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The transition of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia from a traditional to a contemporary mode

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The transition of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia from a traditional to a contemporary mode.

Submitted by

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.
No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of this thesis.
This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.
All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

Signed:

Dated:

ABSTRACT

This thesis grew out of my own experience as an Australian Christian Brother. After nearly thirty years of living and teaching as a Brother in Australia, I was appointed for the next twenty-six years to the Fiji Islands. For most of that time there was no Brothers' community near to my assigned work for me to live in and, in isolation from the Brothers, I continued to follow the spiritual practices and customs of the Brothers' tradition. When I left Australia, the Brothers' expression of their spirituality was defined by a highly prescriptive routine of daily prayer and exact observance of many external practices. On my return to Australia and on my re-joining a Brothers' community, I observed, to my confusion, that this traditional form of spirituality had been radically transformed into a variety of individual expressions, freely chosen by the Brothers to suit their personal needs and relevant to the changed conditions of society. Community life, as it had been once lived, had virtually ceased to exist. The thesis has been generated by my efforts to understand the new ways in which my confreres perceive spirituality, to explore the contemporary ways in which they express it and to consider how the traditional structures of the Religious Life might need to be changed to accommodate these contemporary expressions of spirituality.

To begin with, an examination is undertaken of spirituality as it has been conceptualised from the Christian medieval mystics to contemporary times and a clear distinction is made between spirituality and religion. Further, the research study examines how the different social milieus in which the Brothers have lived in Australia over the last one hundred and fifty years have influenced the manner in which they express their spirituality. It attempts to determine the effect on the Brothers' developing spirituality of the initial formation they received in the Religious life.

This was a qualitative research study where interviews were used to collect data. Seventeen Australian Christian Brothers across Australia, ranging in age from their forties to their late eighties, agreed to participate in the project to share their stories. The focus of the interviews was to discover the participant's understanding and expression of spirituality through their years as Christian Brothers. It was found that various social and religious influences brought about a transformation in these expressions of their spirituality from traditional forms to more contemporary forms. Given the age range of the participants, the researcher was able to compare and contrast different aspects of

spirituality manifested by the Australian Christian Brothers in the times before and after the Second Vatican Council, a time when much change was happening within the Catholic Church. It became clear that if the traditional form of life of living in community is continued, respecting the individual member's ways of relating to God will need accommodation and some adaptation both in structure and practice.

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I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the following people who have helped me throughout this research study.

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I would also like to express my appreciation to my co-supervisor, Dr Brendan Hyde, who, although such a busy man, was unfailingly generous in sharing his time with me. I valued his insights into spirituality, expressed always so courteously, and the clarity with which he solved my technical problems. He probably will never know the delight he gave me with his constant reassurance that my work was creditable.

I wish to thank my Provincial Superior, Br Vince Duggan, for trusting me to venture into such a delicate area of research as the Christian Brothers' spirituality and for making available to me the funds that were needed to pursue it.

I need to thank the anonymous seventeen Christian Brothers who so readily accepted my invitation to participate in this research. The candour with which they shared their spiritual journeys with me was absolutely breathtaking. The sincerity of their quest for God was inspirational. To be told their spiritual stories was to place me in a very privileged and sacred space and I felt the burden of responsibility to do justice to them.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

SPIRITUALITY

Within contemporary Australian society there has been a significant development of interest in spirituality (Hughes, 2003, p. 1; Bouma, 2006, p. 1). In contrast to former times, spirituality is a respected element of contemporary Australian secular society and is given serious attention by it (Kelly, 1992). Spirituality is no longer regarded as a specialist interest that is the exclusive preserve of religionists or any other group, but is now regarded as a concern for everyone, religious or secular, old or young, educated or otherwise (Collins, 1986, p. 100ff.). While the term spirituality in a secular society can become whatever people want it to be, generally it describes a person's yearning for inner peace and some understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. A Christian spirituality is one that seeks to satisfy this inner yearning by a relationship with God, the supernatural Other, known by a variety of names (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 3).

The Problem to be Investigated

The particular spirituality of the Christian Brothers evolved from the culture of their founding years and in conformity to the ecclesial expectations of that time. As a result, the Christian Brothers' spirituality for over a hundred and fifty years found expression in following an horarium of closely regulated religious exercises and in the performance of work in the often difficult ministry of providing education for poor boys. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and under the influence of contemporary secular society, this spirituality has gradually been abandoned in favour of individual Christian Brothers choosing their own expression of spirituality according to their personal needs and performing diverse ministries relative to the needs of the society in which they live.

This research study addresses the specific phenomenon of the transformation of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. It studies the development of a contemporary understanding of spirituality in society as well as amongst the Australian Christian Brothers and investigates how some individuals have transformed their expressions of spirituality from the traditional ways in which they were initially formed to expressions which appear to be more relevant to contemporary times and understandings. Further, it examines the various cultural, ecclesial and societal influences that have helped to bring about these transformed understandings and expressions.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aims of this research study were:

- to identify the manner in which different generations of Australian Christian Brothers were formed in spirituality and in which they expressed their spirituality in their early years; and
- to study the contemporary understanding and expression of spirituality of these Australian Christian Brothers to determine how this has changed.

Because this research study was undertaken partly to resolve some personal tension felt by the researcher, some information about his background is in order.

MY STORY

I am an Australian Christian Brother and my own lived experience provided the motivation for this research study. In 1980 at the age of forty-eight, I moved as a missionary to a South Pacific culture into which I was comprehensively and happily absorbed for the next twenty-six years. For the last sixteen years of my time in the South Pacific, circumstances prevented me from living in community with my Christian Brother confreres. When I left my native Australian culture and congregational spirituality, I was traditionally habited as a Religious, practised a conventional form of spirituality and followed conscientiously the prescribed monastic-like daily horarium of work and prayer. I maintained this form of life very dutifully through my whole time in the South Pacific, particularly during the years I lived apart from the congregation, believing it to be the correct way for the non-ordained male Religious to live. When I returned to Australia in 2006 at the age of seventy-four I was confronted by a congregation whose members now wore secular dress, seemed to practise varied and individual forms of spirituality, exercised widely diversified ministries and no longer had a daily horarium of prayer prescribed by Rule. The research has been prompted in part to satisfy my own professional curiosity and my own spiritual development.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Because the nature of spirituality, as distinct from religion, is a highly subjective concept, the research was a qualitative inquiry. To begin with, a literature search was conducted on traditional and contemporary understandings of spirituality within which to situate this research. The research methodology was a case study and data was collected mainly by

means of one-hour, in-depth, unstructured interviews with the help of a prepared interview guide. Data collection was facilitated by the fact that the researcher himself was an Australian Christian Brother, thus enabling a greater degree of insight as well as interaction with the interviewees. Documents also were consulted to further inform the study. The interpretive framework employed in this research study was that of social constructivism, which enabled the researcher to gain insights into the multiple expressions of spirituality of the participants constructed through their lived experiences. The research was conducted from the perspective of symbolic interaction, which allowed account to be taken of the fact that the nature of an individual Christian Brother's spirituality is not static but is ever developing. The question then focused on the participants' perspectives and understandings of their spirituality.

The qualitative research was influenced by research methods from narrative ethnography. The culture sharing group that constituted the case in this research study was the religious congregation of the Christian Brothers in Australia and the research developed an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the transition of the expressions of spirituality that has taken place within the Brothers from traditional to contemporary modes. The focus of the project was to discover the transformation of the spirituality of the seventeen Brothers who volunteered to participate in the study but it was hoped that this would provide some further insights about the broader group.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching research question is:

- How have the Australian Christian Brothers changed the expressions of their spirituality from their formative years to contemporary times?

This is further broken down into the following sub-questions:

- What were the expressions and practices of the Australian Christian Brothers' spirituality during their formative years?
- What are the expressions and practices of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers today?
- What are some of the influences that led to these expressions during their formative and in their contemporary years?

AGE, SELECTION, DISTRIBUTION

To ensure the integrity of any findings from this research, care was taken in the selection of participants for the study. Twenty Brothers were approached and invited to participate in the study, chosen with the help of the Provincial Superior, for the apparent diversity of their contemporary spirituality as well as their ability to articulate clearly their views on the topic. Seventeen Brothers responded positively and became the participants in the project. They were drawn from every state of Australia and from the ACT, thus reflecting expressions of spirituality distinctive of the four Australian Provinces that had existed before unification into the one Oceania Province in 2007. Their ages ranged from mid-forties to late eighties and their personal histories embraced a wide range of experiences in education and in leadership. All ethical requirements were met in the conduct of these interviews.

As the gathering of data proceeded, there emerged the possibility of organising the narratives into two groups, pre- and post-Vatican II. This provided a useful framework in which to analyse and compare the findings. The participants were active collaborators in the research process. As well, the researcher was able to draw upon his own experience as a Christian Brother and his intimate familiarity with the language and the culture of the Australian Christian Brothers. This helped him to contextualise and identify the issues concerning elements and expressions of spirituality within the narratives.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter one provides the background to this research study and the purpose for undertaking it. It outlines the problem to be investigated and the methods chosen to investigate it. It points to the fact that while the findings of the study are pertinent to the Australian Christian Brothers, they have the potential to inform all the religious congregations who reflect a similar transformation in their understandings and expressions of spirituality.

Chapter two provides the context within which the Australian Christian Brothers developed certain understandings and expressions of spirituality. This supplements the literature review by giving some selected background information, historical and cultural, of the ethos and customs peculiar to the participants in this case study and which influenced the development of their expressions of spirituality.

In chapter three a literature study is undertaken and an understanding of spirituality is constructed which is then applied in this research study. A distinction between spirituality and religion is established and an overview of classical Christian spirituality is given through reference to a selection of five acknowledged spiritual masters from medieval and renaissance times. A context for the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers is provided and the spirituality of modern contemplatives is viewed through the works of a selection of five relevant writers in the field. The emergence of modern secular spirituality is described and its distinctive features are detailed. Particular attention is given to the contemporary spiritual perspective of creationism, universal connectedness and unitive consciousness.

The fourth chapter outlines the epistemology, theoretical perspective and methodology for this qualitative research. It situates this study within the constructivist paradigm and details the use of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism as its theoretical perspective. The rationale for the choice of case study influenced by narrative ethnography as the methodology of the research is given. The use of unstructured narrative interviews as the means for gathering data is discussed as well as the principles that guided the selection of participants for the research.

Chapter five presents the findings in relation to the characteristics of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. It describes the different cultural contexts in which the spirituality of the two groups were initially formed and then contrasts the different ways in which these two groups expressed their spirituality at the commencement of their religious lives.

Chapter six distinguishes and compares the characteristics of the contemporary spirituality of these two groups in the light of the different cultural milieus from which each has come. This chapter also considers the changing images of God that have occurred in the lifetime of these participants and considers the tension emerging amongst them in relation to the teachings and practices of the institutional church.

Chapter seven discusses the implications of the findings from the previous two chapters. By comparing and contrasting the characteristics of the initial and contemporary expressions of both the pre- and the post-Vatican II groups, it was possible to identify two themes, dualism, which was evident in the initial expressions of spirituality of both groups,

and relationality to which it shifted and which was reflected in the contemporary expressions of spirituality, also in both groups. Three areas which reflected the transition in the understandings and expressions of spirituality from dualism to relationality emerged from the analysis of the data and these three areas were studied in greater detail. They were: a shift in the influence of church teachings and structures, the changing notion of work and the changing notions of God.

Chapter eight provides the conclusion of the study and offers some recommendations that may be useful for the future planning of the Australian Christian Brothers and possibly other religious congregations. The research study brought to light the sense of freedom experienced by the Australian Christian Brothers in the transformation of the ways in which they expressed their spirituality. It was clear that the opportunity to express their spirituality in ways that met their personal needs and that were relevant to their current situations was espoused fully. While it was clear that there could be no going back to the former regulated and structured practices that had attempted to meet the Brothers' spiritual needs in earlier times, the findings of the research into this transition to contemporary expressions of spirituality contain implications for the future structure of the Congregation. These are identified and discussed.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While much has been written about spirituality in recent times, there seems to have been little that addresses specifically the transformation of the expressions of spirituality that is occurring amongst the members of religious congregations in Australia. Many of these congregations, like the Christian Brothers, were founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the cloistered, monastic life, with its separation from 'the world', was the established form of religious life to which new Religious Congregations were expected to conform. As a result, the Christian Brothers' founding expressions of spirituality reflected many aspects of this religious culture, and their Rules included many of the ecclesial legalisms governing monastic life. Chittester points out that the challenge to contemporary spirituality, to the religious of our age, "lies in the fact that that the great cultural questions of life have changed" (Chittester, 1995. p. 9). Arbuckle wrote that the "fossilisation" of apostolic religious life intensified following publication of the 1918 Code of Canon Law (1996, p. 28). Like the Christian Brothers, many of these religious congregations would have become rule-oriented and work-dominated at the expense of meeting the authentic

spiritual needs of their members and probably also in contradiction to the vision of their founders. This research study, then, has relevance for formators in the Christian Brothers and other apostolic congregations as they guide their initiates in the beginning of their spiritual development. It has relevance for the leaders of the Christian Brothers and other similar apostolic congregations as they attempt to adapt the structures of their congregations to allow for the diversity of the different expressions of contemporary spirituality practiced by Religious today.

DELIMITATIONS

This research study focused on the traditional and contemporary understandings and expressions of the Australian Christian Brothers through a study of seventeen individual Brothers. Therefore the findings are specific to this group and no claim is made about the generalisability of the findings. However, the findings and conclusions provide new insights about the structure and organisation of religious community life in the contemporary world and therefore have the potential to inform the future planning and development of other religious communities.

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT

The research case study into the transition of the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers' from traditional to contemporary forms requires some understanding of how the culture of the whole body of Australian Christian Brothers has evolved, for it is within the context of this particular culture, peculiar to the Christian Brothers, that the case study is set. An understanding of this context assumes an added importance as in the conversations between the interviewer and the participants a tacit assumption is made of knowledge of the Christian Brothers' way of life. An awareness of the identity, the cultural world and everyday practices of the Christian Brothers provides the background for understanding the changing expressions of their spirituality. A selected number of specific aspects of this culture are discussed below. Where appropriate an explanation of their causes is also given to illustrate how this culture has influenced the ways in which the Christian Brothers have come to express their contemporary spirituality. These aspects are discussed under the following headings:

- The founder and the church;
- Work for the poor;
- Culture, clerical and secular;
- Diminishment of reputation;
- The significance of novice masters in this case study;
- Severity; and
- Supportive leadership.

The Founder and the Church. There is among the Christian Brothers a strong attachment to their founder, Blessed Edmund Rice (Keogh, 2008). Some familiarity with his story and an understanding of how his charism has influenced the Brothers' expressions of their spirituality is fundamental to a discussion of the ways in which these expressions have changed.

Edmund Rice comprehended in depth the need to provide Catholic education for the poor boys of Waterford at the end of the eighteenth century and, with vision, responded creatively to their needs with the founding of the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Both the ministry and the religious lives of the founding group of Brothers were shaped, and constrained, by the religious practices, expectations and social conditions of the late

eighteenth century. The attitudes, perceptions and values of the Founder and the pioneer Brothers were expressed in a particular form of spirituality appropriate to their time and their situation. The attitudes, perceptions and values of the Founder are still cherished today but when applied to the situation at the start of the twenty-first century, they have produced different outcomes both in spirituality and in mission.

From the time of the Founder, living in community has been considered by the Christian Brothers to be an essential element of their spiritual lives and had been valued by them as instrumental in developing their spirituality. Schneiders affirms this, "Community, as the context for Religious Life, is intrinsically related to the relationship with Jesus Christ that is at the heart of the life" (2001, p. 277). However, community remains but one means to develop a deeper, more contemplative union with God and, if it is considered to be an end in itself, may make no spiritual contribution at all. For most of the history of the Brothers in Australia, community life exercised a dominant influence on the formation and the expressions of the Brothers' spirituality. However, over time community living came to be accorded an attention out of proportion to its ability to assist spiritually. The integration of community living into the Brothers' spirituality came to be expressed more with a fortress mentality, that is, as a means of repelling threats of interference by Church authorities and dangers from the world than as a means of seeking union with God.

Even Edmund Rice's founding community was at odds with the hierarchical church of his day, for his was a group of male lay Religious who requested and were granted independence from the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishops (Keogh, 2008, p. 152ff.). The tension resulting from the need of the Church to be in control was well illustrated by the story of Edmund Rice's first school. To build his first school at Waterford, Edmund Rice "had supplied both the initiative and the finance, and in this way was answerable to no one, least of all the local bishop" (Keogh, 2008, p. 95). The Bishop, however, was a "prickly individual" (Keogh, 2008, p. 95) and Edmund Rice appeared to unwittingly offend his sensitivities for "he had stepped beyond the acceptable

limit, establishing a Catholic school free from clerical supervision" (Keogh, 2008, p. 96). Edmund was required to hand over the deeds of the school he had built from his own funds to the Bishop, something he graciously did. There has lingered within the congregation an element of hostility toward the hierarchical church (Hickey, 1982, p. 323) and this tended to bond the Brothers together in community life in the face of hierarchical opposition.

Living in community has been a dominant feature in the Brothers' expression of their spirituality. The Christian Brothers had been given the status of a Pontifical Institute in 1822, allowing them independence from the jurisdiction of local bishops (cf. Rushe, 1995, p. 67; McLaughlin, 2007, p. 211).

The Christian Brothers, being non-ordained Religious, were not committed to the recitation the daily Office. Instead, possibly because the Church could not slot such a group into existing categories and certainly under the influence of the Church culture of that time, the prayer programme of the Brothers was filled with devotional exercises. The Brothers did accept the invitation issued by the Church after Vatican II to adopt the daily recitation of the Office, (Sacrosanctum Concilium, iv). The reason why the Congregation of Christian Brothers had resisted the introduction of this liturgical prayer to their horarium up to this point lay, perhaps, in the fact that the Christian Brothers are a lay religious congregation and so are not bound by the canons that mandate the prayer life of clerics. In the days when many in the church culture considered the priesthood a 'superior' vocation to the religious Brotherhood, the pioneering Brothers were at pains to prevent any loss of Brothers to the priesthood. Up until 1966, when the Constitutions were reshaped at the direction of the Second Vatican Council, it was felt necessary to include the rather strange sounding constitution, taken verbatim from the de la Salle Brothers' Rule, that "the Brothers shall not aspire to the priesthood nor to any ecclesiastical Orders" (Congregation, 1960, Chapter 1, Nº 5). One consequence of this was that the vacuum left in the Brothers' horarium by not saying the Divine Office, because it was the clerics' prayer, was filled with a multiplicity of litanies, rosaries, Stations of the Cross, formulated prayers for morning and evening, strings of Paters and Aves for various intentions and many pious exercises for the monthly retreats, major feast days and seasonal occasions. This way of expressing spirituality did not appear to have much appeal to the generation of young men joining the Christian Brothers in the post-Vatican II era.

This research case study requires an understanding of the strength of the influence on the formation of spiritual expressions by the place of community in the participants' lives. The change of form of life, as a consequence of an altered view of spirituality, has been considered by many contemporary Religious to be radical. In reference to this, Rohr suggests that a reaction to change is due to "preoccupation with religion as an ideology" leading to "over-identification with the group, its language and symbols". He asserts that

group loyalty became the test rather than loyalty to God or truth (1999, p. 94). The Christian Brothers in Australia exemplified this for they were a tightly-knit community, loyal to their congregational traditions, thoroughly inculturated in pre-Vatican II theology and devotional practices, imbued with a strong social work ethic and protective of their good reputation within society. The research in testing the extent to which these factors contributed to an understanding of spirituality by the Christian Brothers in Australia requires an understanding of the place of community in the spiritual expressions of the Brothers. The research explores the changes to this understanding that have occurred, a transition that is encouraged by some contemporary writers. "Religious must refuse to allow themselves to be co-opted into the hierarchical agenda by pseudo-clerical regards or silenced by fear and self-protection" (Schneiders, 2000, p. 257).

Work for the Poor. The Congregation of Christian Brothers was one of the many religious orders that were founded in the eighteenth century to meet particular social needs. The Christian Brothers were founded in Ireland to provide education for poor boys whose situation at that time was desperate. Children were treated as if they were just another possession of the parents so that their rights and their dignity as human beings were barely recognised (McLaughlin, 2007). The Founder, Edmund Rice, and his early companions chose by "mature and conscious decision" (Rushe, 1995, p. 20) to live among the appalling deprivation experienced by the children they taught. They fed them, clothed them, visited the gaols, interceded for debtors, accompanied condemned men to the gallows and even turned their classrooms into hospitals and nursed the victims of the 1832 cholera pandemic (Keogh, 2008, p. 99). The spirituality of the Congregation evolved from the Brothers' concern for the poor and their desire to work to obtain justice for their students.

Br Ambrose Treacy brought the Christian Brothers to Australia in 1868 in response to a request from Rome (cf. letter from Cardinal Barnabo, Propaganda, October 31, 1867). While there were needs of poor boys to be met in the colonies at that time, the Christian Brothers and other religious congregations were requested by the Hierarchy to conduct schools more to counter the effects of the non-denominational state schools introduced in 1848. This was attested to by Br Ambrose Treacy's biographer when he alluded to the concern expressed by the Australian Bishops about the effects of secular schooling on the faith of Catholic children (O'Donoghue, 1983, p. 18).

Poverty in Ireland meant something quite different from poverty in Australia. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the general populace of Ireland was destitute, at times starving, and people simply had no money to pay for their children's schooling. When the Brothers came to Australia they immediately saw that their understanding of poverty needed to be redefined. Br Ambrose Treacy is quoted as saying, "Society here [in Melbourne] may be said to consist of but two classes, the upper and the middle, there being in reality no poor class as at home" (cited in Hickey, 1982, p. 53).

In contrast to the situation in Ireland, the pioneer Brothers in Australia considered that most people here could well afford to pay something for their children's education but, as O'Donoghue recorded, the Brothers had taken a vow of gratuitous instruction of the poor that forbade them from taking anything from the students by way of fee or reward. This posed a problem for the Brothers in Australia. While the Brothers' vow of gratuitous instruction worked well for the Old World, it was neither wise nor necessary in Australian conditions and so release from the vow was sought for the Australian Brothers as "Br Treacy [the pioneering Brother in Australia] contended that it did not work for the New World unless modified and he set out his reasons in a Memorial to the 1871 General Chapter" (O'Donoghue, 1983, p. 64).

The chapter approved and a rescript from Rome was obtained enabling the Brothers to charge the pupils attending St Francis' School in Melbourne six pence a week with the proviso that "no pupil was to be excluded if unable to pay the fee" (Hughes, 1901, p. 54). The Founder's spirit of working for the poor, however, was in no way diluted by this arrangement. The founding Brothers in Australia did not segregate the non-fee paying students from the fee-paying students in contrast to the practice in Ireland where the fee-paying pupils were given a classroom to keep them separate from the non-fee paying students. The pioneering Brothers' remained firmly committed to working for the disadvantaged and this became embedded in the culture of the Australian branch of the Congregation - "The poor were better off assimilated among the general run of students. They got better teaching, the brighter ones had the opportunity to get on and they were not subject to any ignominy" (O'Donoghue, 1983, p. 68).

In any case, Br Ambrose Treacy was able to declare to the Superior General that there were boys in all the Christian Brothers' schools in Australia who not only paid no fees but were supplied free with books and requisites. The Brothers saw this work for the poor as

an expression of their spirituality. To work for the poor was foundational in the Brothers' spirituality.

Culture, Clerical and Secular. The Australian Christian Brothers, like their counterparts in other apostolic religious congregations, formerly relied for their cohesion when living together on a unanimity of vision and a commonality of purpose. The Australian Christian Brothers, up until recent times, followed a highly ordered life built on the exact observance of externalised rules and with a strong emphasis on prayer said in common and the observance of many devotional practices. Schneiders (2001) describes the way in which the Brothers lived, worked and prayed together as the "intentional community model", with little contact with the secular community outside their religious houses. The Brothers regarded their absorption in work, the living of the common life and the exclusion from contact with the world to be essential expressions of their spirituality, so much so that it was feared by some, at least for a while, that the loss or diminishment of such a model of community living or work for the poor would result inevitably in the dissolution of the Congregation. O'Murchu (2005) addresses this, and while at pains to honour the memory and the heroism of those Religious "on whose shoulders we stand", he also states that "we know that the call of our time – and the critical values for now – are significantly different from former times, and call us to a different quality of response" (2005, p. 28).

This research explores such a new response as the Brothers moved beyond limiting their expression of spirituality to the work of teaching and a particular way of living the common life.

It should be remembered also that in choosing to live together in community as the form of life for his followers, the Founder had little option if he wished, as he did, to secure Church approval for his venture. The only model of Religious Life available to him at the time and the only form that would secure Roman approval was the established monastic form. As a result, even though the Founder always had in mind that he and his followers would not seek ordination as priests (Keogh, 2008, p. 100), he was obliged to pattern his venture on a clerical template. The Christian Brothers in Ireland even came to be known as monks (Hardiman, 2009, p. 389). As O'Murchu stated, "Religious were to behave like clerics, pray like clerics and function according to clerical norms. Moreover, they had to

be responsible to clerics, not just for ecclesiastical accountability, but also for guidance in their spiritual formation" (2005, p. 55).

This research case study explores the implications of the fact that the Christian Brothers, as a non-clerical religious group, are exempt from most of the canons binding the ordained ministers of the Church, and so are much freer to break from traditional forms of life imposed upon them by clerical expectations and cultural traditions. Arbuckle is one contemporary writer who considers that contemporary Religious must free themselves from the constraints of clerical expectations if they are to express their own authentic form of spirituality. He sees this as a particular need for non-clerical congregations such as the Christian Brothers, stating that a transformation in expressions of spirituality from the traditional to the contemporary and its consequent effect on the form of life of Religious is essential for their very survival. "One way for Brothers to survive is to 'go it alone', by ignoring the clergy, even developing an antagonism towards clergy as a form of identity" (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 141). The research aimed to explore the extent to which Christian Brothers in Australia had embraced this development.

The pioneer Brothers in Australia brought with them a religious lifestyle and certain expressions of spirituality that were reflective of the Irish culture and the traditions of the Congregation in Ireland and they distinctly conformed to the Church, cultural practices and expectations of the time. Schneiders (2000) postulates that while society was developing and changing, the Church resolutely remained fixed in medieval practices and governances. This affected Religious who, like the Christian Brothers, were actively engaged in modern ministries such as education. The maintenance of traditions of a 'medieval world' was presumed to protect Religious from any contamination that contact with the outside world may have brought, such as undermining the values and rituals of the order. Until the Second Vatican Council, the Brothers lived a kind of double life, practising a type of monastic spirituality at home while engaging with society at other times as professional educators and the equals of seculars in their various fields.

As a result, people who joined religious congregations prior to the Second Vatican Council, having been rigorously disciplined during their religious training, accepted, for the most part uncritically, the assumption that regularity of rule observance was their means to sanctity and the principal way to express their spirituality. The demands of this

external conformity are well defined by Chapter XXV of the Christian Brothers' 1927 Rule, "The Ordinary Exercises of the Day" (Congregations, 1927), which remained in force up until the Second Vatican Council. The forty-six items in this chapter prescribe the prayers to be said in common throughout the day and also the manner of their recitation. By today's standards, some of these prescriptions sound offensively invasive as, for example, when the Brothers were told, "they shall kneel together in the Church during Mass, and use Beads, a Missal or other prayer–book" (Congregation, 1927, p. 202). Even the performance of the prescribed exercises was quite nicely choreographed as, for instance, "The short Grace shall be said aloud and standing before and after breakfast and supper. Immediately before Grace at supper, the Brothers kneeling shall say the Hail Mary in silence, after which the Aspiration will be given" (Congregation, 1927, p. 203). Nothing was left to chance, not even the most personal of responsibilities such as the examination of conscience, as the details of the following Rule illustrate:

> The Particular Examen shall be made in common [original emphasis] for ten minutes daily. This exercise should be performed as near midday as circumstances allow. On days on which school is not held, the Brothers shall make this Examen at ten minutes to twelve – unless arranged for at some other time. On school days the Particular Examen shall be made in the oratory, at the time fixed by the Brother Superior (Congregation, 1927, p. 204).

The exactitude of the Brothers' observance of the daily detailed minutiae of these pious practices was used to measure the 'sanctity' of their communities at the annual Visitation by the higher Superiors. The following excerpt from one such Visitation Report illustrates not only the emphasis given to the observance of the details of the horarium, but also the tension under which the Superior, who was also the Headmaster of the College, had to operate in combining his pastoral duties as Superior and his professional duties as Headmaster. Apparently in 1958 his attempts to put a human face onto community living were not appreciated by the Provincial Visitor on his visit on December 5, 1958. The list of community members and the daily timetable were detailed at the start of the report. The observance of the timetable by the community was then commented on as follows:

> Observance:
>
> The Superior is not a good leader in respect of observance. Some Brothers are of the opinion that he is out too often in the evenings attending Educational, University or other committee meetings. These sometimes keep him out from night prayers. He is not regular in the mornings. Apparently once or twice a

> week he misses out in the mornings [at the community prayer]. Br N. was also noted for his morning irregularity.
>
> Silence should be better observed, and the Latin Grace said at the principal meal each day. The Superior's attention was drawn to his duty of holding a private conference with the Brothers of Temporary Profession once a month. It was also pointed out to him that he had no authority to give the Brothers wine, sherry or port before dinner on Saturday or Sunday.
>
> The Accounts show the bills for Wines and Soft drinks are much too high. They are increasing year by year (Kelty Archives, Parkville: Box VTR 5, Folder 2).

Just as in today's context, there is a generation of lay people who are open to committing themselves to some form of spirituality yet find themselves alienated from the formal, traditional expressions of religion (Ranson, 2009), so, too, the data indicated that there were Brothers who, in searching for an authentic expression of spirituality, felt called to move out of "egoically ingrained patterns of feeling and acting" (Pinto, 2012). They felt called to move out of a spiritual past, even though they felt secure and assured there, to a future of unawakened living. To make this transition, which is the subject of this research case study, was not an easy thing for Brothers trained in the spirituality of former times for, as the Superior General said:

> It is so easy to want to stay as we have been and not want to change. It is certainly the path of least resistance and more comfortable … It is also the way to extinguish the fire of future life (Pinto, 2012).

Of the seventeen Brothers who participated in the research, seven had joined the Congregation well before Vatican II. These had received their initial spiritual formation in pre-Vatican II theology and culture, coincidentally from the same novice master, and they had lived for some time the traditional, ascetic style of religious life of that period. Although they came from every state in Australia, they had all experienced the hardships of the Great Depression and the horrors and austerities of the Second World War. Chittester (1996) acknowledged that, despite all efforts to distance Religious from contact with the secular world, such events as these did affect the manner of Religious Life and the ways in which the Religious expressed their spirituality.

It is conceivable that in the past some Brothers felt obliged to abandon the Congregation when they found that the formal, communal life of the Brothers inhibited their quest to grow in intimacy with God. Schneiders acknowledges this dilemma for Religious when

she says that this situation in a time of transition "has plunged Religious into another zone of liminality that is challenging this unanimity of mind and heart on which community is built" (2000, p. 340). However, she highlights the inevitability of this process when she states "if the God-quest is the defining concern of Religious Life, this discussion must engage Religious not as one among many interesting topics but as a crucial issue in their own area of life specialisation" (2000, p. 340).

The adoption of contemporary expressions of spirituality, which is at the heart of this research, implies great changes for a modern Australian Christian Brother.

Diminishment of Reputation. The Christian Brothers grew in numbers in Australia, peaking at about 1,300 in the 1970s, becoming and remaining still numerically the largest male religious congregation in Australia. Because of their widespread network of schools and institutions, they projected a fairly high profile in Australian society. They were regarded as successful when success was measured by good public examination results, success in a variety of sports and the number of ex-students occupying eminent places in the community. The Christian Brothers in Australia enjoyed a good reputation in Australia. However, the morale of the whole social entity of Christian Brothers was affected by a significant loss of Brothers during the sixties and seventies, which in turn reflected on the effectiveness of their expressions of spirituality to sustain them in their Religious Life. Many felt the conflict resulting from the Congregation's insistence on strict observance of external rules against the challenges of a freer contemporary society. Some could not make the change; others were frustrated in their attempts to do so. While the ministry of teaching was held to be intrinsic to the spiritual life of a Christian Brother, it could be argued that one of the reasons for the significantly high number of withdrawals from the Congregation in the sixties and seventies was the obsessive concern with material success measured in terms of examination results, scholastic awards and public recognition, and the pressure this exerted on Brothers. The pursuit of such achievements may have come at the cost of depriving the Brothers of the opportunity to develop a personally sustaining spirituality and therefore contributing to their decision to leave the Congregation.

In 1964, the Superior General, Br Ferdinand Clancy, rather ruefully confided to Br Bernard Garvey, the Brother Provincial, that "St Patrick's [Victoria and Tasmania] stands at the head of the list for losses of Perpetually Professed Brothers in this year's Relatio

Annualis" (Clancy, 1964). The loss of Professed Brothers was to get worse. In St Patrick's Province (Victoria and Tasmania) 86 Professed Brothers left in the sixties and 87 Professed Brothers left in the seventies (BRS Box 1, Kelty Archives). In St Mary's Province (New South Wales and ACT) 90 Professed Brothers left in the sixties and 111 Professed Brothers left in the seventies (Circular Letters, Province Archives, Balmain). There was also a significant number of departures from the other two Australian Provinces, St Francis Xavier Province (Queensland) and the Holy Spirit Province (Western Australia and South Australia). It was natural, then, that in the opening sessions of the 1965/66 St Patrick's Province Chapter, debate swirled around this topic and the delegates gave their carefully measured opinions about whether age, holding a university degree or the attraction of the priesthood were relevant factors in causing these departures from the Congregation. It was thought possible that men had been admitted to Final Profession despite demonstrating a lack of commitment to the vowed life. The notion of a 'temporary' vocation was aired but was quickly dismissed. Some delegates considered that confessors and spiritual directors might at times have given unsound advice. Defective initial screening processes and the making of vows under pressure of fear, human respect or family pride were considered. The search for reasons why Brothers left the Congregation in such large numbers was sincere and compassionate. Young Brothers having to keep late nights because of external studies, Superiors appointed to office without any training and little guidance, Brothers being worn out at an early age because of over-work, pressure to achieve success, lack of a genuine family spirit in their communities, the influence of latent homosexuality and the special case of Brothers in boarding schools and institutions being under intense pressure of work were all tendered as possible contributory factors to the large loss of vocations that St Patrick's Province had sustained (cf. Minutes of the Provincial Chapter of St Patrick's Province 1966, Kelty Archives). Basic to all this was the fact that the spirituality of the time, the spirituality of these Brothers' formation, seemingly had failed to sustain them in their vocation. All this contributed to the transition that took place in the expressions of spirituality of the Brothers, the matter of this case study research.

Morale further plummeted with the revelation in more recent years that some members of the Congregation were guilty of sexual abuse:

> The high esteem the Congregation enjoyed has been greatly diminished by proven cases of child abuse involving some members. This has led to a genuine sadness and remorse as well as a commitment to supporting and caring for those

> hurt. The morale amongst many Christian Brothers has been affected. (Pinto, 2012, p. 4).

This historical background had an impact on the development of the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. Only in more recent times has there developed a fuller understanding of the importance of emotional healthiness of living as celibate men in the context of their spirituality.

The Significance of Novice Masters in this Case Study. In Religious Life, the role of novice master is considered to be of great importance in providing a novice with a good grounding in the spiritual life. This is indicated in the Brothers' Rule concerning novice masters:

> It was chiefly by the sanctity of his [the novice master's] life, by his union with God, by his humble, fervent prayers, that he will labour most efficaciously for the sanctification and perfection of those whom he guides and instructs (Congregation, 1927, p. 353).

By an accident of history, it so happened that every Australian Christian Brother over a period of thirty years received their foundational spiritual formation from the same novice master, Br Patrick Harty. In 1983, his name became well known in Australia through a public debate conducted in the pages of the Sydney Morning Herald on the merits of methods he used to train Christian Brother novices. It was considered by those on one side of the debate that his methods were too harsh and dehumanising, while they were defended by others as appropriate in the context of the times. The views of those involved in this debate, as well as Br Patrick Harty's published biography, are referred to in this discussion (see chapters five and six). It is relevant then to consider the influence of a novice master, and that of Br Patrick Harty in particular, on the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers.

Br Patrick Harty received no formal preparation for the task but was trained for the role 'on the job', as was the custom at that time. It should be noted that Br Patrick Harty was a conscientious man (Marzorini, 1975, p. 232), and should, perhaps, be considered a victim of this process of appointing novice masters at that time, for without special training for the task, he always considered himself inadequate to it. He wrote tellingly to the Superior General in 1931:

> I am not fit for the position here. I have not the interior virtues from which the others spring. I am not a man of prayer, for I couldn't make a decent meditation even if I tried earnestly to do so, which I fear I seldom do (Marzorini, 1975, p. 204).

While allowing that no blame can be attributed to anyone for this situation, the consequence was that many generations of Australian Christian Brothers received an initial formation in spirituality that concentrated heavily on external observances. Their training came to resemble an obstacle course in which only the fittest survived. Novitiates of all congregations at this time were offered much the same kind of formation. Schneiders observes:

> It [novitiate training] was decidedly one-sided: the congregation testing the candidate, who was trying to avoid being 'sent home' (which carried unmistakable innuendoes of failure) or trying subconsciously to be sent home (so he could leave with a clear conscience) (2001, p. 66).

It should also be kept in mind that in the matter of growth and development in the spiritual life, chronological age has only relative significance. The large groups of Christian Brother novices in the pre-Vatican II years were lock-stepped into a uniform programme of spiritual formation with little regard for individual differences. This ignored a rather basic consideration in spiritual formation, as King points out, "Spiritual development can happen at any time. It is not necessarily old people who are wise – some rather young people are deeply spiritual as well" (2008, p. 57).

St Teresa of Avila was one spiritual master who also implied that growth in spirituality does not necessarily parallel corporeal growth - "The Lord sometimes tarries long, and gives us great rewards all at once as He has been giving to others over many years" (1921, p. 24).

Given that one's spirituality evolves as a result of interacting creatively with other people, with one's environment and with historical events, it follows that spirituality is something personal and individual. Nolan states, "The inner work of personal transformation is like a creative work of art rather than like the planned step-by-step journey along a mapped-out road" (2006, p. 90).

This is affirmed also by Meister Eckhart in his "wayless way", "For whoever seeks God

gets the way and misses God, who lies in it. Whoever seeks God without any spiritual way, gets Him as He is in Himself" (quoted by Woods, 2011, p. 82).

Nevertheless, an individual's spiritual development is strongly influenced by the teaching and example of others. Moffett wrote, "One of the laws of spiritual disciplines is that when you evolve, you must take others with you" (1994, p. 26). In the Religious Life, novice masters are specifically charged with the spiritual formation of those entering their congregations. Arbuckle, in speaking of such formators, states, "They concretise, by their inner conversion and conviction, that a new world *is* possible" (1996, p. 190).

The seven oldest participants in this case study all received their initial spiritual formation under Br Patrick Harty, who was the novice master for all Australian novices from the time of his return from the Chinese mission in 1929 up to his retirement from this position in 1959. During these thirty years, society, both secular and ecclesial, experienced great changes. Br Patrick Harty's biographer noted these changes, which, he said, brought "new freedoms and new licence and new ideals based on the rise of personalism" and added, "Even within the Church, stirrings of unbelievable change had already begun". However he had to admit that, "Br Patrick was the rock whose principles were immutable and whose methods were in 1959 what they had been in 1929" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 224).

When, after thirty years, Br Patrick Harty was to be replaced as novice master, the then Superior General, Br Ferdinand Clancy, in a personal letter to a newly appointed Brother Provincial of St Patrick's Province (Victoria and Tasmania), regretted that:

> We still lack uniformity of training because we have no system of training Brothers for houses of formation. Up to this, [the occasion of the need to find a replacement for Br Patrick Harty as novice master] the training was given to those who picked it up while assisting in a staff capacity in a house of formation (Clancy, 1955, p. 1).

It was this Superior General who instituted the breaking up of the one Australian Province into smaller provinces, as outlined earlier in this chapter. As each of these provinces began to exercise their autonomy and establish their own formation programmes, certain Brothers were selected from among their members to be given overseas specialist training to prepare them for the work of novice master. In acknowledgment of the intense personal and emotional nature of the novice master's task, their appointment was usually limited to one term only of six years. Consequently, there was a constant turnover of novice masters

influencing the post-Vatican II membership of the Congregation in Australia. These novice masters were far more sensitive to the social environment from which their novices had come and adapted their spiritual formation programmes to suit the novices' needs. Thus the participants who comprised the post-Vatican Group in this case study had made their novitiates under a variety of different novice masters. Because of this, and because they had entered religious life from a far different social milieu than the members of the pre-Vatican II group, it was possible to compare and contrast the different expressions of spirituality of the two groups at the beginning of their religious lives based on their recollections, thoughts and perceptions.

The end of Br Patrick Harty's thirty years of service as novice master to the whole of Australia coincided with the division of the Australian Congregation of Christian Brothers into a number of smaller provinces. Gradually each new province established its own formation programme shaped by its own novice master. These new novice masters were well aware that the demands of modern life required a spirituality more appropriate than that offered by Br Patrick Harty. One such novice master was Br A. who was:

> A product of an older novitiate style under Br Patrick Harty [to whom he] readily acknowledged the debt he owed. But he clearly saw that the methods of Br Patrick Harty, which served another age, would not work in the sixties and seventies. These novices were older, more independent in judgment, 'liberated' (Wigmore, 1983, p. 223).

Br B. was another novice master appointed at this time. His biographer notes that:

> Br B. immediately set about structuring a programme that would have greater relevance for the young men who were entering formation after the social turbulence of the seventies. He deliberately made the novitiate an open place that accorded the highest priority to hospitality and inclusiveness – especially of the marginalised – to outreach into the parish community (O'Halloran, 2009, p. 309).

They were difficult times in which to offer to aspiring Religious a relevant spiritual formation. These difficulties were acknowledged in a paper presented to a Congregational International Spirituality Conference in 1982. Its author stated that the difficulties facing the Congregation required a new vision and a new theology and to move with the Church which had "put off much of its structured orderliness and certainties" (Faulkner, 1982, p. 4). In this paper the author urged the Congregation to align itself with the laity, not the clergy:

> We are part of a Church where clerical domination is giving way, however slowly and unwillingly and painfully in some parts, to a Church of partnership – a Church which openly fosters the emergence of an educated and faith-filled laity, a Church which is even beginning at long last to acknowledge the existence and contribution of women in areas beyond the immediate family (Faulkner, 1982, p. 4).

The expressions of spirituality of the Christian Brothers must reflect the existential reality of the times claimed the author of this submission, and in terms that are consistent with the Christian Brothers belonging to a church "struggling to free itself from the centuries-old grip of a theology which is male, clerical, privileged and, therefore, 'of the establishment'!" (Faulkner, 1982, p. 4).

It was not only in the Church that great changes could be seen occurring. In these post-Vatican II years, the influences of a more prosperous secular society, the less rigorously imposed family values and a method of education that was more cognisant of individual needs had combined to produce a youth with very different characteristics from those of the previous generations.

Those novice masters charged with the spiritual formation of young men joining the Congregation in the post-Vatican II years struggled to adapt their methods to meet this youth's characteristics. The previously offered patriarchal style of leadership, with its prescribed list of devotional practices, was not appropriate to the questioning, independently-minded young men of these later times.

This section on the significance of the influence of novice masters on the spiritual development of young Christian Brothers has attempted to provide some help to understand the transformation that has taken place in the Brothers' expressions of spirituality. The formation offered to novices in the pre-Vatican II era was, in keeping with the prevailing church and social cultures of the time, strong on conformism to observance of prescribed rules. Br Patrick Harty's retirement, coinciding with the break up of one large province into a number of smaller ones, enabled the appointment of younger, specially trained novice masters more attuned to the culture of the times and who were able to provide a far more relevant form of spiritual formation.

Severity. McLaughlin speaks of the change from the fatherly and compassionate Ricean philosophy and practice of discipline to one which earned the Brothers an

"unenviable reputation" for the use of excessive corporal punishment after the Founder's death (2007, p. 325). The severity of the discipline administered to the boys that was the practice of some Brothers in the teaching ministry may have had its roots in their understanding of how to express their spirituality. The harshness of the discipline exercised by some Brothers may have reflected the harsh image they themselves entertained of the God to whom they related to in their own spirituality. Such considerations lead to the possibility of a correlation between a strict non-relational observance of Rule to the harshness of the discipline that some Brothers meted out to their students.

The use of corporal punishment had no place in the Founder's vision of education. Keogh (2008, p. 139ff.) states that Edmund Rice and the first Brothers hoped to achieve moral reformation through a spirit of love rather than fear. This was an ambitious aspiration in an age where school management depended on the threat of punishment. To highlight how countercultural the Founder's vision was at the time, Keogh quotes from the First Report of the Commission of Irish Education Inquiry (1825) "which contained instances of savage brutality in schools, including the use of horsewhips by masters" (2008, p. 139). Edmund Rice and his early companions, however, were motivated by Gospel values and aspired to remove all corporal punishment from their schools. The Brothers' Manual of School Government, first published in 1832, stated:

> The children should respect and fear the master, and his presence should inspire them with seriousness and gravity; these are the effects of firmness. They should love their master; they should love their school and the exercises of the school: these effects are produced by mildness (Keogh, 2008, p. 120).

The Founder's 1832 Rule (Congregation, 1832, Chapter vii, Art. 1) makes clear that it was the unique quality of the relationships between Brothers and pupils that was the fundamental dynamic for the maintenance of good conduct. The founding Brothers were forbidden to resort to corporal punishment. Such a non-violent system was unique at this time "when it was socially acceptable to regularly beat schoolboys to maintain discipline" (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 198).

The use of the leather strap, foreign to the Founder's philosophy of education, was adopted, albeit with strict regulations, from the French de la Salle Brothers (McLaughlin,

2007, p. 201). However, after the Founder's death and with the expansion of the Congregation, under intense pressure to achieve successful results in the public examinations upon which depended the financial grants that ensured the very survival of the school and which opened, in the only way possible to poor boys, a career or a university place, corporal punishment came to be used almost as a teaching aid and accepted as normal use. In general, the use of the strap to achieve successful examination results was at the time socially acceptable. "Most parents concurred in this system since they felt that it was 'good for the boy'. For teachers and parents the end – upward mobility – justified the means" (Congregation, 1982a, p. 271).

Out of an intense desire to achieve what was the best for their students, there developed within the Brothers a culture of exploiting most competitively all the systems of scholarships and bursaries that were offered by State and Commonwealth Governments on the basis of public examination results. The Brothers even established their own internal system of external examinations in their network of schools for all the students from Grade Three upwards. It is interesting to note that in 1975 the Brothers in Victoria presented a comprehensive Submission on the Matter of the Proposed Victorian Institute of Secondary Education recommending "that the Institute seek to maintain the present HSC examinations until a more suitable method of determining academic competence and achievement is devised" (Kelty Archives, 1975).

The Brothers believed that the interests of the boys they taught would be safeguarded and their upward social mobility assured by the continuance of a competitive public examination system. To win in competition against others, mainly for the sake of the boys they taught, but also to gain some sense of self-fulfilment, seemed to become the raison d'être of the Australian Christian Brothers' spiritual being.

Supportive Leadership. As has been seen above, the transition in the expressions of spirituality that is the subject of this research case study must be explored within the context of the culture of the Christian Brothers. The contemporary expressions of spirituality are best considered against the background of the contemporary Congregational culture. For most of the history of the Congregation, change has been effected by legislation, in the 'trickle-down' effect from Superiors to subjects and

conveyed by quasi-legal documents. These documents are referred to in the research study to supplement the data drawn from the interviews. However, in recent times, changes in the understanding and expression of spirituality has tended to precede legislation and this transition appears to be happening with the support of the Congregational Leadership.

The Australian Christian Brothers shared with other religious congregations in the post-Vatican II era a gnawing sense of dissatisfaction that their spiritual identity should be limited to their ministry, in the Brothers' case to that solely of education, to the apparent ignoring of the stirrings for something more spiritually satisfying and personally suited. O'Murchu is one contemporary writer who has named this dissatisfaction, "People of our time seem to be growing weary of the reductionist God of the past 2,000 years … the 2,000–year-old God becomes increasingly dissatisfying both spiritually and humanly" (2005, p. 34).

The Christian Brothers, too, were aware of these stirrings when gathered for the First Oceania Chapter in 2007. They recommended:

> The Oceania Leadership consider a discernment of our identity that is designed to engender a shared understanding and agreed commitment to our identity in mission which will inspire us, individually, communally, and at Province level (Pinto, 2007, p. 9).

There has been a gradual development in the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers, which more and more recognises the hunger for a connectedness with God and a lessening of a dedication to the works of ministry as the sole means of expressing this. The Superior General wrote:

> The essence of "A Way into the Future" is an ever-new daily experience of God, whose ways are always beyond what we can imagine, and yet is active in every choice for life that confronts us each day (Pinto, 2012).

O'Murchu goes so far as to state that:

> The group consciousness, a sense of common exploration and shared pursuit for 'union with the divine principle of order' is fundamental to religious life in its various cultural settings (1991, p. 119).

The Christian Brothers' Leadership has shown sensitivity to this move among the Brothers to a different form of spirituality in their recommendation to:

> Uncover the riches of the past and move towards the challenge that would transcend the 'fixed fortress corners' of outmoded ways of being … to a search for God, transforming our way of being and opening our eyes to what 'the veil of the unknown' yields, and something original begins (Pinto, 2012).

Just as contemporary society has come to express its spirituality outside the practices of institutional religion, so too, the Australian Christian Brothers have sought ways of expressing their spirituality outside the prescriptive formalities of the regulated common life. The Australian Christian Brothers' structured ways had been held fast by the Rule that appeared to dictate orderliness and regularity at the expense of genuine spiritual growth and development. In more recent times, the Congregation Leaders have taken responsibility to change this and they have challenged the Brothers to embrace a new way of living in a new emerging world:

> We are dared to become hope for the world and to risk being different … We on the Congregation Leadership Team see this as a cry from our times to become a viable and vibrant example of Religious Life that is responding to the urgent needs of our world (Pinto, 2012, p. 1).

When speaking of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers in this research, both aspects, the individual and the corporate spirituality, have been considered.

The development of these expressions of spirituality are taking place with the encouragement of the Congregational Leaders. To discard traditional religious practices that no longer assist the development of contemporary spiritual life is to put on the mind of Christ. Fox affirms this:

> The historical Jesus challenges Christians and others to move from second hand religion based on the Bible and church doctrines to first-hand religion which is life-centred in the Spirit and is experiential. In other words, from religious faith to spiritual practice (1999, p. 134).

The writings of the Christian Brothers' Leaders also attest the need for the Brothers in their spirituality to turn to Jesus as an exemplar, as one who bore witness in his time and in his context, to a God of compassion and unconditional forgiveness:

> As Religious Brothers we dare to keep alive the dangerous memory of Jesus, Jesus who exemplified an alternative way of living life, who challenged the conventions of the dominant society and of religion that supported and validated it in the name of God. (Pinto, 2012, p. 2)

The Congregation Leaders have urged the Brothers to "put on the mind of Jesus,

something which will lead to a new consciousness, a mindset that we are invited into" (Pinto, 2012). The consequence, the Brothers' Leaders say, of being open to a Jesus way of seeing and living is to be open to living in a context, a new and changed context, that allows this to happen (Pinto, 2012).

O'Murchu (2005) argues that, in respect to expressions of spirituality, there is nothing new in this letting go of the old. He proposes that expressions of spirituality, as with all forms of social expression, are constantly evolving and passing through a cycle of birth-death-rebirth. He emphasised the importance of naming the cultural and time-bound contexts in which certain expressions of spirituality have arisen as well as the symptoms of cultural decline which signal that some particular cultural expressions have outlived their usefulness (p. 17). By clinging to the past, he writes, "we hold onto old baggage, and this enslaves us, diminishing our freedom to embrace the new future" (p. 18).

Recent generations of Brothers have been offered opportunities for specialised studies, including theology and spirituality, and consequently have developed contemporary expressions of spirituality very different from those in which they were initially formed. Brothers who express their contemporary spirituality in ways other than traditional do so not for faddish, self-indulgent reasons, nor to be provocative or rebellious, but as intellectually reasoned responses to changing times in order to make their religious lives more spiritually authentic. For them to continue in conformity to any lifestyle imposed paternally, either by the Church or the Leadership of the Congregation, would be to deny the maturity of their decision and would be stultifying to them.

The influence of changed attitudes to spirituality and religion in society, together with the opportunity open to the Brothers to develop their understanding of spirituality through further studies, made changes to the traditional expressions of their spirituality inevitable. Such changes in a corporate body are not made without cost. For instance, Ranson offers a caution in acknowledging the division between spirituality and formal religion. He states that objectivity in discussing the divide is difficult to achieve, and discussion on this topic can become, to use Ranson's word, "acrimonious" (2009, p. 3). Change is an emotive issue for some. New spiritual insights can be threatening, "since the changes they call for, in our overall worldview, as well as in our subsequent behaviour, seem to be making

demands on us with unforeseen and, sometimes, unsettling speed" (Fiand, 2008, p. 3).

This is also acknowledged by the Christian Brothers' Leadership:

> We are talking about our collective transformation, about moving in new ways to face a different time. All of us know that human nature resists changes that will disturb the comfort that we have become used to and [the proposed changes] will challenge that (Pinto, 2012, p. 2).

Some are defensive of conformity to the traditional forms of religious life but the Superior General warns that not to change "is also the way to extinguish the fire of future life" (Pinto, 2012). Change may be threatening but it is inevitable. The Superior General encouraged the Brothers to be prepared to change:

> Saying 'yes' to a different future is not to deny the past or the great contribution of the brave and the wonderful men gone before us. But to stay in the past is to do wrong to their memory and their efforts. Everything that has happened so far prepares us for what is to be (Pinto, 2012 p.3).

Ransom claims that the Church holds the view that "spirituality outside the framework of religion is misguided and illusory" and that "spirituality is an interior attitude, like hope or trust and does not, thereby, merit independent status or study" (Ranson, 2009, p. 10). This, however, is being more and more contested as a letter to the Brothers of African Province from one of their Leaders indicates:

> So many of our Church teachings and doctrines emanate from the Genesis myth which, whilst it may seem as a valuable gift in amongst many other myths about the world's creation, does not serve us well in the light of the revelations that have come to humanity over the past 100 years. The Genesis myth fosters the two-storey universe, the traditionally held beliefs about how the universe was created, our first parents, original sin, our need for a redeemer, a saviour, a
>
> messiah, the purpose of baptism, the way Eucharist is celebrated, and it is also behind teachings such as the Assumption and the Ascension (Godfrey, 2012).

Too great a polarisation of these opposite views, that is, the views of those who defend the traditions and those who seek to nourish their spirituality outside the formal structures of religion, would seem to be unhelpful. Brian Swimme acknowledged this:

> We are arriving at an understanding that was deeply appreciated during the classical religious period of humanity. Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart in the Middle Ages of Europe grasped intuitively that emptiness is the source of everything … This story does not diminish the spiritual traditions of the classical or tribal periods of human history. Rather, the story provides the proper setting

> for the teachings of all traditions, showing the true magnitude of their central truths (1996, p. 38).

Thomas Berry said much the same, "What we look for is not a total understanding or agreement between religious traditions and scientific developments but a mutually supportive relationship and appreciation" (2009, p. 3). There is always the possibility of a transformation of the division between spirituality and religion so that the experience of both might be enriched.

Finally, the Brothers' own literature refers to the division between religion and spirituality and some of the implications this has for the Christian Brothers. The Provincial of the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers wrote:

> Traditional religion is not providing any help for many of these people. I have been to Sunday Eucharists in recent times and wondered if I am the youngest person in the church. And yet so many of those who have deserted our churches are searching and thirsting and longing and hurting. Many are 'praying to a God who is larger than religion'. We, who claim to be enlivened by the Edmund Rice charism, are well placed to reach out to those who, for whatever reason, do not see traditional religion as relevant to their situation (Duggan, 2010).

Through their unique history and collective experience in Australia, the Brothers have fashioned a spirituality of their own. This spirituality, in its various forms of expression, sees the divine in the human, accepts, perhaps prosaically, the burdens and obstacles of life, and appears to remain more undemonstrative and unobtrusive in an Australian expression of their spirituality. In much the same way as contemporary society finds little spiritual sustenance in structured religion, so the Australian Christian Brothers have moved away from a spirituality expressed almost exclusively in obedience to Rule towards more contemplative expressions. This understanding of some pertinent aspects of the culture of the Australian Christian Brothers and the context within which their spirituality developed, provide the grounds for a discussion in the following chapter of the transformation in the expressions of their spirituality that emerged from the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature to provide the research context for a study into the nature of spirituality and illustrates the various ways in which it has been expressed through time, particularly within a Christian context. The literature from both the classical works of some of the major spiritual writers from times past as well as the works of some significant contemporary spiritual writers provide knowledge for comparing and contrasting the differences in expression occasioned by different social contexts. This knowledge in turn serves to inform the study of the contemporary expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers and to show that little has been written about the change that has occurred in these expressions over the last fifty years. The literature review helps to situate this research study of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brother within the general body of literature and to provide a context to study the change that has occurred in its expression under the following headings:

- Traditional contexts, influences and expressions of Australian Christian Brothers' spirituality; and
- Contemporary context, influences and expressions of Christian Brothers' spirituality.

TRADITIONAL CONTEXTS, INFLUENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality within the Christian tradition. Despite being such a ubiquitous term today, 'spirituality' is generally accepted in religious circles as essentially describing an individual's response to an innate hunger to consummate a relationship with the 'Other', that is, with some higher super-being, whom religionists call God. In such circles it is usually acknowledged that there is this instinctual yearning within each of us for an intimate union with this 'Other', with God, known by whatever name is used (Rahner, 1986). Throughout history, religion has provided for many a means to satisfy this yearning for a relationship with God. In this sense Armstrong states that "religion was not something tacked on to the human condition, an optional extra imposed on people by unscrupulous priests. The desire to cultivate a sense of transcendence may be the defining human characteristic" (2010, p. 19).

Spirituality, as understood in the Christian tradition, is a way of being in the world with God, a way in which people integrate this desire for union with God within the disciplines and habits of their everyday life. Fox recognizes the instinctual need to connect with an Other as the "consciousness of mysticism – the experiential union with the Divine" (2008, p. 259). While it is true that in the Western world it has been the Christian religion that has for two millennia provided the means for many to make this connection, Christianity also acknowledges that all faith traditions enable this conscious and deliberate striving in various disciplined ways to integrate into life a sense of self-transcendence towards an Other. Armstrong points this out:

> Other traditions would also find that these fundamental principles were indispensable: Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism and Daoism, as well as the three monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each had its own unique genius and distinctive vision; each its peculiar flaws. But in these central principles they would all agree. Religion was not a notional matter (2010, p. 31).

At times the performance of religious practices has become an end in itself rather than a means of expressing the inner longing for union with God. It has become, as O'Murchu states, "a special endowment to be nurtured and preserved for posterity" (2000, p. vii) to the detriment of the essential spirituality of the interior life.

From a Christian perspective, spirituality, on the other hand, is seen as a "relentless search for meaning and for hope [that] encapsulates a sense of belonging to a higher life force" (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 191). All people by their human nature engage in this search; to be spiritual is not optional. Marmion supports this for, although he acknowledges that the term spirituality as it is used today remains "extraordinarily fluid and quite ambiguous" (1999, p. 23), he speaks of the spirituality of a human person as being "oriented to the Mystery, which he calls God" and suggests this orientation "is a constitutive element of one's being" (1999, p. 61).

From the beginning of time, human beings have sought to find meaning for their lives. During the two thousand years in which Christian spirituality has developed, human beings from many cultures and in different historical eras have sought to find God in their lives. Rolheiser speaks of the universality of this innate desire to find meaning and peace:

> Whatever the expression, everyone is ultimately talking about the same thing – an unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, a hunger, a loneliness,

> a gnawing nostalgia, a wildness that cannot be tamed, a congenital all-embracing ache that lies at the centre of human experience and is the ultimate force that drives everything else (1999, p. 4).

For the Christian, spirituality is a way of entering into union with the Ultimate, the Holy, by being attentive in the concrete reality of life to that inner call and to respond to it by developing a set of attitudes and values that give expression to it. Ranson is one who attempts to provide a definition of spirituality in these terms, although he admits that spirituality means so many things to different people as to "render the term virtually meaningless" (2009, p. 16). He claims, however, that a definition of spirituality is necessary for any work, such as this research study, "otherwise its intellectual credibility is at risk", for without intellectual definition, there is danger that spirituality "becomes simply the pursuit of psychic harmony and well-being, a kind of 'ego-therapy' to restore the equilibrium of energy" (2009, p. 17).

Today, in fact, the growing interest in spirituality is actually accompanied by a growing disinterest in church-going (Dixon, 2005; Hughes, 2003, p. 1). However, when spirituality is understood to be a Christian's search for union with God whom they believe is present within and among them then glimpses of this God, a God of unity, love and compassion, are seen in the way they relate to each other, both individually and corporately. An institutional church, as a structured organisation, may assist people in this search since it can provide people with opportunities to relate to each other and to God and so it opens up to them occasions and opportunities when they are able to give expression to their spirituality. Nolan speaks of the contemporary widespread search for spirituality, whether within a structured church or outside it, as "one of the signs of our times" (2006, p. 7). He explains that the sign is not the number of people who have found a satisfactory expression of spirituality in any particular institutional church, but rather the fact that there exists, and is acknowledged, among all people a "widespread hunger for spirituality, the search for spirituality, the felt need for spirituality" (2006, p. 7). He supports the contention that all human beings need, and have always needed, spirituality.

This search for union with a Divine Being has been variously described down the ages by any number of mystics, saints and writers. St Augustine famously voiced this yearning at the beginning of his *Confessions* - "You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (in Sheed (trans), 1943, p. 1). Examples of this longing for union with God include the mystic Julian of Norwich who wrote of being "'oned' to Him"

(Colle, 2001, p. 74). Another is St Teresa of Avila, for whom the personal intimate relationship with God is evocatively described in her arrival at the "fifth mansion" when one is "totally united with God … where there is an experience of deep union with God … completely absorbed" (Dubay, 1989, p. 99). The *Spiritual Canticle* of St John of the Cross culminates in the human person entering "profoundly into the inner life of the Trinity, a living triune life" (Dubay, 1989, p. 99).

In contemporary times the inner yearning for union with the Other is expressed in a variety of ways. Some experience it as the need for something that will give them the inner strength to cope with life, peace of mind and freedom from feelings of fear and anxiety (Nolan, 2006, p. 8). Tacey speaks in particular of the spirituality of modern young people who need to be in contact with the mystery beyond what they can see, hear, smell, touch or understand, "beyond the constraints of mechanistic materialism" (2003, p. 11). It is this union with God that, according to the Brothers' Rule, gave meaning to their lives of apostolic endeavour - "We can effect nothing … unless we are closely united to God" (Congregation, 1927, p. 21) and again, the whole point of the vowed life was to find union with God (Congregation, 1927, p. 27). The Brothers have held this desire for union with God down the years and it remains the centre of their God quest today. The Congregation Leader recently told the Brothers, "The fundamental call of Religious Life is always to find God, to deepen one's relationship with God. We have been on this journey for years" (Pinto, 2013, p. 3).

Although spirituality, as is being discussed here, is an individual's personal quest for a relationship with God, it has also an intrinsically communal aspect (O'Murchu, 2005; Rolheiser, 1999). Because society at any given point in time is not the same everywhere, distinctive expressions of spirituality relevant to the particular circumstances of individual groups of people will develop. This is particularly true of religious congregations, such as the Christian Brothers, who share a common ministry and lifestyle. That is, there can be a corporate spirituality as well as an individual spirituality. Ignatian spirituality, for example, is the corporate spirituality of the Jesuits and is described as a spirituality for everyday life, built on the imagery of a soldier in company with fellow soldiers going to battle under the leadership of Christ to defeat self-destructive personal pride in order to form a relationship with Christ, present in our world and active in our lives (Barry, 1991). Ignatian spirituality opens a pathway to deeper prayer, good decision making guided by

keen discernment and an active life of service to others. This has relevance to this research study because the Founder of the Christian Brothers, Blessed Edmund Rice, was strongly influenced by Ignatian spirituality and was characterised by "sacramental devotion, meditation, prayer and the exercise of good works" (Keogh, 2008, p. 64). Edmund Rice bequeathed these elements of his own spirituality to his Congregation and incorporated them into the Rule he wrote for the Brothers in 1830 (O'Toole, 1984, p. 165; O'Toole, 1985, p. 182). These elements comprise what can be called the Christian Brothers' corporate spirituality (O'Toole, 1985, p. 193ff.).

The corporate spirituality of other groups can be similarly described, for example, Benedictine spirituality, with its emphasis on listening to the Word of God in prayer and scripture, Dominican spirituality that expresses itself in the preaching ministry or Franciscan spirituality, the basis of which is to be found in complete poverty of spirit.

The manner in which responses are made to the interior yearning for union with God, that is, the expressions of a spiritual life, are not static, either when made by an individual or by corporate bodies. Expressions of spirituality are ever evolving, ever maturing and ever meeting new challenges. Individuals develop their intimacy with God at different rates and to different degrees, with some seeming to form a deeply intimate relationship with God. For example, St Teresa of Avila at one time wrote that some of her young novices had made within a few months such progress in the spiritual life as had taken her many years (Dubay, 1989). This is true also of the spirituality of groups. They do not remain simply cultic. In this context, Ranson speaks of the "cyclic nature of spirituality". He speaks of spirituality "not as a singular activity but an integrated constellation of different activities. It is an unfolding enterprise and also a tensive one, that is, one in which a number of factors are held in tension" (2009, p. 15).

This has significance for the story of the development of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers as it is transformed from one form to another. In some literature, for instance in the writings of St John of the Cross, there is a perception that there exists a summit of perfection, some sort of ideal spirituality, to which all but in a particular way the Religious, including the Christian Brothers, should aspire and which poses as the criterion against which all other expressions of spirituality are measured. This "spiritual summit" seems to be that intimate union with a personal God. St John of the Cross speaks of how "the Lord makes us aware of His Presence in our deep centre through the effects He

produces there … He Himself is flowing into us and thereby transforming us from glory to glory into His likeness" (Dubay, 1989, p. 64).

St Teresa of Avila speaks of the indwelling of the Trinity, "Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these Persons never seem to leave it any more, but it clearly beholds that they are within it" (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 430). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said that "by virtue of the powerful incarnation of the Word, our soul is wholly dedicated to Christ and centred upon him" (de Chardin, 1965, p. 58). In much the same vein Thomas Merton wrote, "We enter into possession of God when He invades all our faculties with His light and His infinite fire. We do not 'possess' Him until He takes full possession of us" (1973, p. 64). What is also common to these expressions of spirituality is that each writer unequivocally asserts that such a union of God can only occur through, and be sustained by, prayer. St John of the Cross wrote in his *Sayings of Light and Love*, "Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation" (Kavanaugh, 1949, p. 95). Prayer does more than articulate the presence of God in our lives. It is the means by which that union with God, intimate and personal, is renewed and sustained. So it was that prayer has always held a central place in the lives of the Christian Brothers. The previous chapter showed the highly structured prayer programme prescribed for the Brothers by which they gave witness to their union with God. Such prayer, however, was never considered merely as a canonical duty. In the spirit of the spiritual writers referred to above, prayer has been for the Brothers the means of satisfying their yearning for intimate union with God and essential to sustaining them in their work as educators. From the time of the Founder who urged his Brothers to "cherish in themselves a love of holy prayer" (Congregation, 1832, p. 7) to contemporary times, personal prayer has been cherished as the means by which the Brothers pursue their quest for union with God. The present Congregation Leader wrote that in prayer the Brothers "search for meaning, the search for the Mystery inherent in all life. It is Augustine's cry; 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts can never rest until they rest in you'" (Pinto, 2013, p. 8).

From this brief introductory overview, spirituality, to the extent that it can be defined at all, is seen to be to be the innate yearning felt by all humans to acknowledge the existence of some mysterious "transcendent dimension of life" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 5) and to establish some connection with it. This Supreme Other has been known by various names,

but Christians use the name God. This desire has been universally expressed in a variety of ways from the beginning of humankind. Christianity is one of several groups that have helped people to find ways to give expression to it and within Christianity bonded groups have developed corporate expressions of spirituality unique to them. However, in contemporary society formal religion seems no longer to command the respect or the interest of people. In the following section some attention is devoted to the emergence of what may be called a secular spirituality, considered by some to be a renaissance of spirituality, to others, a revolution. Eminent masters of spirituality have left a written legacy of their search to satisfy the inner longing for union with the Other in ways that were relevant to the times in which they lived. The Christian Brothers have been caught up in this search. The Congregation Leader recently wrote, "We experience a constantly changing landscape today. By and large the new search for spirituality, the deep hunger for spirituality, is genuine and sincere. It is one of the signs of our times" (Pinto, 2013, p. 3). So it is that today some Brothers have moved away from traditional expressions of spirituality and express their desire to be united to God in other ways, perhaps in ways that are more contemplative, to be more engaged with people at the margins through a new understanding of the Jesus story, and through cosmology. As the Congregation Leader said:

> This need or hunger [for union with God] is experienced in a variety of ways. However, today we are not sure of so many things, even religious truths. We are questioning old beliefs, even dogmas. We do not see them in the same old way (Pinto, 2013, p. 3).

The relationship between spirituality and religion in Christianity. In reviewing the literature on spirituality, there is a need at the outset not to confuse religion with spirituality. The terms are not interchangeable. Religion today generally refers to the rituals and practices that people perform in response to their beliefs in a divine power (Tacey, 2003, p. 136). Religion is a communal activity. People form communities of faith where they perform rituals and practices in response to their beliefs. Some religions, like Christianity, became institutionalised with hierarchical structures. The religious practices and rituals of an institutional Church are intended to help an individual to give expression to the inner longing for union with God, but in many instances their performance has become an end in itself rather than a means to that end (Rohr, 1999, p. 5). Spirituality, as has been discussed above, refers to the interior life of an individual, the non-corporeal life possessed by everyone simply by virtue of their being human. Christian spirituality refers

to the presence of God, the Spirit, within each person. While religion is generally understood to refer to regular attendance at church services and adherence to the teachings of a church, Christian spirituality refers to the way an individual relates in a personal and intimate way with God and then attests to this interior presence of God by the manner he or she relates with all creation. Spirituality is not synonymous with religion. This distinction is widely accepted today (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 17ff.). As Fox states, contemporary people are more mature and sophisticated and so more readily recognise a difference between religion and spirituality (2008, p. 257). This is true of the Australian Christian Brothers who, as a group of men, were well-educated professional teachers. It was natural, perhaps, that some would, through their academic studies and further reading, be led to challenge established religious practices. Many of those with advanced science degrees, for instance, have been attracted to an understanding of the interconnectedness of all creation and the cosmological expressions of spirituality that this gives rise to. That individual expressions of spirituality, including cosmological expressions, have emerged among the Brothers is acknowledged by the Congregation Leaders. In recent times, the Congregation Leader wrote:

> I wish to say that we are at a stage in human history where our traditional understandings of God are being called into question. The new sciences and the new spiritualities are forcing us, however, unwillingly, to look afresh at who God is for us (Pinto, 2013, p. 3).

Morwood (1997, p. 98) claims that much of society's inherited spirituality was shaped by religious thought patterns and worldviews that are, today, questionable if not irrelevant. The emergence of a secular spirituality in contemporary society is a reaction to this perceived irrelevance of religion to life. Tacey makes the point that the emerging secular spirituality does no more than reclaim the essential spirit that originally animated religious movements. Young people, especially, "seem to feel justified in the difficult task of hacking away the present dull forms of formal religion in an attempt to liberate the spirit that they discern within or beneath it" (2003, p. 6). Today, the practices of religious institutes appear to many to have become irrelevant and are presented so legalistically that the spirituality they are meant to foster is lost. For instance, in Collins' view, few members of the present institutional church actually experience God (1986, p. 250). Morwood claimed,

Today we are experiencing a serious breakdown of a church culture built around

> conformity, uniformity, blind obedience to authority, religious attitudes that border on superstition, notions that the sacred is separate from human experience, and strict control over peoples' thinking and acting (1997, p. 125).

People, particularly young Australians, have reacted against this, not in order to destroy religion but to get in touch with the essential core of religion, which is spirituality (Tacey, 2003, p. 36-37). This phenomenon of a decline of interest in religion and a rise of interest in spirituality is affirmed by Rolheiser:

> A strange thing is happening in the Western world today. As the number of persons participating in our churches is dramatically decreasing, the numbers of persons interested in spirituality is proportionately increasing. We are witnessing a drastic decline in church life in the midst of a spiritual renaissance (1999, p. 34).

In his study, Hughes notes that in the Western world, many young people now see religion as a personal thing and they claim the freedom to believe what they want to believe (2007, p. 127). Australian young people, another researcher named Hughes also reported,

> approach spirituality predominantly in a way that is strongly influenced by a consumerist culture. They take what they want when they want it. They take it in packaged forms. It is seen as a set of resources there for an individual to use appropriately (2003, p. 129).

Cowdell makes the point that institutional religions are no longer the "repository of moral value, chief agents of social cohesion, the focus of nurture and compassion or the key providers of ritual reinforcement at life's turning point" (2004, p. 41). These, he writes, have been taken over by agencies of the secular state "without invoking religious sanction" while non-religious professionals, of whichever sort, "are now the designated carers, bearers of wisdom and figures of orientation" (2004, p. 41).

King questions whether this emerging secular spirituality should be recognised as a spiritual renaissance or whether it should more properly be called a revival or even, perhaps, a revolution. She maintains that the emerging secular spirituality can claim to be a renaissance only if it is concerned with a renewed interest in spirituality and not just with a renewal of past ideas and practices. It needs to be truly the birth of something new, with its own life, potential and promise (2008, p. 21). King concludes that the phenomenon of current contemporary secular spirituality is indeed an authentic renaissance of spirituality because something distinctly original is appearing – something "dynamic and evolving, connected to organic growth and change, to the evolution of life and the world as well as

to the powerful flow of time and history" (2008, p. 22). The ever-changing culture of society would seem to demand an ever-new response of spiritual expression, a response more likely to be considered as a renaissance. Hughes affirms this when he points to the need for leaders of churches to be better attuned to the culture of the times, "somehow, the church must use the culture of the day to speak its message in contemporary ways … should include relationships with the natural environment, a commitment to social justice in the wider community and a relationship with God" (2007, p. 198).

Today's secular society has rejected the traditional church, temple and mosque because people say that they do not find in them that spirit-filled joy and energy of life that they look for. "All they find there are authoritarian teachings, empty rituals and dualism" (Nolan, 2006, p. 13). Some of this rejection of traditional religion is due to the poor or misguided leadership offered by the churches. Cowdell (2004) suggests that there may have been less dislocation between people and churches if "the Church in its organised structures and leadership was wiser, more faithful, more visionary, more pastoral, bolder and more honest in facing truth about itself" (p. 197). He attributes much of the decline in the influence of the churches to poor leadership for, as he says, "The catalyst for both growth and health on the one hand, alternatively, paralysis or failure on the other, can lie with leaders" (p. 217). The expectations of contemporary secular society are that ordinary people will be respected and their views taken seriously. This has not always happened in institutional churches. The leaders of the traditional religions too often have feared to relinquish control or to cultivate a collaborative relationship with their members, and, in recent times, have stifled much individual expression. To adopt such an enlightened stance does not demand a total disconnect with the past:

> It is not a case of abandoning something precious and sacred; rather it is about following a call (or vocation) to work creatively with God and with people; a call, however, that invites me (and, apparently, millions of others) to grow beyond 'orthodoxy' in a way that does not eliminate everything that has gone before but in a way that assimilates the old into something that is essentially new (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 16).

O'Murchu proposes that "one can have a spirituality without a religion" (2000, p. 192) and makes the point that while spirituality has been with us from the beginning, religion as we know it today was introduced only five thousand years ago. In this sense, the essential nature of spirituality is unchanging. Spirituality has always been and always will be what Fox (1991, p. 12) calls "a spirit-filled way of living". Today's secularised society seems to

be looking for a meaning for existence and hence a satisfying way to live life with joy and satisfaction. To speak of the secular spirituality of contemporary times is in this sense something of a misnomer for, as Fox says, what is common to all expressions of spirituality is the one Spirit - "all true paths [of spirituality] are essentially one path – because there is only one Spirit, one breath, one life, one energy in the universe. It belongs to none of us and all of us. We all share it" (1991, p. 12).

The distinction between religion and spirituality as discussed above is relevant to a study of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers as the spirituality of the Christian Brothers was not developed in isolation from what was happening in the secular society around them. The nature of the Brothers' lives, and particularly their professional work as educators, required them to integrate holistically their work as educators with their spiritual quest for union with God. Just as the practices of formal religion are shown by writers to have not always satisfied the spiritual hunger of the members, so, too, an exact observance of prescribed religious exercises did not necessarily lead to a satisfying spiritual life for a Religious Brother. Hughes claims that by this practice of restricting God, as it were, to religious performance, "we lock God away in a spiritual cupboard" and that while great reverence is shown in the regular, well conducted prayer services, "Jesus is kept out of the way so that God no longer interferes in our everyday life" (2003, p. 11).

In Christian spirituality it is God who gives meaning to life and makes life bearable. God, however, is found and experienced in the busy activity of everyday life and the social conditions that shape that life are constantly shifting. Nothing in life is static, not God, not the growth of an individual's relationship with God and certainly not the social conditions in which an individual's spirituality is expressed. God cannot be "caged in rituals or cemented in definitions or bound in dogmas" (Chittester, 1998, p. 3). It would seem then that the institutionalisation of expressions of spirituality has only succeeded in rendering them largely irrelevant to the real world that this spirituality should be nourishing. This is a message that came through to the Christian Brothers assembled at their most recent General Chapter in Munnar, India. There, the delegates were immersed in the various world religions that sit side by side in that country and as a result they wrote to the Brothers throughout the world, "The mystery of God is deeper and more inclusive than we had ever imagined. It was indeed a revelation to discover how our concepts of God had been contained within the horizons of our own traditions" (Congregation, 2008b, p. 2).

In more recent times, the Congregation Leader has challenged the Brothers to move away from the institutionalised expressions of spirituality practised for so many years, to move away from "the comfortable relationship with God, [as if] the God whom we have known all these years is all there is to know" (Pinto, 2013, p. 3).

Collins argues that in the broader Church, leadership may have "remained bogged down with details concerning the maintenance of the institutional structures of the Church" (1986, p. 73) rather than focusing energy on empowering people to grow in a spirituality relevant to their life situations. Thus, it would seem that, for a very long time, religion has received more attention than spirituality within the Christian faith tradition. The rest of this chapter considers some of the ways in which contemporary spirituality is expressed.

Contemplative spirituality. The contemplative element in spirituality within a religious tradition is the desire to form a personal relationship with God. It is driven by that innate yearning for the Other which many individuals strive to satisfy in a variety of ways. Spirituality for a Religious Brother is the lifelong quest to form the closest of intimacies with God, a union so intimate that it is in fact an actual sharing in the very life of God. To speak of spirituality in this sense is to speak of the actual indwelling of God in us, experiencing a participation in the very life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which He offers to humankind as a free gift. In the Catholic tradition, God's life is first given to us through Baptism. In this Sacrament, one encounters God and directly experiences God and becomes absorbed into God's very life, "the presence of the Trinity reaching down to us … bidding us to accept their personal offer of mystical and mysterious interpersonal love" (Worgul, 1980, p. 155). When this is accepted by the Brothers as the basic spirituality of community life, which in turn is regarded as an essential context for living out their spirituality, it reflects a Trinitarian relationship with each other and a Trinitarian creativity in their ministerial outreaches.

The movement towards a deepening contemplative element in spirituality is not, of course, confined to members of religious orders and congregations, commonly referred to as Religious (Catechism, 1994, No 925). In today's context, there is a generation of lay people who, while they are open to committing themselves to some form of spirituality, find themselves alienated from the formal, traditional expressions of religion (Ranson, 2009). They, just as Religious do, search for an authentic expression of spirituality. They too feel called to move out of "egoically ingrained patterns of feeling and acting" (Pinto,

2012) and to move out of a spiritual past. They too feel the pain of moving from familiar expressions of spirituality, which had long given them a sense of security and assurance, to unfamiliar expressions. The Christian Brothers' Congregational Leader said that:

> It is so easy to want to stay as we have been and not want to change. It is certainly the path of least resistance and more comfortable. But it is also the way to extinguish the fire of future life (Pinto, 2012).

It is conceivable that in the past some Brothers felt obliged to abandon the Congregation when they found that the formal, communal life of the Brothers inhibited their quest to grow in intimacy with God. Schneiders acknowledges this dilemma for Religious Orders when she says that this situation in a time of transition "has plunged Religious into another zone of liminality that is challenging this unanimity of mind and heart on which community is built" (2000, p. 340). However, she highlights the inevitability of this process of transition when she states that "if the God-quest is the defining concern of Religious Life, this discussion must engage Religious not as one among many interesting topics but as a crucial issue in their own area of life specialisation" (2000, p. 340). The adoption of contemporary expressions of spirituality, the move towards a contemplative dimension (which is at the heart of this research) implies great changes for a modern Australian Christian Brother.

The writings of the classical contemplatives help to inform this contemporary adoption of a more contemplative expression of spirituality for the Christian Brothers. The movement from a behaviour-centred spirituality to a contemplative, heart-centred approach is to move towards that union with God that the Christian mystics of tradition have so eloquently written about. Many mystics over time have exemplified a personal relationship with God and have described the experience and detailed the manner in which progress in pursuit of such intimacy might be made. The writings of five mystics have been chosen to illustrate how their contemplative spirituality underpins the movement of the Australian Christian Brothers to express their contemporary spirituality: Julian of Norwich, St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart and the anonymous author of the *Cloud of the Unknowing*.

The imagery used by the fourteenth century mystic, Julian of Norwich in her *Revelations* describes clearly her longing for intimacy with God:

> Through the grace of God and the teaching of Holy Church I developed a strong desire to receive three wounds, namely, the wound of true contrition, the wound

> of genuine compassion and the wound of sincere longing for God. There was no proviso attached to any part of this third prayer. I forgot all about the first two desires, but the third was with me continually (Cooper, 1986, p. 17).

In her fourteenth revelation, Julian uses the familial imagery of the relationship of a child with its mother to describe the intimacy she experienced with God. She, somewhat controversially given the masculine and patriarchal attitudes of her day, likens her relationship to God as to a mother. She unites herself to God who manifests not merely the characteristics of all motherhood, such things as wisdom and patience, but to a God who is her very life-giver. For Julian, God is our mother as much as our father. She believed that the maternal aspect of Christ was literal, not metaphoric. Christ is not just like a mother; God is literally the mother, as she makes clear:

> So Jesus Christ who sets good against evil is our real mother. We owe our being to him – and this is the essence of motherhood! – and all the delightful, loving protection, which ever follows. God is really our Mother as he is our Father … The human mother will suckle her child with her own milk, but our beloved Mother, Jesus, feeds us with himself, and with the most tender courtesy does it by means of the Blessed Sacrament (Cooper, 1986, p. 114).

Julian's desire for an intimate relationship with God was so intense that it is summed up in that most evocative word, "oned":

> And this was my understanding, led of God to see him and to understand, to perceive and to know, that our soul is made trinity, like to the unmade blissful Trinity, known and loved from without beginning, and in the making oned to the maker (McEntire, 1998, p. 158).

Such was the closeness that bound Julian to her God.

Talk of this kind is never comfortable, especially for male Religious. There is amongst men, and perhaps Australian men in particular, a fear that in speaking of their relationship with God they are exposing themselves to the charge of behaving in some sort of aberrated way, of indulging in exhibitionism and simply being self-deluded. Fox asks the question why men have, to greater and lesser degrees, "hidden" their spiritual lives and goes on to say, "The reasons are almost endless, but often each man's reasons interlock in a tight web that keeps spirituality unacknowledged and unexpressed" (2008, p. xii).

Kelly attributes this reticence to speak of one's spirituality, the "withheld self", as typical of the Australian male culture, "the depth of Australian conversation [with spirituality] is more marked by silence than verbal play. In regard to the spiritual, there is an habitual reserve, a kind of inarticulateness in regard to the big things of life" (1992, p. 88). He

quotes the Australian poet Bruce Dawe who wrote of:

> This southern church of silence,
> Where to speak of what's in the heart is some dishonour.

Fox (2008, p. 282) speaks of a "false masculinity" as opposed to "real men" who "seek to expand their consciousness":

> They get to know the 'Blue Man' inside, increase their powers of imagination and creativity, and exhibit compassion. Real men listen to music and are unafraid to follow the inner journeys of joy and grief, celebration and community, surprise and elegance that it inspires … real men experience their emotions. They don't run from their feelings (2008, p. 283-4).

The Australian Christian Brothers, especially, have practised a cult of anonymity and have aggressively defended their privacy.

The intense desire for union with God revealed in the writings of Julian of Norwich, an English anchoress of the early fourteenth century, is seen also in the writings of St Teresa of Avila. She was a Spanish Carmelite in the sixteenth century, another Christian mystic and an eminently sensible woman, "a well rounded, well-adjusted member of the human race" (Dubay, 1989, p. 21) whose writings provide concrete and practical advice for spiritual growth. Teresa formed a relationship with God to an extraordinarily intimate degree, having been drawn into this relationship over a long period of time. Her relationship was not the result of any sudden or startling revelation, but rather she was drawn to God quietly. She gradually felt the desire for quiet solitude with God, "a call so gentle that those who receive it can hardly recognise it" (Dubay, 1989, p. 21). It was a call to such intimacy that it seems to have frightened even Teresa herself, for in her *Meditations on the Song of Songs*, after having passionately and erotically exclaimed, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth" (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 220) she followed with "the thought is frightening, and so it will be frightening that I tell anyone to utter them" (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 220). Her union with God was ecstatic and she cried out, "My God and my Glory, Your breasts are better than wine."

Teresa in *The Interior Castle* spoke of a "union with God that the devil cannot even enter … His Majesty is so joined and united with the essence of the soul that the devil will not dare approach" (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 337). In *The Way of Perfection*, speaking of this intimacy with Jesus, she wrote to her Sisters:

> What strength lies in this gift! It does nothing less, when accompanied by the necessary determination, than draw the Almighty so that he becomes one with our lowliness, transforms us into Himself, and effects a union of the Creator with the creature (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 11).

St Teresa's imagery places God deep within what she calls the interior castle. "Within us lies something incomparably more precious than what we see outside ourselves," she wrote. "Let's not imagine we are hollow inside" (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 15). Through prayer, one searches for God and finds God in the innermost room of our inner selves, the interior castle. God, whom Teresa called the Divine Majesty, rewards such an earnest search with Divine intimacy, a "bridal mysticism", a "spiritual marriage". "God espouses souls spiritually," she wrote and "two fires become one". This merging of self with God and the consequent transformation into God-centred persons, making us a "new creation", takes place gradually. One must journey through outer layers or passages of the mansion to reach the goal, the "seventh mansion", where occurs total union with God in a "spiritual marriage".

The imagery used by St Teresa of Avila is sixteenth century romantic Spanish, but the experience of God that it describes is still essentially the experience of God that Australian Christian Brothers aspire to. For them, the imagery of a mystical marriage with God finds resonance with the emerging new consciousness of Jesus that has become evident among the Brothers. The Brothers in their developing contemplative spirituality seek to embrace their own human, male sexuality and to use it to express their intimacy with God.

The writings of St John of the Cross further illustrate the kind of union with God that ignites and inflames the Brothers' spiritual imagination and passion. St John of the Cross was another great sixteenth century mystic, a contemporary helper and friend of St Teresa of Avila. His writings also reveal a spirituality of astonishing intimacy with God. Words and human experience are inadequate when attempting to describe the intensity of such an intimate union with Jesus. Any attempt to describe such a relationship pushed the boundaries of language to their limits, a difficulty that St John of the Cross himself readily admits. In the Prologue to *The Canticle of the Soul*, St John of the Cross asked:

> For who can describe that which He shows to loving souls in whom He dwells? Who can set forth in words that which He makes them feel? And, lastly, who can explain that for which they long? (Zimmerman, 1999, p. 1).

St John of the Cross spoke of the life of God flowing into people and transforming them into his likeness. This divine inflow is perhaps best illustrated by his oft-quoted example of the ray of sunlight. He described a ray of sunlight shining on a smudged window. To the extent that the window is stained, it cannot be fully illuminated and transformed by the sunlight.

Although obviously the nature of the window is distinct from that of the sun's ray (even if the two seem identical), we can assert that the window is the ray or light of the sun by participation. The soul on which the Divine light of God's Being is ever shining, or better, in which it is ever dwelling by nature, is like this window, as we have affirmed (Dubay, 1989, p. 5).

The cleaner the window, the brighter will be its illumination. A totally clean window will so transform and illuminate the ray of light that to all appearances the window will be identical with the ray of sunlight and shine just as the sun's ray. For St John, the window became the ray of the sun by participation. Both God and the soul become united as one by a participatory transformation but he insisted that just as the window remained distinct from the light, so the soul remains distinct from God.

St John of the Cross experienced sublime joy in this immanence of God. For him, this divine infusion was totally affective, way beyond being merely intellectual. In *The Spiritual Canticle*, St John used the image of marriage to describe the ecstatic feelings of his intimate union with God. In the Canticle the soul is represented by the bride who has lost her bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Stanza 24, for example, tells of the bed in which the bride tastes the delights of her bridegroom:

Our bed is in flower,
bound round with linking dens of lions,
hung with purple,
built up in peace,
and crowned with a thousand shields of gold.

The bride reclines not just on this bed of flowers but on her beloved, God himself:

There he gave me his breast;
there he taught me a sweet and living knowledge;

and I gave myself to him,
keeping nothing back;
there I promised to be his bride

(Kavanaugh, 1949, p. 23).

In the intimacy of the marriage bed, St John of the Cross has described how God communicates himself to the soul. This imagery of God's love for us is certainly extreme but because of this it is compelling. The imagery used by St John of the Cross may no longer be relevant today but the same fire of love for God that prompted him to use such words burns still in the hearts of Christian Brothers in their quest to be united to God. New words, words relevant to their contemporary situation, have been forged as is illustrated by one contemporary Australian Christian Brother, words strongly reminiscent of St John of the Cross:

Prayer does not always soothe
The weeping spirit, the deprived mind.
I cried to my lover but his absence seemed to be
Beyond the heavens. He's wandered far – or so I thought.
I wanted to go to him, to seek him for whom my soul longed
I wanted to greet him as he came to me,
Not leaping the mountains or bounding the sea.
I wanted to hear him call me by name,
To tell me all was well.
But only solemn silence reigned,
And my prayer was the prayer of the lonely lover,
Pining the absence of the beloved
And longing for his return

(McGlade, 2013, p. 41)

A consideration of the writings of the German mystic, Meister Eckhart, (c. 1260 – c. 1327) provides further insights into spirituality as a relationship with God. For Eckhart, the cultivation of contemplation, that is the soul's union with God, was something which presupposed the practice of a virtuous life. Eckhart's contemplative spirituality, a total absorption into the life of the Godhead, sprang from such scriptural texts as, "See what love God has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 John, 3:1). Meister Eckhart expressed his connectedness to God through his notion of "Isness":

> For you ask me: Who is God? I reply, Isness. Isness is God … Where there is Isness, there is God. Creation is the giving of Isness from God. And that is why God becomes where any creature expresses God … If you were able to deprive God of Isness, a stone would be more noble than God, for a stone has Isness (quoted by Fox, 1983, p. 12-13).

It was in contemplation that Eckhart saw this union at its fullest. He described union with God as being the birth of the Word in the "ground" or the "spark" of the soul. This union was not one occurring in the intellect, which knows through images, but rather a direct union of the essential Being of God with the essence of the human soul. When Eckhart spoke of the birth of the Word in the ground of the soul, he truly meant the penetration of God into it, God's direct communication with the essence of the soul. The ground of the soul was for Eckhart an image or reflection of God and the birth of the Word in the soul was the actualisation of that image. In this way Eckhart tried to express the ultimate goal of spirituality, union with God, in this case a most sublime union that took place outside the exercise of the intellect. As he said:

> We are celebrating the feast of the Eternal Birth which God the Father has borne and never ceases to bear in all eternity ... But if it takes not place in me, what avails it? Everything lies in this, that it should take place in me (Blakney, 1941).

The complete identification of the soul with God that Eckhart describes as an "essential union" (Sitwell, 1961, p. 78ff.) is not realised through any image, form or traditional prayer discipline. He wrote, "I am as sure as I live that nothing is so near to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to myself; my existence depends on the nearness and the presence of God" (Blakney, 1941).

Eckhart taught that because the intellect cannot know God and because God so far transcends human beings, no human categories could account for God. For this reason, mystical union with God demanded a radical detachment from, and a complete renunciation of, all earthly things. Such an expression of spirituality finds an echo in some forms of contemporary spirituality whose protagonists hold God to be unnameable, and relate to God as a Divine Energy coursing through all creation.

Eckhart is inspirational for contemporary times inasmuch as he taught that spirituality requires a detachment from the thoughts, definitions and goals firmly held from the past in order to be able to open oneself totally to God. In this sense the Brothers are required to let go of much in their spirituality that they once held sacred but, as Eckhart teaches, it is only when one is free from such encumbrances of the past that one is truly free to grow into a contemplative spirituality.

A further perspective from the classical writings on contemplative spirituality may be found in the work of the unidentified English author of the medieval mystical work, *The*

Cloud of Unknowing. This appeared to have been directed to people who aimed at being perfect followers of Christ, not only through good works but also, and more importantly, through contemplation. The author, writing for the Religious of his time, gave explicit instruction on how to achieve intimate union with God through contemplation, something he called "the work". Like Eckhart, "the work" was supra-intellectual, for he maintained that intellectual activity of any kind could only hinder it. The desire for God must be strong. One must have a "naked intent of the will" to be one with God:

> For in real charity one loves God for himself alone above every created thing and he loves his fellow man because it is God's law. In the contemplative work God is loved above every creature purely and simply for his own sake. Indeed, the very heart of this work is nothing else but a naked intent towards God for his own sake (Translated by Underhill, 1922, p. 14).

He called it a "naked intent" because it is utterly disinterested. In "the work" a person does not look for any personal gain or seek any exemption from suffering, but instead, it is only the desire for God and Him alone that occupies the mind. The author assumes that the one engaged in contemplation is so fascinated by the God he loves, and so concerned that God's will be done on earth, that he neither notices nor cares about his own ease or anxiety. In "the work" the aim is that God is really loved perfectly for His own sake.

There is much in *The Cloud of Unknowing* that is pertinent to the current situation of change affecting the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* states that the desired union with God will not be attained through ascetical practices, intellectual achievements or abandonment of the world, things which echo the former spirituality of the Brothers, but only by consciously aligning the human heart and will with the Divine. To do this demands a stepping into the unknown with great faith and trust in the providence of God, something recognised by the Superior General when he wrote that the status quo (referring to the Brothers' traditional lifestyle and spirituality) is not an option for the Brothers:

> This new way of living finds expression in a sense of self that refuses to be limited to the way things have traditionally been. There is a challenge and an invitation to 'follow me to the edge', to 'enter into the core of your being'. The Mystery we call God walks with us 'in places of the heart beyond our wildest imaginings' and asks us to 'fly free as Edmund did'. We are dared to become hope for the world and to risk being different. And above all, above all, we are summoned to trust (Pinto, 2012, p. 1).

The features of the writings of the traditional spiritual writers are given in the following

table and show their significance for the Christian Brothers:

Table 1
Relationship with Other

Author	**Features**	**Christian Brothers**
Julian of Norwich	Child with Mother 'Oned' with God	Embracing the scientific-spiritual concept of oneness with all creation The core of spirituality remains in all expressions, whether traditional or spiritual, essentially the intimate union with God A move towards the more contemplative 'being' away from the more active 'doing'
St Teresa of Avila	Mystical Marriage "The Interior Castle"	
St John of the Cross	Immanence - Divine inflow "The Spiritual Canticle"	
Meister Eckhart	Direct union with the essence of God "Isness"	
Anonymous *The Cloud of Unknowing*	Beyond intellectual striving "The Work"	

To sum up, the writings of these mystics are a magnificent legacy to modern times and the rich imagery in which they describe the quest for union with God continues to inspire people today. The sublimity of their intimate relationship with God continues to fire the hope that, in modern times, such a union with God is attainable. The core human yearnings for interior satisfaction through union with the Divine remain unchanged. Rahner stated that all human beings have a primordial experience of God, that humans are all born of God and have the ground of their being in God (cited in Egan, 1998, p. 57) which suggests that all human beings experience God, perhaps in hidden, unrecognised ways. This chapter has taken the writings of some of the traditional Christian mystics and attempted to show how their union with God, despite being expressed in the language of a different time and culture, can inform the contemporary movement of the Australian Christian Brothers towards a more contemplative spirituality. As the Brothers release themselves from a traditional spirituality of merely conforming to external religious practices and allow themselves to move into a mystical, contemplative and personal intimacy with God, the beauty and thrill of the lived experience of a loving relationship with God will become manifest. To this point, this chapter has taken the writings of some of the traditional mystics and attempted to show how their union with God, despite being expressed in the language of a different time and culture, has informed the contemporary movement of the Australian Christian Brothers towards a more contemplative spirituality.

This mystical union with God that has been described in this chapter as the spirituality for which the Brothers hunger and aspire to, is the common core of spirituality in all its forms through the ages. The classical spiritual writings of the ages underpin this. Styles of expression change, influenced by the various events of different eras and expressed in forms, symbols and images appropriate to local cultures, but the essence of the spirituality of all humankind has remained unchanged – to seek to find God in their lives. Karl Rahner said, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he or she will not exist at all" (1986, p. 22). These five classical writers from the past were chosen to illustrate that the movement of the Brothers towards a mystical, contemplative expression of spirituality is congruent with the ageless search for an experience of God.

In summary, spirituality, as described at the start of this chapter, is acknowledged in literature to be quite distinct from religion, and the practices of the established religions appear to offer little spiritual satisfaction to many members of modern society. It was noted that the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers was not developed in isolation from the influence of society and this influence, together with opportunities for further education and personal development, result in the Brothers, in contemporary times, eschewing expressions of paternally imposed forms of spirituality. It was noted that this change might not have been without pain.

CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' SPIRITUALITY.

Spirituality, concerned as it is within the Christian tradition as the individual's quest to become more conformed to Christ in an ever-deepening relationship, is not just a soul matter. It involves the whole person - body, mind and spirit. God remains the same; it is the individual seeking union with God who develops and changes in order to adapt to the constantly evolving context in which he lives. With this in mind, two expressions of the Australian Christian Brothers' contemporary spirituality are considered, one through activity and the other through cosmology. The writings of some contemporary contemplatives and cosmologists serve to inform the movement of the Australian Christian Brothers away from their traditional expressions of spirituality.

Union with God through activity. What has changed for people of the twenty-first century is the context in which they live and express their spirituality. The worldview at the beginning of the twenty-first century has been shaped by many horrific events that were instantly televised in all their stark reality into family homes, events such as the horror of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, Madrid, London, Mumbai and Bali; by the horror of suicide bombers in Afghanistan; by the incomprehensible genocide massacres in Rwanda, Bosnia and Cambodia; by the plight of poor, starving, displaced people in the wake of droughts, floods, epidemics, earthquakes, tsunamis and bush fires. Society is constantly given dire warnings about the effects of global warming. This context has influenced the shaping of a different expression of spirituality for many people and has special significance for the subject of this research which focuses on the spirituality of the contemporary Australian Christian Brothers.

The Christian Brothers are known technically in Church parlance as an 'active' or 'apostolic' Congregation and, like many of the Congregations founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, came to be identified by the work that they performed which was, in the case of the Christian Brothers, the work of education. The term 'active' distinguished congregations as the Christian Brothers from those older orders, such as the Benedictines or Cistercians, who were known in Church language as 'enclosed' or 'contemplative' because their members did not leave their monasteries to engage in any specific apostolic work but were free to dedicate their lives to the liturgical prayer of the Church.

Members of both forms of Religious Life seek, as the core of their spirituality, union with God. There is no question of regarding one form of life or its spirituality as superior to the other or more effective than the other. As Schneiders stated, "All Religious have come to a deepening realisation of the constitutive centrality of both prayer and ministry to the Religious Life as such, which makes exclusivist claims to one or the other seem restrictive and even offensive" (2000, p. 301).

Nevertheless, there are differences between the lived experience and the spirituality of a contemplative order like the Cistercians and an active congregation like the Christian Brothers. The Brothers commit themselves to a total, lifelong consecration to God and to a whole-hearted commitment to the work of teaching. This form of life integrates the 'work' of a contemplative life of personal and community prayer with the 'action' of full

time public ministry and a healthy balance of the two is required for the development of an authentic spirituality. Because of this particular feature of the Christian Brothers' spirituality, two contemporary spiritual writers, Thomas Merton and Parker J Palmer, have been chosen to illustrate how in modern times there need be no artificial dichotomy between the sacred and the secular and that living a busy life of activity is not a distraction from seeking union with God but actually a condition for attaining it. These writers show that the more deeply a person is united with God in prayer, the more energy they have for serving him in others and they have been chosen to illustrate how, in a contemporary culture of uncertainty and insecurity, a contemplative spirituality can be developed which may look and feel different from the contemplative practices of earlier times. These two contemporary writers discuss contemplative and active expressions of spirituality and show that they need not be competitive and are certainly not mutually exclusive. The challenge for this new millennium is to find and live a form of a healthy spirituality that balances contemplation and activity. This challenge is particularly appropriate to such Religious Congregations as the Christian Brothers, known ecclesially as active congregations because of their engagement in social ministries.

Thomas Merton once wrote, "There is too much passion and too much physical violence for men to want to reflect much on the interior life and its meaning" (1961, p. xiii). In searching for interior peace, Merton's personal response was to retreat from this world of passion and violence into the solitude of a Trappist monastery. In his autobiography Merton speaks of what he was looking for in entering the monastery:

> The contemplative life directly and immediately occupies itself with the love of God, than which there is no act more perfect or more meritorious. Indeed, that love is the root of all merit; the contemplative life establishes a man in the very heart of all spiritual fecundity (1961, p. 295).

As Merton's spirituality matured, however, he turned again to embrace, in a new way, the world he had rejected (Nolan, 2006, p. 9) and from his monastic enclosure he became involved in the American civil rights movement, the anti-war campaigns and, in particular, he grew in appreciation of the mysticism of the Eastern religions.

In the midst of these concerns, Merton's "knowing" God was to experience God. It was essentially relational. Contemplation for Merton meant "rest, suspension from activity, withdrawal into the mysterious interior solitude in which the soul is absorbed in the immense fruitful silence of God and learns something of the secret of His perfections, less

by seeing than fruitive love" (1961, p. 295).

This relationship with God, the essence of Merton's spirituality, is that of the medieval mystics for whom "knowing and loving were not two discrete, separated realities" (Dubay, 1989, p. 179). Merton showed that all forms of spirituality, from that practised by those who withdraw monastically from the world and those who remain in it as active, could be open to the forming of a rich, affective union with God. Merton spoke of a kind of infused knowledge of God different from the conceptual knowledge of God that is stored in the memory and which can be called back to mind:

> The actuality of God's presence is something that does not belong to the past or to the future but only to the present. It cannot be brought back by an effort of memory, any more than it can be elicited by the work of imagination. It is a 'discovery', and each time the discovery is new (1955, p. 203).

The paradox of Merton's spirituality is that out of a deep relationship with God developed in the solitude of the Trappist monastery, he engaged very thoroughly in many of the contemporary concerns of society, especially in the hopes for justice for the disadvantaged and the discriminated, being active in the peace movement and exploring Eastern spirituality (McDonell, 1983). Always, however, the end of any activity was union with God:

> There is only one reason for the monk's existence: not farming, not chanting the psalms, not building beautiful monasteries, not wearing a certain kind of costume, not fasting, not manual labour, not reading, not meditation, not vigils in the night, but only God (Merton, 1950, p. 270).

For Merton absorption into God was not an abstraction. It was for him an intense reality. The vividness of this mystical union is evident in his Epilogue to *Bread in the Wilderness*. It was, he wrote, a flame breathed through his very being. The meaning of such a connection with the Divine could never be simply known; it had to be experienced:

> It must be possessed and lived. God is not fully known when he is only 'known' by understanding. He is best known by us when He takes possession of our whole being and unites us to Himself. Then we know Him not in an idea but beyond ideas, in a contact of love, in an experience of who He is, in a realisation that He and He alone is our life and without Him we are nothing (1953, p. 128).

To help achieve such a union Merton drew upon the wisdom of the Zen Buddhists, the Hindus and the Muslim Sufis (1973). In all of this, Merton sees no conflict between contemplation and activity. He said, "Contemplative experience is somehow deeper and richer precisely because of the mystical graces given to them to help others" (1973, p. 66).

A second spiritual contemporary writer who illustrated the balance needed between the work of prayer and the activity of ministry was the Quaker, Parker J Palmer. Palmer did for a while withdraw from the world, only to conclude three years later that this was not the way for him to express his spirituality. Contemporary notions of spirituality initially persuaded Palmer that to be spiritual did indeed require that one "value the inward search over the outward act, silence over sound, solitude over interaction, centredness and quietude and balance over engagement and animation and struggle" (1999, p. 2).

Palmer's three-year experience of a solitary life, however, led him to conclude that a monastic type of spirituality was not for him. He felt most alive, he said, when he was able to share life with others. To this extent Palmer reflected that modern people thrive on:

> vitality and variety of the world of action … spontaneity more than predictability, exuberance more than order, inner freedom more than the authority of tradition, the challenge of dialogue more than the guidance of a rule, eccentricity more than staying on dead centre (1999, p. 4).

He did not, of course, dismiss the contemplative spirituality of the monastic tradition as being of no value, but he did conclude that the worldview and social context which had been so conducive to monastic spirituality had altered to such an extent as to render other expressions of spirituality more relevant and more appropriate. "Action," he wrote, "not contemplation, becomes the pathway to personal virtue, to social status, and even to 'salvation' for many modern men and women" (1999, p. 6).

Palmer claimed that to be fully alive was to act, but activity in this sense meant "any way we can co-create reality with other beings and the Spirit". Hence Palmer likened action to a sacrament for, as he said, "action was the visible form of an invisible spirit, an outward manifestation of an inward power" (1999, p. 17). Spirituality for Palmer was this conscious intertwining of the God element with an activity, the forming of a spirituality which was a hybrid between the two elements, integrating action and contemplation.

Activity in itself was insufficient to satisfy the inner being. To be spiritually satisfying it must be accompanied by contemplation, the term Palmer uses to "see the reality behind the veils" (1999, p. 18). Contemplation for him was a consciousness that should accompany activity to strip it of any "illusions that masquerade as reality" (1999, p. 17). The kind of action that was spiritually satisfying he called expressive action, as opposed to the spiritually unsatisfying which he called instrumental action. Instrumental action was quite roundly dismissed by him because it measured the value of an action in terms of success or

failure rather than serving any deeper inner purpose. His condemnation is trenchant:

> Instrumental action traps us in a system of praise or blame, credit or shame, a system that gives primacy to goals and external evaluations, devalues the gift of self-knowledge and diminishes our capacity to take the risks that may yield growth (1999, p. 23).

Palmer asserts that this kind of action could be redeemed and changed into "expressive action", an action that could be spiritually satisfying, only when it was accompanied by contemplation. Only through contemplation could the illusions besetting society be shattered and replaced by reality. Society was deluded when it maintained such things as "violence solves problems, that both rich and poor deserve their fate, that young people sent to die in wars fought to defend the rich are heroes rather than victims, that murderous drugs are the way beyond despair" (1999, p. 25).

It is useful to note that Palmer warned that this contemplative-activity combination, the journey from illusion to reality, "may have peace as its destination, but en route it usually passes through some fearsome places" (1999, p. 27). Inner peace and a sense of satisfaction, a state which Palmer called "inner wholeness", could not come from activity per se but only eventuated when the activity was accompanied by a disillusioning contemplation. With this added dimension activity could then be said to be spiritual and have the ability to bring one the power that makes one fully alive.

Activity, whether conducted from the need to survive or perform creatively by choice, is simply the stuff of normal, often messy, everyday life and in that sense is readily understood. Contemplation is less obvious. A personal honesty and a sincerity are required to see through deceptions, to cut through the limitations and false values imposed on us by our culture and our own formative experiences and to see things as they really are. Action then becomes a form of contemplation - not doing things robotically but performing acts with an aliveness that "resonates with our innermost being and reality … that embodies the vitalities that God gave us at birth, ways that serve the great works of justice, peace and love" (1999, p. 9).

Activity as a form of spirituality is never narcissistic when it is an act of co-creation with the Divine for the benefit of others. This spirituality of contemplative-action and active-contemplation leads to a deep, satisfying sense of personal wholeness and wellbeing. This sense of wellbeing is a legitimate end of the spiritual life and, given the tumultuousness of

our contemporary worldview, is highly desirable. It goes far to meet the innate inner yearning for union with the Divine and Palmer considers it to be the most prevalent form of spirituality followed by modern people.

The following table summarises the features of contemporary spirituality as discussed by these writers:

Table 2
Relationship with Other in Contemporary Writing

AUTHOR	**FEATURES**	**CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**
Thomas Merton	Withdrawal from the world Contemplation and social action	Embracing the world with its gifts and its beauty. The marriage of contemplation and action
Parker J Palmer	In the world Hybrid of activity and contemplation	

To summarise this section, these two contemporary spiritual writers, each in his own way, shows that spirituality has two sides – activity and contemplation and both have relevance for a study of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brother. This is especially so when the Brothers' traditional activity of teaching has been so completely and so successfully taken over by lay people. Just as there emerged new congregations to meet the pressing social needs at the end of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, so today a changed society calls forth from Religious a new response. Circumstances now determine that the Brothers no longer minister in institutionalised educational endeavours. Merton was a contemplative mystic, yet his ministry of authorship focused on social justice issues such as the civil rights movement and the proliferation of nuclear arms. His belief was theistic and union with God was the end goal of his mysticism. All his activity was directed to this end so he integrated the contemplative with external activities. Palmer writes from a Quaker background and emphasises the importance to a person's spiritual wellbeing of contemplation in the contemporary busy world. Total disengagement from the world for the purpose of contemplation is not a realistic option in Palmer's consideration, but he writes to dispel the illusion that a person's value lies in success and achievement. He stresses the importance of "human being" rather than "human doing". In contrast with the exotic language of the medieval mystics, contemporary writers of mysticism employ modern images and contemporary literary conventions. The spirituality described in Palmer's contemplative-activity, for instance, alludes to an ecstatic element in

"the rapture of being alive" (1999, p *iv*).

This necessary marriage of the active apostolate with contemplative prayer is the challenge for an active congregation such as the Christian Brothers. For most of the 150 years of their history in Australia, the Brothers have been absorbed in the demanding work of their schools, perhaps so demanding as not to be life giving. As social conditions change, and as the Brothers have, as a group, grown older, the opportunity has emerged for them to develop a more focussed consciousness of the presence of God in all their activities. While living in a busy modern world, a Merton-like contemplative element has been fostered, so that, as Palmer so successfully achieved for himself, activities become life giving. The Brothers' quest remains to form an intimate encounter with God, and their work then is an expression of their desire to share the experience of that union with others. Through a cultivation of the contemplative element in their spirituality, the Brothers come to a renewed understanding of what it means to be a disciple (Congregation, 2008b, p. 13).

Union with God through cosmology. Some Australian Christian Brothers find the most satisfying expressions of their spirituality to be through cosmology. The Congregation Leaders have encouraged this development. The assembled Brothers at the Thirtieth Congregation Chapter, in affirming a new consciousness of being Brothers of Edmund Rice in the twenty-first century, affirmed that they would "reflect on the Jesus story in the light of our evolving understandings of the cosmos" (Congregation, 2008b, p. 12). The delegates to this most recent Congregation Chapter took as their starting point that when our ancestors reflected deeply on Mystery in creation, they came to understand that Earth, Air, Fire and Water were at the heart of this great Mystery. So charged with meaning, potential, passion and possibility did they find these four primal elements that their vision for the future of the Congregation was based on them. They based all their recommendations to the Congregation on them:

> Earth invites the Brothers to be grounded in healthy, intimate relationships within community.
>
> Air calls the Brothers to wander freely across boundaries of spirituality and culture while anchoring themselves firmly in their own Christian tradition.
>
> Fire inspires the Brothers to be a passionate and compassionate presence within the wider community.
>
> Water energises the Brothers to flow freely in collaboration with others. (Congregation, 2008b, pp. 14-15)

The Leaders of the Congregation have acknowledged that the emerging understanding of the place of humans in the cosmos "is impacting greatly on the spirituality of Religious Life and challenging Religious to live in recognition of the Universe Story" (Pinto, 2012, p. 8). The Leaders acknowledge that this new cosmic awareness invites the Brothers to proclaim the message of the Gospel in a new language (Pinto, 2012, p. 8).

To inform this particular expression of spirituality developed by many Brothers, the writings of three eminent eco-spiritual authors, Teilhard de Chardin, Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, are drawn on in the following paragraphs.

If relationship with God is the goal of Christian spirituality, it is important to understand how God is perceived in contemporary times. Cosmologists do not image God, as perhaps God once was, as external to the world, somehow above human beings, working on creation like a craftsman who rested on the seventh day when the task was completed. Creation, as cosmologists understand it, is an ongoing, evolutionary event and as the universe continues to expand, God is present within it always, empowering the change. God is found at the centre of creation where he has been since the beginning of time and his power is seen in the ever new ways in which the universe is continually expanding. It follows, therefore, God's energy and power is present in everything, including humans especially. God's creative energy is within each human being. Because of this, everything and everybody is connected with every other thing and person. To image God in this way and to relate to God in this place is at the heart of the spirituality known as cosmology.

One writer who has exerted great influence on contemporary cosmological spirituality is Teilhard de Chardin, priest and scientist. De Chardin's life work was predicated on the conviction that human spiritual development is moved by the same universal laws as material development. Many people today, when society has become so environmentally aware and growing in a sense of responsibility for the sustenance of the planet, express their spirituality in terms of God's ongoing self-revelation through the cosmos. Basically, this form of spirituality enables people to enter into a relationship with God via their relationship with the cosmos, actualising in some way their belief that God, as Creator, is an ever-revealing presence in a constantly evolving cosmos. De Chardin was a great exponent of this form of Christian spirituality in the twentieth century. The concluding lines of his essay *The Cosmic Life* (1974, p. 205) capture this - "There is a communion

with God, and a communion with the earth, and a communion with God through the earth." The Church and his own Order, the Jesuits, regarded Fr Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary views during his lifetime with suspicion and he was forbidden to publish on religious matters. This opposition to his work seems to have emanated from the religious conservatism of his day as well as from a scientific community steeped in materialism. Since his death, however, and given the changes in society, he has been accepted by many as a modern mystic.

Basic to de Chardin's spirituality is his belief that Creation is continually evolving. "We may, perhaps, imagine that Creation was finished long ago," he wrote, "but that would be quite wrong. It continues still more magnificently in the highest levels of the world" (1957, p. 62). For de Chardin, union with this ever-creating God is attained through activity. God, according to him, uses humans as collaborators in the work of completing God's work of creation. "This is the real meaning and the price of our acts" (1957, p. 62). He suggests that the work of the incarnated Son of God has never been completed but is brought nearer to its completion by the actions of humans - "We serve to complete it, even by the humblest work of our hands … In action I adhere to the creative power of God; I coincide with it; I become not only its instrument but its living extension" (1957, p. 62).

Christ is central to all de Chardin's thought and scientific activity. He expressed this belief unambiguously:

> Lord Jesus, when it was given to me to see where the dazzling trail of particular beauties and partial harmonies was leading, I recognised that it was all coming to centre on a single point, a single person: yourself. Every presence makes me feel that you are near me; every touch is the touch of your hand; every necessity transmits to me the pulsation of your will (1961, p. 153).

This "nearness of Jesus" seemed to be for de Chardin more than an accompanying presence. It was an absorption into the very being of the Other. "For Teilhard, the irresistible and universal centre of convergence to which we are attracted is a Person whom he calls Omega and eventually identifies with the cosmic Christ" (Fabel, 2003, p. 143).

In de Chardin's spirituality the expression of his relationship with Christ is certainly sensate. His union with Christ is intense. His imagery is passionate enough to rival that of the fourteenth century mystics, as his prayer testifies:

> Lord, lock me up in the deepest depths of your heart; and then holding me there, burn me, purify me, set me on fire, sublimate me, till I become utterly what you would have me be, through the utter annihilation of my ego (1965, p. 32).

Other contemporary writers who have made major contributions to the development of cosmological spirituality are Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. These two collaborated in describing the expanding universe and the evolution of life on our planet in one long epic entitled *The Universe Story: A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos.* From this work, a new worldview emerged, one in which a vast universe is seen to be unfolding at an incredible speed originating from an unimaginably small point. Berry and Swimme taught that there was no space outside the universe and no time before its point of origin (called the Big Bang) because time and space were created along the way as the universe expanded. Simply to be in existence is to be part of this evolutionary activity and so human beings, by virtue of their existence, are part of this cosmic evolutionary process. As Swimme stated, "Even our thoughts about this process are simply yet another interesting current of micro-events taking place inside the great macro-event of the fifteen billion year development" (1996, p. 87).

These cosmological insights have been integrated into contemporary spirituality. Berry's reflections on the new creation story appear to have taken him well beyond de Chardin (King, 2008, p. 156), and he claimed that the ongoing emergence of the universe presented humans with the greatest occasion to expand their understanding of the Divine. He praised the marvellous and profuse display of beauty found on earth, most especially in its human expression, saying that they celebrate themselves in the ultimate mystery of their existence (Berry, 2009). Of particular interest in Berry's work is his contention that "the universe in its emergence is neither determined nor random, but creative" (2009, p. 199). By this he meant that the universe was not constructed logically in incremental steps, as is the human way of doing things. Nolan, in commenting on Berry's work, stated, "The direction of the universe is not the implementation of a preconceived blueprint. That is how humans do things. That is the way of human intelligence – fixed and determined. That is not God's way" (2006, p. 174). God, in Berry's understanding, is more like an artist, always creating. Considered in this way, each human being is unique.

The implication of the work of these cosmologists for understanding and expressing spirituality is significant, and many of the Australian Christian Brothers, particularly those

with professional scientific training, appear attracted to expressing their spirituality in this way. The God who emerges from the writings of people like Swimme and Berry cannot comfortably fit the traditional model offered by conventional religions. Their understanding is that God empowers all creation; the life and energy that flow through all creation express divinity to the fullest and continue to do so as long as creation continues to expand. In the cosmological sense, then, there is no time, so the salvation story was not an isolated moment in history (Fiand, 2008, p. 69). Because the creative energy flows endlessly through all creation, and because humans are part of creation, salvation becomes trans-historical. The 'energy' of Jesus' salvation flows through humans in the present. There are some important considerations concerning spirituality consequent to this cosmological insight. For instance, the acts of incarnation and redemption in salvation history are no longer thought of as historical events enacted two thousand years ago for human beings to admire and perhaps imitate. They are, in cosmological terms, trans-historical events, not to be considered linearly, limited by mankind's use of time and space. The salvation story continues to unfold today just as the cosmic story continues to evolve.

The Leadership of the Brothers embrace this perception in *A vision for our times*:

> We, the assembled Brothers of the Thirtieth Congregation Chapter, affirm a new consciousness of being brothers of Edmund Rice in the 21st Century.
>
> As disciples of Jesus we are called:
>
> > To be ever open to exploring the Mystery of God in all of Creation.
> >
> > To reflect on the Jesus story in the light of our evolving understanding of the Cosmos" (Congregation, 2008b, p. 12).

Contemporary spirituality is intimately influenced by the development of a modern scientific mentality. That this has always been the case is noted by Berry, "In classical civilisations as well as in indigenous traditions, the comprehensive worlds of the divine, the cosmic and the human were intimately present to one another" (2009, p. 22).

In the past, however, a defining feature of the scientific mentality was that it was based on fixed, immutable principles. The Universe was considered to be a collection of objects that operated predictably according to strict laws of physics, gravity and motion (Nolan, 2006, p. 36). It was a kind of mechanistic world that could be conquered and tamed by humans who were considered to be "alive and enlightened" and who somehow could make

it "malleable and more congenial to life" (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 126). Such a mindset of static existence, a type of geo-centrism, was long maintained in Western culture for mainly religious reasons, and not without some unfortunate consequences, as Morwood points out:

> [The] Church authority's insistence on protecting doctrine and Scripture, which they thought depended on a particular cosmology, meant that ears and eyes and minds were closed to considerations and facts that would force modifications to the way doctrine might be expressed or Scripture understood (1997, p. 20).

The finalisation of church doctrine over the centuries has allowed for little variation. This is to be regretted (Morwood, 1997, p. 32; Nolan, 2006, p. 13) for such doctrines limit the spirit.

Today, this is changing and humans know that they now live in an omni-centric evolutionary universe, a developing reality, which, from the beginning, is centred upon itself at each place of its existence. In this universe of ours, to be in existence is to be at the centre of the complexifying whole (Swimme, 1996, p. 16).

Such insights have had a profound effect upon the development of spirituality and its contemporary expression. "There is a new science, a new kind of scientific mentality that opens up vast new possibilities for spirituality and faith in God" (Nolan, 2006, p. 36). Some of the implications of a cosmological spirituality are outlined below.

To begin with, spirituality, described earlier in this chapter as an innate human trait, is expressed in contemporary secular society in terms of relationality (Hay & Nye, 2006). As has already been considered in this chapter, contemporary spirituality for many has largely disengaged itself from religious expressions and, instead, prompts people today, in a multitude of different ways, to engage in a generous and selfless giving of themselves to others out of concern for those who are less fortunate. There is much evidence that contemporary secular spirituality is essentially relational (de Souza, 2004; Harris and Moran, 1998; Nye, 1998; Tacey, 2003). With an increased awareness of their connectedness to all things, non-human as well as human, people today are moved to advocate justice for those denied it because of their social status or other reasons. One of the findings in de Souza's study (2004) of young people is that "Expressions of this connectedness were apparent in actions for justice, or signs of empathy and compassion, and, indeed, the valuing of special and community occasions" (de Souza, 2004, p. 4).

This connectedness with the disadvantaged is usually of a 'hands-on' kind and involves tremendous energy and time commitment. A strong sense of connectedness with those in society who are disadvantaged when one cares for them is developed and this sense of connection has the capacity to imbue the lives of those involved with meaning and purpose (de Souza, 2012, p. 171). De Souza argues (2012) that the spiritual journey may be perceived as a relational continuum starting with the sense of aloneness and disconnection and progressing through the forming of relationships with, first, those who are the same as self, that is family, friends and community, until eventually the stage is reached when the ability to connect with those who are different is acquired. De Souza described this movement along a continuum of relationship formations as a progression towards spiritual maturity:

> Corresponding to the outward movement is an internal movement. As individuals reach out to Other, they discover in the Other something of themselves; some characteristic, trait, emotion and so on. In other words, the movement along the continuum is a process of reaching out at the same time as reaching in; a process of self-discovery. It may also be described as a process of changing consciousness that involves increasing one's awareness that one is a relational being; that one's life is a web of meaningful interconnections; that one feels empathy and compassion towards Other (2012, p. 171).

The participants in de Souza's study (2004) expressed that through their actions on behalf of the disadvantaged they experienced some level of connectedness to the Other, to some sense of a Supreme Being, to something "out there" apart from the material world. As a result of their activity to address social injustices, people often experience a heightened sense of self-worth and this is one of the fruits of a healthy spirituality. However, as de Souza (2012) concludes, it is much more than feeling good about oneself for, as a person progresses along a continuum of developing relationships, a point is eventually reached where:

> The lines separating self from Other merge. This is the point of Ultimate Unity where one's consciousness has expanded to recognise that one is part of the whole, that at the core, Self is Other and Other is Self (p. 171).

Whereas the classical Christian mystics spoke of their being ultimately united with God and classical non-Christian mystics spoke of a similar unity (Nirvana, Dao, Brahman), some contemporary thinkers speak of spirituality in terms of progress through stages of relationality until "the individual becomes one with Other, Self becomes part of the Whole

which comprises Other and the individual has entered the realm of Ultimate Unity" (de Souza, 2012, p. 3). That is, the end point of spirituality is ultimately a state of non-duality, the experience of being one with Absolute Reality, with God. This, too, is the desired end point of a Christian Brother's spiritual quest. To the extent that the Brothers have de-anthropomorphised God and have ceased to think of God as an object or even a collection of objects, they have begun to conceptualise God as both immanent, that is one with the Universe, and transcendent, that is, at the same time, the creator of that Universe. There are no words to describe just how an individual Brother's union with God is experienced. As St John of the Cross said,

> And this supreme knowledge
> Is so exalted
> That no power of man or learning
> Can grasp it
>
> (Kavanaugh, 1980, p. 718).

To become one with God would be ecstasy and the spiritual masters believe that this experience is within the reach of all. Fiand described this 'at-one-ment' as "Deep, of archetypal Mystery". She states, "It can evoke tears, a softening of the heart, vulnerability, joy, surrender – not so much to someone as to the All" (2008, p. 58). This understanding informs the Christian Brothers' contemporary expressions of spirituality which calls them into community with the Sacred, into brotherhood with all creation and where holiness is no longer something 'above' them, but something which flows through them.

Obviously society, too, as well as the individual, benefits in many ways from the good works that may be generated by the sense of connectedness that individuals may feel or experience. Ranson argues that there is a need for this activity to be contextualised in some manner for it to be a recognisable spirituality. "[It] presents a difficult challenge for a solid and genuine spirituality since the spiritual endeavour cannot really grow without a referential context" (2009, p. 56). Selfless, charitable activity certainly seems to be a way of embarking on the quest for a personal spirituality but if it is just activity, something important, according to Ranson, is lacking. However, in a contemporary world, steeped in globalism and pluralism, the referential context that Ranson alludes to is necessarily diverse and this fact is not always recognised by rationalists, religionists or theologians who come out of mainstream faith traditions. However, the spirituality of the Christian Brothers, while essentially the finding and deepening of a relationship with God, as has

been discussed above, has always found expression in good works. For hundreds of years, the principal good work of the Brothers was providing Christian education, especially for the poor and disadvantaged. "The Congregation's spirituality has been shaped by it" (Pinto, 2013, p. 8) as the Congregation Leader recently wrote. Today, social circumstances have changed. The Congregation Leader went on to say that the Brothers' past provided clues for the future and that whereas the Brothers had been dedicated to helping people free themselves from poverty through education, today, society at large had assumed the responsibility for ensuring the general provision of education. Today, the Brothers look to express their spirituality through a different model of good works, a model better suited to respond to the urgent needs of society. Through these good works, diverse in nature and utilising the wisdom and skills acquired over the centuries and in the spirit of the writers referred to above, the Brothers will develop a solidarity of relationships with people made poor. The Congregation Leadership has told the Brothers in recent times that they must look at the quality of their relationships, "not from a sense of power or privilege but from a new-found discovery of humility, compassion and self-emptying" (Pinto, 2013, p. 8).

The findings of science are not easily integrated into the traditional expressions of spirituality. Any clinging to a literal teaching of Scripture, for example, would be at odds with the revelations of science. Morwood takes the creation stories in Genesis, for example, and speaks of how they have extraordinary religious insights:

The stories reflect on the realities of sin and death, and wonder how these came about and how they connect with the belief that we human beings cause harm (sin) because we do not live according to the original designs of God (1997, p. 30).

He then takes issue with the too literal interpretation given to these creation stories in the Catholic Catechism (#400), an interpretation which leads to the conclusion that creation is fundamentally evil and so is a threat to the soul and a prime cause of sin:

> Let us be clear and unequivocal: scientifically, this is nonsense. Human beings did not come into a harmonious world. Where is the scientific evidence to show that human beings came into existence with the 'spiritual faculties' in control of the body? And to declare that creation became subject to decay 'because of man' is an assertion which totally disregards the evidence of millions of years of development of life on the planet before human beings appeared. Were the first human beings on this planet explicitly foretold anything at all by God? (1997, p. 31).

In speaking of the emerging secular spirituality, Cowdell simply said, "The emerging scientific worldview proved incompatible with literal reading of the Bible and tradition" (2004, p. 15). Secular spirituality no longer images God as external to the world. As Fox said, "Creation spirituality empowers us for an ecological era, a time when we cease looking *up* for divinity and start looking *around*" (1991, p. 41). Traditional spiritual concepts and expressions such as heaven being 'above', that God 'descended' to earth, that Mary's body was 'assumed' to heaven, that Jesus sits at the 'right hand of the father' belong to an understanding of a static universe (Fiand, 2008, p. 21). These ideas suit an anthropomorphised God, one whom human beings have created for themselves in a human image with human emotions and gender. Swimme (1996) said that to continue to ponder the deep questions of the universe out of this mindset is to do so:

> in a context fixed in the time when the classical scriptures achieved their written form. We do not worship or contemplate in the context of the universe as we have come to know it over these last centuries … the Earth and universe as they are and as they function [are] regarded as 'science', something separate from questions of meaning and value that religions deal with (p. 11).

Berry concluded an historical consideration of human development with the following assertion:

> With these ideas, the great religious task – the great religious experience – is no longer the ancient spiritual experience of divine presence, divine communion, participation in divine life. Rather, it is the experience of an emerging humanity, of a new intellectual vision, of a new and more satisfying social order (2009, p. 11).

Today, science teaches that the Creation story never reached a conclusion, but that Creation is ongoing and that the Universe is ever evolving. The development of the Universe is proceeding continuously during all time.

The leading theories and most of the major discoveries of twentieth-century physics project science more and more away from inert matter towards the underlying 'energy' that sustains all creation (O'Murchu, 1991, p. 230).

The relationship between God and the world is not that between a being who fashioned the world in the beginning and then left it to evolve in a way determined by physical laws and the initial conditions at creation. "The centre of the Universe as well as its birthplace are, in fact, everywhere at once" (Fiand, 2008, p. 14). Humans are inside this process; they

belong to it; they are part of it and express it at every moment. Swimme, as has already been observed, claims that because we are inside this cosmic process, even our very thought are micro-events taking place in the great macro-event of human development (1996, p. 87). Thus, for many, contemporary spirituality acknowledges that the world is one and that everything in it is interrelated.

Modern science speaks of all creation as a living organism in which everything without exception is connected to everything else. Everything that exists in the universe is itself a system, which is a part of a system. Each 'part of the whole' is itself a 'whole'. Swimme puts this graphically into words:

> We reach into a droplet of the universe, and we find there photons with wondrous stories from the farthest regions of the universe. All the books on the distant galaxies, all the volumes and journal articles on the large-scale structure of the universe, all the tomes on the dynamics of neutron stars, all the photographs of the brilliant nebulae, all the studies of super red giants are, strictly speaking, explications of the stories that exist in each cubic centimetre of the universe (1996, p. 65).

O'Murchu (2005, p. 102) claims that of all the spiritual transitions unfolding at this time, none is more pivotal than an understanding of the created Universe. One consequence of the understanding that God has been active in the Universe for billions of years, long before the evolution of humans, is that creation itself is God's primary revelation for humans. O'Murchu writes that "everything in creation ultimately veers towards life-giving relationships (and this includes the paradoxical interaction of birth, death and rebirth)" (2005, p. 128). Contemporary secular spirituality embraces the notion that if the whole is in each part, then each human being is truly expressive of the underlying, unifying, divine creative energy flowing through and nourishing everything in the Universe. "All that we are comes from this plenum, expressing love and passion and relational power in and through us and yet being always so much more" (Fiand, 2008, p. 52). Berry concludes that "any vital spirituality of the present time must be established within this perspective; otherwise it will not express the realities of the human situation" (2009, p. 50). This worldview and the moral values it gives rise to revolve around community, interconnection and relationality. Swimme (1996) spoke of this communion. De Chardin (1965) spoke of a "spirituality of communion". Berry (2009, p. 77) wrote, "This new mode of Earth-human communion requires a profound spiritual context and a spirituality that is equal to this process". Scientists have shown how the larger whole

holds everything in relationship and that includes human beings. Contemporary spirituality gives expression to this communion with the Sacred which is within each person and which flows through each person. Berry (2009, p. 117) suggests that because traditional forms of religious expression have not been able to deal effectively with the evolutionary story of the universe, society is being led to all these cosmological expressions of spirituality. Such cosmological expressions of spirituality are not just spontaneous expressions of transient enthusiasms confined to humans and their influence on creation. As O'Murchu shows,

> The intelligence which drives evolution does not require any sky-God endowed with supreme wisdom. The wisdom is inherent in the evolving process itself and becomes most accessible to us when we try to understand the inter-related dynamics birthing vast possibilities for life and growth (2000, p. 136).

He also affirms that the foundational nature of reality is essentially relational. The relationships which human beings form with one another are inherently part of the greater whole, and, indeed, derive from the inter-relatedness of the whole cosmos the very capacity to relate at all (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 127). Humans are active participants in the creation of the Universe, as Fox said, "We are connected to the stars and supernovas even as we go about our tasks of serving food to one another on this planet" (1991, p. 50).

All people have the potential to develop a consciousness of their inner and outer existences. This consciousness allows them to recognise their interior experience and to live outwardly in an expression of that experience. This consciousness refers not to something to do with the mind only but to the whole person. As has been referred to above, scientists no longer talk about objects in isolation but rather of systems within systems, each system having its own self organising principle. It is a universe of subjects, not objects (Swimme, 1996; Fox, 1991). It is the awareness that human beings are subjects who participate in the creative activity of the cosmos that gives rise to a particular consciousness. Bruteau said:

> We experience our consciousness subjectively, as subjects, from the inside. All the other levels of organisation we observe from the outside, objectively, seeing them as objects in our cognition. But in the case of our own consciousness, we do something more than and quite different from knowing it as an object from our cognition. We know it by being it (1997, p. 152).

Secular spirituality would maintain that it is not possible for humans to stand outside the ever-expanding universe. Humans cannot distance themselves from the act of creation

and, as it were, observe it objectively. Human beings are deeply inside the process.

This understanding that the material world is an integrated whole in which the whole is present in every part applies to everything in the cosmos – all organisms have been built up continuously and develop continually into new forms. But at some point in this process the evolving human being developed consciousness. Bede Griffiths describes this clearly:

> The breakthrough takes place when matter and form, which have been working together, come into consciousness and we can become aware of ourselves as a material organism with cells made up of matter of the universe because the entire universe, and everything in it, is one integrated whole. We are all linked with all the original cells, which began to form this earth as it reached a state when life could emerge, about four billion years ago. We all have within ourselves the basic structure of the physical universe and of life, but we also have this unique awakening into consciousness (1992, p. 25).

It is this consciousness that allows spirituality to give expression to what is essentially an innate human characteristic. This consciousness of connectedness to the human and non-human universe is recognised as having a relational and communal character in secular spirituality (Groome, 1998; Harris & Moran, 1998; Hay $ Nye, 1998; Tacey, 2000, 2003). In her work of evaluating the extent to which spirituality can be acknowledged as 'consciousness', de Souza (2004) uses the term coined by Hay and Nye, "relational consciousness". "Consciousness was used … as something more than being alert. Rather, it suggested a reflective consciousness, as in meta-cognitive process" (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 14). This concept of consciousness is further developed (de Souza, 2012) into the concept of a relational continuum "along which a forward movement will reflect the growth of human spirituality in terms of having a raised awareness of oneself as a relational Being" (p. 3). The work of de Souza suggests that growing awareness is a developing sense of one's relationality with others until another level of consciousness is reached. Ultimately, having reached the absolute height and breadth of such awareness, a person is led "past the point of relationality, where Self becomes" (de Souza, 2012).

These writings have relevance to the changing expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers, who, through their education and work as professional educators, many in the various fields of science, have been attracted to imbibe these scientific insights. More than anything else, the Brothers have chosen to use the scientific insights of these cosmological writers to consciously strive for communion with creation, humans as well as non-humans, and, by absorbing this sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures

and being in harmony with all creation, to come to an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life. This integral awareness of cosmology in the Brothers' spirituality is reflected in one of the resolutions of the first Oceania Province Chapter, 2008, "We reflect on our mission, community, vision and spirituality, in the light of the Earth community in which they are embedded, and the issues flowing from the fragile relationship we have in Earth ecology" (Congregation, 2008a, p. 7).

The features of the writings of the cosmologists referred to in this discussion and the relevance for Christian Brothers are shown in Table 3

.Table 3

Relationship with Other of Cosmologists

AUTHOR	**FEATURES**	**CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin	Communion with God present in the Cosmos constantly evolving towards an endpoint Co-creators	Integration of professional scientific studies with cosmological spiritual expressions and recognising and valuing the interconnectedness of God's world.
Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme	New Creation Story Artistically created, neither programmed nor random Interconnectedness of all creation	

In this chapter, spirituality has been discussed from two different viewpoints. The growth of the monastic spirituality of contemplation occurred at a time when the culture suited the withdrawal from worldly contact and the dedication to a life of austerity and regular work and prayer. The culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, was far different and called for a form of Religious Life somewhat freed from the monastic encumbrances of enclosure, horarium and choir prayer to enable the Religious to participate effectively and professionally in the activity of social ministers. Nevertheless the need for this activity to be sustained by prayer was readily acknowledged, and so a kind of hybrid form of spirituality, a healthy balance between contemplation and activity, evolved. This was the spirituality that the Australian Christian Brothers inherited from the founding members of the Congregation and that was expressed in the traditional devotional practices of the times and practised through a prescribed daily programme of prayer consistent with the Church understanding of religious life at the time.

In the emerging scientific worldview of modern times, the possibility of redemption in terms of cosmic reconciliation has found its place in contemporary expressions of spirituality. The glory of God is acknowledged to be unfolding in the ongoing evolution of the Universe. The presence of God is experienced in the interconnectedness of all matter. Certainly, the emerging expressions of the Australian Christian Brothers' contemporary spirituality seem to have embraced this and the Brothers are being encouraged by the Congregation Leaders who appear to be moving them towards this expression of spirituality when they wrote to them in 2002:

> The new sciences tell us so much about our world today. If we could see the grandeur of God in nature and our cosmos before this, today we are able to see the Divine Plan, which tells us something about how God acts in the Universe. Science, in its quest for truth, can lead us to the Author of all truth just as it can leave us without a sense of mystery. We know from science that nothing in the Universe exists as an isolated or independent entity. Everything takes form from relationships, be it subatomic particles sharing energy or ecosystems sharing food. In the web of life, nothing lives alone (Congregation, 2002, p. 20).

All the literature considered in this section is concerned with union with God. First was the importance of contemplation in a modern, active life and the contemporary move to restore it as an integral element of spirituality. Second was the transformation to spirituality occasioned by the growth in scientific knowledge of the universe and the resulting expansion of the human consciousness. This literature serves to inform some of the contemporary expressions of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers and to lay the foundation for an understanding of how a transformation has occurred from a traditional expression of spirituality to one which is interconnected and relational.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The literature on spirituality selected for examination in Chapter 3 identified, and named as spirituality, the innate yearning universally felt by all humans for a relationship with something beyond themselves, usually named God by Christians. The literature review, which ranged from fourteenth century Christian mystics to contemporary times, illustrated that the inner yearning for union with God has remained constant throughout history but the mode of expressing it has changed; it has been constantly adapting to remain relevant to the context of the times. The literature review further illustrated that expressions of spirituality were distinct from the practices of formal religion, a distinction that is seen to have become more marked in contemporary society. The literature review provided evidence of the manner in which humans from different ages of history expressed their spirituality and this provided the background for this research study to examine the nature of the Christian Brothers' spirituality in Australia today. The work of the contemporary spiritual writers selected for review in chapter three provided evidence of how a concept of spirituality can be expressed in terms relevant to contemporary society. This is important to the present research study that focuses in particular on the strong tendency of many contemporary Christian Brothers in Australia to express their spirituality in a variety of ways. The literature review established a context within which to explore the Brothers' communion with creation and the new metaphors for God that they employ in their spiritual lives. However, while there was much to choose from in the literature dealing with spirituality generally, both from classical and contemporary writers, there appeared to be little available that dealt specifically with the phenomenon of change occurring in the spirituality of apostolic religious congregations, such as the Christian Brothers, whose history has spanned the extraordinary social changes of the last two centuries. This research study aimed to fill that gap.

Creswell teaches that a qualitative research question is framed in order to narrow the purpose that was indicated in the topic of the research study and to help conceptualise it (2013, p. 138). To guide the research study, he recommends that a researcher reduce the whole study to "a single overarching question" (2013, p. 138). In this case study the research question was, "How have the Australian Christian Brothers changed the expressions of their spirituality from their formative years to contemporary times?" This central question, being so broad in scope, was refined into three more specific questions:

1 What were the expressions and practices of the Australian Christian Brothers' spirituality during their formative years?

2 What are the expressions and practices of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers today?

3 What are some of the influences that led to these expressions during their formative and in their contemporary years?

Such a fleshing out of the overarching research question into more detailed forms is, as Creswell (2013, p. 140) suggests, necessary to address the central question. These more specific questions helped to focus the components of this research study, which were the identification of the expressions of spiritualty of the Australian Christian Brothers, and they were used to generate the sample questions used in the interview guide (Appendix 2).

The strategy of the research study was to examine the symbols, both in words and actions, used by the Australian Christian Brothers to express their spirituality at the beginning of their lives as Religious, and it studied the changes that have occurred in these expressions to make them relevant to contemporary times. This was effected through content analysis, a strategy considered to be particularly suited to this research by allowing researcher:

- To deal directly with the participants' personal and individual experiences of expressing their spirituality in their varying life situations, as well data sourced form relevant documents.
- To access valuable insights into how changing historical and social contexts contributed to the participants' changing expressions of spirituality over time.
- Because of his own close affinity to the subject, to make informed interpretations of the data and to organize them into several specific categories of expressions of spirituality (Chapters 5 and 6) as well into the two broad themes of contemporary expressions of spirituality (cf Chapter 7)
- To deal empathetically with a topic as sensitive and as personal as the partuicipants' understanding of their changing expressions of spirituality. (cf Bryman, 2012; Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005)

A content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews and documents led to an identification of recurring words, symbols and practices that were used by the Australian Christian Brothers to express their spirituality in their initial formation as Religious

Brothers and, later, in contemporary times. This content analysis further identified several broad themes that not only highlighted the transformation of expressions of spirituality that had occurred but also provided the basis for making comparisons within the data. According to Creswell these are "the core elements of qualitative data analysis" (Cresswell, 2013, p.180). This transformation in spirituality has been radical and for some Christian Brothers, including the researcher himself, it has been a cause of some confusion and pain.

This transformation in spirituality has been radical and for some Christian Brothers, including the researcher himself, it has been a cause of some confusion and pain. This is acknowledged by the Congregational Leaders:

> Any future that we might envisage for ourselves will be so very different from what we have been used to. We are so scared to do anything that is very different, that has not been tried and tested, that is asking us to move only in faith (Pinto, 2013).

By examining the transformation in the expressions of spirituality, using a qualitative approach and involving the Brothers themselves, a better understanding of the place of a personal spirituality within the organised structure of a Religious Congregation may be established.

THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

The strategy adopted by the research study followed Crotty's qualitative research method. Crotty's method was chosen because of the latitude it allowed in its application (Crotty, 1998, p. 1). He speaks of his method offering a "scaffolded learning" rather than any "definitive construction" of a research process. This was important to a study of such a highly individual and human element as spirituality, and, in the case of this research study, a study that required the additional intimate familiarity with the particular form of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. Crotty's research method permitted the exploration of a topic about which little has been written previously and also permitted the adaptation of the process to suit the peculiar demands of the topic. His method allows researchers to expound a research process after their own fashion, in forms that suit their particular research purpose (Crotty, 1998, p. 2).

Crotty's research method provided a simple progression in the steps outlined below:

Table 4
Research Progression

Epistemology ⇒ Constructivism ⇒ Theoretical Perspective (Interpretivism – Symbolic Interactionism) ⇒ Methodology (Case study, influenced by narrative ethnography) ⇒ Methods (Semi/Unstructured interviews)

Epistemology. Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and with the questions that must be answered to gain some understanding of what knowledge is (Creswell, 2013, p. 21; Lincoln et al, 2011, p. 118). Crotty in his approach to qualitative research makes epistemology the very foundation of any study, for, he claims, once the epistemology has been articulated, it then becomes 'embedded' in the particular theoretical perspective, methodology and method to be applied to the research (1998, p. 3). Spirituality is a complex notion, influenced by an unlimited variety of factors, including, for instance, an individual's character and personality, life experience, education, culture, social status and even the state of the economy.

Since epistemology is concerned with what counts as knowledge, in this research study it is concerned with what counts as knowledge when speaking of spirituality and how the claims that are made about spiritual knowledge are true (St Pierre, 2011, p. 614). As Crotty indicated (1998, p. 3), epistemological awareness is essential to the research, for it determines how the research study will be conducted, how the different values that emerge in the study are assessed, how the researcher will relate to the participants in the study and how the study will be presented (cf. Bailey, 2007, p. 50). In addition to the importance of epistemology to the research process itself, the role of epistemology in this research study was crucial, for, given the very personal nature of spirituality, each of the participants interviewed brought to their narratives their own epistemological baggage (cf. Goodley, Lawthom, Clough & Moore, 2004, p. 97). The work of this research study aimed to see, through the eyes of each participant in the research study, how he perceived his spirituality, the symbols, words and actions he used to express it, and how these symbols, signs and actions had been adapted to contemporary times.

Constructivism. Crotty (1998, p. 8) postulates that in the epistemology of looking at a particular branch of knowledge and making sense of it, a number of epistemological stances can be adopted. For the qualitative research into the symbols, both in words and actions, used by the Australian Christian Brothers to express their spirituality at the beginning of their lives as Religious and the changes that have occurred in these expressions to make them relevant to contemporary times, the epistemological stance of constructivism was chosen. This was considered to be best suited to the nature of the subject, as by constructivism it is understood that meaning is constructed by an individual irrespective of what others construct, that is, it is the meaning making of the individual mind. A commitment to constructivism, Crotty claims, is to accept that all understanding is subjective and that a qualitative method is the best means of ascertaining the meanings people hold about the important elements of their lives (1998, p. 16).

The epistemological stance of constructivism is grounded in Piaget's theory of constructivism, that is, that human knowledge is not something transmitted by a master to a disciple, but is, rather, the meaning constructed by humans for themselves in their own minds (Piaget, 1971). That is, meaning is constructed by an individual irrespective of what others construct. Constructivism refers to this meaning making by an individual mind (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 1). Crotty takes Piaget's principle and says that knowledge is "not discovered, but constructed" (1998, p. 9).

Jean Piaget, one of the founders of the theory of constructivist learning claimed that individuals could not be given information that they immediately understood and used. Instead they constructed their knowledge based upon their interactions with the environment and with others (Ultanir, 2012, p. 201). Piaget's constructivist theory claimed that when an individual encounters new knowledge the individual assimilates that new knowledge by accommodating it to fit into what is already in the individual's schema, that is, the already existing mindset of perceptions, ideas and memories (Piaget, 1953). In this constructivist paradigm "the learner occupies the top position rather than the teacher" (Ultanir, 2012, p. 203), for it is the learner who, according to Piaget, when encountering new information that does not comply with what is already assimilated, will "reconfigure his mind" with regard to the new information (Piaget, 1971).

In other words, the learner is an active participant in the acquisition of knowledge. In the understanding of constructivism, all knowledge is constructed by the learner rather than

being understood in terms of an objective reality that already exists (Ultanir, 2012). Flick says that constructivism applied to qualitative research is concerned "with how knowledge arises, what concept of knowledge is appropriate and what criteria can be invoked in the evaluation of knowledge" (2004, p. 89).

An acceptance of Crotty's claim that, in constructive research, the "social dimension of meaning is at centre stage" (Crotty, 1998, p. 57) led to an examination of the ways in which the Christian Brothers acquired a distinct form of spirituality, and the words, actions and symbols through which they gave expression to this spirituality. The research study into the Christian Brothers' spirituality acknowledged, as Crotty suggests for qualitative research, "the collective generation and transmission of meaning" (1998, p. 58).

In the tradition of Piaget, in which "cognition, perception of the world and knowledge about it are seen as constructs" (Flick, 2004, p. 88), the way in which a person can come to know a given subject and the extent to which this given subject can be known assumes great importance. Piaget taught that human beings construct knowledge from their experiences (von Glaserfeld, 1995). He claimed "all knowledge is tied to action, and knowing an object or event is to use it by assimilating it to an action scheme" (Piaget, 1967, pp. 14-15). Human beings, according to Piaget, do not absorb abstract information directly but make meaning by engaging with their environment and interpreting it (Piaget, 1967). In education, for example, Piaget's theory of constructivist learning is at the heart of contemporary teaching methods, for it is acknowledged by educationalists that the most effective learning takes place when the students themselves are most actively engaged in the process. Crotty described the process of learning thus, "All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human context" (1998, p. 42).

The subject matter of this research study was to identify the nature and the effect of the change in the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers through the symbols, both in words and actions, used by them to express their spirituality at the beginning of their lives as Religious and the changes that have occurred in these expressions to make them relevant to contemporary times. The use of a constructivist epistemology enabled the researcher to explore the individual and changing meaning making of spirituality among the Australian Christian Brothers.

The epistemological theory of construction of knowledge implies that there can be no abstract reservoir of objective fact or truth, independent of a person's individual feelings, imaginings or interpretations (Bailey, 2007, p. 35; Hepburn & Potter, 2004, p. 173). Crotty, in reference to epistemological constructivism, states "there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover" (1998, p. 8). By placing this qualitative research within a constructivist epistemology, the assumption was made that there can be no standard or correct expression of spirituality against which all other variant forms can be measured for validity, authenticity or orthodoxy. Corbin and Strauss state quite unequivocally, "Today we all know that objectivity in qualitative research is a myth" (2008, p. 32). Not only can the subject of the qualitative research not be objectified, but researchers themselves also bring to their work their own particular paradigms, "including perspectives, training, knowledge and biases; these aspects then become woven into all aspects of the research process" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32). This, they add, should not be considered to be a bad thing as it enables the researcher to sensitively pick up on relevant issues, events and happenings in the data.

This consideration is pertinent to the present research study for there is a strong inherited meaning of spirituality in the Christian Brothers' culture and it was necessary for the researcher to take due care to avoid both reification, that is, the danger of accepting that spiritual things *are* because they *have been* for a long time, and sedimentation, that is, the danger of accepting uncritically spiritual meanings culturally accrued over a long period of time and so perhaps becoming far removed from their original reality (Bryman, 2012). The researcher adopted a conscious stance not to reify the past by idealising the former religious traditional practices of the Congregation by which the Brothers expressed their spirituality.

Crotty asserted that the epistemology that informs this theoretical perspective must be established if the theoretical perspective is to have credibility (1998, p. 2). Some understanding of what spirituality is has already been given but before a choice of an appropriate methodology to investigate spirituality could be made, it was necessary to further establish how a human being comes to an awareness of his or her spirituality. The assumption underlying spiritual awareness is that human beings shape or construct their spirituality and so give meaning to their lives in the way they respond to life's experiences and interact with other people. Different people invest different meanings in objects,

events and experiences according to the way they interpret these things.

Crotty claims that one or other forms of constructivism is the epistemology found in most research perspectives (1998, p. 8). Of this constructivism he states:

> All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (1998, p. 42).

All understandings, all knowledge and all meanings that an individual comes to possess throughout life have been constructed by them. Reality, as constructivists explain it, does not exist, as it were, "out there" in some objective form waiting to be picked up. Instead, reality for an individual is the meaning that an individual attributes to his or her experiences, the individual way in which a person interprets life events and experiences (Crotty, 1998, p. 43).

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that is embedded in the theoretical perspective and in the methodology (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The theoretical perspective identifies the philosophical platform underpinning this research study. In this research study, it was an articulation of the assumptions and context surrounding the notion of spirituality held by the researcher and society generally. Some of these assumptions have already been given. They are concerned with what counts for spirituality and how the different claims made about spirituality can be justified. Two assumptions basic to this research study are of special importance.

First, this particular research study was based on the assumption that spirituality is a deeply personal human experience and one that, clearly, cannot be subjected to physical examination. A study of spirituality is a study in subjectivity and individual meaning-making (cf. Flick, 2006, p. 65), and a basic assumption in this research study is that spirituality is considered to be a state of awareness or the developed consciousness of an interior life. Tacey called this "the intuited reality of spirit … urging us towards wholeness and completion" (2003, p. 33).

A second philosophical assumption contributing to the epistemology of this research study is that the personal interiority possessed by each individual does not remain static but changes and develops in response to the varying social influences and circumstances of a

person's life in much the same way as other human traits.

A natural corollary to this assumption is that it is unlikely that the spirituality of a human being would significantly develop if that person lived in isolation, excluded from normal social influences. The philosophical assumption here is that any spiritual expression was for the participants a constructed reality, that is, it was for them a reality that they had interpreted from their personal life experiences. If the assumption is accepted that spirituality is shaped by social, cultural and historical influences, then it follows that spirituality is constantly subject to change.

It follows naturally from this discussion that researchers themselves are engaging in reconstructing meaning as they interpret the data gathered in the interviews, as they must in qualitative research. "Researchers who interpret the interview and present it as part of their findings, produce a new version of the whole" (Flick, 2006, p. 19). The interpretivist belief is that what is learned by them in research does not exist independently of the researcher (Bailey, 2007, p. 54). The researcher brings to the study his own set of values and belief - "all research is interpretative; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 31).

In summary, the spirituality of an individual grows and develops subject to the same principles that govern the growth and development of all other forms of learning. That is, like other forms of knowledge, spirituality is innate but as it develops through life, the expressions of it are constantly changing through interaction with others. The expression of an individual's spirituality is the result of the various interpretations that individual gives to the various experiences of his or her daily life.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective of this research study is interpretivism and, specifically, symbolic interactionism. The epistemology in this research study sees spirituality as something constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interaction with each other and with the wider social systems. Spirituality so considered is not an objective reality. It is real but fluid, locally situated and constantly being changed under the influence of history and the context in which it is expressed (Bailey, 2007, p. 53). This epistemological viewpoint opened the possibility of understanding spirituality and the

changing spirituality of a particular group, the Christian Brothers in Australia through the lens of constructivism. It enabled the research study to focus on how Christian Brothers created their spirituality and it permitted the study of the meanings of the symbols, actions, words and ideas through which they expressed their spirituality (cf. Flick, 2008, p.69).

Interpretivism. The theoretical perspective from which this study was conducted likens spirituality to any other social and human reality. Interpretivism was found to be the most suitable theoretical perspective to understand the subjective meaning of spirituality and to examine the distinctiveness of the different and changing expressions of spirituality practised by the Christian Brothers in Australia, both historically and contemporaneously. Weber's foundational description of interpretivism remains true when applied to spirituality today. "[It is] a science, which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and understanding" (1947, p. 88).

Interpretivism places emphasis on a better understanding of a phenomenon through first-hand experience and good reporting of actual conversations that tap into ethnology's perspectives. This, again, is because interpretivist researchers hold that there is no objective reality or that reality does not exist independently of people (cf. Bailey, 2007, p. 53). Interpretivist researchers maintain that all human reality and meaning are human constructs (Creswell 2013, p. 23). People make their own sense of social realities. Individuals invest objects, events and experiences with meaning. The task of this researcher was to reconstruct the subjective viewpoints of the Australian Christian Brothers in their narratives concerning their spirituality (Flick, 2006, p. 67).

This account of the assumptions concerning the subjective nature of spirituality, how an individual attributes a spiritual meaning to life experiences and how spirituality comes to be expressed in the particular environment of a Christian Brothers' community constitutes the theoretical perspective of this research. This particular theoretical perspective in turn provides the base for the research study and is grounded in the study of subjective meanings and individual decisions making (Flick, 2009, p. 57; Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The specific type of interpretivism that informed this research study was symbolic interactionism dealing directly with "issues such as language, communication, interrelationships and community" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8).

Symbolic interactionism. The term "symbolic interactionism" expresses the idea that knowledge is gained through a particular form of interaction between persons. Blumer, who introduced the term "symbolic interactionism" to social science, described this:

> The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their 'response' is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions (1969, p. 19).

Human beings communicate what they learn through symbols. "The core task of symbolic interactionists as researchers is to capture the essence of this process for interpreting or attaching meaning to various symbols" (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 9). The main symbol used by humans to shape meaning for themselves is language. Language is considered to be the instrument that "allows us to have the world we have. Language makes possible the disclosure of the human world" (Taylor, 1995, p. ix).

It was the researcher's task in this case study to explore how the Christian Brothers came to invest meaning in these symbols. Blumer (cf. Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 9) further posited, "The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other people act towards the person with regard to the thing" (1969, p. 9). That is, meanings derive from the social process of people or groups interacting with each other. The relevance of this understanding of knowledge being derived from interactionism influenced the choice of a research method that would admit the "subjective evidence from participants" and one in which "the researcher attempts to lessen the distance between himself and that being researched" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21).

To identify the symbols, both words and actions, used by the Christian Brothers to express their spirituality and to interpret them from the point of view of the Christian Brothers themselves could only be done, as Creswell pointed out, when the researcher got as close as possible to the participants being studied. "This is how knowledge is known – through the subjective experience of people" (2013, p. 20). It was the researcher's task not only to identify the symbols used by the Christian Brothers to express their spirituality but also to explore how they came to invest meaning in these symbols. That is, meanings derive from the social process of people or groups interacting with each other. The theory of symbolic interactionism that was used by many pioneering social scientists (cf. Berg & Lune, 2012;

Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to explain how humans attached meanings to symbols in order to communicate proved to be a useful aid in exploring the spiritual development of the participants in this research.

The relevance of knowledge being derived from symbolic interactionism influenced the choice of a research method that would admit the "subjective evidence from participants" and one in which "the researcher attempts to lessen the distance between himself and that being researched" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). In this research, the fact that the researcher was a member of a Christian Brothers' community meant that, both before and after the actual data collection phase, he was in close contact with the community, able to observe and informally discuss aspects about spirituality that had relevance for the research.

The fact that the expression of spirituality is of a highly subjective nature, the gathering of data needed to be sensitive to the context while collecting rich and detailed descriptions of the individual expressions of spirituality of the participants. A research methodology that permitted the researcher an insight into the experiences of the participants was required. The subjective nature of the reality of spirituality and the interpretivist, meaning-making ability of the research participants to construct individually their own understanding of spirituality determined the methodology for the research.

Bryman refers to the researcher's role in such a process as exercising "overt full membership" (2012, p. 441) in the group of participants. The researcher was able to identify with the participants in the project and be familiar with some of the events and experiences they recounted and this provided him with further insights into the topics being discussed. The participants, in turn, were all fully aware of the researcher's role and the purpose of the interviews and could choose to answer, or not, any question or introduce a relevant topic if they wanted.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of this inquiry was interpretative and the purpose of the inquiry was to understand a particular aspect of all human life, spirituality, but limited to a particular group, the Christian Brothers in Australia. These considerations led to the adoption of a case study, influenced by narrative ethnographical methods in the research. Crotty affirms this choice of methodology – "Ethnographic inquiry in the spirit of symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people

participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the peoples' overall worldview or 'culture'" (1998, p. 7).

Crotty, however, admits that it is probably not likely that any single, established 'text-book' methodology will exclusively meet the needs of any one research project (1998, p. 14). He claims that a researcher needs to forge a methodology to meet the needs of each separate piece of research, drawing on several methodologies, "moulding them into a way of proceeding that achieves the outcomes we look to" (1998, p. 14). Consequently, this research study came to be the product of a case study influenced by narrative ethnography. Both of these will be discussed.

Case study influenced by narrative ethnography. The 'case' in this study was the Religious Congregation of the Christian Brothers in Australia and the phenomenon of the profound transformation of spirituality that has taken place within it. That such a group of men can constitute a case in qualitative research methodology is affirmed by Flick - "The case represents a specific institutional context in which the individual acts and which he or she also represents to others" (2009, p. 124). Creswell agrees, "the entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case" (2013, p. 97). In this research study the Australian Christian Brothers were considered to constitute one such case. In addition to the research being concerned with one specific issue, that of the transformation of the expressions of the spirituality (cf Yin, 2009), the Australian Christian Brothers were considered to be what Creswell calls "a concrete entity" (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). The parameters binding them into this one entity, and thus constituting one case for this research, were that the participants in the research were united by the observance of a common Rule and the practice of a prescribed daily prayer programme, were engaged in the one apostolic endeavour of offering education to the less well off, and shared a common Congregational heritage and culture. This understanding of a case for qualitative research is affirmed by Creswell who states that "a case may be a community, a relationship, a decision process or a specific project" (Creswell, 2013 p. 98). The case study in this research covered a period of time from when spirituality was expressed by the Australian Christian Brothers through certain signs, symbols and activities relevant to pre-Vatican II times to contemporary times when the expressions of spirituality are far less structured and defined.

The particular type of case study used in this research study, and which distinguishes it from studies involving only one individual, was a "collective case study" (Creswell 2013, p. 99). The use of the case study approach enabled the study to be conducted without the need to test a theory or to provide a new one but simply to come to a better understanding of the intrinsic aspects of the changes that have occurred in the Brothers' spirituality. At the outset, the researcher did not know where the research study would lead and had some ideas but no pre-conceived conclusions or explicit questions about the forms of contemporary spirituality being practised by the Christian Brothers in Australia.

There is a fine but real distinction between ethnography and case study. The intent of ethnography is to determine how a culture works within a whole group, whereas the intent of case study is to develop an in-depth understanding of a single case situated in a real life contemporary situation (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Both of these aspects are relevant to this study. While Stake argues that case study research is not a methodological choice but simply a choice of what is to be studied (2008, p. 119), contemporary researchers accept the case study as an authentic methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2009; Strauss, 1987; Bailey, 2007). Features of case studies are applicable to this research, for as Flick points out, qualitative research is oriented towards "analysing cases in their temporal and local particularity, starting from peoples' expressions and activities in their local contexts" (2009, p. 134). Creswell affirms this understanding. "[It is] a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (or *case)* … over time, through a detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (2013, p. 97).

If a case study is accepted as "an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or a community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment" as quoted from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (2009) with agreement by Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 301), its application to the study of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers is useful. Creswell (2013, p. 98) identifies seven defining features of case studies that are helpful in the study of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers:

- A case study begins with the identification of a specific case. This research study was concerned with the single case, the change in the expressions of spirituality of a group of men drawn from the Christian Brothers in Australia.

- The intent of conducting a case study should be important. The signs and symbols used by the Christian Brothers to express their spirituality in an earlier period in their history have dramatically changed. There has been some confusion associated with this transformation and the future of the Christian Brothers, and probably many other similar groups, would appear to depend on an accompanying transformation of structure. This research study may assist this process.
- A qualitative case study presents an in-depth understanding of the case. The researcher in this study himself has lived the spirituality of the Christian Brothers, and this has provided him with a unique and privileged ethnology's perspective and allowed him access to the history, ethos, literature, documents and folklore of the Congregation, all relevant to the symbols and signs expressive of spirituality.
- A case study enables the researcher to collect data from a wide group of participants representative of a broad spectrum of age, location, experience and spiritual expressions. The selection of participants for this research study ensured a comprehensive representation of age, location and experience.
- A case study allows a good description of the research problem to be articulated and several themes to be developed from the data. The Findings chapters (five and six) in this thesis demonstrate this and provides such themes. Crotty (1998, p. 7) emphasises the need to clearly identify the themes that emerge from the interviews and to specify the value of their contribution to the study. Themes in qualitative research refer to "broad units of information … aggregated to form a common idea" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 186). These themes correlated with the characteristics of spirituality noted in the literature review and so provided the basis for further discussion in this research study.
- A case study allows the themes to be studied, not only in chronological order, but also comparatively. The several generations of Christian Brothers represented by the participants in this research study, spanning

times before and after the Second Vatican Council, allowed similarities, differences and comparisons in the expressions of spirituality to be made.

- A case study often ends with conclusions formed by the researcher about the overall meaning derived from the research. Conclusions concerning the meaning of spirituality in contemporary times for the members of an apostolic Religious Congregation were made at the end of this thesis.

To these can be added other useful attributes of a case study for this research study into the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brother. As has been discussed above, individuals construct personal understandings of what spirituality means for them from their own life experiences. An individual's spirituality in this constructivist sense is experiential knowledge. The use of a case study is well suited for the participants to convey their personal experience and understanding of spirituality and it is also well suited for the researcher to grasp that experience, albeit vicariously. Stake affirms that "experiential descriptions and assertions are relatively easily assimilated by the readers into memory and use" (2008, p. 134). This is important, for in studying such a subjective topic as spirituality, it is feelings and experiences that must be sensitively listened to and analysed as much as any factual data that is conveyed.

Contemporary qualitative researchers do not always focus on a single strategy of enquiry and often use combinations of more than one (Bailey, 2007, p. 60). Denzin and Lincoln, for example, state that qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials including case study, personal experience, life story and interview:

> Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of inter-connected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand … There is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study (2011, p. 4).

In the light of this, the most appropriate methodology for this research study was found to be a case study influenced by ethnographic methods (cf. Crotty, 1998, p. 5; Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 126; Bryman, 2012, p. 50; Bouma, 2006, p. 90). Burns (1990, p. 313) speaks of a case study being "the focus on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context". Berg and Lune's definition of a case study closely approximated the aims of this research "a method involving systematically gathering enough information to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions" (2012, p. 325). By combining

ethnographical data collecting strategies with case study as a methodological design, the researcher was able to extend the study to embrace the entire group of Christian Brothers in Australia. Ethnography enabled the researcher to immerse himself into the day-to-day lives of the Brothers for, as Creswell notes, "Ethnographies study the meaning of the behaviour, the language, and the interaction among the members of the culture-sharing group" (2013, p. 90). This was useful to this research study, for the participants were so separated by distance that there was no direct, personal interaction between them, yet, as members of the same Religious Congregation, they shared in all the characteristic patterns of behaviour, language and beliefs of the organisation and had shared them over a long period of time.

The contribution of ethnography to case study. Ethnographic research has the capacity to use different methodological approaches. Luders notes that ethnographic research is not a question of the correct (or incorrect) utilisation of a single method, but "of the situationally relevant and appropriate realisation of a general methodological pragmatism" (2004, p. 226). Data for this research study was gathered from unstructured interviews.

Ethnographic research involves immersion into the culture of the social world of the case being studied. Bailey speaks of the good relationship between the researcher and the participants that is desirable in a study. "If during the interviews we can close the social distance, however briefly, we might have a better chance of understanding each other" (2007, p. 108). Hammersley (1985, p. 152) says of ethnography that "the aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world". Berg and Lune (2012, p. 196) regard this aspect as the principal advantage of ethnography, "regardless of one's language and terminological preference, [it] is the practice that places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study". They point out that it is from this vantage that researchers can examine various phenomena as perceived by the participants and represent these observations as accounts. Creswell agrees that ethnography is the most appropriate design if the aim is "to explore the beliefs, language, behaviours and issues facing the group, such as power, resistance and dominance" (2013, p. 94). Crotty sums this up when he says:

> Ethnographic enquiry in the spirit of symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover meaning and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people's overall worldview or 'culture' (1998, p. 7).

There are many forms of ethnography and no single way to conduct ethnographic research (Creswell, 2013, p. 93). In this research study, ethnography was a process that allowed the researcher to be placed in the midst of the study, from which vantage point the spirituality of the participants, as perceived by them, could be recorded as narratives that were then analysed. This technique met a need highlighted by Creswell and was applicable to the case studied in this research study:

> The literature may be deficient in actually knowing how the group works because the group is not in the mainstream, people may not be familiar with the group or its ways are so different that readers may not identify with the group (2013, p. 94).

An ethnographical method also allowed the researcher to approach the research study with an attitude more of appreciation than critical judgement, an approach particularly required in this research. Creswell points out that this form of ethnographic study suits best:

> a culture-sharing group … Typically, this group is one whose members have been together for an extended period of time, so that their shared language, patterns of behaviour and attitudes have merged into discernible patterns (2013, p. 94).

As Berg and Lune point out, the ethnographical method of enquiry "does not require the interviewers to agree with or even to accept the perceptions of their subjects but to merely offer empathy" (2012, p. 200). Wolcott (2008) describes ethnography as the science of cultural description while Ellen (1984, p. 78) refers to it as "subjective soaking", because the researcher abandons the idea of "absolute objectivity or scientific neutrality" and attempts to merge completely into the culture being studied.

Ethnography allowed the researcher to be very flexible, free to adapt to the participants' different milieus, situations and personal histories, all of which contribute to the formation of an individual's spirituality. Ethnography opened to the researcher the possibility of suiting the interview to the age and background of particular participants and of engaging them naturally with in-house types of conversation. The process allowed the researcher to draw on his own memories and experiences and to share them with the participants. This aspect was particularly relevant as the researcher himself is a Christian Brother. Luders claims that an ethnographer is in a position:

> to adapt methodological procedures and to maintain the balance between epistemological interests and the requirements of the situation, for an all too

> rigid adherence to principles of methodological procedure could close the access to important information (2004, p. 223).

As a result, ethnography assisted in the study of the transition of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia from one traditional form to several other contemporary forms by contextualising the case within the much broader field of an emerging widespread interest in spirituality throughout Australian secular society. It permitted the admission into the study of a broad spectrum of social relationships affecting spirituality, such as the formative influences of the initial training in the Religious Life, the socialisation processes of living in community and the interaction with secular society in a period of great social change. In this way, the interconnection of an individual Christian Brother's spirituality with all aspects of his social and professional life and his personal development was able to be studied. Flick asserts that the socialisation that has led to different subjective opinions, attitudes and viewpoints can be found in the interview situation (2009, p. 124).

The literature, however, offers a caution in doing ethnography. An ethnographic research strategy in this particular case study situated the researcher with much that was unpredictable as of its very nature spirituality is essentially individual. Ball says in this regard that:

> Ethnography involves risk, uncertainty and discomfort. Not only do researchers have to go into unknown territory, they must go unarmed … They stand alone with their individual selves. They themselves are the primary research tool with which they must find, identify and collect data (1990, p. 157). …..

Narrative ethnography in particular. It was important to choose an approach that was sensitive to the deeply personal nature of spirituality and the qualities of the spirituality as expressed by individual Christian Brothers. It was also important to choose a research methodology that was respectful of the historical ethos and traditions of the Brothers' Congregation that would have contributed so much to the development of the spirituality of these Brothers. It was this sensitivity to gaining an understanding of what spirituality was in general and what Christian Brothers in particular understood spirituality to be that influenced the selection of a research method. The personal nature of spirituality and the constructivist manner in which an individual develops a spiritual interiority influenced the inquiry to move towards narrative ethnography as the preferred methodology. A narrative

inquiry allowed the researcher to begin with the lived experience of the participants as revealed in their stories.

Narrative ethnography, as one ethnographic research methodology (Zajda, 2012), stresses the "importance and usefulness of narrative analysis as an element of doing ethnography" (Cortazzi, 2001). There is, Cortazzi claims, "increasing recognition of the importance of narrative analysis as an element of doing ethnography" (2001).

At times, critics of narrative ethnography have thrown suspicion onto conclusions drawn from data obtained through this research method because there can be no guarantee that those interviewed are typical or representative of the whole. Sometimes the reliability of narrative ethnography is questioned on the grounds that the research cannot be repeated as a means of checking its description and conclusions. Denzin, however, in speaking of developments in qualitative research in the period 1995-2000 dismissed such criticisms as these and stated that in modern social research "the concept of the aloof observer was abandoned" (2008, p. 27). In this research study, care has been taken to address these challenges. The research into the spirituality of the Christian Brothers was necessarily participatory and appeared to conform to Denzin's view of current developments in the use of ethnography that "grand narratives are being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations" (2008, p. 27).

The researcher attempted to address the problem of developing an "objective interpretive science of subjective human experience" (Denzin, 1990, p. 119), assuming that it really was a problem and not simply a fact of life, by making the data gathering and interpretation as transparent as possible. The form of questioning used in this research study was in the form of narrative interview, that is, "a free developed impromptu narrative" (Hopf, 2004, p. 205). This technique accords with the epistemology of constructivism on which this research study is based for, as Crotty reminds us, narration does not necessarily represent reality. "When we describe something [e.g. spirituality] we are, in the normal course of events, reporting how something is seen and reacted to, and thereby meaningfully constructed, within a given community" (1998, p. 64).

In using aspects of narrative ethnography in this research study there was need for the researcher to be ethically sensitive to the possibility that his own perceptions of spirituality might unduly influence the conduct of the research study and affect the analysis of the

data. Also, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the gathering of data by means of narrative ethnography placed the researcher in the privileged position of being a listener to deep, personal stories, and at times required him to gently probe memories and understandings that might possibly never have been previously articulated by the participants. This had the potential to be an emotional experience for the participants. Lieblich suggests that narrative interviewing requires maturity, sensitivity and life experience (cited in Clandinin & Murphy, 2007, p. 642). The researcher remained alert to these potential risks in using narrative ethnography by attentively listening to each narrator's voice and allowing that voice its individual expression uninfluenced as far as possible by the researcher's own notions and expressions of spirituality.

No personal judgements as to the relative value or merits of different expressions of spirituality were held as criteria when analysing the data and the principle that no form of spirituality was superior to any other was strictly adhered to. Both in the conduct of the interviews and in the subsequent analysis of the data, the narrator and the narratives were permitted to speak for themselves. This required the researcher to consciously avoid confusing his own concepts of spirituality with those narrated by the participants in the interviews – in effect, to maintain a kind of moral neutrality. It required that the researcher held fast to the notion that any symbol used to express a relationship with God is not the actual relationship itself, and if that same symbol is used in a later era it may well mean something quite different. All the narratives of the participants were invested by the researcher with as much respect as possible.

The use of narrative ethnography inevitably results in the inclusion in the thesis of excerpts taken from the interviews, and although the Brothers who were interviewed were told of this beforehand and their consent to record the interviews obtained, the researcher remained aware of the skill and sensitivity that was needed in the questioning to reduce any sense of vulnerability induced by this. The introductory letter and informed consent form (Appendices 3 and 4) were an attempt to explain to the participants how the narrative ethnography was to be conducted and an attempt was made in the interviews to convey to the participants a sense of the researcher's ethical responsibility.

It is true that the validity of this piece of narrative ethnographical research, like all qualitative research, lies with an evaluation as to whether any claims made about the Christian Brothers' spirituality by the researcher are supported by the evidence. Further to

this, however, and just as important, is that the validity of narrative ethnography lies in whether the researcher has understood the meanings attributed by the participating Brothers to their accounts of their spirituality. Riessman claims that because narrative ethnography may reveal experiences and meanings not previously exposed by other forms of research "narrative ethnographers must present careful evidence for their claims from narrators' accounts" (2008, p. 186). Creswell, however, sees the affinity of the researcher with the subject of his research as contributing to the trustworthiness of the qualitative research and that the "closeness of the researcher to participants in the study adds to the value or accuracy of a study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). As was discussed above (p. 93) the researcher, being a Christian Brother himself, was able to engage fully with the participants through a shared understanding of the Brothers' culture and spiritual understandings. In line with Creswell's thinking, the data harvested from the interviews was likely to be accurate. Eisner claims that it is this "confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and conclusions" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). Lincoln and Guba, (1985) in speaking of the trustworthiness of qualitative research, claimed that by describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people, and this is what was done in this research study. Trustworthiness was further enhanced by the researcher making well informed decisions about what was pertinent to the study of the transformation in the expressions of spirituality among the Australian Christian Brothers. One instance of this was the recognition of the influence of the Novice Masters in the initial spiritual formation of the Brothers (p. 127). Denzin (1989) bases the trustworthiness of qualitative research, particularly narrative research, on the researcher's ability to contextualise the issue being studied, that is, as Creswell puts it, the ability to reveal "the historical, processual and interactional features of the experience" (Creswell, 2013, p. 258). The lived experience of spirituality, as described by the participants (Chapters 6 and 7), assisted to achieve such trustworthiness.

In summary, the key features of narrative ethnography that influenced the choice of this methodology were:

- The capacity it provided the researcher of exercising sensitivity to the particular context of the participants in the case study research and of palpably respecting each personal, unique narrative.
- The opportunity it allowed the researcher, who himself shared the same cultural anthropology as the interviewees, to obtain in detail the richness of each participant's story of his growth in spirituality as a Christian Brother by encouraging the interviewees to speak freely.
- The enhanced value it gave to the findings by gathering data from participants in a variety of locations, as the participants in the case study lived in every capital city of Australia and the ACT. The value of the data was further enriched by being gathered in-situ where the interviewees worked and lived.

METHODS

The definition of methods is understood to be the concrete techniques and procedures used in the research. Crotty describes research methods as the activities used to gather and analyse the data for the research study (1998, p. 6). In Crotty's model, there is great emphasis placed on the importance of describing these methods as specifically as possible and indicating in detailed fashion how the data was gathered. For example, Crotty asserts the need to identify what kind of interviews were conducted, what interviewing techniques were employed and in what sort of setting the interviews were conducted (1998, p. 6). The data for this research study concerned the specific and clearly defined topic of spirituality as it was expressed by a number of individuals of a culture-sharing group who were representative of that group (cf. Creswell, 2013, p. 148).

The data was collected through unstructured narrative interviews in which the interviewer used an interview guide with specific questions organised in topics, but which were not necessarily asked in a specific order. The flow of the interview rather than the prepared guide determined when and how questions were asked (cf. Bailey, 2007, p. 100). In a structured interview on the other hand, the interviewer determines the questions, controls their order and pace and tries to keep the interviewee on track (Bailey, 2007, p 96; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 p. 415; Miller & Glassner, 2004, p. 125). This case study initially set out to employ the techniques of semi-structured interviews to gather data and a guide sheet of

questions was prepared (Appendix 2). However, as the interviews proceeded, it was quickly discovered that the participants were particularly articulate on the subject of their own spirituality, its beginnings, development and contemporary forms of expression, and few interventions were required of the interviewer other than to introduce the topic and generate the direction in which he wished the interview to go. Consequently, the interviews evolved under their own impetus into what some writers call unstructured interviews (cf. Bailey, 2007, p. 97ff.).

In the light of the findings from the literature review where classical and contemporary expressions of spirituality were identified, the following aspects were considered in preparing the questions for the semi-structured interviews:

- The features of the spirituality of the participants' formative years. This led to eliciting from the participants a judgement on how relevant they perceived this initial formation was to life in community and the ministry of Catholic education.
- The extent to which the expressions of spirituality of the early years sustained the Australian Christian Brothers in carrying a heavy workload in the traditional ministry of Australian Catholic education.
- The effect of the traditional formation in spirituality on the psychosexual development of a young Australian Christian Brother.
- The effective value of the traditional expressions of spirituality of their younger days in achieving the stated objective of assisting the Brothers to form a relationship with God.
- The features of the contemporary ways in which the Australian Christian Brothers express their spirituality, the benefits of the new expressions and the probable causes of their development.
- The contribution to spirituality of living the traditional community life of the Australian Christian Brothers.
- The extent to which contemporary expressions of spirituality place the Australian Christian Brothers at odds with the official teachings of the Church. In particular the place of the Eucharist and Sacraments in contemporary expressions of spirituality was considered.

- The place of ministry in the Australian Christian Brothers' spirituality, particularly in the light of the ageing of the Brothers, the diminishment of their numbers, and the fact that today the laity and the welfare state cater for the educational needs of the poor.

This qualitative research was influenced by research methods from narrative ethnography. The focus of the project was to discover the transformation of the spirituality of the seventeen Brothers who volunteered to participate in the study but it was hoped that this would provide some further insights about the broader group. As the gathering of the data proceeded, there emerged the possibility of organising the narratives into two groups, pre- and post-Vatican II. This provided a useful framework in which to analyse and compare the findings. The participants were active collaborators in the research process. As well, the researcher was able to draw upon his own life experience as a Christian Brother and his intimate familiarity with the language and the culture of the Australian Christian Brothers. This helped him to contextualise and identify the issues concerning elements and expressions of spirituality within the narratives.

Unstructured narrative interviews. The primary form of data collection used in this research study was the interview. One reason for this choice was to avoid the "sin", to use Dey's word, of data being collected "through closed questions using researcher–defined categories" (1993, p. 14). Creswell claims, "Narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals" (2013, p. 74), which was the case in this research study that used the experiences of seventeen Christian Brothers.

Interviews allowed the data to be freely defined by the subject itself and permitted the participants full freedom in their responses. The use of an unstructured form of interview permitted an interplay between the different elements, "[There are] on the one hand, theoretical considerations in reaction to literature and [on the other] exploration of the research field" (Flick, 2004, p. 253; cf. also Bryman, 2012, p. 113).

Through unstructured interviews the participants' understanding of spirituality, the changes that occurred in the way their spirituality was expressed and the participants' understanding of the likely causes of these changes were elicited. Creswell states, "Narrative researchers collect stories from individuals about individuals' lived and told

experiences" and points out that the advantage, as did occur in this research study because of a mutuality of experience, of the possibility of a strong collaborative feature as the story emerged through the interaction or dialogue of the researcher and the participants (2013, p. 71).

As the material from the unstructured narrative interviews was gathered, the researcher realised that he had been provided with a valuable basis for comparison to assist with the analysis of the data. As the stories unfolded, it became apparent that they fell into two broad categories. The narratives of those Brothers who had entered the Congregation prior to, or soon after, the Second Vatican Council reflected a religious formation current at that time, one that was characterised by an uncritical acceptance of, and close conformity to, Rule. In stark contrast to this, the narratives of the Brothers who entered the Congregation in more recent times reflected a religious formation that was far more attuned to their personal, cultural and emotional development. Schneiders wrote:

> The global effect of the Council on Religious Life was the dismantling of the total institution that had enclosed Religious in a self-contained world with its own life style that was to a large extent physically separated and culturally distinct (if not incoherent with and antagonistic to) the modern world (2001, p. 232).

The unstructured narrative interview technique allowed the researcher to identify common spiritual themes and to shape the data, not only chronologically according to the age of the narrators, but also to these common emerging spiritual topics.

Mention has been made of the advantages of the researcher himself belonging to the same group as those who were being studied. One advantage was his familiarity with the in-house language used by the participants. Bryman argues that in an anthropomorphic study "in order to understand a culture the language must be learned" (2012, p. 494). It was useful for the researcher to be familiar not only with the specialist words of church and Religious Life, but also the particular local idiom and slang used by the participants. For example, many of the interviewees referred to themselves as "monks".

The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee resulting from being an 'insider' carried some risks to the quality of the data gathered, for this very familiarity with the Brothers' informal language could have led to the use of subtle persuasive questions, responses or explanations in the course of the unstructured interview (Suoninen & Jokinen, 2005, p. 469). There was also some risk that, because of his insider's position in this case,

the interviewer could have brought his own agenda to the interview, thus distorting the desired egalitarian quality of the unstructured interview (Kvale, 2001, p. 480). By keeping in mind that all interviewees narrate through social constructs and by determinedly avoiding any lapses into casual chat, the researcher used his rapport with the interviewees to enable them to give meaningful insights into their spirituality. The way interviewees responded to the questioner was, as Miller and Glassner point out, "a practical concern as well as an epistemological or theoretical one" (2004, p. 129) but, with an awareness of these practical cautions, the use of unstructured interviews was considered to be the best method of collecting narrative accounts of diverse expressions of spirituality. As Miller and Glassner further state:

> All we sociologists have are stories. Some come from other people, some from us, some from our interactions with others. What matters is to understand how and where the stories are produced, which sort of stories they are, and how we can put them to honest and intelligent use in theorising about social life [i.e. in this research, spirituality] (2004, p. 138).

It was assumed at the outset of the research that no individual's spirituality remained static but that, over time and for a variety of reasons, changes in expressions of spirituality would occur. It was the observation of such change that initially prompted this research. The unstructured narrative interviews allowed scope for such changes in the expressions of spirituality to be detailed. Creswell noted this when he said, "Within the participant's story may be epiphanies, turning points or disruptions in which the story line changes direction dramatically" (2013, p. 75).

Some writers (Abma & Widdershoven, 2011, p. 674; Silverman, 2010, p. 272; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13) point out that there may be a potential problem in ethnographers becoming so completely immersed in the lives of the people being studied because of the danger that they might, as Bryman (2012, p. 445) put it, "go native" and so find it difficult to keep a scientific social angle on the data that they are collecting and analysing. Crotty asserted that in qualitative research of this nature:

> We need to be concerned about the process we have engaged in; we need to lay that process out for the scrutiny of the observer; we need to defend that process as a form of human inquiry that should be taken seriously (1998, p. 13).

The researcher took this warning to heart and every care was exercised to avoid bringing any personal prejudice to the subject in order "to prevent, or at least minimise, the imposition of the researcher's presuppositions and constructions on the data" (Crotty, 1998, p. 83). Denzin recognised this need. "The ethnographer's authority remains under

assault today," (2008, p. 26) he wrote, pointing out that qualitative researchers can no longer directly capture lived experience for, as he said, "such experience is created in the social text written by the researcher" (2008, p. 26). Creswell stated, "In narrative research a key theme has been the turn towards the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter" (2013, p. 75).

While the research was limited to one group of people, the Christian Brothers in Australia, and to one element of their lives, their spirituality, this subject was in itself quite complex. A research method was required to embrace a constructivist perspective that permitted a study of the Brothers' spirituality that touched on "diverse local worlds, multiple realities and the complexities of particular worlds, views and actions" (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). So important is this that in describing five different qualitative approaches to such an inquiry, Creswell refers to Charmaz (2006) who places more emphasis on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals than on the methods of research (cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 87).

This challenged the researcher to conduct a value-free inquiry into the diverse expressions of spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia. Two things assisted him to achieve this. Firstly, he was of mature age himself and had reached a stage in life where he was able to identify quite clearly and dispassionately for himself the current characteristics of his own spirituality. Secondly, for twenty-six years prior to embarking on this study, the researcher was totally immersed in another distinctively different culture, that of the Fiji Islands, and so was distanced physically and emotionally from the changes in spirituality that were occurring in Australia. These two facets of the researcher's own experience contributed to the perspective, beliefs and feelings that he brought to this inquiry, but, because they were so sharply different from the narratives heard in the interviews, it was possible for the researcher to adopt a neutral stance in listening to and interpreting them while at the same time sharing empathetically with them.

However, some procedures were adopted to prevent or at least minimise the imposition of the researcher's presuppositions and constructions. Crotty uses the term "bracketed" for the researcher's conscious attempt not to taint the data by the intrusion of his own constructs (1998, p. 83). Because the researcher felt no imperative to defend any particular philosophy, attitude or expression of spirituality, and used the research as a

personal learning opportunity, open-ended questions were used in the interviews and the interviews themselves were unstructured (Crotty, 1998, p. 83). In the course of the study, any personal anxiety about his own position vis-à-vis spirituality or the Congregational form of life dissolved. Bailey states, "the notion of mutual discovery is consistent with the epistemological belief of an interpretive paradigm" (2007, p. 97). By thus being open to change, the researcher felt able to resist the need to impose his perceptions on the interviews. Sanday said,

> The ethnographer who becomes immersed in other people's realities is never quite the same afterwards. The total immersion creates a kind of disorientation – culture shock – arising from the need to identify with and at the same time to remain distant from the process being studied (1983, p. 20).

The researcher was constantly made aware that in narrative interviewing there was the need to allow for a certain relativism, for, as has been mentioned above, when interviewees narrated the stories of their own personal spirituality, they were speaking about their own constructs, influenced by their many cultural, sociological and historical factors.

Interview dynamics. The interviews opened with a narrative-generating question that was followed by an unstructured sequence of questions (Appendix 2). These questions were open-ended and came from a prepared guideline. They were loosely designed in such a way that the interviewees "were not subject to too much spoon-feeding and, at the same time, were helped to mobilise their memories and to narrate freely" (Hopf, 2004, p. 206). The research study identified the nature and the effect of the change in the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. The strategy used in this research study examined the symbols, both in words and actions, used by the Australian Christian Brothers to express their spirituality at the beginning of their lives and the extent to which the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers has diversified under the influence of the spirituality of the contemporary secular world. The broad question that guided the research study was:

> *In what ways have the present day Australian Christian Brothers accommodated a contemporary form of spirituality within the traditional pirituality of their Congregation?*

This question sought to reflect the fact that many present day Christian Brothers express their spirituality in a wide variety of ways that do not necessarily relate to the prescribed devotional forms of earlier times.

The aim of the questions was to encourage the interviewee to describe his beginning spirituality as a Christian Brother, how he perceived his contemporary spirituality and what were the likely factors that had helped to bring about any changes that had occurred. This fairly clear focus in itself gave assurance that the discursive nature of the unstructured narrative interview would not stray from the aims of the research. At the same time, because the interviewer was not adhering to a rigidly formulated line of questioning, alternative avenues of enquiry were able to be explored as unanticipated but valuable insights arose in the course of the interviews or to admit into an interview interesting and relevant but unanticipated lines of thought gleaned from previous interviews. Bryman says in relation to this, "Even though qualitative research is predominantly unstructured, it is rarely so unstructured that the researcher cannot at least specify a research focus" (2012, p. 473).

The questions were asked of each Brother being interviewed in a systematic and consistent order but at the same time the interviewer exercised the freedom to digress in order to probe beyond the answers given to these prepared questions. The language used in each interview was adjusted to allow the Brother being interviewed to use the vocabulary of his own personal spirituality. Because of his affinity with the subject and the participant, the researcher felt that he could, in the kind of language he used, share a mutual understanding of the particular spiritual perspective being presented by the interviewee. This advantage was seen as important by Berg and Lune "if the interviewer is able to establish some sense of common ground, then one avenue of rapport building could be opened" (2012, p. 137). The interviewer felt free in these unstructured interviews to answer questions, make clarifications and make unscheduled probes into aspects of spirituality that arose spontaneously in the course of the interviews. In the light of interviews already conducted the interviewer felt free to add or delete probes in subsequent interviews. Writers generally see the conduct of these qualitative unstructured interviews as within the competency of a researcher otherwise untrained in interviewing techniques, provided that the researcher is familiar with the theoretical approach to the research topic. Hopf affirms this view - "the ability to conduct unstructured interviews is generally viewed as an independent and relatively unproblematic component in the qualifications of social scientists" (2004, p. 207).

Crotty's requirement that unstructured interviews be prepared in a "very detailed fashion"

including the defining of "what kind of interviews they are, what interviewing techniques are employed, and in what sort of setting the interviews are conducted" (1998, p. 6) was observed without losing the advantages of the flexibility of an unstructured format (cf. Berg & Lune, 2012 p. 105; Bryman, 2012, p. 319). While the topics focused on in the interviews were predetermined with some guiding questions, the nature of the interviews remained essentially collaborative. The predetermined questions were used as guides only and the researcher was able to adapt them to specific interview situations, always taking care that they remained open-ended to safeguard that the subjectivity of each participant's experience was not prejudiced. The questions concerned the personal spirituality of the Brother being interviewed and the spirituality of the Congregation of Christian Brothers in Australia. These guiding questions were sent to the interviewees prior to the interview to allow time for reflection on them.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The following paragraphs outline the various elements of this research study.

Selection of participants. In developing a qualitative research methodology to address the research question, it was important to set its boundaries (Crotty, 1998, p. 35). The research question was considered to be a case, as distinct from a problem to be solved or an issue to be addressed (Creswell, 2013, p.103). The research question was "How do Australian Christian Brothers express their spirituality in contemporary times?" This was considered to be a single case, illustrated by a number of in-depth semi-structured interviews and not for the testing of a hypothesis or the forming of a theory. However, it was expected that the findings from the research methodology would reflect a broad range of views that could reliably inform certain conclusions within this study. Stake makes the point that "the researcher might focus on a few key issues, not for generalising beyond the case but for understanding the complexity of the case" (1995, p. 123). Yin (2009) claims that after having identified the issues emerging from the interviews, common themes could then be identified that transcend the case. Flyvberg makes the point that any generalising consequent to a case study depends on the case itself and how it is chosen (2011, p. 304). This research study was undertaken primarily with a view not to create a formal generalisation but to conduct a study of a particular human situation the findings of which could be of assistance to individual Christian Brothers and other Religious and to those charged with the leadership of the Christian Brothers and similar apostolic Congregations.

These considerations led to the decision that the actual number of interviews conducted in the case study was not critical, the only criteria for determining the number of interviews being that sufficient data was generated (Silverman, 2010, p. 192; van Maanen, 1983, p. 156).

Data about the Christian Brothers' spirituality and that of the Congregation was gathered in interviews with seventeen Brothers from across Australia, invited to participate in the research study by reason of their being perceived to represent a number of widely differing expressions of personal spirituality found among the Brothers.

The invitation to Brothers to be interviewed in this qualitative research was not random but purposive, a term Bryman (2012, p. 313) uses to describe a selection process which strategically chooses participants with reference to the goals of the research study and who are likely to be able to articulate answers to the research questions. The invitation to the participants in this research study was not left to chance but was made with the view to provide a good cross section of the broad range of views held by the Brothers about spirituality. The researcher had been located overseas for the previous twenty-six years and so was unfamiliar with Christian Brothers outside his own Province of Victoria and Tasmania. In response to a request for assistance in selecting Brothers who might be approached with an invitation to participate in the research, the Brother Provincial provided a list of some fifty Christian Brothers from all the states of Australia, but excluding Victoria and Tasmania, all of whom he thought would meet a set of criteria that included the following:

- They were thought to be able to articulate their personal spirituality;
- They represented a variety of different expressions of spirituality; and
- They represented a range of ages and life experiences.

In addition to providing a list of names, the Brother Provincial further identified some, but not many, on the list as being:

- Traditionalists;
- Hermits;
- Free Spirits; or
- Charismatics.

The selection process aimed to include Brothers who had held, or were presently holding,

leadership positions as well as others who had never been called to leadership. The criteria included the following:

- Age was considered so that the group of participants included both older men formed in the spiritual disciplines of pre-Vatican II times as well as younger men who entered Religious Life in the years after the Second Vatican Council.
- Education was another factor in the selection. The obtaining of good data from unstructured interviews depends very much on the ability of the interviewees to narrate their story and have the ability to discuss the meaning of their experiences. Weis and Fine (2000) regard the following considerations as important for the selection of interviewees: Are they able to articulate the forces that interrupt, suppress or oppose them? Do they erase their history, approaches and cultural identity? Do they choose not to expose their history or go on record about the difficult aspects of their lives? Those invited to participate in the research study included some Brothers who had been given the opportunity for more advanced education, both sacred and secular, as well as others who had worked in the schools with fewer opportunities for personal development.

The group invited to participate in the research study included Brothers whose spirituality was known to be nourished by the daily celebration of the Eucharist, the frequent reception of the Sacraments, the daily recitation of the Divine Office and the practice of the more traditional forms of devotion. The sample also included other Brothers whose spirituality seemed to be nourished by finding God in non-sacramental ways, such as union with the Creator through the cosmos.

The selection of participants was made with the view of including some Brothers whose spirituality seemed to flow from an acceptance of the teaching authority of the Church, particularly in regard to the teachings concerning Divine Revelation and Redemption. The selection of participants was also made to include Brothers who were known to have expressed or manifested some form of criticism of the institutional Church as being irrelevant to the satisfying of their spiritual needs.

As the scope of the research study was limited specifically to the one topic, the spirituality of Christian Brothers, it was thought that a sample of about twenty Brothers would be adequate to support any conclusions from the research. As the research study developed it became apparent that the data was falling naturally into two groups based principally on age. The older group of participants came to be termed the pre-Vatican II group and the younger participants the post-Vatican II group. Although the emergence of these two groups, which proved useful for the purpose of comparison, had not been anticipated at the outset, the final number of participants was deemed to be quite adequate to form two viable groups for the purpose of comparison.

From the list of names provided by the Brother Provincial, twenty Brothers were chosen. Because the Brothers were not known to the researcher, this selection was arbitrary, except that the very few Brothers from the researcher's own novitiate group or Brothers with whom he had lived in Community and who knew him well were excluded. Bryman notes, "Rapport is useful to the interviewer but he or she should guard against becoming too familiar … because the respondents' answers may be biased" (2012, p. 228). It was felt that the familiarity of a relationship formed by being a member of the same novitiate group would interfere with the objectivity of the research. The names chosen for an invitation to participate in the research study were generally those at the top of each state list as provided by the Brother Provincial.

It was considered important that participants be invited into the research study from all parts of Australia so that the effects of regionalisation were reflected in the research study. From 1868 to 1953 all Brothers living in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea comprised a single province administered by a central Provincial Council located at Strathfield in Sydney. From 1953, this single entity was gradually broken up until there were four provinces in Australia: Queensland (St Francis Xavier Province), New South Wales and the ACT (St Mary's Province), Victoria and Tasmania (St Patrick's Province) and Western Australia and South Australia (Holy Spirit Province). Each of these provinces was independently administered, attracted new members, established its own formation programmes for their training and, over a period of about fifty years, developed and celebrated its own distinctive ethos. Brothers who joined the Congregation after 1953 were generally not familiar with the history, achievements or membership of provinces other than the one they had joined. All provinces re-amalgamated into one province, the

Oceania Province, in 2006. In order that the group of participants reflected the variety of spiritual expressions, the product in part of the influence of various local social circumstances, participants from all parts of Australia were invited as follows:

Table 5
Geographical Origin of Invited Participants

Queensland	4
NSW	3
ACT	2
South Australia	2
Western Australia	4
Victoria	4
Tasmania	1
TOTAL	**20**

A personal invitation to participate in the research study was extended to each of these twenty Brothers. This invitation was included in an Information Letter (Appendix 3), together with two forms requesting consent for the interviews to be tape-recorded (Appendix 4), one to be retained by the participant. These documents were sent under the University letterhead and were counter-signed by the Principal Supervisor, Dr Marian de Souza. In the package were also a return-addressed stamped envelope, a letter from the Brother Provincial encouraging the participants and the researcher (Appendix 5) and a consent form signed by him (Appendix 6).

Eighteen Brothers replied to the invitations to participate in the research, with seventeen agreeing to participate in the research. Some of these Brothers included messages of interest in the project and offered encouragement:

Table 6
Responses to Invitations to Participate

Queensland	3
NSW	3
ACT	1
South Australia	2
Western Australia	3
Victoria	4
Tasmania	1
TOTAL	**17**

One Brother wrote to say that he did not wish to participate, no response was received from one and one who did agree to participate died before an interview could be arranged. Consequently, the final count of seventeen participants proved to be sufficiently representative and interviews with them provided sufficient data on which reliable and valid findings could be based. The Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee granted approval (Register Number V201114) for the project and the data was collected in the manner described.

Such a method of data gathering was well suited to concentrating on the single specific and well-defined topic of spirituality and allowed scope for those participating to express in the interviews the individuality of their own spirituality. The unstructured interview method of data collection allowed for respect and dignity to be shown to the participants when speaking of such an intrinsically private subject as their personal spirituality. The researcher, by the use of interviews, aimed to identify each participating Brother's understanding of his own spirituality to assist him to articulate it and was willing to resonate empathetically with the experience of the interviewee's spiritual relationship with God as he described it. There was, of course, no question of any expression of spirituality being morally or culturally right or wrong, true or false. It was a foundational principle of this research study that an individual's relationship with God cannot, in any empirical sense, be verified.

Data for this qualitative research was gathered principally by means of interviews. The content analysis identified the recurring words, themes and symbols used by the Australian Christian Brothers at different times in their own lives and in the changing attitudes of secular society, to express their spirituality. Any application of evaluation criteria to narrative content to determine its validity is acknowledged to be difficult, "a constructionist view reveals the impossibility of establishing such criteria a priori … for there is only a pattern of conventional readers' responses (known only retrospectively)" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 572). The value of the narrative content (personal spirituality), could not, therefore, be ascertained by comparing it to its object, for it was only the narrator who had direct knowledge of his spirituality. Only by comparing the narratives to other utterances could any sense of their validity be obtained, and it was to this purpose that the documents of the Christian Brothers were utilised. Huberman and Miles concur

with this:

> The applicability of the concept of validity … does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts that do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some ways relate to those things that the account claims to be about (2002, p. 42).

The 'case' in this study was the Religious Congregation of the Christian Brothers in Australia and the phenomenon of the profound transformation of spirituality that has taken place within it. That such a group of men can constitute a case in qualitative research methodology is affirmed by Flick - "The case represents a specific institutional context in which the individual acts and which he or she also represents to others" (2009, p. 124). Creswell agrees, "the entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case" (2013, p. 97). In this research study the Australian Christian Brothers were considered to constitute one such case. In addition to the research being concerned with one specific issue, that of the transformation of the expressions of the spirituality (cf Yin, 2009), the Australian Christian Brothers were considered to be what Creswell calls "a concrete entity" (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). The parameters binding them into this one entity, and thus constituting one case for this research, were that the participants in the research were united by the observance of a common Rule and the practice of a prescribed daily prayer programme, were engaged in the one apostolic endeavour of offering education to the less well off, and shared a common Congregational heritage and culture. This understanding of a case for qualitative research is affirmed by Creswell who states that "a case may be a community, a relationship, a decision process or a specific project" (Creswell, 2013 p. 98). The case study in this research covered a period of time from when spirituality was expressed by the Australian Christian Brothers through certain signs, symbols and activities relevant to pre-Vatican II times to contemporary times when the expressions of spirituality are far less structured and defined.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Reference has been made throughout this chapter (p. 110ff) to the consideration given to an effective collection of data which, through a process of qualitative analysis, provided a description of the expressions of spirituality variously used by the Australian Christian Brothers at different times in their own personal histories under the influence of the changing secular and church expectations and environments. The themes that were thus identified in the content analysis provided a "conceptual map for a qualitative research

study" (Morgan, 1993, p. 112) and were the basis for establishing the trustworthiness of the process. This trustworthiness was enhanced by identifying and describing the participants in the study, as well as describing relevant aspects of the researcher's own experience (p.114). These perspectives accord with Creswell's understanding of trustworthiness in qualitative research that he described as "an attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). Sandelowski (1986, p. 27) also suggests that a criterion for evaluating trustworthiness in qualitative research is that people who share the experience being researched will immediately recognize the description. Angen (2000) is another who states that the trustworthiness of qualitative research lies within the context of interpretive inquiry.

To sum up, the trustworthiness of this qualitative research study lies in the integrity of the following elements:

- The choice of participants for the research study was made with care to include a wide variety of experiences
- The use of semi-structured interviews together with a study of documents as the most appropriate means of collecting data
- Interviews with seventeen interviewees provided extensive data for content analysis
- The identification of categories of expressions of spirituality in the course of content analysis provided an adequate basis for comparing and contrasting. None of these categories were predetermined. All the participants were given the same questions.
- From the content analysis emerged a unanimity of the concept of spirituality and its expression among all the participants
- This qualitative research study was seen to have application to Religious Groups other than the Australian Christian Brothers

(cf Krippendorff, Klaus & Bock, 2008;. Altheide,1996; Weber, 1990).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has detailed the epistemology and theoretical perspective which underpinned this qualitative study into the nature and the effect of the change in the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers and the symbols, both in words and actions, used by the Australian Christian Brothers to express their spirituality at the beginning of their lives as Religious, and which studied the changes that have occurred in these expressions to make them relevant to contemporary times. The theoretical

perspective of this research study was interpretivism and, specifically, symbolic interactionism. This enabled the researcher to consider the contribution of the many influences that affected the development of spirituality in the lives of the Australian Christian Brothers. This was important for the epistemology in this research study saw spirituality as something constructed, interpreted and experienced by the Brothers in their interaction with each other and with the wider social systems in which they lived. This was important for, although much has been written on spirituality in general, the phenomenon of change in the spirituality of apostolic congregations such as the Christian Brothers appears to have received little attention. The major elements employed in the conduct of this qualitative research followed Crotty's suggested strategy and were:

Epistemology: Constructivism;

Theoretical perspective: Symbolic interactionism;

Methodology: Case study influenced by narrative ethnography; and

Method: Unstructured interviews.

A total of seventeen Australian Christian Brothers took part in this research study and a rationale for their recruitment was provided. They were drawn from every state of Australia and the ACT and from a wide range of age and experiences. The emergence of a division of the participants into two groups, the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group was explained and the usefulness of the two groups for the purpose of comparison was given. The following two chapters present the findings of this research study and outline the several characteristics of the spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers revealed in the interviews, expressed both at the beginning of their Religious Lives and also throughout their lives.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS A: UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY IN EARLY YEARS

This chapter presents an analysis of the interviews of the seventeen participants in the case study. It focuses on the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers at the beginning of their Religious Life. The ages of the seventeen participants in the research ranged from their mid-forties to their mid-eighties, a range which paralleled the age profile of the recently erected Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers in Australia. The expressions of spirituality of the seven participants in the first group, the pre-Vatican II group, tended to carry the characteristics of the uniformity and rigidity of their formation under Br Patrick Harty. The remaining ten younger participants, who had made their novitiates under variety of novice masters, tended to express their spirituality in far more personal and individual ways.

This suggested the possibility of a natural division of the seventeen participants into two groups, a fortuitous coincidence that emerged only after the case study had begun, but one that was helpful to the structure of this research. The change in spiritual formation offered by the change in novice masters within the Christian Brothers also coincided with the effects of the Second Vatican Council beginning to be felt throughout the Church. In this research study, the first group of seven, that is, those participants who had made their novitiate under the same novice master in the years before the effects of the Second Vatican Council had begun to be felt, is named the pre-Vatican II group. The second group of ten, those who had been given their Catholic upbringing in the altered church and social climate following the Second Vatican Council and their initial spiritual formation under a variety of specially trained novice masters, is called the post-Vatican II group. This enabled the factors that influenced the expressions of spirituality of each group to be identified, compared and contrasted. These are discussed as:

- The cultural context;
- Themes that emerged from the individual interviews;
- Aggregation of these themes into broad areas peculiar to the two groups;
- Factors influencing individual spiritual growth within the themes;
- The correlation of themes with the literature review; and

- The cultural context influencing the initial spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT INFLUENCING THE INITIAL SPIRITUALITY OF THE PRE-VATICAN II GROUP

Much of the inherited spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group had been shaped by events of Australian history and by the society which evolved from these events. It is helpful to this case study to place the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II participants within this context. The identity of Australian Catholics in the pre-Vatican II era was bound up with their predominantly Irish foundations. The Irish settlers, both convict and free, came from a homeland that had long been deprived by the British of political freedom. Their identity, both as Irish and Catholics, for the two were integral to each other, was expressed in their struggles against British oppression. Their history had been one of marginalisation in their own country:

> Catholics were excluded from all public life and from much normal social activity. Any form of Catholic education was forbidden and it was illegal for a Catholic to buy land, obtain a mortgage on it, rent it at a reasonable profit or inherit it in the accepted manner. The deliberate debasement of Catholics could be seen in many other areas as well (Rushe, 1995, p. 5).

The situation in Australia, on the immigrants' arrival from Ireland, would have seemed little different to the situation at home and once again Catholics would have felt marginalised. When, for example, Br Ambrose Treacy, the first of 230 Irish Christian Brothers to serve in Australia, arrived in Melbourne 1868, he experienced the effects of the opposition of the Anglican Bishop of Sydney, Dr Broughton, to any action which would deprive the Church of its age-old control of education. "By this he meant the Church of England, which then had pretensions to be regarded as the established church in New South Wales just as in England" (O'Donoghue, 1983, p. 16).

The Catholic culture, in which the participants of the pre-Vatican II group developed their spirituality was, to varying extents, tinged with this inherited atmosphere of suspicion and sectarianism. Bouma wrote of this time:

> For Catholics, the Empire was a foreign force that at first excluded them from legal participation in society and later shored up a Protestant view of the world and Australia, since the monarch is officially Protestant. So long as Anglicans and Presbyterians could tie themselves directly to the Empire they had a form of state legitimacy that might not have had the force of establishment in the

> constitutional sense, but provided some of the benefits of establishment in Australia (2006, p. 108).

Anti-Catholic discrimination, rooted in this kind of history, was overtly practised by some sections of Australian society well into the sixties and contributed to many Catholics feeling isolated and marginalised by society. This was the experience of one of the participants in the research, Br Francis, "It was up [at Uni] that for the first time in my life [I met anti-Catholicism] … for, after school, I realised there was real opposition to Catholicity."

The pre-Vatican II group, whose spirituality developed under these contextual influences, consisted of the following seven Brothers, named here with the year in which they made their novitiate. Pseudonyms have been used in the research to protect the identity of the participants:

Table 7
Pseudonyms and Year of Novitiate of the Pre-Vatican II Group

Br Ian	1944
Br Gerard	1945
Br Christopher	1948
Br Lawrence	1949
Br Bernard	1951
Br Owen	1953
Br Quentin	1953

All these Brothers were the product of a world that was still feeling the effects of World War II. They were the products of an age in which the parish, with its pious societies and sodalities, was the centre of Catholic life. The exclusive claim made by the Catholic Church at this time, that the Catholic Church was the only true Church, resulted in an attitude that Morwood describes as held by many Catholics - "We are the *only true* religion. We alone have God's revelation. We have God on our side; you don't". Or, "If you want to be 'saved' you have to accept our culture, our thought patterns, our dogmas, and our rituals, otherwise there is no hope for you" (1997, p. 480).

With this mindset, Church leaders actively cautioned that engagement with non-Catholics could be a threat to the faith of their members. Catholics of this era were, by their culture, effectively isolated from contact with non-Catholics. This was reflected by Br John, a participant in the second group, who used the word 'ghetto' in trying to explain how the

post-Vatican II inclusive culture from which he emerged differed in this regard from the culture of the older members of the Congregation, "I probably came up from that last group of people [to join the Christian Brothers] that came from a Catholic, not ghetto, but that strong Catholic culture".

Theirs was an age when Catholics kept very much to themselves. The Church at this time obliged parents, when possible, to send their children to Catholic schools where they would have been taught almost exclusively by Religious. At school, they would have been influenced by their membership of the Young Christian Students (YCS) whose aim was to transform the world around them according to Catholic principles. Most Catholic youths at this time moved from the exclusivity of their Catholic education into the social activities of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and the National Catholic Girls' Movement (NCGM). Many young Catholics at this time would have been influenced by the Catholic Action movement with its anti-Communist thrust in the Trade Unions. Some would have experienced some bigoted anti-Catholic discrimination in employment which would have contributed to the fostering of a defensive attitude towards their Catholicity. They would have been aware, at least under Archbishop Mannix[1] of Melbourne, of the Church-approved National Catholic Rural Movement. They were, in effect, the product of a comprehensive Catholic culture which effectively kept Catholics isolated from much contact with the rest of society. The responses which are examined in this chapter reflect these experiences.

To begin with, Br Lawrence said that he had received his education during the Second World War and that he had come to the Brothers from an Australian society disciplined by the austerities and deprivations of a post-war Australian society. He reflected on how different the Church was at the time he joined the Brothers, "It was still very much a group within Australian society and very committed to the Mass, the Eucharist, Catholic schooling and the celebration of the Sacraments, Confession. You know, we went to Confession on Saturdays at the church".

[1] Dr Mannix was consecrated Coadjutor to Archbishop Carr of Melbourne on 1 July 1912. Melbourne was one of the great centres of Irish emigration where the Roman Catholic Church was almost entirely Irish. In Australia at this time, the Irish Catholics were commonly treated with disdain by the English and Scottish majority (who were mostly Anglicans and Presbyterians respectively) and also as potentially disloyal. Mannix was thus regarded with suspicion from the start and his militant advocacy on behalf of a separate Roman Catholic school system, in defiance of the general acceptance of a secular school system, made him immediately a figure of controversy. He died on 6 November 1963, aged 99.

Similarly, the exclusive Catholic culture in which the pre-Vatican II participants grew up is reflected in Br Quentin's recollection of being invited by his parish priest to join the Sodality of Our Lady in his first years in High School and of being encouraged to become a Crusader of the Blessed Sacrament, making the promise to receive Holy Communion once a week and to wear an identifying badge. He took some pride in his recollection of distributing, as a young boy, Catholic papers around his parish:

> *And the third element would have been the Press Squad, doing the Catholic papers around the area, so that was involvement in Church and doing something practical to promote Catholicity in a small sort of way, but nonetheless, an important way.*

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council, which was convened in 1962, had not yet touched the lives of these participants and an additional reason for grouping these together in this study was the fact, as has been pointed out in chapter one, that all these Brothers received their initial spiritual formation from the same novice master, Br Patrick Harty at Minto, NSW, and they received their professional teacher education at Mt St Mary's, Strathfield, NSW. These were significant influences as was captured by Br Gerard who could, nearly fifty years later, quote some of the sayings of Br Patrick Harty whose words conveyed the strength of the impression made on this participant, "I *gelled* with him and he *gelled* with me."

All seem to have come from loving, supportive and Catholic families whose influence shaped the spirituality of their early years, so much so that Br Ian felt that the spirituality of the Formation Houses was little different from that which he had known in his family. He captured the spirit of traditional Catholic family life which was typical of families at that time who were proud to produce vocations. The first four boys in his own family, for example, became either priests or Brothers. He spoke of traditional Catholic devotions practised in family life, recalling a special place, for instance, given to the picture of the Sacred Heart and a treasured one of Mary McKillop, long before she was officially canonised, because his mother had met her once when she was a girl. He spoke of the aspirations the Sisters taught them to say, and count, 'for special intentions' of going to morning Mass, cold and frost notwithstanding, of 'offering sacrifices' for the Holy Souls in November and of attending Sunday evening Benediction:

> *Anything of that kind, we were into it. And it seemed natural that we would be into it … Partly that was a social thing because people would go round and talk afterwards but nevertheless we were there … yes, we were Catholics of that brand.*

This response reflected the experience of the other participants in the case study. It indicated that the pre-Vatican II group came from a culture characterised by conformity to certain expectations and customs that went largely unchallenged and the members of this group seem to have received an initial, spiritual formation that enshrined conformity to rules and customs as a virtue and an end in itself. With the advantage of hindsight, Arbuckle refers to this situation as a "distortion" and wrote, "a frightening amount of creative energy and time was turned inward just to maintain extraordinarily structured, unchanging rules and dress codes" (1988, p. 71).

EMERGENT THEMES OF THE PRE-VATICAN II GROUP IN THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS

In the following analysis of the data gathered from the interviews there emerged some common themes in the manner in which the participants expressed their spirituality. An identification of these expressions of spirituality was informed by the literature study so that the following themes emerged:

- Spirituality motivated by a sense of duty;
- Spirituality motivated by fear of losing one's soul;
- Spirituality influenced by dualism;
- Spirituality of repression;
- Spirituality of work; and
- Spirituality of community.

Spirituality motivated by a sense of duty. There was little in the literature that spoke of an obligation or a duty to form an intimate relationship with God. On the contrary, a relationship with God was regarded by the spiritual masters simply to be in itself highly desirable. Their writings are full of their yearning for intimacy with God. Their imagery searches for metaphors to adequately express this loving intimacy, yet the pre-Vatican II participants were formed in a spirituality that appeared not to give this yearning for union with God the same primacy. Their spirituality appeared to be expressed principally in an undeviating following of a regular round of routine prayers and of spiritual exercises that "had to be done'". This, perhaps, is reflective of the particular period in pre-Vatican II history when

much attention was given to rules and regulations so that the original message of Christianity was overshadowed. This was a period when the emphasis on conformity and uniformity that had become entrenched in the Church after the Reformation still defined Church culture. Morwood describes it as a time when the Church authority saw that its chief responsibility was to keep control of its members rather than to help them to understand the foundational Christian truths:

> Unquestioning loyalty, learning the catechism and knowing the answers, blind obedience to Church authority, rigid observance of church laws, total adherence to strict liturgical laws, fear and guilt, and the use of Latin throughout the world all served to ensure an extraordinary state of conformity (1997, p. 125).

Accordingly, for a very long time, regularity to the daily horarium was regarded by the Congregation as a very high form of virtue and the best safeguard for a Brother's perseverance in his Religious vocation. Not surprisingly, they were strongly exhorted by the Rule to maintain regularity in the performance of their religious exercises. This was clearly expressed in their Rule which exhorted them to hold in particular esteem whatever concerned regularity, no matter of how small a consequence it might seem to be. The Brothers were assured that keeping the Rule exactly was the great means of their sanctification and a powerful safeguard against what it called the temptations of the wicked one. The Rule left them in no doubt of how essential exactness of observance was for their perseverance in the Religious Life and growth in their spirituality, "Regularity is the best support nay, the sustaining power of all religious Communities. Irregularity, on the contrary, is a certain source of their destruction (Congregation, 1927, p. 214).

One respondent, Br Bernard, reflected this:

> *Spiritually, I suppose … I did my best with the exercises that were there - the spiritual exercises … struggling to do my best, and to learn how to meditate according to the approved method, say all my prayers as best I could, to go to daily Mass.*

Nevertheless, even in these early years it appeared for Br Bernard that something was amiss:

> *All told, I found it a bit of a struggle because I was the junior, unequal partner in a certain encounter with the novitiate system and even with all the spiritual exercises … and I would have felt inadequate as I worked through this multitude of 'acts of devotion' I suppose.*

This concern was also reflected in the response of Br Lawrence who clearly sensed, even

as a young man, that a spirituality that was practised somewhat mindlessly each day, that is, an exact following of the prescribed round of Religious exercises, was a distortion of authentic spirituality. He reflected how every morning without fail the Brothers were called to the Chapel at 6.00 a.m. for morning prayer and for him the wonder in later life was that none were missing and none dared to be late. He mentioned with amusement how it was offered for emulation in so many of the Brothers' biographies that they were first into the Chapel each morning. He spoke of the plethora of spiritual exercises that had to be got through each day – Rosaries, Litanies, Examens of Conscience, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and lectures when a pious book was read aloud for the community. This sense of duty to fulfil the prescribed spiritual exercises was illustrated when Br Lawrence spoke of how for over fifteen years while he attended University after school hours, he would return home late at night and "you had 'to make up your eccers' – your 'eccers' meaning your exercises". He gave as an instance of the absurdity of attempting to fulfil his obligation to meet every prescription of the Rule in his busy life by how he used to recite his Office of the Dead while attending Mass, "which was a crazy thing to do when you think about it, like the story of the lady who doesn't like the new Mass because it distracts her from saying the Rosary. But you certainly had a duty."

Br Quentin also acknowledged that the highly regulated performance of religious exercises was the spirituality in which he was formed, "I think we were formed in a spirituality of duty," but he declared that, for him, far from being burdensome, it actually afforded him a sense of satisfaction. This he attributed to his own peculiar personality rather than being anything virtuous because order and regularity appealed strongly to him. He spoke of how he had taken to heart all his life ever since first meeting it, the motto of the Brothers' school that he attended "Fac omnia bene", do all things well. The spiritual duty of having many things prescribed to be done in his beginning years as a Brother challenged him, and, as he said, being of a determined nature he set out to do them all well. For Br Quentin:

> *The obligations that were there for prayers and all of that fitted in well with that sort of personality. Now in the novitiate we had exercises and review of the day and a whole set of actions that filled up the whole day. I bought all of that and also strove to get all the exercises done, so spirituality was one of obligation, duty and fulfilling those duties, and in doing that I thought I was a good Brother. And I think that style persisted with me for a long, long time after I left the novitiate. By a long, long time I mean many, many years.*

Br Bernard agreed that following a routine of prescriptive religious exercises had for him

some usefulness:

> *A value I wouldn't underestimate, actually, for whatever [we may think] about how we filled in the time, they provided a certain structure and framework which encouraged us to realise we were engaged in something that might be called a spiritual life, that our Religious Life was somehow supposed to be spiritual lives [sic] and to that extent the earlier formation sustained me.*

Another response came from Br Christopher who described his early expressions of spirituality as a Brother in terms of faithfulness, of fidelity to the performance of prescribed duties to be thought of as a kind of checklist to measure his worth as a Brother, "The Acts of Chapter, the Rule, the Rulebook … Now, I might not have been perfect, but I think I would have got fairly high marks."

It does seem clear that the performance of the prescribed spiritual exercises by these young Religious was considered by them to constitute their spirituality at that time. The dutiful fulfilment of the obligation to make the daily, routine and regulated spiritual exercises was in itself for them their spirituality, and not, as they certainly came to understand in their mature years, merely a means to that end. In time, this changed both within individual Brothers and officially by the Congregation. In preparing for the General Chapter of 2008, the Leaders of the Congregation noted that the Brothers' spirituality had moved "gradually yet firmly from a controlling and exclusive God to a liberating and larger God, from parochialism to internationality, and from a predominantly clerical spirituality to an emerging fraternal one (Congregation, 2008b, p. 8).

When the pre-Vatican II participants in this research were developing their spirituality at the commencement of their Religious Life, clericalism was a dominant influence. As was mentioned above, although the Brothers were laymen, that is, not ordained clerics, they were nevertheless obliged by church canons to model their Religious Life and their spirituality on that of the priests. The Brothers wore a cassock type habit. In public they wore a clerical suit with a Roman collar (but only half the size of that worn by priests so that the superior status of priests was not compromised). They were to pray like priests. As O'Murchu put it, "the calling to Religious Life became a subservient type of vocation governed essentially by the same laws and procedures as those of the clerical priesthood" 2005, p. 55).

In this partly lies the reason for the legalistic approach to spirituality in the Brothers' way of life at that time. In Br Lawrence's view it was to this that he had made a commitment

and "after I took my vows I didn't go back on that commitment … doing your duty was part of it". He felt that this sense of commitment to duty had come from the family values he had inherited. He spoke of how his own father was never deterred from fulfilling all that he considered to be his duty. "He went to wars and went bankrupt and brought up his family and so on … His principles were expressed [as being an] 'in this life you do what you've got to do' person". Consequently Br Quentin found that the spirituality of dutiful performance of religious exercises in which he was trained when he entered the Brothers was not surprising, "It was strongly reinforced when I was in Strathfield and 'doing your duty'. It was a spirituality which grew out of that sort of society, very loyal to the Church and so on".

Br Lawrence was another for whom the transition from home to the Formation House was not disruptive for, as he said:

> *It was just a concentrated version of the same thing. And that's not a bad thing. I mean, it's not a bad thing to have a sense of duty. It's not a bad thing to have a sense of commitment, so I'm not knocking it.*

Always, however, there was the niggling doubt that mere performance of duty in itself would constitute an authentic spirituality. As he said,

> *It was an impoverished one, I think, in the sense that it didn't give us a deep spirituality. On the other hand it began a process which I think was the beginning of spiritual growth. It was a good basis, and I think my generation, if it made a commitment, on the whole, it stuck to it and to the Religious Life.*

Br Ian was another respondent who felt some disquiet in his early formation in a spirituality of duty, feeling that "manliness was at the centre of it. Secondly, a reliability was likewise there", but he added, "although we did the prayer life thoroughly, it wasn't deep. There were these externals that were more important, I felt".

As a mature Religious, Br Quentin was able to reflect on the strangeness of his formation and that as a young Religious he performed all the spiritual exercises because he knew of no other way. He considered that it was an unnatural situation for a young person to be denied the freedom to make personal choices. He conceded that "the praise and the affirmations came from being faithful to one's duties and being charitable in community and doing the job. But there were no alternatives." He regretted later in life that he had been, in this way, denied the normal experiences of adolescence. He illustrated another important aspect of accepting unquestioningly this fulfilment of duty as his commitment to the spiritual life of a Brother:

> *From the age of 14 exactly to the age of 22 when I came back to Melbourne, I'd spoken to one or two women for example. At Sydney University I never had a coffee in the café. I never spoke to anyone else except for one or two people in the whole three years.*

Although Br Quentin spoke with regret of his lack of freedom to make choices and the isolation he experienced from having to wear the prescribed clerical dress at University, he accepted it as the expression of the spirituality of being a Brother, "There was never any freedom. It wasn't real freedom; we were indoctrinated. I was never unhappy with it. I am now, and I would not probably be a Christian Brother if I had those opportunities of other choices".

His use of the word "indoctrinated" is interesting. In 1983 the noted novelist Morris West wrote publicly of his training as a Christian Brother, "We were not encouraged to question any matter we were taught. Everything came pre-digested, pre-packed, stamped with the seal of authority which raised the most trivial and the most tendentious opinions to the status of articles of faith" (West, 1983, p. 29). He claimed to have been "deeply affected by the conditioning process" (West, 1983, p. 29). This reflection, however, is made with the benefit of hindsight.

In the post-Depression and post-World War II years, economic austerity dictated the lifestyle. In the culture of those years, children were strictly disciplined, both in the family and in the classroom, and corporal punishment was often a feature of both. Children gave unquestioning obedience to both parental and ecclesial authority. Young men in transition from such a culture to the Religious Life in the 1930's and 40's would not have experienced much dislocation. The spirituality offered to them in those days, characterised by "a military type of obedience, a kind of religious ghettoism and the excesses of self-abnegation" (Chittester, 1995, p. 10), was itself shaped by the societal culture of the day and it is not surprising to find a spirituality motivated by duty as one of the characteristics.

Spirituality motivated by fear of losing one's soul. One of the more pervasive influences on the Church during the youth of the pre-Vatican II era was the heavy emphasis placed on sin. The church language of their young days presented God as taking offense at human wrongdoing. They were encouraged to make frequent acts of contrition, "O my God I am heartily sorry for having offended [emphasis added] Thee … ". They were taught in their youth that God sent his son, Jesus, "to save [emphasis added] us from

our sins". Salvation was primarily concerned with "getting to heaven" and "saving our souls". This, indeed, was the whole missionary thrust of the Church at this time. As a result, young Catholics took on enormous loads of guilt. They were made by the current Church attitude to believe that death came into human lives as a result of humanity's sin. They understood that they through their sins were the cause of the death of Jesus and that they deserved punishment.

A dominant characteristic of the works of the spiritual writers discussed in chapter three was a spirit of joy. As Hildegard of Bingen exclaimed:

> Under your protection
> I rejoice, O God!
> In your shadow
> I exult, O God!
>
> (Uhlein, 1983, p. 99)

It seemed, however, that in the expressions of spirituality of the pre-Vatican II Brothers the sense of joy that should have been theirs had been replaced by the fear of losing their souls for all eternity should they not persevere in their vocations. The works of all the great spiritual writers considered in chapter three expressed the empowerment they experienced in a relationship of unconditional love with God. The literature showed that in their relationship with God, these great spiritual writers sensed that they were co-creators in a new life. There was no sense of fear in their writings, only hope and promise. By contrast the participants of the pre-Vatican II group appeared to be deprived of the opportunity to express their spirituality in adult terms, independently of the rules of Religious Life.

The biography of Br Patrick Harty notes, "The element of fear was certainly an over-riding feature in the motivation of the novices" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 227). As has been observed above, all these older participants in the research made their novitiates well before Vatican II at a time when the distinctive church climate was one in which, all too often, Catholics strove to placate a demanding and punishing God. Schneiders says that when this image of a judging God is internalised, "fear governs our relationship with God … who is both the court of last appeal in situations that are beyond our control and the ultimate judge before whom we must render an account of our lives" (2000, p. 192).

Br Patrick Harty frequently told the novices that "to ask for a dispensation [from one's

Religious vows] is to ask for a passport to hell" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 240). While the dangers of rooting a spirituality in such a suspect theology may be clear today, placed in the context of these older participants' formative years, it was accepted without question and was a very real influence on the formation of their spirituality.

Br Lawrence recalled this sense of fear of damnation that motivated Brothers in their early spiritual formation with the great emphasis given to hell, suffering and eternal punishment. He recalled that the novice master quoted Matthew 12:36-37 to them daily, "For every idle word a man should speak, he will enter a strict punishment" and Luke 9:62 "No man, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God," but "he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved". He regretted later in life that in his formation the young Religious were given:

> *... all the unpleasant parts of the Gospels. There was not a lot of emphasis on the more consoling parts and certainly not a lot of emphasis upon that we are saved because God loves us and duty isn't to earn heaven.*

He realised later that he had been formed in a spirituality which required him to earn his salvation.

In using fear as a motive to pursue spirituality, the novice master was doing little more than the Rule recommended. The Rule contained a selection of quotations from the saints to inspire fear should a Brother think of abandoning his Religious vocation:

> St Augustine exclaims: 'Woe to those who, without serious reason, abandon their religious profession.' And St Ignatius says: 'The temptation against his vocation is, for a professed Religious, the most dangerous of all.' While St Thomas declares: 'Inconstancy in one's vocation is one of the greatest marks of reprobation' (Congregation, 1927, p. 193).

Fearful anxiety to meet all the demands of novitiate life was intensified by an elaborate system of penances imposed for any failure. The novelist, Morris West, who made his novitiate under Br Patrick Harty and remained a Christian Brother for twelve years, did not retain pleasant memories of some of these:

> [There was a] constant succession of small humiliations and public confessions of default followed by penances: shaven heads, shortened rations, kneeling at the meal table, standing in the penitent's place in chapel – all designed to lower self-esteem and make the subject amenable to implants by authority (1983, p. 29).

That only one of the participants specifically commented on fear as an unfortunate characteristic of their beginning spirituality possibly indicates the influence of the society in which they lived. These men as novices were impressionable seventeen or eighteen

year olds and were the products of their contemporary culture. All were the products of what can be called traditional Catholic families and several commented that the influence of their family spirituality disposed them for a ready and uncritical acceptance of the harsh novitiate experience. There was a suggestion of wonderment in Br Bernard's voice as he reflected:

> *And here we were, callow youths, and it was quite an interaction really, coming from two ends towards a certain encounter. [The] two ends being my own previous experience and the other being what was proposed by the novitiate regime.*

It is interesting to note that to approach Br N. for guidance after he left the novitiate, Br Bernard had to struggle to overcome this sense of fear:

> *I was only out of the novitiate a short time and took my courage in both hands and I had something to ask. To ring up, I took my courage in both hands and I rang up Br Patrick and I asked him if I could come and see him (not without trepidation, I must say). Somehow I must have had some confidence in him to want to go and ask his opinion about it.*

Br Lawrence had similar memories, but it seems significant to this research that he was a seventeen-year-old novice at the time, having left his family two years before. "I don't have bad memories of Br Patrick. On the whole, he reminded me of my father and I kept out of his road as much as I could and did what he wanted."

Nevertheless, the influence of Br Patrick Harty lingered, and as a mature adult, Br Lawrence found himself at times checking the tendency to address others as the novice master used address him, "'You're an idiot. What are you? You understand what I'm saying?' 'I'm an idiot, Sir.' That's not very good psychology - I'm trying to get out of negative self-talk."

Br Lawrence did, however, refer to a fear that, sadly, was often too influential in the lives of Catholics at that time. He referred to the Catholic belief that if one died in the state of mortal sin, one was eternally damned. He regretted that this mindset also involved a misrepresentation of sexuality which, he claimed, equated the entertaining "an impure thought" to the enormity of the Holocaust:

> *The six million Jews and God knows how many Slavs and Gypsies – that was just as bad as consenting to impure thoughts. Now that is absolutely crazy theology and it says crazy things about God, but I think I just believed it.*

This fear and guilt as motivators for developing one's spirituality are relics of a former

way of imaging God. Many of the participants in the pre-Vatican II group would have absorbed, and, in those pre-Vatican II days, probably passed on to their students, a spirituality in which God is 'offended' by our sins and who 'punishes' us for them. In the pre-Vatican II Catholic culture, any spirituality offered to them would have been expressed in such terms as 'salvation', 'sacrifice', 'redemption', 'saving souls', 'punishment for sin', and 'eternal damnation'. One expression of spirituality that was current at this time advocated the need to 'atone for sin' through the subjection of the body and the practice of severe self-mortification. The Brothers' Rule at that time was quite unambiguous about this, stating that the very first stage in the pursuit of spirituality consisted of "cleansing the heart and waging a continual warfare against natural defects and bad habits … It is a period of combat unto death against sinful nature, which must be subdued by self-denial, mortification and detachment" (Congregation, 1927, p. 46).

Br Patrick Harty integrated this element of fear into his formation of the pre-Vatican II group, as his biographer noted, "his own theory of religious asceticism fitted into such a pattern, for he saw the life of the followers of Christ as a way of self-denial and mortification, of fortitude in sacrifice" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 223). As an instance of Br Patrick's own thinking, his biographer quoted from a letter that he wrote to the Superior General, "The Institute is on the downgrade. The giving up of the five o'clock rising was an admission that things had changed" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 23).

The pre-Vatican II group were formed in this culture of self-abnegation and any one of them could have recounted novitiate experiences similar to that described by a 1958 novice. Because of some infraction of the many novitiate rules or perhaps because of some minor act of self-indulgence, one particular novice recalled being forbidden to pray, eat, recreate with the community or to work at anything other than kitchen and laundry, scrubbing or cleaning the fowl yard. He had to wash in an old farmyard bucket; he was forbidden to touch anything sacred or to speak to any of his Brothers. "Except for the absence of a bell" he wrote, "I felt like the biblical leper" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 224).

The Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group appeared to accept without question that it was part of the spirituality of Religious Life at that time to practise this kind of asceticism and to live and work out of fear of losing their souls, accepting without complaint life in very difficult conditions. These were survivors. Others, as Morris West wrote, "broke under the stress of it" (1983, p. 29). In time, of course, the participants in the pre-Vatican II

group would come to realise that, as Schneiders wrote:

> Christian asceticism is not a commitment to the total subjugation, much less the dissolution, of the body. Nor can it be a commitment to a Pelagian project of achieving salvation through self-mortification and/or a Gnostic escape from the world and history (2000, p. 17).

It is no coincidence that a basic text used by Br Patrick Harty in forming his novices was *The Practice of Christian Perfection* by Alphonso Rodriguez (Marzorini, 1975, p. 244) whose treatises were heavy on the subjection of the body and its passions through mortification and penance. It is apparent that the challenge to the pre-Vatican II group to move from this form of spirituality was very great. As O'Murchu says:

> We look back on the heroic people who did heroic deeds in an age when heroism was a spiritual virtue. We also know that the call of our time - and the crucial values for now – is significantly different from former times, and calls to a different quality of response (2005, p. 29).

Br Owen was more guarded in his response to the suggestion that it was a sense of fear that compelled him to continue to be a Brother, despite some struggles that he was experiencing. His spirituality, he claimed, was not based on fear but simply on a very strong sense of duty to the performance of work:

> *No. I made the commitment and this is what I was going to do, and this is what I did. And I was, as I said, very compliant; still am fairly compliant, in spite of what people might think. But this is what you did. I was invited to go to Uni, so I did. I mean I didn't get into any major decision making.*

Later Br Owen added that he thought his whole life as a young Religious was lived out of a sense of duty. But he was quick to add that he did not feel unhappy about this and he clearly wasn't looking for something else to do with his life. Yet, when it was suggested to him that his spirituality was being expressed through a heavy regimen of regularity and prayer, he responded somewhat ambivalently, "I'm not sure that I would call it a spiritual life. If it was a spiritual life, it was artificial because it was generated by expectation and by doctrine".

In summary, the members of the pre-Vatican II group all received initial formation in a spirituality that was based on fear – fear of eternal damnation should they fail to persevere in their vocation. Again, this was symptomatic of the Church teaching of the time. Sunday sermons preached a just but wrathful God. The Brothers were offered an initial formation in spirituality which proposed that the dutiful carrying out of the many

prescribed religious practices each day was the only pathway to spiritual perfection. Although the social climate of the post war years disposed the participants to an unquestioning acceptance of such a spirituality, many of them expressed unease that it seemed to them, even at the time, to lack the depth of an authentic expression of spirituality and some regretted the resultant socio-sexual repercussions of a spiritual formation based on fear and exclusivity.

Spirituality influenced by dualism. The form of spirituality in which the young Brothers of the pre-Vatican II era were schooled was dominated by the dualistic call to flee 'the world'. Dualists saw God and human life, spiritual things and material things, souls and bodies as two separate and divided, even antagonistic, things. The notion that the world was at least potentially evil and was to be strenuously avoided by good Religious was embedded in the Rule which enjoined them to:

- Abstain from frequent and unnecessary conversations with seculars and they are to avoid too great intercourse with externs (Congregation, 1927, p. 168).
- The Brothers on entering the Congregation shall break asunder every tie they had with anyone in the world, even with their parents (Congregation, 1927, p. 258).
- It is not sufficient that the body quits the world, the heart must also break off from all attachment thereto (Congregation, 1927, p. 258).
- All those who have custody of the enclosure shall carefully see lest, from intercourse with outsiders, the discipline be relaxed and the religious spirit weakened with useless conversations (Congregation, 1927, p. 264).

This emphasis on withdrawal from 'the world' and remaining separate from it underlines the assumption that any form of spirituality given to the young men at this time was non-corporeal and otherworldly. A form of one-dimensional spirituality resulted. It was, in effect, an individual, singular form of spirituality that was mystical in its concentration on the interior life. It was a form of spirituality strong on affective and imaginative elements and less strong on theology. It is interesting to recall that one of the two books that aspirants to the Christian Brothers were required to bring with them on entry to the Congregation was *The Imitation of Christ*, the other being the New Testament. The

theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote critically of *The Imitation of Christ*, a proponent of dualistic spirituality, that it was written for those who had turned from the world:

> It disregards the world, in all its richness, as a field for Christian activity … a subdued and melancholy resignation runs through the book … there is an excess of warnings about the world, the illusions of egoism, the dangers of speculation and of the active apostolate. … All [that] remains is a flight from the world, a world that has not been brought home in Christ (Balthasar, 2001, p. 103).

An interior life springing from such dualism was sustained by a variety of pious practices. This was taken to great lengths in the Brothers' Directory and Rules (Congregation, 1927, p. 161) where even the pious dedication of months and days is prescribed.

Table 8
Devotional Dedication of Days and Months of the Year

Sunday	The Most Holy Trinity
Monday	The Holy Souls in Purgatory
Tuesday	The Holy Souls
Wednesday	St Joseph
Thursday	The Blessed Sacrament
Friday	The Passion of Our Lord
Saturday	The Blessed Virgin Mary
January	The Holy Infancy
February	The Holy Family
March	St Joseph
April	The Holy Ghost
May	The Blessed Virgin Mary
June	The Sacred Heart of Jesus
July	The Precious Blood of Our Lord
August	The Sacred Heart of Mary
September	The Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary
October	The Holy Rosary and the Guardian Angels
November	The Souls in Purgatory
December	The Sacred Humanity

In Chapter XVI (Congregation, 1927, p. 101) long sections are devoted to fostering "tender devotion" to the following:

Table 9
Congregational Devotions

Section I	Devotion to the Holy Infancy – The Lessons It Teaches
Section II	Devotion to the Sacred Heart
Section III	Devotion to the Passion
Section IV	Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

Section V	Devotion to St Joseph
Section VI	Devotion to St Patrick
Section VII	Devotion to Our Guardian Angel

Chapters XXV and XXVI (Congregation, 1927, p. 202-214) prescribe in minute detail the practices of piety to be observed during each day by the Brothers. There can be no doubt that through a spirituality expressed in such pious devotions, many great and saintly Brothers developed a deep intimacy with God, however inadequate it may be considered for today.

Today, however, people, especially young people, express a spirituality that is more communal in nature, one which is essentially an existential and lived experience, "linked to our bodies, to our relationships with each other and society" (King, 2008, p. 4). Tacey says that youth today are indicating that their spirituality is concerned with the welfare of the world and the sacredness of endangered nature. They see spirituality as the basis for a new or a renewed sense of human responsibility and social justice.

> It is worldly and pragmatic. Spirituality is advocated as a cure for racism, an essential ingredient of the new ecological awareness, an antidote to domestic violence and civil unrest, and a remedy for religious sectarianism and holy wars. It has acquired a public conscience (2003, p. 66).

Bouma regards the emergence of contemporary spirituality "as a reaction against the domination of reason-based duty, against the head-dominated, cold, calculating qualities of the rational" (2006, p. 91).

These two forms of spirituality, the private, individual form that concentrates on self and the form that is expressed communally, are not necessarily antithetical. Indeed King asserts that "a truly holistic, integral spirituality must include both personal and social concerns; it must relate to burning social issues such as the search for justice, peace, non-violence and ecological harmony" (2008, p. 11).

However, she also believes that "what is crucial in the development of all personal spirituality is the deepening of reflection and an honest attitude towards oneself" (2008, p. 12). The private, self-centred form of spirituality is today not considered to be an end in itself, but a means, and a vital constituent of these means, to the end of social as well as personal transformation. Maria Harris wrote, "Our spirituality begins with our cultivating the inner eye that sees everything as capable of being saturated with God" (1991, p. 65).

Thomas Merton's whole life is a testimony to this. He wrote that:

> When my practical and outward self is submissive and ordered to the deepest needs implanted in my inward being by nature and by grace, then my whole soul is in harmony with itself, with the realities around it and with God (1955, p. 194).

Contemporary society does not express itself in a one-dimensional form of spirituality. Nor does it find lasting satisfaction solely in activity. There is a kind of continuum in a person's life leading towards the fulfillment of self in selfless activity, but starting with the interior life. If this is not done, the satisfaction from activity, no matter how altruistic, is not lasting. Merton says of such a one:

> He seeks to find himself somehow in the work of making others happy. Therefore he throws himself into the work. As a result he gets out of the work all that he puts into it: his own confusion, his own disintegration, his own unhappiness (1955, p. 106).

This may well have been the case with the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group in their beginning days. The novice master's aim of promoting this dichotomy appears to have been successful at the time of their initial spiritual formation. When, for example, Br Bernard was asked to reflect on the influence of the secular society on his spirituality in his early years, he replied, "very little". He recalled that his world was bounded by the walls of his classroom with only an occasional venture into the local parish. He recalled that in those early years he did not mix with seculars at all, was not permitted by Rule to read a newspaper, was not allowed to listen to the radio and could not visit his family. Of the impact of the world on his spiritualty he could rightly claim, "very little impact actually, because we were secluded from the world to a large extent … anything that was happening in the world would have just washed over me without my being aware of it".

Nor did the lack of contact with 'the world' seem to be any problem to Br Christopher when he was invited to reflect on it. He said that he simply thought that it "was part of the game".

Dualism, in the name of spirituality which required such a total separation from the world, was regretted by Br Lawrence. He said with some poignancy, "I was never a teenager, you know. It never occurred to me to be a teenager".

For Br Ian the questioning of this dualism came later in life, thinking more of the effect on others than on himself. For instance, he came to consider that for so many years his participation in the daily Eucharist as a private, personal spiritual exercise was to miss the very point of the Eucharist:

> *We didn't link the Eucharist with the world. And we should have. And I've been working on things of that nature now for quite a while, but back in those times that we speak of, when I was doing the studies and all that, I suppose we just kept to what we had been told by our leaders up to that time – you know, avoid the world.*

In Br Ian's younger days, the Brothers attended Mass in the parish church dressed in their habits and sat together, a rather public statement of their life commitment. He concluded that this witness must have been of some good to others, "It must have rubbed off on people, the fact that these blokes with their collars back to front were not real bad blokes after all, and that they were conscientious and so on".

The reference to dress is interesting as it raises the question of whether this external observance was yet another way in which the spirituality offered to the Brothers found its expression. Br Ian refers only to the wearing of the Roman collar, but the Rule prescribed not only the wearing of the habit at all times within the monastery but also a particular form of clerical dress when in public, much to the mortification of some of the Brothers, as such dress was not only quite unfashionable but served only to further distance the Brother from society, "The chesterfield coat should reach to at least three inches above the knees. The overcoat may be somewhat longer" (Congregation, 1927, p. 165).

Chittester points out, "The separation of a subculture from a society is a relatively simple process: badges, uniforms and walls have all served the purpose for a variety of groups far beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic religious congregations" (1995, p. 17). She then questions whether there is a spiritual purpose to it. Presumably a distinctive dress is to give identity to a group, to serve as a means of separation from society and to hopefully offer some sort of prophetic witness to others. It ceases to fulfill this purpose if the wearing of clerical dress becomes an end in itself. This would appear to be the case with the Christian Brothers as the following incident illustrates. The Superior General in Rome in 1956 felt obliged to communicate to the Brother Provincial of St Patrick's Province (Victoria and Tasmania) that:

> Recently I received a letter in which it was complained that liberties were taken by some Brothers of your Province during their train journey to the West, in the matter of dress … It is an abuse that has constantly turned up in Australia during the hot weather. According to the letter, 'as soon as the train left Melbourne, clerical clothing was removed and sports shirts and black trousers were worn for the rest of the journey even in the dining car and refreshment car (Clancy, 1956, p. 1).

There were to be no concessions made even when crossing the Nullarbor, which in those days was a week-long journey, thereby reflecting a confusion of the means and ends of spiritual practices.

Br Bernard was a certainly aware of his separation from the world but did not question the exclusivity of the Brothers' life, taking it as the norm for Religious at that time. He accepted as a young Religious that caution had to be exercised in his relations with what the Rule called 'externs'. He, too, so believed that the Brothers' distinctive dress assisted him to do this. He said that he accepted this separation from the world as "a given … I took it as part and parcel of the life":

> *It never occurred to me that the Church in this matter was somehow missing the point. It didn't occur to me that anything I was told was inappropriate. I assumed it was all the right advice so I suppose to some extent I tried to connect to it.*

The dualism resulting from the separation of the secular and religious worlds initially seemed to have little impact on Br Quentin in his early years, "I don't think what was happening in the world affected my spirituality – in other words, pop revolution and Woodstock and all of that. I never listened to that sort of music and it didn't appeal to me anyway".

It was probably inevitable that the exclusivity of the Brothers' life would promote in Br Quentin an attitude that could be thought of a kind of superiority to the world. He admitted that in his earlier days:

> *I had this rigid attitude that many of these people [seculars] were immoral people and their way of life didn't really lead to happiness anyway. I was still in the sixties, very straight laced and faithful to the formation that I had.*

The exclusivity of the spiritual attitudes resulting from the dualistic spiritual formation which these men received, as intimated here, was more clearly expressed by Br Quentin later in his interview when he spoke of the confining effects this had on his spiritual formation. The eight years he spent prior to taking up his first teaching appointment were all so planned and settled that they did not invite any personal spiritual search or any engagement with other points of view, "because in that milieu of spirituality in which we were formed and which operated, it was very hard to think outside that context." To illustrate this limitation he referred to Professor Anderson, the controversial Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University at the time he was a student there. Professor Anderson

promoted 'free thought' in all subjects, including politics and morality. Br Quentin said that his reaction to Professor Anderson's claims that there was no God was:

> *I would hate him – well, not hate him so much as say 'He's a bad man. He doesn't know what he's talking about. I know there is a God, but he doesn't. Poor man!' That's just a simple example but other aspects of morality and behaviour I would have scorned, because [I would have thought] they don't really know. I know because I'm part of this great Church and great Christian Brother group and we've got answers – most of the answers. So that would have been my attitude to other aspects of spirituality outside.*

This exclusivist dimension of the spirituality of their beginning years which obliged the Brothers to keep themselves separate from the world was certainly not that of the Founder. As a merchant, Mr Rice comfortably and openly expressed his spirituality while at the same time acquiring considerable wealth through his commercial activities. His biographer records his membership of a pious association of laymen, committed to living a more active Christian life, some features of which were for Mr Rice the daily reception of Holy Communion at a time when this was most uncommon and the regular visiting of the overcrowded prisons to alleviate the hunger and distress of the inmates (Keogh, 2008, p. 68). O'Toole observes, "Such integration of religion and the details of daily life was to become a marked characteristic of the spirituality of the 'Good Mr Rice'" (1984, p. 55). His vision was to establish "a monastery in the streets" (Hardiman, 2009, p. 169), that is, to have his followers be active in the world rather than to withdraw from it. The Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group were far from this vision and led a monastic lifestyle in the withdrawing from the world, in their communal living, regular hours of prayer and the wearing of a habit in the monastery and school, and clerical dress in public. The Second Vatican Council and the publication of the Revised Code of Canon Law in 1983 offered the Brothers an opportunity to free themselves of this clericalism and monasticism and to return to the original vision of their Founder. The development of the spiritual lives of the pre-Vatican II group parallels this movement.

This section has shown that the expressions of spirituality in the beginning years were, of necessity, shaped by the church and social cultures of their times and as a result were influenced by the prevailing dualism that considered soul matters to be distinct from corporeal matters and that the world was a potential threat to one's pursuit of union with God, hence the retirement of Religious from the world and their restricted association with secular society. It took the Second Vatican Council to expose this for the aberration that it was and to acknowledge that God's self-revelation and sustaining presence is to be found

in all that God has created. In this sense the world, Vatican II taught, was to be considered as a sacrament and was to be embraced.

A repressive spirituality. In the writings of the spiritual masters reviewed in chapter three, there was a pervading sense of delight in the beauty of the human body and many of these writers chose erotic images of sexuality in an attempt to describe the intimacy of their loving relationship with God. All of these spiritual writers were at home with their earthiness and their sexuality. In their writings there was clearly no spirit/material dualism. It was a rich aspect of their expressions of spirituality that the human body deserved a reverence. Fox was moved to say that if the theology of these writers had been followed "in both Protestant and Catholic churches in the West, we would have a much sounder practice of sensual spirituality and of marriage as a sacrament than we do today" (Uhlein, Fox and Berry, 1983, p. 9). In their writings, there was no suggestion of bad conscience nor were their writings overly introspective based on fear and guilt. Instead their writings were filled with passion and grace. By the time the Christian Brothers came to be founded, however, much of this ability to express spirituality in terms of grace and passion had been lost and instead a duality of body and soul had been imposed on them by the culture of the times.

In the days of the pre-Vatican II participants' formation, sexuality was regarded as a threat to the Brothers' vocation and any consideration of gender at that time was not considered to play a positive role in their spiritual growth. The Rule set the tenor for the Brothers' relationships with women (or 'females' as the Rule names them):

a Females shall not be permitted to enter those parts of the House which compose the enclosure, unless, for just and reasonable cause, the Superior should allow them (Congregation, 1927, p. 169).

b The Brothers, in their interviews with the mothers or female friends of their pupils, and in all conversations with people of the other sex, must observe great reserve and modesty and make the conversation as brief as possible (Congregation, 1927, p. 169).

Br Patrick Harty's biographer notes that, "It would seem that his instructions on the vow of chastity was surfacial and negative in quality" (Marzorini, 1975, p. 239). This deficiency was addressed in time, of course, when psychological theories became much more refined,

but in the meantime any denial that "the human body is also always a gendered body, since sexuality is constitutive of our selfhood" (King, 2008, p. 343) would have implications for the developing spirituality of young Religious.

At the Congregation's Spirituality Conference in 1982, the former St Patrick's Province (Victoria and Tasmania) specified in its submission to the Conference some of these spiritually damaging implications. One was that masculinity had been allowed to emerge as 'ockerism', something that in itself pointed to an improper formation in human sexuality. Under peer pressure both from within and without the Religious community, to appear thoroughly masculine, there was the tendency for a Brother to accept the notion that a true Australian male was physically strong, highly competitive and got things done in a practical fashion. There was no room for the 'feminine' qualities of receptivity, creativity and gentleness. These were considered to be signs of weakness. As a result, this side of a Brother's humanity was denied and not allowed to take its rightful place. "Such repression had a tremendous retarding effect upon his spiritual growth. The quality of his prayer life would be diminished because of the immature development of this receptivity and openness to the Lord in quiet prayer (Congregation, 1982a, p. 104).

The submission referred to the oft quoted phrase in the Brothers' necrologies, 'He was a man of unostentatious piety', which far from indicating a deepening of his prayer life, was more likely to mean that his prayer was a duty to be accomplished, a duty he fulfilled with dutiful regularity. This deficiency in the Brothers' spiritual formation was frankly acknowledged:

> The education of the Brother in human development was not adequate to face the world of relationships beyond the confined circle of the classroom, boys' home or boarding school, the struggle towards freeing the Brother to be growing in a good sense of his own self can bring him to a deeper respect for, and a yearning to serve, youth (Congregation, 2001, p. 26).

Attempts to address these concerns were made, for instance, when the Province mounted regular educational sessions for the Brothers in areas of spirituality, affectivity, sexuality and intimacy (Congregation, 2001, p. 26). These issues were reflected in Br Christopher's statement:

> *An interesting thing about those years though, we hardly met a woman. I'd say, 'Did I ever even speak to a woman in those five years in the Juniorate?' I had visitors, of course, but not too frequently. My brother brought his wife and so on and I had other visitors, but generally speaking, we didn't meet a woman.*

In fact, to emphasise this imbalance in his relationships, Br Christopher said that even when he left the formation houses, he had no contact with women until he had been teaching for some five years, when the school employed for the first time a lady teacher. He said that he was then twenty-five years of age and had come to realise that, because of this imbalance, there was something seriously amiss in his spiritual development.

Looking back as a mature Religious, Br Ian also reflected on the shortcomings of a spirituality in which relationships were actively discouraged. He remembered that when he went to his first community, conscientiously striving to observe all the Rules and studied information regarding contact with seculars, he knew that he had earned the reputation among the volunteer ladies serving in the school canteen of being 'stuffy'. This, he reflected at the time, was good:

> *It's a lot better than being too free. And, I thought, we'll keep going as it is for the moment and I might free up a bit later on, but the previous man, he had a reputation of being a bit of a – I dare to say a womaniser – I don't mean it in that sense but being too free.*

Br Ian who had made his novitiate in 1945, the product of the prevailing dualistic philosophy, went on to say that it wasn't until many years later, in 1967, that he felt this freedom, "Pymble [Jesuit House of Prayer] would have been the place I first formed what you might say a deep friendship with women."

Br Ian was the member of the pre-Vatican II group who chose to highlight the forbidding of relationships in his initial spiritual formation when invited to reflect on his spirituality. At the conclusion of his interview he considered the most important part of the conversation had been "the tricky one of friendship with women". He recalled that he had met a Jesuit at one time who said that every man worth his salt would fall in love three or four times in his lifetime and Br Ian added with a laugh, "I've had experience of that with

three or four beautiful women but in every case they've gone off and been missionaries somewhere else!"

Br Quentin, as all members of the pre-Vatican II group, had received an initial spiritual formation strong on dualistic exclusivity, affected by the suspicion and distrust with which the Congregation surrounded sexuality at the time he joined. In 1971, nearly twenty years after he had made his novitiate, Br Quentin participated in an 'encounter group' of secular people at Melbourne University whom, he said, "I treated rather cynically, because they

were emphasising feelings as opposed to the thinking things and I said 'No, you think before you feel' and they say, 'No, you feel before you think.' But I never accepted that".

Later, however, when the opportunity came for him to participate in such an experience again, but this time with Religious, Br Quentin, initially hesitant, came to find it transforming.

> *What became transforming [this time] was that we [were invited] to share the deepest elements of our life. We didn't have to, but we were invited to, and out of it all came 'Yes, I was a lovable person', or an attractive person to women, for example … and that transformed my whole attitude to the school and I was more relaxed and more open.*

Negativity and denial seem to have surrounded the matter of sexuality in the formative days of the pre-Vatican II group. Chapter XX, *On Chastity*, in *The Directory and Rules* begins with "There is no difference between the virtue and the vow of Chastity, as far as the subject matter of both is concerned; every sin against the virtue of chastity is a sin against the vow and vice versa" (Congregation, 1927, p. 167).

This is immediately followed by details of the ways in which a Brother could violate the vow of chastity. That there has been a huge shift in the thinking surrounding sexuality is well indicated by the language of the current Rule of the Brothers, "By responding generously to the gift of chastity, we desire to open our hearts to love all people while remaining free from all exclusive human love" (Congregation, 1996, p. 7).

However, the denial and repression of sexuality in the Brothers by disallowing relationships must have been damaging to their psychological wellbeing. Chittester says of that:

> Chaste love, glorious for its commonplace attentiveness, teaches a person the beauty of the loving soul and the fulfillment that comes with the transcendence of the self for the sake of another. To teach chastity and not to teach love is tantamount to teaching spiritual exercises without teaching God. It is a purely mechanical process that leads nowhere for no reason (1998, p. 122).

The spiritual journey of the pre-Vatican II group progressed from a time when complete detachment from family and friends was required and when it was forbidden to form any deep relationship with another Brother. The charity, which was advocated in community, was non-emotional. There seemed to be a 'macho' culture among the Brothers which prized hard work, success and victory and in which Brothers did not share their feelings

with one another. The lives of the members of the pre-Vatican II group paralleled the movement in the Congregation to a more holistic and healthy mode of relationships. As these participants progressed in their lives they were able to revision and renew their spirituality in remarkable ways, but principally by the way they integrated all the experiences of their human lives into personal wholeness. In many cases this required of them a break with the traditions of their cultural background and the traditions of the Congregation.

Spirituality of work. As was discussed above, there are characteristics which describe generically the corporate spirituality of the Christian Brothers. The so called 'active' Congregations, including the Christian Brothers, that were founded in the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries engaged in some form of apostolic work such as nursing or teaching and were all subject to the requirements of Canon law. As a result, while there were distinctive characteristics each possessed, there was also a certain inevitable similarity among them in the expressions of their corporate spiritualty. It appears that the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers are a mixture of many different strands. Schneiders speaks of such diversity of spiritual expressions as characteristic of Congregations such as the Christian Brothers - "their spirituality is a braid of influences rather than a single, totally distinct product of the unity vision of a single founder" (2000, p. 299). What is distinctive of the Australian Christian Brothers, however, is that up until recent times their ministry was solely connected with the work of education of boys and characterised by intense devotion to it.

The participants in the research, who began their spiritual journeys as Religious many years ago, were all trained as teachers and worked only as teachers all their lives. Their interviews indicate that, as young men, they brought to their teaching, so often in difficult circumstances, great energy and enthusiasm and in so committing themselves to the Congregation's ministry, they were expressing their spirituality. Not surprisingly, they experienced great satisfaction in this. As King says, "Many people find deep inner fulfilment and reward in their work if it is chosen and when it involves responsibility and creativity" (2008, p. 36). Action, as Palmer says, "becomes the pathway to personal virtue, to social status, and even to 'salvation' for many modern men and women" (1999, p. 6).

That the work was an expression of spirituality was not always appreciated by the Brothers. For instance, Br Bernard reflected on how he allowed himself to be caught up in the excitement of beginning to teach without much conscious thought of it having any Godly connection. He said that he simply enjoyed the work and that he gave very little conscious thought to the spirituality of it.

> *I enjoyed the excitement and the novelty of it ... Whatever about the plodding and the hardship, which was part and parcel of life then, especially in our situation - being young, I was able to wear these things without too much difficulty.*

To enjoy the activity "on its own terms", as Br Bernard put it, resonates with Palmer's understanding of a spirituality of work. For Palmer, spirituality is being fully alive, (1999, p. 7) and deriving from the work a sense of what Merton calls a "hidden wholeness" (2000, p. 29). Despite conditions often being difficult, these young Religious were generally untroubled by the workload. It is almost as if they were, sometimes intuitively, intertwining the God element with activity. Br Christopher pointed out that in his beginning years there no such things as 'free periods' and that he was required to teach subjects for which he was quite untrained. Classes were big and days were very busy:

> *I had these seventy-five boys in two classes. About thirty-six in each or something! Form Three and Form Four. Well, it was a bit of a juggle but – it was part of the game! And I trained footy teams, cricket teams, you name it.*

Br Ian was another who recalled worked hard in trying conditions and seemed to assume without giving the matter much thought that this was the way to express his spirituality. He also recalls teaching a double primary class of sixty-three boys and having no textbooks.

While these young men met all these challenges as inherent to their being a Brother at that time, there was also a sense that through their teaching and the unstinting giving of themselves with their youthful energy and enthusiasm ran an undercurrent of there being something more. This sense was akin to Palmer's spirituality of action "to co-create reality with other beings and the Spirit" (1999, p. 17), an action which he likens to a sacrament, for it was "the visible form of an invisible spirit, an outward manifestation of an inward power" (1999 p. 17). The pre-Vatican II participants seemed to regard their work in this way.

When asked if the sheer busyness of his beginning years as a teaching Brother influenced his spirituality, Br Lawrence replied in a strong affirmative and claimed that he was well aware of the spiritual dimension of his work at the time. As an older man, he reflected with pride on the Catholic system of education that exists now on the foundation of those years of hard work:

> *The brilliant Catholic education system that Australia has, it's one of the best in the world … And it's a beautiful system. That's the result of the sacrifice of Brothers and Sisters and some priests' orders who worked their hearts out, knowing it was a sacrifice, knowing they were cutting corners, knowing they were delivering something that wasn't quite right.*

At the same time he was quick to acknowledge that a heavy price was paid to accomplish this. Because of the work he said, "We lost some of the best men". In particular he singled out the almost inhuman demands placed on the Brothers who staffed the boarding schools, a feature of the Australian Christian Brothers' network of schools - "The boarding schools just killed our men." He quoted a well-known Headmaster who later in life became a prominent Provincial, "It is a dreadful thing to be in charge of a boarding school; they are destroying the Brothers. It is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week work."

Br Lawrence had the tale of his own breakdown in health to tell as a result of his commitment to work his younger days, "It was very demanding. I had good health, though when I was in my fifties, I had two very severe operations … and I often think that was a result of pushing too hard."

In concluding this section, there can be no questioning the nobility of the apostolate of education and the possibility within it for both the teacher and the taught, for growth as a person and for the transformation of consciousness and soul. Nor can there be any doubt of the wholeheartedness of the commitment given to the task of education by the Brothers. Indeed, hard work does appear to have become a characteristic of the corporate spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers. However, the conversations with the members of the pre-Vatican II group seem to indicate that they gave themselves to their work, at least in their beginning years, without consciously perceiving or performing it with any deep spiritual perspective. The Brothers in their initial years seemed to be sustained in the discharge of quite overwhelming workloads by the novelty and excitement of the work, aspects which would inevitably fade with time.

Spirituality of community. On the completion of their formation, the participants of the pre-Vatican II group, at about the ages of eighteen to twenty, were sent to their first communities to begin teaching. Classes at that time were large and living conditions were often very austere. In these circumstances, some sort of balance between activity and contemplation was attempted by prescribing a rigid timetable for prayer. Br Bernard, in his response to being asked if his spirituality sustained him in his busy life as a teacher at this time, appears to indicate that considerations of the interior life did not loom too largely for him. He knew that as a young Religious he had been very regular in the attending of all the prescribed daily religious exercises and he supposed that this regularity of attendance provided him with some vague sense that what he was doing with his life was in some sense spiritual.

> *They provided a certain structure and framework which encouraged us to realise that we were engaged in something that might be called a spiritual life; that our Religious Lives were somehow supposed to be spiritual lives and to that extent the earlier formation sustained me.*

On the whole, however, Br Bernard could not claim that what was driving him in those years could be described in spiritual terms. He was young and did not seem to notice any hardship or feel the need to draw on his spirituality for support. As a young person it was natural that the affirmation he received, both from his fellow Brothers in community and from those outside the community, became a source of sustenance for him.

In this, however, lay the seeds of potential tension for conscientious young Religious, for the Directory and Rules frowned upon the Brothers forming relationships. The Directory and Rules stated this unambiguously:

> Particular friendships are like a cancer constantly gnawing at and undermining fraternal union and charity, and proving ruinous to the common religious discipline. They are a great obstacle to perfection, keep mind and heart captivated, chase the love of God from the heart, and prevent the soul from being united to God (Congregation, 1927, p. 252).

After years in a formation programme, in which relationships of any kind were discouraged, it is little wonder that a young Religious found affirmation given to him by those outside the community exhilarating. Br Bernard certainly appreciated it and spoke of the happiness he felt in basking in the esteem in which the Brothers were held in the town where he began his life as a Religious. "I responded quite positively to this. The parents looked up to us. I think civil society looked up to us, realised who we were and

treated us with a certain respect."

The members of the pre-Vatican II group commenced their teaching lives as Brothers at a time when the Catholic laity accorded priests, Sisters and Brothers enormous respect and a privileged place in the parish community. This at times served as a kind of heady affirmation for a young Brother. Br Bernard explained:

> *The parish priest was, of course, encouraging. He was very glad to have the Brothers in his school. And generally the people, certainly the Catholic people, were most encouraging, most friendly and supportive. They looked up to us ... That was a source of satisfaction as well. And that source of satisfaction came from the outside.*

It would have been expected that a young Brother, when joining his first community on the completion of his formation, would have been given great support by the older members of his community. Br Bernard's experience reflected that of all the Brothers on the pre-Vatican II group. He acknowledged the encouragement the members of his community gave him to live well the life of a Brother:

> *I had a few very good companions. I was quite happy in that first community for several reasons. One would be the challenge of a new situation for me and the other would be [that] we had good leadership when I was there, and Brothers were part of the sense of purpose and support.*

In community, however, the expressions of spirituality in a young Brother's life were limited to the performance of his work and the keeping of the Rule with all its many prescriptions. Not much thought to the Transcendent was given on all this.

In the lived experience of Br Lawrence, it was the bonding with the Brothers in community that appeared to sustain him in his busy life as a young Religious. His happiness in his first community came from the companionship with other young Brothers:

> *To know lots of young monks ... and we played sports and we played games and we were more or less united against the boss. There was a sense of [unity]. We were a little sub-group in the community, those who were not professed. In my first community more than half the Brothers were of junior profession ... So that was the spirituality I grew up with.*

Br Lawrence found his affirmation from many of the Brothers he lived with in community. He pointed out:

> *I met many other wonderful Brothers. I was instinctively drawn to the men who were thinking and compassionate and kind. They are very special people for me. One of the things I'd like to say in this context is that I had the great good*

> *fortune of falling under the influence of wonderful men, in my early days in … Those guys were scholars and gentlemen. They were splendid men. They were men who were outstanding Religious. Equal or better than I've met in other [Congregations].*

When invited to reflect on how the busy activity may have impacted on his spiritual life, Br Ian replied positively, noting the influence for good on him of the Brothers he lived with, but perhaps with some regret for what might have been had a more structured system been in place. He felt that although he was encouraged and helped by the older Brothers he lived with, there was not in a place a systematic process for delivering it.

> *I think that it would have been great to have had a mentor who would have led us into something a bit more spiritual ... There was incidental mentoring. I had the task of cutting the hair of all these twenty people. Sometimes you'd get a good conversation out of them. The same down at holidays. The incidental trading of confidences – not deep ones, but confidences of some sort … that was good for us.*

Br Owen, when speaking of the maturing of his spirituality, remarked of the communities of his early years, "As Brothers, we had a quality of community and a sort of boyish togetherness, but I would say it wasn't relational." This lack of provision for the cultivation of personal relationships in community life held the potential for serious consequences and is discussed in chapter seven.

At the time when the Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group were joining their first communities after the completion of their formation, many felt that they were left to fend for themselves. Generally, however, life in community was happy and sustained them, even though there seemed to be little perception of any spiritual dimension to this life.

The spirituality of the Brothers at the beginning of their formation does appear to have been diminished because of the denial to form personal relationships.

SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR THIS RESEARCH STUDY

So far, this chapter has dealt with a study of the spirituality of a group of seven Australian Christian Brothers who had their formative years of Religious Life prior to the Second Vatican Council. They shared in common the influences of a culture dominated by the violence of wars and the austerities of economic depressions. They also shared similar experiences in their expressions of the spirituality characteristic of those times, reinforced in traditional Catholic family life and attendance at Catholic schools and expressed largely

in religious practices and pious devotions. When they began their formation in the Religious Life, all under the same novice master, their spirituality seemed to be influenced by emphasis on such external things as dress, separation from the world, the rigid adherence to a prescribed horarium and dedication to hard work. Generally the data gathered from interviews with these seven Australian Christian Brothers indicated they perceived their spirituality at that time to have six predominant characteristics: a sense of duty, a sense of fear of losing eternal salvation, a ready acceptance of dualism, a sense of emotional repression, a total giving of self to work and the sustenance of community.

It appears that this pre-Vatican II group did not, at the time of their youth, see that their spiritual formation in the Houses of Formation was particularly relevant to actual life on their missions. They dutifully followed the rigid and detailed prayer programme in their communities and responded with the utmost generosity to the almost super-human demands of teaching. In doing so, they sensed, with varying degrees of insightfulness, that in this compliance to the prescribed routines of prayer and work they were being good Religious and that they were expressing a kind of spiritual life. There seems to have been a sense that prayer was said only because it was required by Rule. As young men with great energy and fired with a sense of noble idealism, they gave themselves with the utmost selflessness to this life of prescribed community prayer and heavy teaching. They were energised to maintain this strenuous way of life by the thrill and the novelty of being a teacher and the opportunity for the first time in their lives to fulfil an adult role in society. Reference has been made to Palmer's teaching that such work is indeed an expression of spirituality, for work is sacramentalised when we hold the thought that through work we are in fact co-creators in this evolving society (Palmer, 1999). These young Religious appeared to find sustenance to maintain an arduous lifestyle, not through any deepening of an interior spiritual life, but through the affirmation respectfully given them by seculars and the bonding which occurred with the like-minded confreres with whom they lived in community. In this they were anticipating something that would be realised in a more mature form of spiritual expression, the connectivity of all matter and the interdependence of all creation.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT INFLUENCING THE EARLY SPIRITUALITY OF THE POST-VATICAN II GROUP

The Second Vatican Council, which concluded in 1965, was a watershed in the

development of the modern Church and impacted strongly on the spirituality of all Catholics but in a special way on the spirituality of all Religious. For this reason, and because of the significantly changed secular society, it is convenient in this study for the second group of participants to be labelled as the 'Post-Vatican II Group'. This group was made up of the remaining ten Brothers who are named here with the year in which each made his Novitiate. Again, pseudonyms are used:

Table 10
Pseudonyms and Year of Novitiate of the Post-Vatican II Group

Br Neil	1957
Br Michael	1958
Br Francis	1960
Br Harold	1960
Br Kevin	1960
Br Edward	1964
Br Anthony	1965
Br David	1971
Br John	1972
Br Philip	1974

Just as the initial spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group has been shown to have been influenced by the culture, both church and state, of the times in which the participants lived, so, too, it is necessary to explore, albeit briefly, the culture from which the participants of the post-Vatican II group emerged. These participants came from a vastly different society, a society that had enthusiastically embraced Australia's post-war prosperity that considered, for example, that cars, radios, television and telephones were essential to life. What had been considered luxuries to previous generations were now considered the norm. The members of this second group came to Religious Life from a society that had shed the sexual inhibitions of previous generations, made possible in part by the availability of the pill. In general, these men had been shaped by a society in which the youth were far less compliant and had been influenced by the strong opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and conscription. Their society was one in which youth no longer submissively followed rules set by parents or trusted a society that was menaced by atomic destruction. Pope John Paul II, in an address to the World Youth Day gathering in 1981, gave a helpful summary of the characteristics of contemporary youth:

- It is a critical youth which, having considerably increased its cultural assets, is logically led to think more, to reflect, to judge;
- It is a demanding youth which, though it may sometimes exaggerate and succumb to personal selfishness, wants and claims honesty, truthfulness, justice and consistency;
- It is a youth that suffers from the contradictory nature of the ideologies that impinge upon it and from the continual emptying of ideals which it witnesses;
- It is a questioning youth which wants to account for what is happening, which looks for the meaning of its own life and the significance of the history of man and of the whole universe, which invokes certainty and clarity on its own destiny and with regard to its own conduct;
- It is a youth anxious for truth, ideals for which to live, responsibility, moral beauty, innocence and joy (Pope John Paul II, March 7, 1981).

These general characteristics of young people so clearly identified by Pope John Paul II are helpful in identifying the spirituality practised by the members of the post-Vatican II group in this research.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE POST-VATICAN II GROUP IN THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS

The ten participants who comprised the post-Vatican II group had come to Religious Life from a much more prosperous and settled society than their pre-Vatican II confreres. Not having shared the austerities of the Depression and the effects of wars, these young men's experience of family life, social values and a personalised relevant education had shaped them to be confident and articulate young men, independent in forming opinions and fuelled with zeal for social justice. They were rather dismissive of anything that smacked of insincerity and hypocrisy. The analysis of the data gathered from the interviews with the ten post-Vatican II participants indicated six areas in which there seemed to be some general consensus in the expression of spirituality. These common themes have, for the purpose of this case study, been categorised as follows:

- Individual spirituality;
- Inclusive spirituality;

- Spirituality of freedom;
- Spirituality of personal responsibility;
- Spirituality of duty; and
- Spirituality of work.

Each of these is discussed below.

An individual spirituality. Whereas the pre-Vatican II group appeared to find great affirmation in the companionship of community confreres, members of the post-Vatican II group seemed to derive much less satisfaction. Again, this reflected the aftermath of Vatican II when Catholics experienced a greater freedom with new understandings of Revelation. Collins said that Vatican II was an active agent of the great social change that has occurred in the last fifty years. Because of Vatican II, he claimed, "the symbiosis of authority, worship, spirituality and doctrine have broken down" (1986, p. 10). Independence and self-sufficiency became the hallmarks of the twentieth century character. The Western world maintains than an individual attains authentic identity only if clearly separated from others and from the rest of the enveloping world and It was from this culture that the members of the post-Vatican II group joined the Christian Brothers' communities.

Br Michael seemed to weigh up the contribution of the classroom against the support of the community in his spirituality and seemed to come down on the side of his teaching. Br Michael's response hinted also at an emerging tension arising from the way this generation of Brothers, groomed in a culture that assiduously cultivated personal independence, perceived Religious obedience:

> *I didn't hit it off with the Superior/Principal. I thought he was an arrogant man and a bully. But there were other young men there who provided life and energy. There was community and companionship with the younger men you were with. Plus you still had a class of kids, all day, every day.*

He found his teaching exciting and fulfilling. He found the responsibility of looking after a class of small boys very rewarding. This was for him compensation enough for what he felt life in community lacked, "You put up with the community side of things to do that, I think. There was good life in the community, but there was bad life too. But there was more good life than bad."

While there was certainly a sense of bonhomie and affable comradeship in the communities that the young Brothers of the post-Vatican II group joined, they appeared to be much less dependent on the affirmation of their Religious colleagues in the cultivation of their spirituality than were their predecessors. Vestiges of the pre-Vatican philosophy that the formation of any kind of personal relationship was detrimental to spiritual growth and was to be actively discouraged obviously lingered.

Indicative again of a generational difference in attitude, the post-Vatican II members comfortably dismissed much of the Brothers' spirituality that they judged to be of no help to them. As Br Edward reflected, "I didn't feel he [his first Superior] had anything to do with my spirituality." He used his own discretion:

> *I think one of the great things ... one of our greatest gifts, and it's almost our curse, is we give to each guy incredible freedom and you can look around and you see all these guys that have different spiritualties that are now causing problems because we can't put them together in a community. And the greatest thing I am grateful to the monks [for] is the freedom they gave me to follow my path.*

It is interesting to note that Br David, the youngest interviewee, in apparent contradiction to his peers in this group, did find the support of his confreres helpful to his spirituality. He spoke very positively of his early experience of community life and the support he received from his confreres, and the type of prayer programme mandated by Rule pleased him:

> *I loved the community life and I loved the feast days and I loved all the things we did in common. There were so many in community we used to say the Rosary in two groups. One would go up and down the tennis court and the other would go up and down the verandah. You'd be in a group of fifteen and everything had so much life and it was just so exciting ... I really liked my community life and I liked doing things in common.*

Despite some apparent anomalies in the life of his first community, Br Francis reflected a philosophical acceptance of others' differences, a tolerance that was characteristic of people of his generation. At the same time, he spoke of the confidence that he and his companions felt that their approach to spiritual matters would ultimately prevail over what they felt to be the outdated practices and opinions of the older members of the community, "We were young and idealistic and we made friends with all these nuns and priests and we invented the new catechetics and we knew there was opposition to it a little bit, but we had that adventurous spirit."

Even at that time he felt his attitude was instinctive, a natural outcome of the different culture from which his generation came:

> *I think the seeds of that were informal. We weren't prepared for that with theology ... The leadership, I thought, the world leadership and the local leadership were of one generation and we were the upstarts. We were the people who weren't going to stay and all that sort of stuff. That was the image, especially of my novitiate group, when you talk to them. The mantra was 'The sixty group [the 1960 Novitiate Group] has let us down again!'*

When the young Brothers of the post-Vatican II group recognised a tension between the old and the new in the expressions of spirituality on joining their first communities, they simply resolved to trust their own judgement and chose what things to practise themselves. When Br Francis was invited to reflect on any possible tension he felt between the spirituality he was formed in during training and the spirituality the community practised when he first went on the mission, he agreed that there was tension. "Yes, because the institution was struggling with – well, how do you face chaos? It depends. It's a temperamental, psychological thing."

The tension, he thought, was between two groups, one "people who resort to the tried and true, the authoritative fallibilities stuff", and the other, "people who march with the Spirit."

Again, Br Francis admitted that he could rationalise this today with the advantage of hindsight, but he thought that it was there intuitively in his younger days, reflective of the different way his generation perceived the practices of Congregation:

> *That's my interpretation of it now, but at that time it was a feeling that this was right. This was absolutely right. All the people who were arguing with us would have to be dealt with. You know, we just had to survive. And we'd go underground and we'd go over ground. It didn't matter. They weren't going to destroy us.*

Brothers of the post-Vatican II group, while always respectful of their fellow community members, appeared to have the ability to view them realistically, sometimes with astonishing maturity. Br Francis, for example, was aware, even as a beginning Brother, of the absurdity of clinging to some of the traditional religious practices being observed in community as expressions of spirituality:

> *In my first community we had a troubled Superior. I liked him, but he was troubled within himself. [He was] very legalistic ... He was a legalist as to what we wore and all that stuff. You know, it was stinking hot and we'd still have to wear habits because it hadn't come to April 1st, or whatever the date was. We'd*

> *always try to wriggle out of that and have cold drinks at night and there was always a fight on because there were a lot of young Brothers in the community.*

Br Francis' response gives an indication also of the tension that resulted from the generational difference that occurred in community in the kind of education that the newer members had received:

> *Scriptural spirituality was now starting to come in. The Congregation started to read Scripture. I got annoyed with Brothers who wouldn't read anything for five years and then come and pronounce in Chapters and make decisions. I got annoyed because I think we had the opportunities and I tend to be a bit of an academic sort of person. I follow what I'm reading and critique. I'd get very angry with lazy Brothers who would just sit around watching TV, or whatever they did all the time, and never bothered to read what was available – never go to courses.*

Br John experienced a rather violent clash between his preconceived idea of community life and the reality when he moved into his first community. Like most young people of his era he was disturbed by the apparent disconnect between the ideals of Religious Community life given to him in his initial spiritual formation and its reality. He spoke of the rigidity with which his first superior observed the Rule. As a result of this, he concluded that he had, in fact, joined a dysfunctional group of men:

> *The men were always arguing and fighting. It surprised me, and the middle-aged guys were always sort of critical of the boss. The Superior sat at one end of the table and I sat at the other … It was a very tense sort of community.*

To illustrate the disillusionment that many Brothers of the younger generation experienced when they joined their first communities, Br John painted the following vivid, yet sympathetic, picture:

> *What summed it up for me in many ways was a bloke called Br X. who, I believe in his early days, was quite a spick and span, bright young man, but by the time I got to him, he would spend his weekends under the school where there were cellar-like rooms, and he had one of the cellars down there and he used to cut up tin cans for his May Altars, make straps and repair shoes. I remember he reminded me very much of Dr Manette in Tale of Two Cities (the prisoner in the Bastille). I thought all of those guys were sort of prisoners of the system, where they were angry and frustrated and couldn't express their opinions or say anything.*

These men of a younger generation of Christian Brothers, when moving into their first communities, were caught between the spirituality practised by their colleagues, that is, the traditional observance of the prescribed community exercises, and the much more self-modulated spirituality which was more in keeping with the culture of their times. Many of

the participants spoke of the tension they felt between the way in which they had been formed to express their spirituality in the Houses of Formation and the reality of the practice of their first communities. They spoke of the tension they felt when their values and expectations appeared to clash with those held by the more senior members of the community. It seems that most of the members of the post-Vatican II group wanted to share with their senior confreres some of the aspects of community life, such as the ministry of education, but they were not so accepting of the older Brothers' style of community living. It is interesting to note, however, that the youngest Brother to participate in the study did seem to find the traditional style of uniformity in community living satisfying**.**

An inclusive spirituality. Some ambivalence seemed to linger in the formation offered to the post-Vatican II group of novices concerning the extent that they should be withdrawn from contact with secular society. When making his novitiate, Br Anthony could see some need for such a dualistic separation from the secular world and said that he understood at the time that the Brothers were in a period of transition when the thinking about separation from the world was beginning to change. He said that he could accept the reasoning for some separation was required as "there was still a need for a removal from the world in order to immerse yourself in a way of being formed in the culture of what Religious Life was all about and about the spirit of Christian Brothers."

Nevertheless, there was already some sense that this separation from the world was unnatural. Br Anthony, for example, made his novitiate in his own hometown and he could see little connection to his spiritual life in being forbidden to make any contact with his family. He sensed the absurdity of driving past his family home on regular trips to collect the laundry for the Novitiate without being able to visit. He failed to see the relationship to his spirituality of his being refused permission to receive visiting friends:

> *The novice master said, 'You can't see them'. Visits were only at the required time. They [Formators] still operated out of a sense of that spirituality but at the same time we had moved a little bit more into engagement with some of the issues.*

Br Anthony appeared to have been aware that the Brothers of the post-Vatican II group received their formation at a time of transition in the Congregation, when it was not always clear how that formation should be presented, especially regarding withdrawal from the world. Some things were clear, as Chittester points out:

> It is surely true that the old spiritualities of negative asceticism and rigid schedules and total withdrawal and childlike docility to organisational conventions cannot possibly form the kind of spiritual adults needed to forge new ways of being where the needs are (1995, p. 168).

It was less clear what was required to form Religious for the future. O'Murchu highlighted this difficulty when he said, "Religious are faced with a difficult and discerning choice between fidelity to the old paradigm with its strong ecclesiastical protection and the newly unfolding paradigm inviting us to embrace expanded spiritual horizons" (2005, p. 101).

The notion of separating one's spiritual life from life in the world, as used to be so emphatically a feature of the Christian Brothers in Australia, was puzzling to many Brothers of the post-Vatican II group when it was imposed upon them. Br Francis recalled some of these things, "Yes, there was a dualism. We didn't understand it. You had to wear your black clothes and you had to respect every external thing. You couldn't read newspapers."

In the Novitiate, Br Francis clearly saw a disconnect between what he was being given to aspire to and the reality of life in community as he knew it to be. He felt that he merely tolerated the one in expectation of having the other:

> *We knew Brothers. We knew that the Brothers outside were not like that. So I had hope in [them]. I suppose my inspiration didn't come from my school days at all. The Brothers in my school days were hopelessly unimpressive. It was the Brothers I met later at Uni. While I was a Uni student I did some teaching at a Sydney school, at a beginning school. I knew the Brothers there in community. I knew this [the Novitiate dualism] was not going to last.*

Br Kevin appeared to remain unconvinced of the need to withdraw from the world if he wished to be a good Religious as he was taught in the novitiate. Coming from his generation, he instinctively rebelled at the artificiality of perceiving Religious to be separate from seculars and that "somehow, if you went out into the world, you would be contaminated by it in some way. I wasn't quite sure what way."

When asked if, in his formative years, he had been aware of being told to avoid the 'evil' world, Br Kevin replied, "Oh, yes, very much so" but promptly added, "I never bought that anyway". Young men of his generation had been raised to make decisions for themselves

and to eschew anything that smacked of inauthenticity.

> *Even when I was a novice, we used to laugh about it and all those sorts of things. I had a great group of people I went through with and it's interesting what they used to say. We used to laugh about it because there was a great disconnect between what he [the novice master] was saying and the world we grew up in … It was almost a sin to listen to pop music - the culture I'd come from and grew up in.*

From these observations, it seems clear that the post-Vatican II members brought with them to the Novitiate an experience of life in the world much different from previous generations of novices. No longer, as had been the case with all the pre-Vatican II participants, had any of these men entered the Brothers before completing high school. Most had worked for a while after leaving school and some had graduated from University. As a result, they were less disposed to accept unquestioningly religious practices and expressions of spirituality merely because they were traditional or because they were prescribed by authority. They questioned the sense of looking upon the society that had formed them as potentially evil and therefore to be shunned. There was among this post-Vatican II group an intuitive rejection of anything that they felt distorted spirituality. Chittester affirmed this attitude, "Religious life must be a conscious and creative response to the culture in which it exists or it is at best a pious pretence of the spiritual life, a therapeutic exercise in personal satisfaction" (1995, p. 6).

A complementary factor to this theme, an individual spirituality, was the following theme: a spirituality of freedom.

Spirituality of freedom. That the post-Vatican II novices, during their formation, possessed an independence of critical thought not noticeable in the pre-Vatican II group is clear. Br Edward, when invited to reflect on his formation, showed that he carried the discerning attitude fostered in his family into the Formation House, "I came from a family that … would come home from Sunday Mass and criticise the priest's sermon. My parents would put their tongues in their cheek. I grew up with that."

With this background, he was able to discern the strengths and weaknesses of his formators. He was aware that his own novice master was struggling to disengage himself from the strong and pervasive influence still felt from the regime of Br Patrick Harty, the former and long serving novice master. He was able to appreciate that another of his

Formators was well ahead of his time, despite the uninteresting manner of delivery:

> *We had Br X. Now Br X. was a boring, terrible lecturer, but he'd come back from overseas and the stuff he gave us, we took as normal. And for the next twenty years, thirty years, people were saying, 'This is the latest thing since sliced bread', and I was saying, 'I've heard it all before. Br X. gave us that'. So I found the Novitiate, although my behaviour was a bit odd I'm told, quite freeing.*

Another respondent from the post-Vatican II group, Br David, showed a similar freedom to make his own judgement on what was offered to him on his spiritual formation, accepting what he felt suited him and ignoring the rest:

> *I used to go to Mass of a morning even as a kid, so going each day in the Brothers ... wasn't something different. Saying the Office was different and having meditation and lots of spiritual reading. We were given Eugene Cuskelly and [others] ... I didn't follow it much. I read what I had to read but ...*

Br David concluded that his novitiate formation didn't alter his spirituality or idea of God very much. However, when asked to reflect on whether the development of his contemporary spirituality was influenced by the times in which he lived, Br David differed from the others. He, despite being the youngest of the participants, felt that his spirituality had not been helped by the changes that followed Vatican II:

> *My fundamental spirituality is the spirituality of the fifties and sixties. It's the spirituality of the time I grew up in and when the Second Vatican Council started making changes, initially I thought it was just terrific. But I've come to repudiate it all. I don't think it has borne much fruit.*

Br David, however, did feel free to be different in his expressions of spirituality, "and so I am reverting to spiritual practices and things of my youth, because I certainly don't think the Brothers' spirituality … I can't understand it at the moment."

These comments are interesting in their apparent rejection of the changes initiated by Vatican II, for it might have been expected that any resistance to change would have come from some of the more senior participants. Br David, however, was one of the youngest Brothers to be interviewed and claimed to be one of last Christian Brothers still engaged in full-time classroom teaching. His comments were made in the spirit of "responsible dissent" (Arbuckle, 1996, p. 65) and help to expose the pain some felt after Vatican II with the loss of a sense of belonging.

Br Edward's perception of his spirituality in the years of his own formation showed clearly that in the expression of his spirituality he felt free to be himself, distinct from the

spirituality that seemed to be practised by his peers. He recalled that even as a novice he was not encumbered with some of the conscience problems that, he observed, compelled his fellow novices to "run up to Father for Confession before Mass". He simply said, "This is stupid and that was the end of it. I have never agonised." He recalled the pity he felt for a particular old Brother "dying with scruples" and how this sight moved him to reflect with gratitude that his family, education and society had kept him free from such burdens.

Later, when Br Edward himself was engaged in the formation of others, he made this interesting comparison between the freedom to express spirituality enjoyed by his generation with the restrictive nature of the older, former expressions. He described how he was engaged in a combined pre-novitiate programme with the de la Salle Brothers in PNG and observed that whereas the de la Salle Brothers were obliged to follow a prescribed formators' directory by which you "could tell what's being taught in every country of the world at a particular time in the novitiate", he felt that the charism of the Christian Brothers gave him greater freedom. "Our attitude is 'Well, who's going to form this team? What are our skills? What can we teach? Right, well, you do this and I'll do that, and blah, blah, blah.' And that's our freedom."

As has been seen earlier in this chapter, there appeared to be a relatively uniform practice of expressions of spirituality by the members of the pre-Vatican II group but there seemed to be no such uniformity among the members of the post-Vatican II group. Br Michael, in response to being invited to reflect on the extent to which his spiritual formation helped sustain him on the mission, was of the opinion that it failed because of its irrelevancy to contemporary society. He chose his own expressions of spirituality:

> *It was dreadful. The Final Profession preparation was dreadful. I think there was some energy from the pious practices. I think there was some energy in my worldview of things. There were Gospel values that I would like to think I was trying to live by, but they were covered up to a large extent by pious practices.*

Compared to the participants in the pre-Vatican II group who rather uncritically accepted all that they were offered in their spiritual formation, the members of the post-Vatican II group appeared to be more considered and responsible in their choosing to embrace the lifestyle and spirituality peculiar to the Christian Brothers in Australia. This was a state of questions and openness that followed Vatican II for most Catholics. Br Philip described

how he withdrew from the Congregation from the highest of motives and gave his reasons for re-joining it three years later. His expressions of spirituality grew out of his profound sense of God's unconditional love for him. His religious vocation did not displace this but rather enhanced it. As he said,

> *I grew into a space where my commitment was to my God and my own spiritual journey was lived through the Christian Brothers as distinct from a commitment to the Christian Brothers. It's only a subtle difference but a very important difference.*

The absence of artifice and hypocrisy so characteristic of the younger generation was palpable in Br Philip's decision to withdraw from the Brothers. This was a personal, responsible decision. He described how acutely he became aware of what he described as "my own brokenness" and he argued that just as he would not ask a young woman to marry him while he was in this confused state of mind, so he could not commit himself to the Religious Life. As a result, he withdrew from the Congregation just before pronouncing his final vows. There was great pain in this decision. "It was very difficult and I cried and I was very fragile." Br Phillip's expression of his desire for intimacy with God is reminiscent of so much of the writings of the mystics in chapter three, for he said that in the pain of making this decision, "there was a sense of my God still walking with me and holding me." He said the decision was not made from "a sense of religious crisis. I always had a sense of my God loving me despite my 'stuffed-up-ness'."

Br John's decision to express his spirituality in a Christian Brothers' way of life appeared to be arrived at in a similar well-considered way. He, too, described his experience of withdrawing from the Brothers and later re-joining it. Br John's decision was also made in a way that illustrates many of the characteristics of the younger group of participants. Through his acquaintance with the Myers Briggs Personality Test, Br John had developed his own personal expressions of spirituality. He claimed that it was "because of my 'S' and 'J'[2]" that he developed "a real interest in Benedictine spirituality". This drew him to enter the Abbey at New Norcia as a Benedictine novice. It was a decision independently made, partly because he had developed a close relationship with a number of monks of his own age ("I really enjoyed my six months there because of the friends. The monks were very wonderful to me") but mainly because, in the startling honesty of the younger age he

[2] This is a reference to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment of how people perceive the world and make decisions. 'S' is sensate and 'J' is judgement.

"wanted to get this 'God-stuff' sorted out." It is interesting to reflect in Br John's case on the manner in which he applied psychology to come to a decision about how he wished to express his spirituality:

> *Really I'm a control freak kind of person. I like to be in charge, in control. I feel safe when I've got things going my way and I have worked them all out. So I went to New Norcia and to a certain extent the 'J' and the control freak were tapped into, because there it was, this whole structure – eight times a day praying, Lexio Divina, everything I could possibly want. I was on the super-train to holiness and to God!*

Equally interesting, and illustrative of the spirituality of the younger generation, are the reasons Br John left the Abbey, despite being very happy there. He said of his time in the monastery, "I loved the way of life – getting up early in the morning, doing this, doing that, responding to bells." His decision went to the heart of what spiritualty means for a younger person, a responsible response to the inner yearning for intimacy with God, expressed in the way which best suits his circumstances.

I came to this big realisation while I was there. It was yet another insight into God, that I thought I could put God in a box and that if I did all these things everything would be OK. I would be sorted out. God would be sorted out. I was right. I was set. There was nothing distasteful about it but I had this sort of insight into God - that God, being God, could break into my life however and whenever God wanted to. That in my own life as a Christian Brother and as a teacher, God was breaking into my life all the time."

Br John's response echoes the great mystic St Teresa of Avila who said, "The awareness of God's continual presence brings a special knowledge of God, and from this constant companionship is born a most tender love towards His Majesty" (St Teresa of Avila, 1921):

> *I didn't have the eyes for it, but teaching Year 9 boys Maths on the last period on Friday was just as holy and it was just as God-focussed as was going to the Chapel seven times a day and Mass ... which was a good thing, but God would work in my life the way God wanted to. That was another revelation to me. I don't think I necessarily articulated it as that when I made the decision to leave, but there was something there that I realised. Then having re-immersed myself in it [the Christian Brothers' life], I thought, 'No, this is where God [is].'*

It was a significant feature of the members of the post-Vatican II group that even in their formative years they were making personal choices about the manner in which they

wished to express their spirituality. Their decision to commit their lives to God carried an aura of personal responsibility not quite so evident in the older generation.

Spirituality of Personal Responsibility. Whereas the members of the pre-Vatican II group in their formation tended to accept the spirituality offered to them on the combined authority of the Church, the novice master and the Rule, the attitude of the members of the post-Vatican II group was markedly different and was a feature of many Catholics at the time, when more emphasis was given to individual conscience and decision making. This is reflected in the response of Br Francis. When invited to describe the kind of spirituality he thought he emerged with from his formation, he described how he had entered the Brothers after he had graduated and because of this had not been steeped in the in-house Brother's culture exhibited by his fellow novices:

> *I always had the feeling that I didn't have a good grounding in all this lingo, this monastic lingo. I didn't know what a 'raccolta' was and all this stuff. The kids who had come from the Juniorate had this cultural language. So I always felt a bit apart.*

This served only to strengthen his independence, for, with his background, Br Francis had the experience and the maturity to form his own judgments about the expressions of spirituality he wished to use. He explained that in his post-school years he had been formed in a CYO spirituality and had been greatly influenced by the social justice initiatives of the University Chaplains, "There were some famous priests I could name – Roger Pryke[3] and so on; Ted Kennedy[4] was a challenge, who led us students, Catholic students."

Through this experience his spirituality had become quite inclusive, although he said that his Catholic education had left him with a belief that the world was anti-Catholic and bent on challenging his faith. He had been warned against studying certain subjects at

[3] Roger Pryke, (1921-2009) changed thousands of people's lives. Chaplain to Catholic students at Sydney University for a decade before the second Vatican Council (1962-65), he was an early exponent of the major themes that make up the Vatican II event. Students influenced by him became a new type of Catholic. Previous generations had been wary of the university and its values. This generation learned to treasure university values and make them theirs (cf. http://www.smh.com.au/national/obituaries/chaplain-championed-new-kind-of-catholic-20090630-d3po.html)

[4] Ted Kennedy was known throughout Australia as the priest of St Vincent's Catholic Church in the Sydney inner-city suburb of Redfern. He was also chaplain to the University of Sydney. His example of personal poverty and commitment influenced other people and organizations. Kennedy was a controversial figure, not all Catholics or all Australians supported his radical views.
He was often in conflict with the church hierarchy for his activism. (cf http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Kennedy_(priest))

University. His experience at University had disabused him of this mentality and he had formed strong friendships with many non-Catholics, "I made a lot of friends who weren't religious, or they were Protestant or something or other. So I think that got me moving into the bigger [picture] and with this social justice."

As he said, "The Catholicity of the University was much bigger than the Catholicity of the school":

> *So my childhood faith was of a group that were in a minority and were being challenged by Protestantism and the established Church and all that sort of stuff. And [before] going to Uni we were warned at school not to do psychology and not to do philosophy, and 'don't write this in your history'. So I went [to Uni] with this kind of anti-Catholic [outlook], and with a sense that we [Catholics] were a bit alien there. When I got to [Uni] Roger Pryke was a challenge.*

As to whether his formation in the Novitiate concurred with the spirituality he had been living prior to joining the Brothers, Br Francis was less affirming and gives an interesting take on how he coped with the apparent regression he was faced with in his novitiate:

> *We were the generation that were bubbling around with the Vatican II. The theologians of Vatican II, Schillebeeckx and Yves Congar, Karl Rahner and the existential philosophers were in the air, but it wasn't official. [In the Novitiate] we were getting bored out of our brain with scholastic philosophy by Br X. but, under our desks, we were reading Joumet's Meaning of Grace. So there was this new stuff coming out and I don't know how we were picking it up.*

As noted earlier, the Brothers in the post-Vatican II group came from a culture that had encouraged them to think for themselves. Later, when Br Edward himself was assisting in the formation of PNG novices he said:

> *A good Melanesian sermon takes an hour and a half. You think on your feet and you get warmed up. There was a bishop, Patrick. His sermons were terrible. The novices used to turn around and look at me. It made me angry. Now I went to Mass there only because it was expected.*

Later when he was assisting the formation of novices in Africa, he displayed ease in dispensing himself from dutiful conformity to regulation that was causing upset to his older companion. His reaction to the unhelpful Melanesian liturgies was simply not to attend. As he said, "I've grown into that freedom. The main reason I wouldn't attend Mass today is because I get angry. You don't go to a Eucharist to get angry. God doesn't want me to get angry."

The social environment of the sixties and seventies provided opportunities for young

people to develop an independence of thought and action. Br Francis brought this critical awareness with him to his early formation, "I found a lot of it difficult. I found the fact that nowhere in the novitiate was there a chair that you could sit on that wasn't straight backed and wooden. You see, just funny things like that."

He was well aware of the anomalies in his spiritual formation that resulted from lingering vestiges of an older dualism held by his Formators. He illustrated his frustration by relating how during his novitiate year one of his best friends from university was killed in a car accident and he was denied permission to attend his funeral. Younger Religious of this generation were well aware of the need to integrate relationships into their spirituality and resented it being thwarted by what was now demonstrably an outdated application of dualism.

The members of the post-Vatican II group appeared to be less motivated to persevere out of a sense of fear of losing salvation or a sense of disgrace should they return home than their predecessors had been. Indeed, this was a period in Church history when all Religious Orders were losing members in significant numbers. Idealism seemed to play a less influential role in their spirituality than it did in the pre-Vatican II group. There was certainly realism in Br Francis' recalling his mother's earnest reassurance that if he wasn't happy in the Novitiate he would always find a warm welcome back at home. It appears that his mother had heard of the reputation of the old novice master, Br Patrick Harty!

There was also a certain insouciance characteristic of this group in their acceptance of whatever they found strange in their spiritual formation. In speaking about what caused tension in his formation, Br Francis simply said, "I think spirituality. I cooperated with everything and if we thought it was ridiculous, we'd just laugh and have jokes."

Again, in character with their times, these young men did not take seriously things which appeared to them to be absurd. When asked how he coped with such things, Br Francis simply said, "Humour. We'd have a whale of a time. We'd joke and we had some really funny people in our group."

Br John attributes his initial spirituality to the environment in which he grew up, one that he described as a "cultural Catholicism":

> *Things like daily Mass as a child were regular things, certainly during Lent and before exams. Praying the Rosary, being involved first of all in the Legion of*

> *Mary and later in the Young Vinnies were all sort of formative things … So there were lots of experiences as a youngster which formed me.*

Because of this, Br John did not experience any abrupt dislocation in his spirituality when he entered the Religious Life but he does appear to hold some reservations about the spirituality offered him in his Novitiate, still very structured in a traditional manner. He found it easy to adapt to the "devotional approach to spirituality". At the same time, the formation in spirituality offered to him in the Novitiate was not accepted altogether uncritically. He recognised that his novice master "was not a theologian but the goodness of the man came through". He remembered with appreciation how:

> *Each night after tea we gathered in the study and sat at our desks and he went round one by one and we were encouraged to share our insights, reactions, questions as to what had been the reading for the day.*

In this section, the expressions of spirituality of the post-Vatican II group were seen to have been largely self-determined, and determined in thoughtful, responsible ways. This has allowed the young Religious to own his decision and to allow the expressions of his spirituality to be relevant to his times. The dualism of former times that necessitated the separation of the Brother from engagement with society and a distrust of relationships were shrugged off by the members of this group. The expressions of spirituality used by the post-Vatican II group revealed a depth of sincerity and in a sometimes surprising way revealed a close affinity with the sentiments of the great mystical writers of history.

Spirituality of duty. Brothers in the post-Vatican II group appeared to be just as motivated by a sense of duty as their older confreres. For Br Edward, to be spiritual was simply to carry out his duties, whether he felt like doing so or not. He declared that he expressed his spirituality "by being faithful to the Rule, by being a good monk. By that I mean teaching your class, going to class with a bloody cold and all that type of nonsense."

However, some felt that by itself the mere performance of work, no matter how zealously performed, was not in itself a satisfying expression of spirituality. Br Kevin, for instance, even as a young Religious, sensed some reservation about the dutiful observance of the prescribed prayer programme being an authentic spiritual life. He was made to feel in the first community he joined that it was accepted that it was the Superior's job "just to keep everybody up to the mark; to make sure they made it to all those sorts of things, the

spiritual exercises". This, he felt, was to reduce spirituality to "just saying a series of all those sorts of things".

He agreed that as a young man he himself probably accepted that being regular in the performance of the prescribed prayer programme equated to his being a spiritual person, but even in those beginning years, he was beginning to question this assumption in a way that members of the pre-Vatican II group seemed not to. As a product of a different culture, one in which young people were encouraged to express their views, community life at times appeared unnatural. Br Edward couldn't but feel that much of the spiritual exercises that the community performed daily were simply what he called "external things". "I thought it was very shallow, compared to what we now call spirituality." He recalled a lot of the old Brothers saying things like 'I could commit murder or rape somebody, but as long as I was there for morning prayers, that was fine.' Br Edward realised, of course, that this was not to be taken seriously, but nevertheless as a young Brother it did concern him that if a man "kept the Rule" he was regarded as a "good Religious" no matter "how you were treating the kids or how you treated other community members or how you were going yourself, so long as you did all those things, that is attended the community prayers."

Because of the influence of the society in which he had been formed, Br Edward was perceptive enough to recognise the futility of reducing spirituality to what he termed "ritualism". He deplored the emptiness that was the consequence of such a lifestyle and felt the lack of affective expressions in community, "you couldn't really say what you wanted to say or feel, or anything like that."

Br Harold was another post-Vatican II respondent who expressed similar reservations when asked whether the spirituality of his formation years sustained him when he joined his first community. He recalled how all in the community were "geared to a very strict horarium". This, he thought, did not constitute a "deep spirituality".

During his Novitiate, Br Michael, with an ability to make judgements in a way that is characteristic of the post-Vatican II group, appears to have been aware that there was something lacking in the spirituality he was offered. Although he accepted the routine prayer programme at the time because of the "intense institutional nature of the life" he

admitted that in his mind there were always reservations that this constituted a spiritual life. In fact, the very routine appears to have aroused some resentment in Br Michael. He instinctively rebelled against the institutionalising of community life so that "there was no questioning of the way things were done. There was only one this-is-the-way-things-are-done." He felt he had the right to some discussion and engagement over issues.

In contrast to the members of the pre-Vatican II group these younger Australian Christian Brothers, products of a far different culture, evolved a spirituality that interacted creatively with the circumstances in which they found themselves. They made their own responses to the opportunities as they occurred and, on the whole, did so with maturity, deep awareness and a great sense of freedom.

Spirituality of work. The Leadership of the Congregation wrote to the Brothers before the General Chapter in 2008 that central to all the spiritual renewal programmes that they had offered to the Brothers in recent times was the belief that "God is active in our world and that the world is God's agenda" (Congregation, 2008a, p. 14). They referred to the writings of Albert Nolan to support their proposal that engagement with society is integral to spirituality:

> There are Christians who think that one can take Jesus seriously without taking too much notice of what is happening in the world around us. Jesus' spirituality was thoroughly contextual ... Reading the signs of our times is not a matter of looking at our world from the outside as if we were not part of it. We are inextricably enmeshed in its web of relationships. It is our world and we cannot have any kind of serious spirituality except in our world (2006, p. xvii).

That spirituality can be expressed through work seems to be accepted by spiritual writers as was discussed in chapter three. Indeed, any form of spirituality that is not expressed in some form of outreach would be considered suspect. Thomas Merton, for instance makes clear that some sort of active apostolic work is integral to an authentic spirituality:

> First comes the active life [practice of virtues, mortification, charity], which prepares us for contemplation, yet to stop here would be to fall short of perfection. According to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, it is the comparatively weak soul that arrives at contemplation but does not overflow with a love that must communicate what it knows of God to other men (1961, p. 296).

Palmer described spirituality (1999, p. 17) as "any way we can co-create reality with other beings and the Spirit". Palmer likened action to a sacrament when he said of spirituality that "action was the visible form of an invisible spirit, an outward manifestation of an

inward power" (1999, p. 17). Spirituality for Palmer was this conscious intertwining of the God element with an activity, the forming of a hybrid between the two elements and so integrating action and contemplation.

King says something similar:

> Through stretching out of arms, through opening a home, through providing moral and practical help and support, human inwardness can be deepened and transformed (2008, p. 88).

It is true that, for this young Brother of the post-Vatican II group, it was the novelty and excitement of beginning work as a teacher that sustained him as much as anything more specifically spiritual. Br Kevin seemed to grasp the spiritual element of activity early in his teaching career. He thoroughly enjoyed teaching for its own sake and felt immensely rewarded for the work he did in education. He brought a transforming insight to this work that made it essentially an expression of his spirituality. He was grateful to one of his Formators who:

> *took me out of the classroom into something else. That it was about helping a boy develop and grow and change, if possible, and I think that was my guiding light ever since. I think that introduced me to a whole idea of education, that it wasn't just getting exam results and getting through things, but it was something more than that.*

In reflecting on the spirituality of his early teaching days, Br Kevin expressed some regret that it was reduced to work. He said that he "wouldn't have called teaching an expression of spirituality then" because he had become so engrossed in the work that "all else was forgotten". He did recall, but with little conviction, how the Brothers used speak of their schools as "mission" and he felt that he had persuaded himself that "the mission was my sort of life and that was my spirituality." In his beginning years, Br Kevin "thought the quality I brought to my teaching and the person I wanted to become as a teacher was very much what I would now call the spiritual me."

As with all the participants in the research study, the post-Vatican II group took hardship in the life and work of the Brothers for granted. It was simply a part of being a Religious. But whereas the pre-Vatican II group accepted their lot without much comment, the Brothers of the later group appeared to be better able to analyse their situation. This was illustrated in Br Kevin's comment when he said of the rural children in his first class that they gave him the insight that "I couldn't push them to a place that they didn't want to go".

When asked to reflect on whether this hard and challenging work was the expression of his spirituality at this time, Br Kevin agreed, but somewhat cautiously, sensing even then a lack of interiority:

> *I suppose I regarded teaching as a mission, really. In many ways, it was certainly the centre of my life, in the sense that I would use terms like 'I was giving my life to education'. Now, that would be a spirituality, not in the sense that we talk about it today, but in those days ...*

There was little doubt in Br Anthony's mind that hard work constituted his spirituality in the first few years following his Novitiate. He said that he had learnt well the lesson that a "good" Brother was one who regularly turned up for duty. He sensed that no matter what one's individual personality or talents might be, there was a Christian Brothers' mould that all, without exception, had to fit, "being good at school, good in the classroom, good at coaching. Then rushing back and having a shower and turning up at prayer and trying to think holy thoughts. Then going on retreats and things like that."

He went on, however, to describe how this early idealism failed to satisfy him and how it faded fairly quickly. He, early in his life as a Religious, began to question how the pressures and tensions caused by the regime could be termed spiritual when they seemed only to cause him anger and frustration. He said, "It wasn't enough. It didn't make sense. The image/dream/praying, whatever it was, was unsatisfactory and I thought, 'This isn't working'."

This section has demonstrated that the post-Vatican II participants in this research study did not feel the need, as perhaps their predecessors did, to seek their identity as Christian Brothers through their work. They worked just as hard and zealously as their predecessors, but appeared to understand that the work itself without some internalisation did not constitute a deeply satisfying spirituality.

SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

In summary, the spirituality of their formative years, as perceived by the ten members of the post-Vatican II group, reflected the culture of the society and the church in which they lived. They had been formed in a climate of self-sufficiency and autonomous individualism. They brought to their spirituality an independence of thought and the ability to make judgements about religious practices free from feeling the need to defer to authority. These participants had no understanding of, or experience with, the former

dualism of separating the body from the spirit and formed natural relationships inclusive of sex and status. In their view of things, religious practice claimed no particular respect by mere reason of tradition. From the data gathered in the interviews, the members of the post-Vatican II group perceived the spirituality of their beginning years as being characterised by individualism, inclusiveness, freedom, personal responsibility, duty and work.

All the Christian Brothers in this post-Vatican II group admitted to working very hard, often in challenging circumstances, when they left the Houses of Formation. Their work was a selfless commitment to a heavy round of daily duty in the classroom, combined with a demanding round of attendance at community prayer sessions. At this beginning stage of their Religious Life, they appear to have accepted that their work, or to use their word, their 'mission', was essentially their spirituality. Some seemed to regret that their very activity at this stage of their spiritual development seemed to lack an adequate contemplative element.

CONCLUSION

A study of the data revealed recurring themes that enabled the identification of several characteristics of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers at the commencement of their teaching ministry. While there were some spiritual traits common to both groups, probably due to the ethos and charism peculiar to the Congregation of Christian Brothers to which all the participants belonged, there were far more significant differences between them. These differences could be attributed to two principal causes. Firstly, the coincidental fact that all in the first group received their novitiate formation from the same long serving, untrained novice master while those in the second group received their novitiate formation from various, specially trained novice masters showed the powerful influence of the Formator on the spiritual development of the novices.

Secondly, the data clearly indicated that the significant differences in the social and ecclesial milieus in which the members of the two groups had been raised and educated, first in their families and then in the Congregation of Christian Brothers, exerted their own significant influences on the shaping of the participants' expressions of spirituality.

In summary, then, the characteristics of the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group in their formative years were identified as being motivated by a sense of duty, a sense of fear and

strongly influenced by the current dualistic separation of the spirit from the world with its consequent repression of many normal human emotions. Theirs was a spirituality that found expression in hard work, sustained in large measure by the camaraderie of living in an all male community. By contrast, the characteristics of the spirituality of the post-Vatican II group were far more freely chosen. They showed a much more mature ability to judge and reject what was shallow in spiritual expressions in favour of more personally honest expressions. The members of the post-Vatican II group were as committed and as zealous as their older confreres to the work of the school and in their beginning years also equated hard work with spirituality.

Table 11
Characteristics and Features of the Pre-Vatican II Group in their Formative Years

CHARACTERISTICS	**FEATURES**
Duty	Conformity to routine prescribed by Rule. Fidelity to horarium a virtue, even if mindless. Group uniformity of practice the measure of its virtue. Imposition by Canon Law of monasticism on a non-clerical group.
Fear	Failure to persevere merited eternal damnation. Reinforced in training by public humiliating penances. Reinforced by the contemporary cultural Church context. Cultivation in the Congregation of 'manly' practice of accepting hardship.
Dualism	Dichotomy between spiritual and the corporeal. The world is evil and is to be avoided. The flesh is potentially evil and is to be disciplined. Sustained by pious devotional exercises.
Repression	Total detachment from family, loss of adolescence. Friendships with both sexes strongly discouraged. Sublimation of sexuality: - "ocker" masculinity; and - driven competitiveness. Negative treatment of vow of chastity. Damaged psyches.

Work	Mono-ministry of education. Work was spirituality. Extremely heavy loads and difficult conditions accepted as the spiritua norm. Great commitment and near heroic dedication. Sustained by youthful energy, the taste of some personal responsibility and transient and novel excitement. Pursuit of university education on top of daily work load.
Community	Inspiration of exemplary elders. Affirmation from parents and students more than from confreres.

Table 12
Characteristics and Features of the Post-Vatican II Group in their Formative Years.

CHARACTERISTICS	**FEATURES**
Individual	Personal judgments about expressions of spirituality. Free from any need to conform to practice. Respectful, but conscious of community tension caused by their newer expressions of spirituality.
Inclusive	Integration of the world with spirituality.
Freedom	Carried the critical faculty from their cultural upbringing to their formation in spirituality. Exercised personal responsibility in the choice and practice of spirituality.
Responsibility	Not constrained by authority, tradition or regulation. Recognition of the disjunct between the spirituality of the Formation House and the reality of life in Community. Self confidence.
Duty	Conformity to prescribed religious practices not necessarily authentic spirituality. Breaking away from institutionalism.
Work	Considered as contributing to, but not exclusively comprising, the practice of spirituality. Respectful of the excessive activity of former generations but held no desire to emulate them.

It can be seen from these tables that while there are distinctive elements of spirituality peculiar to each, there are others that are common to both. The post-Vatican II group also had a spirituality motivated by a sense of duty and expressed in hard work. However, the spirituality of their formative years contrasted with that of the older group inasmuch as it tended to a more individual expression, chosen for its personal relevance. Theirs was a spirituality of freedom and it was characterised by an inclusivity that eschewed the dualism of previous times. The members of this group assumed responsibility for their own spiritual growth rather than being dependent on conformity to a prescribed regimen of religious exercises as the pre-Vatican II group seemed to be.

CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS B: UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

In chapter five, a rationale was offered for the division of the participants into two groups, the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group. The cultural contexts and influences on each group's expression of spirituality during the participants' early years as Brothers was considered. This chapter will continue the discussion. It will focus on the participants' contemporary expressions of spirituality and note the extent to which these expressions have changed from their early formation. As well similarities and differences, if any, between the two groups will be identified. The changed social context, which was influential in shaping the contemporary expressions of spirituality, is first considered.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The pre-Vatican II group had lived through remarkable and sometimes tumultuous changes both in society and in the Church. Australia in the post-war years had grown into an economically prosperous country that offered opportunities for personal self-development and confident self-expression not enjoyed during the depression and war years (Shaw, 1984, p. 203). A submission from the former St Patrick's Province (Victoria/Tasmania) to the International Spirituality Conference of 1982, indicated that the Congregation Leaders were not unaware of this change:

> The affluence and the accompanying hedonism taint the world of the Brother. He has to live his following of Christ poor, chaste and obedient to the Father in a world which listens to no God, where material goods abound, where the search for pleasure impedes the search for meaning of life … (Congregation, 1982)

Among many indications of a newfound sense of an individual's right to express disagreement with authority was the public agitation surrounding Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The Vietnam Moratorium protests indicated also the strong social conscience that had emerged in society. Another significant change in the sociocultural context in which the pre-Vatican group developed their contemporary expressions of spirituality was the abandonment of the White Australia policy and the emergence of Australia as an advanced multicultural society. There developed in Australian society a sense of inclusivity, of tolerance and respect for the human rights of all immigrants who came from a great variety of nations, societies and cultures (Bouma, 2006, p. 114). There was also in Australian society generally the loss of inhibition in expressing emotions, replaced with the experiential philosophy of "trust your feelings; trust what your body

is telling you, attend to the inward working of the spirit; listen to the small voice within" (Bouma, 2006, p. 91).

The pre-Vatican II group had also lived through rapid and great changes in church culture. As the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council took effect, the traditional forms of devotion to which they had been accustomed lost their relevance and faded away. As Collins said, "A changing liturgy is the symbol of a changing Church" (1986, p. 64). Catholic laypeople began to exercise a role in what had previously been a hierarchically dominated structure. Morwood states of this new church culture "everything is being questioned. What seemed to be rock-solid, unchangeable aspects of belief are now questioned and even discarded" (1997, p. 133). An illustration of the contrast between the contemporary exercise of independence of thought and the former church ethos of demanding unquestioning obedience (Southerwood, 1980, p. 177), was the example of two Melbourne priests who publicly disagreed with Cardinal Knox's questioning of the morality of the anti-Vietnam war protests[5] and were subsequently disciplined by him.

Cultural influences such as these helped the passing of the expressions of spirituality in the Church known to the members of the pre-Vatican II group in their youth. Culture is the foundation of spirituality (Arbuckle, 1996, p. 42) but as culture is ever changing, so is spirituality ever evolving. For example, a newer and more relevant expression of spirituality was indicated in the 1989 New Year's Peace Message of Pope John Paul II[6] in which he made a strong statement on the need for education in ecological responsibility. The Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group developed the spirituality of their mature years against the backdrop of these sociocultural influences.

A thematic analysis of the expressions of contemporary spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group led to an identification of the following:

- Spirituality of freedom to choose a personal form, time and place for prayer;

[5] Frs V Noone and G McLoughlin, (Southerwood, 1980, p. 177)

[6] "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation" is a papal document written by Pope John Paul II in 1989 (*L'Osservatore Romano* - English edition, 18-26 December 1989), which also served as his message for the World Day of Peace in January 1, 1990. The message acknowledged that "the ecological crisis is a moral issue," that the immoral use of resources is the root cause of all environmental problems. The story of creation is highlighted in the message, which explains man's [sic] responsibility (dominion) over other creations of God. And though man [sic] has thought of ways to cultivate God's creations, we tend to not use, but abuse it.

- Spirituality through a renewed sense of mission;
- Spirituality through self-determination;
- Spirituality of liberating relationship; and
- Spirituality of cosmology.

Spirituality of freedom to choose a personal form, time and place for prayer. When the participants of the pre-Vatican II group left the Formation Houses to begin life on the mission, it was the regularity in attendance at the prescribed spiritual exercises that was the criterion against which their own and the community's worth as Religious was judged by the Annual Canonical Visitor. Regularity, according to the Rule they then followed, was the "great means of their sanctification … for God attaches great graces to regularity … Regularity is also the best support, nay, the sustaining power of all religious communities" (Congregation, 1927, p. 214). It may have been difficult for these more senior Brothers, schooled in this attitude, to change their ways and not be disturbed in conscience at deviating from the spirituality of their formation, particularly in the light of the following explicit Directive – "Regular and punctual observance ought to continue throughout one's entire life, no exception being claimed on account of age, infirmity, office or employment, and no dispensation from the Rule being sought unless through real necessity" (Congregation, 1927, p. 215).

From their early years as Religious, the participants in the pre-Vatican II group understood that their spirituality consisted in the exact observance of Rule, which, in turn, demanded the most regular attendance at all the prescribed daily Religious exercises. The analysis of the data in chapter five showed that the conscientious observance of such external religious practices by the Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group gradually gave way to more personalised expressions of spirituality. Br Bernard was aware of his own shift from this mindset. He said that as the years went by he began to find frequent common prayer "more problematic" and noticed this change of attitude in himself. In his beginning days, when he found the routine prayer programme tiresome he would, he said, simply have shrugged it off without giving his feelings any thought. Now, he admitted, he is conscious of some irritation with having to follow a fixed prayer routine, "even after the Prayer of the Church was introduced after Vatican II, there was still the obligation to meet together and say it."

In speaking about this obligation to regularity in the performance of the spiritual exercises, Br Bernard recalled his growing awareness of the lack of any internalisation when saying the Office in common. "We needed to go through it at a certain time and at a certain pace. It wasn't always a stimulus for reflection or personal transformation because of the time limit and the nature of the recitation."

Speaking of his contemporary spirituality, Br Bernard was in no doubt that it was not a regular communal set of prayers that best satisfied his needs, "over the years the opportunity to have more freedom and more time to pray and to read according to one's needs was a great improvement and, in my case, a necessary change which I appreciate."

Br Christopher, a very senior participant, was another who gave the impression that, initially, he accepted the change from the traditional way of community prayer somewhat cautiously. When invited to reflect on this change, he said that he was worried that with the abandonment of a prescribed prayer programme nothing had replaced it. He appeared dismissive when he said of the Brothers' contemporary prayer practice, "when our numbers were big, there wasn't much time for the individual, go-off-by-yourself stuff which [occurs] nowadays."

However, this participant, at the age of 83, seemed to do more than just "handle it". Whether he was aware of it or not, he appeared to have arrived at a deeply satisfying contemplative stage in his contemporary spiritual life. When describing his contemporary prayer, he said:

> *Well, I talk. I talk to God. I talk to Christ readily. Not only on the official occasions, when saying the Office, Mass, but also just sitting in the Chapel. I find that easy. And … with all the troubles in the world and all that, I've just got to leave it in his hands.*

The freedom to choose the form of prayer and the time and place to pray seemed to result in a blending of the traditional with the contemporary in Br Christopher's spirituality. He appeared to have retained many of the prayer practices of his formative years, but in the maturity of his contemporary spirituality, he took advantage of the freedom he now had to invest them with a contemplative interiority previously lacking. The way in which he described how he now said his Rosary is particularly reflective of the mystical union of the mystics described in the literature review:

> *I say the Rosary every day. It's a wonderful picture book of faith, hope and charity. I do it differently at times. Sometimes I say the Rosary, but just the Annunciation. I just go and sit in the corner of that room [of the Annunciation] and watch what's happening. I just tell the Beads. I mightn't even say the Hail Mary … I have seen many artistic representations of the Annunciation and if you look at the eyes of the angel, they are looking straight to the womb of Mary. I would say the Rosary often that way … I just sit out in the Garden [of the Resurrection] and watch them rolling the stone and, you know, I'm there. I'm in the crowd at the Crucifixion. I don't think I'm belittling the Rosary by doing it that way.*

Br Christopher had very comfortably allowed himself to let go of the rigours of conforming to prescriptive prayer and found some self-justification in doing so by referring to Bishop Cuskelly. The Bishop had told him of his own prayer practice while travelling and for Br Christopher this was authority enough to adopt something similar:

> *The Office … I find in my travels – I roam around the world … I don't turn ahead or paper chase. I just read the first bit, but I read all through that, what it's about today, and then I might read just a psalm … Then I might read the Benedictus and so on.*

Thus, Br Christopher still showed some sense of deferring to authority which was so much part of the religious culture during his earlier years.

Br Lawrence, having spoken a little disparagingly about his spiritual formation – "Keep the Rule and the Rule will keep you, but don't think, whatever you do!" - went on to describe how he had used his freedom to form his contemporary prayer, "I don't pray as much as I did in the old days. Although I talk to God a bit, when I'm travelling around and driving cars and things like that." Br Lawrence sensed that the quality of his prayer had been improved with the removal of a sense of duty that obliged him to pray with others at certain times:

> *I find the Office beautiful … I mean the Psalms are the best part of three thousand years old … I go to the Chapel when I get up, so [the time] changes. I don't have bells any more, but I go to the Chapel and I recite my office.*

Br Lawrence experienced much satisfaction from unstructured prayer times and he derived much consolation in times of stress from a far simpler form of prayer:

> *After I've said my Office I spend a combined time of about half an hour in prayer and a lot of my prayer now is very simple … (Nobody has ever asked me this except my Spiritual Director). I've got these little phrases like, 'The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the presence and the power, healing me, forming me into the likeness of Jesus'.*

With the freedom to pray in a way that suited him best, Br Lawrence had developed something akin to that consciousness spoken of by the spiritual writers such as Merton discussed in chapter three.

> *I try to say that. I say it and breathe out and have a breath and say it and try to set things aside. 'May your presence bring me peace.' I think I've had that one for about twenty-five years. When I'm worried, when I'm bullied, when I'm trying to put up with child abuse cases and people say when they hear you are a Christian Brother, 'Are you gay, or a child molester or something?'*

Freedom in the choice in what prayer to say had become important to Br Lawrence and he made good use of this freedom to enhance his contemporary spirituality. He described how each year he made a point of reading each of the four Gospels. His contemporary prayer programme was a gentler regimen than when he was younger, but he seemed to have invested it with a greater sincerity. The deep personal hunger for an intimate union with God, so vividly described by the mystics (cf. chapter three) is present in the phrase that Br Lawrence has taken from the Book of Revelations and used as a mantra:

> *'Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus' ... Sometimes in the evenings, I have my tea, then I wander up to the Chapel and say Vespers and Compline. And I think about some of the things we were doing during the day, things I 'stuffed up'.*

Br Gerard in his mature years had used the freedom given to him to develop his own personal expression of spirituality to immerse himself in the Charismatic Renewal Movement. This personal choice of prayer seemed to bring him serenity and fulfilment in a way that, previously, the routine observance of the Brothers' prayer programme had failed to do. He described how his involvement with the Charismatic Renewal Movement had brought Scripture alive for him "in a remarkable way", "the Mass suddenly changed from being a duty I did to a love response. And I heard with open ears different descriptions of the rhythm of the Mass."

Nor was this experience a passing affair. Br Gerard spoke of how he had integrated his prayer into his everyday life far more closely than the previous communally prescribed prayer had enabled him to do:

> *And it still talks to me. And I heard the value of the Communion time and priestly blessing at the end. Now I still use the priestly blessing to target my areas of weakness and I can see the change that comes with the result, because that's the blessing of Christ.*

The transformation of the expressions of his spirituality was apparent to Br Gerard and he

consciously nurtured the mystical contemplative elements of it:

> *My whole faith experience changed from 'do it out of duty' to a love relationship. And these days, in between doing jobs, the thousand jobs that I do, I walk around and I tend to be praying inside. I just enjoy going for a walk ... walking the streets and the hills round about and I'm just quietly praying. So that's changed from something that was duty to something that's love.*

As an older Religious, Br Quentin seemed to approach the development of his spirituality from both an intellectual and an existential perspective. His contemporary spirituality appeared to have become something that could inspire him much as in the ideal described by King, "In heart and mind to seek and find deeper awareness, enlightenment and transformation" (2008, p. xi). When Br Quentin was invited to reflect on how his contemporary spirituality differed from what it had been at the beginning of his Religious life, he said that, although it had changed tremendously, he retained some sense of dissatisfaction with it. "I'm still not satisfied that I have understood the meaning and purpose of life and who God is. Very few people do, if anyone does."

Although he acknowledged the essential place that prayer holds in spirituality, he described why he had dropped some of the traditional ways of praying of his beginning years:

> *Let's take the Rosary for example. I would have said the Rosary faithfully over the years but somewhere along the line, in the sixties, I thought to myself, 'This is childish'. Here we are doing two things at the same time and, just from a human point of view, they're not consistent - to be saying a prayer and, at the same time, thinking about, or meditating, upon the mystery of that particular decade. Just in terms of common sense, it didn't make sense to me. So I have dropped the Rosary as a prayer completely.*

Br Quentin did, however, make the point that while he may have abandoned some traditional devotional practices, such as the recitation of the Rosary, in the evolution of his contemporary spirituality, he had chosen to retain the practice of attending Mass. In the less structured and controlled form of spirituality now available to Br Quentin, he had determined for himself how to express his spirituality rather than conform to tradition or official Church practice. The ability to choose was important to him:

> *The one thing that I have held onto is the Mass. I still firmly believe that the Scripture records that Jesus said, 'Do this in memory of me.' Now I would have changed my understanding of what goes on at Mass quite significantly, but it*

> *still means a lot to me, and still is something I identify with – only we do this in memory of Jesus*.

The data shows that in various ways each Brother in the pre-Vatican II group embraced the opportunity offered to him by the Congregation to develop an individual spirituality best suited to his personality and needs. Their spirituality had been packaged for them during their formation in a particular style and these Brothers, conditioned by the culture into which they were born to be accepting and amenable, had adopted it without question and tried to be faithful to it. Over a period of time, however, they all appeared to question the relevancy and the value of this initial formation and sought to replace it with a spirituality more personally meaningful and satisfying. This was not an easy or comfortable process for either the Brother or the Community. However, the Leadership of the Congregation in more contemporary times appears to be giving encouragement to the Brothers to make this shift. Recently the Superior General in an address to Leaders of Religious Congregations said as much:

> It all comes down to our image of God. That is the central piece of the jigsaw. Our image of God that has been handed down to us is undergoing cosmic change. The sad thing is that we are being discouraged, in the name of orthodoxy, from embarking on this journey by people who are afraid that the emerging image of God will demand huge changes in worldview and therefore behaviour – this will challenge and expose their vested interests (Pinto, 2011, p. 2).

The Superior General, interestingly, then drew upon the wisdom of the Sufi mystic Hafiz to add weight to his opinion:

> Dear ones,
> Beware of the tiny gods frightened men create
> To bring an anesthetic relief to their sad days
> (Pinto, 2011, p. 2).

That the Superior General should seek to support his encouragement to the Brothers to be more inclusive in their spirituality by appealing to a verse from a Sufi poet is in itself an acknowledgement that the influence of God for the Christian Brothers today is not constrained by the boundaries of Rule or tradition, those 'tiny gods' that 'frightened men' have created for themselves. His acknowledgment of the contemporary influence of Sufism on Western thought might be seen as an encouragement to the Brothers to admit into their lives a spirituality grounded in the experiences of their own bodies and their

connectedness with all creation.

The Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group appear to have moved well away from the closely defined practices of community prayer of their younger days and all seemed to have embraced the freedom offered to them to express their spirituality in a wide diversity of contemporary ways. Some seem to have retained certain elements of the traditional practices of their younger days, but now express them in a more contemplative manner. Others appear to have found deep fulfilment in expressions of spirituality that bear little resemblance to traditional Church practices. This evolution of spiritualty appears to have resulted from deep reflective consideration and each participant in the study seemed well able to articulate a rationale for the particular spiritual expressions that he had adopted. It is interesting to note the ease with which some more radical forms of spirituality, which would appear to be at odds with official Church teaching, have been embraced. These participants appear to have dispensed with all vestiges of a God who needs to be placated by dutiful attention to ascetical practices and have moved to an experience of God that is not merely knowledge or understanding. They appear to have arrived at a mystical consciousness of awe and wonder that has prompted an inner transformation very akin to that described in the writings of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross.

Spirituality through a renewed sense of mission. When the members of the pre-Vatican II group received their initial formation in spirituality, it was intended that they would give expression to that spirituality mainly through education. Although the Rule stated that the "general end" of the Institute was union with God, the "particular end" was education (Congregation, 1927, p. 11). Schneiders claims that the particular end of a Religious Congregation is certainly "relative, if not instrumental in relation to the primary end" (2001, p. 145). The Rule that these Brothers lived at that time spoke of it in these terms, "The spirit of this Congregation is a spirit of faith and an ardent zeal for the religious instruction of youth and their training in Christian piety" (Congregation, 1927, p. 13).

The Congregation at that time offered very few ministries other than that of the classroom and as young men, the members of this group showed through their responses that they had embarked on their teaching careers with great enthusiasm. They found the work exciting and immensely fulfilling. Frequently they worked under difficult conditions with

huge classes, often double classes, and with very few resources, but, in general, they all appeared to take this as normal for Religious Life. Speaking of the typical Brother of that time, a submission to the 1982 International Spirituality Conference stated:

> He took on tasks that demanded unbounded energy. The need was great; the effect of giving of this energy could be seen in churches and schools, in growing numbers of Catholics. The contemplative-active balance of his daily living was maintained by a rigid timetable for prayer, which assured him of a foundation of Faith to his activity (Congregation, 1982a, p. 104).

Since those times, however, the members of the pre-Vatican II group had passed the retirement age and they were no longer engaged in schoolwork. However, as they all indicated, their contemporary spirituality, now quite diverse in expression, still seemed to move them to continue to seek ways of engaging in service with society.

It seemed clear that the participants did not regard their pursuit of a spiritual life as an end in itself, that is, limited only to their own personal transformation. That the belief that spirituality, to be true to its aims, should be expressed in some form of reaching out to others is endorsed by King, "If understood in an inclusive, integral sense, spirituality must affect both personal and social transformation in all spheres of life" (2008, p. 19).

This was reflected by Br Lawrence, who, at eighty years of age, was proud to claim that, in his "sixty-first year of active ministry", he placed his experience and high educational qualifications at the disposal of the local diocesan seminary where he continues to work three mornings a week as registrar and lecturer in Scripture. He saw this contribution as integral to his spirituality:

> *I don't believe I'm a workaholic, but the work that I do is my life and as long as I can, I'll do it. I'm very fortunate to have an interesting job because it's what I can do and I'm good with the people. And it's a form of support for the Church.*

The participants of the pre-Vatican II group were well aware that a few Brothers had left the Congregation later in life to seek ordination to the priesthood, perhaps believing that in retirement an older priest could still actively make a contribution in ministry to others, while a retired Brother seemed to have little to offer after their work in the classroom ended. Nonetheless, the data gathered in the interviews indicates that retired Brothers did find an expression for their spirituality in a number of works. Br Lawrence, for instance, offered his impressive academic qualifications to the education of seminarians, well aware of the stereotypical thinking among some Catholics who consign Brothers to a lower rung

on the ecclesial hierarchy, "In a quiet way at the seminary … I don't go on about it, but I witness that there are other vocations in the Church apart from the priesthood."

To illustrate this, he told of the occasion when a woman at a social function at the Seminary called him 'Father' and when advised that he was a Christian Brother, she asked, "Are you in charge of the grounds?" At the time he was, in fact, the Seminary Registrar and a lecturer in Scripture.

A further example was Br Ian, who, in his mid-eighties, used his own cosmological spirituality and scientific scholarship to conduct well-patronised retreats in the Flinders Ranges. He also contributed his experience in education to various committees. He related how he had not long before his interview completed a project for the local Catholic Education Office:

> *For five months we've been trying to 'greenify', if you like, trying to get an ecological conversion through to all the Catholic schools, and … it was good to be there and sometimes to alert them to something they had overlooked.*

While the interviewees were modest in speaking about any ministry they had taken up in their retirement, the value of the contribution they were making sometimes came through clearly. Br Ian, for example, spoke of one incident when he, although retired from teaching, was invited to be a member of a team reviewing some aspect of Catholic education. He recalled the satisfaction this gave him and clearly perceived his intervention as an expression of his spirituality:

> *In all of that project, there was this one thing that I felt was lacking and I told them so, the awe and wonder and so forth, the mystery and thrill. So I was given an hour and a quarter for one of the sessions in which I attempted to do that for all these people. And so we had the big table set out with magnifying glasses. I had gone around and captured all sorts of beasties and insects and so forth. I tried to get the people there to see that there is wonder and beauty far beyond what we see normally. Just with a ten-pound magnifying glass. It was very interesting.*

Br Ian hoped that his contribution would bear fruit in bringing these Catholic educators a bit nearer to God. "If a few of them came out of that with their own microscope or their own magnifying glass and if on their hikes they use it, then they'd have a deeper idea of God."

Br Gerard, in his mid-eighties, continued to go to school each day and was available as a counsellor to students and staff. He described how he was a Spiritual Director to a number

of people, including local seminarians, and led a Charismatic Prayer group in their weekly sessions. When asked if his spirituality was still being expressed through activity now that he was retired from the classroom, he agreed. He described how he looked on the work that he did as "a response to the Lord" for he had some time previously suffered a severe heart attack and saw his recovery as time given to him by the Lord to do something with:

> *I try to respond to the Lord, to the gift of my life … I deliberately stayed with the Charismatic Renewal groups to nurture them. This was a deliberate choice by me, that I would nurture them by staying with them … It's one way of responding to the Lord.*

Br Quentin certainly continued to give expression to his spirituality through activity. He said that he was happy because, despite his senior years, he still had things he could do. He detailed a list of them and it was surprisingly long and varied. Much of it was concerned with the community of which he was the Leader, but there was much also that was an outreach to others, such as his involvement with the Aboriginal Ministry. While he admitted to deriving satisfaction from being in charge of various responsibilities, the work remained an expression of his spirituality, not of self-indulgence:

> *But at the same time there are valuable and positive things to do. I go to the Aboriginal Ministry. I went there about eight or nine years ago and I said to myself, 'Quentin, I'm coming here and I will not give directions. I will not take charge. I will not under any circumstances take any leadership. I will be a servant as much as I can.' And I've done that pretty well, I think.*

It became clear from the responses that the members of the pre-Vatican II group have, in their senior years, continued to express their spirituality in work, the nature of which acknowledged not only the change in their own personal circumstances, but also the changed understanding of mission in the Church no longer being limited solely to education. As one Christian Brothers' Congregational document put it:

> We regard mission as our basic call in the Church. No longer is it seen synonymous with our traditional ministries. We have broadened our sense of mission to bring it more in harmony with the Church's mandated responsibility for the whole world. Walls have been breached and that restricting compartmentalising no longer dominates us (Keating, 1995b, p. 19).

The members of the pre-Vatican II group seemed to express the maturity of their spirituality in remarkably diverse and creative ways. Their desire to continue ministry in old age has kept alive their own God-quest and has continued to inspire others. This desire

to continue to express their spirituality in work seems to accord with Chittester's words:

> When where we are has become enough for us, the spiritual quest has died in us. The spiritual quest means that we will never be satisfied with anything less than the spiritual life lived to the hilt in the life-growing graces of the material world around us (1995, p. 51).

Spirituality through self-determination. The wording of the preface to the Christian Brothers' Constitutions which were distributed to the Brothers following the 1996 General Chapter implies that it is the Church that legitimates the existence of the Congregation. The Preface to the Constitutions is a Vatican Decree in which it is clear that the Christian Brothers exist as a recognised Church entity by the grace of Church approval:

> This Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has received and given careful consideration to the revised constitutions presented by the Superior General of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers, following their approval by the twenty-eighth General Chapter. By virtue of its authority to erect, guide and promote institutes of consecrated life, with the present Decree this Dicastery approves, within the limits of canon law, the text of the constitutions, as amended according to its earlier observation (Congregation, 1996, p. ii).

This official recognition of the Christian Brothers, however, is largely ecclesial, not spiritual or theological. As the Vatican Council II made clear, the relationship with God to which Religious aspire is no different from the relationship with God for which all people, whatever the form of life they live, yearn. Lumen Gentium (1964) stated that all people, by reason of their baptism, have "the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity."

Lumen Gentium (1964) teaches that in the matter of relationship with God, all are equal:

> There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because 'there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus" (Lumen Gentium, 32).

This idea of equality before Christ is of particular significance to the spirituality of Christian Brothers. A Religious Congregation of men, none of whom is ordained, is a somewhat anomalous phenomenon in the Church. The members of such a Congregation are given no place in the structured hierarchy of the Church, but their distinctive form of

life is officially recognised as being Religious. Religious Brothers, hierarchically undistinguished, share with the laity the same call to holiness and identify with them rather than with the clerics. This is in the spirit of the words of Lumen Gentium (1964), "Thus it is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity."

The Vatican Council saw that the call to holiness is the same for all and that all share in the same response, the call to service for others:

> They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour (Lumen Gentium, 40).

While it might appear that a congregation such as the Christian Brothers falls between ecclesial cracks and exists somewhere in an intermediate stage, halfway between the laity and the ordained, this very state gives its members enormous freedom to develop a spirituality unfettered by Church canons. It was interesting then to discover how some of the Brothers who participated in this study had used the freedom offered them as lay Religious to develop a spirituality that was creative, challenging and genuine.

This freedom to determine one's own spirituality, the expression of which at times may, perhaps, be at odds with traditional forms of expression, was exhibited by Br Owen when he was asked if he related to God (or by whatever name he used to refer to the Transcendent). He replied that he now did not relate to the God of his younger days "because that Being doesn't exist. That was an enforced idea that was surrounded with emotional expectation and generation but there was no one there."

Following this, Br Owen reflected on the creedal item of Incarnation, that is, the belief that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man, and his response revealed the freedom he felt to move from the dogmatic teaching of the Church. His contemporary understanding of God had moved from literalism to experientialism:

> *I'm not into distinguishing the three persons. I mean, that's so scholastic! Sartre says, 'Give me an experience of them.' Well, I experienced fatherhood. I experienced being a son. I experienced being a father to Ing and Jen [two women living in Br Owen's community] and so fatherhood is there for me. Is there a sacred dimension to it? My word, there is! The sacredness is there all the time. There is the poetry of the Incarnation. Not the empty prose of it.*

Br Quentin in his more mature years also felt free to move outside traditionally accepted Catholic writers and to defy criticism from his confreres to find help in developing a

spirituality to meet his needs. He said:

> *The person whose writing influenced me considerably would be Bishop Shelby Spong[7], the Anglican American, and, of course, I've raised his name in certain circles of people who have said 'Heretic' and all of that, but I just find him so genuine and so clear and what he says just resonates with me about life and what we are here for and what God is.*

That image of God for him appears to be far different from that of his earlier stages of spirituality. Br Quentin was influenced by Bishop Spong's claim that the barrier to true spirituality is to consider God as a personal being rather than the source of all being.

This led Br Quentin to regret the limitations placed on our concept of God by such phrases as "Our Father" and "Jesus the Son" for, he said:

> *that framework more or less personalises God as a person. It's as though, if God was here, he would be sitting there, but that's not God. God is neither male nor female, and is certainly not an anthropomorphic image whom I would consider to be God. I don't know who God is. No one knows who God is; but that's the closest I can get to it.*

In attempting to describe who God was for him, Br Quentin expressed his understanding in these words:

> *God would be not so much the Transcendent personal Being, so to speak, [but] as something beyond a personal being; something beyond the material universe; something that is the source of everything. I can't grasp that for you, of course.*

Br Quentin singled out one particular consequence of this understanding of God when he spoke of living a spirituality in which God does not intervene in human affairs, "I would very rarely pray to God for anything. I wouldn't see God as such a personal being that I would ask him for things."

In the freedom he now enjoyed to form his spirituality to meet his needs, he rejected some of the creedal statements of the Church. When invited to reflect on his attitude to such traditional Catholic beliefs as Original Sin, the Incarnation and Redemption, he replied that

7 Spong's writings rely on Biblical and non-Biblical sources and are influenced by modern critical analysis of these sources. He is representative of a stream of thought with roots in the medieval universalism of Peter Abelard and the existentialism of Paul Tillich (whom he has called his favourite theologian). A prominent theme in Spong's writing is that the popular and literal interpretations of Christian scripture are not sustainable and do not speak honestly to the situation of modern Christian communities. He believes in a more nuanced approach to scripture, informed by scholarship and compassion, which can be consistent with both Christian tradition and contemporary understandings of the universe. He believes "that theism has lost credibility as a valid conception of God's nature." (Adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Shelby_Spong).

there was no place for some of these in his spirituality:

> *Not Redemption. Certainly Incarnation, but I would see Incarnation as an intervention, if you like, [an idea] which a lot of people, theologically, would disagree with. A lot of people would say, who are more inclined in my direction and are more articulate and more intelligent, more spiritual, that life is not discontinuous. There are no intrusions, so to speak. For example, many people wouldn't believe in miracles, that there's no interjection into the normal human run of things that changes humanity. So I don't see Redemption. Redemption has never appealed to me at all. I've never felt the need to be redeemed.*

Br Quentin was anxious to press home this point and appealed to the writings of van Caster[8]:

> *His book on Redemption I accepted totally because it was saying that God doesn't need to be appeased. We don't need to be redeemed. We were not born [with sin]. We hadn't done things.*

It was Br Quentin's belief that there are people who have gone through life without ever sinning. He did not accept that it was inevitable a human being would sin. He asked:

> *How could that be – that we inevitably be a sinner? It means that we have been created defectively. I can't believe that at all. Where there's freedom, there is always the possibility of people choosing the wrong course, through lust or greed or whatever, but there's also the possibility of people choosing the right thing. I believe that there are people like that within the context of humanity. So I don't accept Redemption at all. It just leaves me cold. It's not part of my spirituality.*

This rejection of the need for Redemption had implications for an understanding of the Eucharist. Br Quentin said:

> *For me, it [the Eucharist] is a memory of Jesus, and Jesus was human and suffered and he died. He didn't have to die in that manner. I believe he came (or God became human to keep the terms simple) in order to show us that God is a loving person, a human person and very much with us in our life. So the mystery of suffering remains a mystery for everyone, and I don't know the meaning of suffering; but it's there. I can't accept that by suffering we are making up for anything that we've done or humanity has done.*

Many of the members of the pre-Vatican II group appeared to have shifted radically in their understanding of God in their lives from the perceptions of their earlier years. One contemporary spiritual writer acknowledges this and offers a possible reason for it:

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[8] For further information see: van Caster, M. 1966. *God's Word Today: Principles, Methods and Examples of Catechesis* Benziger

> Some people who have been brought up in the historically based Christianised culture of the West appear to see God in a limited way – the way perhaps they understood God when leaving primary or secondary school. It's not surprising that such people discard a God who does not easily 'fit' into our modern secular world with its emphasis on an empirical view of reality (McCann, 2002, p. 47).

Thus, through exposure to contemporary thinkers, some of this group in their quest for an authentic form of expressing their spirituality appeared to have moved from the orthodox teaching of the Church and the traditional forms of faith expression. Freedom to make such choices was at the heart of their contemporary spirituality as Br Quentin said:

> *There is no virtue and no vice unless you are free. You have to be free. Freedom is the key to being a person of virtue or a person of evil and in so far as you are not free then you're not [a person of virtue or vice].*

In general, then, the participants who belonged to the pre-Vatican II group had used their freedom to explore and express their contemporary spirituality in forms far removed from those that they used in their beginning years. Their contemporary expressions were thoughtfully arrived at and, in some instances, contradicted the official tenets of faith, thereby showing their individual freedom.

Spirituality of human relationship. It was the practice, although not officially legislated, of the Australian Christian Brothers in the pre-Vatican II era to post a young Brother at the end of his training to a mission far from his family. This was frequently commented on by the participants in the study, but without rancour or judgement. Br Christopher, whose family lived in Brisbane, was sent to Dunedin in New Zealand for his first six years of teaching, "And", he said, "I thought it was just a marvellous community. I always looked upon it as fortunate that the first community that I went to [was] in Dunedin". Br Lawrence, who left his family in Perth to enter the Brothers, spoke of his being missioned for the beginning of his teaching ministry in Melbourne where, he said, "I had the great good fortune of falling under the influence of wonderful men".

The Christian Brothers' Congregation in Australia in pre-conciliar times demanded of its members a particularly radical break from their families. Not only were the young Brothers missioned to places far from their families, the Congregation permitted them only one visit home in their lifetimes, for a fortnight at the time of their making their Final Profession of Vows. The Brothers in those days were not permitted to take part in family events such as baptisms, weddings and even funerals. Superiors opened all the Brothers'

correspondence. Schneiders has written of the ambiguous legacy of pre-conciliar Religious Life regarding family, which sometimes resulted in "problems with authority, anger, addiction, unhealthy relationships" (2001, p. 209) and such feelings were referred to by many participants.

The requirement that a Brother renounce his family and any participation in normal family activities was made from the understanding held at that time that isolation from seculars, especially women, was the best protection against 'losing one's vocation'. While the participants in the pre-Vatican II group indicated that they accepted this renunciation of family and isolation from secular society as being a necessary part of Religious life, several of them expressed some reservations. Today, of course, it is acknowledged that such affective repression is not healthy (Schneiders, 2001, p. 208ff.).

In fact, one of the more dramatic developments in the spirituality of the Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group was the growth towards a more holistic integration of their sexuality into their spirituality, shown mainly by their consciously relating to others in a healthy manner. The repression of emotions, considered to be a requisite element of the spirituality of their younger days, had the potential for crippling the growth and development of their spiritual, and social, life. A paper presented at the Christian Brothers' International Spirituality Conference in 1982, first acknowledged the "long history" of the Congregation actively discouraging the forming of friendships and went on to describe the possible damaging effects of this repression of the emotions:

> We were led to mistrust the feelings of our heart as being uncelibate. Friendships were seen as being divisive in community and the struggles of infatuation, possession and exclusiveness in friendship were described as destructive experiences. Brothers were led to deny the reality of these experiences and thus often remained adolescent in friendship experiences, closed to the goodness of friendship and the healthy and holy experience of confronting the dynamics of true friendship.

The submission intimated that the expression of emotions was thought, in the Brothers' culture at that time, to be something weak and unmanly. "We went to the extent of questioning a Brother's sexual orientation in the midst of normal growth experiences in friendships."

Although this repression of the emotions was advocated originally with the best of intentions and as a part of the then prevailing dualistic understanding of spirituality, the

potential harm that this situation could inflict on emotional and psychological development was accepted in this 1982 submission:

> We have sinned and must embrace that as part of our history. In truth, we would do well as Christian persons to reflect back on our lives and claim these experiences as healthy parts of our lives and in prayer ask Our Lord to heal the wounds that might well have been ours in those friendship experiences (Hickey, 1982, p. 292).

This particular repression was referred to by most of the participants. Br Christopher, one of the oldest in the study, seemed almost anxious to tell the story of how as an older Religious he had become involved in the life of one his grand-nieces, a deeply unhappy, unmarried mother, and of how, at the young lady's request, he was present at the birth of her child. He recounted with some satisfaction at how far he had moved from the exclusivity of his former expressions of spirituality, that he even used to accompany the young pregnant grand-niece to her prenatal exercises. Given his whole background of not having anything to do with women and having had a lifetime of discipline in avoiding any form of relationship with another, the irony of this particularly personal experience was not lost on him. The experience seems to have been a pivotal moment in his own emotional development for he observed that:

> *When I was young, I wouldn't have got mixed up with a lady who was pregnant. But I knew I had God on my side and that I'd be strong enough. I don't think many Brothers could have done that.*

As an old man he told of how he now was comfortable in friendship with women and was able to integrate the mutuality of these relationships into his spirituality:

> *I help myself to a meal and she [one of the cooks] comes along and all the cooks come out and say 'Gidday' and all sorts of things and this lady says, 'Oh, I love Brother Christopher. He's just a lovely man'.*

Another participant, Br Owen, also spoke of his experiences when he, later in life, had been able to overcome the influence of his earlier religious formation that had prevented him from including any form of relationship within expressions of his spirituality. He chose in his later years to live in a mixed community, that is, one in which the vowed members shared the house with non-vowed men and women. He had moved so far from his initial expressions of spirituality as to suggest that, in contemporary times, such mixed

communities ought be the norm for religious life and not the exception. He spoke of a lady who had been a member of this community for a time and who had considered herself an 'honorary Christian Brother'. Br Owen exclaimed, "Why she wouldn't be embraced into our committed life, I don't know. Likewise with others who are obviously so committed to what we are on about."

In reference to the men and women who comprised the Edmund Rice Network, the non-vowed people who worked either in employment or voluntarily in the works of the Congregation and professed to be animated by the charism of Edmund Rice, he said, "There are such committed men and women there to Eddy Rice and Eddy Rice's following and yet we somehow keep them out there, and I would wish that we would more openly embrace our different spiritualities."

He felt that those members of the Congregation who were opposed to this idea of including women into their relationships were, in some way, diminished in their spirituality, even as they persevered in the unchanging form of spirituality of their beginning years. "Those who are still caught up in living out [the] religious practice that they were brought up with, and trying to find some impossible satisfaction with that, would feel free to be true to themselves and who they are."

Br Owen attributed this clinging to what he thought of as an irrelevancy in contemporary times to be very damaging:

> *I think a lot of our dysfunction has come from the fact that we have been forced to live a lie, in that the truth of who we are and our experience of life has not been allowed to match practice. It has been an enforced practice, superimposed on the truth of being. I think that is a huge problem and a huge challenge.*

Certainly, the voices of the pre-Vatican II group seemed to embrace the new opportunities in their later years to express their spirituality through relationships. Indeed, it would seem that those interviewed in the study had all come in different ways to appreciate the integral importance of affective expressions in their lives. This understanding is also reflected in several Congregational documents, one recent document stating that:

> Relationship appears to be the key. The struggle for our humanity, especially with regard to our sexuality, points to our weakness and vulnerability. It also stresses the mutual need we all have as persons to experience relational satisfaction that is holistic and appropriate. We find acknowledgement of

> growing understanding and acceptance of ourselves as men who have intimacy needs (Keating, 1995b, p. 9).

It is little wonder that this culture of affective repression impacted on the educational ministry of the Brothers that was regarded by them as the principal expression of their spirituality. A submission to the Christian Brothers International Spirituality Conference from the former St Patrick's Province (Victoria/Tasmania) lamented the harshness that it produced. It stated that, while there was no doubting the dedication that the Brothers brought to their work as teachers, it was on many occasions, "not very Christ-like", "harshness and punishment were often extreme, yet perhaps done in good faith and fairness. The boys in his care were often fearful because of this strictness" (Congregation, 1982, p. 106). The submission noted the embarrassment when past pupils remind the Brother of those harsh times "even as they mingle them with the joy and pride of being his 'old boy'" (Congregation, 1982, p. 106).

Br Lawrence is another participant who made a connection between the harshness of the Brothers' spiritual practices that demanded the suppression of any personal affectivity with the harshness they in turn exercised towards their students. He said that when human beings imaged God as excessively severe they, in turn, portrayed themselves to others as severe people and "that's where some of the severity of the Brothers, which, in the long run, is the thing that poisoned us, came from. It was absolute severity. God was going to punish you, so you could punish kids."

He added that this excessively harsh attitude reflected the culture of the Church at that time:

> *The Church has to bear the blame for a lot of that. No question about that. And if my Guardian Angel (and I'm not sure that I believe in Guardian Angels) - or some of my favourite saints, or even Our Lord were there, I'd say we [the Christian Brothers] were a subset of the Church and the Church had bad theology in those days.*

Without doubt, it appeared that the members of the pre-Vatican group were quite comfortable in using their freedom to develop their spirituality in relational ways. Many of their comments reflect King's observation:

> Developing one's spirituality in a relational way by being connected to others can occur throughout one's whole life, but it flourishes especially in the midst of life when we develop close bonds with others through mature relationships.

> These include the experience of deep human love and a shared life whether lived together in friendship, partnership or marriage (King, 2008, p. 89).

At another level, the Christian Brothers' Congregation today readily acknowledges the unhealthy consequences of a culture of repressing human emotions in the name of spirituality. At the General Chapter, 2002, the Superior General clearly acknowledged the need for an integrated spirituality:

> The challenge into the future is clear and unambiguous. Again, it is a challenge about the quality of relationships in our lives and the care that we take of personal human growth particularly in the affective, social and psychosexual dimension of our lives (Congregation, 2002, p. 17)

The influence of the Church's dualistic attitude on spiritual development was recognised by Br Lawrence:

> *I'm all for the Church, but don't tell me the Church has never gone wrong. It has and the bad theology of teaching an angry, punishing God was an evil type of Jansenist attitude to life and the world that made for severity, and there was a lot of that.*

The consequence of the dualistic philosophy, which required a 'good' Brother to keep his human body under subjection through rigorous discipline became a notable feature of Christian Brothers' spirituality right from their first years. Keogh records of the foundational Brothers that "many communities continued to practise various corporal austerities, including the use of hair shirts, chains and other disciplines which were accepted part[s] of contemporary mortification" (2008, p. 108).

This was in addition to the Brothers' spartan regime that started with a 5:00 am rising, toiled through a long, hard day of teaching and was sustained with only two meals a day:

> Breakfast, at eight o'clock, consisted of porridge with bread, butter and milk. Nothing more was eaten until they returned from school; dinner, at 3.15 pm, was the last meal of the day. It consisted of boiled meat (rarely roast), with vegetables; no bread except on fast days and water (Keogh, 2008, p. 107).

Such a spirit of self-imposed asceticism and uncomplaining acceptance of difficult life circumstances was the legacy of the founding Brothers and has ever since pervaded the ethos of the Australian Christian Brothers.

Br Lawrence was one participant who spoke with regret at being deprived of the opportunity to grow up in his family and have the chance to be part of the normal relationships of family life and the possible damage to his psychosexual development this deprivation may have caused him. "I was an adolescent growing up in the Novitiate. I was never a teenager, by the way. It never occurred to me to be a teenager."

He admitted to contemplating later in life leaving the Order "mostly because of women I got to know and love." He didn't leave so presumably he resolved for himself any damaging effects of the separation from his family in his adolescence.

These regrets of Br Lawrence were shared by other participants. For instance, the practice of the Congregation of excluding women as far as possible from the lives of the Brothers played upon Br Christopher's mind. When describing his beginning spirituality as a Christian Brother he volunteered the comment that in the five years of his formation he did not meet a single woman. Then, when describing the six years in his first mission, he offered the extraordinary memory that he probably didn't even speak to a woman until he had been finally professed at the age of twenty-five. As he said, "Surely, that was an influence on me." Now aged eighty-three, Br Christopher was obviously secure in his relationship with women and was able to give expression to his spirituality by a kind of ministry to the mothers of the students by attending their functions as an "official grace-giver." It would seem that Br Christopher, as others in the pre-Vatican II group, had taken to heart that the Genesis phrase "made in the image of God" applies equally to women as to men, and that indeed God could be represented equally by images of either sex (Sachs, 1991, p. 18).

Yet another perspective was offered by Br Ian. He was the second eldest of ten children who left his family at the age of fifteen. He spoke of how he earnestly complied with the requirements of his formation programme as a Christian Brother and repressed various natural expressions of his sexuality. Such emotional repression "simply masks volcanoes waiting to happen" (Chittester, 1995, p. 113). Chittester contends that when people are deprived of their emotions they are deprived of energy and direction. Br Ian, through various experiences, seemed later to resolve this challenge for himself. He formed strong friendships with women and was able to integrate these friendships into his spirituality. He recalled something told him during a renewal programme in which he participated - that every man fell in love three or four times in his lifetime and in this regard he thought

he was no exception. He regretted that he had been deprived of the opportunities to relate in friendship with women and said, "We were indoctrinated. I was never unhappy with it. I am now, and I would probably not be a Christian Brother if I had those opportunities of other choices."

Br Quentin, for instance, spoke of how he pondered his own situation when a young man confided to him that he had considered joining the Brothers but discovered girls instead:

> *I thought to myself, Bingo! That's exactly right. I was taken away from that context before I discovered girls and we maintained a framework of life that kept us in a particular direction ... I bought all that, accepted all of that, and couldn't think outside that, so in that sense, I wasn't free.*

Br Owen similarly discussed his realisation that leaving the formative influences of his family at such a young age had been detrimental to his development. He said that he had gone off to join the Brothers at such a young age that he later came to think of the practices of those days as being nothing short of 'human trafficking':

> *You know, we talk a lot about trafficking and we were trafficked. We were fed into a machinery of doing stuff. I mean, there was a lot of good will and a lot of goodness, but I reflect back fairly critically on the processes - but that was Catholic life in those days.*

The use of the word 'trafficking' reflected Br Owen's later disenchantment with the consequences of that dualistic tradition, practised both in the Church and in the Christian Brothers, of splitting off the body as a force in conflict with higher cultural and spiritual aspirations (Collins, 1986, p. 202). He said the resolution of the conflict for him was in the formation of relationships:

> *Relationships really began to work for me. In those years I met some great women who became part of my life. People like N. She was a good woman and a very affectionate friend and that made a significant difference. I mean this was relationship and I was getting out of the sort of macho exclusiveness that I'd lived in. I met some great girls in my science years at Uni, too, and, you know, they were very attractive young women but it wasn't relational. It was being friendly on excursions and that sort of thing, but I was bold enough to do that, to be really friendly with them. I had a nice friendship with them.*

Br Owen later requested leave to form a mixed community, that is, one in which he lived with secular people, both men and women. He went on to explain the spiritual dimension of the relationships he formed at this time:

> *I'll sit down with N. tonight and it will be Eucharist full on, because it will be relational, it will be about who we are to each other. It will be about our commitment to support each other, our commitment to live responsibly.*

This, he said, was what he now understood Eucharist to be for him.

A spirituality shaped through and influenced by relationships with others had also become an integral part of Br Quentin's life in his mature years. He explained what he meant by having relationships as a celibate Religious in the name of his spirituality:

> *Although I haven't got children, I still have relationships, but not relationships in the sense of being with a large number of people or being intimate. I don't visit people. I haven't got a huge number of friends or anything like that. I'm more the quiet type. So that's all part of our spirituality. I think how we endeavour to relate to people, because lots of spiritual writing of recent times is based on that, that spirituality is relationship, relationship with God and relationship with one another.*

This relationship with others came to form the core of Br Quentin's spirituality in his later years. He spoke of how he spent longer time at prayer, either in the chapel or elsewhere, than he had when he was younger. He said that he dismissed this consideration of prayer as "a thinking thing" and that the only thing that really mattered was love:

> *Now that doesn't mean romantic love. It means love in the best sense of the word. So I put that criterion on everything I do. 'Is this a loving action? Is this a loving thought? Is this a loving thing to do?' I have tried to apply that within community, with people that naturally we don't like at times and whose ways are strange.*

To sum up, the participants' responses indicated that the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II participants had moved from one that initially concentrated on the person in isolation to a contemporary one expressed through relationship with all others. Br Owen seemed to exemplify this when he said:

> *My life began to take its energy from relationships with people. This was real. This was existentially real. Not a notional God out there – that wasn't real. That I never experienced except in this generated, emotional stunt that had shaped me.*

Spirituality of cosmology. As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the participants of the pre-Vatican II group in different ways had been obliged to move from the expressions of their spirituality that characterised their beginning years to more contemporary expressions. Much of this movement was individualised by the different experiences and understanding of each participant. It seems to have become clear to them

that it was no longer possible to think of God, the human soul, and other spirits as inhabitants of another world. No longer was God imaged as some mechanistic, manipulating deity intervening in human affairs from someplace else. To various degrees they had come to de Chardin's understanding, as discussed in the literature review, that people today are witnesses to God's creativity and purpose, evident in the evolution of the cosmos, and that all human beings are participants in this process.

For instance, Br Ian, in his later years, had developed a spirituality that was highly compatible with his individual needs. Gradually the dualism of the spirituality in which he was initially formed, and which set matter and spirit in opposition to each other, had been replaced by a holistic spirituality integrating "the world of souls and the world of bodies" (King, 2008, p. 25). His contemporary cosmological spirituality grew logically from the biology he taught in the classroom from the seventies, through which he developed an interest in pre-human life. "That's what brought me to the whole thing of environmentalism originally. Then it just expanded and expanded, and soon with my science, I suppose."

He looked back with pride on the success of a Year 12 module in the Year 12 Religious Education syllabus that he constructed called *Creation*. "It had all these things in it – environmentalism, where the world was going, what was happening, what could happen, what we must do about it – all that."

He developed a course to teach that the universe is one interconnected whole and, in the spirit of Swimme's work discussed in chapter three, the fullness of God, by whatever name he is known, exists is each part of the whole.

> Everything in creation thrives on the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, and therefore, each isolated phenomenon only makes sense in terms of a greater whole. The sense of belonging, therefore, is not one of dependency on something higher, but one of mutuality within an encompassing reality that is essentially interdependent (O'Murchu, 2000, p. 174).

Thus, Br Ian's cosmology had developed gradually and incorporated his spirituality. He described this as:

> *the fact that we are so interconnected with the rest of the world but not only the living world, with the rocks and so forth as well. We're so connected with that, that it's absolutely wrong of us not to put that into our lives. The loss of any species is a loss of the nature of the Divine, isn't it?*

De Chardin concluded *The Cosmic Life* by saying, "There is communion with God, and a communion with the earth, and a communion with God through the earth" (1974, p. 205). Br Ian seemed to echo this when he said that instead of meditating in the chapel with the community, as was the custom of his earlier years, he now goes to the nearby park, just to sit:

> *More often I'll walk and view things and look at them more deeply. I think to myself, 'What would happen without those green leaves? What would happen to our world?' And yes, I pray that way. Automatically the prayer of thanks comes out of those things*.

As with Br Ian, there were other participants who also referred to cosmology and its links to spirituality, thus indicating these particular influences on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers.

SUMMARY

In summary, many of the participants in the pre-Vatican II group appeared to have moved well away from the limitations imposed on their spirituality by perceiving God in anthropomorphic terms to an adoption in varying degrees of a form of spirituality which acknowledged that the very personhood of each individual is in a relationship with everyone and everything else in the universe. They now appeared to be expressing their spirituality in ways personally chosen as best meeting their individual needs, praying in a time and place that they felt best suited them, and with a sense of mission no longer limited to education but expressed in ways in which their talents and experience could be utilised. They delighted in a new-found freedom to express their spirituality relationally and many found this through cosmology. The characteristics of their contemporary expressions of spiritualty may be summarised as follows:

- Freedom to pray as, when and where the individual chose.
- Choosing to reach out to others in a variety of relevant ways that were personally fulfilling.
- A sense of maturity in exercising responsibility for one's own spiritual development.
- Growth in personal integrity through relationships.
- Non-anthropomorphic, cosmological image of God.

THE CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY OF THE POST-VATICAN II GROUP

The culture of the society during the formative years of the members of the post-Vatican group encouraged them to express their individual views with great freedom and to develop a questioning attitude towards society's defined expectations of their beliefs and behaviour. The younger group of participants came from a society in which the social structures were vastly different from those of their predecessors. Bouma (2006, p. 122) refers to the cultural shift that had occurred among younger people in Australia during these years, a shift from rational to experiential bases for authority. He speaks of younger people living in "post-family times, post-patriarchal times and times characterised by different forms of social cohesion and social capital" (p. 122).

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

While the expressions of spirituality of both groups was now influenced by the values of the same society, the post-Vatican II participants had come from a very different Church to that of the members of the pre-Vatican II group. Thus these younger men brought with them to the Congregation the experience of having been raised as a Catholic in a culture much different from the members of the pre-Vatican II group. This had the potential for creating tension among the Brothers. What Radcliffe said of his own Dominicans could be said of the Australian Christian Brothers, "Accepting the young into the Order challenges us. Just as the birth of a child changes the life of the whole family, so each generation of young who come to us change the brotherhood" (1999, p. 168). Br Francis seems to have sensed this when he said that like most of the religious congregations in Australia, the Brothers "were pushed into a churchy, controlled model of cloister and all that stuff which was never intended by their founders". He thought though, that because of the lay state of the Brothers, they were freer to develop a spirituality of their own. "We were under the radar a bit, being Brothers. We were more educated than the priests were, but we ran schools and they sort of looked down on us a bit, but we've stayed friends …"

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE POST-VATICAN II GROUP

This sense of confidence in their own identity appeared to free the members of the post-Vatican II group to express their spirituality in ways much more relevant to the society in which they lived. The analysis of the data gathered from the interviews conducted with the ten members of the post-Vatican II group (cf. chapters five and six) identified the

following themes as characteristic of their contemporary expressions of spirituality:

- Spirituality through self-determination;
- Spirituality of community;
- Spirituality of work;
- Spirituality of liberating human relationships; and
- Spirituality of universal connectedness.

However, there was an additional aspect that emerged through the analysis of the participants' responses. During the course of this case study, it became apparent that in both groups, the pre- and the post-Vatican II groups, there had occurred a radical shift in the manner in which the participants imaged God. There was also evidence that some of the contemporary expressions of the spirituality of many of the participants in both groups had at least the potential to bring them into conflict with the official teaching of the Church. How both of these considerations affected the contemporary expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers are considered separately at the end of the chapter under the headings:

- Changing images of God; and
- Emerging conflict with an institutional church.

Spirituality through self-determination. The pre-Vatican II practice in Religious Life of the members of a community praying in the same place at the same time several times each day was considered no longer congruent to the modern world (Schneiders, 2001, p. 388). Religious were now given the responsibility to make decisions concerning their prayer life for themselves, something O'Murchu deems "congenial to adult growth in the service of the New Reign of God" (2005, p. 179). Br Neil appeared to have used his freedom to develop a form of spirituality quite distinct from that in which he was formed. When asked to articulate to whom he related in his spirituality, he first referred at some length to the work of Joseph Campbell[9]. Br Neil described Campbell's three forms in which gods might come to people – anthropomorphic, animistic and elemental. He said

[9] Joseph Campbell had a lifelong passion for myth. He studied and mapped the cohesive threads in mythology that appeared to exist among even disparate human cultures. His *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (first published in 1949) is a non-fiction book and is the seminal work of comparative mythology. In this publication, Campbell discusses his theory of the journey of the archetypal hero found in world mythologies.

that he understood from Campbell the importance of gods in any culture remaining transparent to transcendence:

> *That is, not to get stuck in the metaphor of your particular cultural form of God-expression. And I think I might have been stuck in a metaphor. I think that some religions do get badly stuck in their metaphors, particularly when they regard their duties as being just the right ones and anybody else's aren't good.*

For Br Neil this was the background to identifying for himself what it was about spirituality that he didn't want - "to get stuck in the traditional Western Christian model of God, which is anthropomorphic, and, therefore, a model of God which regulates time, and, within time, the activities of the human on the planet."

Br Neil seemed to grasp this freedom when he reflected on his relationship with the institutional Church. He resonated with those aspects of the Church that revealed things of beauty, but he dismissed the Church's claim to author tenets to be believed and doctrines to be followed. The value of Church for him was in different things:

> *The Church offers us a way to think, a language. It offers a way into aspects of beauty, like architecture, and these are aspects to me that are valuable, although I utterly reject the Creed, lock, stock and barrel these days.*

The Church, of course, projects itself officially as much more than merely a means of inspiration through beauty of form in the way that Br Neil found value. Lumen Gentium makes it clear that the Church is necessary for salvation (Lumen Gentium, 1964, p. 14).

Other members of the post-Vatican II group also seemed to express the sense that the institutional Church was no longer meeting their spiritual needs. Br Michael spoke of one aspect of his relationship with the Church. He said that he used the Eucharist these days in a way that the mainstream Church probably did not intend, and that, in general, the Church's sacramental system failed to satisfy his spiritual needs:

> *The Eucharist has a place. I need a ritual, but I find that the Sacraments, as they are expressed, do not provide all the ritual. For instance, I need a symbol of commitment to the mission of Jesus, the fact that I'm committed to the mission of Jesus. I need to be able to say that we as collective people are 'stuffing things up'. I'm not allowed to do that because the Third Rite has been taken away. I haven't been to Confession for years.*

It seemed that Br Michael's not celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation was the consequence of more than simply the Church's withdrawal of the Third Rite and was more concerned with his growing disenchantment with the traditional Church teaching of sin

and the need for Redemption. He claimed that he did not consider himself a sinner and hence was in no need of redemption:

> *Strangely, I don't accept that I'm a sinner. I think I'm an ordinary human being, trying to be a good one, and I 'stuff things up' but I think that's the way of ordinary human beings. I don't accept this concept of grovelling before a Lord God, saying 'through my most grievous fault'. No, I'm an ordinary human being and I get things wrong at times. I try to live with integrity. I'm reluctant to kowtow to a Lord God but I wish I had the opportunity to join with other people and say 'Hey, collectively, we're stuffing things up. Let's do that'.*

In particular, Br Neil was very articulate about this aspect. He spoke of how he no longer prayed verbally, as he once did in the traditional manner in which he was spiritually formed. Prayer still was an important expression of his spirituality, but it was now expressed in a different way, a way that suited his understanding of his spirituality:

> *For me instead of verbal prayer, it is the ritual of presence in the natural world and the relating of myself to it, both interiorly and how I write. I often refer to the sacredness of the earth and the Divine Presence which is there, and I don't mean a theistic presence but a more immanent presence.*

The need for some sort of ritual in his life was recognised by Br Neil, but it was now not the ritual of Church ceremonies that satisfied his spiritual yearnings but rituals expressed in terms of his creation:

> *My emotional satisfaction now comes from ritual and things that surround the natural world. I introduce them [people who come here] to rituals and reflection out in the open, and I train them to see what's going on and to be part of what's around them, to be a participant in the natural world rather than an observer.*

This connectedness with the natural world led Br Neil to reject some of the traditional Christian expressions. He had turned to other authorities than the Church and Scripture for validation of his stance:

> *This kind of metaphysics is quite different to the kind of transcendental thinking of the past – that we are made for heaven and heaven is our goal and that most things are assessed and valued because of our eventual destiny. I have rejected the notion of heaven as the place where I am going and I feel supported by the poetry of the mystics and by many kinds of traditional spiritualties.*

Br Neil described how he might typically 'pray' in this state of connectedness with nature, an engagement that he claimed was a rich field of emotional support:

> *So a typical morning prayer for me would be a walk, which I have with N. A fairly limited walk, and being very attentive to nature. Maybe I use a ritual I've*

> *got in prayer, when hands might go out, and I'll do a complete rotation around slowly, around the natural world.*

In this type of prayer, Br Neil said that he had no need of words because "the highest form of prayer or reflection is pretty much silence. I hope I've got some support from people like Merton there and some other characters."

Any acceptance of the measurement of time as human society does inhibits this expression of spirituality as outlined by Br Neil, who went on to explain why he did not relate to a God who regulates time:

> *Cosmology, which Teilhard de Chardin sparked in me, is that everything has been set in motion and that it's unfolding gradually maybe, as some people say, by an intelligent design, but I cease to believe that God can alter the state of things in the Universe and I have ceased many, many years now with every single part of my being - I used to say this and get into trouble – that a theistic model of deity is not mine anymore.*

In an attempt to gain a deeper insight into Br Neil's contemporary spirituality, the researcher asked him to reflect on what for him was the ultimate goal of his spirituality, but he replied, initially, in the negative - "It's not heaven. I don't worry about heaven." In answering the question, he first regretted that the process of enculturation, within the Church as well as within the Christian Brothers, often had the unfortunate side effect of uniformity:

> *A uniformity which cultures like, and which cultures need, but cultures get stuck in uniformity and don't have their thinkers and their prophets and particularly their artists. They are in danger of becoming dysfunctional. So when it comes to spirituality, it's a little bit to do with time, because I don't hang out for heaven. If I get there I'd probably enjoy it, I think, but I don't hang out for heaven in the future.*

The spirituality described by Br Neil was set in the present moment:

> *The present is crucially important to me, to live honestly and candidly, and with that kind of compassionate love which our Bible, the Testament - I still abide very strongly by the thinking of the great saints of whom Jesus is now the major one - to live with love and compassion, in the moment, with critical awareness.*

This consciousness of the ever-present 'now' that Br Neil spoke of seems to be very similar to that which Tolle regards as the key to what Tolle calls 'the spiritual dimension':

> The shift in consciousness from time to presence sometimes happens naturally. The personality that has a past and a future momentarily recedes and is replaced by an intense conscious presence, very still but very alert at the same time. Whatever response is needed then arises out of that state (2005, p. 51).

The deliberate striving to acquire a conscious sense of the 'now' that Br Neil spoke of as his spirituality is one of the hallmarks of Sufism. Tolle quotes Rumi, the great poet and teacher of Sufism and one of the mystical writers that Br Neil was drawn to, "past and present veil God from our sight; burn up both of them with fire" (2005, p. 53).

These influences led to Br Neil describing the goal of his spirituality as follows:

> *I want to be a human being immersed in life, experienced of life and to be a part of that process where the Divinely Inspired (or whatever) is happening. I trust the universe process … that we are responsible for the future. We are respectful of the past – the past is part of us. We carry it in a fragile bowl and we are passing that on to the future.*

This responsibility of passing on to future generations a culture of care for creation concerned Br Neil:

> *It's so evident that it's gone on over two thousand years, though I think it has been badly handled. I think it needs a bit of redemption. So the end point of spirituality is to enrich the moment, compassion, part of the community of life, not just human, but which is wide, very wide.*

Others of the post-Vatican II group expressed this consciousness in various ways. Br Kevin said that it was something that occupied him:

> *I always struggle with the transcendent. It's very difficult for me. Richard Rohr says somewhere that in the end, I move into a position where all life is what equals grace. As Rohr[10] says, you don't really do anything. You've got eyes and you've got hearing and you are given a time on earth – that's grace. And philosophically I'd like to think that there is more to it all. The transcendent for me is that there is something greater than yourself.*

Br Kevin described how this insight into the transcendent impacted on his life:

> *It's saying there is something greater that we call God. They say of culture, don't they, that there are moments of transcendence? Every now and then in your life, you think, well, there is more to it than this. There has to be more to it than all of this. There are so many unanswered questions.*

He described that he could come to terms with the mystery of pain and misery in the world

[10] Richard Rohr, O.F.M. (born in 1943 in Kansas) is a Franciscan friar ordained to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church in 1970. He is an internationally known inspirational speaker and has published numerous recorded talks and books. Scripture as liberation, the integration of action and contemplation, community building, peace and social justice issues, male spirituality, the Enneagram of Personality and eco-spirituality are amongst the many subjects addressed in his writing and preaching. Rohr has sometimes been criticised as unfaithful to orthodox Catholic teaching. (Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Rohr)

only in terms of a Transcendent Being:

> *And that's the transcendent aspect of it for me – that there's something greater than yourself in all of this. I mean for a lot of people, the transcendent is their family. It's greater than them and they give their all.*

Br Kevin used the experience of the death of his father to illustrate how he had come to his contemporary expression of spirituality, different from that which he had taken for granted in the years of his formation:

> *I was much touched by my Dad. In the end he couldn't feed himself much so I used to go in and feed him. Sometimes, he would have sandwiches and before he would start he would always push the plate over to me so I'd have a sandwich first. And I thought, that's how he lived his life. I think that's the transcendent for me.*

The customary way in which Religious gave unquestioning acceptance to teachings of the Church and directives from the Congregation of Christian Brothers, simply because these institutions claimed to have authority to give such teachings and directives, appeared to make little impression on some of the members of the post-Vatican II group. This is perhaps a characteristic attitude of their generation, for, as Chittester wrote, "The very idea of professing obedience in a culture that thrives on individualism and commits itself to personal freedom approaches the heights of the inimical to the Western mind" (1995, p. 125). Br Francis seemed to exemplify this when he said, "I think all this pointy hat infallibility, vertical power stuff … those who claim to know what God's message is, and so 'Shut up, and do what you're told' - I think that is finished."

Far better, he said was that "we are forming - I see extraordinary things happening with us and with the best parishes – friendship based groups". Chittester commends this attitude – "Real obedience … shines brightest in the Jesus who contests with Pilate, argues with Pharisees and heals paralytics on the Sabbath on behalf of higher laws" (1995, p. 129).

Br Michael seemed to develop this understanding of obedience. He said that he started fairly early in his Religious life to "disengage from the redemption story". He claimed that the need to be redeemed made little sense to him and that he wasn't prepared to accept "that people were bad; I wasn't prepared to accept that, in that phrase, 'Lord, I am not worthy to come to Communion.' No, if you institute this [the sacrament of the Eucharist], I *am* worthy."

He described how from that point he found the courage to disengage from the traditional

beliefs of the Church and "to start to form my own beliefs and I was, in terms of the Galilee Song, 'prepared to leave my boats behind'."

This decision was made by this younger person not without some trepidation for, as he admitted, "I was conscious that this was bit scary and that [I was] going into unknown waters". He found support for these views that were so contrary to traditional beliefs in one particular book[11] in which:

> *The image of Jesus there gave me the courage, that he was a person who had some unique relationship to the Divine. But his passion was for justice in the larger life and that was where I was with these kids. I was very comfortable with that image of Jesus.*

He related how the language of this particular author opened up for him a contextual understanding of Jesus and invested scripture with a meaning previously hidden to him. "It gave me an image of Jesus the man, who became a whole lot more exciting."

The "disengaging from the traditional beliefs of the Church" that was a feature of Br Michael's contemporary spirituality appears to parallel the culture of his time, a culture which rejected all forms of autocracy. The freedom to entertain individual thinking in apparent contradiction to the traditional and official teaching the Church was described by O'Murchu as a feature of contemporary times:

> The breakdown of patriarchy, as evidenced in the 1960s and 1970s with the student revolts, in the build-up of trade unions in many Western nations, in the rise of feminism and in the rise of the consultative processes within the professions (1991, p. 143).

Chittester, also, in reflecting on contemporary spirituality says that:

> The Black Box theory of obedience – that all the answers to our life questions are already designed for us by God and all we have to do to get them right is to obey those over us who know what we do not – died the death with Galileo and modern science (1995, p. 130).

Such thinking as this led Br Michael to distance himself from the institutional church. He said that the devotional practices of the Church and which were cultivated among the Christian Brothers "had never given him much". He claimed, "I went out of a sense of duty, so this new thinking of mine distanced me even more from the institutional church."

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[11] see Myers, C. 1988. *Binding the Strong Man : A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Maryknoll. Orbis Books for Myers-Briggs personality scale.

He did not stop expressing his spirituality, but his expressions were now determined by what he thought suited his own needs and situation, and not those mandated by the authority of Church or Congregation:

> *Prayer became more a time to be. Just the sense of being there. Just being in a Presence. So I think I saw Jesus less as a second person of the Blessed Trinity and more as a passionate human being who had a relationship with the Divine*.

When the participants of the post-Vatican II group exercised the freedom to choose their own way of expressing their spirituality, there was the likelihood of their appearing to be in conflict with the official teachings of the Church. Br Michael seemed to feel that he was caught between a sense of obligation to Church law and a growing disillusionment with it. His continued attendance at Sunday Mass, for example, appeared to be maintained out of a need to belong to a group rather than from valuing the intrinsic worth of the Mass:

> *I say to myself, 'Why do I go to Mass?' I'm fairly regular with going to Mass – not during the week but fairly regular on Sundays. I often think to myself and say, 'What am I doing here?' But I also need to be part of that community and I need to meet up with ... You need to stay in touch and the gathering of the Church is part of that.*

Br Michael appeared to readily concede that his perception of the Eucharist differed from the official teaching of the Church and based his personal view of the Eucharist on his basic tenet that "no person is created bad". He said that when he celebrated Mass he did not say a lot of words. "I'm not someone who grovels before a Lord God, so I don't say, 'Lord, have mercy'. I don't make it public, but I'm not there to grovel before God."

At the same time, he said that he could not bring himself to subscribe to certain items of the Creed:

> *As for the 'I Believe in God the Father Almighty' – well, effectively, I don't believe it. Well, I do and I don't, because these are words that people are using to try to describe the reality that can't be described. So I'm not anti them [the words] but they're not good enough. I don't say the Creed because I don't believe it. I would use the phrase that I've moved on.*

As such an apparent rejection of the Creed seemed to include the Incarnation and Redemption, Br Michael was asked to reflect on the place these beliefs had in his contemporary spirituality. He replied:

> *I don't reject it, but it's not part of my belief structure. It's not important to me. It's not important. I can accept that Jesus had, and I think that many other*

> *people have had too, this unique relationship with the other, to God. The person of Jesus is important and the fact that he did have some relationship. But the whole redemption story, it's not important for me. I don't need to be saved.*

When the members of the post-Vatican II group struggled with the place of authority in their spirituality, not all rejected the Church teachings so absolutely. Br Anthony, for instance said that while he himself did not "blindly accept the law of the Church and the directions of the Congregation", he felt that there was possibility for some compromise:

> *I'm not fighting it and saying, 'That stuff's no good. You should be with the poor and all of that.' To take this attitude is just a waste of time, being anti-this, counter-cultural everything. It's integrated, so there is goodness in both.*

Many of the responses of the post-Vatican II group indicated that spirituality, to be genuine, should lead to the discovery of a person's own real self and to discover the nature of consciousness. The arrival at such conscious awareness of one's ego is, according to Nolan, ultimately a personal responsibility:

> It is important to remember that we cannot get to know ourselves by merely reading about human behaviour. We need periods of solitude and silence to deepen our reflections, and while we may need the help of others, in the end it will be during our quiet time that we will take the log out of our eye and recover from the long night of blindness to begin to see the world as it is and as Jesus saw it – right side up (2006, p. 110).

Influenced, perhaps, by the societal culture of their more contemporary times, many of the post-Vatican II participants moved into this conscious awareness of their egos with an admirable honesty and a readiness to change their own perceptions and to respect the difference in others. Br Anthony illustrated this by describing his reactions to a typical Brothers' community meeting. He argued that at any community meeting of Brothers there would likely be a difference of opinion but that instead of concluding the issue with a vote with the majority as it were 'winning', claiming to be 'right', there should be a tolerance, an understanding. As he put it:

> *It's not all about voting. It's saying, 'Did that person have some wisdom?' or did everyone say 'We don't like what you are saying, so that's the end of the discussion?' What is the wisdom coming out of this group? It might be that the odd person is the one with something to say. It's letting go and seeing beyond that. It's not about being right or wrong or having the answer.*

He added that among the Brothers there should be no need to claim to be 'right' but

instead to live with the question, "What is it that I'm not seeing?" or "Can I see the goodness in that?"

He did say, also, that it would be foolish to assume that all other people are good, or that he, by virtue of being a Christian Brother, was entitled to special entitlements. To aspire to express his spirituality in such mutuality of respect, was, Br Anthony admitted, far from easy:

> *It's an ego thing, but it's trying to get to a deeper wisdom that allows me to see - another deeper way beyond me - to a deeper level of seeing others. Jesus was able sometimes to see that it's not 'this' or 'that'. There is often a third way, another way. In the process of trying to see what they call the 'mystic gaze' to see another way and not be caught in dualistic thinking by saying, 'That's right. That's wrong. In, out, up, down, me, you.'*

As Br Anthony struggled to articulate this aspiration, he described his contemporary expressions of spirituality as stemming from the consciousness that all things are interconnected:

> *It's a sense of what they call unitive consciousness where everything reveals something of God. We're not separate. 'I don't really exist', I would say. 'I'm just an expression of God.' I put a name on myself ... and I think I'm separate, an individual who goes around separate from things. But in unitive consciousness, we know that everything belongs, that I'm not separate from anything. I am an expression of God, here today for this very small time.*

Not all the members of the post-Vatican II group, however, distanced themselves so radically from traditional practices of expressing their spirituality. Br Kevin, for instance, said:

> *I still do the ritual sort of thing. I still say the Office. I like saying the Psalms, again because I think they are genuine expressions, like the guy saying, 'God, where are you? Where the hell are you? I'm all in a fix here! Where are you?' They always come back to a notion of giving me hope.*

There did seem to be, however, a more mature contemplative element to this retention of these expressions of spirituality:

> *I pray the Psalms and in the Office there are prayers for others and all those sorts of things. So I still do all those sort of things. I do the composing of myself as a meditation and I do what you call spiritual reading and those sorts of things. The prayer, I think, is my reflecting about life.*

There is, however, an added consciousness to these spiritual exercises:

> *I try and think about life. I think about all those sorts of things. I think that's my prayer. It's not a Rosary or a litany or those sorts of things. The closest I would come to that is the Office or a ritual but it's a much more meaningful ritual for me. I still go to Mass and I go to Communion and all those things. I think I would think about them differently these days. I wouldn't think they are automatic 'grace-fillers'.*

While there was a place in Br Kevin's expression of spirituality for the formal prayer of Church and the traditional devotions of the Congregation, he had come to regard them as:

> *external things that help you to think about what's going on. I still believe in them and I still believe they play a part in your life. Like Confession is the act of being sorry for those parts of your life that have willingly or unwillingly in some sort of sense alienated and frustrated people.*

Br David, however, in the expression of his contemporary spirituality appeared to feel some confusion over some of these issues. He said, "Most Brothers' places don't have prayers in common now, because no one can agree on how to pray. And that should never have happened." Yet later in the interview, he added:

> *If someone came to me and said, 'You have to use that book and you have to say this', and, I know, if I didn't agree with it, I couldn't do it. So that docility that perhaps people once had is gone because – something's gone wrong.*

Nevertheless, Br David appeared to regret what he perceives as a diminishment of the former place of authority. He seemed to express a desire for a legally defined role for authority in the Congregation and that those invested with this authority exercise it morally as well legally. He thought of himself as an obedient Religious and claimed to be happy as an obedient Christian Brother. What disturbed him was the loss of what he thought of as the essence of obedience, "It's more of a philosophical thing; if you believe the person who is in authority doesn't have the right to that authority, then you've got a bit of a problem."

For Br David, this is what the present leadership, set up for the Brothers, lacked and he felt it did not deserve the respect of the Brothers:

> *Now, you see, our community leaders, when we got rid of all the terms 'superiors' and that, there's still no provision in Canon Law for a 'community leader'*[12]*. And so community leaders haven't got any authority to bind you, say, under obedience. I would think that the Provincial Councils have but then I*

[12] In the revised Constitutions of 1996, the word "Superior" does not appear. Instead, titles such as "Congregation Leader", "Leadership Team" and "Community Leader" came into use.

> *start to look at them flying around the country and all the things that are not compatible with a life of simplicity – going out to big dinners, expensive dinners, all the time, hiring cars.*

There may be some significance in that Br David was the youngest Brother interviewed, and that it was he more than the older Brothers interviewed who appeared to lament that self-determinism might have cost the Brothers something in their spirituality. He stated that in the beginning he felt "like a real Religious":

> *We wore our habits, and I even taught in my habit for probably the first six years, even in Wagga, and I was getting on by then. We always had our habits on for morning prayers and we wore our habits after school even though it was a hot country town. And also, you had to get permission for things and you didn't go out to tea all the time to peoples' places. Your community life was it. There were no TVs in peoples' rooms. There were no cars. I felt like a Religious probably from when I joined up until 1988, perhaps, almost twenty years, eighteen years, and then through the late eighties and the nineties it all seemed to [change].*

In mourning the loss of this sense of "being a real Religious", Br David expressed his loyalty to the teachings of the Church. He said that his most satisfying expression of spirituality was the celebration of the traditional rites of the Church. In them he found:

> *a majesty and a mystery. I simply love going to Mass. I love being an altar server. I believe absolutely in transubstantiation. I wish it was the same for everybody - the bread and wine becoming the Body Blood of Jesus. At the elevation, I know Jesus is there.*

He expressed his dismay at the attitude of his students when they attended Mass. "When I go to Mass with the school I've got perspiration running down my back because I get myself into such a state over people talking and mucking about."

This distress and the longing for a return to the expressions of spirituality practised in former times, even perhaps to a rather literal understanding of God-claims, was in this research singular, all the more interesting in that Br David was the youngest participant and claimed to be speaking for many of his age.

In summary it can be said that the members of the post-Vatican II group seemed to evidence a deepening self-reflection in the contemporary expressions of their spirituality. While it was observed that there was some regret expressed by the youngest member of the group at the changes that had taken place in the Church and within the Congregation, the others appeared to welcome the invitation to take responsibility for the development of

their own spirituality. At times, some members of the post-Vatican II group appeared to be in conflict with certain aspects of official Church teaching and of traditional beliefs, yet all seemed to find personal wholeness and inner peace in their contemporary expressions of spirituality.

Spirituality of community. Religious Life in the post-conciliar era ceased to be what it had previously been, "a tightly ghettoised subculture of a total institution" (Schneiders, 2001, p. 355). Instead, younger Religious in the post-Vatican II era, with their experience of contemporary culture, looked to community life to sustain their enthusiasm for the mission of the Congregation and to provide an environment for continued personal growth. The last revision of the Constitutions of the Christian Brothers was made in 1996, coinciding with the Beatification of the Founder, Edmund Rice. The revised Constitution 32 not only retains the central place of community in the Brothers' lives, it also adds a new emphasis:

> Brotherhood in community is a principal source of our companionship and a privileged context for our personal growth. Our personalities develop as each of us accepts responsibility to make a unique contribution to the life and mission of the community. It is from community that we carry our gifts to others. We in turn are enriched as the lives of others touch our own (Congregation, 1996).

It seemed, however, that this remained for many post-Vatican II participants in the research largely an unrealised ideal. Br Anthony appeared almost to caricaturise his early community experiences as he described how very often the force bonding the Brothers together into a community was their opposition to the Superior:

> *There was a time in the Brothers where there was a sense of companionship against authority. The spirit of going against the Boss was a good relief – the young guys against the Boss. He was the ogre and that's how it was. We got away with that and we did all this stuff.*

In time, he came to recognise the immaturity of this behaviour, but it does seem to have been a strong influence in his early experience of community life:

> *Yet that was fun, and when you had other young guys saying, 'The Boss didn't know I came home late', or 'The Boss didn't this and that', and you'd have childish but good fun in the sense of 'we broke the rules', or went to watch the footy, or we didn't turn up to this event, and he, the Superior, was away so we'd have meals and go to the drive-in.*

While such an attitude might be attributed to youthful immaturity and exuberance, in time

the reality of community living set in for Br Anthony. As he became aware that some of his companions were leaving the Congregation to get married, he began to ask himself, "What am I doing here?" He said that "while in my thirties, I was prepared to just put up with [the difficulty of living in Community]. I would just grin and bear it."

He admitted that perhaps at that time he might have held unreal expectations of community life for, as he said, he thought that:

> *Community should be meeting all my needs. So the reason I joined and stayed in the first ten years was different. By the time I got to my thirties, I had changed about what I expected, and how I wanted to [be] in Religious life and community and prayer life. Life had changed. The world had changed. The monks had changed.*

Br Anthony experienced the shift in the Brothers' life from the observance of a multitude of prescribed spiritual exercises closely monitored by a Superior to a more relaxed approach to community life. He was, however, able to see that changing the externals, such the wearing of the habit, would not necessarily be accompanied by any more meaningful expression of spirituality. As he said,

> *Well, we don't have to wear the habit anymore, and we can be a lot more liberal. Liberal can be an excuse to not do things, but I don't think it's an open licence to do what you like. There [must be] an internal shift, inside. You don't have to wear the habit? Well, it's just an external. You don't have to go to that? Well, how are you going to know if you are spiritual? How are you going to do that together?*

It was Br Anthony's conclusion that the Brothers, while retaining some of the traditional expressions of spirituality would need to invest them with a certain consciousness in order for them to be spiritually authentic:

> *So you do need some structures. There has got to be [also] some internalisation. If you just change the external things, whatever they are, you need internal. What are we trying to do? How do we come together to hold things [like] prayer and reflection and Mass and Community - how do we understand these things?*

In speaking of his own altered attitude towards community, Br Anthony gave as an example his experience of a community discussion on the occasion when the Brothers, because of their diminishing numbers, were obliged to move out of their old, monastic-like residence to live in an ordinary, suburban house.

> *One would say, 'Well, where's the Chapel?' So you'd have a discussion about that. 'We need that room for a chapel and the Blessed Sacrament.' And I clearly remember a Brother saying, 'Oh, we have this big tabernacle in this tiny room where we are all crowded around. It was uncomfortable and we had in front of it, a big, old altar in this same room.' So we are trying to fit this [old] model into this [new] model, and it's not stacking up.*

On this occasion, the discussion on the customary reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in their houses, according to Br Anthony, illustrated how the Brothers' expressions of spirituality began to look beneath the external:

> *And then someone said, 'Well, I don't know why we're on about the Sacred Presence here. God is present wherever I go. The people in this area where we live, they are the presence of God. But we're saying the only Presence is here and we are blind to the needs of the community'. So that's when there was a shift from it. I was moving out of one model into another model.*

As Br Anthony became aware, if contemporary community life was to effectively contribute to his spiritual life and the spiritual life of the Brothers, certain demands by individuals had to be accommodated. He described how he grew in respect of the different expressions of spirituality beginning to emerge among the Brothers while they continued to live in community:

> *My spirituality is trying to say that my own journey and my own experience reflects back to my own experience and what the Congregation is trying to say. Whereas other Brothers are having journeys too, and they are asking, 'Is this the direction?' 'What direction are we called to as Brothers?' 'What is the new consciousness of being a Brother?'*

Br Francis reflected that, when he was in leadership positions in his province, he felt that the Brothers' spirituality was sustained by their sense of community. He said that despite a diminishing and ageing membership, and despite the pressure of the negative publicity and public criticism that began to appear, the Brothers' sense of community grew:

> *I think we always held onto a sense of community. I think we always had a sense of being Brother. I don't think the hotshot, upward-mobile, swivel-chair, career public figure was the typical Brother. I think the Brothers themselves were much less high profile and retained the sense of community of Brotherhood.*

In fact, it was his opinion that the negative publicity given in contemporary times to the Christian Brothers in Australia may well have helped them to bond together even more strongly in a genuine form of community life and so find in community living a source of

spiritual nourishment:

> *Somehow we've become more Brother[ly] and I think it's because all the time we never let go of the sense of community. Not the hotshot stuff – that's where we fell. The power and the reputation and all this sort of stuff and the huge reputation we had – it went, but we didn't go.*

The Superior General in 1995 noted the problem that would be experienced in community if there was failure to mutually accept and respect a diversity of individual expressions of spirituality among members of a community:

> One reason for such problems and frustration has been the unwillingness or inability to name and accept the fact that in Religious Life today we are living in communities with very different spiritualties. Two Brothers sitting next to each other at prayer may well have had entirely different formation experiences in what it means to be a Religious (Keating, 1995a, p. 16).

Thus the Congregational Leader certainly acknowledged that there was no merit in striving to project a uniformity of spiritual expressions merely for the sake of an appearance:

> As long as we do not accept this and continue to operate under the assumption that somehow we all either have or should have the same spirituality, we will not be able to dialogue with each other or grow together, because there will be too much finger pointing and blaming at the obvious diversity of practice (Keating, 1995a, p. 16).

Br David was identified earlier as the youngest participant in this case study and the one who regretted the loss of uniformity. He described what was for him a painful experience when only some of the community attended Morning Prayer and no agreement could be reached on the manner of praying it. As a result he felt that he derived little spiritual nourishment from his life in community:

> *It doesn't sustain it at all … The fact is, because of political correctness, nobody can agree on how to say them and our morning prayers are still from the Breviary. I know if I had to say the rubbish things that were in that grey book*[13]*, I couldn't keep doing it.*

In particular, Br David found the attempt to use inclusive language a deterrent to his praying well:

> *And on some mornings I'm flat out getting through them because Br N. keeps changing the words – you know, in the Magnificat, the Benedictus he changes things from whatever they are to 'all' and, to me, trying to get rid of all the*

[13] "The New Companion to the Breviary with Seasonal Supplement", produced in 1988 by the Carmelites of Indianapolis in inclusive language and written from a feminist perspective.

> *personal pronouns just because they say 'his' renders something totally impersonal. To me the inclusive language destroys the power and the strength and the meaning of what you are trying to say … To me the new translation is just so insipid I just can't bring myself to have it. All these smarmy, 'weazly' words do nothing for me. So I just cling onto the Psalms, the Breviary and the Rosary and get to Mass as much as I can*.

When Br David was invited to reflect on the community aspects of his contemporary spirituality, he said that as a Religious he used to feel that he was part of the Church but that this sense had somewhat waned in recent years:

> *I believe in the Mystical Body of Christ. It's kind of Christian karma, I suppose. I think that if you are faithful to all of those things, it strengthens the Church and I'm quite sure that saying the Office, that's the daily worldwide prayer of the Church, and saying the Rosary and all those … I'm sure that has a tremendous benefit for the Church. It was never for me an individual thing.*

It was with a sense of loss that Br David described how the contemporary, individual and personally chosen expressions of spirituality practised by the Brothers seemed to take away from community life the sense of belonging and contributing to the Church:

> *But my spiritual expression nowadays, whilst I still feel linked to the wider Church, I no longer feel linked to the Brothers because a lot of it is sort of what you do yourself - whatever you can fit in when you're not visiting people, getting a massage or something*.

To close this discussion on spirituality of community, it may be said that the Christian Brothers in Australia have retained a traditional form of communal life. All the participants in this study lived in Religious Communities and all seemed to develop a thoughtful integration of communal life into their expressions of spirituality. As Albert Nolan wrote:

> We need one another. There is no kind of perfect spirituality that I can achieve without the help of anyone else. If there is no one to help me, no one to share with, then my growth will be stunted (2006, p. 167).

Contemporary communities of Brothers, however, have passed beyond institutionalism and beyond living out of an authority model. The contemporary spirituality of the post-Vatican II group appeared to exhibit a ready acceptance of responsibility to care for each other and to affirm each other, and so to derive spiritual nourishment from living together. These participants welcomed affirmation, but did not appear to be dependent upon receiving it from the communities in which they lived.

Spirituality of work. Some contextual background is required to appreciate the development of this particular expression of spirituality. By the time the members of the post-Vatican II group were reaching their forties, the Catholic Education system no longer relied upon the free services of Religious to staff and manage the Catholic school system. Their place had been more than adequately taken by lay teachers. This development had implications for the Brothers' spirituality:

> By 1966, one-third of the teachers in the Brothers' schools were lay teachers and a trend seemed to be already in place which would, for the first time in the history of the Congregation, result in there being many more lay teachers than Brothers in our schools. This was a situation radically different from the traditions of the Congregation, for it was now conceivably possible for a student to proceed through a Brothers' school without actually having much, or even any, direct contact with a Brother (Nangle, 2010, p. 74).

It was this situation that altered the nature of the Brothers' work as an expression of their spirituality. It is not unfair to say that the senior Brothers, during this period of transition, felt threatened by the thought that the Brothers would, if this trend continued, be obliged to surrender key positions of responsibility in their schools to lay teachers. While senior Brothers seemed to feel that with the Brothers playing an ever diminishing role in their own schools, and with lay teachers assuming correspondingly more and more of the important posts, the vocation to the Brotherhood would be minimised in the eyes of the students. This sense of threat does not seem to have affected the Brothers of the post-Vatican II group at all. Instead, they seemed to embrace the opportunities these new times offered them to express their spirituality in many different activities. This was one example of how their different cultural context had impacted on them.

Br Anthony found that he was not involved in education very much at all. A clearly defined educational ministry was no longer the work of this group of Brothers. Instead he described the struggle to discover for himself where he thought God wanted him to be. He said, "It was about seeing God in the poor". This, he claimed, was the reason why his community deliberately relocated to a predominantly low socio-economic suburb and spent time as youth workers to see the deprived and their struggle. He learnt to accept that, no matter how earnestly the Brothers wished to assist the poor, they would not always be accepted by them. "Some days we would walk down there and they'd just say 'no' and we'd come back home. There was a struggle in 'What's God saying to me in all this?'"

For Br Anthony it was clear that the traditional work of the Congregation was no longer

relevant as an expression of spirituality for modern Brothers. He found it offensive to insist on it. "We are not here to set up a new Christian Brothers' school, as if to say, 'Here is our flag. Come in. We run good schools. Fit yourselves into us'."

He came to understand that a new model of work as an expression of spirituality was demanded by the times nor, he added, was the traditional Brothers' school the answer to the needs of the poor. "They've invited us in. They're our hosts and we are the guests."

This openness that encouraged a response to different needs as they arose led Br Anthony to conclude:

> *God is saying, 'The poor have got a secret to tell us'. Their experience of life is an intuition into the heart of God. There's a very clear message that comes from people who are materially poor and experience all those things and exclusion from the things I take for granted. So working with the poor, working at C. and working with the refugees, all those things spoke to that experience.*

There was a deepening of Br Anthony's growing awareness of God in his life through this work with the poor that he had chosen to engage in. It became an experiential awakening of God acting in his life. He became convinced that God was speaking to him through the poor with whom he associated. It led him to question the image of God fashioned in his earlier days:

> *The difference is that I was then intellectually trying to know God. I thought that if I read enough, that's how I'd know God. But the reality was that it is only through experience of God that we know God. In that sense it's knowing and not knowing. And there was the idea that I don't really know God at all. That humility. It's mystery. But in my emptiness of saying 'I don't know', God fills it.*

As a young Religious, Br Kevin was another who began to discern that it was possible to find the sacred in everyday work and to realise that perhaps for some, it was the only way. His first mission was to a mining town in Western Australia, and he remembered the Sunday Masses in the parish Church where in the congregation only six were men and three of them were the Brothers. He learnt there not to place a judgement on a person's spirituality by the manner of their observance of external practices. He found among these men, the non-attenders at Sunday Mass, a deep spirituality in the generous way they devoted their Sunday mornings, the only time they had off from the demanding work of the mines, to assisting the Brothers:

> *They would come and paint the school. And they'd be up painting the school while we were at Church. So there was a greater notion of what goodness was than just a religious, that particular religious, view of the world.*

The contemporary spirituality of the post-Vatican II group generally found expression in some form of outreach to others. When Br Michael was invited to reflect on what sustained his activity, he said that it was not from prayer, as perhaps a member of the pre-Vatican II group might have replied, but rather from a sense of a connectedness with some form of Supreme Being. He said that "I'm somehow in the presence of the ultimate forces of the universe. I'm in touch with the [presence] … there's not something that switches on and off. It's there all the time. There's just a sense of reality."

In speaking in this way, Br Michael appeared not to want to be totally disconnected with traditional Christian spirituality and spoke of his attempt to relate Jesus' activity to contemporary times:

> *The ultimate forces of the universe sustain me in the fact that running parallel with that is the trying to do the things that Jesus did. So that activity is an expression of it, if you like. Somehow Jesus was in touch with the same reality that in a way was of his culture. His vision of God was his cultural vision of God. I think other people put words into his mouth when they wrote things down many years later.*

It was important, Br Michael claimed, that the words of both Jesus, the founder of Christianity, and Edmund Rice, the founder of the Christian Brothers, be understood in the context of their times. He pointed out that Jesus and Edmund Rice "would have had had little knowledge of cosmology and fundamental physics, perhaps Edmund Rice a little more. But they were products of their culture. Their spirituality was their culture."

Consequently he felt that it was what Jesus and Edmund did within that context that ought to stimulate our spirituality today, that is, "seeing that what Jesus did was worthwhile. He was someone who had a connection with God, with reality. So today's work is that side, that is the practical expression of it."

These participants, certainly, indicated that their contemporary spirituality continued to be expressed with vigour and energy, even though it was not necessarily in the classroom. Br Philip recalled that his ministry seemed to be his spirituality. He acknowledged that the nature of his work helped him to give expression to his own spirituality, as it was quasi-religious in nature:

> *I seem to have a gift for articulating spiritual stuff with young adults. So very early on I got involved with youth group movements such as the Antioch Movement and I got very involved with that so that was kind of like a pseudo-religious life.*

Echoing this, Br Philip readily conceded that the nature of his ministry was personally rewarding and he felt that his own spirituality flourished in the exercise of it:

> *I remember having the Antioch weekly meetings where we all shared prayers and sang hymns. That was more emotionally satisfying. I was giving talks at the State Conference and I was the National Chaplain for eight or ten years, taking groups to Rome for World Youth Day or to Paris for Youth Day. So all of that nurtured my spirituality; that was helpful. I was expressing my spirituality by writing articles in the old Queensland Province.*

He regretted, however, the apparent lack of affirmation from his religious colleagues. He felt this lack of encouragement, "whenever I did have articles on spirituality published, I always got two or three Brothers who would say 'Ah, yes, that was really special' – then there would be deafening silence from the other hundred and fifteen or something."

On the other hand, Br David seemed to be disappointed at the apparent move away from the Brothers' traditional ministry of the classroom. He seemed to hold reservations that any form of ministry other than the Brothers' traditional work of teaching was a genuine way in which to express their spirituality:

> *I think that whilst there could be other very worthwhile missions, there is no work like class work. It keeps you on the go and it's really hard. And it's very hard these days because things have changed so much. And the other jobs ... Most of our Brothers seem to be caught up in administering ourselves and I can't work that out. To me, that's not outward going out [sic] at all.*

A different view was projected by Br Francis who seemed to convey much more hope when he was invited to share his thoughts on the spirituality of his community. When asked, first, what he understood by the word 'spirituality', he said, "I'm thinking about an individual's relationship with God, by following Jesus or being aware of the Spirit." He referred to the contemporary spiritual writer, Rolheiser:

> *I did a very good sabbatical with him in '09. He says spirituality is what you do with the Holy Spirit who is within you. The Holy Spirit is what you do, so that means you've got to be a bit of a mystic to really have an awareness of the Spirit available.*

With this in mind, Br Francis described the part his own community played on his contemporary spirituality. He declared that although the members of his community were

"all on different planets in terms of ministry", they would gather each morning and evening for community prayer.

> *Someone prepares it. They select something out of the day's reading, a Lectio Divina sort of thing. And then we share on it. We read two or three different versions of the same story. Then we share our insights on it. And then we get the modern translation of the Psalms, the modern translation of the Gospels and then we give ourselves a theme for the day.*

He described how the process is repeated each evening as the community gathers to "revisit the day's theme", respectful of where each individual member of the Community is at spiritually:

> *Then we'll just tell each other how the day went. We'd have had a hard day or an easy day or a joyful day, who we need to pray for now. So we come together but we don't tread on each other. We come together to get the nourishment to go on.*

While circumstances had restricted the members of this group from exercising the traditional educational mission of the Christian Brothers, the spirituality of these members continued to be expressed in activity of many kinds. Significantly, they concerned themselves with justice issues. In this, they appear to be in accord with the society in which they were formed and in which they now worked. Apropos of this trend, O'Murchu wrote, "In the latter half of the twentieth century, the justice issue became much more focused and demanded more attention ... Since the 1970s the pursuit of justice has been a primary concern of Religious in the Christian tradition" (1991, p. 179).

Br Anthony thought that it was the opportunity to express his spirituality in ministry that "kept him going". He spoke of his enthusiasm for "new opportunities to do other things at other schools; enjoying it; getting success out there, so I stayed". Gradually, however, he came to sense that something was missing – "But you knew there was this other spiritual life."

Br Christopher, at the end of a long life in mainline education, did not regret the Brothers' move away from their traditional schools. He took pride in the initiatives of the Brothers in offering new Flexi-Learning Institutions for school dropouts and saw in this work a great expression of the Brothers' spirituality. "That's a great work. We're not going to get any Rhodes Scholars or First Fifteens out of those kids – far from it. But through hard work we're going to help some to lead good lives."

Br Edward went so far as to say that the great thing about his contemporary spirituality was "how the Brothers have grown out of the classroom". Br Francis, in reference to the Brothers' loss of reputation through the public shaming of child abuse, believed that "when we were pushed off our perch, we were freed up", and, as he said, "I think it was the greatest gift of the Spirit." Br Harold, in leaving the teaching ministry, was able to draw closer to that "inner eye" necessary for a spirituality of work. He said that in leaving the classroom it has been simply a matter of substituting one activity for another. "I think I've become more reflective about what this activity means for me. Before, it was ninety-nine percent activity and one percent reflectivity, if you like."

A further offering came from Br Kevin, who admitted that he felt that he could not differentiate his spirituality from the work he did and through which he felt he expressed his spirituality, even though he also acknowledged the self-pride that was at times an element of the work:

> *You'd say that the sinfulness part of your life is that you become so wrapped up in what you are doing that you can't separate yourself from what you are doing. There is a lot of ego in it. You say, 'Oh, yes, I'm working for religion', but in the end you say, 'No, I'm working for myself really.' I was having myself on.*

He delighted in the loss of what he called the 'footy-club mentality' of the Brothers that celebrated the successes achieved in the competitive world of examination results, sporting triumphs and 'old boy' triumphs. He thought it was a "good thing" for the Brothers' expression of spirituality that they had moved away from identifying themselves by their work. He felt offended when some Brothers:

> *carry on about their old Boys – 'He's a judge' – and they never say 'This guy is in prison', as though we always accomplished the greater good. I think that coming to terms with the other part of life, what the psychologist would call coming to terms with the shadow existence that was in your life, has been important. Now I think that because the shadow went for so long unrecognised in the monks in a lot of ways, that it has destroyed us.*

In general, then, it can be said that the post-Vatican II group continued to reach out to others in some form of ministry as an essential expression of their spirituality, but they appeared to have experienced no personal tension in adopting ministries quite different from the traditional educational works of the Congregation. They sought no affirmation through public recognition for what they did. They brought a new spiritual consciousness to the good work that they now performed. Their spiritual shift is now placed at the

service of their ministry.

Spirituality of human relationships. The separation of the Brothers from the world was not so marked a feature of the spirituality of the post-Vatican II group as the pre-Vatican II group and so the expression of their contemporary spirituality through relationships came to them without the struggle of their more senior confreres. Far from being a threat to their perseverance, as those proposing the previous dualism feared, this contact with family contributed enormously to the spiritual growth of the Brothers. Br Kevin spoke of his being missioned in his own hometown during the years his parents were old and ailing. He regarded these years of caring for his parents as a defining time in the development of his contemporary spirituality. Br Kevin was certain that he now expresses his spirituality in a form strongly influenced by the experience of attending his mother as she neared her death. He described how his mother, in life "a really extrovert person" gradually became blind in an old peoples' home:

> *To be with her and witness her dying was pretty traumatic ... I think watching your parents die in that sort of way is very difficult and makes you question about the world and what's important in it and how you relate to people when their life is diminishing. And that brings up the whole question of what life is about anyway. What your own life was about and what you can contribute.*

Not long after this, the death of his only brother in a tragic car accident leaving two little children created the responsibility of providing some care for them and Br Kevin acknowledged the influence this relationship had on his expression of spirituality. "So I stepped in there. Relating to young people and being something to young people in that sort of way changed my whole outlook on how you are."

Such experiences seemed to draw Br Kevin nearer to a perception of the place of relationships in his spirituality and to a rejection of the notion that virtue and holiness for a Brother consisted merely in the regularity of his observance of the horarium. These personal relationships, created by sad circumstances, brought home to him that "in a way, Religious Life can be a fairly selfish life. You've just got to get up in the morning. You don't have to worry about anything else or anybody else." His relationship with his nephews brought home to him how demanding care for others can be:

> *In a way Religious Life was saying, 'You are giving of yourself', but in a way it can be - and I'm talking of my own life – pretty selfish. You just do your job and you think that because you've done your job, that's it. But contributing to other people and trying to fit in things changes your outlook on life tremendously. It changes your spirituality.*

Relationships assumed more and more importance in the expression of Br Michael's spirituality. He spoke of how the relationships he formed when in charge of a dormitory in a boarding school deepened his spirituality. He claimed that the experience of relationship, which boarding school duties necessarily required, enabled him to meet students as people. "Before, I would sum it up as describing kids as students, I think, and it was a sort of role thing. Within the boarding school, you got to know them as people, individuals."

His duties involved pastoral home visits to the families of his residential students and he described his experience of "sitting on the back of a motor bike being hurtled around a farm by a fourteen year old and a thirteen year old driving the farm truck to show me the farm". He concluded that "it was a good humanising experience for me. I started to become aware of the relevancy of a lot of what passed as spirituality for these kids and I got more sensitive to that."

Br Philip furthered this understanding when he spoke of the need for intimacy in his contemporary expression of spirituality. He described how on one occasion, when he was about thirty years of age, he addressed a large group of Brothers making their annual retreat and said:

> *We never talk about our grandfather needs. We never talk about our fatherhood needs. Here we are, a group of men, we were all at an age when we could be fathers or dads or grandpas, but we never talk about any of those things – intimacy needs and all that, and I said, 'Look, I need to. I need us to. I need to share our stories and everything.' Deafening silence when I finished!*

He went on to describe his disappointment at this reaction and that he dealt with his feelings in prayer:

> *All of that I kept taking back to my own private sitting with God and somehow that private prayer made it okay at a deeper level. Even though at a surface level I was going up and down and feeling lonely and sad and angry and happy.*

Br Anthony also alluded to these missing elements in his life. He seemed to regret a certain inability amongst the Brothers to comfortably express an intimacy of relationship. He felt that this was a result of the culture of the Australian Christian Brothers that did not comfortably accommodate that which was different:

> *There is often felt in communities of Brothers the effect of still coming out of a model where there is a kind of tall poppy thing. That is, when people try new things, or do new things, or don't fit into the 'norm', we try to bring them down.*

It was his experience that when a visitor came to a community, the conversation would often involve putting down another member of the Congregation and he judged this to be another manifestation of the Brothers' inability to comfortably relate to others in any degree of intimacy:

> *The Brothers have got to rubbish that Brother in front of them as a way of showing affection for him. Isn't that strange? That the way we show our affection is to rubbish them in front of others as if there is a fear of something or other, and that there is a kind of stinginess with praise.*

Br Anthony also regretted that, in the masculine environment of the Congregation, there was this inability to share praise with one another and ascribed this to the Congregational culture of avoiding any experience of intimacy in their lives:

> *We aren't good [at] praise. Oh, publicly that they have been very loyal and faithful and that they have done these great things … there is a kind of peer thing about what is acceptable. You've got to bring others down a bit … We are very hard on our own. We are very good at making it hard for them. We find it hard to understand guys who are different or what they call 'difficult personalities'.*

Another factor identified by Br Kevin was that the emotional health of the Brothers was closely tied to their ability to relate to others. "I think it's the quality of the relationship you have with the people that you are working with that's the key to the whole thing. In one of the ways, that's what I have always believed in."

Br Kevin had qualified in psychology and described how as a result of his studies he recognised the need for care of his own emotional welfare to be important to his spiritual life:

> *One of the interesting things they did in the whole process was that when you were going in [to a meeting with others], you sort of calmed yourself and reflected on yourself and sort of said, 'What's happening in my life now? What am I bringing to the table? What's my sort of background?' That's what I still do and that's what I called in the old days 'a meditation'.*

Br Kevin seemed to have developed a connectedness with all people in his spirituality. In his interview, he quoted Henry Lawson to make this point:

This is the rule from the Book of the Bush,
It should be quite plain for a dunce,
If a man's in a hole, you should pass round the hat,
Be he jailbird or gentleman once.

He went on to say that he recognised that there were good and bad people in the world but that it was not up to him to pass judgement on them.

It is the relational aspect of spirituality that Br John, also, had come to embrace in his contemporary spirituality. When speaking about his ministry to aboriginal children, he said that he tried to help them to relate to God as being close to them rather than fearing a God who imposed laws and then punished any infraction of them:

> *I would say to them, 'It's God who invites. He just wants to be part of our life, a God who gives us a way of living, who wants us to love and to be loved but he does it in an invitational way'.*

He lamented that too often the children in his care were taught a wrong form of relating to God. "He's not there with a set of [a] million laws and – 'You trip over, Buster, and you've had it', which, unfortunately, some priests still espouse, trying to give people guilt trips."

This unfortunate presentation of God reflected, he felt, the speaker's own inability to relate to others:

> *It goes back to that relational sort of thing, being with people, of trying to get people to see that it's through our being with others that God will break into our lives and so to make them sort of aware of things and to see how you can respond. But not to say, 'If you're not at Mass every Sunday, you've had it.'*

Br John's responses illustrated a similar understanding of relationality as being more important to his spirituality than any sort of legalism. He expanded on this traditional understanding of the Sunday Mass obligation:

> *One of my own beliefs about Sunday Mass is that it's very important that I think God doesn't need me to go to Mass on Sunday. God is in no way being diminished by my not being there. I need to be there because it's the gathering of God's people ... to try to encourage people to see why going to Mass is for them, not for God. It's about building them up and allowing God to be in their lives, to come together to support people.*

Another participant, Br Anthony, was able to accept readily what was different in others

and to relate to them. He worked as a counsellor in a school and he said that he based all his work on the assumption that every person he met was a spiritual person. He found in his work that there was less and less use of the differentiating words 'secular' and 'religious'. He said that young people come from a different era and that he assumed a basic goodness in them all "because goodness is made in the image of God, I just assume that about everyone."

This inclusivity of the post-Vatican II spirituality that was evident in the responses of most participants was also in Br Edward's remarks on whether he was using the word 'spirituality' to refer to his relationship with God:

> *It's more than that. Spirituality is your whole life. It's how you relate to others. I've come from working out at C. where I facilitated a group of mums, pretty broken women, and I had a dietician speaking to them about food. Now my spirituality came across in the way that I could relate to those women.*

There were some tensions experienced when younger men with these views about intimacy of relationships joined communities and when their values seemed to clash with those of older Brothers who perhaps disapproved of their way of life. Br Anthony was positive about his life as a younger Brother even though he acknowledged that it caused him tension.

> *Tension can be very good. If people just sit quietly and just blindly don't say anything, I think [it] is crazy. You can have a discussion. You might have tension, but you can hold the tension creatively and hold it respectfully. Then you can have change and growth.*

Br Edward coming, as all the post-Vatican II participants did, from a culture in which the forming of friendships and relationships with others had been an integral element of their upbringing, was taken aback when he experienced the rather impersonal life of his first community:

> *I had this experience - this is the family I have decided to belong to and all families, (excuse the expression) are f*** up. This is how they live their life. So I followed the regularity and all this type of stuff - and remember, I'm a non-practising Catholic really; you could put it that way.*

Br Francis described himself as belonging to "the generation bubbling around with Vatican II", but he recognised that his formation did not pick up much on what he called "this new stuff coming out". He too felt tension in his first teaching appointment. He said:

> *We found our support in a generation of us Religious because we got out of that ghetto thing. Our ministry was outside – we didn't design it – we were reacting to the professional challenges of the new syllabuses and how to learn all the new sciences, new everything. We were young and idealistic and we made friends with all these nuns and priests and we invented the new catechetics. We knew there was opposition to it but we had that adventurous spirit.*

The tension of living in a transitional time, when the Brothers were having to learn the necessary place of relationships in any spiritual development, was felt by Br Francis:

> *The institution was struggling with how to face chaos. At that time, it felt to us that our way was right. This was absolutely right and all the people who were arguing with us would have to be dealt with. We just had to survive and we'd go underground or we'd go overground; it didn't matter. They weren't going to destroy it in us.*

Br Francis and the other post-Vatican II participants appeared to be coping but the influence of the culture from which he had come to the Congregation helped. These younger members of the Congregation were not carrying the baggage of the anti-body and anti-woman aspects of the spiritual formation of the pre-Vatican II participants. Others struggled. The members of the post-Vatican II group had inherited a Congregational culture that was suspicious of all forms of intimacy as being inimical to spiritual growth and a danger to perseverance in the Religious Life. Spiritual manuals of a past era set the tone. This extract from a nineteenth century manual of spirituality illustrates this:

> Shun with care all natural aversions and special friendships. They are two equally dangerous outgrowths of corrupt nature; two very catching moral diseases, all the more dangerous for God-fearing communities that they force an entry into the breast by the most seductive of sensual charms, against which ordinary care is not a sufficient safeguard (Verheyen, 1891, p. 88).

The above analysis of data drawn from the post-Vatican II participants indicates that they instinctively reacted to the unnaturalness of repressing their emotional needs through the formation of helpful relationships with others.

Spirituality of universal connectedness. Generally speaking, it seemed that the members of the post-Vatican II group had moved into a spirituality of connectedness without any apparent difficulty. When Br Michael was invited to share what went on when he spent time with 'The Transcendent Other' (whom he was reluctant to call 'God' because, in his words, "To me that goes back to 'the Man Up There'"), he said:

> *Nothing. In a sense I guess it [his prayer] comes from the cosmology which I have an interest in, but also from an interest in fundamental physics. I know that the energy of the divine, the energy of the Universe, keeps me in existence. You get down to molecules and mesons and quarks and String Theory and all the rest of it. The energy of the universe flows through me and I think of – Jesus said 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'.*

This was what Br Michael described as his spirituality, a oneness with the energy of all creation, and his prayer was a contemplative acknowledgement of that:

> *The energy of the Divine just flows through me. So I need to still myself as much as I can and just be there - and does anything happen? Not consciously, but there is just a being there … Is it meditation? It's not a conscious structured thinking of thoughts. It's just that words aren't necessary and I don't hear words and I don't say words.*

It was in terms of connectedness with the environment that Br Michael also expressed his understanding of sin. He claimed that he did not commit acts that offend God:

> *The most sinful thing I do is to drive a polluting car. The sinful things I do are the things that destroy the planet or help to destroy the planet. The sinful things that I do are what make the community of people I live with, and the wider community, worse.*

This sense of connectedness was extended to human beings, and so Br Michael's understanding of sin was expressed in terms of breaking connection with others:

> *My sins are social sins. I don't see myself accountable to a Lord God for small things. But I think I do wrong when I damage the environment, either the natural environment or the social environment.*

To replace traditional expressions of spirituality with this sense of connectedness with creation posed problems for some. Br David said that he felt the loss of praying in community together with other Brothers. He felt that with the growth of the sense of connectedness, "Things got left to yourself" and he admitted that for a while, "I would never do a meditation any more". While he now continued to pray, he regretted what was for him a sense of loneliness:

> *There are certain things I do all the time by myself. Like, I always say the Rosary by myself every morning before I go to morning prayers. I just think it's a pity that I have to say it on my own.*

He went on to describe some other aspects of his contemporary spirituality that, compared with the spirituality of connectedness practised by many of his colleagues, seemed almost recidivist:

> *The sacraments are the high points of my spirituality and also the practices of the Church provided a majesty and a mystery. I simply love going to Mass. I love being an altar server. I love the Easter ceremonies*.

There was the struggle implicit in Br Anthony's search to express his spirituality in terms of connectivity while retaining some sort of religious framework. This was very similar to the struggle experienced by many of the participants in the pre-Vatican group whose spirituality had been largely fashioned by doctrine and dogma. Some of these more senior Brothers admitted to catching only glimpses of the intimations of a new doctrine of creation. Br Antony said that he understood that the universe story, the creation story, existed long before any religion was established and that human beings gave expression to their spirituality long before the coming of Jesus:

> *Moses didn't believe in Jesus, because he'd never heard of him. He was a Jew. So they weren't Catholics all going to Mass and the sacraments – that's just a fact. But in the universe, when it was started there were no religions, but God was present. So religion is just a structure.*

As a consequence of this line of thought, Br Anthony felt comfortable in the freedom he enjoyed to make his own prayer in his own way and in his own time, all outside any formalised structure:

> *I need to spend time in silence. For me, I purposely spend time for about thirty-five minutes in quiet silence, meditation if you like, each morning. I find the morning the best time because it's not going to be compromised later and there is something about in the morning, in the dawn. That's before the others wake. I have my own space. And it's quiet. And I'm aware.*

He described how he spent this time:

> *On the week-end I try to find some other space where I can sit out in the garden, in the morning at about nine o'clock and just sit, watch a butterfly, maybe do a little reading. I'll read a poem. I find it most helpful to read something by Elizabeth Johnson*[14]*. To just sit and be still and be quiet.*

In sharing his sense of connectedness in his spirituality, Br Anthony referred to the writings of Chet Raymo[15] and described how under the influence of his reading he had moved away from the more narcissistic aspects of prayer. Instead of the self-

[14] Elizabeth A. Johnson (born December 6, 1941[1]) is a Christian feminist theologian. She is a Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University, a Jesuit institution in New York City. She is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood (adapted: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki /Elizabeth_Johnson_(theologian).

[15] Born September 17, 1936 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Chet Raymo is a noted writer, educator and naturalist. He is Professor Emeritus of Physics at Stonehill College, in Easton, Massachusetts. Raymo espouses his Religious Naturalism in *When God is Gone Everything is Holy – The Making of a Religious Naturalist* (Adapted: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chet_Raymo)

congratulatory "I'm doing God things; I know who God is; this is God", and instead of repeating "Me, Lord, Me as my prayer" he remained attentive to "the life and every particle of every animal, of every cell, of every butterfly, in everything". He said, "If I can be attentive to that, if I can see that, then I am really in touch with the Divine Presence, which isn't the same as 'saying a prayer'."

There is a great range of conscious responses to the new creation story (McCann, 2002, p. 36). It was difficult for some of the participants of the pre-Vatican II group with their different cultural background to share the passionate concern for the universe that the post-Vatican II participants brought with them to the Congregation. Br Francis was one of the post-Vatican II group who expressed his contemporary spirituality in cosmic terms. When invited to reflect on the way in which his image of God may have developed over the years since his formation, Br Francis said that these days he would, for instance, have a different, much deeper, understanding of the Trinity:

> *I don't like the word 'Trinity' because of all this mathematical stuff we used to get at school, but instead I have the idea of Jesus and I try to work out how the Scriptures were trying to capture this man and his relation and fidelity to God. And his presence with us post-Resurrection. That's Trinity and Incarnation, the union of God and humanity.*

He took the idea to include de Chardin's notion of the ongoing creative activity of God, and, in this case, he included the ongoing nature of the Incarnation:

> *God is united to the flowers but the flowers give God praise just by being pretty. But we have freedom and the idea that the Resurrection thing is becoming Incarnate. Resurrection is much clearer to me with the cosmic theology. I'm much happier with Incarnation, the evolution of mankind - that is God's coming and Resurrection.*

Further responses from the post-Vatican II group indicated how the different participants perceived and related to God, or some transcendent dimension, in their lives. Br Anthony spoke of a "unitive consciousness":

> *In unitive consciousness we know that everything belongs, that I'm not separate from anything, that I'm just an expression of God, here today for this very small time. So is everything else too. I'm part of everyone. It's a fundamental truth that if you look at any science of how this planet came to be, and how you and I came to be, we are all connected to the dust, stardust.*

Because of this "unitive consciousness", Br Anthony asked, "If they don't use the word 'God' or 'religion', does that make any difference?"

Br Michael was one who was reluctant to use the word 'God'. Instead, he spoke about his 'connectedness' with the Other when he spent time in prayer. Prayer, he said, was for him not a conscious, structured thinking of thought, but rather, a sense, a consciousness:

> *Words aren't necessary and I don't hear words and I don't say words. It's a connectedness. It's an awareness of being connected with the Other, with creation, with the universe – just a connectedness is there. I just want that connectedness. There's goodness there ... I say positive things happen; it's a peaceful time. The Universe is on a positive growth. I'm somehow on a positive growth. This for me is God. I'm somehow in the presence of the ultimate forces of the universe. I'm in touch with [them], and they are in touch with me ... there's not something that switches on and off. It is there all the time.*

Br Anthony commented that he came to see "the Divine Presence infused in every part of nature". As he grappled with the notion of God, this developing appreciation of the immanence of God became for him "a big change of focus". In effect, knowing God became for Br Anthony an experiential thing and he felt that he had abandoned his earlier intellectual striving to know God.

To sum up this section, most of the post-Vatican II group in the study appeared to have adopted contemporary expressions of spirituality that reflected a consciousness that salvation is not an isolated historical event performed by Jesus two thousand years or so ago, but that rather it continues to be experienced in the ever evolving, ongoing activity of God in the cosmos. Most of the participants appeared to express their contemporary spirituality by attempting, in various ways, to be connected with this activity in a truly human involvement. The understanding that God has been at work for billions of years, long before humans evolved and formal religions were founded, and that creation is God's primary revelation for humankind (O'Murchu, 2005, p. 103) seemed to have been accepted by most of the participants as a basis for expressing their contemporary spirituality. Cosmology has become for them a recognition that God relates to the whole of creation and not just to humans and that by exploring the connections with creation, the creativity of God, which underpins everything, will be better understood.

SUMMARY OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

This chapter has attempted to identify the characteristics of the contemporary expressions of spirituality of the participants in the research. In doing so, an attempt has been made to acknowledge that the senior group, the pre-Vatican II group, faced greater challenges in

letting go the spiritual expressions of their youth to embrace a new spirit. The characteristics of the contemporary spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group that were identified from the data gathered from the interviews can be summarised in the following table:

Table 13
Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Pre-Vatican II Group

CHARACTERISTICS	**FEATURES**
Freedom	Gradual decline of observance of prescribed religious practices. Contemplative growth.
Mission	Retirement from school teaching opened up a variety of personally satisfying but useful ministries. Traditional activity in itself no longer seen as spirituality.
Self-Determination	More personal and relevant choice of spiritual expressions. Feeling comfortable to question some traditional Church teaching.
Relationship	Acknowledgement of the positive benefits to spirituality and human development of healthy relationships with both sexes.
Cosmology	Openness to recognising the Divine in creation.

The participants in the second group, the post-Vatican II group, having been raised and educated in the culture of contemporary Australia appeared to have inherited less of what had become spiritually irrelevant. Their spirituality seemed to blend much more readily with the contemporary worldview. The following table summarises the elements of their contemporary spirituality. Because both groups are reaching out to the same spiritual end, there are elements common to both groups.

Table 14
Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Post-Vatican II Group

CHARACTERISTICS	**FEATURES**
Self-Determination	Imaging of God in non-anthropomorphic forms. Disengagement from the institutional Church. Prayer conducted in other than traditional devotional forms.
Community	Genuine human relationships as the basis for authentic community spirituality, not the prescriptive uniformity to structures and practice of tradition. A caring responsibility for each other.
Work	Changed social conditions rendered obsolete the expression of spirituality through the sole ministry of education. An outreach to disadvantaged others in a variety of ministries a vital element of spirituality.
Relationship	Retention of contact with families. An inclusive integration of intimacy into the religious life a natural

	element of spirituality.
Connectedness	A one-ness with God by being part of the Divine life-force found in all matter, human and inanimate, throughout all creation. Salvation is an ongoing event in an ever evolving universe.

Much of the above discussion concerned the area of the change in the idea of work as an expression of the Brothers' spirituality. Two additional areas reflective of the shift in spirituality from dualism to relationality in the Brothers' contemporary expressions of spirituality common to both the pre- and post-Vatican II groups emerged from the analysis of the data and were considered to be significant. These two additional areas were the changing notions of God, and the potential possibility that some contemporary expressions of spirituality were in conflict with the official teaching of the Church. A consideration of these is discussed in the sections below.

CHANGING IMAGES OF GOD

The data indicated that many of the participants found that as their understanding of spirituality developed and came to be expressed in ways far different from that of their initial formation, so too their perception of God changed. Some discovered that the images of God that they had inherited were misleading and conflicted with the image of God they now held. These old images of God appear to have been abandoned, to be replaced with new images. This, Armstrong states, should not be considered unusual. "Throughout history people have discarded a conception of God when it no longer works for them" (1993, p. 134). Gone are the images once held of a far away, punishing God or a God who was a supreme male patriarch who imposed his will on everyone and controlled events such as floods, earthquakes and other disasters. The data showed that many of the participants no longer used the name "God" preferring to refer to God, active in their lives, by other names such as "Being", "Creative Energy", the "Other", the "Transcendent", the "Sacred". This, states Fiand (2008), is no more than it should be. "As the context changes, religious expressions also change or, at least *should* change for the sake of cultural relevance, in order to continue to foster the connection with the Holy for which they are intended" (p. 18).

Br Edward said of his notion of God:

> *I don't anthropomorphise. I'm happy with it being something nebulous. What is God? God is who he is. I like the fact that I'm dealing with an unknown power and the mystery of this power is its transcendence, but also its immanence.*

Br Neil was another participant whose contemporary notion of God had moved significantly from that of his earlier years. He said that he often referred to the "sacredness of the earth", and the "Divine Presence which is there" and, he added, "I don't mean a theistic presence". He said that in his ministry of giving retreats he helped people to become participants in the natural world rather than remain observers:

> *This kind of metaphysics is quite different to the kind of transcendental thinking of the past – that we are made for heaven and that heaven is our goal and that most things are assessed and valued because of our eventual destiny.*

Br Neil said that he had long rejected the notion of heaven. 'God' for Br Owen was also something else. "My language is the transcendent sacredness of our human experience into which all being invites us. Our relationship potentially invites me into the transcendent sacredness."

This concept of an invitation came to Br Owen not in the practices of conventional religion but through meeting people, sharing a meal with them, walking in the park or attending the fine arts performances. To illustrate this, he spoke of attending a recent Australian Ballet performance, *After the Rain* by Michael Walden. "This was a recurring piece of sacred music to which this man and woman danced, mirroring each other. It was just awesomely beautiful. That's the transcendent sacredness. There is no other." He added, "Isn't that prayer, to engage in transcendent sacredness into which I'm being invited?"

Br Neil spoke of how he gradually came to reject the traditional understanding of God. He said that he had become conscious that the image of God that he held was heavily culturally encoded. This became clearer to him when he encountered other modes of expression. "This became more gradually cemented in my consciousness, the notion of a theistic God with overtones of anthropomorphism, gender and human emotions and quality. It wasn't any longer satisfactory at all to me."

This shift in conceptualising God had logical implications affecting the traditional beliefs of his faith and Br Neil struggled with them. "The notion of Incarnation, Redemption and Salvation became mythic terms for me rather than actual terms. I was struggling not to throw them out lock, stock and barrel, those theological concepts."

He claimed that these faith terms did have a valid 'connotation', a word, he said, that he

chose deliberately in contrast to the word 'annotation'. Annotation, he said, was a much more literal entity in his vocabulary whereas connotation allowed for a deeper, more archetypical and more mythical understanding of a concept. For this reason, Br Neil said that he had stopped using a lot of the vocabulary of traditional piety and religious thinking. "I'd reckon I haven't used the term 'sacrifice of the Mass' for years now". His shift in conceptualising God went further than mere language, however. It had implications for theological beliefs of formal religion He said, for example, that these day he tended to side with those who would debate what the terms 'Resurrection', 'Ascension' and 'Assumption' or the term 'sitting at the right hand of the Father' mean:

> *All that language to me is unsatisfactory in that it points to a model of God that might be intellectually satisfying, and I'm using the word 'satisfying' in the sense that 'it might do but is not gripping at all', and probably I would need to talk for quite some minutes to explain how the concept of God for me has altered dramatically overtime.*

God, for Br Neil, seemed to be a non-personal but benign force or energy. He spoke of his contemporary notion of God as "a presence in the natural world" with whom he related, both interiorly and in how he wrote:

> *I often refer to the sacredness of the earth and the Divine Presence which is there and I don't mean a theistic presence, a more immanent kind of presence, and my emotional satisfaction now comes from ritual and the things that surround the natural world.*

It was clear to Br Neil that his concept of God could pose a challenge to the Graeco-Roman heritage of Catholicism in which, over time, the concept of God had become fixed and unchangeable.

> *This kind of metaphysics is quite different from the kind of transcendental thinking of the past – that we are made for heaven and heaven is our goal and that most things are assessed and valued because of our eventual destiny. I have rejected the notion of heaven as the place where I am going.*

Br Neil summed it all up by saying, "A theistic model of deity is not mine anymore." Towards the end of his interview, Br Neil, when invited to reflect on the specific idea of an interventionist God, agreed that there was "a mythic level of truth in that", but he no longer found it tenable that there was a God who "wanted to intervene in the natural state of things, that is, an incarnation in the individual Jesus". He said that he was always taught this and always believed it, but:

> *in the wider realm of cultures, I regard that the belief that Jesus was the only Son of God is a kind of arrogant story that we tell our youth, 'You've just got to believe this, guys, whether you're a Muslim or a Zoroastrian, or a this or that - Jesus is the only Son of God'. That kind of dogma is so heavily encrusted with … I don't even think it's Biblical really. I'm not alone in this.*

In this, Br Neil was confronting the problem created by the Church when it claimed that some things are 'eternal truths', that is, unchangeable and not even examinable. Br Neil seems, with extraordinary honesty, to have rethought the symbols traditionally used for God and instead by embracing the awe and wonder of creation to have taken for himself symbols and metaphors for God that are for him personally far more relevant. He expressed his resentment that anyone should proclaim that *their* view of God is the only valid one or that there is no possibility of speaking about God outside formal religion:

> *But the notion that Jesus was the only Son of God … to use that language, we are all sons of God. We are all incarnations of the Divine Spirit, the One who graces and is divine of being. We are all called to sonship, daughtership in the kingdom. All this language concerns me.*

This resulted in a radical redefining of spirituality also for Br Owen, albeit gradually. Schneiders describes how we all, over time, divest ourselves of the various God images formed in younger days and move "into adult relationship with the transcendently

immanent Holy Mystery, who is both the ground of all being and utterly beyond our imaging, our language, our control" (2000, p. 192).

She suggests, in fact, that the whole of the spiritual life consisted in the gradual maturation of the God image. Br Owen experienced a great sense of freedom when he finally freed himself "of the scholastic thing". The fear of incurring anathemas for his following his beliefs was very real:

> *It was enormously fearful to let go of what you'd been trained and brought up in and created expectations around, and all that sort of stuff. So it wasn't without all of its nervousness and potential self-doubt. But, yes, I made the decision.*

His reading and reflection eventually drew him to explore existential theology. "I went back to Paul Sartre and read his own philosophical writings and I began to really understand." He applied much of this thinking to the religious education courses he constructed for his senior students, running the risk of criticism. "I introduced them to

different philosophical ways of viewing our Catholic tradition. And lots of parents were absolutely horrified, you know, and there were fights that went on. But I was vigorously into understanding."

There appeared to be for most of the participants in this case study, a changed concept of God and a growing realisation that God was an unfathomable mystery, formless and unknown who could not in any way be treated as an object, reduced to "Western imperial minimalism" (O'Murchu, 2005, p. 36). It was this changed notion of God that gave rise to the next aspect of the contemporary expressions of the spirituality of the Christian Brothers.

EMERGING CONFLICT WITH AN INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

The data in chapter six indicated that there was among the participants an awareness that expressions of contemporary spirituality appeared to conflict with some of the official teachings of the Church. To suggest new names for God, new metaphors for God or new symbols for God for the sake of relevance is to expose oneself to the possibility of criticism and censure. Morwood acknowledged this possibility, "A difficulty arises when theology becomes so tied to a particular worldview or understanding of the universe that its statements come under threat of being irrelevant if there is a dramatic shift in worldview of cosmology" (1997, p. 19). He added that the Catholic Church seemed reluctant to meet the challenge of expressing traditional faith in language and images of contemporary society.

For instance, when invited to speak about his attitude to the authority of the Church, Br Neil said:

> *I think that the Roman Church has had its day. I really think it has. I've got little respect for it anymore. You know, some of the things that are said and done these days, I think, I can't be there any more. It's not what I'm into.*

Br Owen also found at one time, when he himself was placed in charge of the formation of young men wanting to join the Congregation, that his intellectual questioning intensified:

> *I couldn't help but confront the whole meaning of our life and the meaning of our Catholic tradition and the beliefs of our Catholic tradition. And I was increasingly uncomfortable with the whole scholastic theology expression of who we were as Catholics. It began to finally not satisfy me. I mean that it had been growing for years but now it was getting to a climax.*

The climax seemed to have been resolved for Br Owen when he became aware of Karl Rahner's shift from a scholastic to an existential way of thinking:

> *So I thought, right, if Karl Rahner shifts and it is good enough for him, it is good enough for me. So I shifted quite deliberately. In my own mind I embraced existentialism as a philosophy. Now that didn't mean that I understood it all, but I could let go comfortably of the whole scholastic theology or philosophy and theology, and embrace existentialism and find its theological possibilities to underpin spirituality and theology*.

Br Owen also spoke about his apparent diminishing relationship with God as he formerly understood God, the Church and religious practices:

> *I very deliberately seek moments where the fine arts can take me unto this engagement with the transcendentally sacred. I can traipse along to Mass. I don't normally go to Mass. It's just awful. It's got nothing to do with my spirituality, either the language or the experience … you know, you're supposed to do this – sit for half an hour in a chapel in the morning when you are dead asleep and all that. I mean, that's all just nonsense for me now. This may be practised faithfully by some and that's good for them, but don't expect it of me.*

It was in an intellectual way that Br Owen appeared, over time, to have worked through a growing unease that the spirituality in which he was formed was very much, as Schneiders (2000, p. 186) described it, "not only authoritarian but institutionally totalitarian". As he matured, Br Owen began to question the necessity that, to be a good Catholic and a good Religious, he must give unquestioning obedience and intellectual assent to teachings and

practices that he was no longer entirely convinced of. He said that this change was stimulated initially by his intellectual development through his professional studies:

> *I was immediately plunged into working with senior kids … and that meant teaching Religious Education at the most senior level. And I would say that at that stage I began to get really quite critically interested in Catholic doctrine and the refinements that were possible within the traditionalist expectations of what 'Catholic' meant.*

It is interesting to note that Br Owen sensed that his spiritual development was influenced by his work of teaching. He described how he grew to be critical of much of what he was required to teach in the Religious Education syllabus and he explored these. "There were lots of refinements that you could indulge with integrity. For me it was Catholic writing and that sort of thing. I began to get quite critical and, of course, they were the years of the Vatican Council."

He found this critical analysis of the religious courses he was given to teach personally

helpful:

> *So it was all pretty formative for me, and I was beginning to claim much more who I was and what I was going to believe and how I was going to believe. And it was getting into a fair bit of the critical end of our faith with traditionalist stuff and I was sort of becoming much more independent as a person in the face of expectations.*

Such responses highlight the challenge that faces the Congregation to form a Religious Brotherhood, within the Church, of deeply spiritual men, for some of whom God no longer appeared to be the God of Jesus Christ. The different responses showed that a common understanding of who God was and how one related to God could not be taken for granted in contemporary times as the basis for forming a Religious Brotherhood.

When invited to reflect on whether this change in his spirituality brought him into conflict with the community living of the Brothers, Br Owen replied that he had not engaged in any "sort of cogent revolt against the practice" but he knew that the energy was no longer there for following what had become for him a routine of meaningless religious exercises:

> *I mean, it just wasn't working, so I didn't put energy into it and that got me into a lot of trouble for not being regular at prayers and all that stuff. And frankly, the energy just wasn't there. To put it bluntly, it didn't matter. But it mattered to others. I mean I got bullied around by Br N. and Br N. like you wouldn't believe, because my practice wasn't up to scratch. It didn't matter that it didn't make any sense.*

Out of this emerged a special form of prayer that differed radically from the conventional prayer forms of his beginning days. When asked about his relationship with the Other, with God, or with the Being by whatever name he acknowledged such a Being, Br Owen replied that there was none "because that Being didn't exist. That was an enforced idea that was surrounded with emotional expectation and generation but there was no one there."

Instead, his expressions of spirituality were now generated by relationships with others:

> *But there were people there and my life began to take its energy from relationships with people. Now this wasn't generated by expectation. This was real. This was existentially real. Not a notional God out there that was not real, that I never experienced except in this generated, emotional stunt that had shaped me.*

In response to how he prayed, Br Owen replied that it was far different from the formalised, structured prayer programme of his formation years:

> *I'll sit down with L. tonight [Br Owen had chosen to live in a mixed community of lay men and women] for dinner and it will be a Eucharist full on, because it will be relational. It will be about who we are to each other. It will be about our commitment to support each other, our commitment to live responsibly. I mean, this is what [the] Eucharist is about. Essentially it will be communal. It doesn't fit the traditional language and the traditional numerical theme of the church and the sacraments and that sort of thing, but my life has transitioned into rich meaning and rich sacramentality.*

Because of this form of spirituality, Br Owen explained that he no longer attended Mass except when the Mass provided an opportunity to suitably ritualise a special occasion. On the Sunday he was interviewed, he said that instead of attending Mass he had gone for a walk in the nearby parklands as he often did and this was his prayer, the expression of his spirituality "and that's just so deeply satisfying and in that existential moment of just awesome loveliness and wonder, and the river and the birds and the bush and the people as you walk …" Br Owen was emphatic that this was prayer, although he raised a doubt as to what the word 'prayer' itself meant in contemporary times:

> *Isn't that prayer, to engage in transcendent sacredness into which I am being invited? Do I make ejaculations? No. Do I articulate wishes? No. Do I sometimes engage my thoughts in how special it is to be able to enter this moment? Yes, I do. I reflect on that. Is that prayer? You could call it prayer if you like. I think the language itself has too much baggage for me, so I tend to avoid it. But, yes, I would say in a sense that it is a new way of praying.*

Another perspective came from Br Michael who struggled with the concept of religion. He said that conventional religion no longer had anything to offer him and that he had grown away from "the institutional side of things". His contemporary understanding was:

> *People can be good and holy people and all the rest of it but without the trappings of the other thing, religion. I'm somehow in the presence of the ultimate forces of the universe. That's not something that switches on and off. It's there all the time.*

He now understood that this was, in fact, Jesus' position:

> *Somehow Jesus was in touch with the same reality that in a way was of his culture. His vision of God was his cultural vision of God. I think other people put words into his mouth, you know, when they wrote things down many years later. Their, Jesus' and Edmund Rice's, spirituality was the spirituality of their culture.*

Br Michael fully accepted the invitation from the Congregation to engage with God in a new form of spirituality, "just to have a spirituality, as Phillip Pinto [Superior General]

says, that is independent of the mainstream Church. To demonstrate that and to show people there is a spirituality that is valid outside the mainstream, the institutional Church."

Br Edward offered a further example of the changes in his concept of God. He attempted to find words to express the changed way in which he expressed his spirituality because of his more contemplative way of engaging with God. "The nourishment of my spirituality would come from my prayer life. I'd spend an hour, if not more each day, sitting. I'd read the lessons of the day. I'd apply my imagination to the readings."

He had, however, developed some discrimination, for, as he said, "As a young monk, St John's Gospel and its Gnosticism were wonderful. Now I think it's a load of bunk and I'd rather read Mark. That's what I find interesting about how my spirituality has evolved."

He seemed to use as a symbol of this change in his spirituality his learning to pray with his eyes open, and moving from sitting on a cushion with eyes closed, breathing and "doing it correctly" to "sitting in a chair looking out" and he found that it was a "hard and challenging thing" for him.

Br Francis, in reflecting on his contemporary spirituality, said that it "was what you did with the Holy Spirit who is within you." He said that spirituality for him in his later years was "not coming from scripture; it was not coming from creedal formulations; it was not coming from the Catholic Catechism or how to be an identified Catholic." He held, instead, "a deep awareness of what the Spirit is, the Holy Spirit is with you", and that it is our responsibility to "be spiritual … in touch, mystical almost, in touch with God through the Spirit. Whatever images we used to use, we've got to change them now."

Br John also described how the spirituality of his earlier years had developed over time, "I am nourished by living in the present moment and allowing God to be present there. I'm lucky, I think, that I'm a sensate … so I allow myself to be nourished by those constant experiences."

Some elements of the conventional, traditional church were appreciated by participants who appeared to express their contemporary spirituality in non-church ways. Br Neil, for instance, acknowledged the value of the aesthetic beauty offered by the Church. The Church, he said,

> *offers us a way to think, a language; it offers us a way into aspects of beauty like architecture, and these are aspects to me that are valuable, although I utterly reject the Creed, lock, stock and barrel these days.*

There seemed to be a difficulty, however, when, in the name of orthodoxy, doctrinal agreement was insisted on. The discussion so far has shown that many of the participants sought a much more expansive expression of their spirituality than seemed possible within strict conformity to official doctrine with its laws, regulations and rubrics. However, not all the participants committed themselves to developing a spirituality around new imagery of God and did find their spiritual needs adequately satisfied in traditional expressions. Br David, for example, resolved to cling as well as he could to expression of the old, but felt himself marginalised by his confreres, and perhaps by the Church, for so doing. This clinging to traditional faith expressions in an environment which appeared not to share the faith that Br David's confreres expressed caused some conflict for Br David. He described how he would attend Mass in his parish Church and make a contribution by playing the organ. But, he said, "I'm a nervous wreck by the end of Mass because it's turned into a concert and there is an endless parade of people being presented to the congregation."

He lamented the loss of a sense of dignity in the celebration and was critical of the celebrants who, he said:

> *think they're movie stars, and the sanctuary is like a film set; it's flood lit, it's vast. They swan around, they talk to [people] - the Liturgy, the Word of God – it's gone from one extreme perhaps, in the fifties to the other now.*

Br David, in making this point, wanted it to be noted that he was, he thought, about the sixth youngest Brother in the Province and added, "I don't know of anyone of my age that goes along with this nonsense." What he referred to as 'nonsense' seemed to be:

> *The absolute avalanche of drivel that you get on the Internet [communications from the Congregational Leaders]. It's all so strange to me now. All this eco-spirituality. I mean, we're not encouraged to be devoted to Our Lady or we're certainly not encouraged to be loyal to the Holy Father. None of that. It's all rubbish that I read and I can't relate to it. I have nothing to do with it.*

The strength of his feelings of loss, pain and alienation can be sensed in his language:

> *God knows why they [Province Leaders] put an Interfaith Calendar in our [Province Newsletter]. I don't want to know when the Muslim feast days are on or when the Dervishes are twirling around, or Wiccan Pagan feast days. To me that's all just terrible. Absolutely terrible.*

The spirituality of most of the members of the pre-Vatican II group, however, appears to reflect the contemporary understanding of a continuously evolving universe and that humans are dynamically part of the process. It would seem that many in this group have integrated into their spirituality the notion that God is one with the universe and that God is to be found in the here and now, actively present in the world around them. Most appear to have entered with little, if any, personal stress "into union with all that is" (Nolan, 2006, p. 176), a oneness sometimes known as 'panentheism', that is, that God is *in* all things.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the manner in which both groups of participants, the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group, came to express their spirituality in contemporary times. The expression of the contemporary spirituality for each participant in both groups remained clearly a quest for union with God, total and absolute, a search to find a oneness with the Divine, by whatever name is given to it. Old images of God were discarded as a new consciousness of his presence in the universe emerged. There occurred a distinct development in the participants' expression of their spirituality from mere belief in the existence of God to an experience of the presence of God in their lives and in the world. This oneness with the Divine was all-inclusive, that is, it desired to embrace not only all humans but also all creation. This oneness for which they longed was certainly no longer concerned with religious dogma or creedal beliefs, nor with traditional religious practices and customs. The movement from a spirituality fashioned by ideas and thoughts, the movement from traditional expressions of a scholastic-based spirituality and the movement from a spirituality dominated by the dualism of matter versus spirit was particularly challenging for the members of the pre-Vatican II group. It was easier for those who joined the Brothers later. They were able to express their spirituality through relationship comfortably, as they came from a society in which there was great freedom and which cultivated a sense of individualism and personal freedom to choose for themselves. Both groups continued to express their spirituality in work. The Congregation's mono-ministry of education was lost to the pre-Vatican II group because of their age, and lost to the post-Vatican II group because of changes in society, yet both groups appeared to consider that by using their experience and skills to reach out to various disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society they were completing their spirituality.

The next chapter will present a discussion of the issues that these findings gave rise to.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This research was undertaken to study the expressions of spirituality by the Australian Christian Brothers and specifically to study the transition from traditional forms of expression to more contemporary forms. In 2007, the four Australian Provinces, the Province of New Zealand and the Region of Papua New Guinea were formally dissolved and then united in the newly constituted Oceania Province. All the Christian Brothers in Australia were brought under the one governing Council. It might have been assumed that this unification would have resulted in a kind of spiritual homogeneity, but the findings of the research presented in chapter six indicated a great diversity of expressions of contemporary spirituality amongst the participants who had been drawn from all the original Australian Provinces. In particular, it appeared that the senior participants in the research had taken full advantage of the freedoms offered them in their retirement to express their spirituality, apparently with no disquiet or regret, in ways far different from those of their youth. This shift away from the spirituality in which they were initially formed was also true of the post-Vatican II group of participants although for them the move to contemporary forms seemed to be less challenging. As explained in chapter one, the difference between the participants from the pre-Vatican II group and those who had joined the Congregation much later, led, during the data analysis, to the identification of these two groups of Brothers, named the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group. While both these groups shared some common elements in their particular contemporary understandings and expressions of spirituality, it was also useful to consider, separately, the contemporary spirituality of the two groups.

A thematic analysis of the data in the previous chapters indicated that the changing expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers paralleled the concurrent changes in church and secular cultures. The most senior of the seventeen Brothers who participated in the research study entered the Brotherhood in 1942. Therefore, this research study covered the changes in the expressions of spirituality over a period of seventy years. Significant events, both in Church and nation, occurred during these seventy years, giving the impetus to, and contributing to the development of, contemporary modes and understandings of spirituality in society generally. To consider this relationship between spirituality and societal change is important, as Chittester has pointed out, “Unless we understand the heritage of renewal, its ideals and its social

circumstances as well as its theology and its social aberrations, we cannot possibly understand why we do what we do at the present time" (1995, p. 1).

The expressions of spirituality of the seven pre-Vatican II participants in their early years displayed particular characteristics and, as such, they provided a useful basis for comparison with the spirituality of the other ten participants whose initial spirituality was shaped by the theology and church culture that developed after the Second Vatican Council. Spirituality in the period before the Second Vatican Council was often identified by an air of certainty that accompanied an unquestioning acceptance of the dogmatic teachings of the Church. It acknowledged and honoured God through a variety of pious exercises and devotions as well as ascetical practices designed to control what was understood as the innate sinful tendencies of the human body. For Religious, pre-Vatican II spirituality tended to require a radical withdrawal from the world. Post-Vatican II spirituality, on the other hand, acknowledged that God was to be found in the world and developed practices accordingly (cf. chapter six). Consequently, contemporary spirituality exhibited a marked inclusivity and was generally resistant to any forms of obligatory practices and prohibitions. It was expressed in a far more relational way. A brief summary of the themes which were identified in the analysis of the data in chapter five is given below.

Summary of the Characteristics of the Initial Spirituality of the Pre-Vatican II Group. The expressions of spirituality of the seven pre-Vatican II participants in their early years displayed particular characteristics and, as such, they provided a useful basis for comparison with the spirituality of the other ten participants whose initial spirituality was shaped by theology and church culture that developed after the Second Vatican Council (cf. chapter three). A brief summary of the themes which were identified in the analysis of the data in chapter five is given in the following table.

Table 15

TITLE *Characteristic Expressions of the Initial Spirituality of the Pre-Vatican II Group*	**CHARACTERISTICS**
Spirituality motivated by a sense of duty	Performance of an exact observance of rule and daily horarium.
Spirituality motivated by fear of losing one's soul	Failure to persevere in a religious vocation placed the salvation of one's soul in jeopardy.
Spirituality influenced by dualism	The 'world' was considered potentially evil and a threat to the vocation of a Religious.
Spirituality of repression	Authentic spirituality for a male Religious demanded minimal contact with women. In the name of celibacy, any expression of intimate relationship was denied.
Spirituality of work	Performance of work, hard, relentless and often unrewarding, came to be for many their sole expression of spirituality.
Spirituality of community	Support and affirmation came from living with like-minded confreres, in the early years less spiritual than boyish exuberance.

Summary of the Characteristics of the Initial Spirituality of the Post-Vatican II Participants. The manifestations of spirituality of this first group were contrasted in chapter five with the spirituality of the remaining ten participants who received their initial spiritual formation in post-Vatican II times. These men had been raised in an affluent Australian society and were educated to express themselves confidently in the expectation that they would be listened to and their views accorded respect. Society gave them opportunities to travel, to enjoy leisure activities and to have a quality of life unknown to previous generations of Australians. The church culture of their youth was also markedly different from that of the pre-Vatican II participants who, raised in a society that often discriminated against Catholics, consequently lived their lives somewhat segregated from the rest of society. In contrast, the spirituality of the second group, the post-Vatican II group, had been formed in a society less focused on religious bigotry and also in a Church much less concerned with the fear inculcated by a pervading sense of sin and guilt. The post-Vatican II group experienced a church culture influenced by 'Gaudium et Spes' (Flannery, 1988, p. 903), which had stimulated the Church to shed much of the theological and pious accretions of the Middle Ages and to engage with modern society as part of the Divine plan.

By way of contrast with the pre-Vatican II group, who had all been trained under the same novice master, Br Patrick Harty (cf. chapter two), the participants who constituted the post-Vatican II group had received their initial spiritual formation from a diversity of novice masters, most of whom had received specialised overseas training in preparation for the task. From the data gathered in the interviews with the ten post-Vatican II participants, six characteristics of the ways in which they expressed their initial spirituality were identified in chapter five, as detailed in the table below.

Table 16
Characteristics of the Initial Spirituality of the Post-Vatican II Participants.

TITLE	CHARACTERISTICS
Individual Spirituality	Less dependent on the community and exercising greater individuality in the development of spirituality.
Inclusive spirituality	Dismissal of negative practices of separation from the world and a natural embracing of all creation.
Spirituality of freedom	Able to think critically for themselves, often shaped by post-school work experiences, critical of any demand for excessive uniformity of practice.
Spirituality of personal responsibility	Mature choice of expressions of spirituality to meet personal needs.
Spirituality of duty	A dutiful acceptance that a Rule was necessary for a Religious Brotherhood to function.
Spirituality of work	Enthusiastic and zealous workers, but work was not considered as an end in itself. Recognition that spirituality may be expressed in many ways.
Community spirituality	Found affirmation and spiritual sustenance in community life.

The contemporary expressions of spirituality characteristic of the two groups identified in chapter six are summarised in the following sections.

Summary of the Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Pre-

Vatican II Participants. The pre-Vatican II group appeared to have responded well to the challenge of contemporary times so that their spirituality reflected the years of thinking and study which had brought them release from the narrow confines and strictures of traditional religious culture and practice and helped them achieve a certain liberation.

Table 17
Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Pre-Vatican II Participants.

TITLE	CHARACTERISTICS
Spirituality of freedom to choose a personal prayer form and the time and place for personal prayer	Opened up the possibility for a more personal and contemplative prayer, expressed in ways intellectually satisfying and better integrated with personal interests.
Spirituality through a renewed sense of mission	Engaged in a greater diversity of ministries than the traditional mono-ministry of education. Recognised the need to give some expression to spirituality through ministry, and did so creatively and in personally satisfying ways relevant to their situation.
Spirituality through self-determination	Realised in practice that as non-ordained Religious, their spiritual expressions need not be those mandated for clerics.
Spirituality of relationship	Acknowledged the possible damage done to their psycho-sexual development by early separation from family environment and denial of the opportunity to have normal relationships with women. Discarded the former Congregational negativity towards forming friendships and developed healthy balanced relationships as integral to their spirituality.

Summary of the Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Post-Vatican II Participants. As already discussed, the post-Vatican II group had been subject to a different set of religious and social influences in their spiritual formation, and it appeared that, while they retained some of the same traditional spiritual characteristics of the pre-Vatican II group in their contemporary spirituality, they had developed, perhaps because of the different early formative influences, some significantly different characteristics. These are briefly summarised in the following table.

Table 18
Characteristics of the Contemporary Spirituality of the Post-Vatican II Participants

TITLE	CHARACTERISTICS
Spirituality through self–determination	Resistance to expressing God anthropomorphically and hence a movement away from the spirituality of their formative years to a thoughtful, more personally satisfying expression. Some seemed to disengage from traditional, institutional Church teachings.
Spirituality of community	Moved to create communities devoid of former authoritarianism, but instead based on personal responsibility, care and affirmation for one another. Recognised that mutuality of respect, regardless of individual differences, is basic to good community life.
Spirituality of work	Spirituality now expressed in a variety of ministries with a clearer recognition of God in those they served. Fighting social injustice was not academic; there was real engagement with people at the margins of society.
Spirituality of relationships	Retained connection with families and acknowledged the need for some form of human intimacy in a healthy spirituality.
Spirituality of connectedness	Expressions of spirituality acknowledged that God impregnates all creation. Expressions of spiritualty embraced the connectivity of all things.

There appeared to have occurred among the participants a general shift from understanding and expressing spirituality in dualistic terms to adopting contemporary expressions of spirituality that could best be described as relational. The analysis of these two broad

themes further indicated that this movement from dualism to relationality was reflected in three areas of the Brothers' contemporary expressions of spirituality. These are identified and discussed below (see page 264).

OVERALL SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

It seems clear that the spirituality of both groups was influenced by the cultural context in which they were initially formed. The environmental factors, both secular and sacred, which contributed to shaping the initial spirituality of the two groups in this study differed significantly from each other. The participants in both groups had travelled a spiritual journey within the Congregation of Christian Brothers from these two separate starting points, to arrive at similar, but not totally identical, expressions of spirituality. The analysis of the data in chapter six indicated that, although both groups had been subject to the same influences from contemporary society and had been influenced by the same changes in Church and Congregation, there still appeared to be some differences between the two groups in the way they expressed their contemporary spirituality.

The newer generation of Religious, with less pressure on them to perform and to conform, were given the individual space to grow in personhood with a greater likelihood of tasting success in their ministry, receiving affirmation from their religious communities and those they served, exercising some personal responsibility in the discharge of their duties and happily gaining a healthy sense of self-esteem. These later generations of Brothers were given more time to reflect and the freedom to grow as individuals. With these human needs being fulfilled, there was more potential that, according to Maslow's motivational theory (Maslow, 1968), the Brothers would aspire to the highest stage of human development, that of self-actualisation.

The characteristics of the Christian Brothers' spirituality, identified at the beginning of their lives as Religious and compared with the characteristics of their contemporary expressions of spirituality, gave an indication of the overall transition that had taken place. The identification of these characteristics provided the foundation for the discussion that follows and that attempts to understand the transition that occurred.

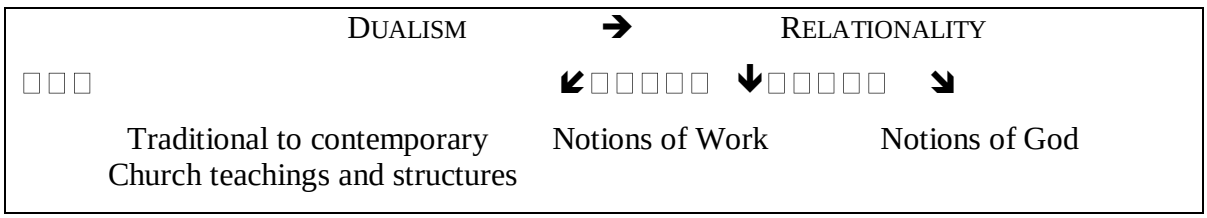
By refining the data analysis and organising the findings of the analysis in the summary form given above, it was apparent that a transition in the spirituality of the participants had taken place. Two broad themes that reflected the changing nature of the participants'

expressions of their spirituality emerged from a study of this transition. These themes were a general shift away from understanding and expressing spirituality in dualistic terms and a movement towards adopting contemporary expressions of spirituality that could best be described as relational. The analysis of these two broad themes further indicated that the movement from dualism to relationality was manifested in three discernable areas:

- The shifting influence from traditional to contemporary church teachings and structure;
- A shift in the participants' perceptions of the notion of work; and
- A shift in the participants' perceptions of the notion of God.

This analysis of the data provided the framework for the discussion that follows. It can be schematically represented as follows:

Figure 1
Discussion Framework



There follows, first, an explanation of these two themes, dualism and relationality as they relate to the Brothers' expressions of spirituality. This explanation, in turn, informs the discussion that follows on the three areas of the Brothers' contemporary expressions of spirituality that manifested the shift from traditional to contemporary expressions of spirituality.

DUALISM

By this is understood the conviction that God inhabits a non-material, heavenly realm and that everything else is somehow alien to God and a distraction from following Christ in a God-like way (O'Murchu, 2005, p. 46). This concept was seen to be foundational to the spirituality of the participants in the pre-Vatican II group (see chapter five) and had

implications for the manner in which they expressed their spirituality. Three themes from this dualistic perspective of the understandings and expressions of spirituality at the beginning of the participants' Religious lives were highlighted:

- Dualism emphasised a spirituality of penance;
- Dualism cultivated an anti-feminine spirit; and
- Dualism resulted in inadequate spiritual formation which could be linked to child abuse.

Dualism emphasised a spirituality of penance. In Ireland particularly, the birthplace of the Christian Brothers, there was almost an ingrained culture of penitential austerity intended to subdue the body in pursuit of holiness. This heavy emphasis given to bodily mortification in order to control it has, rightly or wrongly, been attributed to the influence of Jansenism. O'Murchu (2005, p. 48) noted that in the 1700s and the 1800s it was the binary undercurrents in the Jansenistic worldview that caused people to be preoccupied with the salvation of their souls while failing to address the serious social problems around them. Under the influence of Jansenism, the salvation of one's soul was procured through the joyless, penitential subjugation of a sinful body. Enduring a hard life without complaint, working hard under difficult conditions and even adding self-chosen penitential acts to the difficulties of daily life became part of the Brothers' traditional spirituality.

As discussed in chapter one, the spiritual culture of the times assured practitioners that their acts of penance were pleasing to God and helped them to attain eternal salvation, but for Religious, voluntary mortification was also stressed as an important means of preserving chastity. The language used at the time reflected this concern and the Brothers' 1927 *Directory and Rules* was peppered with such phrases as "victory over self", "with the wings of mortification and prayer, the soul speedily soars heavenwards", through mortification "he has despoiled him of the old man", and in order "to keep the flesh subject to reason, the mortification of the body is necessary" (Congregation, 1927, pp. 236-242). An analysis of the research data in chapter five indicated that the participants of the pre-Vatican II group were certainly moulded in this tradition, whereas the Brothers of the post-Vatican II group, who grew up in the totally new social milieu of the 1960's and 1970's, appeared to have experienced a certain conflict between the values of openness and the confident expressions and sharing of feelings that were inculcated by their

generation and the behavioural expectations of the Congregation. Significantly, all the participants in the case study indicated that in their contemporary expressions of spirituality, they had dismissed thinking of their bodies as objects and as something that needed to be mastered and controlled. Instead they had moved towards a realisation of the importance of not repressing their emotions in the name of spirituality.

Dualism cultivated an anti-feminine spirit. Almost as a corollary to the core value of penance being used to subject the body into submission was the negative attitude towards women. The pre-Vatican II literature of the Christian Brothers may have urged a Brother to view his own human body, at best with some suspicion and at worst as an occasion of sin. There was no doubt at all that a woman's body was considered a far greater danger. The Brothers' Rule, reinforced by the church culture of the time, made it clear that women were to be treated always as a potential threat to a Brother's virtue and a danger to his perseverance as a Religious. Many strictures on contact with women were put in place to safeguard the Brothers from these dangers. Human emotions, when aroused, were best suppressed. A Brother was urged, for example, "to divest himself of all carnal affections for his relations" (Congregation, 1927, p. 168). Sensual feelings particularly were not to be indulged. The Rule made many recommendations for the "perfect preservation of this virtue [chastity] through distrust of self, custody of the senses, care in avoiding sensual friendships, promptness in repelling temptations and openness of conscience" (Congregation, 1927, p. 168).

Many attempts were made to legislate a limitation of a Brother's contact with women, presumably to prevent the arousal of feelings unworthy of a vowed celibate. When considered in a modern context, the attempts to control human feelings by legislation appear to have been taken to exaggerated lengths. Two examples may help to illustrate this. The Brothers up until relatively recent times were permitted to take a holiday at the seaside at Christmas time. This arrangement gathered quite large groups of Brothers at some popular holiday resorts. For many years, these holidays were preceded by a Circular Letter from the Brother Provincial forbidding them to engage in "mixed bathing" and the Brothers were obliged to distance themselves physically by at least a hundred yards from seculars when on the beach (Circular Letters, ILM: X0473, 1943; SRY: X0474, 1955; JDH: X0475, 1962). Anecdotally it was reported that such legislation failed to achieve its purpose, as the seculars were drawn to the safety of where a large number of young men were swimming.

The second example illustrates how seriously the Superiors considered any engagement with women was for the Brothers. When plans for a new Brothers' house at West Essendon were submitted to the General Council for approval, they were required to be altered so that an entry to the maids' section be made directly from the outside and that the domestic employees' block be completely cut off from the Monastery by locking the door leading to the kitchen each evening (Letter from Br Leo Duffy to Br Bernard Garvey, 7-6-61).

This demonising of women's bodies, the almost irrational fear of the power of the human body and the marginalisation as sinful of all natural human feelings contributed to serious psycho-sexual deficiencies in the development of a Religious Brother. The data gathered in the course of this case study showed that all the participants noted this with regret in their lives and that most appeared to have succeeded in taking appropriate steps to redress the situation. It is important to note that the Congregation also has indicated its desire to release its members from any kind of dualistic bind, has taken steps to facilitate full personal development and has acknowledged that appropriate affective relationships hold an integral part in the Brothers' spirituality. Chittester wrote, "Repression simply masks volcanoes waiting to happen … Someday, somehow, it will erupt in the most destructive of ways" (1995, p. 113). This is a valuable consideration for future Congregations.

This attitude towards women even went so far as to dictate the Brothers' educational policy of not engaging in coeducation, despite the changing educational conditions in Australia that required such action. The Papal Encyclical 'Divini Ilius Magistri', which stated that "False also and harmful to Christian Education is the so-called method of co-education" (Pius XI, 1929, Nº 68) was often quoted to justify the Congregation's resistance to engaging in coeducation, but this stance would have been much more strongly influenced by the Congregation's own hostile attitude to women. This attitude is perhaps glimpsed in a private letter to the Provincial of St Patrick's Province who had requested some discretion in the application of the policy forbidding co-education, with the provision that a Religious Sister supervised the girl students. The Irish Superior General at the time replied to this request in the negative, saying, "Nuns are dangerous, for you can be burned by a holy candle just as any other" (Clancy, 1957). Indeed, when the same Superior General was requested by a Bishop of an Australian rural diocese for some relaxation in the policy in order to rationalise limited resources, he replied that there were

other ‘wastages’ to look to besides teaching power and that “we must safeguard our Brothers from moral danger” (Clancy, 1957).

The philosophy that produced a division between the body and the soul and encouraged Religious in the name of spirituality to hold their bodies in contempt was potentially damaging to wholesome personal development. As was seen in the literature review (chapter three), such a dualistic separation of body from soul had no part in the understandings of the great mystics. Julian of Norwich, for instance, wrote “I understand that our sensuality is grounded in Nature, in Compassion and in Grace. This enables us to receive gifts that lead to everlasting light. For I saw that in our sensuality, God is” (Doyle, 1983, p. 92).

O’Murchu claims that it is precisely when the human emotional capacity is suppressed, whether in the name of spirituality or not, that sexual problems surface, “A celibacy that denies basic human needs belies the incarnational dignity of human life … and turns celibacy into an ascetical monstrosity” (1991, p. 133). The Cartesian philosophy that claimed that the material body and the immaterial mind were two entirely different, albeit connected, types of substance underpinned many of the traditional spiritual understandings in which the pre-Vatican II participants were formed. The implications of this dualism for the expressions of their spirituality were extreme. Such a dualistic understanding required that the body with its instinctual emotions, its sensuousness and erotic passions needed to be held in control by the powers of the mind. Consequently, ascetic practices evolved in Church tradition to control the body so that the soul would be kept pure in order to enjoy eternal salvation in the after-life. As O’Murchu stated, “We did not have any major problem with the human body until formal religion began to evolve” (2000, p. 157), and he added that it was this religious context that was largely responsible for “the dualistic bind in which people view and treat the human body” (2000, p, 156). Nolan claimed that the body-soul dichotomy, or dualism, has created “havoc in the spiritual lives of generations of Christians” (2006, p. 151).

A spiritual formation that taught young Religious that the pursuit of spirituality required the repression of their emotions also held the potential to stunt the growth of an integrated, healthy personality. The Christian Brothers’ formation programme that appeared to absorb these two principles may have contributed to generations of Australian Christian Brothers consciously cultivating an exclusive and anti-feminine attitude and so contributing to the

possible stunting of their psychological and spiritual development. Considerations such as these indicate the importance to the Congregation of developing an understanding of the individual Brother's growth and transformation into personal wholeness. The analysis of the data (chapters five and six) indicated the participants' desire for a spirituality that was interwoven with every aspect of human life. It suggests that any policy that does not acknowledge the relations that men have with women and the power and influence that men and women have on each other, or any policy, such as refusal to engage in coeducation, that seems to cultivate misogynist attitudes would be detrimental to spiritual development.

However, this attitude towards women probably did no more than reflect the theology of the Church teaching at that time concerning Original Sin, which, Wiley (2002) contends, had a specific gender concern. She maintains that early Church theologians held the following three gender positions emanating from Genesis 2-3:

1 Woman's creation as an inferior human being;

2 Woman's sin as the cause for the fall of humankind from divine friendship;

3 Male rule as a divinely willed feature of the created order (p. 155).

Unfortunately, as a consequence of this teaching, as well as its origins in Jewish religious culture, the Church in its piety and in its theology had long spoken of God as a male person. In attempting to image the incomprehensible mystery of God, who is neither male nor female, as a 'person' to whom humans could relate, it was the masculine that was divinised. This resulted in a Catholic culture of oppressive patriarchy. Nothing, of course, can justify such a culture, but it was within this historical culture, especially strong in Ireland, that the Congregation of Christian Brothers was birthed. It was probably this conditioning by the contemporary Church culture which contributed so much to the shaping of the anti-feminine traditions of the Christian Brothers.

Dualism resulted in inadequate spiritual formation which could, possibly, be linked to child abuse. Another issue that was identified by the participants in their responses was the matter of child abuse and arguably, this is another area that could be attributed to the dualistic philosophy that pervaded spiritual formation. As long as spirituality (soul work) was separated from other human qualities and needs pertaining to

mind, body and emotions, and indeed, elevated to something beyond these other elements of being human, these other human needs were given a weighting that made them, somehow, lesser than spiritual needs. If a Religious Brother was formed to understand his vow of chastity to mean only the repression of his natural instincts and the denial of the opportunity to express a healthy affective life, a wonderful opportunity to open him up to the goodness of creation, love, friendship and sexuality was not only lost to him but might have been the cause of later problems. Certainly O'Murchu's view seems to be that if, in the quest for holiness, sexuality is split off from life rather than integrated into it, later problems may occur and he identified that this "may well be what is happening in the sexual abuse cases that came to light in the closing decades of the 20th century" (2005, p. 49). Dorr makes a similar connection between sexual child abuse and an aspect of formation in the former type of spirituality which involved denigrating the human body and imposing humiliations and harsh penances. He thought that the practice in Religious Formation Houses of testing and disciplining novices and candidates by shaming and humiliating them lowered their sense of self-esteem and possibly damaged them, leaving them vulnerable to later psychosexual problems (2005, p. 106).

Br Lawrence was one participant who gave explicit expression to the suggestion that the harshness with which the Brothers, in the name of spirituality, treated themselves and their students, ultimately damaged them. He thought that the Australian Christian Brothers could be regarded as a 'subset' of the Irish Church and had inherited from that Church an image of a harsh God which in turn produced harsh Christians. Br Lawrence was of the opinion that it was this severity that "poisoned" the Brothers by producing a mindset that, "just as God was going to punish you, you could punish kids."

Some of the participants in the research spoke of the shame and humiliation they felt following the wide media exposure of sexual offences and the impact this had on their spirituality. A thoughtful comment from Br Francis to the whole issue of sex abuse indicated that he had learnt something from the process and appreciated what the loss of reputation had meant for the Brothers. He reflected that the very success of the Brothers' educational work in Australia burdened them with a reputation that they felt obliged to live up to. With the media exposure of child abuse, this reputation was tarnished but, in fact, Br Francis saw this as liberating. "We gather together in our Province now. I think there's

a humility and a brotherhood and an acceptance. I think it has been a great gift for us to see what a Brother is."

It is generally conceded today that the principle of withdrawal from 'the world' as an integral part of the spirituality of a Religious is flawed and that it has produced many negative effects. O'Murchu stated that the belief that the world was a sinful, impermanent and destructive place was an old spirituality and that it had spawned, tragically, "the accompanying anthropomorphic projection: humans are born sinful, so is the whole of creation" (2005, p. 61). Because of this dualistic perception of the world, Congregations such as the Christian Brothers required their members to turn their backs on the world producing what O'Murchu further described as a kind of spiritual schizophrenia in which Religious felt the tension "between their desire not to be too immersed in the world, and their deeper yearning to bridge the chasm between faith and culture" (2005, p. 61).

In general then, the dualism that pervaded the cultural and religious context of the lives of the participants in their early years clearly had an effect on them in these three broad areas, which have been discussed above.

RELATIONALITY

The second broad theme that emerged from the analysis of the data identified a shift in the participants' expressions of spirituality in a move away from expressions of spirituality that concentrated on the self to one that was inclusive of all people. The analysis of the data (chapter six) indicated that the participants had sought to transit from the dualistic thinking that had shaped such an understanding of spirituality as exposed in the three expressions discussed above. Instead, their contemporary expressions of spirituality acknowledged that the whole person was important and that spirituality was not the concern only of the soul. There was a transition away from the dualism of the formative years to an integrated and holistic spirituality, including body and mind as well as spirit, expressed in contemporary times.

In this research case study, relationality is understood as a connection with God, which can be formed, not just in some spiritualised, non-corporeal spiritual zone, but in the whole of creation, human and non-human. "Dei Verbum" pointed out that God reveals himself in all creation, "God who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities" (Flannery, 1988, p. 751). From the

thematic analysis of that part of the data concerning the participants' contemporary expressions of spirituality (see chapter six) a recurring theme unfolded which revealed an understanding that God's primary embodied presence lies in the cosmos. While spirituality is concerned with the development of the interior life, it is not limited exclusively to individual, personal concerns. As the spiritual life develops, it seeks to find expression in reaching out to others in mutual help. Merton says that a person "cannot find him [God] in him [God] alone, but that he must find him [God] in and through others" (1955, p. xiv). King (2008) goes so far as to say that a more ethically grounded and action-oriented spirituality "is not just a necessity – it is an imperative" (2008, p. ix). A spirituality which focused exclusively on otherworldly things and which kept the pursuit of holiness distinct from bodily needs would be considered today to be defective and probably dangerous. This was not always so. Even though many Congregations were founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to meet specific social needs, they were nevertheless heavily influenced in their foundation and development by the prevailing monastic tradition where spirituality required the renunciation of the world by some sort of physical separation from it, as well as the abandonment of all worldly goods and the

renunciation of all sexual activity. This has been identified in an earlier discussion (see chapter five).

Two elements of relationality were identified and are discussed below:

- Relationality and changing perceptions of the human body; and
- Relationality and the emergence of a level of freedom and individualism.

Relationality and changing perceptions of the human body. Since Vatican II, there has been a great shift away from considering the human body and the enjoyment of human relationships as potentially dangerous to one's spirituality. The language of contemporary spirituality no longer refers to 'subjugating the passions', or 'keeping distance from the body or the opposite sex'. Instead, contemporary spirituality embraces a healthy affective life and celebrates the goodness and beauty of human and sexual love (cf. *Pope Paul VI, 1965a*). In the contemporary world, there has been a growing movement of male reinterpretations of religion and spirituality. This movement is concerned with issues of "embodiment, sexuality, the deconstruction of traditional masculine roles and images, and new approaches to the Divine" (King, 2008, p. 137). One issue emanating from the

analysis of the data in chapters five and six is the challenge that the participants have to demythologise the well-established Congregational traditions of disdaining the physical body, of canonising toughness and success, and of abandoning any vestiges of anti-women thinking.

There are probably many reasons why a strong negative attitude to women was, seemingly, so embedded in the traditional spirituality of the Christian Brothers. It may well have been reflective of the cultural conditioning of a male, clerical, pre-Vatican II Church in which women were presented as a source of temptation for men. One of the issues arising from the analysis of the data in chapter six was the need for the celibate male contemporary spirituality of an Australian Christian Brother to be expressed in a spirit of mutuality with women and equality of women with men. Another aspect of this issue was an acknowledgement of the feminine in the spirituality of the male. All the participants in the pre-Vatican II group in this research entered the Religious Life before they completed their secondary education, and their choice of celibacy, as a result of the then-current dualistic philosophy of undervaluing their bodies and their sexuality, may well have resulted in an unconscious psychological withdrawal from their sexuality (Dorr, 2005). As a result of having moved from puberty to adulthood in the unnatural monastic conditions of the all male formation house, these young men may well have concluded that sexual feelings were sinful and were to be avoided. Any such withdrawal from their sexuality could result in a less wholesome spirituality, for sexuality is an integral human trait and is important for spiritual growth (King, 2008).

Schneiders (2001, p. 202ff.) writes at length on the influence of the family as the normal means of affective development in a young person. As was mentioned above, all the pre-Vatican II participants left their families at an early age to enter the Brothers, and so were deprived of the experience of developing their emotional and social lives in this natural manner. The trauma of this severance from their families was heightened by the awareness that they would not be permitted to visit their families ever, except for one visit of a fortnight's duration at the age of twenty-five when they pronounced their perpetual vows (Circular Letters: Kelty Archives, 1949, 1950, 1951). This separation from their families was radical, as the distance of their homes from the Formation Houses, centrally located in New South Wales, precluded the possibility of many, if any, inter-state visits from their families during the years of their training. These young men were deprived, not

only in the years of their formation but also later when they were living in community, of the opportunity to participate in family events such as weddings, baptisms, birthdays and even funerals.

The data indicated that this separation from their families during their teenage years and young adulthood was an issue in the development of the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group. They were ill equipped to interact with women and to develop any kind of relationship with them when social processes and values changed to enable them to do so. This could have contributed to the dysfunctional role of unresolved personal conflict in the relational life that was sometimes observed in older Religious (Schneiders, 2001). Certainly some Brothers chose to leave the Congregation as indicated by Br Lawrence (chapter five). It is also conceivable that some Brothers remained in Religious Life simply because they no longer had the confidence to live independently in a world from which they had been separated for so long. It was now a new kind of society, with different needs from those of the time when many of these participants had entered Religious Life. Their exclusion from with the world had ill equipped them to engage with contemporary issues – homelessness, ecological experimentation, hunger, peace, AIDS, globalism, the new world order, ethics, lifestyle, alternative education, feminism, etc. (cf. Chitttester, 1995, p. 162).

Freedom and individualism. One of the issues arising from the findings in chapter six points to need to reintegrate Christian Brothers who may possibly have been damaged by their formation in a spirituality which failed to see the individual as a whole person, a psycho-somatic unity, but rather saw in the individual only a temporary union of two disparate parts, body and soul (cf. Collins, 1986). The deeply dualistic philosophy practised in the name of spirituality, one which totally excluded women from the Australian Christian Brothers' formative, adolescent years and beyond, and the associated repression of any emotions which may have been stimulated by contact with non-Brothers, was fraught with potential danger for later life (Chittester, 1995). Several of the participants in the pre-Vatican II group were aware of this need in themselves and they appear to have successfully rectified it.

The analysis of the data also indicated a movement by the participants away from an understanding of spirituality that was expressed in a submissive compliance to a regular

observance of rules provided by the Congregation to the freedom to exercise self-responsibility for choosing how to express their spirituality. In this movement, many of the participants observed that they were ahead of the Rule and were at times even at odds with the official teaching of the Church. As well, the data analysis indicated that the participants recognised that conformity to structures such as the prescribed disciplines of the Rule led to dependency and immaturity. This search for individual freedom led many of the participants to move beyond the traditional customs of the Congregation. Freedom came to mean a release from having to live up to the reputation for efficiency, discipline and success that the Congregation had accrued over the years. One participant even considered that the loss of public reputation was for him a freeing experience.

It was not so great a challenge for those who received their initial spiritual formation in the post-Vatican II era to develop a form of relational spirituality. These Brothers had grown up in a social environment which had taught them to trust their own instincts, to be honest, to share their feelings and to confide in friends. Take for example, Br Edward who recounted, "I went along to the novice master at one time when I had a little bit of a crisis after about six months and said, 'I'm gay. I'm attracted to so-and-so'."

The post-Vatican II participants were already inclusive in their views and were puzzled when confronted with any suggestion that to save their vocations and obtain eternal salvation, they should withdraw from society and exercise the Congregation's traditional exaggerated restraint when relating to women. These were men who had been culturally encouraged to engage with others and they rejected, if they even thought about it, the anti-body, anti-female, anti-holistic spirituality of the past. These men were inclusive in their relationships and made no sharp distinction between religious and secular. Their views often seemed to bring them into conflict with the more rigidly held attitudes of the older Brothers in community. Therefore, the movement towards a relational spirituality for these participants was not as radical as the movement for the pre-Vatican II group.

THREE AREAS IN THE LIVES OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS THAT REFLECT THE SHIFT FROM DUALISM TO RELATIONALITY

As was stated in chapter two, the overall intent of this research case study was to explore the transition in the expressions and understandings of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers from their early years to the expressions and understandings they

expressed in contemporary times. From the data analysis, as has just been discussed, this transition was seen to be a shift away from expressions informed by the prevailing dualistic philosophy of the times with a consequent strong individualistic orientation to contemporary expressions of spirituality that acknowledge and derive meaning from relationships with all creation, human and non-human. A consideration of the three key areas that emerged from the data analysis and that illustrated this shift from dualism to relationality follows.

THE SHIFTING INFLUENCE FROM TRADITIONAL TO CONTEMPORARY CHURCH TEACHINGS AND STRUCTURE

Introduction. As was shown in chapter one, the life form of the participants in the pre-Vatican II group was particularly burdensome. The Rule, followed literally by the Brothers, imposed a strictly controlled monastic lifestyle that, authoritatively administered, had become progressively more alienated from the egalitarianism of contemporary society. As many participants in this case study research indicated, they dutifully endured the physical hardships and the often demeaning demands to sacrifice, in a spirit of penance, personal development, both intellectual and emotional, in the name of spirituality. The analysis of the data showed that this acquiescence seemed to be grounded in the enculturated expectations that the Church held for Religious, and the equally enculturated acceptance by Religious that, however unreasonable the demands made by their Church-approved lifestyle might be, they went unchallenged because the Church in those days was held to be always right (Campion, 1982, p. 164ff.; O'Murchu, 2005, p. 27ff.). This, of course, was at odds with the Brothers' growing ability to discern for themselves, partly as a result of their university studies and partly because of the influence of society, yet absolute obedience and rigid conformism to the requirements of the Rule prevailed. The dualistic perception at that time was that the 'lower appetites' of the body must be subjected to rigorous disciplines so that the 'higher matters' of the soul might prosper. The prevailing theology of the pre-Vatican II era was grounded in this dualistic division (O'Murchu, 2005, p. 48) and its effects lingered long after the Second Vatican Council concluded. As a result, dualism was intrinsic to the traditional expressions of spirituality that were often narrow, anti-world and preoccupied with the salvation of one's soul.

Prayer in common. One issue that emerged in the analysis of the data (chapter six) was that to use the traditional 'prayer in common' as the means to bind members of a

community together was no longer tenable. By prayer in common was meant the routine practice of the Brothers assembling in the Chapel at regular times during the day to recite vocally prescribed sets of prayers. Formerly, this regular attendance to prayer in common was considered by the Church, and therefore by the Congregation, to be the raison d'être of Religious Life, and that by an exact observance of the prescribed prayer programme, the Congregation of Christian Brothers conformed to the expectations of the official Church. The analysis of the data, as already discussed, indicated that over time, the development of individual and personalised expressions of contemporary spirituality had gradually but insistently resisted this practice, even though it had long been perceived to be the binding force in creating community. However, in the minds of traditionalists at least, its retention seemed to be critical to the continuing form of life of the Congregation. The traditional practice of prayer in common met resistance because it was no longer seen to be congruent with the emerging contemporary expressions of spirituality and, as an end in itself, was seen to have little to do with the formation of community. The traditional prayer in common paid little regard as to whether or not these prayers said in common were meeting the spiritual needs of the Brothers. Superiors in earlier times evaluated the worth of community life simply by taking note of the regularity of attendance to community prayer by the members of the community. At the annual Visitations by a member of the Provincial Council, it was usually the external observance of attendance at community prayers that was the criterion for measuring the worth of community life. This is substantiated by the excerpt from the Visitation Report discussed in chapter two.

Influence of secular society. As secular society began to respect the right of each human being to make individual choices in personal matters, a public morality, one not necessarily based on theological principles but arising from society's belief in basic human decency and respect for the rights of others, evolved to meet the effects of a lifestyle that, in an age of prosperity, seemed to be dominated by consumerism and self-gratification. Such issues were as pertinent to the life and expressions of the spirituality of Religious as they were to secular life.

Brothers, however, whose spiritual formation and life experience were mirrored by the pre-Vatican II group, had been lock-stepped into doing the same things together at the same time each day, praying together the same prayers routinely at regular times, and little leeway was offered for the satisfying of individual needs or the development of individual

talents. As the theological understanding of religious life matured and as the influence of the contemporary culture on the Brothers was better acknowledged, this changed. For instance, the 1996 revised form of the Constitutions mandated a prayer programme for the Brothers, but at the most recent General Chapter of the Congregation in 2008 no attempt at all was made to regulate the prayer life of the Brothers but simply recommended that:

> Each of us live the vision of this Chapter by taking responsibility for his own ongoing formation through activities such as contemplative prayer, spiritual direction, accompaniment, professional supervision, immersion experiences and reading related to the Chapter vision (Congregation, 2008a, p.16).

Clearly, there were signs that the Congregation had evolved beyond using community prayer as the glue for binding community together and measuring the worth of a community by the regularity of the Brothers' attendance. Instead, community prayer was encouraged because it was now regarded as an expression of community life and a source of spiritual nourishment for it and for the individuals who comprised the community.

Personal responsibility and community life. Whereas formerly the expressions of spirituality were regulated by the Superior of the Community, one effect of dualistic thinking, the contemporary spirituality of individual Australian Christian Brothers was expressed independently of whatever understanding of, and/or relationship with God that was held by local community leaders. The Brothers appeared to have taken responsibility for their own spiritual lives. However, there remained the challenge that to form a Brotherhood, not only must the vision of the 2008 General Chapter expressed above be accommodated, but also the diverse forms of individual expressions of spirituality identified in chapter six. Some of these expressions of spirituality were highly eclectic and some appeared to be only nominally Catholic Christian practice but relational in essence.

There is, indeed, a challenge to community life when individual members independently express their relatedness to God in so many diverse ways. Schneiders speaks of the effect of this on Religious communities, "It can no longer be taken for granted that the members share the same faith, a serious situation for a life form, which is based not only on faith but specifically on Christian faith" (1998, p. 22).

Schneiders points out that even those members for whom Christian faith remains normative:

> may hesitate to speak in explicitly Christian terms lest they be branded reactionary Christian members may hesitate to voice their spirituality lest they shock their hearers or find themselves branded as heretics (1998, p. 22).

Summary. To summarise this section of the discussion then, Congregation Leaders, in recent times, appear to have conceded that individual members should be accorded personal responsibility for their spiritual lives and that to do so was congruent with the contemporary social environment. The whole Brother is to be cared for and his human needs are taken as integral to his spiritual development. As O'Murchu said, "in setting up the dualistic oppositions of flesh and spirit, sacred and secular, the human and the divine, we have fragmented the very foundations of our emergence and unfolding as spiritual people" (2000, p. 66).

This was a radical transition in thought and policy from the not-too-far distant times when all expressions of spirituality were mandated by Rule and the observance of these prescriptions were used as the criterion of community and individual value. Less clear, however, was how contemporary community life could be structured around these diverse expressions of spirituality and still maintain cohesiveness, particularly when some were in apparent contradiction to the teachings of the institutional Church. The data analysis of chapters five and six indicated that a general transition had occurred from an understanding and expression of spirituality held by the participants in this research case study at the beginning of their Religious Lives to radically different contemporary expressions. The participants had, in different ways, come to sense that their original expressions of spirituality no longer gave them a way of being with God. The findings yielded by the data showed that the participants had come to realise that spirituality should no longer function as a means of protecting them from the world, as it formerly seemed to have been used. Instead, the participants in this research case study had, under various influences, developed contemporary expressions of spirituality (cf. chapter six) that were personally integrated and life affirming, and while their spiritual engagement was still essentially concerned with a self-transcendent union with God, it was no longer expressed at the expense of full self-integration and self-development. As the interpretation of the participants' narratives proceeded, and as the data was gradually crystallised into the two themes of the effects of dualism and aspirations of relationality, further patterns of the

transformation in the expressions of the Brothers' spirituality began to emerge –the notion of work and the notion of God.

The second area that showed the transition of spirituality from expressions of dualistic characteristics to spirituality of relationality concerned the participants' changing perception of work.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHANGED PERCEPTIONS OF WORK.

Introduction. The discussion above has concerned a certain tension between the spiritual ideals of their religious life and the expression of their human emotions. It was seen that the spirituality in which the pre-Vatican II participants were formed concentrated on securing 'salvation', that is, a happy life after death, a quest which at that time seemed to involve viewing the human body with contempt and as something that was potentially dangerous to this eternal salvation. This sharp distinction between things of the soul and things of the body had repercussions for the Brothers in another, similar way in that they expressed their spirituality almost solely in work.

Life for the Brothers, at least for the pre-Vatican II participants, seemed to have been polarised into two distinct spheres. They were trained as monastics, as every moment of the day was programmed with silences and with allocated times for prayer, for work, for examens, for reading and for community recreation, all controlled by bells. This training was not much different from the life lived by Benedictines or enclosed communities. When the Brothers were sent to 'mission', the experience was very different. There they became involved in the very active life of teaching, with their days full of work-related tasks. When they returned to the monastery after a day's work in the schools, they again put on their monks' life, and said prayers, kept silences and studied together in a community room not unlike a monastic scriptorium. In some ways, these two lives were at odds with each other. Their work came to dominate their thinking and absorbed all their creative energy. By performing their work as perfectly, and, in competitive education, as successfully as possible, they sensed that they would be regarded as 'good' Religious and so secure their eternal salvation. The analysis of the data (chapter six) indicated that a transition occurred from giving expression to spirituality through work from a dualistic viewpoint to giving expression to spirituality through work that was relationally motivated. This can be seen in the following figure:

Figure 2

The influence of changed perceptions of work from a dualistic to a relational perspective

DUALISM	➔	RELATIONALITY
Work as a spiritual duty	➔	A consciousness of work as an expression of spirituality
The enculturation of work as spirituality	➔	Contextualising the spirituality of work
Work for the poor as spirituality	➔	Integrating work as spirituality

Work as a spiritual duty. All the Brothers who participated in this research noted in different ways that their work, certainly in the beginning when they joined their first communities, was their spirituality. The work was recalled by them as rigorous, disciplined and usually exhausting, as exemplified in Br Ian's reference to a "very tough year" when he taught a class of over sixty without any text books, studied at night "gaining first place in the State in Metallurgy", all the while suffering poor health as a result of his living conditions. The findings of the research in chapter six seem to indicate that the prayers said in common before and after each day's work were regarded more as an obligation incurred as a result of being a Religious than as a means of developing a spiritual interiority. In fact Br Quentin described his spirituality "for a long, long time - I mean for many, many years - as one of obligation, duty and fulfilling duties, and in doing that, I thought I was being a good Brother". The Brothers' daily fulfilment of their spiritual exercises appeared to be an end in itself, rather than as a means of spiritual growth and nourishment. Br Owen summed it up when he said, "This is what you did as a Christian Brother and that amounted to saying the prayers, but I don't think that it inflicted anything into the realm of this God that I believed in."

There seemed to be a kind of *ex opere operato* principle being applied to the notion of work, that it was not the worker but the work itself that earned grace, no matter what the worker's disposition was. Just being there at work was the good thing. God did it all.

Generally, the Brothers found their work exhilarating, for, as they emerged from the confinements of the strict monastic Formation Houses, they felt a certain liberation and flung themselves generously and enthusiastically into their work. The participants in the pre-Vatican II group, who had a cultural background shaped by the austerities of the Great Depression and the Second World War, appeared to accept with little difficulty the performance of hard work as the normal expression of their spirituality. They appeared to enjoy the work and their responses and comments provide evidence that they found it

personally fulfilling and deeply satisfying. Br Bernard's use of the words "exciting and challenging", echoed in Br Francis' "exciting and stimulating", conveys this, but for Br Bernard there was also the sense that there should be something more than the work, for, as he said, "There was a world beyond the Green Rule Book [Congregation Rules] … a world of spiritual teaching".

The sense that the work was the Brothers' spirituality appeared to pervade the thinking of both pre- and post-Vatican II groups. Br Kevin of the post-Vatican II group noted that, "In many ways it [the work of education] was certainly the centre of my life, in the sense that I would use terms like 'I was giving my life to education' and that would be a spirituality."

At the same time there was a sense of tension generated by the dualism present. This was indicated in Br Anthony's comment that "on the mission, you're full on with the work so it [the community prayer] was a kind of 'charge up the batteries' in order to go out and do work."

For the Brothers of the post-Vatican II group, there appeared to be a much stronger sense of disquiet at the emphasis placed on the work of education as the principal expression of the Brothers' spirituality. Br Kevin, for instance, sensed the inadequacy of this position for him. "Even in those days," he said, "I thought it was very shallow, that which we called spirituality," and as Br Francis said, "It was exciting, but sometimes frustrating. I always had a vision, but why couldn't other people see things [as I did]?" Br Philip felt that the practice or expectation of enshrining work as the principal expression of spirituality was selling the Brothers short. He dismissed it "as a 'jump through the hoops' spirituality." He identified a gap between what he called his ideal and theory of spirituality and his lived reality. "I went through ten years of frustration, anger, hurt, sadness," so great that it caused him to leave the Congregation just before he pronounced his final vows, only to be drawn back a few years later to start again.

The enculturation of work as spirituality. There was, in addition, an institutional cultural heritage in the Australian Christian Brothers' conviction that working hard was in itself being spiritual and pleasing God, thereby fulfilling God's requirements for salvation. The legacy of hard work as a Congregational characteristic was bequeathed to the Brothers by the Founder himself. When Edmund Rice, a young wealthy merchant, was widowed in 1789, he first considered and then subsequently rejected a call to enter a Continental

monastery and, instead, he was persuaded to apply his wealth and his talents to educating the poor boys of Waterford. The workload he and his founding confreres undertook was staggering. School hours were long and classes large, up to 150 boys controlled by one Brother and his trained student monitors. To this he added night school for young adults unable to attend during the day, weekend instruction to prepare children for the sacraments, visits to the jails and active support of dozens of charities (cf. Shanahan, 1996, p. 22). An ethos of hard work was thus early embedded into the Brothers' culture. The Christian Brothers who returned[16] permanently to Australia in 1868 brought this work ethos with them and, through education, particularly before Catholic schools were given State aid in the 1950s, made a significant contribution to helping Catholic youth escape from poverty and seek employment, often in the face of anti-Catholic discrimination. This contribution is generally acknowledged in such public statements as the following:

> Since 1868 some thousands of Christian Brothers have conducted over 150 schools in Australasia and been involved in a range of other ministries generally with a focus on the disadvantaged. Together with other religious congregations, Christian Brothers' schools have offered educational opportunities to young people which realised not only their academic and personal development but also led them to careers from which Catholics had previously been excluded (McMullen, 2012).

Work for the poor as spirituality. Another defining characteristic of the Founding Brothers' work in Ireland was its exclusive dedication to poor boys. The Brothers came to wear, almost as a badge of honour, James Joyce's lampooning of them in his semi-autobiographical novel, The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, when Stephen Dedalus reacted to a suggestion of being given a Christian Brothers' education:

> Christian Brothers be damned! … Is it with Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud? No, let him stick to the Jesuits in God's name since he began with them. They'll be of service to him in after years. Those are the fellows that can get you a position (Joyce, 1905, p. 72).

Although the nature of the poverty in Australian society differed from that in Ireland, the Australian Christian Brothers jealously retained, as a defining characteristic of their mission, a commitment to provide education for the less well off.

[16] The first group of Christian Brothers arrived in Sydney in 1843 but returned to Ireland in 1847 because of misunderstandings with Archbishop Polding and the Vicar General Dom Gregory about their status as members of a Pontifical Institute.

A consciousness of work as an expression of spirituality. Work has its own meaning and dignity but it becomes more than that when the worker perceives and undertakes it from a spiritual perspective. Of course, work of any kind can bring its own reward with a sense of inner fulfilment when a particular task is brought to a successful conclusion. Such a sense of accomplishment is all the more gratifying if the task was voluntarily chosen or if it required the exercise of some responsibility and some creativity. It was clear from the participants' responses that as young Brothers, newly graduated from the Formation House, they would have experienced a gratifying sense of satisfaction when they were entrusted with their first teaching assignment. All the Brothers who participated in this research, both those from the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group, seemed to experience a healthy growth in their sense of self-esteem through their work. "My teaching helped me value my own … I learned that I was a good teacher and the young people, generally speaking, held me in high regard" (Br Phillip).

That there was a sense of excitement and personal fulfilment in the work of education is not surprising, considering the emotions and feelings that were generated by the passage from life in the Formation House to life in Community. While it appeared from the participants' responses that they viewed their work as a vocation and, in that respect, experienced it as spiritual, they also indicated that something more than the performance

of work was needed to sustain a spiritual life. Their initial feelings did not last forever and for some, fatigue, and maybe a sense of failure, set in.

There is no doubt that the nobility of the Brothers' selfless efforts in these circumstances has been acknowledged by society, but if theirs was a spirituality exclusively oriented to the performance of tasks, it would seem to have lacked much of the transformative qualities of a spirituality leading to peace of mind and personal integrity, even if the claim was made that the work was being done to seek union with God. Certainly young Brothers attempted to invest a God-quality into their work. For example, Br Michael said of his beginning years as a teacher, "I think there was a core Gospel value … of witnessing to Jesus and, yes, saving kids and bringing them up as good Catholics."

Fox (2008) is one writer who sees this as spirituality:

> For many men, work itself is often a pursuit of the spiritual ... Anyone who gives life their all – be they engineers, doctors, lawyers, taxi drivers, businesspeople, teachers, nurses, writers, mechanics or carpenters – is announcing his or her spirituality, which is giving life one's all (p. xi).

There were other participants, however, who felt that the performance of work as an end in itself fell short of what is generally understood as a spirituality of work. The term 'spirituality of work' required something more, even when it was well and Godly intentioned and performed as well as humanly possible. Moore (1994, p. 177ff.) suggests that tasks, no matter how efficiently they are performed, will remain merely soulless occupations unless the worker deliberately imbues them and transforms them with a spiritual focus, something that King calls "deeply spiritual attitudes and intention" (2008, p. 91).

This consciousness is the transforming element. Moore states that, "While we are hard at work on some worldly endeavour, we are also working on a different plane" (1994, p. 184). This is what transforms the classroom chalk into a sacramental. Such a "sacramental consciousness" (Groome, 1998) enables one to look through reality to see for oneself "the beyond in the midst … the ultimate in the immediate … the Creator in the created … the Divine in what is very human" (Groome, 2003, p. 238ff.). If work is performed with this consciousness, any notion of a hierarchy of activities is done away with, for all tasks, whether great or small, become privileged opportunities for the worker to share in God's creative and redeeming action. Br Philip seemed to have a sense of this when he said, "I grew to a space where my commitment was to my God and my own spiritual journey, lived through the Christian Brothers, as distinct from a commitment to the Christian Brothers."

Parallel between personal development and spiritual growth. The growth in spirituality amongst the Christian Brothers appeared to have formed individual expressions thereby reflecting a pertinent comment from Moffett (1994, p. 10ff.) that individuation evolves. Some stages, according to Moffett, begin by being selfish and narcissistic. These are attained by the majority and further stages, (empathy and compassion) are attained by some. According to Moffett (1994, p. 7), such a process of individuation not only enables the cultivation of individual talent and intellect, but is necessary in order "to foster the full human being". He claimed that it appeared that those who attained these later stages of individualism eventually returned to group solidarity and brought with them the benefits of their individualisation. "There is a world of difference between the primal herd feeling, which is unconscious and incapable of personal thought or action, and the expanded consciousness of the individual who has parlayed self-cultivation into self-transcendence"

(p. 10).

Culliford (2010) said much the same. He outlines a development of spirituality beginning with an early stage, a kind of spiritual adolescent stage, when the interests of the group take precedence over individual inclinations and when conformity within the community and culture are the hallmarks. He goes on to describe a spiritual development that progresses to a further stage in which a desire to be independent exerts itself, a stage that he says "is critical in personal spiritual development" (p. 24). The final stage is described as one in which people have no personal agenda remaining and whose virtue is not forced or fickle but "arises from a deep-seated spiritual awareness of the interconnectedness of all things and all people". It is people who have reached this stage of spiritual development who have a tendency to insist on a measure of personal choice.

Hughes also refers to an evolutionary development of individuation:

> Our Christian life is a pilgrimage in which we shed the self-centred 'me', the 'me' enclosed within my own fears, my own wants, my own kingdom, which excludes everyone and everything that does not serve to praise, reverence and serve me and those like me (1996, p. x).

Moffett suggests that such an evolution occurs, among other things, within spirituality as the initial concern for one's own individual spirituality gradually broadens to embrace an awareness of connectedness with others and a growing appreciation of the Divine in others. This insight is also supported by Hughes:

> In place of that 'me', I take on the new self, my God-self, who loves all creation, is continuously giving God's very self that we may live in peace with our selves, with all peoples and with God, Heart of the Universe. This is where I find God and lose 'me', discovering a life that is full of surprises (1996, p. x).

These theories expressed by Moffett, Culliford and Hughes are relevant to this research. It appears that some Brothers had moved away from communal expressions of spirituality, away from the collective mindset of relating to God, and had developed an individual way of thinking. A few Brothers appeared in time to have reacted against any dependence on the group for decision-making or community determination in how to express their relationship with God. Instead, they had evolved to expressing their own independence through thought and action. Moffett makes the point, however, and it appears to be true of the evolving spirituality of the participants in this research, that survival in a period of

conformity to the expectations of the group was necessary before these Brothers had developed enough self-consciousness to think for themselves in spiritual matters and before they could exercise some autonomy in the manner of expressing their spirituality.

Compatibility of individuation and communal life. In contemporary times, the claim that the cultivation of personal liberty mandates the disintegration of the group is no longer tenable. Moffett (1994, p. 9) claims that this process of evolution in spirituality from communal to individualistic need not represent a threat to the continuing existence of the group. The analysis of the data in chapter six also supports this. The participants from both the pre- and post-Vatican II groups had appropriated a much more personalised spirituality than they had ever had the chance to develop in the days of rigid uniformity and routinised horaria. Yet, at the same time, they appeared to remain intensely loyal to the Congregation and proud of how the Congregation was adapting to the contemporary era. The research findings indicated that these Brothers had assumed responsibility for their own spirituality, some, perhaps, showing evidence that they had attained Moffett's third stage of individuation (1994, p. 11), that is, shifting from self-consciousness to cosmic-consciousness, into "a spiritual state of direct revelation that will render religions obsolete" (1994, p. 11). Yet they remain Christian Brothers today, for, in Moffett's terms, they seem to have returned to the herd and are contributing to it through the wisdom and enrichment of their spiritual individualisation.

Like Br Philip, Br Neil also seemed to have arrived at this stage when he said that he felt that he had found "the ability *to be* in a different way. I was able to give reign to that inner drive." This also seems to be very like what Harris claims is the very beginning of spirituality, the "cultivation of the inner eye that sees everything as capable of being saturated with God" (1991, p. 79).

The spirituality of work as perceived by these Australian Christian Brothers, at least in their beginning years, seemed to have been inspired by the two traits that had been bequeathed to them, both by the history of the Congregation and by the circumstances of their Australian mission, that is, hard work and a deep commitment to the poor. In the years prior to the granting of State aid to private schools, which began in the 1970's, the work in Catholic schools was very demanding. The teaching religious congregations at this time were almost completely responsible for the provision of Catholic secondary schooling in Australia, even though, and particularly in the case of the Christian Brothers,

they seemed unable to cooperate with each other in a practical way to meet the increasing demand for coeducation.

In later years, the drive to work efficiently and successfully, narcissistically either for self-satisfaction or to maintain the reputation for achievement and success that the Christian Brothers had acquired over time, had matured into a spirituality of a heightened consciousness of the spiritual possibilities of work. Whatever the tasks were, whether mundane and routine or exotic and spectacular, the contemporary spirituality of the Brothers seems to have invested them with the sense of cooperating with the ongoing creative activity of God.

Integrating work as spirituality. The issues arising from the Australian Christian Brothers' spirituality of work are better understood if they are placed within the ambiance of the time within which this spirituality was practised. The constant pressure on the Provincial Superiors from the Australian Bishops to open more and more schools to cater for the post-war population expansion made it difficult for the Brothers to improve the quality of the education they offered. Although the St Patrick's Province Provincial Chapter of 1966 decreed that no new schools be opened and that no new classes be added to existing schools, it also decreed that the ratio of Brothers to lay teachers be kept to 1:3. This simply confirmed that the Brothers would continue to carry debilitating teaching loads. Nor was the educational poverty of the Brothers' schools alleviated. Not only did they teach, in the main, boys from the lower socio-economic levels of society, but the classrooms were also overcrowded and lacked basic facilities. The Brothers themselves, of course, were aware of the serious shortcomings of the education that they were offering, but they believed that it was their vocation, indeed, a part of their spiritual lives, to labour in such conditions. The submission to the 1982 International Spirituality Conference from the St Patrick's Province (Congregation, 1982a, p. 104) made the point that the mission of the Brothers was to fight for justice for the oppressed. The number of schools and orphanages they managed are an example of this.

It remained true, however, that total devotion to work, where work was reduced to nothing more than a function, seemed to lack an essential spiritual element. As Br Kevin said, "I got so involved in the work that I forgot about everything else". Such a commitment to work may have come at the cost of neglecting the human development of the Brothers and

may have developed instead a warped understanding of what it means to be masculine. Fox (2008, p. 178) maintained that true masculinity is expressed in what he called a "fatherly heart" and then deplored contemporary society where, instead of a fatherly heart, a different sort of heart had developed. "The authoritarian heart, the distant, cold, abstract and rational heart. An un-fatherly heart is a heart that has never been stretched, a mind that has never been challenged into consciousness".

Genesis of severity. There is evidence that some Brothers held an incomplete understanding of spirituality of work and in their desire to perform well in their work for the advancement and training of their students, brought to their classroom management a too severe form of discipline. The Submission from St Patrick's Province to the Spirituality Conference (Congregation, 1982a, p. 106) noted that the history of the Brothers in Australia had been marred by accusations of severity. Many of the participants in the research referred to this aspect of their lives as Brothers. Br Francis said that his cousin was not sent to the Brothers to be educated because his mother did not want him "to get belted' – he went to the Jesuits instead. Br Lawrence remembered that Br Garvey, the first Provincial of St Patrick's Province, wrote "intervention letters" to all the Professed Brothers in the fifties, telling them "We have an unenviable reputation for severity and harshness". This recollection is supported by a letter referring to the fact that corporal punishment was still practised by some Brothers (Clancy, 1960). The Superior General was quite clear on the matter and said that there was no place in the classroom for any Brother unable to manage to teach without having to resort to administering corporal punishment (Clancy, 1960). Br Kevin was dismayed when he joined his first community to find that the Brothers seemed to be "always arguing and fighting and bitter" and he spoke of the confliction he felt on seeing an old Brother making stars out of jam tins for his May Altar and in the same place making straps to punish the boys with. That there was conflict in these different expressions of a Brother's life was evident from Br Francis' recollection of the Brothers who taught him, "May devotions were an extraordinary thing … Some of the guys who could be belting us one day could really turn it on for Our Lady with all the flowers…"

The participants' comments on corporal punishment were revealing. From whatever perspective the sorry use of corporal punishment is viewed, the consequences were always regrettable. Some participants in the research said that harshness in the classroom was

reflective of a spirituality that had become harsh in character, lacking in humanity and sensitivity. The research findings discussed in chapters five and six indicated that for most of the participants the spirituality of the Brothers had become legalistic, and that emotionalism and tenderness were deemed to be unmanly and not becoming of a Religious (cf. Congregation, 1982b, p. 301ff.).

What is important from the observations and memories discussed here is that the harmful severity and harshness which the Brothers seem to have brought to their work of education may have been a reflection of an inadequate understanding of the spirituality of work. Perhaps, too, the repression of their own human sexuality, which the spirituality of earlier times encouraged, contributed to this.

Personal cost of work. From the research findings it appeared that an Australian Christian Brother's dedication to his work, as an expression of his spirituality, often motivated him to produce as perfect an educational outcome as was humanly possible. However, this striving to excel was at times achieved only at some cost to his own holistic human development. Work in the restricted field of the Brothers' ministry, while at the same time living the regulated life of a Religious, seems to have limited for a Brother many of the opportunities to develop his own sense of self-esteem and independent personhood. This could have been achieved through normal relationships available to his secular peers. It is possible that a Brother might well have sought some sort of compensation for this by seeking achievement and success in his teaching and thereby hoping to savour a substitute sense of fulfilment and gratification otherwise denied him, or perhaps even repressed by him, in the name of spirituality. There was some danger in this, as Moore wrote, "Repression never accomplishes what we want" (1994, p. 127). Not only was the Brother expected by his Congregation to be physically strong; he was expected to produce results.

Misguided competitiveness. As a result, there seems to have developed among the Australian Brothers a measure of competitiveness. Competition as a motivator is not necessarily a bad thing. Fox said, "Competition can have that positive effect on the male psyche in particular – it can wake us up from lethargy and passivity and bring out the best in us … Men are especially prone to envy and competition" (2008, p. 143).

On the other hand, there can be some pernicious consequences of excessive rivalry and competition. Thomas Merton said that in order for a spirituality of work to be able to settle us to "the quiet of our own being … we must learn to be detached from the results of our own activity" (1955, p. 106).

From the responses, it was clear that the participants reflected the Christian Brothers' determination to bring the boys they taught to a standard which allowed them entry into the workforce and the professions, such as the public service and teaching, in an era when some employers in the private sector still discriminated against Catholics. However, such a focused effort to win, such strenuous efforts to avoid appearing to be weak and a failure, may have limited the Brothers' attempts to be spiritual men. Moore (1994) has said that benefits to the soul do not necessarily follow just because a person has worked hard and long. Thomas Merton argues that efficiency, work and pragmatism pose the biggest threat to true spirituality:

> He seeks to find himself somehow in the work of making others happy. Therefore he throws himself into the work. As a result, he gets out of the work all that he puts into it: his own disintegration, his own unhappiness (1955, p. 106).

The research findings in chapter six reveal the relief many of the participants felt when they no longer had to work so hard and found that they were now given time and space to explore their own hearts.

That there was a sense of unease at this need always to work hard and be successful was expressed by several of the participants in the research. The Brothers from the Holy Spirit Province (Western Australia and South Australia) submitted to the International Spirituality Conference of 1982 their concern that "there have been times and situations when 'success at all costs', prestige, harshness, results rather than means, dominated the lives of some Brothers" (Congregation, 1982a, p. 308). They acknowledged that the 'hard work ethic' could be no more than an escape from living with oneself.

Effect of withdrawals from the Brothers. During the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of Australian Brothers withdrew from the Congregation (Kelty Archives). The loss of so many Brothers in a relatively short period of time was keenly felt and reasons for the loss were assiduously sought. The findings of this research led to the conclusion that an incomplete understanding of the notion of a spirituality of work might have contributed to the loss of so many Brothers from the Congregation. Moore, as well as

describing all work as a vocation, says, "Work is an important component of the spiritual life … Monastic writers describe work as a path to holiness" (1994, p. 181). Many of the Brothers who participated in the research certainly regarded their work of teaching as their vocation and their path to holiness, but for this work to be truly spiritual, it may have required an investment of a more focused spiritual consciousness than seemed to have been given to it. Merton warned against this:

> I must not plunge my whole self into what I think and do, or seek always to find myself in the work I have done. The soul that projects it entirely into activity and seeks itself outside itself in the work of its own will is like a madman who sleeps on the pavement in front of his house instead of living inside where it is quiet and warm (1955, p. 104).

Moore speaks much of 'soulfulness' and he, too, says, "The ultimate work is an engagement with soul" (1994, p. 199). To the extent that the Brothers' work was deprived of this soul engagement, in part or entirely, then the work failed to rise above mere function to become truly spiritual

Conclusion. This discussion on the changing notion of work as an expression of spirituality has shown that the Australian Christian Brothers once structured their entire spirituality around their work as educators. It gave them, at least in the beginning of their Religious Lives, satisfaction and identity. They responded to the challenge of competing in public examinations and regarded their students' success as their reward. The data analysis, however, showed that there had occurred a gradual breaking down of this concentration on this one dimension of life and that the participants had discovered alternative ways of relating and living that more authentically expressed their desire to form a union with God. This shift had opened up for them opportunities to express their union with God in many creative and innovative ways.

The third area that showed the transition of spirituality expressed with dualistic characteristics to spirituality of relationality concerned the changing notion of God among the participants.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHANGED PERCEPTIONS OF GOD

Introduction. The analysis of the data indicated the transformation of the way in which the participants had come to conceptualise God to be highly significant. The ways in which the participants' conceived God is foundational to all other aspects of the

Brothers' transformed expressions of spirituality. Their perception of God informs previous aspects that have been discussed in this chapter – the individuation of expressions of spirituality manifested in a rejection of any compulsory conformism and the integration of affectivity into expressions of spirituality, accompanied by an acceptance of the beauty of the human body and human sexuality. How the Brothers have come to understand God is integrally bound up with their contemporary expressions of spirituality.

As the Catholic Catechism tells us, "Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God" (1994, p. 17). Armstrong says that some of the greatest Christian, Muslim and Jewish theologians have struggled with this difficulty and that they have made it clear that while it was important to put our ideas about the Divine into words, these doctrines were manmade and, therefore, were bound to be inadequate (2010, p. 2). The words that are used to describe the mundane things of everyday life are simply not suitable for describing God. Armstrong points out, for example, (2010, p. 2ff.) that one cannot say that God is good, divine, powerful or intelligent, because these are attributes of a being and God is not a being. This problem of having to use words to describe an indescribable, incorporeal God has always existed but in contemporary times has assumed a much sharper focus because, although the name of God is invoked frequently in a variety of life situations, people today are more and more consciously rejecting their long held images of God as being either childish or inappropriate. At the same time, religion and spirituality are attracting much attention, and all this discussion by people in contemporary Australian culture (Tacey, 2003; Bouma, 2006) is creating the need for some name for God. Nolan identifies this contemporary phenomenon, "We find people will speak of the Absolute, the Divine, Transcendence, Being, Creative Energy (Thomas Berry), the All-Nourishing Abyss (Brian Swimme) or simply the Spirit (Ken Wilber and many others)" (2006, p. 199).

The very name 'God' is, according to Fox, always a metaphor – "No name for God is God or tells the whole story" (2008, p. xxiii).

Figure 3
The influence of changed perceptions of God from a dualistic to a relational perspective

DUALISM	➔	RELATIONALITY
Anthropomorphic notion of God	➘	

God and orthodoxy Limitations of etymology	➔ ↗	Unitive consciousness

The anthropomorphic notion of God. The participants of the pre-Vatican II group in this research began their spiritual formation in Religious Life at a time in Church culture when their formators could assume that there was a common understanding between them of who God was and what their relationship with God should be. This understanding was expressed generally in theistic and dualistic terms, that is, God was the object and the centre of the life to which the Brothers aspired, a form of life that was characterised basically by a dutiful observance of the Commandments and the New Testament summary of these Commandments, that is, serving God first and neighbour second. The Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group expressed their relationship with God principally through prayer and they gathered several times each day at prescribed times to pray in common. They were conscious of the advice of their Rule at that time that prayer said together in community was their principal way of advancing in perfection and thus entering into closer union with God (Congregation, 1927, p. 61). However, the revised Constitutions following Vatican II confirmed the importance of this prayer but without prescribing a detailed prayer horarium. Instead, it simply stated that a Brother, because he totally belonged to Christ, would want to spend time exclusively with him in prayer. The revised Constitutions suggested that in this way God could be found present both in community and in the people to whom the Brothers were sent (Congregation, 1996, p. 18). That is, the revised Rule still presented God in theistic and dualistic terms and this appeared to be a difficulty for some participants (cf. chapter six: Br Neil, Br Owen, Br Michael, Br Quentin).

Armstrong (2010) has shown that some concept of God, however expressed, has always prevailed in the history of humankind right from the dawn of time. The concept of God was fashioned in each era by each succeeding civilisation into images peculiar to those times and cultures. O'Murchu (2005, p. 31) also points out that in every time and in every culture the concept of God is mediated through human images and perceptions but that these images and perceptions alter with changing cultural circumstances. In this study, the research findings indicated that the participants imaged God in their spiritual lives in a great variety of ways and that their notion of God, since their beginning years, had,

largely, been an evolving and dualistic one so that God was always a distinctly separate entity. Some examples of the images held by the Brothers at the commencement of their Religious lives were that God was a kind of friendly school teacher for whom one worked to please and by whom one was rewarded with a good report card (Br Anthony). Another Brother entertained the notion of an angry God who was always on the lookout to punish (Br Lawrence). In a similar vein there was a demanding God for whom one leapt through flaming hoops to satisfy (Br John). There was also the judging God (Br David), the policeman God (Br Ian) and the loving brother God (Br Phillip). The data indicated that the initial spirituality of the participants was largely expressed anthropomorphically as well as being spirituality expressed, as has been discussed above, by dutifully and rather uncritically conforming to Church teaching and practice and to the Congregational culture.

In their later years, however, the participants in both groups in this research appeared to change their imaging of God and their manner of expressing their relationship with God. The changed post-Vatican II culture of Church and Congregation that allowed more individual freedom to the Brothers to choose the manner and times of their prayer undoubtedly offered the opportunity for this. The findings of the research showed many instances of the participants' awareness of the way their understanding of the notion of God was changing and transforming the way that they expressed their spirituality (cf. chapter six). God was no longer a distant God but the God within.

Parallel between human and spiritual development. Such changes in the spiritual development of the participants mirrored Maslow's study of human psychological development (Maslow, 1968) and many of the participants in their later years appeared to have their spiritual needs fulfilled in much the same way as Maslow identified human emotional and psychological needs being fulfilled in the fifth stage of his hierarchy of human needs, a stage which he calls self-actualisation. In this stage, according to Maslow, the human need is to become more and more what one is, and to become everything that one is capable of becoming. Maslow maintained that the human need for personal growth is present throughout the whole of a person's life and that a person is always "becoming" and never remains static. He maintained that the needs of the lower levels must be at least partially met before those of a higher level in the hierarchy of needs can be fulfilled. Growth in spirituality seems to follow a similar pattern, and so not all Brothers of the same chronological age, or the same length of service in the Religious Life, could be assumed to

have reached the same level of spiritual development. Marked individual differences in spirituality would be seen in people of a common age.

Some Religious of a mature age may be carrying the baggage of earlier unfulfilled human, and perhaps, spiritual needs. In Maslow's terms, the self-actualisation occurs when a person finds a meaning to life that is important to him or her. Many of the participants in the expressions of their spirituality in their later life seem to have found this self-actualisation.

It is clear from the analysis of the data in chapters five and six that there had occurred over the years in the lives of all of the participants in this research a change in the way they imaged God and the way in which they expressed their relationship to God. The literature speaks of such change as spiritual growth, but, of course, spirituality, with its individual, personal and intimate nature, cannot be measured. Each person develops spiritually at a different rate. Mention has already been made that, at the beginning of their spiritual formation, many of the participants imaged God as the One needing to be feared and appeased, and many held the notion that in some way or other "we had to buy or win God's love or presence" (Morwood, 1997, p. 99). These understandings emphasised the dualism that was foundational to thinking about the Christian God. Through a process of change, perhaps caused by natural human maturation, formal education and informal life experiences, the spirituality of earlier years seemed to develop into one which constantly sought an abiding consciousness of God's presence. Merton said that such a growth in spirituality brings a person to "the full discovery of who he really is … the fulfilment of his own God-given powers in the love of others and of God" (Merton, 1955, p. *xiv*). Merton warns, however, that spiritual growth is more than just the psychological self-realisation, "which to some extent it presupposes, and usually effects, and always transcends" (1955, p. *xv*). O'Murchu says that this transformative God-quest undertaken by Religious should not be about an exclusive focus on individual salvation "but a call to honour the completeness *(pleroma)* through which God instils a living soulfulness into everything that is born from the breathing of the creative Spirit" (2005, p. 70).

Br Owen, for instance, well illustrates the extent to which he appears to have allowed this awareness to have transformed his spirituality when he said that he was "claiming the natural world for our knowledge and respect. That's what I do. That drives me. That energises me and that informs my spirituality and my spirituality informs my life and

informs how I am."

Influence of the growth of ecological awareness in society. Such expressions as these reflect the awareness in the contemporary spirituality of secular society of the connectedness of all things, both animate and inanimate, and the contemporary expansion of consciousness to embrace the interdependency of humans on all reality. It is recognised today that whatever humans do affects everything in the universe. As Berry said, "We see quite clearly that what happens to the non-human, happens to the human. What happens to the outer world happens to the inner world" (2000, p. 200).

Moore calls this inner world the anima mundi, the "soul of the world". He claims that this world-soul affects each individual thing, whether natural or human-made and that without this sense of connectedness, "we become numb to the world" (1994, p. 271) with fatal consequences to one's spirituality. Moore says, "To care for the soul we will need to give up … our illusion that our consciousness is the only sign of soul in the universe, and our desire for dominance over nature and fabricated things" (1994, p. 283).

These insights seemed to have transformed the notions of God held by many of the participants in this research. This transformation paralleled a change occurring in the wider society for, as King claims, the notion of God held in the past by the traditional spiritualities of all the great religions of the world – Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian – have been similarly transformed (cf. King, 2008, p. 4). Br Kevin, for instance, spoke of the moments of transcendence he experienced, not through theology, but through the pain and misery found in contemporary culture. Therein lies the shifting notions of God as revealed by the participants.

Development of notions of God and orthodoxy. A transformed notion of God held by many of the participants in their later years often seemed not to sit comfortably with the teachings of the official Church. Br Anthony said of his contemporary spirituality, "I am not blindly accepting loyally the law of the Church and what the Congregation says". Br Quentin, who did not have "a high regard for the authority of the Church," said that there was no place in his spirituality for the traditional teachings of Redemption and the Incarnation, which he regarded as interventions. He believed that life was not "discontinuous", that there were no "intrusions [by God], no miracles, no injection [by God] into the normal human run of things that changes humanity". As a result of this idea,

there was no place in his spirituality for the Sacrament of Reconciliation which, he said, he had not received "for thirty years or more" as it "just did not register" with him. He went on to say that he believed that "two billion Chinese can't be that wrong – and they've never been offered Baptism, so I don't see Baptism as a necessary element to going to heaven or anything like that."

He concluded by dismissing the Church:

> *I haven't got great confidence in the authority of the Church, and the more I see of it, I, like many educated Catholics throughout the world, are [sic] just not embracing the Church in the way in which the Church would like us to.*

Br Neil said of the Creed, "It is anthropomorphic and so gender laden in language that it is quite unacceptable to me." He, too, found it untenable that there should be a God who would "want to intervene in the natural state of things" and he experienced difficulty in accepting the claim that Jesus was the Son of God:

> *The belief that Jesus was the only Son of God is a kind of arrogant story and to tell our youth, 'You've just got to believe this, guys, whether you are a Muslim or a Zoroastrian or a this or that – Jesus is the only Son of God.' That dogma is so heavily encrusted … We are all sons of God. We are all incarnations of the Divine Spirit, the one who graces and is Divine of Being. We are called to sonship, daughtership in the kingdom. All this language concerns me.*

These comments seem to be clear expressions of dissent from traditional Church teachings and practices.

The limitations of etymology in referring to notions of God. It seems clear that many of the participants in this research affirmed in their later years the notion of God that the religious culture of their earlier years, both familial and Congregational, gave them. Others, however, appeared to have moved well away from these notions of God and the expressions of spirituality that characterised their earlier years and some seemed to have rejected them altogether. The pre-Vatican II participants in particular had come from a secular culture which contained strong religious awareness to contemporary times in which God, if named at all, is known by a myriad of names. In one sense, there should be nothing surprising in such a diversity of notions of God for, as St Thomas Aquinas said long ago, "Man's utmost knowledge is to know that God was unknowable" (1998, 1.5.3). Any name for God must therefore be a metaphor. It should follow, then, that no single notion of God can be claimed as the only valid one and that everything that at any time in human history that has ever been spoken about God, in whatever religion and even outside

formal religion altogether, and, indeed, before the very institution of organised religion, must be respected as legitimate expressions of God.

One disadvantage in using a metaphor to name the un-nameable is that any metaphor, in order to make sense, is carefully drawn from the culture and the social context of the times in which the metaphor is to be used and this culture and context is constantly changing. All God-talk is contextual (cf. Fiand, 2008, p. 18ff.) and as the context changes, so does the metaphor. Br Neil, for instance, was aware of this when he said that it was important "not to get stuck in the metaphor of your particular cultural form of God expression". He added, "I think I might have been stuck in a metaphor – I think some Religions do get stuck in their metaphors, particularly when they regard their duties as being just the right ones and anybody else's aren't good."

The desire was expressed by some of the participants in this research that the metaphor chosen by them to express God and their relationship with God, should continue to be relevant to contemporary culture and be transparent to the Transcendent. They believed, however, that their desire for this was not helped by the Church claiming to be the guardian of unchanging eternal truths. Those participants who wished to express their spirituality in a new and relevant metaphor were aware that any introduction of change to, or even re-examination of, dogmas that were finalised long ago was inhibited by the exercise of Church infallibility. This was acknowledged by Fiand who said, "Even today anyone who dares to rethink the symbols and metaphors of our faith for the sake of relevance does so with trepidation" (2008, p. 19). Several participants expressed this dilemma, as did Br Francis for instance, when speaking of the Brothers' need "to be in touch with the living God [with] whatever images we use; we've got to change them all now." The comments he claimed to have made to the African novices for whom he was responsible certainly challenged official doctrinal teaching. He said that he used to ask them:

> *Where do you think Our Lady's body is now? If the edges of the universe are expanding at the rate of light, and it's thousands of light years away – where's Our Lady's body in the Assumption? It's rubbish. No, it's not rubbish; it's just an old fashioned thing.*

Br Neil was another participant who expressed difficulty with the use of unchanging traditional Church metaphor. He spoke of how "the notion of the Incarnation, Redemption

and Salvation became mythic terms" for him, "rather than actual terms." He saw himself on the side of people who were ready to debate what terms like Resurrection, Ascension, Assumption and 'sitting at the right hand of God' really mean.

Other participants in the research reflected a similar attitude to traditional Church teachings. Br Owen, for example, spoke of Mary as

> *the fourth person in the previously triune, male Trinity. That's what the dogma of the Assumption surely is about, if it means anything. Mary is now acknowledged as being a fourth person. A feminine presence to the previously exclusively male Godhead.*

The advice given by Cardinal Martini during his final interview (3-9-12) would seem to encourage a greater freedom in these matters, "For no reason, should we restrict them [ideas] within the constraints of the institution" (Allan, 2012).

Understanding mythology. In the same way ideas should not be limited to literal interpretation of sacred texts. Many of the participants (cf. especially, Br Owen, Br Michael and Br Neil) professed dissatisfaction with the outdated cosmology "which presumes God is up or out there somewhere and sends his son down to this planet" (Morwood, 1997, p. 54). The Brothers' contemporary expressions of spirituality absorbed an interpretation of the Christian Scriptures, not as history of events only, but as a means of intentionally taking on the Jesus' story. Campbell reads the scriptural stories in terms of myths (as did Br Neil), "Mythology is to render a cosmology, an image of the universe that will support and be supported by this sense of awe before the presence of a mystery of a presence and the presence of a mystery" (1976, p. 519).

He adds, however, that the crucial thing about interpreting scripture mythologically is that they must be relevant to contemporary times. "The clergies, generally," he laments, "still are presenting themes from the first to fourth millennium BC" (Campbell, 1976, p. 520). This was what disturbed several of the participants.

Br Owen's statement accords with Armstrong's assertion that a myth was never to be taken as an account of an historical event, but rather, something that "had in some sense happened once but that also happens all the time" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 3).

Nevertheless, there is, Moore claims, a place for myth in our lives. "Mythology gives body to the invisible and eternal factors that are always part of life but don't appear in

literal, factual story" (1994, p. 220). Myths have always been part of culture, and are still very much part of our contemporary culture. As Br Neil pointed out, "Across the world, even today, the mythic consciousness is still a predominant level. The creation myths and stories of people, while they are similar across the planet … are all different."

He stated that it was quintessentially human to create myths. "The human condition with its stories of heroes and saviours and its wise people will always arise. The deeper archetypal aspects of the human, and love, and compassion, and wholeness will always arrive in every culture in some form."

An obstacle to development in spirituality seemed to occur for some, however, when myths are understood literally. Tacey claims that the churches are at fault here for they "have failed to understand that the scriptures are primarily poetry and myth, not history" (Tacey, 2012, p. 2). Official religion has misread mythology as metaphysics and, as many of the participants claimed, "We have been stuck ever since with a religion that few can believe in" (Tacey, 2012, p. 2). It would seem that as long as spirituality was confined to doctrine that was conceived and developed within a different and out-dated cultural background, despite it being well intentioned, it was not likely to lead to a transformation of consciousness (cf. McDaniel, 1994, p. 196). Yet there was a distinct changed consciousness that became evident through the participants' responses. This was about a sense of unity that is foundational to the human and non-human world and it had implications for contemporary understandings about God.

Unitive consciousness. Contemporary culture has become very sensitive to ecological change and people today are educated by pervasive modern technology to accept responsibility for the well-being of our planet, earth. This reflects the connectedness that many feel to the human and non-human world, which is an expression of the relational dimension of the human person. Young people, especially, are passionate about the state of the physical world and the green movements throughout the world have taken their concerns into the political arena (Collins, 1986, p. 230ff.; Schneiders, 2001, p. 300ff.; O'Murchu, 1991, p. 159ff.; Fox, 2008, p. 19ff.). This emerging world perspective, that espouses the science that the universe is not static but is ever expanding, has profound implications for spirituality. The image presented in the 1940's high school apologetics classes (cf. Sheehan, 2001) that God was a kind of divine clockmaker who, having wound up the machinery, divorced himself from any further involvement with his creation is no

longer acceptable. Contemporary spirituality understands creation to be ongoing and evolutionary, ever expanding in extraordinary ways (cf. Fox, 1999, p. 99ff.; Swimme, 1996, p. 71ff.). God is understood today to be in everything and to express himself in everything and so there follows logically from this the interconnectedness and relationality of everything.

To varying degrees it seemed that all the participants in the research had, as they grew older, embraced a new, ever-expanding consciousness. Fox points out the pervasiveness of this consciousness:

> Scientific discovery is expanding our consciousness so that we understand how interconnected and interdependent humans are to each other and to the Earth. Global warming expands our consciousness. Even the HIV epidemic, nuclear proliferation and the obscene gaps in wealth worldwide expand our consciousness. They are all 'wake-up' calls, invitations to deepen our awareness and seek justice and healing (2008, p. 160).

It is a consciousness that emphasises that God is not, as perhaps a literal interpretation of Genesis may once have had us believe, external to the world, that is, a God who rested on the seventh day when the world was completed. Rather it is a consciousness that creation is an ongoing, evolutionary event, constantly bursting from the centre of the universe and continuing to expand in ever new and ever extraordinary ways (cf. Fiand, 2008, p. 20; Fox, 2011, p. 16ff.). It is there that God expresses God's power. "In an omnicentric universe we, and everything else with us, are at its centre and amazingly, at all times at its beginning as well" (Fiand, 2008, p. 20). Berry called this awareness a participatory consciousness, "a heightened, world-reshaping awareness of participation with the visible and invisible; embodied and numinous; past, present and future beings, relationships and energies among whom we dwell" (quoted in Haugen, 2011, p. 32).

This consciousness is very different from the neat and tidy traditional linear time-space categories of the human, western tradition. It demands that notions of God can no longer be imaged in such ways as a generator of life or a judge who sees everything, as one who punishes us, separates us from him or draws us near to him and who rewards. This new consciousness cannot include a notion of heaven above from which God descends and to which Jesus ascends. These types of notions of God fit a static universe that has a beginning and end time and has space in fixed and measurable distances. This consciousness cannot include an anthropomorphised God:

> with hands to hold us, feet to walk in the garden, with eyes to watch us; with a definite gender capable of impregnating a virgin; and with all the emotions of anger, vengeance and jealousy and the subsequent behaviours associated with human beings and projected onto the Divine (Fiand, 2008, p. 21).

Some of the participants in the research gave various expressions of this new consciousness. Br Anthony, for example, seemed to have something of it when he said that he turned away from using what he called the God-word, "I'm doing God things, this is God, I'm doing God, I know God," and instead was "attentive to every particle in every animal, of every cell, of every butterfly, in everything, [and] if I can be attentive to that, if I can see that, then I'm really in touch with the Divine Presence."

He spoke of trying to develop a "unitive consciousness where everything reveals something of God … In unitive consciousness we know everything belongs, that I'm not separate from anything. That I'm just an expression of God here today for this very small time."

Br Edward was another who spoke of the:

> *mystery of the unknown power ... The mystery of this power is that it is transcendent but is also immanent. The immanent is this God who can be so vast. I love all these things on the planet and the universe.*

Br Francis spoke of how the Brothers were changing in the expressions of their spirituality.

> *We never stopped changing. We're still changing. Now I'm at home with that. That's my generation, but the Spirit is now guiding us. Now I'm reading about eco-theology – the Big Bang, that the dream of God is evolutionary. I don't have to believe in the survival of the fittest or any theory of evolution, but the idea that the Spirit is alive.*

Later he added:

> *The Spirit is in every day; and in the ordinary things, God is present. Trying to live – you know, that's come with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit pops up everywhere, not necessarily in Church, but everywhere that something happens and it's all saying the same thing. It's the Spirit that is changing us.*

He spoke of "a deep awareness of what the Spirit is, the Holy Spirit is with you. The power of the Spirit is what will bring about God's dream of God's Kingdom." Br Philip also seems to have a sense of this new consciousness when he said:

> *Walking is possibly my number one spiritual thing, so I walk. I have always been gifted with a sense of the presence of God ... In nature, people I love. Often I will just walk in the sense of that presence and I will mull over things.*

Br Philip described how he had "another powerful experience of the oneness and interconnectedness of all" at a lecture and which opened him to the possibility of a new spirituality, a new notion of God:

> *[The speaker] in the first half was all science, the science of it all, that we were all stardust and she developed that slowly. I'm not a scientist, but at the gut level I am kind of saying, 'Yeah, I don't quite understand but this is making sense.' Half way through I remember going outside and there was this feeling … I remember just crying because I had a sense of oneness of all life and the presence of God in, with, around, through, in all that, and how we had broken that and we had sinned against that oneness. And that was a powerful experience.*

Br Michael was another whose contemporary spirituality appeared to be expressed in terms of this consciousness. "It's a connectedness; it's an awareness of being connected with the Other, with Creation, with the Universe." Br Anthony said much the same when he spoke of:

> *unitive consciousness, where everything reveals something of God. We're not separate. I don't really exist … I'm just an expression of God … I think I'm separate, an individual, who goes around separate from things. But in unitive consciousness we know everything belongs, that I'm not separate from anything.*

He said that this connectedness was a "fundamental truth", and that "if you look at any science of how this planet came to be and how you and I came to be, we are all connected to the dust – stardust".

Summary. In reviewing this section of the discussion, the findings from the data yielded that the manner of expressing spirituality was intimately connected with the way God was visualised by the participants. The discussion has touched on the notion that God is unknowable and that the metaphors used for God down the ages have emanated from a constantly changing culture. Many of the participants in this case study expressed the need to move beyond conventional, traditional metaphors for God, and to be free of the strictures placed upon their relationship with God by the tenets of formal religion. In particular, the analysis of the data revealed that there was among the participants a growing awareness of a sense of presence, or the development of a consciousness of the timeless Mystery, called by some God, to which they surrendered themselves, much in the way of Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross and the other great mystics. Some participants felt that this surrender, called by de Chardin (1974) "spirituality of communion" and by Swimme (1996) "communion event", could not be expressed in anthropomorphic terms,

but in terms of connectivity with the universe.

This transformation of spiritual expressions manifested by the participants did not occur in isolation from the Congregation. Contemporary Congregational literature indicates that this new consciousness is being actively promoted by the Brothers' Leaders. The most recent General Chapter of the Congregation (2008) held in Munnar, India, began by immersing the delegates into an experience of various World Religions that sit side by side in India. "As we entered the sacred stories, places of worship and rituals, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'i, Jains and Muslims invited us into their lives" (Congregation, 2008a, p. 2). The General Chapter invited the Brothers throughout the world to deepen their understanding of the powerful presence of the Spirit within these religions. The Brothers who were Chapter delegates reported that they began to perceive that the mystery of God was deeper and more inclusive than they had imagined. "It was indeed a revelation to discover how our concepts of God had been constrained within the horizons of our own tradition" (Congregation, 2008a, p. 2). One of the resolutions at this Chapter was to "rewrite the Constitutions, taking note of developments in Congregation life and evolving understanding in science, theology and cosmology" (Congregation, 2008a, p. 18).

A CONTINUUM OF SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS.

As the discussion has shown, the participants expressed their contemporary spirituality in a whole range of ways, from a spirituality that emanated from the traditional religious practices of the Church to other forms of spirituality that attempted to connect with the mystery of being free from the constraints of material things or institutionalised religious practices. If these two expressions of spirituality can be imagined as being at opposite ends of a continuum, most of the other expressions of spirituality revealed in the analysis would occupy positions somewhere between them. The following examples illustrate this wide spread of contemporary expressions of spirituality within the research participants.

Figure 4

Different expressions of spirituality were found to lie along a continuum

Dualism_____	➔	_____Unitive consciousness

Perhaps Br David might be said to have been well to the left of centre on a continuum of these contemporary expressions of spirituality. Br David rejected, with some passion, the literature emanating from the Brothers' headquarters, material presumably intended to be of assistance to the Brothers in developing their contemporary spirituality. Br David called it "an avalanche of drivel" and "rubbish" and said that he felt he could not relate to it. It is interesting that Br David, the youngest participant in this research, said of himself, "I'm about the sixth youngest Brother in the Province. I'm one of the very few still in their fifties and I don't know of anyone of my age that goes along with this nonsense."

Consistent with these views, Br David considered that the "high points" of his contemporary spirituality were the sacraments and the "practices of the Church" and seemed to be mourning the loss of them. In this regard, Moore claims that the soul "can benefit greatly from the gifts of a vivid spiritual life and can suffer when it is deprived of them" (1994, p. 204), and in this way Br David seemed to be suffering deeply. He appeared to miss what Moore calls the "beautiful technology" of religion that keeps alive spiritual principles and understandings.

The analysis of the data indicated that most of the participants occupied positions on the continuum somewhere between these two opposite positions. In the expressions of their spirituality most of the participants appeared to affirm a notion of God that was still strongly influenced by the culture in which they were formed. When Br Gerard was asked who was the One he had prayed to as a young Religious, he acknowledged simply that it was "God – the nebulous idea of God" and that it was only in later life that he was able to give some personally satisfying meaning to this through an understanding of scriptural references to the Kingdom of God.

McCann has said, "Our experience of God is best explained as the religious dimension of human experience" (2002, p. 49) and this seems to have been the case with Br Gerard. Later in life, as part of his tertianship, Br Gerard was given the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and he said that while in the Garden of Gethsemane, he came

to an enlightened understanding of how Christ prayed. It was from that point, he claimed, that his prayer changed from something that had to be done as a duty to "falling in love with Christ". It was then, he said, that he "met Christ as a person". Perhaps Br Gerard's spirituality might find a place somewhere near the centre of the continuum as he found that Scripture was alive and that he felt he had no need "to go further than the Gospel". He described how he prayed intimately to the "person of Jesus". This complete absorption in union with Christ is very much as Chittester sees spirituality. "The spiritual quest tolerates no compromise with any aspiration less than the felt presence of God in this place, to these people, in this venture" (1995, p. 51).

If, as this discussion suggests, growth in spirituality and a personal transformation resulting from an altered notion of God is thought of as a progression along a continuum, some of the participants in this research could be expected to hold a position to the right of the middle ground. Some, in fact, described how, over time, their perceptions of the Divine in their spirituality moved away from the traditional anthropomorphic expressions. Br Owen earlier in his interview had stated that he did not relate to God as a Being "because that Being didn't exist. That was an enforced expectation … there was no one there." When he was invited later in the interview to reflect on the mystical marriage imagery used by the Spanish Mystics St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, he dismissed it as "homoerotic and awful." He thought such spirituality to be "very narcissistic compared with the cosmic spirituality in which I find myself … My spirituality, the language at the moment, is a spirituality of embracing the fact that all being invites me into transcendent sacredness."

The expressions of Br Neil's spirituality are also probably placed somewhat to the right of centre in the continuum. He described how, as a result of encountering "other modes of expression", he became aware that the image of God that he had from his formation days "was heavily culturally encoded". He told of how, over time, "The notion of a theistic God with overtones of anthropomorphism, gender and human emotions and quality was no longer satisfactory at all to me."

The transition from anthropomorphisms to some understanding of a mystical union with the Unknown was, indeed, challenging and not all the expressions of the contemporary spirituality of the participants could be neatly placed on the continuum. For example, Br Quentin said of his contemporary spirituality that, although he thought it had changed

tremendously, he admitted that he was still not satisfied that he had understood the meaning and purpose of life and who God was. In articulating his notion of God, Br Quentin acknowledged the influence that the writings of the Anglican Bishop Shelby Spong had had on him and said that for him the barrier to true spirituality was considering God as a personal being rather than as the source of all being. He concluded by saying, "I don't know who God is," but that God "would not be so much the Transcendent personal Being, so to speak, as something that is the source of everything."

The placing of expressions of spirituality along a continuum is no more than a useful tool, for there can be no 'end' in spirituality. Rolheiser claims that "In the spiritual quest, you never, in this life, really arrive" (1999, p. 35), nor can any single expression of spirituality be fixedly polarised within a continuum, for all expressions of spirituality contain some elements of spiritual expressions properly characteristic of the extremes. At best, it can be said that the analysis of the data indicates that many participants sought to find and relate to transcendence in new ways.

Br Michael said that as a young person he would not have known the meaning of the word 'anthropomorphic'. He said:

> *If you had asked, 'Do you see God as an old man with a beard and a white gown?' I would have said 'No', but I think my relationship to God was an anthropomorphic one - there was a person up there, or persons, whatever it was.*

He described how his exposure to the very disturbed boys at St Augustine's Boys' Home helped him to arrive at "an alternative vision of Jesus – Jesus the person; Jesus the man." He went on in his life, he said, to find the courage "to disengage from the traditional beliefs of the Church and to start to form my own beliefs." Br Michael told how his image of Jesus, the man, "was a whole lot more exciting than Jesus the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity." He said that it distanced him somewhat from the institutional Church. In time, Jesus for Br Michael became "a passionate human being who happened to have a relationship with the Divine." He described how he came to consciously avoid using the word 'God', "because, to me that goes back to the man up there." Instead, he used his interest in cosmology and fundamental physics to say:

> *I know that the energy of the Divine, the energy of the universe keeps me in existence. You get down to molecules and mesons and quarks and string theory and all the rest of it and the energy of the universe flows through me and I think of Jesus saying 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. Well, in a sense, I say creation can say the same thing. The energy of the Divine flows through me.*

Conclusion. In summary, this research study has shown how the notions of God, under different contextual influences, have been variously developed within the spirituality of individual Christian Brothers in Australia. These images range widely along a continuum of expressions from a kind of spiritual recidivism at one point, through a middle ground of maturing traditionalism, and stretch to a point of new consciousness. Yet all of these notions of God and the differing resultant expressions of the Brothers' relationships with God are required to be accommodated within the single form of life of the Christian Brothers. At the same time there appears to be an insistent supporting thrust from the Congregational Leadership to move towards the new consciousness. The Congregation Leadership Team wrote in a Circular Letter in 2012, "Our time is leading us to new consciousness of the interconnectedness of all life, and, in Rahner's words, we are 'pressured from within to evolve' as creation is moving to ever greater complexity" (Pinto, 2012, p. 1).

The Superior General added that the Spirit was breathing new life into all of existence and that the Brothers were invited to join the community of creation with renewed commitment and freedom.

The findings indicate that many of the participants were alert to the need to reinvent the symbols and the images that had been traditionally used to represent God. They spoke of the fact that the religious myths of tradition no longer revealed God to them. Several participants (especially Br Neil, Br Michael, Br Owen, Br Quentin and Br Ian) referred to the Incarnation and the act of Redemption, as traditionally presented, to be of no effect in their lives if they were to be considered as mere historical events. For them, these Christian beliefs held significance only if they were thought of as perennial truths, timeless events, going on within human beings always. This understanding is what seems to have drawn them to a cosmological expression of spirituality, of a connectedness with all creation. It is helpful to refer to Berry about this for he said that the Universe Story "must provide in our times what the mythic stories of earlier times provided as the guiding and energising source of the human venture" (2006, p. 145).

Further, the discussion has highlighted the fact that the implications of committing sincerely to the Universe Story would demand a major transformation in the notion of God and the surrender of many past understandings and certainties. Not least of these changes

would be the evolution of a new form of consecrated life. Chittester wrote:

> Steeped in charism and intent only on God, religious life is being called beyond spiritual formulas found tried and true in the past, to the frightening depths of the God who goes on creating, even now, from nothing. Contemporary religious are called to the contemplation of God in time as few generations before them have been (1995, p. 175).

Perhaps not all can make this transition. Some of the participants in this research acknowledged this. Br Michael said:

> *I accept that my spirituality is for me. I have no wish to impose on other people or say that they should have it – this is my path. Other people find their path. And I hope I would be respectful of their paths, as I would want them to be respectful of mine.*

The participants seemed to be aware of how diversity of spiritual expressions might affect community living. A respect for another's spiritual position is seen in Br Gerard who said of another in his community who did not appear to conform to traditional standards:

> *I just think of the goodness of our guys around here, in this particular community, where the Lord is moving them through the Holy Spirit in their lives, only they aren't aware of it. Even the guy who criticises him most, the Spirit is in him powerfully, because he is willing to care for and serve and look after others – and yet equally the blind spot is there. It saddens me. It doesn't sadden me in terms of where he is at, in terms of the Spirit moving him, in terms of the way the Spirit is moving in him, in terms of his enthusiasm for ecology and enthusiasm for saving species – that's part of the Spirit in him.*

There is inherent desire for freedom to choose for oneself the manner of expressing one's spirituality. The challenge to the Christian Brothers appears to be to provide a form of life that respects this freedom and that will allow different expressions of spirituality to flourish while at the same time maintaining a cohesive unity as a Religious Congregation.

In particular, this transformation in the way in which the Brothers have come to express their spirituality means that the Congregation of Christian Brothers would be affected in some quite specific areas. For instance, the Brothers of the pre-Vatican II group all expressed regret at what they, in hindsight, saw as defects and limitations in the spiritual practices in which they were formed in their earlier years. They appreciated that their dedication to work and the resolute repression of an affective life, done in the name of spirituality, was at best misdirected and at worst damaging both to their spiritual lives and their very psyches. The Brothers of the post-Vatican II group also had to struggle with the

conflict between the liberal culture of their family upbringing and education with the culture of the Congregation that was still in many ways restrictive and repressive. Yet while there was regret, there was no blame. Both groups seemed to accept readily that the expressions of the spirituality of their formative years, now largely abandoned, had come about through the historical circumstances of the church and society of those years. Times had changed. Chittester identified what such change in society meant:

> Theories of education changed, the nature of the family changed, the definition of human nature changed, types of work changed, philosophies of government changed, the practice and the place of religion changed in both the public and the private dimensions of society (1998, p. 7).

With a new consciousness alive in contemporary society, it follows that the old expressions of spirituality no longer satisfied the inner yearning for union with God. The findings of the research in chapter six showed many examples of this.

The findings in chapters five and six also revealed the great reservoir of good will among the Australian Christian Brothers and their extraordinary desire to seek appropriate, relevant and contemporary means to continue the search they had begun with their initial formation for union with God in the several ways they now imaged him. It was the manner of how they expressed their spirituality that had changed. The Brothers' transformation of their expression of spirituality from traditional to contemporary, if it is to be sustained, suggests that the support offered by the Congregation be adapted in some measure.

Although some Brothers these days live independently, and although it is true that spirituality is essentially concerned with an individual's personal relationship with God and can be just as well served by independent living as communal living, spirituality continues to be expressed by the majority of Christian Brothers in Australia by living in community. The shift from the once practised uniformity of prescriptive religious exercises and hard work to a personally chosen form of spiritual expression of prayer and ministry would seem to imply that it be accompanied by a corresponding shift in the mindset of the Congregation. That is, there would need to be a Congregational shift to provide an umbrella under which provision could be made for the diversity of contemporary spiritual expressions. The Congregation would need to make provision for appropriate psychological, social and cultural needs associated with the growing sensitivity of contemporary expressions of spirituality. Formerly, Congregational Leaders

saw it as their duty to ensure a uniformity throughout the Congregation of religious practice. The method used to achieve this, not only in the Christian Brothers but in all Religious Orders at this time, was through legislation. It was through the Rule, and the prevailing culture that the keeping of the Rule was the normal way to holiness for a Religious, that the Brothers were encouraged to express their interior lives. The findings of this research imply that such a mindset would need to be relinquished in favour of a compassionate leadership, one of example and encouragement, not coercion. The contemporary expressions of spirituality practised by the Brothers would seem to require a different way of living in community.

The implications of the findings from this research are that, freed from the need to manage a network of schools and freed from having to live under the shadow of a high educational reputation that was increasingly difficult to live up to, communities of Brothers are open to be vibrant witnesses to the world of the beauty, joy and fruitfulness of men who have given themselves totally to God. Society no longer needs Brothers to be administrators. Instead, their contemporary expressions of spirituality lived out in supportive communities would be their prophetic gift to the Church.

There is no intention here of implying that the Congregation is not already implementing such a transformation of it and its leadership. A new form of Brotherhood is indeed being birthed at the present time. As the Superior General wrote recently to all the Brothers throughout the world:

> 'A Way into The Future' is not so much about a series of action steps as it is about putting on the mind of Jesus, something which will lead us to a new consciousness, as mindset that we are invited into (Pinto, 2012, p. 2).

Despite an aged membership in Australia, the Brothers are seeking out places at the margins of Church and society where the need for the Gospel is the greatest. They remain Christian Brothers but no longer do the same things in the same place at the same time each day. Law follows life and doubtless the juridical and ecclesiastical aspects of this development will eventually be acknowledged by Church canonists. Chapter eight will bring the findings of this thesis to a conclusion and prepare some recommendations that are generated by the transformation of the expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers from traditional to contemporary forms.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

This research study set out to explore the transformation that has occurred in the ways in which the Australian Christian Brothers understand and express their spirituality. From their very foundation the Christian Brothers expressed their spirituality in the conventional ways prescribed by the Church and hallowed by tradition. It was clear to the casual observer that they no longer, either as individuals or corporately as an identifiable culture-sharing group, understood or expressed their contemporary spirituality in this manner. The aim of this research project was to study this transformation by identifying the characteristics of the Australian Christian Brothers' contemporary spirituality and to explore the forces, cultural and historical, secular and ecclesial, that had effected this transformation.

Seventeen volunteers participated in the research study. These seventeen participants were invited into the research study because it was expected that they most comprehensively reflected the diversity of understandings and expressions of the contemporary spirituality of all Australian Christian Brothers. They were drawn from a longer list of Brothers nominated by the Province Leader as being Brothers who most closely met the selection criteria detailed by the researcher (see chapter one). Consequently the group of seventeen included Brothers from every state of Australia and the ACT and so brought to the research study the distinct spiritual characteristics and backgrounds of the four former Provinces of the Christian Brothers in Australia.

In the process of analysing the data, it emerged that not only had seven of the participants grown up under the influence of great social upheavals such as the World Wars and the Great Depression but also they had entered the Christian Brothers prior to the Second Vatican Council and had received their initial spiritual formation from the same novice master. The remaining ten participants had grown up in a more liberal, prosperous and secular milieu and had received their initial spiritual formation from a variety of novice masters in the spirit of the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. This discovery that the participants fell naturally into two groups provided a useful tool to compare and contrast different understandings and expressions of spirituality. Consequently, the interpretation of the data came to be organised around the two groups which were identified as the pre-Vatican II group and the post-Vatican II group (cf. chapter four).

The data analysis identified that the initial expressions of the spirituality of the pre-Vatican II group were characterised by the following elements:

- A sense of duty;
- Fear of losing one's soul;
- Influenced by dualism;
- Repression of affectivity;
- Work; and
- Community life.

For the post-Vatican II group, the elements that were characteristic of the initial expressions of their spirituality were:

- Individuality;
- Inclusivity;
- Freedom;
- Personal responsibility;
- Duty; and
- Work.

Further analysis of the data revealed that the pre-Vatican II group had transformed their initial expressions of spirituality into contemporary expressions having the following characteristics:

- Freedom to choose a personal form, time and place for prayer;
- Renewed sense of mission;
- Self-determination;
- Liberating relationship; and
- Cosmology.

When a similar analytical process was applied to the data gathered from the post-Vatican II group, the expressions of their contemporary spirituality revealed the following characteristics:

- Self-determination;

- Community;
- Work;
- Liberating human relationships; and
- Universal connectedness.

A comparison between the two groups showed that not only had each passed through a transformation of the understandings and expressions of spirituality, but that they had also arrived at contemporary understandings and expressions of spirituality that were similar but not identical. In general, the analysis and interpretation of the data led to the conclusion that among the Australian Christian Brothers there had been a movement away from dualistic understandings and expressions of spirituality in which God and human life, spiritual things and natural things, souls and bodies were seen as two separate, divided and even antagonistic things. Instead, the movement was towards understanding spirituality, and giving expression to it, in terms of relationality in which the Divine was understood to be a permeating presence which opened the Brothers towards new dimensions of consciousness. The expressions of spirituality of earlier generations of Brothers emanating from a dualistic philosophy had given way over to time to contemporary expressions of spirituality reflective of a relational philosophy. As well, there had been a shift away from literalism in the use of metaphors and symbols for God towards a more mystical union with God in which words were seen to be quite inadequate and, indeed, it had led some participants to the ultimate mystical experience of wordlessness. This shift in the understanding and expression of spirituality among the Australian Christian Brothers was no more than a reflection of the fact that God is never static in human history and that new understandings of God are continually being found in the changing conditions of human life.

This research case study has focused on the Australian Christian Brothers and dealt with such aspects as the history and the cultural events that influenced this case. The research study concentrated on some key issues that emerged in the case study, not for generalising beyond this case, but to help understand the complexity of this particular case study. Therefore the findings are specific to one Religious Community, the Australian Christian Brothers. However, these findings may inform research studies into other Religious Communities and may inform their future planning and possible restructuring.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this research study, three specific areas emerged during the analysis of the data that illustrated the movement in the understanding and expression of the Brothers' spirituality from dualism to relationality. These were:

- Changes related to the movement from traditional to contemporary church teachings and structures;
- Changes related to the notion of work; and
- The changing notions of God.

The findings from this research study have implications for future communities of Christian Brothers and may need a considered and responsive action from the Leadership. Certain findings pointed to the fact that:

- Brothers may continue to experience God in non-traditional ways which may lead to a desire to give expression to their union with God in ways other than though formal and traditional religious practices. This needs to be recognised and addressed in the planning of future communities;
- Communities of Brothers will need to be so structured as to acknowledge and accommodate a plurality of spiritual understandings and expressions and integrate into these expressions of creationist understandings of the Universe Story;
- A future form of Religious Life, relevant to the culture of contemporary times, may, perhaps, cast the Brothers into the role of being prophetic witnesses to the Church, challenging traditional Church doctrine and religious practices as being no longer congruent with relational spirituality or relevant to contemporary society;
- Community life practices need to understand and meet the human needs of male sexuality and intimacy appropriate to celibate living and in which there remains no relic of patriarchal attitudes to women; and
- The ministry of the Brothers to the wider community will no longer be confined to education, but all their ministries will retain the Founder's charism and will remain in solidarity with the poor.

DELIMITATIONS

This study has focussed on the changing expressions of spirituality of the Australian Christian Brothers and the implications these changes may have on the life form of this one specific religious group. The findings and implications from this case study have the potential to inform other religious groups who also may be looking to reconstruction.

Despite the findings that the Brothers had moved away from a shared community life, it is quite possible that a collectively held desire to reclaim holiness and a collectively held desire to grow into a sacred, mystical space amongst the Brothers may bring about, of its own accord, occasions of community faith sharing. As well, ritual celebrations of the life of the community, relevant to the local situation, will spring up of their own accord. In such a community climate, emphasis will be given to the invitation to deepen one's personal spirituality and this will remain the core and dominant element, not the arrival at some end product of conformity and regularity to community exercises. To conclude, the findings of this research study has identified a challenge for future communities of Christian Brothers to develop and enhance a common understanding of the call to holiness.

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APPENDIX 1 ETHICS APPROVAL

ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Human Research Ethics Committee
Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Marion De Souza Melbourne Campus
Co-Investigators: Brendan Hyde Melbourne Campus
Student Researcher: Paul Nangle Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
An examination of the influence on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia: the transition from traditional to contemporary contexts

for the period: 24/2/2011-1/03/2013

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V2011 14

Special Condition/s of Approval

Prior to commencement of your research, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:
N/A (already supplied)

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:

(i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
- security of records
- compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
- compliance with special conditions, and

(ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
- proposed changes to the protocol
- unforeseen circumstances or events
- adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: ..... Date: .....24/02/2011.....
(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Macintosh HD:Users:pgnangle:Documents:Microsoft User Data:Saved Attachments:V2011 14 Approval Form[2].doc

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interviewee will have been told beforehand why the information on spirituality is being sought and how it will be used.

Only the interviewee and the interviewer will be present during the interview.

The interviewee will be advised beforehand that the interview will take about one hour to an hour and a half and that the interview will be recorded.

Attention will be given to creating a comfortable, pleasant and private environment in which to conduct the interview.

The interviewer will maintain a neutral stance during the interview and will refrain from expressing his own views on what is being discussed. The flow of the interview will be largely determined by the different emphases that the interviewee places on a personal understanding of spirituality and the formative processes that have been experienced in shaping it.

The interview process will be flexible. While the topics to be covered by the researcher in the interviews will have been specifically predetermined, the interviewee will be allowed great latitude in how to reply. The questions may not follow the sequence in which they have been prepared in the schedule and some questions not included in the schedule may be asked as the interviewer picks up on particular aspects nuanced in the responses.

A different, more objective set of questions on the Brothers' spirituality will be used in the interviews with the non-Brother participants.

FIRST AREA

a When did you join the Brothers?

b How old were you when you joined?

c Who was your novice master? (Novice masters exert great influence on the formation of the spirituality of those beginning their formation as Religious. This was particularly so of Br Patrick Harty, noted for his strictness, who was the Australian Novice Master for thirty years.)

d Where were you sent on your first mission?

e What are your memories of the religious practices of those early years?

f How did you feel about being a Brother in those days?

SECOND AREA

a How would you describe your spirituality, that is, your relationship with God, in the early years of your Religious Life?

b Do you remember how you felt about your spiritual life in those early years of being a Brother?

c In your beginning years as a Brother, how did you come to have that particular form of relationship with God?

d How did you feel your spiritual life was helped by the way the Brothers lived their lives in those early years?

e How long, do you think, did you maintain your initial attitude towards your own spiritual life?

THIRD AREA

a In what ways has your spirituality changed over the years?

b What do you remember were the crucial times or events or influences which changed your way of expressing your spirituality?

c Is the way in which the Congregation has also changed over these years helped you to develop your spiritual life?

FOURTH AREA

a What do you see are the biggest changes in the way the Brothers live their Religious lives?

b How do you feel about the way the Brothers presently live their community life?

c Is it possible, do you think, for the Congregation to continue as a Religious Brotherhood in the Church when the Brothers practice so many different forms of spirituality?

FIFTH AREA

a What place does the celebration of the Eucharist have in your spirituality? Is the reservation of and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in the Brothers' houses a necessary part of their spirituality these days?

b Is there these days a place for the regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Brothers' spirituality?

c If in the contemporary welfare state there are no longer "poor boys" to be educated, what is raison d'être of the Christian Brothers in contemporary society?

d Has the spirituality of contemporary secular society, especially with its expression in personalism and humanism, so pervaded the spirituality of the contemporary Christian Brother as to render inadequate or unnecessary a form of life requiring:

- Community living;
- The authority of any superior, ecclesial or congregational;
- Celibacy; and
- Vows of any kind.

APPENDIX 3 INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Brother……..,

Being now retired from teaching, I applied last year for a place as a research student at the ACU where I recently defended the following proposition:

> An examination of the influences on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia: the transition from traditional to contemporary context.

I have been given approval by the University to pursue this research. With permission from the Province Leader, Br Vince Duggan, I am now approaching you and some other Brothers to invite you to participate in the research.

I hope to collect data on the transition of the Brothers' spirituality from our traditional form of expression to a more contemporary mode and the influences which may have contributed to this transition. This will be done principally by means of interviews with up to a dozen Brothers or so in Australia, as well as through a study of Congregational documents. I hope that the Brothers who accept an invitation to be interviewed will represent the various different expressions of spirituality which have evolved within the Congregation and which are currently being practised by the Brothers. The interviews of about an hour to an hour and a half will be in the nature of a conversation in which the Brothers will be invited to tell the story of the development of their own spirituality and attempt to identify the various influences that may have contributed to this development.

The interviews will be recorded with the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed to hard copy. This material will be stored in a locked facility in the Supervisor's Office at the University. Throughout the research the anonymity of the participating Brothers will be thoroughly safeguarded. Their identities will not at any stage be revealed and all record of interviews, electronic and textual, will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. Brothers will, of course, be perfectly free to decline to accept the invitation to participate without having to justify that decision and the right of all Brothers to withdraw from participation at any time without having to provide a reason will be fully respected.

While my initial motivation for undertaking this study was to satisfy my own need for further spiritual and professional development, I believe that the study may be of some benefit to our Congregation and to others. The non-ordained status of the Brothers

provides them with some freedom within the Church to develop contemporary forms of spirituality and perhaps even to develop a new form of life within the Church. Little appears to have been written on this aspect of spirituality.

I would like to extend to you an invitation to be a participant in this research and to allow me to interview you. I am happy to answer any questions you might have concerning the procedures or you may wish to direct such questions to my Chief Supervisor:

Dr Marian de Souza,
Australian Catholic University,
1200 Mair St,
BALLARAT, Phone No: 5336 5316
Victoria 3353 Email: marian.desouza@acu.edu.au

At the conclusion of the research I would be happy to share with you any findings which may emerge.

This research has been granted approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. In the event that you may have a complaint or a concern that has not been satisfactorily addressed by the Principal Supervisor or by me, you should feel free to contact:

Chair,
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus,
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY
Vic 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. I will be informed of the outcome by the Committee.

If you agree to be a participant in this research, I would be grateful if you would sign both copies of the attached consent form, retain one for your own records and return the other to me.

SUPERVISOR:

……

STUDENT RESEARCHER:

……

……...

APPENDIX 4 PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT FORM

Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT:

An examination of the influences on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia: the transition from traditional to contemporary context.

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

Dr Marian de Souza,

STUDENT RESEARCHER:

Br Paul G Nangle

I ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that the Brothers invited to be interviewed may participate and that their interviews may be recorded. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time **without adverse consequences**. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify the participating Brothers in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

……

SIGNATURE .....……

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER (if applicable)]:

DATE:

APPENDIX 5 PROVINCE LEADER'S LETTER OF APPROVAL

ACU National
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's)
115 Victoria Parade Fitzroy VIC 3065 Australia
Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC VIC 3065
Telephone 613 9953 3000
Facsimile 613 9953 3005
www.acu.edu.au

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM
Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT:

An examination of the influences on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia: the transition from traditional to contemporary context.

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

Dr Marian de Souza,

STUDENT RESEARCHER:

Br Paul G Nangle

I VINCENT FRANCIS DUGGAN Province Leader, Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that the Brothers invited to be interviewed may participate and that their interviews may be recorded. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify the participating Brothers in any way.

NAME OF PROVINCE LEADER: Br. Vincent F Duggan

SIGNATURE V.F. Duggan DATE: 08 February 2011

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: .....

DATE: .....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....

DATE: .....

DATE: .....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER (if applicable)]: .....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

APPENDIX 6 PROVINCE LEADER'S CONSENT FORM

PRESENCE LIBERATION

Christian Brothers
Oceania Province

15 February 2011

Br Paul Nangle cfc
Edmund Rice Community
35 Westbury Street
ST KILDA EAST VIC 3183

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for your letter with the details of your proposed research into "influences on the spirituality of the Christian Brothers in Australia".

I am happy to give the approval that you request to do this research, and also the approval for you to approach Christian Brothers in Oceania Province to participate in the research.

I hope that the experience is an enjoyable and stimulating one for you. I can see that it has the potential for all of us in Oceania Province to come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of our brotherhood.

Wishing you every blessing, Paul,

Your brother

Br Vince Duggan cfc
OCEANIA PROVINCE LEADER

Edmund Rice

Oceania Province Centre
131 Queens Road
Nudgee QLD 4014 Australia

Correspondence to:
PO Box 596
Virginia BC QLD 4014

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