the appalling housing that causes the T.B. was being inconsistent.\textsuperscript{229}

The prayers for healing conducted every Tuesday evening in Iona Abbey reflect this. In each service there is time spent in intercession for named individuals who may be suffering from a variety of illnesses but there is also space to pray for the varied social conditions that leave people far from whole. Likewise the prayers for healing may also extend into a polyphony of concerns including various global inequities that may hinder individuals, communities, nations and indeed the planet from fulfilling their potential. This polyphonic approach to healing is also reflected in the opening liturgical responses used in the Abbey Service of Prayers for Healing.

Leader: We come in this service to God,
ALL: IN OUR NEED,
AND BRINGING WITH US THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD.
Leader: We come to God, who has come to us in Jesus,
All: AND WHO KNOWS BY EXPERIENCE
WHAT HUMAN LIFE IS LIKE.
Leader: We come with our faith and with our doubts,
ALL: WE COME WITH OUR HOPES AND WITH OUR FEARS.
Leader: We come as we are, because it is God who invites us to come:
ALL AND GOD HAS PROMISED NEVER TO TURN US AWAY.\textsuperscript{230}

Iona Community member Graham Monteith comments that these opening responses reflect some key features in the Community's theology of healing, namely:

\footnotesize{that that inspired the requests. See T. Ralph Morton, 'Divine Healing', in Coracle, No.22, (July, 1952), p21.\textsuperscript{229} Cited in Ian Cowie, Prayers and Ideas for Healing Services, p12. The precarious tensions within such a polyphony of healing are also well noted by Ian Cowie who asserts in response to MacLeod's maxim about Mary with T.B., it is just as inconsistent to be convinced that you know the answers to the political problems of nations on the other side of the world and yet have nothing positive to offer Mary. Ibid. p12.\textsuperscript{230} Iona Abbey Worship Book, p90.}

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healing and wholeness concern not only the individual but the world,
God through Christ is with us and the world in our experiences,
healing is sought through our own volition but granted by God,
an unquestioning faith is not a precondition of healing
and God is always in solidarity with us.\textsuperscript{231}

Such a theology does not claim to be all encompassing, but it does state a clear intention for healing to be an integral ministry of the community and for such healing to be polyphonic in nature.

This is also seen in the Community’s approach to the ministry of laying on of hands. The initial prayers for healing are usually led by an individual but when the service offers the ministry of laying on of hands close attention is paid to the dangers of exotic practice and self-glorification. On Iona the practice of laying on of hands seeks to avoid such dangers by ensuring that the ministry is participated in by everyone present. Members of the congregation may come forward to receive or share in the ministry as they choose but whether they remain where they are or come forward to share in the laying on of hands everyone is invited to share in same prayer:

\begin{quote}
Spirit of the living God, present with us now
Enter you, body, mind and spirit
And heal you of all that harms you
In Jesus’ name. Amen.\textsuperscript{232}
\end{quote}

In turn, those who have laid hands on others are then prayed for in the same way.

None of this is done to deny a place to individuals who may be especially gifted in healing. Indeed George MacLeod exercised such a ministry on occasions but deliberately kept matters private.\textsuperscript{233} But it is rather to affirm the brokenness of each human life and to establish that the gift of healing is an inclusive process entrusted to the whole community of faith.

\textsuperscript{232} Iona Abbey Worship Book, p91.
\textsuperscript{233} See George MacLeod, p389.
There are other ways in which a polyphonic understanding of healing may be helpful but can only be hinted at here. When prayer is offered for healing, heaven may respond with a variety of melodies, none of which would be dissonant from Christ’s *cantus firmus*, but not all of which may have been on the hearts and minds of those who prayed. The obvious response is that heaven grants that which was pleaded for in prayer: that the person or situation is healed within a very short space of time. But while healing does undoubtedly occur in this way, such a response from heaven is never guaranteed. For instance Bonhoeffer was never released from prison and was eventually executed despite the faithful prayers of friends and family. What is the individual or faith community to do when an illness or injustice continues unabated? A polyphonic understanding of healing offers a perspective that can creatively incorporate such scenarios because it accepts that heaven’s healing may visit earth through a variety of fragmented epiphanies.

Sometimes when healing seems to tarry it may be that the melodies of heaven have a greater music in mind. In music there may be long pauses of silence in which nothing seems to happen as far as a particular individual is concerned. But much may be going on around them. This may be true also in regard to healing. A period of protracted illness, a time when with the psalmist a person may repeatedly cry out ‘How long O Lord’, may eventually prove to have been for the greater good of the person or community. This is not to say that God visits illness upon people in order to teach them some lesson of life but it is to say that if circumstance brings a need for healing there is no human experience that sits beyond the reach of the healing of Christ. The Christian hope is that in the midst of such times Christ is present with them; not to necessarily remove the pain but to stand in solidarity with them. To claim that Christ was fully human means that he too experienced pain and rejection and longed for healing on occasions too.

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234 Ian Cowie relates how on Iona a woman went forward to pray for a friend but felt a strong heat on her own neck and was cured of a whiplash injury. Ian Cowie, *Prayers and Ideas for Healing Services*, p13.

235 For some of the ensuing comments I am indebted to a lecture given at Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival in 1997 by John L. Bell, entitled, *Jesus on the Sick*. 

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To hope that life could be lived without such times would be to long for the paucity of a monophonic existence.

A polyphonic approach to healing also acknowledges that for a while the music may seem absent, but it knows too that silence is often part of the music and as such some silence may be necessary to enable a deeper healing to be worked before the presenting difficulty may be addressed. For instance, in the unity of body, mind and spirit it may be necessary for some healing of the mind to occur before a presenting physical ailment can be addressed. It may also be that the desired healing is deliberately delayed so as to provoke the afflicted person to action. Heaven’s response to prayer may not be to remove the pain or injustice but instead, God may incite an individual to offer up a new and responsible reaction to that over which they prayed. In this way the delay is heaven’s immediate response and it may make an individual or community more receptive to the unfolding melodies of God around them.

Another possible melody of healing in heaven’s polyphony may be that one person’s suffering becomes the way in which healing comes to others. For a number of years, an Iona Community Member, Brian Gallon, was the Prayer Circle Secretary in the Abbey. He was responsible for coordinating the numerous requests for prayer received from around the world and leading the Service of Prayers of Healing. During that time he suffered and died from cancer. Many people prayed for the healing of Brian Gallon, but he did not recover from his illness. He used to answer this apparent cruel irony by telling people that if others were healed through his weakness then he stood in the tradition of the cross where, through the wounds of Christ, the vulnerability of the world was healed. Within the polyphonic understanding of healing it may be possible to detect one such person’s suffering as an essential counterpoint to the healing of others. It may also be that for the Christian death is the final act of healing. For them the final act of healing comes as they move from the colony of saints militant into the homeland community of saints triumphant.
chapter nine: making melodies in the world.

Christian Piety at its best has made a significant contribution to the social transformation of the world.  

John W. de Gruchy

New techniques entirely of the nature of the devotional life will need to be forged. Such can only be forged by those who continue at any cost to be involved in the world as it is.  

George MacLeod

I am a shepherd who, with his people, has begun to learn the beautiful and difficult truth: our Christian faith requires that we submerge ourselves in this world.  

Oscar Romero

What is the difference between a cathedral and a physics lab? Are not they both saying: ‘Hello?’  

Annie Dillard

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2 George MacLeod, Coracle, No. 47, (December 1965), p13.
CHAPTER 9:  A PRELUDE

The Church has not always viewed the world positively as a potential locus for the epiphanal melodies of God. As we have seen, Gnostic and Neo-Platonic philosophy have often generated a world-renouncing spirituality that has regularly dominated the self-understanding of the Christian community. In such an understanding, this world and its materiality are set at enmity with what are erroneously perceived as the more ‘spiritual’ or ‘other worldly’ ambitions of God and the Church. But the epiphanal melodies of God are as likely to be encountered through active engagement with the material world as they are to be found within the prayers and worship of the gathered Christian community. We have seen that there is a rich polyphony of such melodies to be found within the gathered Church community but there exists too a vibrant mix of divine music that is revealed within the wider world.

While the previous chapter focused solely on how melodies may be made within the internal life of the Church, this chapter is concerned with how Christians may encounter and recognise the fragments of God’s music within the world around them. An examination of this second locus for the melodies of God is of vital importance for a deeper understanding of the new monasticism of the Christian colony. For while the Church might claim to find its ultimate identity in the God of heaven, it cannot remove itself from its penultimate solidarity with the created World: the penultimate World in which God through Christ chose to act in flesh

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5 Indeed this enmity between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’ was an understanding of World favoured by Bonhoeffer during his period at Finkenwalde, but later rejected during Ethics and the Prison writings. See the historical survey of Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the World in Ernst Feil, The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p99 ff, and particularly p125-135.

6 This more positive attitude toward the World was articulated by Bonhoeffer in his later works. Significantly his theology of World changes after his co-operation with non-Christians who were prepared to risk their lives working in the German Resistance movement while the Christian Church did little to oppose Nazism. See Ernst Feil, The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p138-159.

7 The early thought of Bonhoeffer was concerned with how the mystery of Christ might be shared within the life of the Christian community itself but his gradually maturing theology of the World, together with his personal praxis of a Discipline of the Secret, led him to address the questions of how a Community’s worship of Christ related to the secular realities around them.
and blood. The Church must be, as Bonhoeffer claimed, about both prayer and righteous action.

Righteous action is then the bearer of heaven’s overture; it is both the proleptic epiphany of God’s this-worldly music and the forerunner of the eschatological apotheosis. And because in Christ, the Church and World are held in bisociation, the divine polyphony can be heard within such righteous action whether it is performed by Christians or by people of other or no religious faith. Christians acting in this way will do so, being conscious of their allegiance to the polyphonic Christ. But others, who claim no allegiance to Christ, may still share a parallel commitment to work for justice. However sweet the name of Jesus may sound in a believer’s ear, non-believers may still participate in the music without ever fully recognising its cantus firmus; walking like a ‘vague somnambulist, whose name may also be written in the Book of Life’. In Luke’s gospel the disciples encounter a man driving out demons. Even though he is doing so in the name of Christ, the disciples try to stop him because, they claim, he is not a follower like them. Jesus replied that they should not have prevented his action because: ‘whoever is not against you is for you’. The issue at stake for the disciples is not whether the man properly recognized Christ as the Son of God, but that they were jealous of someone from outside their defined boundary participating in the purposes of God. Jesus clearly instructs them that what is important is that the work of the kingdom is accomplished, whether it is by them or by others. It is precisely because they recognize the Christ that they can

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8 See Bonhoeffer’s argument concerning the ‘ultimate and penultimate’, in Ethics, p146 ff.
9 In an Opera or Oratorio the overture is played before the complete performance but contains within it hints and themes of the final music that is to come.
10 The apotheosis in music such as Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony or Mahler’s ‘Resurrection’ Symphony No.2, is the final movement where all that has gone before is taken up into a ‘divine resolution’.
11 A universal working definition of justice is difficult to find: The call to say ‘Yes, to a global ethic’ by Hans Küng and others may affirm a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards and personal attitudes found in the core values of the world’s religions but it faces increasing difficulties in a world which for all its globalisation increasingly rejects the meta-narratives of the world’s religions. See Hans Küng, ed., Yes to a Global Ethic, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1996).
13 See Luke 9:49. c.f. Luke 11:23 ‘Whoever isn’t for me is against me’. These two verses are not necessarily incompatible for if someone is participating in the unfolding music of God, consciously or otherwise, then they are for Christ.
identify that such this-worldly melodies are in true relationship with his *cantus firmus*:14 singing God's melody after him.

As for those who are not Christian, until such times as they may recognise the *cantus firmus* as being Christ, the question is whether their thoughts and deeds sound in harmony with the Divine music. Thus, they may presently participate in the unfolding melodies of God, but do so unconscious of the *cantus firmus* that lies beneath their own melodies of action.15 In the past, descriptions of such people as 'unconscious' or 'anonymous' Christians have been open to criticism16 particularly if Christians claimed to have 'recognised their Christ' in the practices of other religions or secularists. In such cases it was rightly argued that Christians were unfairly claiming for themselves that which was truly 'other' to them. This was clearly unacceptable to the self-aware secularist or member of another faith who did not want to be considered a Christian, whether unconscious, anonymous or in any other way. And if the Christology asserted herein is to be maintained (namely that Christ is a unique and particular bisociation of heaven and earth in whose *cantus firmus* the whole polyphony of life is rooted) then it is difficult to avoid some degree of such offence or criticism. But some important common ground may yet be found between Christians and non-Christians and music may help us find a place of universal belonging.

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14 It is akin to someone listening to Mozart's Requiem Mass for the first time and appreciating the music qua music without being aware of the under-girding biographical detail of a composer convinced that he had been mysteriously commissioned to write the music for his own funeral. Once the biography is recognised the music takes on a deeper significance.
15 Bonhoeffer argued in favour of a 'natural piety' of the secularists with whom he worked in the Resistance. He referred to such people as 'unconscious Christians' because he believed they were participating the contrapuntal melodies of God without being conscious of Christ as their *cantus firmus*. See Letters and Papers, p373.
16 Bonhoeffer's term may be rightfully critiqued if it is understood to mean that he unilaterally asserts an honorary Christian identity to people who themselves have expressed no desire to be included in its community of faith. Furthermore, inherent in the term 'unconscious' is the suggestion that if such people were 'awakened' to the claim that Christ under girded their action for justice they could subsequently do no other than accept a Christian position on life. This is understandably offensive to avowed secularists and devout members of other faiths who are engaged in work for justice and may be seen by others in the Church as reducing the particularity of the gospel. Similar critiques have been made of Karl Rahner's similar term 'anonymous Christianity'. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Moment of Christian Witness, trans. R. Beckley, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1969), p126 and Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions", in John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds., The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1988), p178-200, particularly p82 ff. For a wider consideration of anonymous Christianity and religious pluralism see Gavin D'Costa, 'Postmodernity and the Other', in Ursula King, ed., Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age, (London: Cassell, 1998), p28-46.
If it is admitted by the Christian community that while fragments of God’s epiphany do reside within the colony of heaven, they have not yet heard the full repertoire of God on earth, then such a self-conscious openness to continually fresh melodies of revelation will remind the community that they may still encounter God in new locations of otherness. These melodies are revealed in actions that are undertaken for the good of and on behalf of those other than themselves. In this commitment to work for the betterment of others, Christians will share with their non-Christian colleagues a commitment to making the melody of justice known in the world. Both Christians and non-Christians are then melody-makers of justice, whether or not they believe themselves to be making harmony with Christ’s *cantus firmus*. All participants in such melody-making would acknowledge that a willingness to act vicariously for others has the potential to generate new challenges and understandings of justice. As such, the totality of their melody-making cannot be pre-defined by any group, including the Church. This leaves open the possibility of a hitherto hidden melody of Christ being yet revealed within the World and lays before the melody-makers a common ground of mystery.

For the Christian this means that the proleptic music located in the economy of the polyphonic God and revealed to the world in Christ does not exhaust the melodies of God’s immanent polyphony. Gavin D’Costa has argued that in the ‘Trinitarian surplus’ genuine otherness can become ‘a question mark’ to the self-understanding of the Christian and their community.\(^{17}\) And if so, then,

\[\text{in terms of the phrase "anonymous Christian" the anonymous does not relate to the self consciousness of the Other ... but to the manner in which the Christian does not possess God or know God without remainder, so that there is a sense in which the anonymous relates neither to the self consciousness of the Other or the Christian, but rather to the mystery of God, who is known in Christ, yet still hidden.}\(^{18}\)

It is this common ground of mystery that enables the problematic terminology of ‘unconscious’ or ‘anonymous Christian’ to be abandoned in favour of one in


which people can affirm their common commitment to participate in making the melodies of justice known in the world. Adopting this terminology does not circumvent all the criticisms of Christological particularity, but admitting to a common goal of justice-making without necessitating an identification with Christ is helpful. It provides an inclusive melody that can be made by Christians, as well as those of other or no faith commitment.

The Christian will recognise in this melody-making the boundariless boundary that is rooted in the polyphonic Christ. The colony of heaven is known by its commitment to the polyphonic Christ as its *cantus firmus*, but must also affirm that this ‘mystery’ to which it is dedicated and which it endeavours to share responsibly in the world has yet to reveal His entirety to that world. And, as all that exists within that world holds together in that mystery, there can be no boundaries to the potential loci of its revelation: it has a boundariless boundary. The Church who seek to incarnate that mystery as a community of people must then also display such a boundarilessness in its character and will expect to encounter new epiphanal melodies of God that as yet remain hidden within the mystery of the World. If further revelation does occur then the Christian community may, in response, need to question anew its own identifying characteristics and evolve a new self-understanding. Such a position has long been identified within the Iona Community: MacLeod argued that they were a ‘laboratory of co-operative living ... working under the sign of all good laboratories - which is a Question Mark’.\(^{19}\) The daily prayer of the Iona Community affirms the belief that many melodies of God may still be secret in the world: ‘O God ... further in all things the purpose of our community that hidden things may be revealed to us and new ways found to touch the hearts of all’.\(^{20}\)

MacLeod recognised in the new monasticism of the Christian colony the penultimate world of the physical was ‘the only arena for the display of

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\(^{19}\) *Coracle*, No. 1, p3.

holiness: the legitimate identifier of true faith. He argued in favour of a witness that included, 'political concern, economic obligation, social betterment and scientific search' and contended that this polyphony of action ought not to be considered as 'a derivative of faith', but rather, it was the stuff of which Christian faith was moulded, and through which alone faith could be apprehended. This is not to suggest that there is no room for the moulding of faith within the internal life of Christian community, but rather it is to argue that the mettle of Christian holiness is tested only amidst this-worldly realities. Its testing must in turn inform the nature of the community's worship. In this way the ultimate and penultimate realms of heaven and world are elevated above the traditional zero-sum-game of mutually exclusive opposition: the traditional 'two realms' between which the Christian historically had been forced to choose. That choice, which places Church and World in enmity, is a false one: an authentic following of Christ who is the embodied bisociation of heaven and earth involves not a choice between the two realms but the deliberate choice to hold both 'melodies' together. For in Christ 'the reality of God encounters the reality of the world and Christian life is participation in that encounter, 'living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes, failures, experiences and perplexities ... [throwing themselves] completely into the arms of God'.

But how is the Christian to throw him or herself into the world as a Christian? While all that is created in the world may find its cantus firmus in the Christ, Christianity is not identical with the world. What in the Christian will remain distinctly Christian and how, if at all, do the fragmented melodies of God encountered in the world connect with those whose revelation in the Church we have hitherto considered?

21 We Shall Rebuild, p13.
22 We Shall Rebuild, p13-14.
23 For Bonhoeffer the medieval monk and the 19th Century Protestant secularist, typified these two opposing realms; the first being a realm in which the spiritual regnum gratiae dominated the secular regnum naturae and the second characterised by an increasing independence of the secular from the spiritual. See Ethics, p57 ff.
24 See Ethics, p159.
25 Letters and Papers, p370.
26 See Ethics, p59.
In order to discover how the fragmented epiphanies of Church and world unite in Christ’s *cantus firmus* we turn again to the *Discipline of Counterpoint*. As we have defined it, this discipline requires the responsible performance by the Christian community of the mystery that is the Polyphonic Christ. This mystery of the polyphonic Christ is the *cantus firmus* that underpins all Christian discipleship. It is this that is held in common by Christians both as they gather for communal worship and as they are individually scattered among the world. In a healthy discipleship, Christians will perpetually move within these two loci: the colony of heaven and the surrounding world. As they do so, fragmented epiphanies of God may be encountered in either place and then are to be gathered together in the Christian colony. Each gathered fragment will inform the other and all may ‘polysociate’ in a wider music through their relationship to the *cantus firmus*. None is ever fully separate from the other because every melody whether it is encountered primarily within the Church or World, has its foundation in Christ. There may not always be harmonious music when the melodies are gathered: there may be dissonance within the colony of new monasticism or between it and the World, but there is always in Christ the hope of a final eschatological resolution. In acknowledging the polyphonic nature of Christ who is encountered both within the World and Church, the *Discipline of Counterpoint* enables the Christian community to bring together their encounters of Christ in prayer and worship with those in the world and vice versa. It is this discipline that unites the ‘two realms’ of life under Christ and prevents the Christian community lapsing into world-denying piety or becoming a centre of radical action with little or no sustaining spirituality. In so doing, the individual Christian and their community of faith are compelled to seek out concrete encounters with Christ beyond the Church. In them, as in their Saviour, work and worship and prayer and politics, sacred and secular will come together not simply as a pious hope, but as a confession of praxis.

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27 The Iona Community affirm the joining of ‘Work and Worship, Prayer and Politics, Sacred and Secular’. See [http://www.iona.org.uk](http://www.iona.org.uk). This is not a statement about joining together two otherwise separate spheres but of acknowledging that all such apparent dichotomies are taken up into Christ.

28 Norman Shanks has noted that the Community’s concern for justice and peace is a confessional matter, reflecting the conviction that, ‘political engagement is intrinsic to Christian discipleship ...'
But while such action must be considered a confessional matter for the individual Christian and their community, the righteous acts of justice they engage with in the world should be, according to Bonhoeffer, 'a silent and hidden affair'. By 'silent', Bonhoeffer was not advocating a complete muteness concerning a Christian's confession of faith but rather he was arguing in favour of an asceticism of melody making: an acknowledgment that Christians must not dare to speak to the world concerning the apotheosis of heaven or the cantus firmus of Christ until their righteous actions had revealed overtures of the divine. To so speak could leave the important hopes of Christian faith, (forgiveness, reconciliation and the like), devoid of a meaningful context by which the world might understand them. For instance, to speak to the world of a gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation within the context of Nazi Germany or between White and Coloured South Africans during the era of Apartheid or between Roman Catholics and Protestants amidst the 'Troubles' of Northern Ireland, leaves the proclaimed music of good news ringing hollow in the air. There must be a responsible sharing of the melodies of God and that responsibility necessitates an overture of righteous action, a proleptic prelude of concrete accomplishment through which the world can experience the fragment and anticipate the whole. This is not to say that the melodies of heaven cannot be sung on earth, the Lord’s Prayer constrains the Christian to participate in the Divine performance precisely so that the music may be sung on earth as it is eternally performed in heaven. But the primary performance of such music in the world must be a melody of righteous action that sings for itself. It will be a melody that captures the imagination of the world and provokes it into contrapuntal participation. Bonhoeffer called this 'the deed that interprets itself' and argued that 'if this deed is to have become a force, then the world itself will

because of God’s involvement in human events in a specific, down-to-earth, embodied way in Jesus Christ and that this is reinforced by an inescapable biblical imperative'. Iona - God's Energy, p156.  
This eternal performance acknowledges that amidst all the sound there is opportunity for silence and rest, indeed the heavenly silence referred to in Revelation 8:1 is an integral part of the divine music.
long to confess the Word'.\textsuperscript{32} He rightly distinguished this responsible sharing from occasions when the Church had done nothing other than 'loudly shriek out (its) propaganda' and he argued that such a responsible Word must be preserved 'as the most sacred possession of the community'.\textsuperscript{33} To do so is an exercise of the \textit{Discipline of Counterpoint}. It is to responsibly share the melodies of Christ in the world. A conscientious performance of these melodies will not seek as their goal the preservation or advancement of the institutional Church but will hope simply for a more just world and a 'better worldliness'.\textsuperscript{34} Undoubtedly if the \textit{Discipline of Counterpoint} is being properly exercised such actions would in turn affect the worshipping life of the Christian community but the righteous action should stand on its own in the world: 'interpreting itself' to its people. Those so engaged would normatively be silent about Christ as the \textit{cantus firmus} of their melody in the world until such times as their deeds offered a legitimate context within which they may then talk with integrity of the gospel of reconciliation and redemption.\textsuperscript{35} It was in such 'kairos' moments of opportunity that Bonhoeffer suggested the Christian community might then dare to speak to the world of Christ but they would do so, as already noted with a 'new language, perhaps quite non–religious, but liberating and redeeming, - as was Jesus' language; it [might] shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it [would] be the language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God's peace with people and the coming of God’s Kingdom'.\textsuperscript{36}

By arguing that acts of righteousness ought to be 'hidden', Bonhoeffer seems to have had in mind Christ's warning to the disciples to beware of practicing righteousness before others to be seen by them'. (Math 6:1).\textsuperscript{37} He may also have had in mind the ways in which Christ often sought to keep secret his own

\textsuperscript{32} 'The Nature of the Church', in \textit{A Testament to Freedom}, p86.
\textsuperscript{33} 'The Nature of the Church', in \textit{A Testament to Freedom}, p86.
\textsuperscript{34} See \textit{Ethics}, p60.
\textsuperscript{35} See \textit{Letters and Papers}, p300.
\textsuperscript{36} See \textit{Letters and Papers}, p300. (Translation altered).
\textsuperscript{37} Bonhoeffer reflected on the hidden nature of righteousness while at Finkenwalde: See \textit{Discipleship}, p146 ff.
miracles and acts of healing. Of course these acts of gracious melody are still heard in the world and there is a creative tension between letting the light shine before people and not letting the left hand becoming an end in itself. (Matt 6:1-4). But righteous actions are melodies that sing themselves before the world and are not perpetrated in order that the world might hear their song or as an exercise in public relations by the Christian community. Indeed the reverse is the case: making these melodies of justice arises not out of a desire to sing one’s own song, but as a result of having listened to the music of heaven and the songs of others. At its core is an understanding of Christ as deputy; the one who hears the earth’s distress and the lament of other’s pain and chooses to stand in vicarious responsibility for them. For, if sin is understood as ‘the heart turned in upon itself’ then acts of righteousness are those deeds that are orientated towards the betterment of others. It is by this orientation toward others that we detect the origin of such deeds to lie within the cantus firmus. Righteous action begins with hearing the lament of others and joining in solidarity with their melody of distress. This is no doubt why Nazi motorbikes ran their engines outside the gas chambers of the Concentration Camps, to quite literally drown out the cries of the other. It illuminates why Lenin famously claimed that he could not listen to music too often because it:

affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell. And now you mustn’t stroke anyone’s head - you might get your hand bitten off. You have to hit them on the head, without any mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against anyone.

38 See Matt. 6:1-4. Eleanor S. Neel has traced examples of God’s hiddenness throughout Christian scripture, from God hiding his face from Moses, the Jews refusing to speak the name of God to Christ’s often incognito action in the gospels and the gospel exhortation for the left hand to not know what the right hand is doing. See Eleanor S. Neel, “Incognito as a Key to the Future Church’s Way of Being and Working in the World’. Unpublished Paper, held in the Bonhoeffer Archive at Union Theological Seminary, New York.
39 See Discipleship, p146 ff.
40 See Ethics, p12.
41 The definition, cor curvum in se, belongs to Martin Luther’s Lecture on Romans and influenced Bonhoeffer’s thought: see Act and Being where he refers to the human spirit curving in upon itself and thus moving away from community with God and other human beings. Act and Being, p46, 58, 80, 89, and 137.
So if, as Bonhoeffer argues, Christ is the paradigmatic ‘man for others’\(^{43}\) then the Christian community ought to live in vicarious responsibility for others. As such it is sufficient for the Church to share the melody of making justice with those of other or no faith; to make ‘common cause with the non-Christian and the nonreligious, all without ecclesiastical and theological pretence and qualification’.\(^{44}\) Melody-making for justice by the Christian in, with and for the world is then music sung not in the name of God per se, but in the name of the common humanity to which God in Christ binds himself in vicarious solidarity. And those who are not against this melody are deemed by Christ to be for it.\(^{45}\) It is what Bonhoeffer would have understood as ‘mitleiden:’ justice as participation in the sufferings of God within the secular life.\(^{46}\) Fragments of such this-worldly melody can be heard in non-faith allied organisations such as The Red Cross, Amnesty International, Alcoholics Anonymous, Oxfam, World Development Movement, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.\(^{47}\) Hidden in such people is the melody-making for justice typified by the unaware righteousness of Matthew 25;\(^{48}\) giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a home to the stranger and visiting the ill or those in prison. Within the Iona Community many members are involved in making such melodies: not as Christians \textit{per se} but as people committed to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.\(^{49}\)

As they work these silent and hidden acts of righteousness, members are discovering appropriate ways to interpret their faith in the new contexts of the world. And where it is impossible to relate these concepts to the world they, after Bonhoeffer, have discovered that, ‘a tactful silence is better than mere repetition of words whose cultural conditioning may have rendered them

\(^{43}\) Letters and Papers, p381.
\(^{44}\) Larry Rasmussen ‘Worship in a World Come of Age’, in A. J. Klassen, \textit{A Bonhoeffer Legacy}, p279.
\(^{45}\) Luke 9:49.
\(^{46}\) Mitleiden = Compassion. See Larry Rasmussen, ‘Worship in a World Come of Age’, p279.
\(^{47}\) The paradigmatic example of this for Bonhoeffer was when the Christian Church raised little opposition to Nazism but he, acting undercover for the German Resistance Movement, met people of no religious persuasion who were willing to risk their lives for the good of persecuted others.
\(^{48}\) Letters and Papers, p380.
\(^{49}\) Rule 4 of the Iona Community specifically relates to action undertaken for justice and peace and the integrity of creation. See Appendix 1.
meaningless'.\textsuperscript{50} But in this public silence is located their urgent struggle to reinterpret the words of the Bible and the actions of faith in ways that once again speak to the world of God's offer of reconciliation and redemption.\textsuperscript{51} This task is succinctly petitioned in the Iona Community prayer for 'new ways to touch the hearts of all'.\textsuperscript{52} One of the melodies of God that has the potential to touch the hearts of all is the practice of making peace and reconciliation.


\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p300.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Iona Abbey Worship Book}, p20.
CHAPTER NINE, FIRST MOVEMENT:
MAKING THE MELODY OF PEACE IN THE WORLD.

World peace through non violent means is neither absurd nor unattainable. All other methods have failed. Thus we must begin anew. Non-violence is a good starting point. Those of us who believe in this method can be voices of reason, sanity and understanding amind the voices of violence, hatred and emotion.

Martin Luther King, Jr.53

To refrain from the violence of tongue, fist or heart.

S.C.L.C. Commitment Card 54

The whole earth is sacramental: every thing is truly every blessed thing, and it is indeed blasphemy to use the very atom to kill.

Ron Ferguson 55

Non-violence is about revolution. It is about finding creative, imaginative ways to overthrow all forms of tyranny and oppression, without becoming the oppressor in the process. It widens the options and holds out a possibility of a way out of the cycle of violence where dignity can be maintained.

Helen Steven 56

It is not always easy to participate in the newly revealed melodies of God in the world. New harmonies and meaningful songs of peace and protest can be difficult music to learn. For instance, the Croat theologian Miroslav Volf was once asked by Jürgen Moltmann if he could embrace a četnik, those armed Serbs who had recently destroyed much of Volf’s homeland. His deeply honest reply underlines the cost of being a disciple of the Prince of Peace: ‘No, I cannot – but

53 I have been unable to find a published reference but the statement was given in December 1964, see http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/warandpeace/wpquotes.htm .
55 Chasing the Wild Goose, p156.
as a follower of Christ I think I should be able to'.

For the individual Christian, participating in God's melody of peace making will always carry a personal cost.

It was a personal cost with which Christ was familiar. While he proclaimed that the peacemakers of the world would be blessed by God, he knew also that those who sought to participate in making melodies of peace would need encouragement to 'love their enemies' and to 'pray for those who persecuted them'. He knew, too, that their enemies and persecutors, and the potential for violence would remain ever present. But Christ repeatedly avoided violence with those who opposed him. He refused to accept for himself the warrior-king associations of Messiah-ship that might incite violent confrontations with the Romans, and he resisted provocations to precipitate such conflict. When Peter used a sword to attack those who had come to arrest him, Jesus rebuked the disciple warning him that those who live by violence would also die by it. Similarly when he entered Jerusalem on the week before his execution, he did so not on a battle steed, but riding on a donkey as predicted by the prophet Zechariah. Indeed, Zechariah had foretold that the Messiah would end repeating cycles of violence: taking away 'the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem' and 'breaking the battle bow'. He would proclaim peace to the nations and his rule would extend 'from sea to sea' and 'to the ends of the earth'. At his death, Christ rejected the possible use of the legions of angels who could have delivered him from the personal cost of the crucifixion.

But Jesus did not practice non-violence as a pragmatic tactic against a Roman Empire who held a monopoly on strength and might; rather he saw non-violence as a melody of heaven finding its voice on earth. It was, claims Walter Wink, 'a direct corollary of the nature of God and of the new reality emerging in the world.

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59 It is possible that Judas Iscariot was connected with the radical Jewish opposition to the Roman occupiers and in betraying Jesus was trying to force his hand into a violent conflict the like of which was widely associated with the coming reign of the Messiah.
62 Zech. 9:9-10.
from God'. Echoes of this new reality had been heard in a series of fragmented melodies proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets. Isaiah described his foretaste of it as a time when 'swords would be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning forks', (Is 2:4) and when 'the wolf would lie down with the lamb' (Is 11:6) when all who were thirsty could come to the waters, and when 'those without money could buy and eat, [buying] wine and milk without money or cost'. (Is 55:1). It was a time of 'good news for the poor, freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, release for the oppressed and the year of the Lord's favour. (Is 61:1-2). The promise of this melody was fulfilled in Christ (Luke 4:21) and it was much more than an absence of conflict. He was the Hebrew concept of 'shalom': that proleptic network of harmonious social relationships between people and with God.  

Not only did Christ teach and practice Shalom, but, the peace of Christ is in fact predicated on the polyphonic life of the Trinity, one God in perfect community. For God is not only the provider of such peace, but God's very identity is characterised by the immanent quality of Shalom. Cunningham suggests that the otherness located within the immanent lives of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit creates a genuine potential for their wills to differ, but that because this conflict is never actualised there is also within God a genuine Shalom. Without this potential for difference there would be no real meaningful concept of peace but with the diversity of three agreeing to act in unity, Shalom becomes personified within in the polyphonic God. Christ as the second person of the divine music

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63 Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, p209.
64 Shalom, the Hebrew concept of peace is to be contrasted with the classical Greek concept of peace (Eirene) that envisioned a harmonious balance of tranquillity while the Roman Pax was stability maintained by the peace keeping military might. For a discussion of these differences within the context of the community of faith, see C. Norman Kraus, The Community of the Spirit, p133ff and Rowan Williams and Mark Collier, Beginning Now: Peacemaking Theology, (London: Dunamis, 1984), p13-24.
65 This is the argument of David Cunningham who asserts that God is not only 'the dispenser of peace' but is actually marked by an immanent quality of peace / shalom; i.e. that the difference and otherness located within the life of the Trinity creates the potential for wills to differ but that this conflict is not actualised. Without this potential there would be no real meaningful concept of harmonious relationship / shalom. See David S. Cunningham, These Three Are One, p238-243.
66 Cunningham cites Philippians 2 as a classic text in which each person of the Trinity chooses not to exploit one's equality with the other, but rather seeks to exalt the other. He also cites John 14:16 as an example of divine cooperation in a common task. See David S. Cunningham, These Three Are One, p241.
eternally negotiates this potential for conflict within God’s own internal differentiation and together with the Father and the Holy Spirit inhabits a mutual shalom. And as the visible image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), Jesus becomes the epiphanal melody of the divine Shalom in this world, inviting humanity to participate in the melody of a humanity unaffected by mimetic violence. It is this divine Shalom ('peace but not as the world gives it') that is left ('my peace I leave with you') with the disciples and bequeathed to the Church.\(^{67}\)

The responsibility for participating in this-worldly performance of shalom rested in the new realities of the post-resurrection disciples and in generations of the colony of heaven. The early Christian community inhabited a new and unique place of boundariless social inclusion and non-violent living for others that owed everything to the polyphonic Shalom encountered in Christ. Their responsibility for participating in the melody of Shalom was readily adopted by the pre-Constantine Church as is evidenced in the specific Christian rejection of the Imperial State Military.\(^{68}\) The writings of Justin Martyr, Origen and Tertullian all testify to the refusal of Christians to engage in military action claiming that: 'Christ in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier'.\(^{69}\) But after the Constantinian Settlement, with the increasing homogenisation of the gospel, the army became an integral part of ensuring the unthreatened propagation of a uniform religion. This laid the foundation for an alliance between the Church and force of arms that has with notable exceptions continued ever since.

There has, of course, been controversy over whether the prior Christian denouncement of war and military participation was due to their objections to killing per se or owed more to their aversion to the idolatrous paganism of the

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\(^{67}\) John 14:27.

\(^{68}\) Pacifism was of course not unknown in the Ancient world: The Greek Cynics disassociated themselves from war and the Epicurean pursuit of tranquillity led them to withdraw from public responsibility and hate war. The Jewish sect, the Essenes, was also pacifist. But these examples in general owe more to the individual pursuit of tranquillity and detachment from the world than any hope to remain responsibly involved with the world in a non-violent fashion. See the work of Peter Brock, \textit{The Roots of War Resistance: Pacifism from the Early Church to Tolstoy}, (Nyack, N.Y.: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1981), p15, cited in Walter Wink, \textit{Engaging the Powers}, p209.


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army. But Walter Wink asserts that that debate is largely irrelevant. He concludes that both possibilities (together with his explication of the Myth of Redemptive Violence) are symptoms of ‘The Domination System.’ The Domination System is those global, national, local and personal ‘powers and principalities’ that have fallen from their God ordained purpose. Their march toward monophonic homogenisation, (no voice but their own), stands in direct contradiction to the polyphony of Christ and the Christian colony. They perpetuate unjust economics, oppressive politics, domineering gender relations, racial prejudices and hierarchical power relations which are predicated on a hatred of difference and maintained by a violence against diversity. For the early Christians their opposition to killing and to military idolatry were one and the same. Namely, an allegiance to the purposes of Shalom and as such, an opposition to the Domination System personified in Rome and the Empire. Here is uncovered a deeper melody of truth: while there had been fragments of heaven’s alternative revealed through the prophets of Israel, the Domination System had been largely camouflaged as a System: it simply was the way things were. But with the epiphany of personal Shalom in Christ, the System is unmasked. This reveals the ‘hidden things’ that Christ tells the disciples have been concealed ‘since the foundation of the world’. (Matthew 13:35.) These things stand in direct opposition to melodies of vicarious action on behalf of suffering others that characterises Christ as cantus firmus. The self-seeking purpose of the Domination System is to overwhelm and silence the melodies of making justice. So they stand in opposition to the boundariless inclusion, unifying

71 Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, p211.
72 The Myth of Redemptive Violence is the idea that violence can be used to satisfactorily resolve conflicts and ensure peace. It originates in the ancient Babylonian Creation Myth of Marduk and Tiamat in which the cosmos is born out of their violent conflict. Paul Ricoeur’s commentary on this Myth in The Symbolism of Evil, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) is the foundation of much of Walter Wink’s analysis. See Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, Chapter 1.
73 See Walter Wink, Engaging The Powers, p211 ff.
74 See generally Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, Chapters 1-5
75 Indeed René Girard has specifically identified such recurring cycles of violence and domination as the ‘hidden things’ that Christ reveals through the parables. See René Girard, Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metzger, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). I am indebted to David Cunningham’s work for drawing this book to my attention and to identifying the shortcomings of some of Girard’s argument. See David S. Cunningham, These Three Are One, p247-251.
difference and non-violent harmony of Christ’s Shalom. In the ongoing revelation of their true character Christ does not simply expose their falsehood, but offers creative alternatives to their violence and overcomes their self-perpetuation through his death and resurrection. This heralds the end to mimetic acts of violence and the cessation of scapegoat mechanisms (including those ingrained in Christian theology) that are designed to retrain society’s longing for vengeance. The unmasking of these powers⁷⁶ once hidden is the prelude to their being engaged and redeemed.⁷⁷

At the same time he offers the possibility of participating in the alternative and ordained melodies of God. The melody of peace-making revealed to the world through Christ challenges the community of faith to resist the System without succumbing to a mimetic methodology. The gospels reveal how Jesus offered creative and disarming alternatives for non-violent resistance, classically turning the other (right) cheek which denies the dominator any continued power to humiliate the victim and challenges the boundaries of differing social status.⁷⁸

The cross and resurrection of Jesus attests to the ultimate powerlessness of the Domination System before the melody of Shalom. Pentecost bears witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in which the Domination System can be resisted in this world. The eschaton promises hope to those who live in the now and not yet that the Powers can and shall be redeemed. The unmasking, engaging and redeeming of the System is at the heart of the melody of peace-making. Participation in such a melody ought to be a defining characteristic of the colony of heaven, a confessional matter, a commitment of belonging as determined as the traditional baptismal / confirmation vows. Within the new monasticism of the Iona Community a commitment to making the melody of shalom is a confessional matter. Although not every member is a convinced pacifist each


⁷⁷The prayer for the Iona Community pre-dates the work of Girard, but synthesising his reflections with Wink’s analysis gives a deeper and fresh perspective on the Community prayer: ‘Further in all things the purpose of our community, that hidden things may be revealed to us and new ways found to touch the hearts of all’. The Iona Abbey Worship Book, p20.

⁷⁸See Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, chapter 9, p175 ff, for a fuller treatment of this and Jesus’ command to offer up your undergarment to those who demand your cloak for collateral on a loan and going the extra mile.
person commits themselves to work for peace and justice in some way appropriate to their context. But while this position is by no means unique to the Iona Community it stands in contrast the common practice of the post-
Constantine Church. From its sanctioning of Crusades to its blessing of battleships, the Church has too often colluded with the Systems of Domination, complicit with its violence with little self-examination or search for alternatives.\textsuperscript{79}

A classic example of the Domination System and the Church's collusion therein was the rise of Nazism in Germany during the 1930s. Nazism offers a profound example of the Domination System, not simply in its desire for a totalitarian eradication of difference but also in its ability to induce in its opposition a mimetic violence of resistance.\textsuperscript{80} And Bonhoeffer offers an honest refrain of the tensions and complexities of participating on the melodies of peace-making amidst the Domination System. His early theology claimed that when a people consciously submit to God's will and go to war ... then 'war is no longer murder'.\textsuperscript{81} In Barcelona Bonhoeffer admitted that killing was undoubtedly a sin and wicked but argued that pacifism was a mistaken and legalistic position that failed to be concrete and 'as a consequence it does not take in the depths of Christian decision'.\textsuperscript{82} However by 1934 his theology had altered.\textsuperscript{83} By then he had

\textsuperscript{79} There are of course sections of the Church such as Quakers and Mennonites for whom peace-making is a central concern but peacemaking as a confessional position has been rare. The Church as a whole has tended towards varying theories of the 'Just War' although as Wink notes, the strict definition of such a war is rarely appreciated by those who often appeal to it. See Walter Wink, \textit{Engaging the Powers}, p212 ff.

\textsuperscript{80} A good example is the terror bombing of civilian targets in WWII. This began with Hitler bombing Warsaw and Rotterdam but the allies soon reciprocated in a systematic attempt to destroy German morale by bombing all 43 major German cities. For further comment on WWII mimetic rivalry see Walter Wink, \textit{Engaging the Powers}, p196 ff. In \textit{Ethics} Bonhoeffer commented critically on this new aspect of 'total war' in which all means - even criminal – are justified if it serves to further the victory of their cause. See \textit{Ethics}, p110.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Sanctorum Communio}, p119.

\textsuperscript{82} See Larry Rasmussen, \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance}, p96-97. (This is Rasmussen's translation of a footnote on p56-57 of \textit{Gesammelte Schriften} Vol. III).

met Jean Lasserre and was enthralled by the Sermon on the Mount. In Germany, with the minority exception of the Confessing Church, Christians were colluding with Nazism. Soon Bonhoeffer was making passionate pleas for peace through an international and ecumenical witness at Fanö. There he confessed to colleagues that in the event of war he would pray that 'God would give him the strength not to take up arms'.\textsuperscript{84} He had also been influenced by the non-violent opposition to the British in India\textsuperscript{85} and in the next few years, secured introductions that would have enabled him to study in Gandhi's Ashram. For a variety of reasons, the trip was never possible, but despite that Bonhoeffer's commitment to peace deepened. In 1935 he wrote to his brother that, 'There just happen to be things that are worth an uncompromising stand. And it seems to me that peace and social justice, or Christ himself, are such things'.\textsuperscript{86} The following year he confessed to then seeing 'as self evident' the Christian pacifism that up until then 'he had passionately opposed'.\textsuperscript{87} In Finkenwalde he taught his students:

\begin{quote}
Jesus' followers are called to peace. When Jesus called them, they found their peace. Jesus is their peace. Now they are not only to have peace, but they are to make peace. To do this they renounce violence and strife. Those things never help the cause of Christ. Christ's kingdom is a realm of peace, and those in Christ's community greet each other with a greeting of peace. Jesus' disciples maintain peace by choosing to suffer instead of causing others to suffer. They preserve community when others destroy it. They renounce self assertion and are silent in the face of hatred and injustice. That is how they overcome evil with good. That is how they are makers of divine peace in a world of hatred and war.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{86} Letter to Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer cited in \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p206.

\textsuperscript{87} Letter to a woman to whom Bonhoeffer had been engaged', in \textit{A Testament to Freedom}, p425.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Discipleship}, p108.
Most of Bonhoeffer’s work in the Resistance reflected this commitment: to stand in solidarity with the suffering and renounce violence. But famously he then participated with other members of the Resistance in a plot to assassinate Hitler. That the plot failed does not change the fact that Bonhoeffer was now willing to entertain complicity in murder. Did he forsake the call to peace? Did he change his theology? Did he too in the end succumb to mimetic violence? Both pacifism and conspiracy must somehow flow together if Bonhoeffer meant what he said in April 1944:

*I’m firmly convinced – however strange it may seem – that my life has followed a straight and unbroken course, at any rate in its outward conduct.*

The integrity of this unbroken course is particularly pertinent because on the day after the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler, Bonhoeffer, in a letter to Bethge, specifically reaffirmed what he had written in *Discipleship.*

It is Bonhoeffer’s polyphonic approach to life and peace-making that enables him with unbroken integrity to hold his apparently contradictory actions in tension. Christ, the *cantus firmus* remained the epiphany of divine Shalom. Peace was the ‘great venture’ still to be dared. But being conformed to the likeness of the polyphonic Christ and responsibly participating in the divine melody of peacemaking meant seriously addressing the question of ‘Who is Christ for us

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89 During this time Bonhoeffer worked on the U7 project to help Jews escape from Germany. Also through his overseas travel and friendship with George Bell he was able to provide a list of names to Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, of those Germans ready to cooperate in the overthrow of Hitler.

90 For Bonhoeffer if any change were occasioned it was a change in theology and not simply a politics of pragmatism. Bonhoeffer would never have become a plotter on political grounds alone. Rather, theology played a decisive role in his particular understanding of an involvement in political resistance. See Andreas Pangritz, ‘Sharing the Destiny of His People’, in John W. de Gruchy, ed., *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, p258 ff.


92 *Letters and Papers*, p369. Bethge holds that Bonhoeffer was consistent; he writes: ‘I think he would have said: “Of course I’m still in your terms a pacifist, even in doing this (participating in the conspiracy) and I took the guilt, I took all the consequences of not being on the successful side and being killed for it,” cited in G. Clarke Chapman in ‘What Would Bonhoeffer Say to Christian Peacemakers Today?’ p168.

93 Bonhoeffer used such a phrase in his address to Fanô on 28th August 1934, see *No Rusty Swords*, p291.
today? Christ was to be found among those suffering under Hitler and his Nazi system of Domination. Wrestling with how to make peace in such an extreme context eventually led Bonhoeffer to reject the possibility of 'innocently' observing and compelled him to conspire to act violently (and sinfully) for the sake of suffering others, and in the last resort that meant tyrannicide. Simple adherence to an absolute position of pacifism that retained his purity while others (and therefore Christ) suffered was insufficient. For just as the melody of the divine shalom is never passive so too Bonhoeffer could not be a passiveist: doing nothing in the face of others’ struggle and pain. His life was characterised by 'daring to do what is right'. And, but for the 'in extremis' responsibilities that he believed arose in response to Hitler, Bonhoeffer remained as deeply committed to the music of non-violence. He never sought to justify his participation in the planned tyrannicide as being 'in tune' with the cantus firmus. In Ethics he had written that:

Those who, in acting responsibly, seek to avoid becoming guilty divorce themselves from the ultimate reality of human existence; but in doing so they also divorce themselves from the redeeming mystery of the sinless bearing of guilt by Jesus Christ, and have no part in the divine

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94 Dena Davis has argued that Bonhoeffer was still very much influenced by Gandhi at this point, particularly the spiritual discipline of 'satyagraha': the self sacrificial soul force, in which to remain 'neutral' is not a non-violent option, it is rather an option which aligns one with violence already in the situation'. See Dena Davis, 'Gandhi and Bonhoeffer', p46.

95 Indeed he regarded pursuing the ideological purity of pacifism through public conscientious objection as a private and indulgent flight from the increased responsibility and guilt needed in the situation. He disapproved of the pacifism adopted by Hermann Stöhr, Secretary of the German Fellowship of Reconciliation. Stöhr refused to fight and, as conscientious objection was not recognised by the Nazi Regime, was shot. Bethge recalls that while such a stand might have appeared noteworthy 'Bonhoeffer regarded it as an act of irrelevant self-fulfilment'. See E. Bethge, Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr, p112. In a 1985 radio interview Bethge reflected Bonhoeffer’s thinking when he responded to the assertion that Christians are to be ‘pure and spotless in a crooked world’ by stating: ‘Christians have to acknowledge what is happening to victimised people and they have to accept their responsibility to try and save them, and not run away into purity and leave them. Purity is even worse then.’ BBC Radio 4 interview, Broadcast Sept. 1986, edited transcript in Keith W. Clements, What Freedom: The Persistent Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p34. Gandhi would regard such fear of doing violence as cowardice and to resist by violence was better than to not resist at all. See Dena Davis, ‘Gandhi and Bonhoeffer’, p46.


97 This was a costly personal decision for Bonhoeffer. He asked for warning so that he might formally sever his links with the Confessing Church before any assassination occurred. He knew that his actions might mean the end of any future career as a pastor and never denied that his act was a sin. Walter Wink notes that two generations of Christians have held back from full commitment to non-violence, citing Bonhoeffer’s example and then ponders: ‘Had he known, both that his attempt would fail, and that it would have the effect of justifying redemptive violence in the eyes of so many Christians, I wonder if he would have done it?’ Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers, p225.

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justification that attends this event. They place their personal innocence above their responsibility for other human beings and are blind to the fact that precisely in so doing they become even more egregiously guilty. 98

It was in this vein that Bonhoeffer confessed his guilt before the God of shalom but simultaneously placed his trust in that same God. So, living unreservedly in life’s problems and perplexities, Bonhoeffer threw himself ‘completely into the arms of God’. 99

Living for God amidst life’s duties and problems places an obligation upon the Christian to ‘seek peace and pursue it’. 100 Thus, while George MacLeod became a convinced and on occasion incorrigible pacifist, a polyphony of positions on working for peace has always been found within the membership of the Iona Community. The Rule of the Iona Community commits members to working for peace but, the Community itself has never been pacifist in that sense of adhering to an absolute rule. 101 Since 1966 the Community has retained as a confessional position a specific commitment within its Rule of Life for members to work for peace. This was subsequently amended into its current form which includes a commitment to justice.

It includes within it the following polyphony of commitments: 102

We believe:
That the Gospel commands us to seek peace founded on justice and that costly reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel.

That work for justice, peace and an equitable society is a matter of extreme urgency.

That social and political action leading to justice for all people and encouraged by prayer and discussion, is a vital work of the Church at all levels.

98 Ethics, p276.
99 Letters and Papers, p370.
100 Ps. 34:14.
101 Nevertheless it has been richly blessed in its thinking and its action by many of those within its ranks who have held such beliefs. For one such example see Helen Steven, Roger: An Extraordinary Peace Campaigner.
102 For a complete copy of the Rule see Appendix A.
That the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction is theoretically and morally indefensible and that opposition to their existence is an imperative of the Christian Faith.

And within the accountability structures of the family group members of the Community seek to participate in the melody making of peace by committing to:

Engage in forms of political witness and action, prayerfully and thoughtfully to promote just and peaceful social, political, and economic structures.

Work for a British policy of renunciation of all weapons of mass destruction and for the encouragement of other nations individually and collectively, to do the same.

Work for the establishment of the United Nations Organisation as the principal organ of international reconciliation and security in the place of military alliances.

Support and promote research and education into non-violent ways of achieving justice, peace and a sustainable global society.

Work for reconciliation within and among nations by international sharing and exchange of experience and people, with particular concern for political and economically oppressed nations.\(^\text{103}\)

This polyphonic commitment to the melody of shalom needs to be understood as a radical alternative to the Domination Systems that are uncovered in Christ's presence in the World. George MacLeod instinctively grasped the truth that this involved the Christian colony in struggles against more than flesh and blood and that crucial to such resistance was for individual and Community to know well the melodies of its peacemaking purpose. In a passage particularly pertinent to this thesis he wrote:

The fact is we live in a demonic world. At least I hope we live in a demonic world. I hope it is not as reasonable creatures that we spend these astronomical sums on preparing for a war no one can win ...

We have always believed in principalities and powers and the rulers of wickedness in high places. The very essence of our Faith is that we have the answer through our Redeemer.

\(^{103}\) See Appendix A.
Michael must come back into our consciousness (not just our intellects). Angels must become our consciousness again ... not floppy damsel s in their nighties, but dynamic forces in the serried ranks ... "the whole company of heaven."

It is because we have left "all that" out that the Faith has become "background music" and demonic secularism rules our souls.

By all means let us say that the secular is the realm of God's activity and that He is in and through all things, but realise He has let loose Satan there, for our disciplining, and that Christ is also there for our salvation.104

For the Christian colony, the melodies of peacemaking, the polyphony of shalom can never be allowed to become 'background music'. This echo of angel song breaks into this world's present reality and longs for humanity to join in the performance. Such melodies are regularly rehearsed within the Christian community: as family groups gather together and, in Iona Abbey, there is a weekly evening service and short daily Services of Prayer for Justice and Peace. But such services would be but a pious hope and a false witness if members did not participate in the melodies of peace within the world. Members of the Community will vary in the ways by which this music remains in the foreground of their discipleship of righteous action. Some, approximately ten, may be said to be engaged in peace work professionally. Many others are actively involved in organisations such as C.N.D., The Campaign Against The Arms Trade and Trident Ploughshares. Others may express their participation in the melody of peacemaking through their lifestyle choices, or their supportive involvement of others. The work is conducted within Church related and secular organisations. Some have been involved in the World Court Project regarding the international declaration of the illegality of nuclear weapons. For other members their commitment to the Rule and God's overture of peace-making has led to direct non-violent demonstration such as that which occurs regularly outside the Faslane Submarine Base, near Glasgow. Others have understood their participation in the melodies of peacemaking to necessitate non-violent direct

104 George MacLeod, 'Background Music', Coracle, No.49, (December 1966), p15-16.
action that has ironically led to their arrest for 'breach of the peace'. Indeed a defence run in such cases is that given the illegality of the weapons retained on the military bases, the defendants are in fact acting 'to keep the peace'. Rather than pay the fines with which they have been sentenced many members have spent time in prison for their convictions. But many others who do not feel they can take this step may be found supporting the witness of such individuals, through regular 'affinity groups' and practical care on the day of demonstrations and during their period of incarceration.

That such action is seen as an unmasking of the powers of the Domination System can be seen in the reflections of Roger Gray who in 1986 at the age of 70 moved from lawful campaigner to an action of civil disobedience. After participating in a Pentecost act of worship outside the R.N.A.D. Coulport, (where the Polaris Missiles were housed), some campaigners then chained themselves together and knelt in prayer across the gateway of the base. Spontaneously Roger joined. Reflecting on his subsequent arrest he wrote in the Coracle:

For the first seventy years of my life I have kept the laws of the land, believing it was right to do so, but on that day of Pentecost, I believed, with the others, I was called to make that particular witness to oppose the cosmic powers of evil which, if not overcome, will lead to the destruction of life on this planet.

Significantly this act of peacemaking in the world happened after participation in an act of peace-making worship. The day had begun with worship that had moved from penitence for complicity in the arms race to a celebration of the power of the Spirit. For these people their act of prayer was no optional extra to bolt on to their righteous action. Rather the worship energised and sustained

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105 Accounts of the surrounding events and trials can be found regularly in various issues of Coracle and on-line at www.tridentploughshares.org.
106 On 21st October 1999 at Greenock Sheriff Court, Sheriff Margaret Gimblett upheld the defence argument of the 'Trident Three' that the accused were in fact keeping the law and the peace by their actions. On March 30th 2001 the Scottish High Court in Edinburgh ruled that their acquittal and Sheriff's Gimblett's acceptance of their defence was mistaken. In 2004 both Ellen Moxley and Helen Steven continued in direct action, continued to be prosecuted by the UK Government and were awarded the prestigious Gandhi International Peace Award.
107 The details of these events are recorded in Helen Steven, Roger: An Extraordinary Peace Campaigner, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1990), p76 ff. The extract from Coracle is found at p79.
Roger Gray and eighteen other protestors as they participated in the penultimate melodies of God's shalom before a world of Domination. Here is an example of the *Discipline of Counterpoint* at work; the melodies of God revealed in the Church and World uniting and bisociating around the *cantus firmus* of Christ in polyphonic witness.
CHAPTER 9,  SECOND MOVEMENT:
MAKING THE MELODY OF JUSTICE IN THE WORLD.

The Bible is about revolution as well as revelation ... The theme of social justice echoes through the pages of Scripture like an insistent drum-beat.

Norman Shanks

We are not Christ, but if we want to be Christians, we must have some share in Christ's largeheartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes, and by showing a real compassion that springs, not from fear, but from the liberating and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer. Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behaviour. Christians are called to compassion and action, not in the first place by their own sufferings, but by the sufferings of their brothers and sisters, for whose sake Christ suffered.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The melodies of peace and those of justice perpetually sound in close harmony to one another, for as Bonhoeffer once declared; ‘There can only be a community of peace when it does not rest on lies and injustice.’ And it is precisely as the heavenly colony makes known the melodies of God on earth that the world witnesses within the boundariless boundary how ‘justice and peace join hands’. This affirmation of the close harmony that exists between justice and peace is taken from the morning liturgy of the Iona Community but as the Rule of the Community attests, such words become no more than ‘a pious hope and a false witness unless people seek separately and together to put it into practice’. How the melodies of justice are practiced within a community of faith will depend greatly on how they imagine God. A people who imagine God to be an omnipotent autocrat will conceive and dispense an understanding of justice in a similarly capricious and monophonic form. But that is to ill-conceive God who is polyphonic in character: God’s melody of justice, as with that of

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108 Iona - God's Energy, p156.
109 See A Testament to Freedom, p483-484.
110 No Rusty Swords, p168-169.
112 ‘The Rule of the Iona Community’, See Appendix A.
God's peace, must therefore be polyphonic in form. The divine shalom (a concept as much to do with justice as it is with peace) is premised upon such a polyphonic character. And justice, like peace, requires more than the suppression of difference by the oppressive monophony of a dominating system or persons. Polyphonic justice allows the melodies of every person to find their voice through their response to the cantus firmus. At the core of this justice is both the ability and the willingness to listen to the voice of others, particularly those less advantaged than ourselves, to empathize and stand in solidarity with them and to welcome them into the melodies of God's community.

This is certainly the witness of the Christian scriptures. Beginning in the Jewish Torah, God's people were exhorted not to deny justice to the poor in legal disputations and to uphold the rights of foreigners\(^\text{113}\) precisely because it was so easy to ignore the voice of those who could not afford to pay to have their case heard. Biblical justice generated a social obligation for the people of God to listen to the melodies of others. It was a justice premised upon their experience of God. The prophet Micah pronounces that the Lord requires no more of humanity than to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.\(^\text{114}\)

Jesus not only spoke about justice, but also revealed its heavenly character throughout his earthly ministry. Beginning in his incarnation, he who was of heaven did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped but took the nature of a servant and human form.\(^\text{115}\) In so doing he knew what it was to live in humility before others, to enter into their song, to empathise with their struggles and sufferings. In the open polyphony of his life, he revealed an inclusive appreciation of the music that others had chosen to exclude and ignore: the laments of lepers, slaves and tax collectors, women, children and Gentiles. He listened them into the fullness of life\(^\text{116}\) not only giving them a rightful place within society but teaching them to sing a polyphonic anthem of unity in diversity.

\(^{113}\) See Ex. 23:6&9; Ps. 89:14; Is.1:17 and Amos 5:15 & 24.

\(^{114}\) Micah 6:8.

\(^{115}\) See Eph. 2:1-11.

\(^{116}\) Brother Roger of the Taizé Community wrote: 'To be listened to is the beginning of the healing of the soul'. Uncited quotation in This is the Day, Month 4, Day 5.
through which the early Church proclaimed there were no Jews nor Greeks, slaves nor free folk, male nor female, for in their polyphony they were united in Christ's *cantus firmus*.\(^{117}\) As such melodies of God were made known in the world there was revealed to its people a polyphonic justice that was inclusive of everyone.

Both Bonhoeffer and MacLeod shared an uncommon ear for the melodies of this righteous anthem. They did this despite coming from backgrounds of privilege. They were both male, white and born into stable upper-middle-class families; they were physically strong and healthy, intellectually gifted and university educated, well-travelled, and financially well-resourced. Such privilege is not the usual incubus for champions of radical social action: in such environments the cacophony generated by an introspective elite often leaves little space to listen for the melodies of otherness.\(^{118}\) Yet for those who had ears to hear, the music of others was there to be heard. George MacLeod heard it first in the Great War, in the trenches with the common man and in the meetings of Toc H. But he carried the music with him to the back-street children hanging round St. Giles' in Edinburgh, the poverty of Govan tenements during the 1930s Depression and the post-war housing programmes. In time, that music blossomed into the polyphonic concerns of the Iona Community and nurtured numerous personal sacrifices and communal campaigns for justice at home and around the world. Bonhoeffer heard similar counter-melodies; whether it was the Barcelona drop-ins, ('the strangest persons, with whom one would otherwise scarcely have exchanged a word')\(^{119}\), the racially victimised Afro-Americans of Harlem, the slum

\(^{117}\) See Gal. 3:28.

\(^{118}\) Charges of elitism, sexism and religious intolerance could also be levelled at both men. They shared an aristocratic elitism and an outward confidence. While that confidence was an undoubted strength in leadership it did not make them particularly open to the suggestions of others in their community. Their lives and writings also reveal an occasional tendency toward what might now be regarded as sexism. Bonhoeffer's theology contains hints of anti-Semitism and for all his ecumenism, MacLeod could unashamedly engage in anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric.

\(^{119}\) He includes among these strange people, 'bums, vagabonds, criminals on the run, many foreign legionaries, lion and other animal tamers who have run away from the touring Krone Circus, ... German dancers from the music halls and German gangster murderers on the run'. See his letter to Karl Bonhoeffer 7th July 1928, cited in *A Testament to Freedom*, p379-380.
teenagers of Berlin\textsuperscript{120} or indeed the persecuted Jews of Europe, he continually championed the voice of the voiceless.\textsuperscript{121}

Indeed Bonhoeffer's 'song from below' has now become a 'locus classicus' of that champion of the marginalized; liberation theology.

There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled—in short, from the perspective of those who suffer. The important thing is that neither bitterness nor envy should have gnawed at the heart during this time, that we should have come to look with new eyes at matters great and small, sorrow and joy, strength and weakness, that our perception of generosity, humanity, justice and mercy should have become clearer, freer, less corruptible. We have to learn that personal suffering is a more effective key, a more rewarding principle for exploring the world in thought and action than personal good fortune. This perspective from below must not become the partisan possession of all who are eternally dissatisfied; rather, we must do justice to life in all its dimensions from a higher satisfaction, whose foundation is beyond any talk of 'from below' or 'from above'. This is the way in which we may affirm it.\textsuperscript{122}

There are numerous 'songs from below' that are gradually adding their voices to God's melodies of justice as revealed within the world. As they are listened into existence their songs invite the Christian colony to discover the 'higher satisfaction' of the divine polyphony that will do justice to 'life in all its dimensions': to the rich and poor, old and young, male and female, with the Christian and those of other or no religious faith. This music from below might include the melodies of God as they are perceived by a variety of historically marginalized or silenced groups such as women,\textsuperscript{123} gays and lesbians,\textsuperscript{124} or those

\textsuperscript{120} During his student years in Berlin towards the end of 1925 he began working in a local Church in Grunewald, helping in Sunday School and initiating a Thursday night club for teenagers.

\textsuperscript{121} Although the melody of justice is apparent in some of his early writings, including those from Barcelona, G.B. Kelly and F.B. Nelson have asserted that it was at least in part under the influence of Paul Lehmann in America that Bonhoeffer learnt that 'the theological only made sense when it intersected ethically with one's social and political concerns'. The influence of Jean Lasserre, Frank Fischer and Erwin Sutz were also critical at this time. \textit{A Testament to Freedom}, p10-11.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Letters and Papers}, p17.

\textsuperscript{123} The Feminist struggle for justice has now left few, if any, areas of life untouched by its critique of the dominant monophony of patriarchal systems. It is itself polyphonic in nature (Carter Heyward once called it 'a cacophony of diversity'). It celebrates the multiplicity of women's experience as uniquely located in Asian, African or Latin American women, together with the Womanist Theology of the
with physical or mental disabilities. Regrettably it is not possible in this study to adequately examine all such melodies from below; but by way of illustration we shall listen to two harmonies: those that address poverty and racism.

Poverty:

For a long time I have known that to sit with the poor brings extraordinary blessing and insight ... for in their freedom comes my own, and that's the place in which I wish to be found.

Martyn Joseph

Poverty is an offence to God precisely because it breaks and crushes human beings made in his image; and in our society today, poverty is breaking and crushing us all, not only the poor, for it is our humanity, as well as that of the poor, that is lessened and distorted as we allow poverty to exist in our midst.

John Harvey


126 Martyn Joseph, CD notes to Till the End: For the MST, (Christian Aid / Pipe Records: 2002).

127 John Harvey, Bridging the Gap: Has the Church Failed the Poor? (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1987), cited in This is the Day, Month 4, Day 25.
May it not be long, Lord...
Before there are no more beggars at the door
Waiting for the crumbs from the tables of the rich ...

... May it not be long,
Before Christians in this land examine their economic priorities
In the light of the Gospel, rather than its shadow.

John L. Bell

Someone may be understood as economically poor\textsuperscript{129} when they have ‘nowhere to externalise the cost\textsuperscript{130} of providing for their basic human needs. In other words, when they cannot personally bear the financial burdens of daily life and the wider community, local, national or global, are not willing or able to accept the responsibility for those suffering from economic deprivation in their midst. When this happens their songs of protest are silenced and excised from the harmonies of the people of the world. They may be conveniently ignored into pretended non-existence, an experience to which every street beggar in any country will testify. Or they may be violently silenced by guns and bulldozers.\textsuperscript{131}

Either way they are the Unmensch,\textsuperscript{132} non-persons, excluded from experiencing the fullness of the relational symphony in which God has ordained they have a part to play. It is the task of the Christian community to provide a way for their songs of identity and belonging to be heard in the world; for ‘God wants us to honour God in our fellow man and woman - and nowhere else’.\textsuperscript{133} As we listen to the songs of others so the music of the community we share


\textsuperscript{129} G. Gutiérrez has distinguished real poverty as defined as the lack of those goods required to satisfy the most basic of human needs from spiritual poverty (an attitude of openness towards the will of God) and poverty as a commitment to be assumed by all Christians in solidarity with the poor and in protest against poverty. See G. Gutiérrez, ‘The Task and Content of Liberation Theology’, in Christopher Rowland, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology, p25-26.

\textsuperscript{130} The phrase is borrowed from Kathy Galloway, the current leader of the Iona Community.

\textsuperscript{131} Sadly this experience is common to the poor across the boundaries of time or geography. In times past peasants in Ireland and Scotland were ‘cleared’ from the land on which they worked when keeping livestock became more profitable for its owners. Similarly when the World Bank met in Manila in 1976 legal tenants in an area deemed to be an eye-sore were forcibly evicted and their homes demolished. This is one of many such stories told by Ian M. Fraser, Strange Fire: Life Stories and Prayers, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1994), p112. A present day instance involves the work in Brazil of Movimento Sem Terra (M.S.T.) in which peasant farmers campaign for land reform. In April 1996, 11 peaceful campaigners were shot dead by Military Police.

\textsuperscript{132} This was the Nazi term coined for non-Aryan people, literally non-persons.

\textsuperscript{133} ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ cited in A Testament to Freedom, p92.
between us is honoured. So liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez notes that
the question for our time is then not so much how to announce God in a non-
religious ‘World come of Age’, but how to proclaim God as Father in an in-human
world ... ‘How do we tell the ‘non-persons’ that they are the sons and daughters
of God?’134 By this he does not mean that the questions of Christian belief in a
modern and post-modern world are no longer relevant, but simply that there is a
greater urgency to make absolute poverty a matter of history.135 God’s justice
demands that the human ability to respond to Christ and participate in the
polyphonic melodies of heaven on earth cannot be denied to those whom local,
national or global society arrogantly regards as worthless non-persons. There is
claims Bonhoeffer, ‘an unending worth in the apparently worthless’ and an
‘unending worthlessness of what is apparently so valuable’.136 So it is that Christ
is often to be found in the midst of such people, joining with them in their
otherwise unheard laments and songs of protest.137 As Bonhoeffer informed his
Barcelona congregation, ‘Jesus stands at the door and knocks, in complete
reality. He asks you for help in the form of a beggar, in the form of a ruined
human being in torn clothing. He confronts you in every person that you meet.
Christ walks on the earth as your neighbour as long as there are people’.138 Later
he asserted that whoever attacks ‘the least of the people attacks Christ, who
took on human form and who in himself has restored the image of God for all

world Come of Age, was for Bonhoeffer one in which every person was able and responsible to speak
for him or herself. As such he stood against the Nazi designation of groups of society as being
unmenschen.
135 See G. Gutiérrez, ‘The Task and Content of Liberation Theology’, p28 ff. The phrase is borrowed
from a broad based alliance of UK Aid Agencies, faith communities and celebrities who, in 2005
launched the ‘Make Poverty History’ Campaign, to encourage governments to eradicate world poverty
through more equitable rules of international trade, cancelling debts owed by Developing World
Countries, and increasing vital aid.
136 See A Testament to Freedom, p52.
137 In Christ the Center Bonhoeffer rejects the heresy of Ebionitism with its emphasis on Christ as
simply the enlightened but humiliated brother of all humanity. The essential bisociative element of
divinity and humanity is never unbalanced in Bonhoeffer’s Christology. However he struggles with
how Christ is to be encountered by the proletariat for whom He remains allied to the Church of
bourgeois society. See Christ the Center, p34 and 82 ff. Pangritz believes that Bonhoeffer never
succeeds in finding a middle course between Docetism and Ebionitism and believes his work contains
Ebionite tendencies. See Andreas Pangritz, ‘Who is Jesus Christ, for us today?’ in The Cambridge
Companion, p142-143.
who bear a human countenance’. If the world has now truly come of age then it is a matter of justice that no individual in whom resides the image of God is denied their ‘response-ability’ before God’s cantus firmus in the world. Until release from poverty is achieved for all then the melodies of God on earth remain in some part muted and all people, rich and poor, the powerful and the oppressed, those below and above are simultaneously diminished by the place that is denied their song. ‘The opposite of poverty, in the Bible, is not riches, but righteousness, justice.’

But is the hope of polyphonic justice for the poor a credible ambition? The Hebrew Scriptures seem to assert a harsh reality that there will always be poor people in the land and Jesus appears to confirm this realpolitik when he tells the disciples ‘the poor will be with you always’. However, in these Jewish scriptures, the stated actuality of interminable poverty was not only paralleled by an exhortation for the people to be open-handed towards the needy, but included a specific social provision made for their relief through the regular communal cycle of debt cancellation. These melodies of mercy and justice were specifically designed to prevent a perpetuating cycle of deepening poverty and to remind the people that everything fundamentally belonged to God. While there is no evidence that Israel ever practiced this regular rhythm of righteous economy, that need not diminish its potency: Michael Taylor claims that at best, ‘jubilee, like love, is an impossible possibility ... always there to question our self-satisfied achievements and call us on to new heights’. Economic jubilee is then an epiphanal fragment of heaven’s polyphonic song entrusted to the colony to be shared within the world. Similarly when Jesus claimed that the poor would

139 Discipleship, p285.
140 John Harvey, ‘Poverty - A Violence of Human Rights’, Coracle, No. 3 / 12, as cited in This is the Day, Month 2, Day 1.
141 See for instance Deut. 15:11.
142 See John 12:8.
143 Lev. 25 provided for a Sabbath year every seven years and a year of Jubilee every 50th year when all slaves were freed, debts were cancelled and the ownership of land was affirmed as belonging solely to God. Deut. 15 similarly allows for the cancellation of debts between those people who are part of the community of God every seven years specifically so that there would be no poverty among them.
always be present on earth he was intent on drawing attention to his own impending exodus and not to an inexorable social condition. From the inception of his ministry, Christ was about bringing good news to the poor and freedom to those oppressed. In acknowledging the continuing presence of the poor, Christ’s intention was not to harden the hearts of the disciples so that they might walk by on the other side of another’s destitution secure in cosseted religiosity. Rather, the coming of the kingdom of God brought melodies of good news to the poor and the disciples were charged with sharing the rhythms of resurrection living and the songs of Messianic freedom to ‘Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth’. And as is evidenced in the Book of Acts, the embryonic Christian community soon responded to this challenge with melodies of ‘compassion and action’ beginning a radical and sacrificial provision for the poor among them.

In a contemporary setting these same melodies of Christ’s liberation to the poor challenge the blasphemous monophony asserted by global free-trade economics that they be acclaimed the sole and comprehensive symbol of human self-determination. As Peter Selby notes:

_The claim of the market to be a symbol of human freedom and responsibility comes under the judgment of those who are restricted and bound, entmündigt, by its operation: how else can we describe the nations of the Two-Thirds World, whose indebtedness and whose structural adjustments programmes [are] forced upon them ... How else are we to regard the individuals and whole communities within the world’s more prosperous societies for whom the market is neither the symbol nor the key to their freedom, but the means by which they are reduced, as all debters in history have been reduced, to incapacity and ultimately to effective slavery? Most serious of all is the fact that since what happened to them is made to appear to come about through the operation of the ‘free market’ there is added to the injury of their overwhelming poverty the insult of the conviction that they themselves are to blame._

145 See Acts 1:8.
146 For instance, the quarrel between Greek-speaking Jews and native Jews in Acts 6 over the distribution of resources to widows reveals the normative but radical practices of the early Church.
The traditional monastic vow of poverty was taken to undermine the enslaving power that wealth may exercise over individuals and communities. It was a counter-cultural melody that refuted the claim of wealth to determine the worth of a person. It shared something of the poetic insight offered by Alice Walker:

We alone can devalue gold
by not caring
if it falls or rises
in the market place.
Wherever there is gold
there is a chain you know,
and if your chain
is gold
so much the worse
for you.

Feathers, shells
and sea- shaped stones
are all as rare.

This could be our revolution:
To love what is plentiful
as much as
what's scarce.  

However, as we have seen, vows of poverty were open to the misinterpretation that Christian discipleship required an antipathy toward and an abandonment of the world. A more this-worldly melody is again located in the life of the Iona Community. For while neither he nor the Iona Community has ever taken such a vow, George MacLeod understood the insight that the 'Powers' behind free trade economics were not concerned with universal equity or the freedom of all, but with promoting personal interest and the exploitation of others. He knew too that the this-worldly melodies of God heralded both liberation and justice to those

discipline went some way; it helped members put their disposal of personal income under review. However, the Community have never understood this discipline to be 'the solution for the economic chaos of our times', but they do continue to affirm its importance as a point of departure; 'a response, in economic terms, and in a disciplined way, to the biblical revelation that Christ is the Lord of all'.\textsuperscript{152} Indeed Community members have always affirmed that God's justice demanded more than personal acts of discipline and charity. So at different levels and in a number of ways members have responded to the challenge of poverty through their practical involvement in local community projects, or through their Churches, or other Christian organisations such as \textit{Church Action on Poverty}. At other times members will work with 'secular' groups with whom they share common aims and objectives. Such direct action is often a vital state of confession for Christian Communities for as Bonhoeffer claimed, there are times when the Christian community needs to go beyond bandaging the wounds of victims caught under the wheel of unjust action and proceed 'to put a spoke in the wheel itself'.\textsuperscript{153} Such action would be direct political action, and if employed while seeking justice for the poor it requires poverty to be tackled at its societal core: this necessitates engagement with grant authorities and local councillors, national politicians and international financiers all of whom shape the conditions in which poverty arose. For the Christian colony know that while poverty makes it difficult to hear the song of one person or group it diminishes the melodies of all.

Thus Iona Community member and long time campaigner Erik Cramb reflects on a recent period when child poverty rose significantly in the UK\textsuperscript{154} and argues that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Economics}, (Stratford-upon-Avon, Self published pamphlet, 1983) and made it required reading for the Iona Community in the May plenary of that year.

\textsuperscript{152} John Harvey, 'The Way in the World', \textit{Coracle}, No. 3 / 3, cited in \textit{This is the Day}, Month 3, Day 2.

\textsuperscript{153} No Rusty Swords, p225.

\textsuperscript{154} Erik Cramb is specifically commenting on the years 1979 - 1991. See Erik Cramb, \textit{Fallen to Mediocrity: Called to Excellence, An Affirmation of the Spirit of Community in Britain}, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications Worship Group, 1991). Margaret Legum notes that in the years 1979-1997, child poverty in the UK grew from 5 million to 14.3 million. While these children were rarely starving they did display significantly increased mortality rates and revealed greater rates of addiction crime.
\end{quote}
It cannot be right ... to deny our interdependence ... to learn from experience that market forces favour the rich and dispossess the poor and yet do nothing about it ... Do we really believe that the God who called the rulers of Israel to task; who brought the rich women of Jerusalem to heel; who witnessed the worth and dignity of the poor widow, wants us to be silent on these issues and thus free to promote private religiosity?\textsuperscript{155}

And of course for the Christian colony, as a global community, the struggle with poverty cannot be limited to the domestic parish but needs to be enjoined internationally. The interconnectedness of global economics can reduce whole people groups to poverty and the Iona Community has a long record not only of charity, but of putting a spoke in the wheels of economic policy that keep such injustice turning. In one of his most quoted passages MacLeod argued that:

It is urgent that the whole issue of international monetary finance be independently reviewed ... Have you ever queried the bankers? I have. Try the lower echelon of bankers and most of them will say, 'These things are too high for us, we cannot attain unto them', but a small minority will whisper, 'You've got something there, boy; isn't it extraordinarily cold weather for so late in the month of May?'

Try the upper echelon of bankers. I have. I wrote to the top man of a London bank, a charming man, asking his comments on a similar document to the Haslemere Declaration. He replied that the figures were inaccurate. I immediately asked which figures, but have had no reply.

They are in training for the job of international bankers. They know what is good for us. Don't consult us, the paltry crowd. But do they know what is good for us? Or are they sowing the seeds of the next war?\textsuperscript{156}

Campaigns such as the Drop the Debt movement have compelled international leaders to take seriously the relief of global poverty. But of course it is not simply enough to 'spoke the wheel' in this manner, it is also necessary to discern new ways forward in national and global economics. Movements such as Make Poverty History and the Campaign for Trade Justice, which include within their

\textsuperscript{155} Erik Cramb, \textit{Fallen to Mediocrity: Called to Excellence}, p15-17.

\textsuperscript{156} Address given to the Church of Scotland General Assembly in 1968. Cited in George MacLeod, p364-365.
strategy viable economic alternatives, typified by the success of 'Fair Trade' produce, are beginning to make a difference, economically and spiritually. As Adrian Rennie wrote recently:

To Shop is to Pray: - there can be little point praying for justice and peace if we do nothing about where it really counts: through our purchasing power. If we continue to buy goods which have been made by companies whose hidden byword is exploitation, then we are really praying pretty hollow prayers.

Through the policy of Fair Trading we can be sure that the gifts and goods we buy are helping those whose needs are often ignored: the people in the poorest parts of the world who make the commodities we take for granted.157

Articulating a comprehensive response to poverty is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis, but there is an urgent need for a polyphonic economics that specifically seeks to relieve poverty by creating new policies crafted through listening not only to the masters of international finance but to those currently impoverished. One such compelling proposal has recently come from Margaret Legum, an Iona Community member and South African national who writes with critical conviction against the zero-sum mentality of economists who perpetually assert that there is no alternative to the way things are. She cites with approval fellow African economists Heather Couzyn and Ronnie Lessem, who draw parallels with the world of biology to argue that 'not competition but cooperation between molecules, genes, cells and organisms is what makes life possible ... Life did not take over the globe by combat but by networking'.158

The full flourishing of human life is denied by continuing instances of impoverishment: the silencing of song that is occasioned by poverty diminishes the melodies of earthly justice. But such flourishing of human life remains at the core of heaven's purposes on earth. God is impatient for the full polyphony of such melodies to be sung on earth and heaven shall not wait:

157 Adrian Rennie, 'To Shop is to Pray', Coracle, No. 3 /16, as cited in This is the Day, Month 2, Day 19.
158 Margaret Legum, It Doesn't Have to be Like This, p18.
for the poor to lose their patience
the scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend:
Jesus is Lord;
He has championed the unwanted;
In him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait
For the rich to share their fortunes,
The proud to fall, the elite to tend the least:
Jesus is Lord;
He has shown the master's privilege –
To kneel and wash servants' feet before they feast.

Heaven shall not wait
For the dawn of great ideas,
Thoughts of compassion divorced from cries of pain:
Jesus is Lord;
He has married word and action;
His cross and company make his purpose plain.\textsuperscript{159}

\textbf{RACISM}

For Christians racism denies the unity and solidarity of all humanity which is at the heart of the gospel.

\textsuperscript{160}Stanley Hope


God's image is not epidermal.

\textsuperscript{161}Josiah Ulysses Young III

\textsuperscript{162}\textit{Only he who cries out for the Jews can sing the Gregorian chant.}

\textsuperscript{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}


\textsuperscript{162}\textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer}, p441.

Melodies of Community
We are not destined to be monoculture, to be uniform. The differences that exist among nations and cultures, that make other people hard to understand or attractive are there by divine design. So, if you should happen to end up on the Costa Brava and no waiter can fulfil your need for a fish supper or hot-pea special, then thank God ... And if you go into the West End of Glasgow and see second and third generation Pakistani or Indian restaurateurs offering a range of curries which no cholesterol-saturated white Glaswegian could ever make, then thank God for this glorious diversity ... God does not want everyone to be the same ... The Kingdom of God is not a monoculture. John L. Bell

There is an English language proverb that suggests that 'opposites attract', but human sociality often displays a marked proclivity to organise itself homogenously: like attracting like. Having so been organised these respective factions then place around themselves clear boundaries that define both who is welcomed and accepted by the group and by extension, those who are 'other' and suspect. Those who claim belonging within each boundary often perceive themselves to be in a zero-sum relationship with otherness: an 'I -Thou / "us and them"' scenario that extends from the youthful cruelties of primary school playgrounds, through the intolerance of religious fundamentalism to the xenophobia that may spark and fuel international conflict. Sometimes these factional groupings are premised upon shared religious beliefs, frequently they are understood through a common language or a shared culture and often they are based upon their belonging to particular anthropological racial groups. Indeed what is often termed 'racism' is commonly a display of one group's tribal prejudice against another's nationality (viz. the historical antipathy between the racially similar French and English) or cultural belonging (the violence during 1994 in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsis) as much as it is specific opposition to their genetic identity as members of racial / ethnic groups such as Caucasoid (European / 'White'), the Mongoloid (S.E. Asian, Chinese, Inuit and Native Americans), the Negroid ('Black' / Coloured Africans), and the Australoid (Maori / Australian Aborigines). While ethno-racial prejudice is most commonly manifest

in an intolerance between anthropological categories, it is not the only way in which such partiality can be evidenced. But however such intolerances are defined, ethno-racial prejudice is clearly monophonic and self-boundaried in disposition. Its elevation of sameness and its antipathy toward the limits arising out of Otherness clearly reject the possibility of Christ’s incarnation pertaining to all groups within the diversity of humanity. In contradistinction, the Christian colony understands that the image of God is not epidermal, but social. Christ became human precisely so that all humanity, in its richest polyphony of socio-racial difference, may be reconciled both to one another and to God. Different racial / ethnic groups may, for instance, imagine Christ to be incarnated as ‘one of them’ and many have chosen in their art, to portray Christ as Asian or Black one within their own ethnic groupings. But while each artistic expression of the incarnation is valid for that ethnic group, (Christ is indeed one of them), none may be thought of as exclusive. Christ who is one of them is also one of ‘otherness’ and in this bisociation can be found the whole human race. True human community would not be present without such otherness. Thus the Incarnation is not boundaried by an ethnic particularity but rather it is the incarnated Christ as cantus firmus in whom the rich polyphony of human racial difference is held in unity.

However, as a rule (albeit one with notable exceptions) the incarnated Christ interacted primarily within one racial boundary, his own, the Jews. Although he frequently breaks socio-religious taboos regarding Jewish purity his mission

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164 The allusion comes from Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, p58.
165 There is a diverse collection of Asian portrayals of Christ in the online collection of the Asian Christian Art Association: www.asianchristianart.org.
166 See for instance the art of Afro-Americans such as Aaron Douglas’ “The Crucifixion” and William H. Johnson’s “Descent from the Cross,” and his presentation of an all-Black cast as the family as Jesus in “Jesus and the Three Marys.” For an appraisal of such work see Kymberly N. Pinder, “‘Our Father, God; Our Brother, Christ; or are we bastard kin?’: Images of Christ in African American Painting’, African American Review, Vol. 31, (Summer 1997), p223-233.
167 This is no new phenomenon; the Celtic artwork in the Book of Kells portrays Christ having red hair, i.e. as being one of them.
168 This is the thrust of Bonhoeffer’s argument in Sanctorum Communio when he argues that ‘the union of like beings never leads to the concept of community, but only to the concepts of sameness, of unity’. Sanctorum Communio, p43.
169 See for instance, the occasions when he was accused of breaking the Sabbath; Luke 6:1-11; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 9:1-41 or times when he touched the unclean and ritually impure, such as lepers, Luke 5:12-16; Luke 17:11-19, or the bleeding woman, Mark 5:21-43, or foreigners / Gentiles,
was not characterised by a deliberate overturning of racial boundaries. There is the notable exchange with the Syro-Phonecian woman,\(^{170}\) the conversation with the Samaritan Woman at the Well,\(^{171}\) the parable of the Good Samaritan\(^{172}\) and the proclamation that foreigners would come to feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,\(^{173}\) as well as the inclusion of ‘outsiders’ in his genealogy\(^{174}\) but as Wink notes ‘Jesus nowhere flings the doors open to Gentiles.’\(^{175}\) While there is an unmistakable a trajectory of inclusivity and boundary crossing within his ministry, Christ’s disciples remain exclusively Jewish and his contact with Gentiles is self-limited.

The Jews had a long history through which they understood themselves to be the exclusive chosen people of God, a people clearly distinct and separate from others: Jewish identity was a matter of belonging to the nation as much as believing in their God. Of course there were proleptic echoes of God’s boundarless purposes in exhortations to welcome and care for strangers\(^{176}\), and through prophets such as Isaiah,\(^{177}\) but the Jewish people remained racially and religiously distinct. The two could not be separated; converts entered within the carefully constructed boundaries of both, and once inside, considered all others, the Gentiles, as those with whom contact was to be avoided. For such Gentiles to be included into the new ‘Christian’ community of God required much imagination; from Jews and Gentiles alike. The critical moment for the embryonic Church came in Acts 10 when the disciple, Peter, receives a vision from God in which he is instructed to kill and eat a selection of non-kosher food. When he protests that eating such food crosses his threshold of boundaried belonging,

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\(^{170}\) See Mark 7:24-30. This woman, clearly a Greek, is beyond the Jewish boundaries of community. Jesus appears to reject her at first and then, admiring her faith and strength of character, makes it clear to her and the disciples that the love of God is not just for them or those like them. In Matthew’s account she is referred to as a Canaanite, traditional enemies of the Jewish people. See Matt.15:21-28.
\(^{171}\) See John 4:1-42.
\(^{174}\) Neither Rahab nor Ruth, expressly mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy, was a Jew. See Matt.1:5.
\(^{175}\) Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, p117.
\(^{176}\) See Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 24:17.
\(^{177}\) Is. 2:2-4; 11:10-12; 25:5-6; 60:3-5.
God declares that the former boundaries have been transcended: what heaven has now declared to be clean Peter must no longer regard as impure.\textsuperscript{178} Within a few verses Peter encounters a devout Gentile named Cornelius and is challenged to reinterpret his recent vision as God inviting Gentiles to participate in the community of God’s people. The new paradigm is confirmed when God blesses Jew and Gentile alike with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{179}

So it was that the early Church began to learn that God showed no racial favouritism and accepted people from every ‘nation’ into the new community that was becoming the Church.\textsuperscript{180} It was this new community who would affirm that in Christ there was no ‘Jew nor Greek’\textsuperscript{181} and proclaim that Gentiles were no longer ‘foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ... with Christ as the chief cornerstone’.\textsuperscript{182} This is not to say that the racial differences were forgotten or removed but that they were overwhelmed by the unity found in Christ. The colony of heaven knew no boundaries of race; its only boundary was marked through being that space wherein the people of all races could find a polyphonic common ground through their humanity and Christ. To deny anyone their place in participating in the melodies of Church, community, nation or planet on the basis of their race or ethnicity is clearly a denial of Christ’s \textit{cantus firmus} and a silencing of the melodies of God. Participating in the fragmented epiphanies of heaven’s melodies on earth will require the Christian community to perform a song of justice in which all ethnicities are equal and affirmed.

In some respects, Bonhoeffer is an unlikely source from which to learn this song and the Iona Community might on first appearances seem an improbable place in which to hear it sung. For while the Iona Community has a clear commitment to ‘celebrate human diversity and actively combat discrimination’ on a variety of

\textsuperscript{178} See Acts 10:15.  
\textsuperscript{179} For a helpful comment on the historical and contemporary significance of Acts chapter 10 to the development and mission of the Church see Michael Riddell, \textit{Threshold of the Future}, p17-18.  
\textsuperscript{180} See Acts. 10:35.  
\textsuperscript{181} See Gal. 3:28  
\textsuperscript{182} See Eph. 2:11-22.
grounds, including 'colour, race, ethnic and cultural background'\(^{183}\) it remains largely comprised of white Caucasians. That it has a standing 'Racism Matters Working Group' and that many Community members are engaged in work for racial justice in the UK and around the world cannot lessen this observation. But it would be premature to dismiss its value as an epiphanal community of heaven's racial justice on such a superficial impression. Similarly Bonhoeffer might not be first choice of those seeking a paragon of social equality, and not simply with regard to racial equity. It cannot be avoided that Bonhoeffer's writings do reveal an aristocratic exclusivism\(^{184}\) with a tendency toward sexism\(^{185}\), Euro-centricism and even hints of anti-Semitism.\(^{186}\) There is also in his life and work a problematic lacuna with regard to Africa.\(^{187}\) Yet, for all that, Bonhoeffer's writings and biography has been an inspiration to those who led victims of racial oppression in South Africa during the Apartheid years.\(^{188}\) Indeed, it was not just theologians and Church leaders who were inspired by Bonhoeffer

\(^{183}\) 'The Rule of the Iona Community', Rule 4, part 10. See Appendix A.


\(^{186}\) While Bonhoeffer was one of the first to oppose the Nazi treatment of Jews he did so not so much from the perspective of common human rights but in opposition to the effect of the Aryan Clause on ecclesiology. At times he found it hard to shake off the centuries of anti-Semitic rhetoric in the Church which accused the Jews of killing Christ and in 1933 wrote, 'The church of Christ has never lost sight of the thought that the "chosen people" , who nailed the redeemer of the world to the cross, must bear the curse for its action through a long history of suffering'. \textit{No Rusty Swords}, p226. However Kelly and Nelson conclude that there is ample evidence that the early traces of anti-Semitism were excised and retracted from Bonhoeffer's theology and action. \textit{A Testament to Freedom}, p131. For a complete discussion on Bonhoeffer and the Jews see E. Bethge, 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Jews', in John D. Godsey and Geoffrey B. Kelly, eds., \textit{Ethical Responsibility: Bonhoeffer's Legacy to the Churches}, p43-93; Ruth Zerner, 'Church, State and the "Jewish Question"', in \textit{The Cambridge Companion}, p190-205; Geoffrey B. Kelly, 'Bonhoeffer and the Jews: Implications for Jewish - Christian Reconciliation', in Geoffrey B. Kelly and C. John Weborg eds., \textit{Reflections on Bonhoeffer}, p133-166 and Christian Gremmels, 'Bonhoeffer, the Churches, and Jewish-Christian Relations', in Wayne Whitton Floyd, Jr. and Charles Marshall, eds., \textit{Theology and the Practice of Responsibility}, p295-305.

\(^{188}\) See Josiah Ulysses Young III, \textit{No Difference in the Fare}, p1 ff.

but all those who struggled for racial justice and discovered ‘fragments of his theology which have helped them to remain faithful and hopeful’.189 And it is a Black American theologian J. U. Young III, who has articulated just how inimical Bonhoeffer’s life and work is to the evil of racism.190

From an early age Bonhoeffer’s theology was equipping him to deal with the evils of blud und boden racism191 that he would encounter in adult life. Long before he famously opposed the Nazi treatment of Jews or wrote about the ‘view from below’ he articulated an understanding of the relationships between God, self and others that denied the objectifying of otherness (so necessary for racism to exist) and assured the legitimacy and freedom of ‘the other’ in the ‘I-You’ relationship.192 For Christians, the ‘I-You relationship’ is perpetually mediated through Christ: the You of human otherness is an image of the Divine You and hence each person’s relationship to other people is orientated to their relation to God.193 Here, says Bonhoeffer, the concept of the Church comes into play: ‘the Christian person achieves his or her essential nature only when God does not encounter the person as You, but "enters into" the person as I’.194 Tellingly, Young likens Bonhoeffer’s articulation of the I-You relationship to a musical ensemble: ‘An asocial jazz musician, in actual performance, is an oxymoron, for, in objectifying his fellow artists all too subjectively, he fails to yield to them – fails to be with them ... fails to see that the Other ... is a particular living person’.195 So, ‘the fact that the “alien Thou” is willed by God and is to be loved as such destroys the basis of racism, whose law is “Thou shalt love only the Same.”’196 And so as Young reads Bonhoeffer, ‘the Church bears the potential to

189 John W de Gruchy, ‘Bonhoeffer, Apartheid and Beyond: The Reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa’, in John W. de Gruchy, ed., Bonhoeffer for a New Day, p354. In this article de Gruchy notes that while the influence of Bonhoeffer among the common struggle cannot be underestimated, the reception of Bonhoeffer was largely restricted to a white academic elite who were themselves liberated into seeing things from below, recognised the legitimate struggle of the oppressed, and stood in solidarity with it. See p359 ff.
190 See Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, generally.
191 Blud und Boden, literally ‘Blood and Soil’ was a cry for ‘purity’ of race and land taken up by the Nazis.
193 Sanctorum Communio, p55.
194 Sanctorum Communio, p56.
195 Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, p56.
196 John D. Godsey in the forward to Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, px.
become a community of faith in which the law of racism ... Thou shalt only love
the Same, will be overcome through revelling in the difference of white and black
— "I and Thou." Such difference was to be 'no longer a strain, but a gift, a
revelation of God's love'.¹⁹⁷ It is a fragment of heaven's apotheosis in which the
monophonic tyranny of 'the Same' is taken up into the polyphonic freedom of
divine otherness and diversity. It is an epiphanal fragment of justice that is to be
gathered into the Christian colony: a melody that is to be performed by its
people.

But while the gift of this theological melody was in place, Bonhoeffer had not
sung it in a crucible of genuine otherness before his sojourn in New York in
1930. As a child he had read and reread 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'¹⁹⁸ and so was no
doubt aware of the prejudice that may be encountered through racial otherness,
but it invaded no more than his imagination. And while he had worked in Spain it
was primarily with Germans and almost exclusively with Europeans. He had not
viewed his visit to North Africa favourably.¹⁹⁹ So it was in New York that
Bonhoeffer first saw and was horrified at the racial prejudice perpetrated upon
Afro-Americans such as his friend Frank Fisher and the congregation of the
Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he worshipped.²⁰⁰ It was here that
he, 'the other' was welcomed as the stranger, here that he listened to the
'melodies from below' found in Negro spirituals, songs whose emotion and lyrics
were rooted in the experience of slavery and still spoke loudly to the oppressed
community in a racially segregated society.²⁰¹ The first person singular 'I' in
these Spirituals spoke of the whole community:

¹⁹⁷ Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, p11.
¹⁹⁹ He went to Libya with his brother Klaus in 1924 and seems to have engaged in some cultural
misunderstandings. He wrote after that trip that 'one should not spend a longer time in Africa without
preparation, the shock is too great and increases from day to day, so that one is glad to return to
Europe'. The Young Bonhoeffer, 1918-1927: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 9, (Minneapolis:
Fortress Press, 2003), p100, as cited in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p59. On his second trip with Klaus they
gone to Spanish Morocco precisely because it was more European. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p103.
²⁰⁰ When it was obvious in an America restaurant that the black Frank Fischer was not going to be
afforded the same service as Bonhoeffer and other white customers they both made a point of leaving.
See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p154-155.
²⁰¹ Bonhoeffer was greatly impressed by the 'Spirituals' and was later to play recordings of them to his
students in Finkenwalde. See No Rusty Swords, p113 and also Wolf Dieter Zimmermann, 'Years in

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Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows my sorrow...

If I had-a my way,
I'd tear this building down
Great God, then, if I had-a my way,202

These were more than an expression of individual suffering, as each person sung them the 'I' was, says Cone, 'a particular black self affirming both his or her being and being-in-community, for the two are inseparable ... the struggle to be both a person and a member of a community was the major focus of black religion'. 203 They knew that the liberation found in Christ was a bisociation of spiritual and this-worldly freedom, a freedom from which racial oppression could not exclude them.

O freedom! O freedom!
O freedom over me!
An' befo' I'd be a slave,
I'll be buried in my grave,
An' go home to my Lord an' be free.

My Lord delivered Daniel
Why can't he deliver me?

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go;
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go;
Go down, Moses, 'way down in Egypt's land;
Tell ole Pharaoh
Let my people go.204

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Berlin', in I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p64-65. Heinz Neumann remembers Bonhoeffer sharing the song:

Nobody knows the trouble I see
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody know the trouble I see
Glory Hallelujah.

And Young notes that this reflects Bonhoeffer's belief that if a person is centred in Christ then even if their life takes them to the margins of the world, that boundary edge becomes the middle, the centre. See Josiah Ulysses Young III, No Difference in the Fare, p113.

204 James H. Cone, The Spirituals and the Blues, p40-41. Cone notes that not every black could reconcile divine revelation with their human servitude and alongside the 'Spirituals' grew up songs known as the 'seculars'; now known as 'the blues' in which they sang “I don't want to ride no golden

Melodies of Community 315
It was perhaps in the words of songs such as these that Bonhoeffer learned to identify with the voice of the racially oppressed. And perhaps herein also lies the genesis of Bonhoeffer's thinking on the *Discipline of the Secret,* for the lyrics of such songs conveyed to those who knew how to listen, truths and mysteries that required them to be shared responsibly in the world. Few white persons would have understood that 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' referred to the means by which slaves might escape the oppression of the American South, or that to 'look over Jordan' meant to have reached the Ohio River, and that 'a band of angels coming for to carry me home', was Harriet Tubman or some other friend coming to take them to the free states or Canada.205

While Bonhoeffer never explicitly stated that his ideas were formed by his experience of Black Christianity in America, it seems likely that his friendship with Frank Fisher and the Abyssinian Baptist Church informed his own secular work against the Nazi Regime. While still in America Bonhoeffer was distressed at the deep clef in the Church in which 'the "black Christ" had to be led into the field against the "white Christ"'.206 He was astounded at separatist policies that kept two ethnicities of Christians apart for word and sacrament and mystified at the silence of the 'White Church' during lynchings perpetrated by the Klu Klux Klan.207 In his first sermon in America he proclaimed that because they worshiped one God in Christ, the 'marvellous mystery of the people of God ... [rose] above all differences of race, nationality and custom'.208 He promised Fisher that on his return to Germany he would make known the sufferings of Black Americans209 but at the time Bonhoeffer could not imagine that Germany contained anything like the racial hatred he had encountered in America: He wrote to his brother 'our Jewish question is a joke by comparison; there won't be

207 No Rusty Swords, p112.
209 No Rusty Swords, p77.
many people who claim they are oppressed here. At any rate, not in Frankfurt.²¹⁰

That opinion changed rapidly in April 1933. When the Nazi persecution of the Jews began, Bonhoeffer was one of the first to offer a melody of resistance. His initial objections owed more to his theology than a concept of humanitarian liberalism; raising his objections to the Ayran Legislation that sought to evict from the Church all Christians who could trace a Jewish heritage. He claimed that racial purity [sic] had replaced baptism and the Church had thus fallen into heresy.²¹¹ But in an essay entitled ‘The Church and the Jewish Question’ he developed his argument further, advocating that Christians should go beyond merely questioning how the anti-Jewish law impacted the Church. The melody of justice which affirmed God’s revelation in the face of others necessitated Christians taking action in solidarity with Jews and in their defence; action that would ‘put a spoke in the wheel’²¹² of the Nazis. H.E. Tödt notes that at this time, ‘Bonhoeffer was the only one who considered solidarity with Jews of such importance as to obligate the Christian Churches to risk a massive conflict with [the] state’.²¹³ In August 1933 Bonhoeffer wrote: ‘It is the task of the Christian proclamation to say; here, where Jew and German stand together under God’s word, is the Church, here it is proven whether the Church is still the Church’.²¹⁴ It was with the ambition to help the Confessing Church prove their worth as the Church that he agreed to lead their Seminary at Finkenwalde. Before doing so he had considered spending time with Gandhi in India to learn more about the non-violent patterns of resistance (satyagraha) and no doubt his opposition to racism would have been strengthened by such a time but, the urgency of events in Germany drew him back. Within a few years the Gestapo closed the seminary and Bonhoeffer became increasingly disillusioned with the equivocal position taken by the Confessing Church in respect of the Jews and the Nazi Regime.

²¹¹ A Testament to Freedom, p127.
²¹² No Rusty Swords, p225.
low point came in 1938 when many pastors capitulated to the *Konsistorium* and accepted the Oath of Loyalty to Hitler\(^{215}\) and then failed to offer any resistance to the shameful events of *Kristallnacht*.\(^{216}\)

By then Bonhoeffer was deprived of students and banned from writing. There was it seemed only one forum left where he could raise the song of heaven’s protest to racial injustice. He sought more immediate and secular ways by which he could not only denounce the racism of the state, but also take action that put a ‘spoke in the wheel’ of Nazi *rassenhygiene*.\(^{217}\) So, during his double life as a member of *Abwehr*, he performed many of the melodies of God’s racial justice in secret, taking great personal risk to act for the most defenceless of others. He enabled the escape of Jews from Germany and travelled abroad to communicate plans of the anti-Nazi conspiracy to the allies. In the end he accepted the guilt of his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler because he believed his Church to be already guilty of remaining silent while the blood of the innocent cried to heaven. And in the end it was such action that led to his death. It was from prison that he wrote of ‘the view from below’ but he had been seeing it and singing the laments of its people for many years before. It was his unending hope that justice would be done to life in all its dimensions from a higher satisfaction, whose foundation would be ‘beyond any talk of “from below” or “from above.”‘\(^{218}\)

The challenge to the Christian community is to offer a place for all the melodies of race to belong and find their voices in response to Christ.

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\(^{215}\) The *Konsistorium*, led by Dr. Friedrich Werner, was the official body of the Reich Church who could grant politically legitimate ordination. Werner used legal, financial and administrative pressures to force a majority of Confessing Church pastors to assent to an oath of faithful obedience to the Führer, the German Reich and its people. Anyone who refused was to be dismissed.

\(^{216}\) On 9\(^{th}\) November 1938, 7500 Jewish shops and 171 Synagogues were destroyed. It was called ‘Crystal Night’ because of the extensive remnants of broken glass. The Confessing Church was silent in the face of such blatant racial violence. See *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p607. By then Bonhoeffer had already helped his twin sister Sabine and her Jewish-Christian husband Gerhard Leibholz to escape to England.

\(^{217}\) Literally ‘Racial Hygiene’; Rassenhygiene was the Nazi policy that weak elements must not be allowed to prosper or reproduce and was the premise upon which the mentally and physically handicapped were culled, as well as the rationale for the Jewish holocaust. See Josiah Ulysses Young III, *No Difference in the Fare*, p29 ff.

\(^{218}\) *Letters and Papers*, p17.
Bonhoeffer was a significant influence on many of the early members of the Iona Community and they too have consistently sought to oppose the presence of racism wherever it is encountered. In the late 1950s and early 1960s many new members went to work overseas, to Pakistan, South Africa, Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, Nigeria, Nyasaland, India, Gibraltar, the USA and Canada. They did not do so with the specific intention to combat racism (although some inevitably did so) but their encounters with otherness when shared with the Community 'at home' inevitably generated difficult questions of global justice and equity between peoples. Within the worship of the Community, the singing of songs from around the world in the language of their origin, such as those collected in Malawi by Tom Colvin, reminded the Christian colony that God is fully present in the Other and enabled expressions of solidarity. This practice has increased in recent years through the work of the Wild Goose Resource Group. But vital as such disciplines may be to the responsible sharing of the polyphonic Christ within the spiritual life of the Church, this-worldly action for racial justice is also needed. Often this has been accomplished by questioning, even as Bonhoeffer did, the legitimacy of the actions of the state or some other racial oppressor. On other occasions it has required aid being brought to the victims of racism and sometimes it has required members to put a 'spoke in the wheel' of injustice. Macleod's maiden speech in the House of Lords questioned the legitimacy of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, legislation that was being pushed through in a week and was designed to stop the influx of Kenyan Asians into Britain. Many Asians had gone from India to Kenya to support the British colony in the previous century. On Kenyan independence they could choose between Kenyan citizenship and the right to live and work in the former colony or retain their British citizenship that they believed would allow them to live and work in Britain. The proposed legislation restricted access to Britain on racial conditions.

219 See Chasing the Wild Goose, p83.
220 Alison Swinfen, a Community member and lecturer at Glasgow University has recently argued that language and particularly the imperialism associated with certain languages including English is a matter of social justice. See Alison Swinfen 'Living Words, Living Worlds', in Coracle, No. 4 / 3, (February, 2003), p9-11.
221 The Bill which was subsequently enacted required an applicant to show a 'substantial UK connection' to be permitted residency in Britain. This was deemed to necessitate a connection 'by birth or ancestry' Thus Asians leaving Kenya, despite holding UK passports were denied access to the only
MacLeod denounced the Bill as racist. Indeed Stanley Hope, an Iona Community member and long time campaigner for racial justice has argued in a brief but searing pamphlet that since the Second World War the intention behind every Governmental development in UK immigration law has been intentionally racist seeking to ‘restrict entry to the UK on the basis of colour’. Overseas, many Community members were involved in challenging the legitimacy of racist legislation and institutions: a prime example was the opposition of Iona members to the Central African Federation, an exploitative regime formed on Britain’s initiative, which denied Africans land rights and revenues from industry, particularly mining. It collapsed in 1963. More recently, the work of Community member Yousouf Gooljary Wright in equipping black people in England with “survival skills” to overcome the ‘persistent ideology in English society of discriminatory practice in employment and education’ is just one example of bandaging the wounds of the victims of racism. There have been occasions to spoke the wheel also. In the 1960s members Andrew Ross and Albert McAdam were forced asked to leave Malawi after speaking out against oppression there and Graeme Brown, a one time leader of the Community, was refused permission to return to his position as principal of a theological college in South Africa after the protest he and others made against Apartheid.

Poverty and racism are just two of the melodies generated by participating in the performance of heaven’s justice in the world. We have already noted that prejudice over gender equality, sexual orientation and disability also demand consideration and in a ‘post 9/11’ world bringing the metaphor of polyphony to bear on matters of interfaith dialogue may prove to be of great import. Each is connected to Christ the cantus firmus and each will bear upon the other. Clearly these and other melodies of justice sound in close harmony with matters of peace and conflict resolution. Sharing these melodies responsibly in the world is

country where they had a connection but white settlers from Kenya were welcomed. See Stanley Hope, Liberty to the Captives: Christianity, Racism and the Law in the UK, (Glasgow: Iona Community Working Group on Interfaith and Racism, 1992), p8-9.
222 See George MacLeod, p363.
223 Stanley Hope, Liberty to the Captives, p8-9.
the task of the Christian community. But to the melodies of peace and justice must be added one further counterpoint, one that may prove to be the defining melody of our time: the song of all creation, the lament of the earth and her distress.
CHAPTER NINE, THIRD MOVEMENT
SINGING THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION.

O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers, the animals, to whom thou gavest the earth as their home in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail.

May we realise that they live not for us alone but for themselves and for thee and that they love the sweetness of life. Basil the Great 225

The earth remains our mother, just as God remains our Father, and our mother will only lay in the Father's arms those who remain true to her. Earth and its distress - that is the Christian's Song of Songs. Dietrich Bonhoeffer 226

In you all things consist and hang together:
The very atom is light energy,
The grass is vibrant,
The rocks pulsate
All is in flux; turn but a stone and an angel moves.
Underneath are the everlasting arms.
Unknowable we know You, Christ beneath us. George MacLeod 227

This prayer of George MacLeod's, 'Man is made to rise', is a celebration of creation in which he detects beneath the polyphony of vibrant grass, pulsating rocks and the perpetual flux of all that is created, a cantus firmus of divine

225 This prayer, written by Basil the Great, (c330-79) is cited in Sean McDonagh, The Greening of the Church, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), p167.
cradling; the everlasting ground bass of God. Many of MacLeod’s prayers call upon the imagery of nature as if it is an epiphanal counter-melody to the divine song in which all things hang together. For him, ‘matter mattered’: the earth and sea and sky were ‘a harmony of colour’ in which the ‘air of the eternal seep[ed] through the physical’. The physical creation was valued in heaven because it reverberated with the song of God. Jürgen Moltmann argues that when Genesis speaks of God’s Spirit hovering over the waters of creation we should envisage not a brooding dove but the vibrating ‘song of creation’ in which, ‘The word names, differentiates and appraises. But the breath is the same in all the words, and binds the words together’. He adds:

*We should think of the fundamental resonances of music out of which sounds and rhythms emerge … In the quickening breath and through the form-giving word, the Creator sings out his creatures in the sounds and rhythms in which he has his joy and his good pleasure.*

In such a scenario, matter would matter to God; it would be God’s delight. But this understanding is in contra-distinction to the strong anti-materiality that we have seen persistently pervading much of historical Christianity. This has propounded a theology concomitant with its suspicions of materiality, a theology that objectified creation and asserted humanity’s dominance over the natural. The dangers of such an unhelpful paradigm were amplified when married to the

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228 See prayers such as ‘Eternal Seeping Through the Physical’; ‘The Glory in the Grey’ and ‘A Veil Thin as Gossamer’, in *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*, p11, 13 and 60.

229 He was not unique in this. Down through the centuries many examples can be found in the writings of Celtic Christians such as St. Columba, as well as in Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1178) and St. Francis of Assisi, (1182-1226). More recent examples can be found in the theologies of Teilhard de Chardin and Matthew Fox. Recent scientific writing has affirmed the interconnection of all life; for instance drawing on genetic research into fly embryology Victoria Roe concludes, ‘the same genes, the same parts turn up again and again, from one species to another … we are all made of the same fabric, we’re part of the same web’. See Victoria Foe, ‘Drawing Big Lessons from Fly Embryology’, (*New York Times*, 10th August, 1993), C12, as cited by Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, p262.


231 *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*, p11.

individualism and scientific experimentation that characterised the Enlightenment. In this, individuals were isolated 'from other people except through contracts and from nature except as a resource base from which to amass wealth'. \(^{233}\) Nothing in this social paradigm encouraged the Church to be a community who embraced mutually sustainable relationships with the realm of nature. So it was in 1967, that Lynn White famously laid the burden of blame for contemporary ecological degradation at the door of historical Christianity. Particularly, he understood the Genesis accounts of creation as condoning the exploitation of creation as a solely human resource. \(^{234}\) He wrote:

> We shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence but to serve man ... both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance towards nature that no solution for our ecological crisis can be expected from them alone. \(^{235}\)

In the article White revealed some ignorance of theological history \(^{236}\) but he did succeed in provoking many and varied Christian responses both in reply to his criticisms and addressing the ecological crisis facing the planet. \(^{237}\) Most of these agree that the fault lies not in the Christian heritage or texts per se, but in the Church’s infidelity to their roots: i.e. their unwillingness to accept the communal and ecological responsibilities entrusted to them in Eden, their reluctance to acknowledge their recapitulation in Christ’s incarnation and their ongoing refusal to listen to the current laments of earth’s distress. Never before has the very existence of the planet and its varied species (including the human race) been

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\(^{234}\) Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', *Science* 155, (1967), p1203-07. White does acknowledge that Christianity is a complex faith whose consequences differ in differing contexts but is generally more critical of the faith found in Latin West than that of the Greek / East.

\(^{235}\) Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', p1207.

\(^{236}\) See Sally McFague, *Life Abundant*, p161. McFague rightly notes how the recapitulation of creation through Christ's resurrection was a major theme in the work of Irenaeus and comments that similar reflection can also be found within the works of Augustine and Aquinas. Sean McDonagh notes that while Christian theology has predominately focused on the divine / human relations there have been persistent strains of a more cosmic context. See Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, p163 ff.

under threat by the irresponsible actions of humanity whose systemic anthropocentrism threatens all creation by its unchecked and self-serving monophony. Never before has there been such a necessity to develop a theology that addresses the global community and articulates the interdependence of all multi-voiced creation, (with humanity being but one constituent part) upon its cantus firmus. And if the Christian colony is to share the mystery of the polyphonic Christ responsibly then their participation in the melodies of a sustainable ecological lifestyle will be perhaps the defining righteous action in the 21st century.

We turn first to the responsibilities given to humanity in the Garden of Eden. In the King James translation of Genesis 1 we read:

*And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth: and God saw that it was good'.* \(^{238}\)

Lynn White saw in this commandment to subdue and have dominion over creation something akin to the ‘Domination System’: i.e. a violent trajectory towards monophonic exploitation of the non-human creation, an aggressive silencing of the many melodies of created Shalom. If this was what was commanded by God then White’s criticisms of the Christian position would be valid. And in so far as the Church has adopted such a reading of the biblical text his critiques remain legitimate.\(^{239}\) But such an understanding misinterprets the biblical command through an unjustified anthropocentric hermeneutic that has

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238 Gen. 1:26-28, King James Version.
eschewed the true responsibility entrusted to humanity in the Garden of Eden. Before human beings were ever given 'dominion over the earth' we learn that they were made in the image of God. And if God is understood polyphonically then we see that it is in the very character of the Divine to exist in mutually affirming and sustaining relationship with the melodies of Otherness. As we have seen, the Father is distinctly differentiated from the Son and Holy Spirit, the Son from the Spirit and the Father and the Spirit from the Son and Father. Yet there is a Unity in this diversity: three parts to the great music of the divine; 'each so for and in the others that they cannot but comprise one being.240 And if humanity is made in the image of such a polyphonic deity, and it is from such a God that dominion over nature is granted to them, then the character of the dominion they receive must similarly be identified by a mutually affirming sustainability: they will mirror God's polyphonic way in their ways of dominion.241 In accepting this charge of polyphonic dominion they will recognise their integrated part as but one created voice amidst a diverse materiality so interconnected that it cannot but comprise one being of created order. For as the poets tell us, 'no matter how many times removed, humanity remains as cousin to volcanoes and leaf-buds, and the heron devouring a frog eats a blood brother of suns and gravestones'.242 The dominion exercised by humanity thus requires them to listen 'to the entire orchestration of creation, and not to allow the apparently minor melodies to be silenced'.243 The task of dominion with which

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242 The lines are taken from Norman MacCaig, 'No end, no beginning', Collected Poems, (Chatto and Windus, 1985), p206 and are cited by Ruth Page, God and the Web of Creation, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1996), pxi. Page adopts the metaphor of the spider's web not only 'because it is a pattern of interconnection, but because when one part shakes it all shakes'. There are weaknesses in the metaphor of the web. It is an image whose purpose is entrapment and death rather than liberation and life, and as such raises potentially uncomfortable parallels between the role of spider and God. However Pages' central thesis is correct namely, that Christian doctrines of creation need to be reformed from their anthropocentricism and reconstructed in ways that enable all creation, human and non-human, to declare their very being as a valued response to God's gift of life.

243 David S. Cunningham, These Three Are One, p262.
humanity is charged in Eden is to teach the world (and indeed all non-human creation beyond it) ‘to sing in perfect harmony’ comprised of mutually sustaining relationships.\textsuperscript{244} In essence, it requires nothing other than that they perform their unique part in this creaturely counterpoint\textsuperscript{245} affirming that they are but one (albeit privileged) interwoven melody among the polyphony of the cosmic shalom.

Each part must therefore sing of both their common likeness and their difference. The fact that Adam is fashioned out of this non-human creation (dust of the ground)\textsuperscript{246} and will return to it\textsuperscript{247} merely emphasises the point that it is not incumbent upon him or his descendants to objectify creation, placing it at a distance from himself. Humanity, as with other melodies of creation, is not valued primarily because of its own existence but because of its relationship with Christ’s \textit{cantus firmus} and the polyphonic life of God and all creation. It is in recognition of this that, for instance, the Hebrew book of Proverbs acknowledges that, ‘four things on earth are small and yet exceedingly wise: ants, conies, locusts and lizards’.\textsuperscript{248} Every created being is rescued from ‘non-being’ by the first person of the Trinity, is then shaped in its particularity by the Word and then located within the larger communion of all being, divine and created, by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{249} Each being within the universe, human and non-human, should therefore ‘be viewed more or less as subject - at least in so far as it partakes of the subjectivity of the divine personal subjects who give themselves to and through it – as well as object’.\textsuperscript{250}

All life as subject, should therefore be revered as God’s sacrament, ‘the material is shot through with the spiritual’ because, as Ron Ferguson suggests there is a

\textsuperscript{244} The line is taken from the song ‘I’d like to teach the world to sing’ by the New Seekers, \textit{We’d Like to Teach the World to Sing}. (Collector’s Choice, B00000EW021, 2004), Originally released in 1971. \textsuperscript{245} Indeed as humanity reaches into the cosmos this responsibility should be extended to all that exists beyond the earth. \textsuperscript{246} Gen. 2:7. \textsuperscript{247} Gen. 3:19. \textsuperscript{248} Proverbs 30:24-28. \textsuperscript{249} Anthony Lowes, ‘Up Close and Personal: In the End Matter Matters’, p134. \textsuperscript{250} Anthony Lowes, ‘Up Close and Personal: In the End Matter Matters’, p134.
"withinness of God in all life". Each created being within it, non-personal as well as personal, is the "subject" of its own being. It is the responsibility of each subject to live in contrapuntal relationship to Christ’s cantus firmus. As such, theologies that seek to include an ecological dimension but interpret human dominion as no more than a benign stewardship, remain insufficient guides for singing the integrity of creation because they perpetuate the objectifying distance between human and non-human creation. They deny the mutuality of nurturing relationship that resides at the core of every creature’s responsibility and simultaneously encourage humanity in their arrogant assumptions that having so damaged creation, the earth is now theirs to heal. However inspiring it may be to regard the human vocation as something akin to Hebrew idea of ‘tikkun olam’, (gathering and refashioning the fragments of our broken earth), ecological shalom will only be accomplished if, in part, the earth is allowed to heal herself; to sing her own song. Stewardship, no matter how benign, fails to appreciate the degree of mutuality located between co-operative

251 Chasing the Wild Goose, p156. This view of creation as sacrament not only has a long pedigree within the Celtic tradition but within Orthodox Christianity too. For a good account of how creation is regarded with Orthodox sacramentalism see Paul Evdokinov, ‘Nature’, The Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1965), p1-22. An account of what aspects of Orthodox Christianity may offer to the wider Christian community in the current ecological crisis can be found in Kosuke Koyama, ‘The Eucharist: Ecumenical and Ecological’, Ecumenical Review, Vol. 44, No. 1, (1992), p80-90.


256 The ancient idea of ‘tikkun olam’, repair of the world, comes from the 17th century Jewish mystic Isaac Luria, who argued that the Creator of the Universe drew in the divine breath in order to make room for creation. In the enlarged space the Creator places vessels into which was poured the brilliance of divine light. This was too brilliant for the vessels which shattered all over the universe. Since then the work of human beings has been to mend and transform these vessels in the repair of the world. See Mary C. Grey, The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope: Prophetic Dreams for the Twenty First Century, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), p40. Grey takes this idea from the work of Maria Harris, Proclaim Jubilee: A Spirituality for the 21st Century, (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p15. The full quotation asserts that ‘the demand is liberation; the emphasis is connectedness, the corrective is suffering, the power is imagination, the vocation is tikkun olam’. In her attention to this ‘emphasis on connectedness’ Harris stresses the need for healing relationships between spirit and matter, people and earth. See Mary C. Grey, The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope, p40.
musicians or the deep way in which a composer and their composition may shape one another.\textsuperscript{257}

However the vocation of teaching the world to sing in response to its \textit{cantus firmus} may on occasion require humanity to demonstrate and initiate the song. Humanity may be required to cantor the music to the world or to even sing vicariously for the realm of nature. In initiating harmonies of praise to God, humanity as the ‘world’s high priest’ and ‘secretary of God praise’\textsuperscript{258} may loosen what Moltmann calls ‘the dumb tongue of nature’.\textsuperscript{259} This is not to suggest that the melodies of creation do not sound in the ears of heaven apart from and even without humanity,\textsuperscript{260} (if humanity is the high priest of creation then it is surely a priesthood of all believers). But it is to agree with Rasmussen that, ‘human beings are the singers of the cosmic song and tellers of its tale in a special way; we can represent creation and give voice to it in cosmic liturgy of praise and transfiguration’.\textsuperscript{261} In performing this responsibility, humanity does not dominate to exclusion the melodies of nature, but rather empowers their polyphony. What is being sustained by their music is neither the earth nor human existence upon it, but the contrapuntal relationship each has with the \textit{cantus firmus}.

All this is reaffirmed in the incarnation. Here, the Son of God, ‘the one in whom all things were made and without whom nothing was made’\textsuperscript{262} takes material form. Here, God is confirmed as more than an absentee composer who might objectify the music he created and from which he then may distance himself.\textsuperscript{263}

\textsuperscript{257} A similar point is made by other writers including Ruth Page, \textit{God and the Web of Creation}, pxiii and Diarmuid O’Murchu, \textit{Poverty, Celibacy, and Obedience}, p66 ff.


\textsuperscript{259} Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{God in Creation}, p71.

\textsuperscript{260} Larry Rasmussen notes that in Haydn’s oratorio \textit{The Creation} when all creation is completed except for humanity the angel Raphael sings in praise of all that has been accomplished but then notes that one thing is yet missing. He does not yet know what it will be and indeed the aria ends without the creation of humanity but in his song Raphael described their responsibility in the created order: ‘There wanted yet that wond’rous being ... that grateful should God’s power admire ... and with heart and voice [God’s] goodness praise’. See Larry L. Rasmussen, \textit{Earth Community, Earth Ethics}, p238.

\textsuperscript{261} Larry L. Rasmussen, \textit{Earth Community, Earth Ethics}, p238.

\textsuperscript{262} John 1:3

\textsuperscript{263} Diarmuid O’Murchu makes this same point, paralleling humanity’s stewardship to God as an absent landlord. See Diarmuid O’Murchu, \textit{Poverty, Celibacy, and Obedience}, p66 ff.

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Through Christ, God decides to locate God’s self within the music of temporal and material life; he is the ‘all in all’. As we have seen this places a unique responsibility upon humanity who are made in God’s image. But while non-human creation does not share in this unique responsibility it is nonetheless clear that if such being has been sung into its existence by God and is held together in Christ’s cantus firmus then each constituent part, from waterfall to antelope has a particular harmony to perform. As the Psalmist says:

Praise the Lord from the heavens...
Praise him sun and moon
Praise him, all you shining stars ...
Praise the Lord from the earth,
You great sea creatures and all ocean depths,
Lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
Stormy winds that do his bidding,
You mountains and all hills,
Fruit trees and all cedars,
Wild animals and all cattle,
Small creatures and flying birds,
Kings of the earth and all nations,
You princes and all rulers on earth,
Young men and maidens,
Old men and children.265

With regard to the animal kingdom, Rasmussen notes that in the second biblical account of creation the animals were first considered as potential companions to Adam and while none prove to be wholly sufficient the important reflection remains ‘the aboriginal companion character of all creatures’. The Celtic tradition which so inspired MacLeod and the Iona Community abounds in legends of Columba and other saints being befriended by animals, even ferocious ones. Indeed that same tradition goes further and asserts that:

264 See Col. 3:11 and I Cor.15:28.
265 Ps. 148:1-3, 7-12.
266 Larry L. Rasmussen, Earth Community, Earth Ethics, p275. Ian Bradley notes with interest that when Jesus is driven into the desert (Mark 1:13) he is said to be with the wild animals and emerged untouched by them, perhaps even having had them as companions. Ian Bradley, God is Green: Christianity and the Environment, (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1990), p76.
267 For overviews of these see Ian Bradley, The Celtic Way, p51 ff and Esther de Waal, A World Made Whole, p81 ff. For a more detailed account of the Celtic traditions relationship to creation see Mary

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there is no plant in the ground but is full of His virtue, there is no form on the strand but is full of His blessing, no life in the sea ... no creature in the river ... no bird on the wing ... no star in the sky ... nothing beneath the sun but proclaims His goodness.  

Likewise theologians have contended that the whole divine Majesty can be found substantially present 'in a single grain' and that 'all things made by the Word live in the Word and are life'. Poets correspondingly assure us that creation is 'charged with the grandeur of God' and compel our spirits to 'make sensuous the glories of God'. Ancient saints exhort that if we would know the Creator we must understand created things and modern seers declare that, 'The whole earth shall cry glory'. Being made in the image of God places upon the Christian community a unique counterpoint of ecological responsibility and its performance must remain its primary concern. However, such a performance, while obliged to respond to its cantus firmus must also attune itself to the polyphony found within the realm of nature’s song and encourage its rendition too.

It is important to realise that locating Christ’s cantus firmus within the material world of human and non-human creation is not to reduce God and creation to a vaguely symbiotic pantheism. While it may be true that all creation finds a...
commonality in its relationship to the *cantus firmus*, God remains God, and so cannot be simply reduced to 'being everything'.\textsuperscript{277} The finite simply cannot hold the infinite.\textsuperscript{278} While the boundaries between humanity and non-human creation may be beneficially transcended to facilitate the practical and theological necessities of mutual creaturely sustainability, 'creation', as George MacLeod once prayed, 'is not enough'. Though the 'sap of life in our bones and being' is God's, 'in the garden that is each of us' there is always the thorn ... always in the beauty [there is] the tang of sin in our consciences'.\textsuperscript{279} And this remains the fundamental separation between God and creation and the tension that is uniquely disassociated in Christ. Creation's music, the melodies of materiality, however beautiful are always foreshadowed by its bondage to decay. Even in the Christ who was without the 'tang of sin', his materiality was yet bound to go the way of all flesh. The polyphonic music of the Trinitarian God exists both before and beyond the melodies of creation; it is free from such decay. God neither needs creation nor to be in relationship with it for that self sustaining music to exist. God and creation, including humanity, are thus definitively distinct. This was the clear understanding of Bonhoeffer's theology:

*That which lives and is creative is not something divine; instead it is and remains a work that is creaturely, that has been created, that is separate from the Creator and under the Creator's free command.*\textsuperscript{280}

God and God's creation do not serve each others needs in symbiotic co-dependency but rather it is precisely this difference between God and creation that marks the freedom of the Creator's love for the world, especially humanity.\textsuperscript{281} It is in the human response to that love that their responsibility is located. However, clearly God has freely chosen to bring the world into existence

\textsuperscript{277} Jacques Pohier takes the phrase 'God is God, so God is not everything’ as the title for the final chapter in his book, *God In Fragments*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1985), p261 ff.

\textsuperscript{278} Reformed theology has traditionally asserted 'finitum non capx infiniti' the finite created order cannot hold the infinite of God. In contrast Lutheran theology has argued 'finitum capx infiniti' the created order is the place where God is to be found. This led Luther to famously propose a bold panentheism whereby the Divine majesty could be found entirely within one grain. Bonhoeffer offers a perceptive alternative, namely, 'The finite can hold the infinite, not by itself, but it can by the aid of the infinite!' *Christ the Center*, p93.

\textsuperscript{279} *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*, p8-10.

\textsuperscript{280} *Creation and Fall*, p58.

\textsuperscript{281} The point is made by Rowan Williams, *Bonhoeffer, the Sixties and After*, p5-6.
and through Christ to remain as its *cantus firmus*. In so doing the infinite is to be found within the finite: *finitum capax infiniti*. God is then both simultaneously beyond creation and bound to it as the 'beyond in its midst;' the Creator chooses to bisociate with creation. This is not pantheism but a more subtle melody of panentheism\(^{282}\) in which the eternally transcendent Christ participates in the immanent particularity of every created thing.\(^{283}\) As Bonhoeffer argued, 'The finite can hold the infinite, not by itself, but ... by the aid of the infinite': creation bears the melodies of Christ because his *cantus firmus* makes it possible.\(^{284}\)

In the incarnation, Christ, the Emmanuel, is revealed as both the good and the God of material existence.\(^{285}\) As we have seen, human and non-human creation share in the responsibility of offering up reciprocating counter-melodies in response to their common Christological *cantus firmus*. The elements respond in obedient harmony, 'who is this that the wind and sea obey him'.\(^{286}\) But for humanity, and particularly those within the Christian community, the task entrusted to them is to participate in the melody of earthly dominion as exercised by Christ in inaugurating the Kingdom of God. So if the contemporary Christian colony is to be the body of Christ existing as a this-worldly community, then they must revisit the ministry of Jesus to discover who Christ is for today's

\(^{282}\) By 'panentheism' is meant an understanding of the world as existing in God without seeking to negate or diminish the transcendence of God. It should not be thought of as implying a necessitous mutuality between creation and creator.

\(^{283}\) Luther's panentheism argued that while the divine majesty could be found within a single grain still that same majesty was so large that neither this world not a thousand worlds could encompass it. In his commentary on the Eucharist he wrote, 'God in his essence is present everywhere in and through the whole creation in all its parts and in all places, and so the world is full of God and God fills it all, yet God is not limited to or circumscribed by it, but is at the same time beyond and above the whole creation'. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), 37:59, as cited in Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, p278-9. A similar argument, although one drawing more on the work of the Holy Spirit, is found in Moltmann's theology of creation where he argues that 'if we understand the Creator, his creation and the goal of that creation in a trinitarian sense, the Creator through his Spirit dwells in his creation as a whole, and in every individual created being, by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life'. See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p21. Ruth Page has proposed her own term, 'pansynthesis' with which she hopes to distance herself from the pantheism in which Creator and Creation are so often conflated but which identifies her with a theology that affirms the role of God to be *with* (as opposed to 'above' or 'in') creation. See Ruth Page, *God and the Web of Creation*, p40.

\(^{284}\) *Christ the Center*, p93.

\(^{285}\) This celebration of materiality is never far from the life of the Iona Community. In the Abbey cloisters sits the Jacob Lipchitz sculpture 'The Descent of the Spirit'. It depicts the Holy Spirit visiting the Virgin Mary and bringing God to earth and is a permanent reminder of what MacLeod referred to as the 'earthed life'.

\(^{286}\) Mark 4:41.
ecological age and how he may inform the unique responsibilities entrusted to humanity. It is to the historical and earth-bound Jesus that the Christian community must look if they are to hear the clearest fragments of God’s compelling melody of mutual sustainability.

The gospel narratives offer some limited witness as to an ecological sensitivity in Christ: he shows an intimacy with the processes of creation and a contemplative appreciation of its elemental presence and does this while within a predominately urban existence. But it is anachronistic and, as McFague argues, ‘futile to rummage about with fig trees and hens trying to make Jesus into a nature lover’. But she is nevertheless right to assert that the way Christ exercises dominion in the unfolding Kingdom of God can be extended to the created environment. She writes:

His parables, which overturn conventional human hierarchies, should include the hierarchy of humans over nature; his healing stories can be extended to the deteriorating ecosystems of our planet; his practice of eating with outcasts is pertinent to the extension of species and loss of habitats due to human overdevelopment and consumption.

This is dominion as understood and practised by earth’s cantus firmus: it is an invitation extended to humanity into new ways of hearing the music of the world, and to join with it in mutually fulfilling relationships with God, themselves and the whole created order. It is epitomised in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Luke 14:15-24 wherein the expected boundaries of society are overcome and those who would have been otherwise excluded are invited to participate in the celebration of life. What this parable reveals and what is heard throughout the ministry of Jesus, is a polyphony of lament issuing from the oppressed. And today that must include the songs of protest rising up from victimised non-

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287 Sean McDonagh explores the attitudes of respect and familiarity that Jesus had toward the natural world in some detail in The Greening of the Church, p158 ff.
288 Sally McFague, Life Abundant, p167.
289 Sally McFague, Life Abundant, p167.

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human species and the suffering earth itself. It is, as we have seen earlier, what Bonhoeffer described as the importance of 'the view from below'.

If Christ is Christ for today's ecological crises then the Christian colony must again see the whole of creation with the view from below, they must learn to listen to the songs from the boundaries and include them in their own: not only to the hymns of human suffering, but to the laments of non-human species, the cry of the earth and her distress. As early as 1929 Bonhoeffer was drawing on ancient mythology to make exactly this point:

A glimpse of eternity is revealed only though the depths of our earth ...
The profound old saga tells of the giant Antaeus, who was stronger than any one on earth; none could overcome him until once in a fight someone lifted him from the ground; then the giant lost all the strength which had flowed into him through his contact with the earth. The person who would leave the earth, who would depart from the present distress, loses the power which still holds them by eternal mysterious forces. The earth remains our mother, just as God remains our Father and our mother will only lay in the Father's arms those who remain true to her. That is the Christian's song of earth and her distress.

And while this is far from being a systematic theology of sustainable ecology, Bonhoeffer's concern for a responsible deputyship both for the present day and the future tomorrow, together with this passion for 'the earth and her distress', contains compelling insights for the contemporary Christian colony. For instance, Keith Clements argues that Bonhoeffer's personal hopes for the future

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290 Letters and Papers, p17, and see above, p297.
291 No Rusty Swords, p47. Translation slightly altered.
292 In Ethics, Bonhoeffer's concern for the world of the penultimate was always integrated with the future world of final justification in the eschatological Christ. In this, the Church is bound to the historical future but in such a way that its vision of the ultimate must not hinder the fulfilment of her historical responsibility. See Ethics, p149 ff. Likewise, two years before his own engagement he had written to his friend Sutz arguing that marriage was 'an affirmative gesture to the world and the world's future', a symbol of man’s desire to build, to which God says “Yes’’. See Mary Bosanquet, The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p239. In prison he continued to think of the future, planning the nature of the post-war Church, anticipating his marriage and encouraging his sister Renate to wed his friend Bethge. He summed it up as, 'Thinking and acting for the sake of the coming generation, but being ready to go any day without fear or anxiety …[that] is the spirit in which we are forced to live'. Letters and Papers, p15. Wolfgang Huber notes that Bonhoeffer's notion of responsibility is not just concerned with 'care for' (Fürsorge) but includes prospective care (Vorsorge), specifically the prospective care for a shared realm of living together. See Wolfgang Huber, 'Bonhoeffer and Modernity', in Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. and Charles Marsh, eds., Theology and the Practice of Responsibility, p15.
were theologically paralleled with a sense of vicarious responsibility for those
generations who were yet to come. It was not, as in the songs of the Hitler
Youth, that the future belonged to them but rather, that in faith, they belonged
to the future reign of God in righteousness and were called to manifest their
belonging to that community, however modestly, in the here and now.²⁹³
Furthermore, in imagining the bond between God and creation as being akin to
the reciprocal relationship that is to be found in marriage (Father God and
Mother Earth), Bonhoeffer infers that fidelity to God can only be properly lived as
a fidelity to the earth.²⁹⁴ As late as 1944 Bonhoeffer is still pressing home the
point, telling Bethge that the Christian has ‘no last line of escape available from
earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal, but, like Christ himself ... He must
drink the earthly cup to the dregs ... this world must not be prematurely written
off’.²⁹⁵ The theme even appears in his love letters to Maria von Wedemeyer: ‘Our
marriage must be a “yes” to God’s earth. It must strengthen our resolve to do
and accomplish something on earth. I fear that Christians who venture to stand
on earth on only one leg will stand in heaven on only one leg too’.²⁹⁶ Bonhoeffer
is therefore repeatedly specific in his rejection of the religious inclination to be
other-worldly. He claims that the Church has tended towards this ever since they
‘hit upon the devious trick of being religious, yes even “Christian” at the expense
of the earth’ so that ‘whenever life begins to become oppressive and
troublesome we just leap in the air with a bold kick and soar relieved and
unencumbered into the so-called eternal fields. We leap over the present. We
disdain the earth; we are better than it’.²⁹⁷ But if the Church is to be Christ

²⁹⁴ This point is made by Larry Rasmussen in a paper entitled, Bonhoeffer, Song of Songs and
Christianities as Earth Faiths, p2. Address given at 8th International Bonhoeffer Conference in Berlin
2000: copy obtained from the author.
²⁹⁵ Letters and Papers, p337. Bonhoeffer’s later language altered in tone not least in response to the
Nazi crie de cœur of ‘Blut und Boden’, (Blood and Soil). Bonhoeffer retained an affirmation of loyalty
to the earth without defying the finite creation as had occurred within Nazism. For a detailed
discussion see Larry L. Rasmussen, Earth Community, Earth Ethics, p298 ff.
²⁹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer, Love Letters from Cell 92, p69. Here Bonhoeffer
also confirms his deliberate orientation towards the future.
existing as a community then faithfulness to the *cantus firmus* will be made manifest in the melodies that bind them ‘with oaths of fealty to the earth’. \(^{298}\)

But in making such oaths of fealty to the earth it is not just the life and ministry of Jesus that must be revisited by the Christian colony. If ‘creation is not enough’ then neither are the parables, miracles and daily acts of righteousness performed by Jesus. It is to the suffering song of crucifixion and the victory cry of resurrection that the colony must ultimately listen because it is there that God completes that liberating work which humanity and creation could not accomplish for themselves. \(^{299}\) In his death and resurrection the *cantus firmus* overcomes all that would deny the polyphony of life or would enslave it to monophonic oppression. On Good Friday as his followers scattered in terror or watched in horror, creation hid in darkness, trembled in earthquake and feared that the song of life had failed and lay silenced for all time. As Julian of Norwich put it:

> Even heaven and earth languished for grief in their own peculiar way when Christ died. It is their nature to know him to be their God, from whom they draw all their powers. When he failed, then needs must that they too most properly should fail to the limit of their ability, grieving for his pains. \(^{300}\)

But on Easter Sunday failure is swallowed up in victory, death is overcome, all fear is cast out by the perfect love of Jesus’ song of liberation. His *cantus firmus* is heard anew and harmonies of joy resonate throughout the cosmos. From henceforth sin, all forms of life-denying action and monophonic dominion have no claim to be the final note. There is a future music that calls to all creation from beyond itself, a music in which the melodies of past events announce eternal consequences that are to be heard both in the now and the not yet.


\(^{299}\) It is argued here that salvation is more than merely ‘illustrative’, revealing to the world new insight to an existing situation, but rather is ‘constitutive’ i.e. it establishes a new situation between God and creation. For a detailed discussion of the merits and weaknesses of both positions see Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

Along with all creation, the individual Christian and their colony of heaven inhabit this world of the now and are conscious of that which is not yet. The eternal redemption of humanity is accomplished but there remains an ongoing work of sanctification that echoes to each person from the eschaton. Likewise the effects extend beyond humanity. The essential goodness of creation is liberated. Paul writes:

Creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed ... in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.\(^{301}\)

Through the reality of the resurrection all visible creation is touched, given a new significance, called by the echoes of the future melody wherein all is reconciled to God\(^{302}\) through the *cantus firmus*, where all creation learns to sing in perfect harmony.\(^{303}\) This is, as Moltmann suggests, ‘a cosmic act ... the first act in the new creation of the world’.\(^{304}\) It is as MacLeod suggests, ‘in this that we find the road to harmony again’.\(^{305}\) Sing to the Lord a new song: this is the new reality, the colony of heavenly relationship that Isaiah envisages keeps breaking into the now:

*The wolf will live with the lamb*
*The leopard will lie down with the goat*
*The calf and the lion and the yearling together.*\(^{306}\)

*The desert and the parched land will be glad*
*The wilderness will rejoice in blossom.*\(^{307}\)

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\(^{301}\) Rom. 8:19, 21-23.  
\(^{302}\) See II Cor. 5:19.  
\(^{303}\) See Col. 1:15 ff and Eph. 1:7-12.  
\(^{304}\) Jürgen Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*, p83.  
\(^{306}\) Is. 11:6  
\(^{307}\) Is. 35:1.
Sing for joy O heavens, for the Lord has done this;  
Shout aloud, O earth beneath.  
Burst into song, you mountains,  
You forests and all your trees,  
For the Lord has redeemed Jacob  
and displays his glory in Israel.\(^{308}\)

For you shall go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills  
will burst into song before you  
and all the trees of the field  
will clap their hands.\(^{309}\)

Declaring, as Bonhoeffer suggested, ‘oaths of fealty to the earth’, committing themselves to live as if ‘our mother will only lay in the Father’s arms those who remain true to her’ is an important part of the Rule of the Iona Community. Within the Rule that commits members to act for justice and peace in society it is stated:

We believe:

\(\text{That God has given us partnership as stewards of creation and that we have a responsibility to live in a right relationship with the whole of God’s creation;}\)

and:

\(\text{That, handled with integrity, creation can provide for the needs of all, but not the greed which leads to injustice and inequality and endangers life on earth.}^{310}\)

While the description of humanity as ‘stewards’ falls short of the theology outlined above, this aspect of the Rule is a clear statement of Community members’ intentions to remain true to the earth their mother and to listen and respond to her distress, making melody with the songs of creation.

\(^{308}\text{Is. 44:23.}\)

\(^{309}\text{Is. 55:12.}\)

\(^{310}\text{‘Rule of The Iona Community’, 4:3 and 4:4. See Appendix A.}\)
However, long before this section of the Rule was composed and almost in prophetic anticipation of the current ecological crises, George MacLeod had both envisioned and incarnated a concern for the integrity of creation. In the late 1930s he was readily appreciative of a theology which saw something of Christ in all things but there were few others thinking similarly or constructing praxis rooted in such a theology. In the early 1940s these ecological concerns attracted him to the Russian Orthodox philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev and the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner’s work particularly was not easily accommodated into traditional Christian doctrine and MacLeod was no systematic theologian. But his was a concern with praxis and at a time when Barth’s theology of transcendence dominated European thought and there were few others addressing the concerns that he intuitively knew would be critical in the years to come. By the 1950s he had electricity generated by wind power in the Abbey and his car had been refitted with a diesel engine specifically for ecological reasons. He was unsuccessful in persuading the Community to establish a market garden on Iona or to assist in crofting on Mull. But in the 1970s after ceding the leadership of the Iona Community and approaching his 80th birthday he initiated a new experiment to be undertaken at the old manse at Fuinary. His dream was for a new interdenominational and self-sufficient agricultural community who would live simply ‘as a preface to an understanding with the underprivileged Third world and offer hospitality to groups wishing to explore alternative lifestyles. MacLeod managed to persuade Alec and Anne Walker to join him but despite the best efforts of all the vision proved impracticable and illusory.

311 Macleod’s fascination with Berdyaev owed much to the Russian’s mysticism and resonating social analysis. MacLeod had held a deep respect for Orthodox Christianity ever since his Easter experience in Jerusalem in 1933. Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy was more problematic; it offered no place for God, whether transcendent or immanent and sought simply to develop the spirit of man.

312 George MacLeod, p302 and 304.
313 Ian Fraser recalls that one summer MacLeod made little effort to tend the lettuce in a small garden he had already created by the youth huts and suggests that MacLeod hadn’t thought the whole prospect of the market garden through in sufficient detail. Conversation with Ian Fraser, August 2005.
314 Paper prepared by George MacLeod announcing the ‘Fuinary Intention’ and cited in George MacLeod, p390.
315 George MacLeod, p391.
In this, as on many other occasions, George MacLeod heard the first strains of a new melody before the tune was widely known or loved. In the 1970s he proposed that a windmill be installed on Iona\textsuperscript{316} and argued that Camas should become 'an ecological community exhibiting an alternative lifestyle with a full time horticulturalist on the staff'.\textsuperscript{317}

In his proposals for Camas, MacLeod's vision has proved more possible. Camas is a group of former fishing cottages situated on the Ross of Mull in a secluded bay, over a mile away from the nearest road. The cottages were originally purchased pursuant to MacLeod's vision for them becoming a centre for deprived urban young people. This vision persists and it is now an accredited activity centre offering a wide range of outdoor pursuits to youth groups, schools, social work groups and Church groups. But it is also a community with a distinct fealty to the earth. There is no electricity; light comes from the sun and the stars or candles. Heat comes to those rooms with a fireplace from a managed supply of peat dug and dried on site. The (cold) water is collected rain-water and the waste collected from the dry toilets is used to fertilise the garden from which many of the daily vegetables are harvested. The centre is also used occasionally for themed adult weeks often focusing on ecological matters. Since the rebuilding of the Abbey, Camas has traditionally been the site where new members have come for weeks of practical work, a series of physically demanding and necessary common tasks that help to 'build' community and which emphasize the Community's bisociation of work and worship. In response to Health and Safety legislation Camas is currently being redeveloped by the Community. They have retained Gaia Architects to introduce essential improvements and ensure energy self-sufficiency without losing the characteristic simplicity of life at the centre.

Not all such projects have met with equal success. The restored Abbey is a difficult building to light and heat and in the past a well-intentioned if ultimately ill-conceived idea to do so using the considerable energy of tidal ebb and flow

\textsuperscript{316} The proposal was rejected on technical grounds by the then Secretary of State for the Environment Rt. Hon. Tony Benn. See George MacLeod, p392.
\textsuperscript{317} George MacLeod, p392.
unfortunately floundered. But the MacLeod Centre now heats much of its water from solar panels and in purchasing food for the Island Centres, preference is given to local suppliers and community based projects. All of this, successes and failures alike reflect the Community's attempts to sing the integrity of creation, joining their voices with those of all creation in response to Christ's *cantus firmus*.

As with other aspects of the Rule it is not simply a Community commitment: each member has the personal responsibility to discern what this commitment means within the context of their daily living and then to remain accountable for their action within the network of family groups and the wider Community gatherings. For some this commitment has led them to full-time work for sustainable development and environmental justice. For instance, one community member recently gave up his job to purchase a small cottage and 3/4 of an acre of land at Beaudesert Park, England to work on a Christian Eco-project. There they have developed a wider range of activities which connect creation and faith, including a series of five 'reflective gardens', inspired by the Ignatian exercises, 'Seeing God in all things'.

For others it has meant taking ecological considerations to the heart of their chosen professions or domestic arrangements. For many more it has meant a conscious rethinking of daily life choices; for instance choosing power supplies that utilise renewable sources, deliberately seeking not to purchase food and other goods that have been transported over long distances and thus necessitated the burning of polluting fuels. Many have chosen to grow as much of their own produce as possible, either amidst their rural context or in suburban gardens and city allotments. For many it has occasioned rigorous programmes of recycling resources and composting waste and for some the deliberate choice to forsake the personal use of cars. And in keeping with their commitment that the Rule does not become a 'pious hope and false witness', many community members have enabled their local Churches to consider these issues and have

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318 [www.reflectiongardens.org.uk](http://www.reflectiongardens.org.uk/).
been part of initiatives at local and national government to place the practical implementation of sustainable patterns of living at the heart of policy.

These commitments and many others like them are far from being unique but by placing them at the centre of their understanding of the gospel, the Iona Community declares them to be a vital part of making the melodies of God in the world.

The Jacob Lipchitz sculpture 'The Descent of the Spirit' in Iona Abbey Cloisters.
chapter ten:
cadenzas and conclusions.

Never fear.
The kingdom of heaven's
   for all
   for all
who just sing and play
playing their heart out
   orchestrally
   communally
   in harmony
the sound of heaven's
   chief occupation
Spirit-inspired preoccupation
to follow the maestro
   singing and playing
   playing and singing
   beyond expectation.

We didn't know
we had it in us
to play and sing
to sing and play
   so radiantly
   so accurately
so precisely together
   in harmony
each performing
our own vocation
   each rapt up
   in a symphony
   beyond ourselves
in the kingdom of heaven
playing our heart out.¹

¹ 'A Mozart Concerto', in Frances Young, Virtuoso Theology, p183-184.
The conclusion of a solo musical performance is often marked by a cadenza. It is a virtuosic passage performed in response to all that has gone before it. This practice began as simply an ornamental flourish but by the mid-eighteenth century it had evolved into the opportunity for a concerto musician to display their technical prowess and creative gifts through melodic improvisation. Symbolically, it extemporized on the penultimate note of the bass.\(^2\) The cadenza is then the final occasion for the performer to bring some concluding and personal comment to all that has gone before\(^3\) and offers an apposite metaphor for this final chapter. The improvisation of a cadenza arises organically out of the preceding melodies as written by the composer and performed by the orchestral community. Yet it is a unique and personal moment of recital by the individual. As Young notes:

*In order to improvise effectively, the performer not only has to have technical competence, but also needs to understand musical theory, the rules of harmony and counterpoint, the accepted conventions of development, the stylistic character of the work within which the cadenza is to figure. She has to have sensitivity to the actual score of that work, its form, its themes, and subjects, and their "generative" potential.*\(^4\)

In other words, to perform a 'cadence of Christian discipleship', the individual must have nurtured an *asksis* of personal rehearsal which shows that they have listened and responded to the *cantus firmus*. They must have been true to the melodies of community called into being by God and established through scripture, sacrament and historical tradition, and yet be true to the personality of the individual as well as the context of auditorium and audience.

In many respects this thesis is one such cadenza. Its stated intention was to articulate a theology of community through the metaphors of music, particularly that of polyphony. Adopting this as its central image the thesis has sought to

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\(^3\) Little free improvisation now occurs and most cadenzas are either written by the composer or inherited from other musicians.

\(^4\) Frances Young, *Virtuoso Theology*, p160.
perform something unique in the theology of Christian community while yet remaining true to the scriptures, doctrines and traditions of the Church and its theologians. The metaphor of polyphony has provided a fresh Christology which takes seriously the Christian claim that heaven and earth are bisociated in and through the incarnate God. That incarnate God has been described as the cantus firmus, the one in whom difference and particularity are affirmed and yet through whom all boundaries are transcended. This understanding of Christ has facilitated a unique understanding of praxis for the community which seeks to perform the earthbound counter-melodies that God calls into existence. It has done so by establishing a unique paradigm in which multiple images of the Christian community may inform and strengthen one’s imagination and by showing how diverse theologies may co-exist in a fecund Christ-centred relationship. Vitally, the metaphors of polyphony and cantus firmus have demonstrated how Christ is Lord of the world and Church, concerned with work as well as worship, politics as well as prayer and the secular along with the spiritual. However, this thesis has done more than articulate a theology that demands that the activities of Christians within the life of the Church and what is commissioned through their presence in the world should inform and shape each other. It has also posited a Discipline of Counterpoint, through which such a polyphonic praxis may be attempted.

Like any musical cadenza, performing this thesis has depended upon the mind of the great composer and the orchestral community of the faithful and it hopes to make some small effect upon the lives of all those gathered in the auditorium of creation. But it has been a performance with acknowledged limits.

It has drawn deeply on Bonhoeffer and particularly the evocative imagery of his Letters and Papers. But in these he offers only tantalising fragments of the potential he glimpsed in the synergy of theology and music, the metaphor of polyphony and the performance of what we have termed the Discipline of Counterpoint. The thesis has never sought to be a statement of the theology of Bonhoeffer and has less attempted to be a projection of what he might have said.
or done had he lived longer. But it has sought to be true to the man whose overwhelming concern in life and work was the character of the Christian community and its place in the world.

It has also engaged at length with George MacLeod and the contemporary Iona Community. It has not sought to present Iona or its founder as the perfected embodiment of polyphonic community. The Community would readily acknowledge that it has not perfected anything, least of all how to be the body of Christ, and that it is just one of many colonies of heaven seeking to practice something like a worldly monasticism. By its own admission it has no pretensions to the importance of its existence. In its early days its members affirmed that the Community would continue just as long as God required its existence.⁵ Today it confesses to be 'a disposable tool, not an everlasting institution; it is only a tiny part of the Church's witness'.⁶ Yet, as Ferguson has noted, 'The numbers of Members and Associates joining, the continued appeal of the developing Iona programme and the response to its mainland work would seem to indicate that if the Iona Community were to disband today it would need to be reinvented tomorrow'.⁷ So while acknowledging the shortcomings of the Iona Community, it has been suggested that within the fragmented melodies of its history and current membership there can be detected persistent intimations of a polyphonic Christ and the counter-melodies he calls into being.

The work has left unexamined many areas that others may have felt vital. This has been due to the necessary limitations of time and space that pertain to doctoral research. So, for instance, there has been no detailed enquiry into the varying manifestations of the character of the Eucharist when understood through the metaphor of polyphony. Similarly there has been no extension of the discussion on ecumenism to consider how a polyphonic community might develop a theology and praxis of Eucharist. Neither has there been any examination of how the metaphor of polyphony will assist the more difficult but

⁵ Chasing the Wild Goose, p160.
⁶ Chasing the Wild Goose, p161.
⁷ Chasing the Wild Goose, p161.
no less urgent arena of interfaith dialogue. Little attention has been given to the phenomenon of time, how it is comprehended in music and theology, and how these understandings might be bisociated. Furthermore, a myriad of ethical considerations have, of necessity, fallen beyond the remit of the thesis. However, it is hoped that the prevailing metaphors of polyphony, cantus firmus and the Discipline of Counterpoint might offer fruitful contributions to matters such as sexual ethics where polarising positions and zero sum mentalities do little to reflect the bisociation of unity and diversity revealed in the polyphonic Christ. There is much potential research in these and parallel areas of interest.

Another area in which there remains much work to be done is the interaction of theology and the arts, particularly as to how practices other than music might inform Christian doctrine, praxis and spirituality. It is anticipated that the metaphor of polyphony will provide a helpful paradigm for further interdisciplinary research and discussions.

The thesis has sought to be no more than one improvisation upon the cantus firmus of Christ, offering one performance of participation in the polyphony of God. And as Young notes, ‘there is bound to be improvisation if we are to sing love-songs that are at once our own, and yet inspired by, and integrally related in theme and style to the classics provided by the repertoire we have inherited’.\(^8\) So the thesis is neither a blueprint for the reform of the Institutional Church nor is it a manifesto for any alternative forum of Christian community. With one final mix of metaphor, we might say it is far less a comprehensive road map and more akin to snapshots of the journey so far, in which can be glimpsed the new and distant horizons of tomorrow. What has been written is not the thing itself, it has perhaps not even well described the thing itself; it has been, at best, a new song sung to the Lord and an echo of a tune that has not yet been fully heard.\(^9\) In this concluding chapter, the score may have reached its final page, the baton may be stilled, the orchestra silenced and the audience may be departing, but the music

\(^8\) Frances Young, Virtuoso Theology, p167.
has not ended. It is hoped that one day, in the fullness of time and grace, it may find a place in the melodies of heaven’s community. But until then:

_Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord all the earth._

_Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day._

_Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous deeds among all peoples._

_For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods._

_For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens._

_Splendour and majesty are before him;
strength and glory are his sanctuary._

_Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations,_
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength._

_Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name;_
bring an offering and come into his courts._

_Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness;_
tremble before him, all the earth._

_Say among the nations, “The Lord Reigns.”_
_The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;_
_he will judge the peoples with equity._

_Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;_
_let the sea resound, and all that is in it;_
_let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them._

_Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;_
_they will sing before the Lord, for he comes,_
_he comes to judge the earth._

_He will judge the world in righteousness_
_and the peoples in his truth._

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Psalm 96.
Appendix A

The Rule of the Iona Community

Our five-fold Rule calls us to:

1. Daily Prayer and Bible-reading
2. Sharing and accounting for the use of our money
3. Planning and accounting for the use of our time
4. Action for Justice and Peace in society
5. Meeting with and accounting to each other.

1. Daily Prayer and Bible Reading

We are asked to pray for each other, for our common concerns, and for the wider work of the church, on a daily basis. We are also asked to read the Bible on a regular and frequent basis. Together with prayer requests and topics in the Members booklet, the use is commended of Pray Now (published by St. Andrew Press) or With All God’s People (published by the WCC, Geneva), or such other resources as mentioned in the Community’s ‘Spirituality Tool-kit’.

2. Sharing and Accounting for the Use of Our Money

a. We are asked, first, to account to each other for the use of our income.

b. We are then asked, in Family Groups, to agree our individual baseline commitments and special circumstances and expenses: thus arriving at a personal disposable income figure from which the amount to be given (a tithe - 10% in most cases) can be deducted.

c. The amount to be given should be divided up as follows:

   i to the wider work of the Church, and to bodies concerned with promoting justice and peace, world development, etc - 60%

   ii to the work of the Iona Community - 20%

   iii purposes decided by the Family Group - 10%

   iv to purposes decided by the Common Fund Trustees on behalf of the Community - 5%

   v to the Travel Pool - 5%

The accounting year for each of these amounts is from 1st January to 31st December.
3. Planning and Accounting for the Use of Our Time

This discipline seems to have its origins in the early days of the Community, when craftsmen doubted the ability of ministers to work an eight-hour 'shift'. Through it, we are all asked to plan our time, in such a way that proper 'weighting' is given, not simply to work, but equally to leisure, to time for family, to developing skills or acquiring new ones, to worship and devotion, to voluntary work - and to sleep!

4. Action for Justice And Peace In Society

Our act of commitment on justice and peace is, as was also said of the earlier Act of Commitment on Peace, 'a point of departure'. It will remain no more than a pious hope (and a false witness) unless we seek, separately and together, to put it into practice.

Justice and Peace Commitment

We believe:

1. that the Gospel commands us to seek peace founded on justice and that costly reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel;

2. that work for justice, peace and an equitable society is a matter of extreme urgency;

3. that God has given us partnership as stewards of creation and that we have a responsibility to live in a right relationship with the whole of God's creation;

4. that, handled with integrity, creation can provide for the needs of all, but not for the greed which leads to injustice and inequality, and endangers life on earth;

5. that everyone should have the quality and dignity of a full life that requires adequate physical, social and political opportunity, without the oppression of poverty, injustice and fear;

6. that social and political action leading to justice for all people and encouraged by prayer and discussion, is a vital work of the Church at all levels;

7. that the use or threatened use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is theologically and morally indefensible and that opposition to their existence is an imperative of the Christian faith. As Members and Family Groups we will:

8. engage in forms of political witness and action, prayerfully and thoughtfully, to promote just and peaceful social, political and economic structures;
9. work for a British policy of renunciation of all weapons of mass destruction and for the encouragement of other nations, individually or collectively, to do the same;

10. celebrate human diversity and actively work to combat discrimination on grounds of age, colour, disability, mental wellbeing, differing ability, gender, colour, race, ethnic and cultural background, sexual orientation or religion;

11. work for the establishment of the United Nations Organisation as the principal organ of international reconciliation and security, in place of military alliances;

12. support and promote research and education into non-violent ways of achieving justice, peace and a sustainable global society;

13. work for reconciliation within and among nations by international sharing and exchange of experience and people, with particular concern for politically and economically oppressed nations.

5. Meeting with and Accounting to Each Other

We are asked to do this

a) In Family Groups
b) In Plenaries

We are also asked to give a written undertaking at the beginning of January each year (through the 'With-us' card) that we are 'with the Community' in commitment to the Rule.

Along with the 'With-us' card, we are asked to send:
- a short personal assessment to the Leader of how we are keeping the Rule.
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