AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY

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EDITORIAL

In this issue AJL bids welcome to the Uniting Church's new service-book, *Uniting in Worship*. It is commended by Sir Ronald Wilson, President of the Assembly of the UCA; it is introduced and described by Dr Wood; it is reviewed by Canon Bartlett. This 'new and local product', as Dr Wood describes it, is a significant achievement in liturgy and will have influence beyond the UCA.

A novel feature of *Uniting in Worship* is that it is published in two versions: 'Leader's Book' and 'People's Book'. It will be interesting to see what affect this will have on the performance of liturgy. Will it allow fuller and more direct participation by the people, as Dr Wood hopes? Will ministers see the fact that the congregation does not have the full text of the liturgy as an invitation to extemporise? There is, of course, good precedent for the eucharistic president's giving thanks 'according to his ability' (see Justin's *First Apology*) but the church very soon provided full liturgical texts and expected their use.

Dr Wood's article is the text of the Austin James Lecture for 1988. The Austin James Lecture has been an annual event given under the auspices of the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre in Melbourne. With the demise of the ELC (see the article by Fr Ron Dowling) the Victorian Chapter of AAL has taken over responsibility for the lecture and it is hoped that future lectures will be published in AJL.

Further papers from the 1988 Conference of the Academy are also included in this issue. The wider context for considering reconciliation is addressed by Mrs Gribben and Dr Rule, while Fr Doolan, Dr Sherlock and Mr Gribben describe the rites of reconciliation in three Christian traditions. Other papers from the conference appeared in the previous issue of AJL.

May I remind readers again of the proposed series of articles on Great Liturgists of Australia (see Editorial in last issue of AJL)? This will be an occasional series ranging from short notes to articles of 3,000 words. Anyone wishing to volunteer contributions is invited to contact me. May I make two suggestions of liturgists who could be included: Austin James and Guilford Young? In the 1973 Austin James Lecture James Minchin wrote: 'The contribution of Austin James to the church both here and in India was a fruit of his generous, thoughtful and humane vision of life in Christ. His work in the renewal of the liturgy and of an ecumenical perspective has had considerable impact.' Edmund Campion (in *Australian Catholics*) refers to Archbishop Young as 'the acknowledged leader of the liturgical movement' and notes that at Vatican II 'Young's quality was quickly

recognised and he was drawn into the central conciliar group working for liturgical renewal.'

With this issue we welcome to the editorial committee Fr John Baumgardner. He has particular responsibility for typesetting and lay-out of the journal.

S. Barnabas' College
St. Mark's Day 1989

R.W.H.

CONTENTS

UNITING IN WORSHIP
A COMMENDATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY

I am delighted to commend UNITING IN WORSHIP as a worship resource, both within the Uniting Church and beyond. The book is remarkable in its breadth and flexibility, providing material relevant not only to formal church worship but to personal and family devotions. Its appearance marks the end of a period of intensive work on the part of the Uniting Church's Commission on Liturgy, headed by Dr. D'Arcy Wood of Adelaide. I congratulate and thank Dr. Wood and his colleagues most sincerely for the skill and dedication that has characterised the project.

It was said to me recently that 'Liturgy will not bring in the Kingdom of God'. Taken literally, that may be true. But it can be an enormous help. I believe that if we give UIW the reception it deserves we will find several things to be happening. Let me indicate briefly some of them:

1. UIW will help us to recover our confidence in worship as a celebration of personal and community faith and thereby deepen our individual capacity to engage in life at a spiritual level. The worship, in spirit and in truth, of the people of God, constitutes the powerhouse of the Spirit.
2. UIW will help us to understand more clearly the content of our faith, because the entire book is grounded in the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. In so doing it will not only lead us to love God with our mind as well as our heart but will anchor us more firmly in our ecumenical relationships with other churches.
3. If we lay members of the churches are to be equipped to respond to our calling to be witnesses to the presence of the Kingdom of God - the kingdom of righteousness, justice and peace - in the pagan world here in Australia where we live and work as citizens, we cannot afford to waste the time we spend in worship. That time is both limited and precious. For too long most of us have been content to sit in the pews as passive receivers; our preparation for worship has been dilatory and consequently our individual contribution to the worship of the congregation has been casual, spasmodic and unimaginative. Such worship does little to equip us to hear and respond relevantly to the call to mission. UIW could help to change all this.
4. Finally, in encouraging the lively participation of the whole congregation, UIW will help to re-establish the Church as a praying community. It will build up the fellowship and sense of unity of its members and deepen their commitment to one another in love because

the liturgy will represent more fully the response of the whole body of Christ to God's mercy and grace.

These are a few of the reasons why I welcome UIW and earnestly commend its use to the Uniting Church.

Ronald Wilson
President of the Assembly

A NEW AND LOCAL PRODUCT IN LITURGY: UNITING IN WORSHIP

The Austin James Lecture for 1988. *D'Arcy Wood*

The beginning of the Uniting Church

The history of this book is a mere 6 years, or 13, depending on one's starting point. Let me explain this. It was in 1975, two years before the Uniting Church was inaugurated, that a working group on liturgy was established in Adelaide with national responsibilities. It included representatives of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches and its responsibilities were rather modest. It will be enough to mention two of these. One was to prepare for the establishment of a Commission on Liturgy in the new Church. A second was to prepare services which would be needed from the time of union, such as Ordination of Ministers and Induction of Ministers.

The next date to mention is 23rd June 1977, when the Inaugural Assembly of the Church set up the Commission on Liturgy with the following terms of reference:

(i) to prepare services of worship to be available for general use in the Uniting Church, subject to the approval of the Assembly;

(ii) to prepare and distribute resources for occasional services and other worship material for use in churches;

(iii) to encourage responsible liturgical experimentation and to offer its services to congregations as a co-ordinating agency;

(iv) to study liturgical developments in other churches with particular reference to Baptism and Holy Communion;

(v) to maintain liaison with the Commission on Doctrine and the Council on Ministerial Education regarding matters of common concern;

(vi) to maintain relationships with working groups in the several Synods.

What kind of book?

It is worth noting that in 1977 there was no commitment to produce a book of worship like *Uniting in Worship*. Some people saw the Commission's role as producing flimsy publications of very limited life expectancy, backed up by education processes to assist ministers and congregations to develop their own forms of worship. Other people said that a more solid hard-backed volume, analogous to the Anglican Church's Australian Prayer Book, was needed, and the sooner the better. There were variants on both of these viewpoints, eg. the suggestion of a ring-binder or similar folder into which services could be inserted for a limited time and then discarded.

That issue was not of course a minor matter of publishing format or of economics. An audience like this one will realise that the debate was really about an issue of principle, turning on such questions as whether the whole Uniting Church should have a fairly stable liturgical tradition which would be common to all.

The Commission has endeavoured to recognise the force of the various viewpoints while at the same time seeking to persuade the Assembly of the Church to adopt a hard-back format with a useful life of at least a dozen years, and maybe 15 or more years. One way of recognising the view which emphasises local initiative, flexibility in worship style, and the differing histories of particular congregations is to provide services with plenty of alternatives within them and this is what the Commission has done. Another way is to encourage the use of extempore prayer and locally written prayers - and the Commission has done that as well.

Uniting in Worship is not, therefore, a compendium which provides all the resources a congregation will ever need. It is a basic resource which, it is hoped, will stimulate people to develop good patterns of worship which are suitable to local situations.

The development stage

But before describing what *Uniting in Worship* is and does, let me say a little more about its process of development. After debates within the Commission, and after producing services, first, in a very cheap duplicated form (1976 to 1979), and then in small laminated booklets (1980 to 1985) the

Commission decided to ask the Assembly for authority to produce a comprehensive collection. This phrase 'comprehensive collection' was embedded in the key resolution of the Assembly of 1982, five years after the inauguration of the Church. This resolution reads:

> .....that the Assembly direct the Commission to begin work on the publication of a comprehensive collection of services and other resource materials for use in worship, such materials to be prepared in collaboration with the Commission on Doctrine and to be submitted to the Assembly or its Standing Committee for approval.

Further research in 1982 and 1983 showed that a hardback, durable book would be the best mode of publication and so the concept of *Uniting in Worship* was born. Earlier I used the phrase 'six years' because 1982 to 1988 was the period of intensive work. Now that the first printed copies are about to arrive by air from Singapore I am amazed that so much has been accomplished in such a short time. Equally amazing is the fact that at no time has the Commission had even one full-time person working on the project. If some members of the Academy of Liturgy look pale and haggard at times, you now know the reason!

It must be added quickly that the Commission has done a lot of borrowing. Even where we have made major revisions to someone else's text, be it Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian or United Church we have at least had the benefit of their finished product as a base. One might say that *Uniting in Worship* is rather derivative but we make no apology for that. Good liturgical work from whatever source deserves widespread use, and the resources of scholarship and liturgical experience in the Uniting Church are simply not sufficient for us to have produced a large book with new things from cover to cover.

Having said that, the impression made by this book will, I think, be one of freshness and contemporaneity.

I should say a word more about the *modus operandi* of the Commission. As we worked on a particular service, say baptism, we would begin with a list of sources including services of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, both Australian (where such services existed) and overseas. We also examined the theological documents relevant to the service, especially the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church, and any other doctrinal statements of the church. Thirdly, services of other denominations would be used where appropriate. An outline would then be produced, followed by a draft of the full text. After discussion of the full text in the Commission, re-drafts would follow: the record number of drafts for a service was I think ten!

Looking back on our *modus operandi* most Commission members believe that we would have been better advised to produce first a statement of theological principles for a given service, then an outline with justification or commentary on that outline, followed finally by a full text. This method may have been slower but it would have had several advantages which are fairly obvious and probably do not need spelling out.

The principles we did use were developed 'on the run', so to speak. This had its excitement but also its trauma on those occasions when a clash of principles would emerge. But before I describe the major principles I should probably say more about the content of the book itself.

Two books: what they include

What I have been calling 'the book' is in fact two books. The larger is called *Uniting in Worship Leader's Book* and the smaller *Uniting in Worship People's Book*. The differences, apart from size, are principally two. First, the services in the People's Book consist mainly of service *outlines*, the full text being included only in the Leader's Book. In the People's Book there are responses for the congregation included in the service outline. This device allows the congregation to participate audibly as well as mentally in the prayers and affirmations but without overloading the people's text. Rather than having eyes lowered and heads bent, we hope to see congregations alert not only with their ears but with their eyes to the development of the liturgy around them.

Also in the People's Book is a Psalter, using a translation from the Episcopal Church in the United States and a large selection of prayers, both prayers for use in public worship and prayers for private devotion. There are also affirmations of faith and other resources which make this book rather comprehensive.

The Leader's Book has the full version of services which appear in the People's Book, including many alternatives from which the minister or other leader may choose. These 'other leaders' are mainly lay preachers, which is an order of ministry in the Uniting Church, and these preachers preside at many hundreds of services each Sunday.

The other main respect in which the two books differ is that some services, such as the Funeral Service, appear in the Leader's Book only. Likewise the lectionary and Collects appear only in the Leader's Book. Conversely the psalter appears in the People's Book only. Obviously the person presiding will need to have both books on the lectern or prayer desk at most services.

The list of services and other resources is in many respects fairly predictable. But there is one feature which will be new to Uniting Church people and which I regard as the centre-piece of *Uniting in Worship*. It is

called 'The Service of the Lord's Day'. This will be the service most commonly used. It has four parts:

1. The Gathering of the People of God.
2. The Service of the Word.
3. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
4. The Sending Forth of the People of God.

The name 'Service of the Lord's Day' suggests that this service can be used each Sunday, and that it is indeed the Commission's intention. Why then does it include the section 'Sacrament of the Lord's Supper' when most Uniting Church congregations do not celebrate the eucharist each Sunday? The answer is that the service is planned in such a way that an act of thanksgiving takes place at the third section whether there is to be a eucharist or not. By encouraging the same basic framework to be used each Sunday the Commission aims to bind together and harmonise the worship from Sunday to Sunday and from congregation to congregation. This uniform framework does not however impose a uniformity. Not only does the content of scripture, prayer, music and preaching of course change from week to week, but there is ample opportunity for the service to be adjusted in length to suit particular circumstances. This is achieved by the frequent use of the word 'may' in the rubrics.

The degree of formality in Uniting Church services varies greatly. The Service of the Lord's Day has been prepared in such a way that it can be used in informal situations and in charismatic worship as well as in worship which is usually known, for want of a better term, as 'traditional'. A challenge that lies ahead of the Uniting Church's Commission and its many helpers is to persuade ministers and congregations that using a book does *not* mean that the worship will be of the formal or 'traditional' kind.

Having said that the Service of the Lord's Day can be used for both eucharistic worship and for services without eucharist, it should also be said that one result of frequent use of the service for the latter purpose will probably be that congregations will celebrate the eucharist more often. There is already a clear trend toward more frequent eucharists and the Commission applauds this. If *Uniting in Worship* accelerates the trend, that will be all to the good.

Before leaving the question of content, two other remarks should be made. The first is that some services will be quite new to Uniting Church people. Among these are the Service of Reconciliation, a Service of Healing, and a Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child. While the Uniting Church owes much of its inspiration for these services to books of other denominations, the forms printed have been produced here in Australia.

The other remark is to explain the infrequent mention of music in *Uniting in Worship.* The issue of music has not been disregarded by the

Commission. Far from it. But for the Uniting Church, and for at least two of its constituent churches, the hymnal is regarded as a liturgical book. It is not an optional extra but a central part of worship. Clearly this was always the case for Methodists, and the Presbyterians inherited from Geneva and from Scotland the regular use of the metrical psalms as well as hymns. Although metrical psalms were declining in use before union in 1977, the place of the Revised Church Hymnary as a whole was still a vital one.

Since 1977 *The Australian Hymn Book* has supplied this need. Its use is widespread in the Uniting Church, although, in some places, especially Queensland, congregations leave the books in the porch on many Sundays and sing choruses instead. In 1987 the supplement to AHB called *Sing Alleluia* appeared, and this book has two important benefits for the Uniting Church: one is that contemporary music and words of high quality are available to congregations which use this book; and the other is that *Sing Alleluia* provides Communion Settings. The settings of Michael Dudman, Colin Smith, Lawrence Bartlett, and others are becoming known to many congregations and their use is bound to increase.

To return to *Uniting in Worship*, the point is that the Commission has assumed all along that *Uniting in Worship* will be used alongside a good hymnal, and that communion settings can be played and sung from *Sing Alleluia* or some other source. The only pieces of music in *Uniting in Worship* are six settings of the *Gloria Patri* and one set of versicles and responses.

The other musical emphasis in the book is the encouragement of worship leaders and musicians to choose music carefully and to place it appropriately in the service.

Criteria for decision

I turn now to the principles which lie behind the text. Any church which includes a Reformed component in its history can be expected to take doctrine seriously and the Uniting Church is no exception. Many, many times we have debated whether a prayer, or even a phrase in a prayer, can be justified theologically, and we have submitted all our major texts to the Commission on Doctrine of the church for scrutiny. Correspondence between two cities proved rather inadequate, so eventually joint meetings and exchange of personnel were established in order to hasten, and to deepen, the inter-change between these bodies. At times there has been a difference of emphasis, which I could perhaps express by saying that if the ecclesiology of the Uniting Church is described as 'catholic, reformed, and evangelical', the Commission on Liturgy has tended to stress the catholic and evangelical while the Commission on Doctrine has tended to stress the reformed.

But we have been able to iron out our differences by appealing to our common foundation in Scripture, the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church, the confessional documents which that church inherited from the three constituent denominations, and the various doctrinal statements (few in number) which the Uniting Church has itself issued. The use of Scripture has, we hope, not been wooden. We are aware of the strictures against biblicism in liturgy uttered by people like TGA Baker in his book *Questioning Worship*. However we are also aware that liturgy teaches faith, and that liturgical writing dare not be theologically misleading, fuzzy or internally incoherent.

The *Basis of Union* is a short text but this too has had a profound influence on both the doctrine and language of *Uniting in Worship*. Many are the times we have pondered, eg, the statements about baptism in the *Basis*, and have tried our level best to be faithful to them.

Another important principle which has guided us is ecumenism. The Uniting Church is well known for its ecumenical commitments, and the Commission on Liturgy has turned quite naturally to texts like *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* of the World Council of Churches (the so-called Lima text). In these three statements, incomplete as they may be, are clear signs of where the main theological trends of the church are. The liturgical implications of the Lima text are manifold. An example is the link made between eucharistic theology and the component parts of a satisfactory service of the eucharist. While the Uniting Church is not committed to every phrase of the Lima text, the Commission on Liturgy has tried to be faithful to its spirit. Our liturgy, we hope, will be one of the ways in which the Uniting Church signals to other churches our willingness, indeed our deep desire, to enter into closer unity with other denominations.

Another sign of the ecumenical commitment is our adoption, almost without alteration, of the English translations by the international ecumenical body known as the English Language Liturgical Consultation, or ELLC for short. These texts, which are revisions of the 1975 texts published by its predecessor the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) have a strong claim, in our view, to be used or at least earnestly considered by any church which takes ecumenism seriously. The ELLC texts published in 1987 were just in time to be incorporated in our book, and for this we are very thankful.

A further principle which we have used is that we are an Australian church. We have not hesitated to use texts from churches overseas, as I said earlier, and my personal belief is that too much can be made of the differences between living as a Christian in Australia and living as a Christian in other parts of the world. Having said that, though, there are various ways in which our climate, our church practices, and our psychology differ from other

countries. In *Uniting in Worship* we have therefore avoided the links between the resurrection of Christ and the season of Spring. We have been encouraged by the number of Australian contributions to the AHB and more particularly to *Sing Alleluia* and we have given an Australian flavour to some of our original writing. An example is this excerpt from the first eucharistic prayer which appears in the Service of the Lord's Day:

> Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
> our Lord and God,
> for you alone are worthy.
> In time beyond our dreaming
> you brought forth light out of darkness,
> and in the love of Christ your Son,
> you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.

The evocation here of dreaming and of light suggests several levels of meaning. Aboriginal culture, the ancient land forms, and the colour of an outback dawn are all suggested to me in these lines. Other things, perhaps quite different ones, may spring to your minds.

I say again, it is possible to overstress the peculiarities of Australia, but where Australian emphases could be included without self-consciousness we have tried to do so. I must say that our appeals to church people to submit original prayers and other resources for inclusion in the book brought forth very little, so most of the original work in *Uniting in Worship* is by members of the Commission. To put it another way, more of the 1970's and 1980's liturgical writing comes from the United States and Canada than from Australia.

Remarks about language

The last principle I want to mention is the linguistic one. The Commission has not spelled out its beliefs here, but has rather hammered out patterns and stylistic habits on the run. My interpretation of our style could be stated in four brief points:

1. We have avoided archaisms except in a very few traditional prayers in the section called 'resources'. Our selection of a psalm translation illustrates this. We regarded the Authorised Version, Coverdale, and even the RSV and David Frost, as insufficiently modern in style. We have avoided trendy phrases, clichés and cuteness as far as we possibly could, but we have also tried to speak with a contemporary voice.
2. We believe that prayer language is not the language of street conversation, although many Uniting Church people seem to believe that it is. We believe the language of prayer, being addressed to God, should be respectful without being remote, humble without being

obsequious, and rich in the imagery of Christian prayer down the centuries, even where the source of some images is quite ancient. Our preference for the RSV, for almost everything except the psalms, is an illustration of our stance here. The Good News Bible (or TEV) is too flat and bland for use in public worship, useful as it may be for evangelistic purposes, private use, or group Bible study.

3. Occasionally we have found that grammatical constructions from our sources have been English or American rather than Australian. On a few occasions, then, we have tried to tune in to the Australian ear. An example is in Psalm 29. Our base text says:

Ascribe to the Lord
the glory due his name.

Our preferred version adds one word 'to':

Ascribe to the Lord
the glory due to his name.

4. Our position on inclusive language is rather middle of the road. We would be seen as conservative by people who think that references to God as 'Lord', 'King', and 'Almighty' are suspect and should be eliminated or minimised. Some proponents of inclusive language would even see the name 'Father' as unacceptable. We have not taken this line. My personal view is that some terms which are male, especially 'Father' and 'Lord', cannot be phased out of the Christian tradition without weakening the content of the faith itself. The point is that faith and expression of faith in language are not two separate things: they are two aspects of *one* thing. It is not possible to make some changes of language without threatening the structure of faith itself. Now, you may say, language about God changed within the scriptures themselves, and has changed drastically since. I would agree, but there must be some strong threads of continuity, some linguistic corner-stones. The question is 'which ones are they?'.

Concerning language about human beings there is less controversy. In *Uniting in Worship* we have avoided 'men' when we are referring to 'men and women' or 'all human beings'. Similarly, we avoided using the pronoun 'he' as a description of a person whose sex is unknown. We use 'he or she' or 'they' instead. An example is in Psalm 91. Our source translated thus:

He who dwells in the shadow of the Almighty.

We have used the following, which is close enough to the original:

They who dwell in the shadow of the Almighty.

When one needs a pronoun to refer to God the situation is quite difficult. *Uniting in Worship* does use 'he', 'his', and 'him' of God quite frequently. I suspect that if we had gone to press in say 1990

instead of 1988 we would probably have reduced those masculine pronouns considerably, although possibly not eliminated them entirely. Personally I see no reason for reducing the use of 'he', 'his', and 'him' with reference to Jesus, but I can see a case for reducing the masculine pronouns with reference to God, and a case for the occasional use of feminine pronouns.

From publisher to people

I want now to describe the situation into which *Uniting in Worship* is about to be thrust. Every liturgical book grows out of a specific context and is injected, so to speak, into the body of believers worshipping.

The Uniting Church allows a good deal of local autonomy in some matters though not in others. Worship is one thing where local autonomy is at its greatest. Ministers, lay preachers, elders, and worship committees may use or decline to use official books of their own or any other denomination. If there is such a thing as typical Uniting Church worship, and I doubt there is, it grows after a slow osmosis into a rough consensus.

Differences abound. Some congregations use worship books regularly; others never. Some are given to responsive psalms and responsive prayers; others are not. Some use traditional hymns; others prefer choruses. Some ministers dress in alb and stole; others dress quite informally, say in slacks and open-neck shirt,or more formally in business suit. Some services are minister dominated; others are planned and led largely by lay people. Some congregations have at least one eucharist each week, while others celebrate only four or five times a year. Some parishes have services especially for youth; others do not.

The amount of leadership by lay preachers, elders, and other lay people is more than for most denominations. Unfortunately many of these lay people, and indeed some of the ministers, have little or no liturgical training. As a result, liturgical oddities abound. This is not to say lay leadership is a bad thing; it is simply that the level of education is poor.

Recognising this fact, the Commission on Liturgy and the Joint Board of Christian Education decided that sending *Uniting in Worship* into parishes and congregations without an accompanying education process would be unwise. Accordingly an educationist has been appointed to a national responsibility, to travel up and down the country conducting workshops and seminars, especially in presbyteries. (I should explain that a presbytery consists of anything from half a dozen to 50 or more parishes.) This person is to be known as 'Worship Consultant' and I am fortunate enough to be 'it'.

The variation of style in Uniting Church worship, even within one congregation, presents a major challenge to our educators. There will be

many who believe this book is 'not for them', and will need persuasion to even give it a try. The Commission has done its best to make the services usable in congregations of different size, historical background, age range, and liturgical preference, but, as I say, there will undoubtedly be a good deal of sales resistance. One of the strangest notions is the idea that the use of a book of worship somehow 'stifles creativity' or takes away the initiative of the people. Only time, I suspect, will dispel such ideas.

In the final months of 1987 I was able to hold conversations about worship with about 40 people, both clergy and lay, in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. The results of this research cannot be summarised here, but one point can be mentioned,namely, that many people are unhappy about the worship they experience. There is therefore a high level of expectation that improvement can and must take place. While there will be sales resistance, as I said, there are also many people who will take to *Uniting in Worship* eagerly as a firm basis on which to begin the process of rebuilding.

Because of the tradition of 'free' worship, as it is sometimes called, no attempt is being made to make the services of *Uniting in Worship* mandatory. They received strong commendation from the recent national Assembly, but the words were chosen carefully. They read:

> To recognise the orders of service contained in the forthcoming publication 'Uniting in Worship', already examined and approved by the Standing Committee, as official services of the Uniting Church in Australia and to commend them to Ministers of the Word, leaders of worship, Councils of Elders and congregations for their use.

The book is therefore officially endorsed, but ministers, congregations and others may opt to bypass what is now offered to them.

Beyond the Uniting Church

I conclude these remarks by asking this question - (and attempting a partial answer):

What has *Uniting in Worship* to offer Australian Christians other than the Uniting Church? I suggest there are four things:

1. The book draws on many traditions of worship and manages to combine them without, I think, doing violence to them.
2. The book shows how a great degree of choice at local level can be combined with a clear liturgical framework.
3. The amount of Australian content, while not great, poses the question to other churches of how far they can go, or want to go, in the direction of inculturating their own liturgy.
4. The standard of production of the book is exciting and I think shows what Australians can do when they put their minds to it. Here I claim

credit not so much for the Commission on Liturgy as for the Joint Board of Christian Education, and am glad to place on record a great indebtedness to that body.

Beyond 2000?

What is the life-expectancy of this book? I suspect that the answer will be found not only in the pace of social and ecclesiastical change, but also in the inherent quality or otherwise of the book itself. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and I am rash enough to believe that this pudding will last for many meals.

RECONCILIATION: A SECULAR APPROACH

Susan Gribben

The theme of this conference is reconciliation and the organisers thought it might be helpful to begin with a secular approach to the topic.

As the eldest of a large family, a lawyer, a marriage counsellor and a divorce mediator, I have been involved with fighting and peace-making in various ways all my life and I welcome this opportunity to think through and present some of my ideas.

The area is extremely complex and all I can do is make some generalisations which may stimulate your thinking about a theology of reconciliation and liturgies to express it. I hope that in the discussion time which follows, we may be able to make some connections.

Reconciliation is defined (in the Shorter Oxford Dictionary) in two ways:

1. The primary notion is one of 'bringing persons into friendly relations again after estrangement'.
2. The second conveys 'the bringing of persons or ideas into agreement or harmony'.

The first definition seems to assume that there has been a past friendly relationship, then the occurrence of a serious rift, followed by some actions which enable the restoration of the former relationship.

As I began to think about reconciliation, I was struck by the circularity of this definition and felt trapped by it. I did not know where to start this paper. Should I begin with the relationship or with the estrangement? Each point seemed to lead back to the other. I think that people are also trapped by a circular view of reconciliation. The former relationship held the seeds of the estrangement, so a return to it does not offer much hope. Also the events leading up to the estrangement and the subsequent separation have changed the people involved, so that the old relationship is no longer possible, even if it were desirable.

This is classically the problem faced by the married couple who have separated, following the discovery by one of them of the other's affair.

'How can I ever trust him again?'

'If I come back, can I stand her being the same?'

or 'Will I be able to cope with her watching me to see if I am behaving?'

The second meaning of reconciliation - the idea of bringing persons or ideas into agreement or harmony - does not assume a fundamental break in relationship, but rather a way of conducting an existing relationship.

If we take the two meanings together, it could be said that reconciliation involves both bringing back into relationship and maintaining relationship. As we have seen with the estranged couple, it is not enough to bring them back together after the affair. A lot more is required to build a new relationship, leaving the old behind, and then to maintain the new relationship. So our task is to discover what is required to bring about reconciliation and what is necessary for maintaining a reconciling, harmonious relationship.

I think that the most helpful starting point is an understanding of what happens in relationships to cause disharmony and estrangement, and this involves examining the causes of conflict, people's traditional responses to conflict and the usual outcomes produced by these responses. We can then look at ways in which differences can be handled more creatively and identify the steps necessary to bring about relationships which can do so.

So let's begin with conflict -

Conflict is defined firstly as '*incompatibility* of actions' e.g. 'You can't have your cake and eat it too'. The second meaning is 'fight or battle'. I will be using it in the first sense of incompatibility and regarding fight and battle as possible manifestations of conflict.

A common assumption, especially among Western Christians, is that conflict is bad and peace and harmony mean primarily an absence of conflict, or at least no overt signs of conflict. It is easy to understand the reasons for this view. We are all too aware, after centuries of war and family feuds, of the destructive potential of conflict. We are frightened of violence, our own and others; of being hurt ourselves or harming others; of the conflict escalating out of control; of losing or being overwhelmed.

We may begin to see *any* expression of difference as holding this potential - even just the colour of a person's skin. However, there are also creative possibilities inherent in all conflict. When I was a child, my father often puzzled me with the saying 'Why rush the discord that the harmony may prevail'. I have been unable to locate the saying in any dictionary of quotations although I note that Horace in his Ars Poetica, speaks of 'Concordia discors' - Harmony in discord. I think I now have some idea of what this might mean, not just musically but for creation as a whole.

Conflict is an essential part of the human condition and of human relationships. It is the necessary accompaniment and even pre-requisite of any change, growth, or development. Dissatisfaction with the existing state of things provides the motive and energy for change. However, any change is preceded, accompanied and followed by conflict as the full implications of what will be lost as a result of the change is appreciated by all those it will affect, including the initiator. There is conflict over the necessity for change;

the kind of change desirable; the rate of change required. The conflict can be within an individual person; between persons; within a group or between groups; and of course combinations of all these.

I ask you to think about whether life would be perfect if nothing ever changed and we were all equally happy with things staying exactly as they are. Is Heaven like this? Personally, I do not believe it is. I believe God takes infinite pleasure in the changing variety of human responses, needs, wishes, beliefs and relationships. Difference and conflict prevent stagnation; stimulate interest and curiosity; allow problems to be aired and solutions found; are part of the process of testing and assessing oneself; and can help consolidate groups and strengthen relationships.

So any conflict offers creative as well as destructive possibilities. The difficulty is that we tend to be more motivated by our worst fears rather than our best hopes, as hell-fire preachers down the ages have known only too well. And when we are frightened, we tend to act in one of the following destructive ways:

- if extremely frightened, we may become immobilised, completely helpless, unable to act at all.
- if less frightened, we may run away; buy peace at any price; give in completely.
- or we may fight and in fighting seek to eliminate the conflict by eliminating the other person or their opinions. There are a number of ways of trying to do this, of varying degrees of effectiveness:
  - execution; assassination
  - banishment
  - imprisonment
  - torture
  - censorship
  - pretending that the other person does not exist
  - pretending that there is no conflict.

So it can be seen that the more frightened we are of a destructive outcome, the more likely it is that we will act in a way which will produce a destructive outcome for ourselves and others. Those who run away from conflict are in a competition to be the most generous or to lose, be the victim. They do not allow others to give to them; they never fight or disagree; they go on pretending for years that they are happy when they are not, perhaps wrongly assuming that this is what Jesus really meant by 'turn the other cheek' and his example of obedient death on the Cross.

Those who stand and fight are in a competition to win or at least to deprive the other, like the dog in the manger. The strongest wins and might is right. The problem is that the cost of winning can be greater than the prize gained and the winner only keeps the prize for as long as the superior force,

strength, threat or power can be maintained. Also, whatever else may be won, a loving relationship is usually undermined or lost. The tools and methods of warfare are not conducive to good relationships. Even verbal warfare is characterised by threats, blaming, putting the other person down, deception, concealment, mistrust, suspicion, individualism and demands for retribution for past behaviour.

There is an alternative response to flight or fight which involves all parties co-operating to understand the conflict; find solutions which do not harm the relationship and which everyone can live with - all are at least partial winners. This approach involves openness and honesty; use of persuasion not force; trust and mutuality; and a focus on the future, not the past. The problem is attacked with all the energy otherwise put into running away or attacking the other person. Such response is possible when conflict is more welcomed than feared and there is enjoyment of the challenge to find better ways of relating and doing things together.

Most people have experience of all three responses, often in relation to the same conflict e.g. A daughter asks Mum where her jeans are, as she is about to go out. Mum says they are in the washing machine. Daughter gets upset; Mum tries to calm her by suggesting that she would look better in a skirt; Daughter accuses Mum of doing it deliberately; Mum says she is old enough to do her own washing. Eventually both calm down and work out how the jeans can be dried quickly or what else the daughter can wear. Promises about future behaviour may be made by both mother and daughter. Even though we are all familiar with all three responses, I think it is true to say that women are more inclined to pacifying behaviour and men to aggressive behaviour, and that there is a biological basis for this as well as social conditioning that women are responsible for relationships.

In addition, in particular relationships certain responses become habitual and it becomes hard for either person to bring about a change in themselves or the other, so they do not see themselves as having any choice but to fight or give in - the all or nothing approach. I am not suggesting that fighting or running away are always inappropriate responses, or that fear of conflict is not justified. In the face of a Hitler, anyone is foolish not to be extremely frightened and flight or fight is called for. But most of the people we have to deal with are not mad - they are just frightened of conflict or of a particular outcome, in the same way that we are, and their fear prevents them from thinking rationally about the problem and looking for other ways of dealing with it.

If one's fear about a conflict is balanced by hopes of a creative outcome, then maybe reason can start to play a part. Two heads may be better than one, but one is certainly better than none. If one person starts to be hopeful about finding a solution, that hope helps everyone. So the first step toward

reconciliation is the belief by someone that it is possible. The belief must be genuine and realistic and it must not contain approval or condemnation of any person's behaviour to date. Rather, it should be based on an understanding of each person's perception of the problem, the choices seen to be available given those perceptions, and a plan to change perceptions so as to create the possibility of other options. For example, if every time a verbal argument starts, one person gets anxious and incoherent, her belief that she will always lose an argument is real and her silent door-slamming withdrawal from the scene makes perfect sense. It should not be condemned or praised but understood. Then she should be asked - 'But does it get you what you want? After all, the situation remains unresolved, the other person is now angry with you not just about there being no money left, but because you won't talk about it'. Equally, the other person needs his response to be understood. 'Of course you get angry when someone won't listen to you and your shouting is perfectly understandable, but is it getting you what you want? i.e. the other person really listening to you and a plan to deal with the money shortage'.

Secondly there have to be two people willing to explore the possibility of improving the relationship. True reconciliation does not come about under compulsion or because someone else pronounces it should happen e.g. 'Kiss and make up'; 'Shake hands and be friends'; 'Forgive and forget'. Although there may be something in the theory that acting as though one were friendly may change one's thinking and feeling about the other person, my own view is that unless it is accompanied by a deeper change, it will only be temporary. There has to be a desire for reconciliation - to be in relationship again - even if the belief in the possibility of its actually happening is very weak. Often this involves resolving an internal conflict - a willingness to abandon a fundamental belief or value and acknowledge the possibility of another reality. I once asked a woman, who had not seen her father since she was five, and whose only memory of him was a violent, drunken man, if she knew what he was now like and what she would do if she found out he was neither drunken nor violent. She could not begin to think about this possibility because her whole life was built upon the fact that all men are potentially drunken, violent and uncontrollable. Nor would she allow me to see her estranged husband with her. Her life remained out of control, her behaviour totally reactive and unplanned and men were eliminated.

So both the belief that reconciliation is possible and the desire for it to happen bring about a meeting, but the work of reconciliation has barely begun, although many seem to think that that is all that is necessary. Of course, it depends on one's goals. I am not interested in a return to the old relationship or the establishment of *any* relationship. I am concerned to see relationships being built which can handle differences better in future.

So what else needs to happen, particularly if there has been a long period of bitter fighting or estrangement? There has to be:

1. Some understanding of our responsibility for the estrangement and fighting. In families, the identification of strong patterns of behaviour repeated in succeeding generations can be helpful. We may be punishing parents or children for behaviour we share with them. If we can acknowledge our own difficulties and forgive ourselves, we may be able to forgive and accept others. Paradoxically, change for all may then be possible because it is no longer expected or demanded.
2. Some acknowledgement that the past is past, that no-one can change it, and that maybe nothing can compensate for the loss and suffering of the past. There may be a need for a symbolic payment. If the debt can *never* be repaid in full, the only possible relationship in future is one of perpetual slavery. Understandably, the offer of such a relationship is usually rejected. A way of closing off the ledgers has to be found.
3. Some acceptance and welcoming of difference and complementarity - not demanding any more change in the other than one is willing to offer oneself. Also, understanding the difficulties of changing for oneself and others. The familiar, no matter how awful, is known and predictable. The unfamiliar, no matter how seemingly attractive, is an unknown quantity.
4. Not expecting too much too soon from yourself or others.
5. Noticing and rewarding even small desirable changes in attitude or behaviour.
6. Looking for similarities; focussing on areas of agreement, i.e. shared beliefs, values, perceptions, goals, ways of achieving goals. The tendency is to believe that the person who is different in some way is different in *all* ways, and the person who agrees with us on one matter will do so about everything. We are very uncomfortable with any internal conflict in our perceptions and when this becomes apparent, will try to resolve it by eliminating one of the perceptions. So we have to act inconsistently with the perceptions of difference held by the other person and challenge our own view of their difference.

Obviously reconciliation is not easy to bring about and the assistance of a third, independent person(s) can be of enormous value. As Christians see themselves as not only required to live in reconciling relationships themselves but to act as peace-makers for others, I think it would be useful to look at how mediators can be most helpful in the light of what I have said so far:

1. They must understand their own response to conflict - the feelings aroused in them by a discovery of difference, contradiction or frustration and the behaviours likely to result from these feelings. Otherwise their feelings may cause them to become involved in the conflict themselves, either by fighting or withdrawing or seeking to pacify for their own sake.
2. They must be able to tolerate open and intense conflict and remain firm and calm, offering safety and containment to those fighting.
3. They must be seen by the parties as neutral. There is a lot of argument about what neutrality means and whether complete neutrality is ever possible. However, an example may illustrate the problem. A wife left her husband after a long marriage in which she had been on the receiving end of much violence. They were a Christian couple and the man was a highly respected church leader. Other church leaders acted as mediators to try and bring about a reconciliation. The wife initially welcomed their efforts but later refused to see them because they were so committed to reconciliation at any price, and concerned about the effect of the marriage breakdown on other church members, that her issues were not being addressed at all. I think that this can be a problem for the institutional church when seeking to bring about reconciliation, whether between individuals and God or just individuals. It is important to differentiate the institution from God; for the Church to acknowledge its own human failings, its limited perceptions of problems and people and its possible part in causing and maintaining the fighting or estrangement because it is working to achieve an agenda of its own; a particular outcome.
4. Professional mediators see all conflict as offering some possibilities for improving the relationship. They do not impose this view on people but rather seek to persuade having first listened to both persons; understood how each views the relationship or dispute and why; and communicated that they have understood and that each person's concerns are legitimate. This is quite different from agreeing with them. Only then do mediators have the right to help each person understand the *other* person's view, to help them check out the reality of their own perceptions and challenge the other person's.
5. Mediators try to identify shared interests and concerns, even if only small and then encourage people to develop a joint goal and joint plans to achieve the goal. People who are working together to achieve something they both want will gradually establish a climate of co-operation which may enable other matters to be resolved co-operatively. For example, imagine that a husband and wife who have been living separately under the one roof for some time and who fight

violently every time they encounter each other, over money, children, cleaning the house, mowing the lawn etc. have come to counselling. A mediator might begin by asking them how they managed to agree to come to counselling together; then go on to develop a contract concerning the number and frequency of sessions and how they will be paid for. The mediator has identified their joint hope for a new relationship and helped them expand and enhance it.

6. Mediators deal with issues systematically separating those concerning the relationship from substantive ones; reducing matters of principle to specific fact situations. For example, a couple may not be able to decide or agree on who should be boss in general, but they may be able to agree on who will decide when the floor needs vacuuming and who will do it. Each person is given an opportunity to express their values, beliefs, needs, concerns, fears, hopes, resources and commitments and the mediator ensures both are heard so that each can listen to the other.

7. Mediators help the people to objectify the problem i.e. see the problem as separate from the other person. This is done in two main ways -

   (a) Defining the problem in a neutral way - one which both parties can agree to e.g. if the parties' definition of the problem is - He/She is saying 'I can't have custody of the children', a neutral definition is - 'What would be the best living arrangements for the children?'

   (b) Writing up the issues, the facts, the ideas for solutions, on a board in front of both people. This physically puts the problem out there and the couple face it side by side. Attacking each other is less likely.

8. Mediators encourage both parties to come up with solutions and ideas for improving proposals from everyone's point of view. People who have put nothing into a plan may feel little or no commitment to it, even if it is in their interests. ('The inherited stamp collection is never quite as wonderful as the one you collected yourself.') So mediators tend not to make suggestions unless the people are very stuck and then they make a number of suggestions with no implied endorsement of any, asking the parties to consider how each idea may or may not deal with the needs and concerns of each person.

9. Mediators' short term goal is an agreement that both people can live with, knowing that the alternatives are worse - an agreement which is clear and capable of being carried out. But mediators are also teaching a problem-solving approach, and a way of communicating about differences which will enable people to handle their conflict better in the future.

10. Mediators do not have any other goals for the relationship. It is not assumed that the most desirable relationship is the most intimate. The degree of intimacy is a matter for negotiation like any other. Intimacy cannot be imposed. There are many possible reasons for not wanting a particular degree or kind of intimacy and there is no time to go into them here. Suffice to say that the problem is summed up in the demand 'If you loved me you would like garlic'. I may be prepared to eat garlic. I may even pretend to like garlic. It is conceivable that if I eat enough of it, I may in time come to like it; but I cannot like it now to order.

Conclusion:

In summary then, I believe that -

1. Reconciliation does not mean a return to an old relationship but rather the creation and maintenance of a new one.
2. Harmony is not the absence of conflict but a relationship which handles conflict creatively.
3. Conflict is a necessary part of any relationship and always has potential for good and bad. It is primarily the way we bring about change.
4. Any change will have losses and gains for all persons involved and it is important that conflict about change, or failure to change, should be handled in a way that preserves relationships. This involves identifying losses and finding ways to minimise them; and maximising gains for all.
5. There are many different kinds of relationships of varying degrees of intimacy. A good relationship is one which can handle differences including disagreements about the kind of relationship it should be.
6. Relationships are not static. To be reconciled involves creating a relationship which enables growing and changing together - one where responsibility for conserving valued and familiar patterns is desired as is the responsibility for finding new and better ways.
7. Peace-making is the responsibility of all but is not a job for people frightened of conflict.

And I conclude with the text, a word of personal encouragement to all mediators - 'Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God'.

AUSTRALIAN RITES OF RECONCILIATION

Paul Rule

Introduction

Nearly one hundred and fifty years ago here in Melbourne town the newly appointed Chief Protector of the Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson, wrote to the Colonial Secretary: 'On Saturday last [23 March 1839] the town of Melbourne was visited by a very large body of aboriginal natives, who it seems were invited by the resident tribes, and as I am informed, to attend a conference expected to take place immediately.....I was unwilling to lose so favourable an opportunity for conciliation.....In pursuance therewith I have intimated to the aboriginal natives now on their visit from the interior, as well as to their friends and allies the resident natives, my intention of affording to them an entertainment for the occasion, which announcement has given the greatest satisfaction.'[1]

Robinson was, of course, an old hand at reconciliation, having 'reconciled' the survivors of the extermination campaign against the Tasmanians by removing them all from their homeland to a lingering death in the middle of Bass Strait. What he had in mind was a sort of grand feast on special rations provided by the government, at which he would proclaim his new role as protector of Aboriginal interests. He knew enough about Aboriginal society to recognise the importance of symbolic ritual gestures in the process of reconciliation. But the irony of the situation is that the Goulburn tribes, as the Northern Victorian visitors were commonly called, had their own agenda for reconciliation with the Melbourne blacks.

The old Melbourne hands could have told Robinson what to expect because it had been an annual event since the settlement was formed. Every year, in the autumn, the Goulburn blacks came down to Port Phillip. Their arrival was awaited with trepidation and the first thing to happen was a grand 'battle', to use the term commonly applied to the event by the settlers. And sure enough, to Robinson's dismay, this is what happened in 1839.

This was the first serious contact between the Protectors who had arrived in early January, and their charges, and one that their surviving journals show caused them considerable perplexity. They saw it as a 'fight', and so it was. Several blacks were injured, seven seriously, including three women, and the military had to be called in to quell it. But the journal of William Thomas, which remains our best early source on the Aborigines of Port Phillip and Westernport, shows in his account of 'the first fight since the

Protectorate had arrived' something of the powers of observation and interpretation that make his writings so important. He saw that this was not just a fight but something more:

> They however had a corroboree at night, though there appeared much distrust, as those who were not dancing had their spears by their sides ready for action in the event of any treacherous move. This was the first corroboree I had seen. To me they appeared more like automaton figures. Time and motion appeared too exact for so many human figures. We remained with them till 11 o'clock at night. The transition from fighting to dancing so quick, in but a few hours, gave me a queer idea of these people. *I thought that anger or play must be one or the other artificial.*[2]

In other words, the perceptive Thomas suspected that despite the apparent ferocity of the encounter, it had been more a ritual than a battle. This suspicion must have been sharpened by what happened the next day.

Unfortunately Thomas' journal for Sunday 24 March is not very informative, being more concerned with Sunday reflections on 'the Sun of Righteousness.....forcing a passage through the dark mind of the Australian savage'[3] and the impiety of the settlers in encouraging another corroboree on the Sabbath, than with the aftermath of the previous day. However the journal of his fellow Protector, James Dredge, gives us some fascinating details:

> Mr. Thomas and I were at the aboriginal encampment this morning before sun rising. On our return we brought away with us another native who had been badly wounded with a waddy the evening of the fight. When we arrived at our fire he was recognised as the individual who had opened the man in the cheek, from whose waddy he received the retaliating wound. For a few minutes there was some shyness manifested. Seating himself by the fire, however, they began talking over the events of the affray, when observing the suffering of the man with the wounded cheek, he went to him and removing the plaster commenced sucking it, and humming a kind of corroboree tune, using at the same time a kind of muttering which was continued for some time, when they separated apparently good friends.[4]

There are some further observations, the details of which I will not bother you with here, such as that marriages between the Goulburn and the local Aborigines seemed to occur at this time; that inter-sexual conflict occurred (particularly interesting here is an account of the Goulburn women seizing and cutting off the hair of seven of the local men to their mortal terror only undone by the native doctors); and that alliances of various kinds were formed. For all this I refer you to Volumes 2A and 2B of the Foundation

Series of the *Historical Records of Victoria*. All, however, confirms what Thomas at the time only dimly glimpsed; that here was a highly ritualised encounter, an Aboriginal ritual of reconciliation. It was the annual settling of accounts between two groups marked by expiation for past offenses, reconciliation and the creation of renewed bonds.

The Treaty Proposal

I have lingered over these obscure events not only because I find them of such intrinsic fascination but because they give us an immediate point of entry into one of the most important contemporary Australian debates, that is, whether or not to proclaim a formal treaty or act of reconciliation between us Euro-Australians and the original inhabitants of our land. What is the use of such an act? Would it be merely symbolic? Would it create legal obligations that are socially or economically undesirable?

I shall not rehearse here the arguments against the last objection. Anyone who has looked clear sightedly at our two hundred years of occupation of Australia must, I believe, acknowledge a great wrong that must be redressed by economic compensation and social compassion, irrespective of the treaty question. If a treaty created legal obligations to reinforce the patent moral ones, so much the better.

Nor shall I before this audience above all others argue the fatuity of the phrase 'merely symbolic'. Symbolic action is ritual action, both an expression of our deepest commitments and strengthening such commitments. There is nothing 'mere' about liturgical actions.

Rather I shall concentrate on the Aboriginal understanding of such a symbolic action in the context of traditional rituals of reconciliation and friendship. I shall argue that a formal public ritual declaration, both acknowledging past injustices and committing the people of Australia to redress them, is a gesture that Aborigines will appreciate, one originally suggested by Aborigines themselves, and one that might have some impact even on our ritually impoverished white Australian society.

We must do more than merely celebrate our Australianess together. I am told by an expert on Aboriginal languages that 'Moomba', far from meaning 'Let's get together and have fun' is an obscenity. George Robinson's Moomba when, on the 28th March 1839 it eventually took place, was in its way a kind of obscenity. William Thomas describes the 'blacks wrestling, climbing up poles, throwing spears at hats etc.' and lists the vast quantities of food consumed by the Aborigines - 602 pounds of beef, 210 pounds of mutton, and so on - and adds ominously 'what the whites consumed we must not mention'.[5] All this is very reminiscent of the way we, in 1988, have been celebrating our bicentenary and, in many cases sincerely, inviting the Aborigines to join us in the celebration. But to invite them to participate in

a celebration of their dispossession is to say the least grossly insensitive. A treaty with the Aborigines proclaimed at the end of 1988 might go some way towards making amends for the way we began the year.

The treaty concept did not emerge fully formed from the agile brain of our Prime Minister. It was vigorously advocated for several years (1978-83) by the Aboriginal Treaty Committee comprising some most distinguished Australians, including Dr. H.C. Coombs, Judith Wright, and some of the best qualified experts on Aboriginal culture such as Professors Bill Stanner and Charles Rowley. They seem to have given up in 1983 in some despair at the immediate fulfillment of their hopes but also in the firm belief that eventually it will have to come. Judith Wright, whose *We Call for a Treaty* is the best general study of the issue, puts the question succinctly in a chapter titled, 'How long can might be right?'

It is important, however, to note that the call for a treaty did not begin with white activists but with Aborigines themselves. In 1972 a small group of Larrakia people from Darwin proposed that 'the government appoint a Commission to go around to every tribe and work out a treaty to suit each tribe'.[6] And the National Aboriginal Conference took over the treaty proposal enthusiastically suggesting that it be called not a 'treaty' but a 'Makarrata', an Arnhem Land word meaning an agreement ending a communal dispute and marking the resumption of normal relations. This term was to become a bone of contention amongst Aboriginal groups, many of them regarding it as a government-inspired attempt to evade the legal implications of a 'treaty'. Others, for example the Aboriginal lawyer Pat O'Shane and, more significantly, the Federation of Aboriginal Land Councils, opposed a treaty altogether on the grounds that it conceded the vital point of Aboriginal sovereignty over the whole of Australia. It is probably true to say, however, that a majority of Aborigines supported the concept.

There is room for argument about the contents of a treaty. The general lines of the government's current proposal seem to me quite adequate: an acknowledgment of prior ownership of land, of responsibility for the dispossession of the original owners, and of an obligation to recompense and so far as possible undo the effects of that dispossession. Furthermore, the Minister, Gerry Hand, has followed the initiative by a very wide ranging consultation process. I believe it must be a public act involving as many Australians as possible. I would also argue that it must be symbolic of reciprocity; of unity but unity acknowledging difference and priority; and that it must be sealed by appropriate social and institutional bonds. However, I would stress that the form of the declaration may be as important as the contents. It is the symbolism that I want to concentrate on leaving the precise verbal formulae to the consultation process.

Aboriginal Rituals of Reconciliation

Our opening example of the annual encounter between the Wurundjeri of Port Phillip and their northern neighbours suggests a much broader symbolic context for the discussion of the treaty than is usually provided. There are very many examples indeed of ritual forms of peacemaking exchange and solidarity building between groups of Aborigines. It is often forgotten in discussions of the 'ownership' and exclusivity of Aboriginal rituals that it is normal to invite neighbouring groups to participate in rituals and that rituals were often the occasion of economic and social exchanges. They created a link in the exchange of goods across the continent: sea-shells for ochre, stone axe blanks for native tobacco, spear shafts for feathers. They were an opportunity for creating alliances through the exchange of marriage partners actual or promised. [Note I did not say the exchange of women since it is now recognised that such marriage arrangements were reciprocal in respect of both partners.] Thus, each Aboriginal group usually had relations with all its immediate neighbours and sometimes those at one further remove. If tensions had developed over ritual offenses, women, alleged sorcery - to mention just a few of the causes of disputes in Aboriginal society - these regular gatherings for rituals would provide an occasion for reconciliation. If offenses had occurred reparation would be made either by gifts or, in serious cases such as wife stealing or physical injury, by the shedding of blood. Gifts might be prized objects, most likely ritual objects such as carved poles, tjurungas or sacred boards. Combats, whether between large or small groups or individuals, were not intended to be mortal (although sometimes given the weapons used they turned out so) but rather to provide satisfaction. They frequently were concluded by a ritual action symbolising renewed fraternity and often of a very intimate nature, for example, penis holding or wife exchange.

As far as one can determine, such encounters were always given ultimate sanction by invoking the creative spirit beings through ritual. If a ritual was the explicit reason for the gathering then that ritual and the reenactment of the Dreaming activities of the spirit beings associated with it created the supernatural underpinning for any social or personal reconciliation reached.

Sometimes, however, at least in some areas, there were special rituals of reconciliation or bonding. One such has recently become widely known through somewhat unusual circumstances. This is the *Rom* ritual of the Gidjingarli speaking peoples of the northern Arnhem Land coast. The Anbarra people of Maningrida amongst whom several anthropologists from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies had worked, decided as an expression of reciprocity with the Institute and the people of Canberra to perform their *Rom* ritual in Canberra in the grounds of the Institute near Lake Burley Griffin. This happened in November 1982 and a full account

beautifully illustrated is given in *Rom: an aboriginal ritual of diplomacy*, edited by Stephen Wild.

Rom is described by Wild as a 'ritual of diplomacy', the general term he applies to that class of ritual 'whose purpose is to establish or reaffirm friendly relations between people of different communities and, frequently, of different languages and cultures'.[7] The centre-point of the ritual is the presentation of a specially bound and decorated sacred pole to the accompaniment of songs and dances by a visiting group who have been invited by a leading member of the host group. The songs and dancers are mostly totemic, based on the White Cockatoo, Brown Snake, Bittern, Friarbird etc. and are connected with the much more important creation story known as the Morning Star cycle.

The purpose of the ritual, however, is clearly to establish reciprocity between communities. The Anbarra announced the forth-coming *Rom* to the people of Canberra, in a message addressed to Dr. Peter Ucko, then Principal of the AIAS:

> We want that Canberra mob to look at our ceremony because we have been to many meetings there. Peter Ucko, Les Hiatt, Rhys Jones, Betty Meehan - we want them to see our ceremony, all the Institute people too. A big mob of *balanda* [white people] can come to see the ceremony; a big mob of *an-gigallya* [Aboriginal people] can come too. We want to show them *Djambidj* [the name of a song cycle].....The *Rom* is associated with *Djambidj* all the way. We want to give our brothers, Les and Rhys, this *Rom* to keep. *Mulanda* is the short one. *Wama* is the long pole and this is the one we are going to bring to Canberra.....White people from Bungendore, Cooma, Sydney and Canberra can come: *an-gigallya* can come too. They will say when they have seen the ceremony: *gun-molamola bunggul*, a good dance. Pictures can be taken and the music can be recorded. We have been thinking about this for a long time. We have been thinking about all the men, the big members, all the time we have been attending Institute meetings. We have been thinking that we would show all these people our ceremony. We would perform *Rom* and call up all the big names.....If some of the people would like to receive a present of the proper *Rom* ceremony we will bring it to Canberra.[8]

Who could resist such an invitation? The 'big men' duly replied and eventually the ritual was performed and meticulously recorded. The Anbarra had handed over something of great value and through the accompanying songs and dances explicated to those who know the language of ritual something of its inner meaning. That meaning primarily relates to the sacredness of their land, the stories of how it was 'made' by the great creator spirit beings in the Dreaming and given to them in trust. The ritual itself

nourishes and revitalises the land by relating it once more to that act of creation.

There is much debate about the precise significance of such rituals and how best to interpret them. Is their purpose primarily social? Do they function to validate the Law, the complex of ritual and social obligation for all members of the society? Do they express or project unconscious psychological needs? Are they simply the matrix for the exigencies of survival in the harsh Australian environment? Are they the analogues of our theologies, concretised metaphysics?

Even to begin to explore these questions would take at least another paper. However, I would like to make a few brief observations that might relate the foregoing discussion to what I take to be the professional concerns of this gathering.

Firstly, any narrow or reductionist explanation must fail to come to grips with the multi-faceted nature of Aboriginal ritual. To most of the standard theories my response is 'Yes, and.....' They are clearly enactments of the sacred stories, ways of contacting and participating in the normative deeds of the creator spirits. They reemphasise and ground the Law. They bind men and women together in a common and reciprocal purpose.

One aspect of Aboriginal ritual, however, seems to me unduly neglected. It receives major attention in a long opening section of the work of the late Fr. Worms recently translated as *Australian Aboriginal Religion*,[9] but rarely elsewhere. This is the centrality of sacred objects in Aboriginal religion. You will have noted that the *Rom* focusses on a sacred pole and this is typical or Arnhem Land rituals in which the creative actions of the spirit beings are performed with and ritually reenacted by such poles. Back in the beginnings of the study of Aboriginal culture and religion Spencer and Gillen rightly emphasised the cult of the *tjurungas* amongst the Aranda of Central Australia. A similar role is played by the sacred boards of the Western Desert and the bullroarers of Southeastern Australia.

I would like to acknowledge here the pioneering interpretative work of Sacred Heart Father Martin Wilson in his *New, Old and Timeless: Pointers towards an Aboriginal Theology* (1979) which presents a stimulating thesis not yet assimilated much less refuted by either anthropologists or theologians. Wilson argues that the most appropriate language to deal adequately with Aboriginal religious beliefs and practices is sacramental. It is primarily objects and actions that transmit spiritual power. They function not merely as symbols but as concrete vehicles of that power. They are often referred to as the 'body' of the spirit being. At least in the context of ritual, and often outside it, Aboriginal sacred objects are identified with the spirit and directly perform functions of healing, transforming, uniting. Much of the ritual itself - the dancing, the reiterated

snatches of verse, the ritual actions - focus on these objects. I will leave it to the theologians to argue the appropriateness of 'sacrament' as a description of what lies at the heart of Aboriginal rituals whether of reconciliation or otherwise. But my own sporadic and unsystematic reading in this area of theology inclines me to accept and use the label with little hesitation.

Conclusion

We have strayed far from our starting point of the proposed Aboriginal treaty. I would like in conclusion to come back to it. Could such a treaty be primarily a *Rom* writ large? There are, of course, enormous problems in using the concepts and language of any region of Aboriginal Australia in a negotiation involving them all. Pat Dodson rightly protested in 1982 to the Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs against the use of the Arnhem Land term 'Makarrata' that it was better 'to use a white man's word in this regard'. 'I think'. he went on, 'it is a futile exercise to get one word from one linguistic group, cultural group or law group that is acceptable to other linguistic and cultural law groups'.[10] I am not suggesting a specific 'Rom' or 'Makarrata'.

What I am suggesting is that the emphasis in the treaty should be ritual, symbolic rather than legal. My dream would be of a formal gathering involving a large number of representative White Australian and Aboriginal Australians at which symbolic actions drawn from both traditions would be performed, a liturgy of reconciliation. I leave it to the experts to suggest what might be the appropriate ritual symbolic actions on our side: an offering of the fruits of the land, the display of symbols of the blood shed by us and the blood ties between the two races? And it would be the Aborigines themselves who would have to agree on their symbolic forms (some echoes of Pope John Paul's visit to Alice Springs suggest themselves).

One of the saddest episodes in White-Aboriginal relations in Australia was an abortive attempt on Elcho Island in 1957 at creating mutual bonds by the display of sacred emblems. When the group of Aborigines involved in this cargo-cult like movement publicly proffered their secret religious objects or *rangga* to the gaze of the white passersby they appear to have confidently expected a reciprocal handing over of white secrets. It never came and the sacred poles slowly disintegrated in the heat and damp of coastal Northern Australia.[11] One opportunity was lost; it is time to create a new one.

I think it is very important for us as Australians to bring out into the open and acknowledge our dark and dirty secret: that our prosperity is built on murder, rape and theft, and that in many parts of Australia that process still goes on. I am not advocating a national guilt trip but a frank admission of where we are and how we got here, combined with a positive commitment to the future. That future lies not only in reconciliation with our usurped

predecessors but in learning, the faster the better, how to live in the unique environment which they left comparatively unscarred in perhaps 50,000 years of occupation and we have almost destroyed in 200.

So, in the end, as always with Aborigines, we are back to the land and its sacred - should I say sacramental - significance. Perhaps we have as much need to be reconciled with our land as with its original people. There are some routes to this opening up in recent theological discussion. Matthew Fox's 'creation theology' for all its naiveties points one direction (I would particularly commend his appropriation of American Indian ideas as a model for an Australian appropriation of Aboriginal spirituality); another in Teilhard de Chardin's vision embodied in works such as 'The Mass on the World' and 'Hymn to Matter'. Or perhaps, better still, we should find a uniquely Australian way.

My vision, then, of a treaty ceremony, a ritual of reconciliation, must necessarily embrace a ritual conducted in the open air, preferably at a traditional Aboriginal sacred site such as Uluru. [Uluru would be particularly appropriate since, as well as being a major sacred place to Aborigines and now in their control, it is recognised as symbolic by most white Australians.][12] For we desperately need to recapture something of that passion for the land as the expression of spiritual values that the Aborigines have. Let me conclude by quoting one of the ritual owners of Uluru, the late Paddy Uluru:

> Uluru is my camp. This is mine, this holy cave. Yes, this is a holy cave. I alone truly know about this place. I was put into this place. Yes, my fathers and grandfathers entrusted me with this cave. This holy cave.....This is my great ceremony, my holy ceremony, my great camp with its holy tree and Mutitjulu on this side is holy. Uluru is holy. I am Uluru and these things are mine. And now white people have broken that which is ours, our Law, ours, our great ceremony, the ceremony of the Mala wallaby from which we are taught. And I am speaking truly to you. Mutitjulu is the main place at Uluru and white people have gone through it. A white fellow, having frightened me, chased me away. Having gone from that place, I wandered around, having left my things there I moved around. Finished! My fathers are finished. They are finished.....Having become one in that place I left it. This having happened I let everything go.....We do not know about it but the white fellows get rich. They come from a long way away, from the west, and they get rich from Uluru. I don't know. They are a long way away. Yes, but from my camp they become rich. Yes, and now I am obtaining a

motor car and I am coming to that place. I am going to live there at Uluru. Yes, here I am coming to you. Yes.[13]

Paddy's dream came true. He died there at Uluru just a few years ago. Will my dream too come true?

NOTES

1. *Historical Records of Victoria*, Foundation Series,2B,Melbourne (Victorian Government Printing Office)1983,448.
2. Entry for 23 March 1839; italics added. *Ibid.*, 441.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*,450.
5. *Ibid.*,452.
6. J.Wright, *We call for a treaty*, Sydney,(Collins/Fontana) 1985, 15.
7. S.Wild,ed., *Rom: an aboriginal ritual of diplomacy*, Canberra (AIAS)1986,10.
8. *Ibid.*,26.
9. A.E.Worms, *Australian Aboriginal Religion*, Kensington (Nelson Yubu Missiological Unit) 1986.
10. Quoted in Wright, 180.
11. R.M.Berndt, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land*, Paris (Mouton) 1962.
12. See R.Layton, *Uluru: An Aboriginal history of Ayers Rock*, Canberra(AIAS) 1986.
13. Slightly modified after J. Isaacs, *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 years of Aboriginal history*, Sydney(Lansdowne Press)1985, 40-41.

RITES OF RECONCILIATION

1. THE NEW CATHOLIC RITES

Joseph Doolan

Our endeavour is to observe briefly some examples of sin and reconciliation in Australian poetry and prose. From these examples we shall look at the process of apology into which we enter in reconciliation rites. Since this action moves from good times, to negative experiences and back to friendship we hope to present a schema for celebrating penitential paraliturgies that operates upon the same structure. The article will conclude with suggestions for school and parish services. It is hoped that the utilisation of penitential paraliturgies may advance our understanding and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Poems, Stories, and Sin

Henry Lawson's short story 'When The Sun Went Down' simply describes the reconciliation between an older and younger brother, Tom and Jack Drew. Tom has spent the day following their morning quarrel refusing forgiveness to young Jack; it is only after the mine shaft collapses on the hot-headed youth that Tom springs to action. He furiously digs his buried brother's 'grave' until a hole in the earth gives way and Jack is visible through the face of the new shaft. The exertion had been too much and Tom exclaims: 'I've hurt my heart, Jack! Put your hand - quick.....the sun's going down'. Jack's hand came through the hole, Tom gripped it, and then fell on his face in the damp clay. The final scene, a two-sentence Lawsonesque conclusion, depicts the brother kneeling in the grass, the diggers standing round the body of Tom Drew, and the sun going down.

The story presents the good relationship of brothers who won't let the day conclude with the quarrel unresolved. The experience of the younger brother caused the clash and incited the fight; he quickly requested forgiveness. Tom, however, has to brood a while and cannot quickly forgive and forget. The reconciliation is by word and action; the gripping of hands down in the mine shaft seals the forgiveness they share. The story presents the brothers, their faltering steps at reconciliation, their forgiveness and the action of acceptance and love.

Those principles of forgiveness we note again in the poem 'The Fire at Ross's Farm'. This poem of Henry Lawson again describes quarrelling workers, feverish activity before the gripping of hands in friendship and reconciliation:

> And when the gallant band
> The beaten flames gave way,

Two grimy hands in friendship joined,
And it was Christmas Day.

This story portrays no time of peace between the squatter, Sandy Black, the stubborn Scot, and the farmer 'Old Ross' who selected, took up the water and the black soil. The Romeo and Juliet tale is of young Robert Black, racing off to fight the fire for love of Jenny Ross. His father's parting curse declares:

I'd bless the fire if it would clear
selectors from the run
.....Go if you will.....But don't come
here again!

Lawson gives us no mention of the reconciling movement that gnawed at Ross the squatter. We are left to surmise that the dark clouds from the west must have worked their healing and trans-forming power over the stubborn Scot as he enjoyed his Christmas feast; meanwhile his neighbour's farm is threatened by a bushfire and when the fire is at its worst the power of forgiveness beats in his heart.

For o'er the crackling fire he (old Ross) heard
The sound of horses feet.....
The squatter with a dozen men came
racing through the smoke.

Both these simple stories of reconciliation have the happy conclusion of forgiveness in relationships. Yet often there is a darkness in life that is not brought to the light of forgiving love. This sinfulness is part of life, we renounce it at Easter yet we are enslaved each day.

In contemporary Australian poetry we address darkness and sin in the hollow of life. Both poems entitled 'Your Shadow' by Kevin Hart, show that evil is part of us and, if we live out of the light in a tight corner, it will generate more evil.

It is the thing
beside you when you wake, the cold
sheet
as delicate as your skin.
It is the lie
hunched within each word you say.

The poems demand the single recognition that sin is part of our everyday life. They urge us to 'open our hand and see the darkness nursed there' and then prophesy its growth.

see as
your shadow blossoms
your body's very own black flower.

With this dark prediction we are given a glib reassurance not to worry.

It will not hurt you, it simply shows
that you are not alone
that what you fear is part of you
that you are both the killer and the kill.

St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that 'Sin is turning away from God, from the light, and turning towards the creature'. These poems remind us that enslavement is part of the human condition; we can accept the reality of our darkness, or flee from it. Its truth

is the side show mirror whose black
humour is all
too true.

Many people sort through their options in life and settle for a wanderer's existence among the side shows. As Christians we rejoice in Jesus Christ the light that comes into the shadows of our existence to expose the darkness of sin.

The Father of Sin

One of the difficulties in Reconciliation is the notion of sin and the need to bring to the light the darkness of our lives. The Easter remembrance of Baptismal Vows is a time when we reassert our 'rejection of Satan, and all her/his empty promises'. We reject sin in us to live in freedom as children of God, and not be totally mastered by the current enslavement of sin. We refuse to be mastered by sin, and denounce the father of sin and the prince of darkness.

Since these statements - the age-old preamble to our profession of faith - name the reality of sin, it is wonderful that we have a sacrament of Reconciliation to celebrate God's forgiveness of our sins in Christ. We live in the Holy Church of Sinners and we sin. Scripture tells us that we sin every day, and if we say we have no sin we call God a liar.

Jesus' ministry was especially exercised with the sinners. The physician is needed for the sick not for the healthy. Christ's mission and announcement of the Reign of God was especially beckoning the sinners. He charged that people were blind and paralysed who stated that they had no sin.

Entanglement and Sin

We are entangled by sin and from that web we reach toward the reign of God. Sin, we know, is the exaggerated assertion of one's own freedom in reckless disregard of the freedom of others whom God has also created. It is this gift of freedom that enables us to explore this world, our lives and our relationships. Such an exploration can lead to asserting this freedom to the detriment of the freedom of others. Our use of God's gift of freedom demands that we do not exaggerate its use nor disregard other created ones.

Sin is also a quest for pleasure in disregard of the pain of others. Our society is trivial and pleasure-conscious, but the cost-counting that must accompany our actions forces us to see what effect upon others our freedom or quests may incur. Sin is also the usurpation of power that dominates and represses others and is a rebellion against God as creator by refusing to allow others their participation in life.

We note from these descriptions of sin that the dominant theme is disregard for others. We sin in disregarding their freedom, disregarding their pain, refusing to look at the other as a creature of the loving Creator, and being blind to the domination and bullying patterns of human relationships.

In the light of these sins we note that the task of Redemption is one of overcoming bullying patterns, doing away with factions, exclusions, claims of superiority and prejudicial attitudes. We have to build up the community in which all may contribute according to their talents and receive according to their needs. So the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the ritual to which we bring our lives to remember who we are, to face Satan and bring this entanglement in sin and power to the light of Christ. Our sinfulness, we have seen, is so much related to our relationships and our abuse of others. We are so fortunate in the Catholic Church to have a rite that forgives us our sins. We recognise our mistakes and, given God's healing and transforming grace, we grow in conversion, and welcome the Reign of God.

Like Lawson's characters we have the opportunity for healing relationships, hearing words of forgiveness and receiving the touch of peace.

What of the new Order of Penance? 'The celebration of this sacrament is always an act in which the Church proclaims its faith, gives thanks to God for the freedom with which Christ has made us free, and offers its life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God's glory, as it hastens to meet the Lord Jesus' (Introduction, paragraph 7). 'The acts of the penitent in the celebration of this sacrament are of the greatest importance. When with proper dispositions he approaches this saving remedy instituted by Christ and confesses his sins, he shares by his actions in the sacrament itself; the sacrament is completed when the words of absolution are spoken by the minister in the name of Christ. Thus the faithful Christian, as he experiences and proclaims the mercy of God in his life, celebrates with the priest the liturgy by which the Church continually renews itself' (Ibid. paragraph 11).

Going to the sacrament of Penance is no longer a private action. The local Church is itself a community of conversion and reconciliation with a priority to re-awaken the sense of a Church dedicated to holiness as the context in which the individual can be converted and reconciled. Because Christian life is human life, it is a social thing - we are responsible for each other and we are not saved or damned on our own. We can drag each other down or we

can help one another to soar. This is why in our own time penitential services have been introduced.

Christian life is also a constant struggle against sin. The multiplicity of relationships generated in life - some close and important, others less so - imply a corresponding multiplicity of ways of obtaining access to penance and the forgiveness of sins. Penance is the celebration of something which has to be going on all the time.

It is important to realise also that forgiveness takes place, not because God changes, but because we change in response to his gracious call. This change is traditionally described in terms of three 'acts of the penitent', all of which find expression in the celebration of the sacrament.

1. Contrition: a turning-back to God and a repudiation of what is godless in our lives. (Contrition is essentially forward-looking, choosing God as one's future, and not backward-looking, like regret and remorse.)
2. Confession: which is a matter of acknowledging what God has done for us as well as of acknowledging that we have failed him.
3. Satisfaction: not so much a matter of compensating for the past as of taking the first step in a new life with God. The absolution, which completes the sacrament, is the effective proclamation of the sinner's reconciliation with God and the Church, and of his being once more caught up in God's unfolding plan of salvation.

The new rites are meant to assist and to structure the process of conversion and reconciliation. This is the essential, but it is easy to get bogged down in the rubrics and perplexed by the proliferation of alternatives. It is helpful to bear in mind the fundamental structure of the celebration of Penance, which is applicable to all forms of penance. First, God speaks (reading from Scripture); man responds to God's Word by listening attentively and humbly allowing it to judge his life and to call him to a life more in accordance with God's will (examination of conscience, act of contrition, confession of sins); God speaks again (absolution) reconciling sinners to himself; man, experiencing forgiveness and reconciliation, gives thanks with a short prayer or acclamatory song.

I RITE OF RECONCILIATION OF INDIVIDUAL PENITENTS

a) Reception of the Penitent
b) Reading of the Word of God (optional)
c) Confession of Sins and Acceptance of Satisfaction
d) Prayer of the Penitent and Absolution
e) Proclamation of Praise of God and Dismissal

II RITE OF RECONCILIATION OF SEVERAL PENITENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

a) Introductory Rites (Song, Greeting, Opening Prayer)
b) Celebration of the Word of God
c) Examination of Conscience
d) Rite of Reconciliation (General Confession of sins, Individual Confession and Absolution)
e) Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy
f) Concluding Rite

III RITE OF RECONCILIATION OF SEVERAL PENITENTS WITH GENERAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

As if II a) and b), then
c) Instruction
d) General Confession
e) General Absolution
f) Proclamation of Praise and Conclusion

Prayer of Absolution

God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and resurrection of his Son
has reconciled the world to himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God give you pardon and peace,
and I absolve you from your sins
in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

2. THE ANGLICAN TRADITION

Charles Sherlock

The distinctively Anglican tradition on reconciliation begins with the English Reformation. This short paper thus begins there - but it should be noted that reconciliation is interpreted in very different ways amongst contemporary Anglicans. It is also true that until quite recently the emphasis was upon the 'negative' aspects of reconciliation (pardoning sins). Emphasis on the social and/or positive aspects of reconciliation (building peace, *shalom*) - although seen as necessary consequences of forgiveness - has been the minority note until recently.

A preliminary note: in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which remains determinative for doctrine and principles of liturgy in the Anglican Church

of Australia, 'priest' means an ordained presbyter, whereas 'minister' means any Christian licensed to read or assist at public services. This distinction is observed in this paper.

Introduction

The Church of England of the Reformation period did not reject the notion that Gospel ministry entailed the absolution of sins. But it did reject the *exclusive* spiritual authority of a priest to absolve sins. Sin and its forgiveness were not seen as a private matter, but certainly were personal, the re-opening of relationship between an individual and God, with no *necessary* mediatorial ministry. However it was acknowledged that no sin is an individual matter: it affects other members of the community, especially the household of faith. Therefore the practical provision of corporate and 'mediated' forgiveness is recognised as pastorally desirable.

The fundamental principle adopted was that the preaching of the Gospel is the scriptural way by which reconciliation is administered. Such preaching takes place both 'audibly' through the reading and exposition of the Scriptures and in the use of the liturgies provided in the Prayer Book, and 'visibly' through the Gospel Sacraments and in the lives of ministers of the Gospel. This principle needs to be understood in order to appreciate the approach developed. It is grounded upon the conviction that Jesus committed the ministry of reconciliation to the *church as a whole* (Matt 16:19, 18:18, John 20:20ff are so interpreted), not to any one group within it. On the other hand, it is those who publicly minister the Gospel who are the normal ministers of reconciliation in the church (cf 2 Cor 5:12ff).

Turning to particular acts of reconciliation, it can be observed that two balancing perspectives developed - perspectives which continue to govern the practice of Anglican churches today. The one (public discipline) derived from the Calvinist side of the Reformation; the other (authoritative absolution) stems from the Lutheran side. The actual shape of Anglican practice, however, owes not a little to pre-Reformation practices (for example the formula for absolution in the Holy Communion derives from Sarum). Perhaps the distinctively Anglican approach to reconciliation lies in the combination of these three aspects of Christian tradition.

This paper therefore proceeds by analysing in turn these twin perspectives, in relation to Anglican liturgy (which continues to be Anglicanism's binding force - earnest debate about the meaning of a rubric may be unfamiliar to non-Anglicans, but it is the very stuff of traditional Anglican discussion!).

General Confession and Absolution

With the Reformed tradition, the necessity of public discipline was admitted, including the confession and absolution of sins. The priest was to

require intending communicants to give notice: if any were known to be 'an open and notorious evil liver', or where there were 'those betwixt when he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign', then he was to seek to have the offender disciplined or reconciled. The actual discipline appears to have been a matter between the curate and person(s) concerned, but any exclusions from the Communion had to be reported to the bishop within fourteen days. (These provisions have been practiced in a rather desultory manner, though still in force: they have been used in Melbourne in extreme cases of wrongdoing or immorality.) Such private discipline was not to involve intrusive personal enquiry (as Calvinist practice was perceived by many to entail).

The need for public confession and absolution was met in the first Edwardian Prayer Book (1549) by having the priest read, before the Communion was administered, an exhortation stressing the necessity for examination of life. He (or a clerk) then says a searching general confession in the name of the congregation, as part of the preparation for Communion:

A Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The priest then reads a general absolution, based on Sarum, in 'precatory' form:

B Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; have mercy upon you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(These materials were taken from the English 'Order of Communion' inserted into the Latin Mass in 1548.) This pattern of 'general' confession and absolution continued in the (re-arranged) Holy Communion service of 1552, using the same forms. In addition a different General Confession and Absolution (called by those titles) was added to the introduction to Morning

and Evening Prayer in the 1552 book. These were written by the Reformers themselves - the Absolution being in 'declaratory' form.

C Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord, And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

D Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live; and hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins: He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. Wherefore beseech we him to grant us true repentance, and his holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure, and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This last form is noteworthy for its allusion to the ministry of Ezekiel (chapters 3, 18 and 33). It is this same prophet whose ministry provided the model of priesthood for Cranmer's Ordinal - to be 'messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord'. The prayer is a Gospel preaching in miniature - and both forms C and D include an indication of the purpose of confession and absolution, that those who have received forgiveness should respond in godly living. Such emphases disclose clearly the English Reformers' distinctive views on reconciliation.

Both provisions for general confession and absolution (viz. in Holy Communion, and Morning and Evening Prayer) continued in the 1604 Book, with one small but significant change: the latter Absolution (D) is termed 'The Absolution, or Remission of sins'. In 1662 a further change was made: the word 'minister' becomes 'priest' at each case where an absolution is read publicly. Interestingly, both changes were made at the behest of Puritan Anglicans, who desired a more authoritative view of ministry than was apparent in the earlier books. In the 'definitive' Book of Common Prayer, 1662, the forms of general confession and absolution from the Holy Communion are provided in 'Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea', to be used in a time of emergency (a priest being needed for the absolution). (These

forms have continued in all succeeding Anglican books, to the best of my knowledge.)

Thus we have two forms of 'general absolution' in the tradition. One has the effect of praying for (precatory, in the second person, in Holy Communion (B)), the other that of declaring (declaratory, in the third person, in Morning and Evening Prayer (D)) God's pardon. Anglicans do not seem to sense any difference in meaning between these, however. It is significant that no form appears which would suggest that the minister concerned has a spiritual authority independent of the congregation (such as 'I absolve you'). Neither form would suggest in itself that it requires an ordained minister to read it.

Nevertheless, it is the universal practice of Anglican churches to have these forms of absolution read only by a priest/presbyter (or bishop, since 1552). These forms of absolution are omitted if such a minister is not present. (If a priest is not present for Holy Communion, the point in the service at which the absolution occurs is not reached, so it is merely an academic question in this case.) Since the mid-1800s,if a bishop or priest/presbyter is not present at Morning or Evening Prayer, the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity, or one or more of the 'Comfortable Words' from the Holy Communion service, are read by the minister leading the service:

E Merciful Lord, grant to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

F If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The 1928 Deposited Book followed these patterns, but provided for a less searching alternative confession formula in Morning and Evening Prayer, and a brief 'precatory' absolution.

G O God our Father, we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed: we have not loved thee with all our heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. Have mercy upon us, we beseech thee; cleanse us from our sins; and help us to overcome our faults; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

H May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant unto you pardon and remission of all your sins, time for amendment of life,and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Neither form had much use in liturgical practice until recently, where they have influenced modern forms. Thus the Confession used in the Second Order Holy Communion service of AAPB is close to G, with a modernised B absolution. Forms C and D (modernised) remain in AAPB First Order Morning and Evening Prayer, but (rather oddly) a modified Holy

Communion form (G) is used for confession in Second Form Evening Prayer. Form E is now printed as an alternative in Morning and Evening Prayer in AAPB.

A different but similar declaratory absolution is provided in *Another Order of Service for Prayer and the Hearing of God's Word* in AAPB, read by 'the minister'. It is interesting in that it combines elements of each Confession and Absolution form, yet does not require a priest for its use.

The minister and congregation kneel to say together this Confession

I Most merciful God, we humbly admit that we need your help. We confess that we have wandered from your way we have done wrong, and we have failed to do what is right. You alone can save us.
Have mercy upon us: wipe out our sins and teach us to forgive others. Bring forth in us the fruit of the Spirit, that we may live as disciples of Christ. This we ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

The minister stands to declare God's forgiveness

J God wills that all men should be saved and in response to his call we acknowledge our sins. He pardons those who humbly repent and truly believe the gospel. Therefore we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be blessing and honour for ever. Amen.

(NB: the word 'men' in the first line of J is not uncommonly omitted.)

To summarise: Anglicans are used to making a corporate public confession of their sins at each assembly, with a pronouncement of God's pardon by an authorised minister, usually a bishop or priest.

Two further comments should be made concerning the church year. Firstly, Anglicans are entirely at home with the rhythm of penitence and joy represented in the Advent-Christmas and especially the Lent-Easter cycles, as well as regular fasts in the Ember season. Secondly, BCP provided for a 'Commination' service on Ash Wednesday, involving a very strict act of public repentance based on the curses of Deuteronomy 28. This is rarely used today, but similar services are prevalent. These structures are less obvious in any one liturgical act, but provide a framework for reconciliation over the year.

Individual Confession and Absolution

Following the Lutheran continuation (in Reformation style) of pre-Reformation tradition, provision was also made in the Church of England for optional individual confession and absolution. It has never been Anglican practice to make such confession and absolution in any way compulsory. The

1549 Exhortation of the Negligent emphasises that both general and 'auricular and secret confession to the Priest' are acceptable, with the users of either not to despise one another. This paragraph was omitted from 1552 (perhaps to avoid any appearance of supporting Rome?), but the spirit of the section continues.

Two cases are distinguished in all the Prayer Books noted above. Firstly, anyone who felt unable to receive Holy Communion due to a bad conscience could seek out any

> discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

It should again be noted that the term 'minister' (used from 1552) did not necessarily mean a 'priest' (the term used in 1549). It could include anyone deemed to have the church's authority to minister, most often the parish priest concerned. No formula for confession in this case is provided - it has generally been understood that any suitable form of words, whether formal or informal, are appropriate.

Secondly, where a person who is near death desires to make 'a special Confession' of his/her sins, this is encouraged - along with seeking reconciliation with any whom they have offended, and making a will, paying debts etc. Again no form is provided for the confession.

As for absolution, the two cases are treated very differently. In the first case no formula for absolution is given: it is assumed that suitable personal ministry of the Gospel will suffice to relieve the person's conscience, so that they may come to Communion able to seek (and find) the forgiveness of sins. It is worth noting that this principle (that absolution is available primarily through the public Gospel means of Word and Sacrament) is further enshrined in the Communion of the Sick: such persons are urged to receive the Communion regularly in 'normal' life, so as to avoid the necessity of emergency Communion or absolution.

In the second case (absolution of the gravely ill) the Prayer Books do provide a formula, this time in direct form:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

It is a carefully phrased prayer, indicating that the 'power' (*ius* - legally binding force) to pronounce the forgiveness of sins belongs to the Church of Christ, and is administered by the priest, who has 'authority' (*auctoritas* - morally binding power) to do so, as the church's representative. It is

assumed that absolution is generally performed via the (audible and visible) proclamation of the Gospel, but that a personal formula for this is appropriate in extremis: the absolution formula is a 'sermon in microcosm'.

Since the Tractarian revival this emergency provision has become the basis for a more general use of individual confession and absolution (a return to 1549). Over the last 150 years, weekly 'auricular confession' to a priest has become the norm for a few Anglicans. For many more, occasional use of such a means of reconciliation is adopted. Many would never use it - and a few would strenuously deny its need, and assert that it is spiritually dangerous (interpreting silence in 1662 as excluding such a practice). In my experience few priests would refuse to hear a confession, but I know quite a number who never have done so.

Contemporary Practices

The first thing to be noted is the much more positive approach taken by nearly all schools within Anglicanism to reconciliation. It is no longer only a question of the 'negative' - finding forgiveness and pardon. In the liturgy this is seen especially through the Peace, re-introduced in the mid-60s,and now almost universal (with the exception of 1662-only congregations). As well, the theme of reconciliation in its missiological and social dimensions is more prominent in the Intercessions and Canon of the Holy Communion rites of AAPB and other modern forms. It has become far more prominent in teaching, and in practical action (on an ecumenical basis on many issues).

The practice of general confession and absolution at each public assembly continues: only at very informal gatherings would this not be present (in my experience). I have detailed the various provisions of AAPB, which are not untypical of other modern rites, above: the prominent feature is the much less penitential nature of congregational confessions, and the provision of some form of 'declaration of forgiveness' by non-ordained ministers. Some see the latter as having lost the sense of corporate repentance,and as confusing acknowledgement of our finiteness with confession of sin. These issues are part of on-going discussions, and cross the churchmanship barriers.

In the area of individual confession and absolution there remain significant differences over the 'spirituality' of reconciliation. The variety described above is still present. However changes do seem to be taking place: 'Anglo-Catholics' appear to be taking a less formulaic approach (no doubt influenced by Vatican II), and some 'Evangelicals' have come to use such techniques as 'Prayer Counselling' (which could be seen as confession and absolution, disguised in pentecostal dress). Some would see 'Charismatic' Anglicans as giving far too little space to the need for repentance, yet

tending to new legalism in discipline: others would see them as re-discovering a biblical note of Christian freedom and holiness.

Clergy practice is also varying. The experience of war led many chaplains into contact with the need for individual confession and absolution. Growing trust between those who discern a common commitment to a solid Gospel of grace - whatever the churchmanship - is meaning a greater willingness to hear confessions formally by 'Evangelicals', and a less formal approach (including extempore prayer) by 'Anglo-Catholics'. There would still be quite a number of priests who would not administer individual absolution (except perhaps in extremis), and others who would find it difficult to function except through set procedures and formulae.

But the whole matter is now placed in a new light, as we move from seeking to implement pastoral care in a 'Christendom' environment, to preaching a Gospel of reconciliation in a violent and often uncaring society. And that task has scarcely a distinctively 'Anglican' role: it is surely an ecumenical, charismatic, evangelical and catholic necessity.

3. THE UNITING CHURCH

Robert Gribben

More historical background to the Uniting Church 'rites of reconciliation' is needed than may first meet the eye: for I am one who does not think the chief feature of the UCA is its newness (or worse: novelty). I commend to you the paper from Brixen in Studia Liturgica 18/1, 1988, by my former liturgical teacher, Raymond George: 'The ministry of Reconciliation in the Evangelical Tradition', in which he has included Calvin.

For what the Uniting Church has provided in 'A Service of Reconciliation' in its new worship book, *Uniting in Worship*, must be seen against the background of the Reformed and Evangelical traditions from which we sprang, and in some very important ways, from the Catholic and Anglican traditions as well. The latter was particularly influential in some Methodist circles prior to union. Methodism, in fact, had one of the most direct 'confessionals' of the Protestant traditions - in the small 'bands' of the original Wesleyan network. They were group confessionals, where every member, on joining, had to consent to be 'told all his sins, and that plain and home'. And anything mentioned in that small cell was confidential - there was even a phrase in Methodist circles until recent times, that if something was told 'in band', it was secret.

The work of Fr. Max Thurian, in his monumental pamphlet *Confession* ET 1958, in the renewed practice of the ecumenical community of Taize, and through his hand in the Lima liturgy, is perhaps one of the most direct sources of what we have tried to do in the Uniting Church. The Iona

Community of the Church of Scotland similarly re-instituted the practice of personal confession, and there is a pamphlet arguing the case by its founder, George MacLeod (*The Church of Scotland and the Confessional*, no date, Glasgow). But we do not lack historical precedents for rites of reconciliation, even if we are initially a little uncomfortable with the terminology.

The Ministry of the Word

The UCA and its constituent churches prior to 1977 certainly had not published official forms for a rite of reconciliation (not even under another name!). But since we are sinners, the need is there, and we were reconciled to God and to each other. In our tradition the 'sacramental' power of preaching cannot be under-estimated (though it is less believed and practiced now). That is, the preaching of the Gospel itself brings judgement and offers grace. Many a sermon ended with a prayer for forgiveness, and with an assurance of pardon on the basis of the Gospel.

In the Uniting Church, the ministry of reconciliation is part of the Ministry of the Word. I mean that both in the sense that its ultimate source is the Gospel itself, and in that curious title the Uniting Church gave its presbyters: 'Ministers of the Word'. It is a title which embraces, and does not intend to exclude, the Ministry of the Sacraments, which are the 'visible Word' of Augustine and others. Because the ministry of the Word is founded on the Gospel, it is exercised by all Christians in the general sense (and in Reformed theology, based on the 'priesthood of all believers'), and we acknowledge that it may be exercised by any Christian in specific cases of the need for confession and assurance of forgiveness. But the ordained are the ordinary stewards of this grace.

Calvin puts it with characteristic precision:

> But when it is a matter of the keys, we must always beware lest we dream up some power separate from the preaching of the gospel.....we shall see that any right of binding or loosing which Christ conferred upon his church is bound to the Word. This is especially true in the ministry of the keys, whose entire power rests in the fact that, through those whom the Lord has ordained, the grace of the gospel is publicly and privately sealed in the hearts of the believers.
>
> [Institutes, III, iv, 14]

This whole section of the Institutes (paras 12-14) should be consulted on the ministry which Calvin commends and teaches. But because the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are 'the Word made visible', they too proclaim forgiveness - but there is no space to explore this.

The General Confession

Usually early in the service there has been a prayer of confession, and this has been followed by a 'Declaration of Forgiveness' (or some such title). Few declarations match Calvin's (prior to 1542 when the godly magistrates of Geneva restrained him):

> To all those who repent in this wise, and look to Jesus Christ for their salvation, I declare the absolution of sins is effected, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This form is still found in the present French and Swiss Reformed liturgies, and Max Thurian put something very like it in the Lima liturgy. But given the disciplines of 'fencing the table' and excommunication itself in the early Reformed (and later Scottish) churches, this corporate absolution was a serious reconciling rite.

In the Service of the Lord's Day, the basic Sunday liturgy in *Uniting in Worship* (1988), the absolution is preceded by a quotation from scripture - a 'comfortable word' - and then the minister (who may be a lay preacher) may say:

> Hear Christ's word of grace to us:
> Your sins are forgiven.

The form was suggested by the Rev'd David Tripp, Ecumenical Lecturer in Liturgy at Lincoln Theological College, UK, and nicely avoids most of the problems in our tradition about (a) declaratory absolution and (b) the need of the minister to receive absolution even as he/she pronounces it to the people.

Personal Confession

There is a general prejudice against private confession in the Protestant traditions (I exclude Lutheranism). It arises from an historical fear of priestly power, echoes of medieval abuses. More positively, it is based on the strong evangelical Protestant conviction that a sinner stands alone before God, and that Jesus Christ, the only mediator, is the link of the individual soul and God, without any other human intermediary. So, in private prayer, confession would form a staple, and at the end of an examination of conscience, the believer would claim for him or herself the promises of the Gospel for those who repent and believe. (John Wesley provided long lists of questions for examination of conscience each day.) Obviously a great deal more needs to be said about the communal nature of such an act.

The New Provisions

Why then a new service? Partly because in the post-Freudian age or possibly in the current passion for pseudo-psychology and the spilling of personal feelings in public, the Uniting Church recognises by listing such a service

that there are good and godly ways of going about reconciliation. There are many ministers who have exercised this ministry for years without a manual, myself included. But ministers and people seem now to need 'permission' to avail themselves of a more direct and tangible rite. That is, for many, private confession and self-absolution (as it were) are not enough. There are matters which need more direct and personal pastoral care and counsel. And here is a service for that, published with the Assembly's imprimatur to assure our people that it is possible to do this and still be faithful to the theology of Calvin, Wesley, and the *Basis of Union*.

It is worth noting that there are two linked new liturgies in *Uniting in Worship*: a Service of Healing, and a Service of Reconciliation.

The former service takes seriously the multi-faceted nature of reconciliation - not only the individual and God, but for two individuals (for instance, in a marriage relationship) and for groups and communities. (On this latter point, it is worth reiterating Fr. Robert Taft's observation of the important ecumenical urgency of this issue: that disunity is a sin which requires reconciliation.)

The reconciliation rite begins with a series of notes to guide ministers and to safeguard doctrine.

e.g. v. Care should be taken to ensure that the minister does not take up a position (sc. physical) that makes it appear as if confession is being made *to* another person. It is being made *in the presence* of another who is also in need of reconciliation. The one who declares forgiveness does so as a servant of God. God alone forgives and makes whole.

The order is simply:

ACT OF CONFESSION
DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS
THE PEACE

The Act of Confession is spelled out as follows:

The one making confession says:
Lord,
purify me with the fire of the Holy Spirit,
so that I may serve you
with a pure and trusting heart.
Silence may be kept for a time.
I confess to almighty God,
in the communion of saints in heaven and earth,
and before you, my brother/sister,
that I have sinned,
Here specific things for which forgiveness is sought may be confessed.

The minister may ask questions and speak words of encouragement.
The one making confession then says:
My sins weigh me down;
but my confidence is in the Lord Jesus Christ
who has taken upon himself the burden of my sin.
I ask you, my brother/sister,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.
Free prayer is offered.
The DECLARATION is prefaced by suitable verses of scripture and then the minister says:
Our Lord Jesus Christ forgives your offences
and releases you from your burden of guilt.
By his authority,
I declare the forgiveness of your sins.
You are free:
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
And the greeting of peace follows.

Those of you who know the Taize liturgy will recognise parts of this; though it bears some original Uniting Church touches. It shows a sensitivity to the psychological language which is part of this whole transaction ('You are free:') but brings the whole into the ambit of the Gospel.

And since this paper is being given on the very eve of the ter-centenary of John Bunyan's death, I can hardly forbear to observe that the whole matter may be found perfectly set forth in the language of Calvin and the Puritans in Bunyan's account of the release of Christian from his burden at the cross in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. And John Bunyan's last journey through the rain which hastened his death in August 1688 was in fact to bring about reconciliation in a family.

So, new provision this may be, but it should be profoundly familiar to any pastor of the Protestant tradition.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

ECUMENICAL LITURGICAL CENTRE

When the journal *Studia Liturgica* first appeared in the sixties a small ecumenical group of clergy in Melbourne gathered together to discuss the new issues that were emerging through its pages. Among them were Harold Leatherland (Congregationalist), Austin James (Methodist), Greg Manly, CP (Catholic), and Barry Marshal (Anglican). Under the direction of Harold Leatherland, and based on the Congregational Training College in Kew (Melbourne), the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre emerged as a group of clergy and lay people interested in the study of liturgy as an ecumenical enterprise. Meetings became more broadly based and lecture series were run as the Churches turned to liturgical renewal through the revision of rites which had begun in all the major denominations at that time. Liturgy was quite a popular topic in church circles. In the early seventies the ELC was one of the few places where these matters were discussed at an ecumenical level. That was its purpose and that was its great (and ground-breaking) achievement.

In the early seventies a lectureship was set up by the ELC to honour Austin James. Since then, this (almost) annual event has seen some important lectures given:- Evan Burge: Eucharist and Sacrifice (1975), Greg Manly: Liturgical Formation: a praying need (1977), David Frost: The place of Psalms in Christian Worship (1979), Gerard Austin: Confirmation - an ecumenical overview (1982), Geoffrey Wainwright: Divided by a common language? (1985).

When Harold Leatherland died in 1976, Robert Gribben became the new director. As almost his first task, he organised a Memorial Fund for Leatherland. The ELC had inherited Leatherland's extensive library and part of the purpose of the Fund was to build on the library, and also to provide an exhibition prize to students of liturgy for an annual essay and, when funds permitted, grants for research, and travelling and publication of that research. These activities have continued to the present time.

Robert Gribben went to the UK in 1980 and Patrick Bishop, SJ took over the helm for a short time before he, too, left Melbourne. The present writer became Director in 1980. This decade has seen a considerable decline in the general interest in liturgy, partly because it is no longer a 'new' thing and partly because of the general raising of awareness of liturgy. Perhaps this last is wishful thinking, but it would seem that that is how most people perceive the situation. During this time the ELC has continued to offer the Austin James Lecture, the Exhibition Prize and has maintained and extended the library, and made the odd grant for research/travel. A number of courses have been sponsored.

About three years ago it became obvious that the emerging AAL was concerned with the same matters and areas as the ELC. The Council began to negotiate with AAL about the possibility of merging the two structures. In Victoria both groups included many of the same people. These negotiations came to fruition in 1988 when it was agreed that ELC members be invited to join AAL, that the management of the Leatherland Fund (held jointly with the Melbourne College of Divinity) be taken over by the Victorian Chapter of AAL, that this chapter take over the Austin James Lecture, and that the research grant be made available to members of AAL. The library has been housed in the Joint Theological Library at Ormond College, University of Melbourne. The ELC has ceased to exist from early 1989.

For those of us who have been involved with the ELC over the years, its closure brings some sadness. It is, however, in the best interests of the promotion of the whole field of liturgical study and interest. The ELC has always been committed to the ecumenical task and sees that AAL is also committed to this. The amalgamation can only further the cause.

Ron Dowling.

SANTA MARIA CENTRE

SMC, located at Northcote, a northern working-class suburb of Melbourne, is in the early stages of development as a centre for Liturgy, the Arts and Adult Education. Part of the convent building which is the home of a community of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan will be used as the Centre facility.

The vision for the Centre was arrived at after extensive consultation with the sisters of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, regarding the future use of the convent space which had formerly housed a much larger community. Advice was also sought from the directors of diocesan bodies such as the Centre for Adult Education, the Office for Pastoral Planning and the Liturgical Centre. The Archbishop of Melbourne, T.F. Little, was also a part of this process.

The consultation repeatedly drew attention to the fact that the Sisters of the Good Samaritan belong to the Benedictine tradition, one which has always treasured and promoted the Church's liturgy. It seemed appropriate then that the Centre take a direction which would promote and offer opportunities to experience good liturgical practice, and which would also provide an ongoing education in liturgy consonant with the vision and practice of the Church. Already, Lenten and Advent Evening Prayer has been opened to the wider community, along with special liturgies such as the Great Paschal Vespers and a Vigil Service for Pentecost. Future plans

include the introduction of an Evening Prayer for Youth which might be celebrated seasonally and the gradual introduction to lay people of the Liturgy of the Hours as the Church's daily rhythm of prayer.

A commitment to Adult Education was also mandated by the consultation. In seeking to respond to the call and needs of the post Vatican II Australian church, this was seen to be in ready continuity with our valued tradition in education in Australia.

The commencement of the venture coincided with a Forum for Artists and Architects held at Santa Maria (August 1988) and which was occasioned by a visit to Australia by Fr Sean Swayne and Mr Christopher Ryan (sculptor), both of whom are widely acknowledged for the significant part which they have played in the development and promotion of liturgy and the arts in Ireland. This proved to be an event which gave further direction to the Centre. It is planned that artists and architects will continue to gather at the Centre for dialogue and support, and to be formed in the Church's vision of liturgy - both its theology and practice - so that they may serve the churches creatively and faithfully.

A welcome offshoot of this has been the interest shown by musicians who are involved at varying levels in the promotion of Church music, and who are mindful of the significant part music plays in the liturgy. An Open Forum is planned in the near future, the purpose of which is to look at the possibility of establishing regular workshops as a means of support and stimulation for those interested in liturgical music.

So that the vision for the Centre could be implemented, it was considered necessary that there be a resident community which would be committed to its direction and which would readily offer hospitality to those who come to pray or to use the facility. At present, the Centre community comprises sisters, but it is envisaged that lay people be welcomed to participate as members in the life and mission of the community.

The Sisters hope that, as Santa Maria develops, it will truly be for the Church of Melbourne a 'Centre of Inspiration'.

Margaret Smith SGS.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES WORKSHOP: WORSHIP, MUSIC AND THE ARTS.

Melbourne was the fortunate venue for an enthralling workshop on worship, music and the arts, held at Trinity College, University of Melbourne from 30 January to 8 February 1989. Whilst all the input was very valuable the richest resource was indeed the presence of so many people of faith from wide-ranging backgrounds and diverse cultures.

We have the World Council of Churches in co-operation with the Australian Council of Churches, the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and the Pacific Conference of Churches to thank for creating this wonderful amalgam of creative artists. No one could have participated in this event without being challenged to consider the whole question of indigenisation and the liturgy since the arts so directly impinge on this area. There we were, for the most part strangers to one another, not only observing cultural differences in the external expression of worship but involving ourselves to the best of our ability in identifying with these expressions. At times this meant singing in languages that were utterly foreign to our experience or using symbolic movement or gesture that was not within our vocabulary for worship. This had a most freeing effect on one's whole perception of praying the liturgy and at the same time gave one a strong sense of bonding with the aspirations and longings of the heart of strangers-become-friends, companions in faith. We were fifty five fellow travellers (20 from Australia) led by expert animateurs from such wide-ranging places as Canada, Zimbabwe, Geneva, Manila, Yugoslavia, Argentina.

The task of the workshop was two-fold - sharing the various musical styles and insights of the different churches in this region of the globe and creating new liturgical music by way of preparation for the WCC Assembly in Canberra in 1991. The programme was organised to fulfil these purposes by providing a few key addresses followed by 10 minute theological reflections teasing out a few themes from the papers; presentations from various churches in their regional areas of the current state of repertoire and practice; elective workshops on field of interest and expertise.

Involvement in the organisation restricted my participation in some of the programme but I can speak personally on the exciting experience of working alongside truly creative and talented people on texts for hymns. Led by Colin Gibson, a Professor of English from Dunedin, New Zealand, and a most cheerful and generous Christian whose simplicity and consideration was felt by many in the workshop, we set to work on a text from Ezekiel (37:1-14). Another well-known hymnologist from New Zealand, Shirley Murray, came up with a basic idea which was worked over by the group. It was a study in the refining power of sensitive artists, some of whom were accustomed to writing their own texts, others drawing on material from outside. Much time was spent on adding and deleting articles, experimenting with different prepositions. When the text had been pared to the satisfaction of the group it took on the vesture of song by courtesy of I-to-Loh, the Taiwanese musicologist and pastor from the Philippines-based Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music. In a flash he had a delicate melody to wrap around the words and in canon over an ostinato. One emerged from the workshop a little

intoxicated with the speed, intimacy and joy of both product and process. Since composition is so personal a thing I was truly surprised by both the fact that it happened and the way that it happened. There must be some valuable insight to gain from this experience where composition for the church is concerned.

The influence of the animateurs, the experience of openness in the workshops and the stimulating of the imagination by the interaction with such richly endowed musicians, writers, liturgists etc. from, at times, starkly different backgrounds and cultures all contributed to the incredible final liturgy on the theme: *Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the whole creation.* The wall hanging symbolising the creative power of the Holy Spirit in the elements of fire, water, earth and wind, inspiring all in a united community of praise was typical of the whole liturgy. It brought together widely different interpretations. Should this not be the experience of the onlooker when our prayerful efforts are beamed across the nation on ABC TV on Pentecost Sunday we can only respond that this liturgy came out of the lived experience of a unique group who, by the grace of God, were thrown together in the 6th WCC Workshop to their lasting gratitude and reward.

Deirdre Brown IBVM.

BOOK REVIEWS

UNITING IN WORSHIP: LEADER'S BOOK
(Uniting Church Press, Melbourne 1988, 674pp)

This beautifully presented book is offered to the Uniting Church in Australia as a repository of resources for worship. It is to be used in tandem with a *People's Book* which runs to 362 pages.

Some initial impressions of this book were gained at a recent meeting of our own Commission. The question often arose, 'what does *Uniting in Worship* do at this stage?' We were impressed with what we found. Its authors have served their church well. Indeed, this book will make its impact felt well beyond the walls of its parent church.

In order to make a responsible review, it is necessary to be critical. Whatever I say does not reduce the admiration already expressed. I shall write as I would speak if I were sitting at a round table in discussion. The disadvantage for the readers is that they cannot hear the answers given by others to the questions and criticisms raised. One must be careful not only to examine what a service says (including the fine-print of safeguards and conditions) but what the service may imply to those who use it. In liturgy, one looks for truth in content, clarity in expression, coherent sequence of ideas and consistency in flow of language. There is always the risk with a committee that there will be gaps and steps in style. The questions is, how does *Uniting in Worship* measure up to this examination?

The book begins with **Baptism**. That comes as a surprise to an Anglican who is accustomed to opening his book at the in-house service of Morning Prayer. Too often the sacrament of baptism is hidden away in a discreet corner, but *Uniting in Worship* puts it at the front door. The notes are full and helpful. The corporate responsibility of the congregation is stressed. Practical matters such as the comparative values of immersion, pouring or sprinkling (shades of Dr Chasuble) and the size and place of the font are set out clearly.

It is interesting that the choice of lections in note xvii on p.16 omit any baptism narratives and studiously omit the story of the children who were almost turned away by the disciples. It is surprising to see Acts 8:14-17 here. The Anglican Deposited Prayer Book of 1928 used this at Confirmation, though most would now think it unhelpful to do so.

There is a problem with the sequence of ideas at 4 on p.20. The minister refers to our 'obeying the word of the Lord Jesus' but does not explain what that word is. (It is presumably the first reading at 3 on p.17, but much could happen between that and 4 on p.20.)Furthermore, the three paragraphs in this section seem to display unevenness in style. The rhythm of the third

paragraph is loose, and the rather low key reference to 'confirmation' seems to lack confidence.

The flood prayer at 6 on p.23 begins superbly, but those who do not feel that an aqua-epiclesis is necessary will be uncomfortable. The alternative version of this prayer on p.24 is brief and colourless.

The baptism at 7 on p.24 requires the candidate to be dipped thrice or to have water poured thrice. Whilst ancient precedent can be claimed for this, it does seem strange to require this in the rubric. Surely 'may' could have been used instead of 'is'.

The Laying on of Hands at 9 on p.26 has the Isaiah 11 prayer beautifully reworked. However, does the reference to 'witness' in the first paragraph on p.27 imply that one does not become a witness until after the laying on of hands?

In the **Baptism of a Child**, it seems strange that the title Renunciation and Affirmation is used at 5 on p.37 when no such questions are asked. It is a delicate matter choosing appropriate questions to ask parents, but the questions provided here do seem inadequate. The word to the child on p.42 is a nice touch, but the content and style seem heavy and ecclesiastical. The punchline in context may be incomprehensible.

I question the felicity of the grammar in the Post Baptismal Prayer at 9 on p.45. Would the fourth line be improved if 'could' were to take the place of 'can'? The final line of this first paragraph seems to doubt the effectiveness of baptism by using the word 'become'. The first line of the second paragraph refers to God's 'goodness' without any indication as to what this means. The third paragraph would benefit by the use of one or two additional fullstops.

The **Reaffirmation of Baptism** will be a valuable service. However, the actual Reaffirmation of Baptism at 2 on p.51 asks questions that were not asked at the baptism. How can this be 'reaffirmation'? The recollection of baptism at 3 on p.54 is creative, but will the use of the sign of the cross overstress its significance at baptism? In recollecting one's baptism, there is no reference to the washing that happened apart from a mute pouring. The prayer of Richard of Chichester is beautifully used here.

Personal Reaffirmation is a wise contemporary provision which is sure to be considered by other churches. In line 3 of the minister's welcome, perhaps the verb could be 're-commit' rather than 'commit'.

As with the previous service, one can imagine other churches using the **Covenant Service** on an annual basis. The form of confession and absolution at 63 on p.68 is particularly commendable. On p.72 in the third paragraph of the minister's part, he suggests that we could 'renew' the Covenant. Does this denigrate God's commitment?

The **Service of the Lord's Day** is preceded by thoughtful notes about the position of the presiding minister, the style of bread to be used, the bible

version preferred and the re-discovery of silence. It is interesting to note that the manual acts and words of institution are still regarded as mandatory.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving which begins on p.93 has an invariable preface to the Sanctus. 'And so we praise' seems to be something of a straight-jacket and rarely works without a seasonal thanksgiving. The problem is 'and *so*'. The range of texts offered for this prayer should give adequate scope. The varying approach to epiclesis is interesting to observe. However, 'Pour out the Holy Spirit' on p.103 seems to come from nowhere. The offering of ourselves becomes part of this prayer on p.108. Such structure was thought to be dangerous between 1549 and 1552.

The form of prayer on p.109 starts so well but falls off at the turn of the page. The Christocentric form of the prayer on p.114 also starts splendidly but then comes the intrusion of church words like 'bondage' and 'pilgrimage'. I am interested that someone had inside information as to the exact form of thanks which Jesus used on the last night according to p.115. Some might feel the offering of bread and wine on p.116 is unwise. There is a splendid gospel rehearsal on p.123. If this thanksgiving were used, the Creed might be unnecessary.

One notes that there is no explicit provision for naming the recipients in the words of administration. One must protest at the ugly infelicity of 'anchor' on p.129. To take a beautiful prayer and then spoil it by changing one word is a tragic mistake.

There are many fine ideas in the **Marriage Service**, but the text is uneven in words and rhythm.

The **Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child** is relevant, contemporary, coherent, and satisfying.

The **Service of Healing** makes a thoughtful contribution in an important area, but the last line on p.418 contains a touch of jarring 'clergy-speak' where we find 'life situation'.

The modernisation of Newman's prayer on p.489 seems to lose the charm of this piece of Victoriana. Perhaps some things cannot be modernised.

The detailed criticisms set out above are meant to be constructive. The book contains so much that is good that it deserves such close examination. I tend to think that, in the future, it could be pruned back in size. This would help its users and will allow some of the weaker alternatives to be eliminated.

Having said all that, one must say that *Uniting in Worship* has been prepared carefully. The work of the Commission has been characterised by a responsible openness to comments and reactions. Its protagonists have taken part in a broad range of liturgical consultations. Their thoroughness can only be admired.

Lawrence Bartlett

TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

A Bicentenary Revision of the Book of Common Prayer brought to NSW in 1788. PART ONE. Morning and Evening Prayer and the Litany and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion by John Bunyan Sydney: Broad Churchman Series, PO Box 9 Chester Hill 2162. Pp 128, $1.90 in NSW, $2.25 in other states

In the preface the author justifies this volume by referring to 'the many who greatly value the Book of Common Prayer and seek to ensure its continued use in the Australian Church,' but 'who would welcome some revision as well'.

The operative word in the title would seem to be 'Towards', as I cannot see the present edition (limited anyway to 1,000 copies) being at all easy to handle in the pew, even for experimental purposes. It is printed on A4 paper with, on the right hand pages, suggested revisions of Morning Prayer, Litany, Holy Communion and Evening Prayer (in that order), and, on the left hand pages, 'alternative forms' including *inter alia* metrical psalms (ancient and modern) and Latin forms for choral singing (the author's expression).

The work is clearly very much a 'one man's revision' and might perhaps be better entitled 'An anthology of favourite forms'. Like Cranmer the author has raided many sources (of course after four hundred and more years more material is available). For example, an offertory prayer is brought from the Coronation Service, while near the end of the book we find a hymn by Ernest Merrington (1922), either written for, or regarded as suitable for, Australia.

On p.44a the Latin title of the old Compline hymn is given as *Te lucis terminum*, omitting the *ante* before *terminum*, or rather *termi<u>m</u>um* (as it actually appears, and the same two mistakes appear in the table of contents on p.vi), suggesting that God is the end of the light! On p.24b the Greek/Latin form of the Trisagion includes not only ισχρυος for ισχυρος but also the very strange form ελειτσον υμας which can only mean 'Have mercy on you'! The Latin of the Sanctus and Benedictus on p.31 comes, I take it, from the Sarum missal, as it is different from the well known Roman form. On p.7b there is the rubric: 'Then may be read THE FIRST LESSON from the Hebrew or the Greek Old Testament'. I thought at first that the author must have a remarkably well educated congregation in mind, but I have now concluded this is meant to be a subtle way of saying: 'From the Old Testament or from the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books'.

PART TWO is said to be nearing completion. It will include the Collects, additional prayers ('all finely written'!), lectionary, calendar, and an extensive list of commemorations.

There is no doubt that the work is the result of a life's interest in and devotion to liturgy and the 1662 book in particular, but I doubt whether so much should be crammed into any prayer book. To quote from the Preface to the 1549 book (which reappears as *Concerning the Service of the Church* in 1662): The book is said to be 'commodious, both for the shortness thereof, and for the plainness of the order, and for the Rules that be few and easy'. Unfortunately, however much the author admires the historic Anglican books, this statement could not be made about his own work.

Edmund Randall

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INDEX TO VOLUME ONE
[Part 1: pp 1-37. Part 2: pp 38-83. Part 3: pp 84-133.
Part 4: pp 134-182.]

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