



AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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Editorial

The life of the Academy has three main foci. The first is the national conference. This is where the main work of the Academy and the interaction of members take place. However, because of the tyranny of distance and the difficulty in finding a time which suits everyone, the attendance at any conference is less than 20% of members. Given this and the relative infrequency of the conference (about once every 18 months), its effectiveness is limited. The second focus is the activities of the Chapters. The effectiveness of the Chapters seems to rise and fall and, by their nature, they are limited to a small proportion of the Academy members each. It is, therefore, an important function of the third focus, the journal, to facilitate and complement the work of the conference and Chapter meetings. To this end, this issue includes a composite article as background and preparation for the next conference – to be held in Adelaide next January. Chapters too are working on the topic of liturgical inculturation in Australia. I hope to publish in the next issue the papers from the conference. In this way, not only is the work of the conference facilitated, but more members (and other readers) are enabled to have some share in study of the conference topic.

The other articles in this issue fulfil the wider purpose of this journal, viz. to provide scholarly and practical discussion of liturgical matters. Professor Chryssavgis, an Australian now working in the USA, continues to open up Orthodox life and liturgy for those not of the Orthodox tradition. Professor Clyde looks at *A Prayer Book for Australia* through the eyes of a linguist. Mr Dawson concludes his discussion of confirmation in the Methodist Church in New Zealand (part 1 of this article appeared in AJL 5/2 October 1995).

This issue of AJL completes ten years of the journal. A decade might not be long when compared with the life of some journals, but many a publication has fallen by the wayside before reaching ten years. I would like to acknowledge the help of various assistant editors and members of editorial panels over this period and particularly Fr John Baumgardner. John has been responsible for typesetting, design and seeing-through-the-printer since the beginning of volume 2 (May 1989). In the next issue there will be some review of ten years of AJL and a cumulative ten-year index.

RWH

Strathmore Vicarage

Michaelmas 1996

Contents

Liturgical Inculturation in Australia		
Introduction <i>R. Wesley Hartley</i>	189	
National Liturgical Music Convention <i>Joe Doolan</i>	191	
National Council of Churches <i>Gillian Hunt</i>	194	
Beatification of Mary Mackillop <i>Carmel Pilcher rsj</i>	196	
Anglican General Synod <i>John W. Stewart</i>	199	
The Liturgy of the Orthodox Church		
<i>John Chryssavgis</i>	201	
Language fit for God?		
<i>Michael Clyne</i>	217	
In Search of Meaning		
<i>Brian R. Dawson</i>	227	
Book Review		
The Word in the Desert		
<i>Evan L. Burge</i>	239	
News & Information		
Studies in Liturgy		
<i>Russell H. Hardiman</i>	246	
Contributors		248

Liturgical Inculturation in Australia

Some recent use of the Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony

INTRODUCTION

R. Wesley Hartley

Recent interest in the question of the liturgical inculturation in Australia led to this being chosen as the topic for the Academy's national conference in Adelaide in January 1997. A particular focus will be the use of Aboriginal smoking ceremonies as part of or in relation to Christian liturgy. As background to the conference (and for the general interest of readers) I have gathered reports of four recent occasions on which an Aboriginal smoking ceremony has been used at some major liturgical event. I am grateful to those who have written the reports and to those people who were their consultants.

The four people writing the reports are non-Aboriginal, as I am myself. We are careful to note the limits of what we are doing. We are reporting: giving an account of the events themselves and the preparation for the events, and also passing on what Aboriginal people have told us. The process for gathering the information for this article drew my attention to a particular cultural difference. Aboriginal people tend more to want to talk about the matter, to tell stories, to "sit around the camp fire". Non-Aboriginals seem more inclined to write it down. We have tried to make the most of both these tendencies. The writers have first listened to what the Aboriginal people are saying and then have written their reports.

The various Chapters of the Academy have been undertaking a study of enculturation as preparation for the conference. The Victoria Chapter invited Vicki Walker from the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Melbourne to talk with the members at the September meeting. Some of what Vicki told us will help give a perspective to our discussion. Vicki told us: "One of our elders, Deacon Boniface, calls the Catholic faith the 'new way' and Aboriginal religion the 'old way'. Aboriginal people had a relation with the Creator Spirit thousands of years before Abraham."

The importance of ceremonies to Aboriginal people must be realised by all who seek to understand the ceremonies. The use of Aboriginal ceremonies in relation to Christian liturgy is as much a novelty for Aboriginal people as it is for others, and Aboriginal people are proceeding with caution into this area with

much consultation. It is of the utmost importance that non-Aboriginal people realise that Aboriginal ceremonies belong to the Aboriginal people. There should be no attempt to take them over. Among Aboriginal people ceremonies can only be done when there is the promise to treat them with great respect. Nothing less can be expected of non-Aboriginals as they study or experience these ceremonies.

Vicki Walker said to the Victoria Chapter: "Ceremonies tell us who we are. They are more than a re-enactment of a past event at which we are merely spectators. If our ceremonies die, we die. This is the experience of our people. Many of us have lost our law, our land and our language. Some say our greatest loss is the loss of ceremony."

In reply to a question about what advice she would give to liturgical scholars undertaking this study of liturgical inculturation in Australia, Vicki replied:

1. Know the history.
2. Build up a relationship – get an Aboriginal friend.
3. Listen to the Aboriginal people – sit around the camp fire.
4. Give Aboriginal people the freedom to be themselves, to be unique, different.

One of the earliest major national occasions in which an Aboriginal smoking ceremony was used in relation to Christian worship was at an ecumenical service in Canberra on the evening of 25 January 1988. Outside St Christopher's Cathedral as preparation for the smoking ceremony, the commentator said:

On this day 200 years ago, the longest period of isolation, the longest period of land occupation by one group of people, came to an end. Aboriginal people will today be remembering the impact of new people arriving in this land. They will remember their people who have fallen and the suffering that has occurred over the last 200 years and are looking towards the future for justice, freedom and hope. The Aboriginal people are inviting us to dialogue, to listen to what they have to say, to respond to the injustices denied to a nation of people, to learn how, with them, to continue existing on this land, their mother, as caretakers for the next 50,000 years.

Aboriginal people, for worship, never approach sacred, spiritual places without preparing themselves properly. Not only is the mind prepared by cleansing it of wrongful thoughts, but they also speak to the spirit, saying that they are preparing for ceremony and ask for approval. The body is also prepared by cleansing and painting. The cleansing is done by purification by smoke which comes from fire – the cleansing force in the land.

For most people, the mention of fire causes a response of disaster, as bush fire devastates and destroys our bush, our undergrowth and not infrequently our homes and even human life.

Fire is also a source of heat and comfort. To gather around a fire is often the time for discussion, for storytelling, for decision, for singing and laughter, for peace and joy.

Fire is a sign and source of purification. Not long after the land has been devastated by fire, there is evidence of new life, new growth. To walk through the smoke of a fire is to walk from capture to freedom.

Thus we begin our ceremony this evening gathered around the fire, a sign of oneness and peace, a sign of hope for the future in talking, laughing, singing and making decisions in a spirit of justice and truth.

The accounts of four more recent occasions follow: two Roman Catholic, one Anglican, and one ecumenical.

NATIONAL LITURGICAL MUSIC CONVENTION

Melbourne, April 1993

Joe Doolan

The Catholic Diocesan Liturgical Commission, planned in the late 80's to hold a National Liturgical Music Convention in Melbourne early in 1993. A large international gathering of lecturers, scholars and practitioners of liturgy assembled for the week. The Convention had a clear ecumenical focus and was conducted at the World Congress Centre.

The Opening Ceremony for the Convention was a Sunday afternoon Eucharist held on the banks of the Yarra River, and led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We were welcomed by representatives of the local Wurundjeri Tribe, and the Eucharist was celebrated by the Most Revd Raymond C. Benjamin of Townsville, a bishop well acquainted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rituals.

The month leading up to this Opening Ceremony was very pressured for this gathering liturgy had an interesting ritual juggle to execute.

The broad question was simple: How do you bond International and interstate visitors, representatives from other Christian Churches, as well as blending the many representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The easiest task was getting different representatives of these communities to process with the gifts for the Eucharist, lead music, and celebrate the various ministries. The most difficult negotiation was the Smoking Ceremony. At that time, (you'll notice that this concern has changed, in virtue of the Mary MacKillop celebration

at Randwick) the Catholic theologians were extremely hesitant about placing an Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony within the context of a Catholic Eucharist. The ruling given was that the Smoking Ceremony could only be celebrated as the processional group, Bishop, Deacons and Ministers proceeded to the sanctuary; the Mass would start with the Opening Song and Sign of the Cross after that Smoking Ceremony.

The representatives on the planning group could not understand why an Aboriginal gesture of welcome could not be incorporated into our Catholic prayer, but had to be placed before the Sign of the Cross. The local authority was intransigent upon this point despite the assurances by Bishop Benjamin that he had many times included a Smoking Ceremony in Eucharist. One can only surmise that the high profile visitors at this international gathering raised the stakes of the ceremony and called for caution, rather than accommodation. It was during this stalemate that I was invited to assist with the very late crafting of the celebration.

The Mass went very smoothly; a half forty-four gallon drum was filled with coals and lit. Prior to the Entrance Procession, fresh gum leaves were placed on the coals as the processional group entered the assembly (more than 4,000 had gathered). The Group circled the smoking drum two or three times, taking the smoke into themselves and their vestments, a regular ritual of welcome amongst many Aboriginal tribes. The group then processed onto the pontoon or sanctuary, floating on the Yarra, for the celebration. The smoking drum was quickly removed by four bearers. With the Opening Song the Mass began.

It was noted in the course of this Convention that the lofty aim of all liturgy is a certain concert between word, gesture and music in the ritual. From this stance the Opening Ceremony of the Convention was a liturgical flop hardly enjoying any great fluency or balance. The separation of the Smoking Ceremony of Welcome from the Roman Ritual, and the attempt to accommodate the singing traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people certainly exposed the distance between the theory and practice. Marty Haugen, an American composer, said the Liturgy showed the best and the worst of our attempts to co-ordinate indigenous liturgies with the Roman Rite.

Despite the misgivings of the purists as to the cohesion of the celebration, many Aboriginal and Torres Straits people from around Australia, were delighted with this Sunday gathering. The enfranchisement of their ministers, the incorporation of rituals, the acceptance of music (that some would call ersatz), coupled with the welcome offered to the visitors, proved to be a very successful venture and a colourful welcome to a successful week.



*The Revd Gloria Shipp leading the procession at the opening of the Anglican General Synod, St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne, July 1995.
Photo: Charles Sherlock, Church Scene*

**INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA**
An Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony as a Liturgical Event
Gillian Hunt

The Service of Inauguration of the National Council of Churches in Australia was held in St Christopher's Catholic Cathedral in Canberra on Sunday 3 July 1994.

I will address four questions related to this ceremony.

Why was the ceremony used?

Who was involved?

How did the ceremony relate to the rest of the liturgy?

What was the response?

Why was the ceremony used?

This needs to be answered from several perspectives. The Aboriginal view was printed at the beginning of the Order of Service beneath the heading Aboriginal Dance and Call to Prayer:

Aboriginal people never approach sacred, spiritual places for worship without preparing themselves properly. The mind is prepared by clearing it of wrongful thoughts, the body by cleansing and painting. The cleansing is done by purification with smoke. The didgeridoo calls the people to prayer as Aboriginal dancers carry the smoke sticks into the cathedral.

These words were provided to the committee planning the service in Canberra by Br Graeme Mundine. They come from the text used at a Smoking Ceremony held in the same cathedral during the Bicentennial Year 1988 at an ecumenical service to mark the 200th anniversary of the last day of uninterrupted occupation of Aboriginal land. Graeme is the Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council and a member of the Aboriginal and Islander Commission of the then Australian Council of Churches, now National Council of Churches in Australia.

There is also an ecumenical perspective. Again in Canberra, this time in February 1991, the opening worship of the World Council of Churches 7th Assembly began with a Smoking Ceremony outside the worship tent. The 1994 planning group wanted to honour the Aboriginal peoples' tradition by offering them another opportunity to welcome non-indigenous people onto their land and to continue the process of education about Aboriginal culture and spirituality.

There was a further motivation. It is expressed by one of the committee, Fr Ken Heffernan, in his reply to a letter from a parishioner:

From day one of planning for this historic occasion it was agreed that the presence and involvement of Aboriginal Australians in this service was desirable, especially since the inauguration took place during National Aboriginal and Islander Week.

More will be said about this letter in looking at the question of response.

Who was involved?

The Gamillaroi Dancers with their Managers Mr and Mrs Lloyd Bowlings and Azalia Ah Mat, Br Graeme Mundine, Kay Mundine and Karen Mundine were all actively involved. Kay and Karen attended one of the committee meetings. Their participation came much later in the planning than the committee had wanted, despite our many endeavours. We thought it crucial to have representation of Aboriginal people throughout this time. Br Graeme provided the link, giving us valuable background understanding as in the example of text above, and by suggesting suitable Aboriginal dancers. Graeme spoke with the contacts for the Gamillaroi Dancers, based in Sydney, who arranged a Smoking Ceremony.

How did the ceremony relate to the rest of the liturgy?

This question is at the heart of the matter. The ceremony could have been seen as no more than a required courtesy following precedents such as those already mentioned. Visually interesting but open to being called tokenistic; a cultural cut-and-paste job. We wanted to impart a sense of belonging, of being connected, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, through our shared belief in the one eternal Spirit of God. How? The ceremony itself did this most powerfully. At this point it is worth noting that we learned how Smoking Ceremonies differ from one tribal tradition to another. In some places it is not used at all. Last-minute changes were required when we were told that some of the young dancers were from areas which did not use smoke sticks carried into the worship space for cleansing. Rather, their tradition was to prepare a fire, then invite participants to walk through its cleansing smoke. Three young boys began the ceremony, one playing the didgeridoo, the other two telling in mime and dance the story of the ritual preparation of the body, mind and spirit. The young women then performed a dance with didgeridoo accompaniment.

The ceremony is, by its nature, a pre-liturgical event. Only after its completion did the Entry Processional begin. For writers of liturgy, there is an additional challenge, namely to have the Smoking Ceremony received as within the liturgy as a whole. We invited the Aboriginal women to carry in the Gospel, leading and accompanying the non-Aboriginal reader to the lectern. (Confusion briefly arose when we asked if they could dance the Gospel in. 'We don't do that,' was the

initial reply. Then, 'Oh, you mean stomp'! We were becoming aware that there are different ways of preparing for worship among Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal alike.) The entrance of the Gospel, a high point in any liturgy, thus carried with it the heightened dimension of being brought in by Aboriginal women – stomping and beating the rhythm with clap sticks. This then was the connection between what happened at the beginning with the Smoking Ceremony and what followed in the continuing worship.

What was the response?

It was hardly surprising that there were different responses. The most difficult for the committee was a response before the Service itself when one person who was deeply involved in aspects of the preparation for this event felt unable to be present, because she saw the Smoking Ceremony as unchristian and a threat to Christ's sacrificial act on the Cross. Another was in the letter to which I referred above. This was more a question arising from uncertainty about why the ceremony was there at all. However, the overwhelming response was one of joyful, enthusiastic appreciation of the contribution made by the Gamillaroi Dancers who willingly shared their sacred tradition with other Christians.

My thanks go to Br Graeme Mundine for our conversation and his comments about this article. Graeme named three other significant Smoking Ceremonies. They were at the Eucharistic Conference in Melbourne in 1992; the National Liturgical Music Convention in Melbourne in 1993, and the Beatification of Mary McKillop in Sydney in 1995. In each service he saw the ongoing creation of an Aboriginal theology and liturgy for his ceremonial people.

THE CEREMONY OF THE BEATIFICATION OF MARY MACKILLOP Sydney, January 1995 *Carmel Pilcher rsj*

In the early days of our planning for the Beatification Mass we determined the appropriateness of the original owners welcoming us to the land at Randwick. To that end I was directed to meet with members of the Aboriginal Catholic Community at Erskineville to learn the who, the what, and the how that this should happen. I found myself in the capable hands of Elsie Heiss and Barbara Asplet. They in turn consulted with the wider community, and were assisted by Naomi Smith rsj and Frank Fletcher msc. While I met with the above named

delegates many times, their consultation was more extensive still. The aboriginal community determined the components of the ceremony, and who should take part.

What eventuated was a welcome ceremony that included smoking: the result of many months of meetings and planning. The smoking was entirely at their initiative. In our proposal to the Vatican then, the welcome ceremony which included smoking, was suggested as major components within the introductory ritual. Our only hesitation in presenting this for approval was the fear that it may become a ritual “added on” to the Roman liturgy. The Vatican Papal Master of Ceremonies was completely in tune with our concern. He agreed with us that the smoking ceremony could readily replace the incensing. Monsignor Marini strongly encouraged cultural inclusion within the liturgy as a general principle. To quote him: “if we wanted a Roman style liturgy we would have held it in Rome.”

Two years later, and largely prompted by the request to write this article, I again asked to meet with Barbara and Elsie. Barbara was away at a funeral, but Elsie was able to be present, as was Frank. Since that time Barbara has had the opportunity to make her contribution to this reflection. We remembered and relived the event. It seems that their careful preparations and orchestration of the ritual were successful; the aboriginal communities were very happy with the ceremony, and they felt suitably included in the liturgical celebration. The welcome ceremony, a key component of the introductory rite, was both initiated and executed by the aboriginal community.

It is useful at this point to recall the elements that made up the welcome ceremony:

The ceremony began with the sound of the didgeridoos, which were played by several men and boys, who were painted ceremonially. At the same time, a group of aboriginal people walked in procession onto the podium.

One among the group spoke words of welcome (a poem), which he had composed. It was spoken in the language of his tribe and in English.

Two of the group placed soil from the local area into the container.

When the soil representing all the lands connected with Mary MacKillop had been mixed into the container, the smoking began.

The group stood at the base of the podium and wafted smoke, which the celebrants and assistants walked through in procession as they moved onto the podium.

A group smoked the objects for the ceremony: the desk used by Mary MacKillop from which the gospel was proclaimed, the altar table, and finally the Pope himself. At the same time, some thirty people, representatives from all over NSW, walked through, and smoked the assembly.

To identify themselves, a number of aborigines involved in the ceremony wore scarves. The design of the scarf was a painting which was especially created to illustrate the story told of one of the tribal families of coastal NSW.

In their many meetings, the aboriginal organisers agonised over the inclusion of the smoking as part of the welcome ceremony. The aboriginal mentality is local. The concern became how to balance the local claim with the wider claim. Smoking is not a universal custom of all aboriginal tribes, and the beatification of Mary MacKillop was a national event. However, they decided it would be appropriate because it is so widespread and therefore ancient. It happens all over the continent, and is generally practiced amongst the 63 tribes in NSW.

The aboriginal community were also sensitive to current situations, and adapted the ceremony for the Beatification. Smoking has traditionally been performed by men. However, both men and women were included at the Randwick ceremony. While the men held the pots, the women were also involved. They carried the leaves. This shift was made, to use Elsie's words: "on behalf of all aboriginal women, to restore the dignity of aboriginal women." While geographical locality was instrumental in the choice of who would perform the rite, other factors were also considered. The choice by the community of the man who smoked in the podium area was made, because they perceived him to be a person of deep spirituality and holiness.

The ceremony, Elsie explained, originated as a domestic ritual. It is used to clear a place of evil spirits when someone dies. People and the place are both smoked. Elsie recalls a big tub being set up at the place of death, and each person walking through the smoke that emerged from it. Smoking of the place usually took all night. This was done to settle the spirits. "For us, to grow up with a tradition makes it relevant to continue that tradition." It was part of Elsie's culture and experience, so from her point of view it is right. As she explained, she could not speak for other aboriginal cultures.

When I asked Elsie the meaning of the smoking she told me that it represents purification. The smoking at Randwick made it a holy place, clearing away the evil spirits in readiness for the celebration. The assembly and the leaders of the assembly, the bishops surrounding the Pope, were smoked to make all holy and worthy to take part in the Beatification liturgy.

I asked Elsie about the use of smoking ceremonies generally. In the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney Archdiocese, smoking has become part of their worship. It is included in ceremonies of baptism, and sometimes at funerals. It is only included at the initiative and choice of those involved. When ceremonies are being prepared the question is asked: "do you want to include smoking?" Often apparently, the families want it included, especially at baptisms.

As Elsie explained, “it is part of our identity, it is ours. We need to keep the few traditions that are left, that haven’t been taken away from us.”

Elsie and Frank cannot conceive of a smoking ceremony as part of liturgical ritual where no aboriginal people are present. As Elsie pointed out: “It can only be performed by aborigines.” I asked Elsie what she meant by this. She explained: “For a non-aboriginal person to perform a smoking ceremony would be like a sacrilege – it would be like a baptised person doing what the ordained priest does at Eucharist, or like burying a non-aboriginal person on aboriginal sacred land.”

I came away from the meeting both enthused and enlightened. It was a delight to be reunited with Elsie and Frank. As I reflected later, I couldn’t but notice the contrast between our NSW Chapter, which has spent several meetings trying to discuss the appropriation between culture and liturgy, and the simple ease and conviction with which Elsie was able to connect an ancient aboriginal ritual with our Roman liturgy. It is important also, to keep in mind Frank’s caution that we are in very early days of experimentation with aboriginal spirituality and worship. This must remain the context for any discussion and possible implementation.

OPENING OF THE ANGLICAN GENERAL SYNOD

Melbourne, July 1995

John W. Stewart

Towards the end of 1994 I was invited by the Primate to be the Chaplain for the meeting of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia scheduled to meet in Melbourne in July 1995. The task included preparing all the worship for the duration of the Synod commencing with the Opening Service on the Sunday evening.

General Synod had always met in Sydney, and the Opening Service had always been a traditional act of worship from a Prayer Book. On this occasion there were a number of new factors:

- for the first time the Synod was meeting away from St Andrew’s Cathedral Sydney
- the service was to be recorded for broadcast nationally by ABC television
- the General Synod was meeting to consider, among other matters, the proposed new book *A Prayer Book for Australia*.

I resolved, therefore, that the service should be more imaginative and creative than in the past, showing a contemporary face of the Anglican church to the nation. So, a number of major elements of the Opening Service were suggested, though they are not the subject of this paper. One of them is the matter I was asked to outline, and it is the matter of the aboriginal smoking ceremony.

The General Synod, at its previous meeting in 1991, had established the National Anglican Aboriginal Council as a way of identifying in a serious way our partnership with Australian aboriginal people. I believed it was essential, therefore, for this significant new national body of our church to participate in the Opening Service. Throughout the months I negotiated with the NAAC, primarily through Margaret Waterhouse the Melbourne delegate to the Executive, as to the nature of their involvement. The members of the Council agreed to be involved, and they explored several possible liturgical actions. In the end they suggested the Smoking Ceremony themselves, and agreed to provide some of their members from around Australia to lead it for us.

We had to obtain permission from:

- the Primate who had a keen interest in the detail of the whole service;
- the Dean of the Cathedral (who was concerned that the smoke might set off the sprinklers in the nave ceiling);
- the Melbourne Fire Brigade;
- the local aboriginal elders because the aboriginal folk who were coming did not belong to the local tribes and needed their permission to perform their rite.

On the night, the entrance of the smoke (produced in a container burning gum leaves) was a very moving experience. The smoking party – an aboriginal bishop, an aboriginal deacon, and an aboriginal lay woman, accompanied by the flags of Australia, the Anglican Church and the aboriginal people – passed through the aisles of the cathedral in a figure-eight procession and then stood at the entrance to the Chancel to offer the opening prayer.

It made spectacular television and the producers of the telecast did a most imaginative job of it. Most people present believed it was an appropriate start to our worship, an appropriate way of honouring our aboriginal brothers and sisters, and an appropriate way of saying to the nation this is an important part of who we are as Australian Anglicans. There was some criticism about it being a pagan ceremony in a Christian context, but that was only a small ripple in an otherwise affirming atmosphere.

The Liturgy of the Orthodox Church

Spiritual and Doctrinal Dimensions

John Chryssavgis

I. An Introduction to Another World

(i) The Notion of Tradition

It would hardly be an overstatement for me to say that the definitive mark of Orthodox liturgy is its traditional character. In the Orthodox Church, devotional forms and gestures have been meticulously and continuously preserved, without any major change, for centuries. I have, therefore, every reason to believe that, to a degree, my family shares today what Byzantines experienced in churches of Constantinople during the tenth century. The Byzantines were a liturgical people. Yet the Orthodox liturgy is a timeless re-enactment, not so much of past events, but rather of a presence, that of the heavenly kingdom, in the present time.

Western Christians attending the Divine liturgy (in particular) are commonly impressed by the strong aroma of antiquity and continuity generated by the ceremonial expression. Orthodoxy typically presents – and is indeed frequently so presented by the Orthodox, as a seamless robe, as a totality, in which every part adheres in the whole in primordial and perfect harmony. In actual fact, the attachment to *tradition* does not imply immobilism and stagnation. In reality there has always been growth and development in Orthodox liturgy. This change is slow, almost imperceptible, because it is a natural process, not a programmed reform from above or even from below. This is why *we* like to call it a living tradition. To quote the brilliant Roman Catholic liturgist, R. Taft:

Of course it results in any number of loose ends, hard to reconcile practices, customs that overlap or even contradict one another – but they are loose ends of the living, rather than the well-ordered immobility of the dead.¹

The question of course is how Orthodox liturgy will be retrieved and presented not as emotional but as essential, not as attractive but as logical and theological. It must be admitted that Orthodoxy is often successful on the wrong grounds: because it is exotic, or escapist, or sufficiently different. People are attracted – or perhaps distracted – by the orientalism (music, icons, mysticism).

Orthodox themselves are often enticed by the luggage that they carry around, by the symbolical explanation for every last button on an episcopal garment. Yet the liturgy and its music are symbolical of only one thing, “the one thing that alone is necessary” (Luke 10.42). Their ultimate meaning is the entering of the kingdom of heaven. And heaven is not what Bultmann could not understand. It is where Christ is. To quote John Chrysostom whose fourth-century liturgy we

celebrate to this day each Sunday: “What do I care about heaven, when I myself have become heaven?” So the liturgy is neither primarily ceremonial nor mystical. It is the celebration of one mystery, namely the certainty that “Christ is in our midst.” That is the central focus. And the music is the translation of this very conviction, mirroring the evolution of doctrinal ideas.² Verse and voice are intimately linked with theological vision. Unfortunately today there is less expression of individual emotion and imagination than in the first millennium. Nevertheless, the element of the “otherworldliness” is definitely preserved.

Now Tradition is *more than* the mere remembrance of certain acts of Christ and of some of his words. It is understood in terms of living with Christ and in Christ “through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” By analogy, the liturgy is *more than* a mere remembrance of acts and words of the Lord. It is *the* act of the Word; it is the act of self-sacrifice and love. Nicholas Cabasilas, the fourteenth-century liturgical commentator, notes: “The rite is not a mere figure or symbol, but a true sacrifice.”³ Here again, it is the Holy Spirit that is said to “celebrate the liturgy with us all the days of our life.” So the liturgy is seen as the way of entering communion with Christ, the means of appropriating salvation. And that is also the way in which tradition is understood.

It is precisely during the liturgy that Christ is transmitted, handed down to us (“trado”, “paradido”). In fact, there is a mutual handing over: “Thine own of thine own...” Orthodox spirituality would affirm Irenaeus’ words that “our whole life should conform to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist should confirm our whole life.”⁴ There is, in the context of the liturgy, a virtual identity between Christ and tradition, between Christ as past, present, and future (Revelation 4.8), between the one who has already come and who is yet to come.

The Body of Christ is comprised of a group of sinners which, through the Holy Spirit, is transformed into a community of believers who “in fellowship break the bread” (Acts 2.42). “The holy things are received by the holy,” and the group of sinners is rendered the communion of saints. No wonder there is such a strong emphasis on the invocation (the *epiclesis*) of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox liturgy. The Spirit offers the assurance that “we have seen the true light, we have received the Holy Spirit, we have found the true faith.”

(ii) Tradition, Liturgy, and Doctrine

The reference to the Holy Spirit in connection with faith raises the further dimension of the importance and influence of *doctrinal developments* on the liturgy. Imperial patronage in the early fourth century had immediate and profound consequences for the Church generally, and for its worship especially. The emperor’s influence was also felt in the domain of doctrine. The fourth century was one of fierce doctrinal conflict and unprecedented theological

creativity for the Church. “Homoousian” and “hypostasiac” terminology, christological and trinitarian theology: these inevitably left their mark on Eastern liturgy. There is an added prominence, prestige, and privilege in liturgical matters that gradually is concentrated on the imperial city of New Rome. Constantinople, whose *typikon* becomes “typ-ical” for the whole of the Eastern Church.

No wonder then that liturgy is respected like doctrine, that the “*lex orandi*” is so closely connected to the “*lex credendi*”. It is not difficult to appreciate why Byzantines of old and Orthodox today feel that “Truly, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law” (Matthew 5.18) of liturgy. Like John of Damascus, the eighth-century champion of icons wrote about tradition: “we do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set, but we keep the tradition, just as we received it,”⁵ so Nicholas Cabasilas can say of the liturgy: “Beyond this it is not possible to go, nor can anything be added to it.”⁶ There are certain doctrines, never formally defined, which are nonetheless maintained with as much inner conviction by the Orthodox Church as any explicit dogmatic formulation. St Basil of Caesarea wrote as early as in the fourth century:

Some things we have from written teaching, while others we have received from the apostolic tradition handed down to us in a mystery; and both these things have the same force for piety.⁷

Certainly, for the Orthodox, the liturgy belongs to one of those powerful “traditions *handed down to us in a mystery*.”

This is precisely why no one will so much as blink an eye during the divine liturgy when the deacon – apparently out of nowhere, but certainly out of apostolic tradition and conviction – still cries out aloud, immediately preceding the recital of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (or “symbol of faith”): “The doors! The doors! Wisdom! Let us be attentive!” This recalls the early days when the church’s entrance was jealously guarded – out of fear for persecution in the first christian period; out of fear for profanation in later centuries. Only the initiated members – those baptised and able to recite the common principles of belief – could remain in the church. No one moves today; certainly no one leaves. Chrysostom complained that in his day people seized this opportunity to leave *with* the catechumens. But the powerful reminder of the link between credal formulation and liturgical adoration remains.

(iii) Some Contrasts/Comparisons – “my world and your world”

Attending an Orthodox liturgy, for many non-Orthodox, is entering a different world, a world governed by a tradition that goes back many centuries: architecture, iconography, the altar space. Ritual and richness abound here. The

faithful do not see the full altar: the “prothesis” where the gifts are prepared – without any obvious participation by the laity – is entirely out of sight.

Where Western liturgy is characterised by simplicity, the keynote of the Eastern eucharist is solemnity. The same may be said of liturgical space, movement, and dress. Solemnity, not simplicity. The distinction in the West between clergy and laity is less apparent, while the service is clearly visible and audible. All those present at a Catholic or Protestant service are normally expected to receive communion.

By contrast, in the Orthodox Liturgy, there is an air of reverence, as well as an atmosphere of informality. The congregation is in fact fairly silent — they will worship with their eyes and ears. They will also worship with their body — moving about, lighting candles, standing, kneeling, making the sign of the cross at any time and many times, bowing or fully prostrating. They worship even with their sense of smell – incense, bread, oil, candle. Surprisingly, not all – indeed few – will receive communion. Everyone, however, lines up for the “antidoron”, the blessed bread, at the conclusion of the service.

There are some other details which may puzzle a Western Christian: while the basic liturgical structure may be similar, many other differences will not be familiar. There is less emphasis on the “Ministry of the Word”, there are lengthy litanies, two central processions – the “little” and “great” entrances (the latter of which attracts the fervent reverence and devotion of the people to the *unconsecrated* gifts), – the readings are sung, the sermon is not crucial, the kiss of peace is not exchanged except among the clergy, significant prayers are read “silently” (or “mystically” – in fact the “anaphora” may be as inaudible as the priest saying it is invisible, – communion is given with a spoon (to adults and babies alike).

There is almost a sense in which two services are going on at the same time – one in the sanctuary, and the other more visibly. The two coincide at some points, but in many ways the people in the congregation seem to be only passive attendants. This idea of two liturgies, or two levels of liturgy, is significant not so much in itself, but as a unique symbol of another two-fold reality. It is, as will be seen in the next section, a reminder that in the liturgy heaven and earth somehow meet, and in some very real way con-celebrate.

Furthermore, there is a strong symbolical element. Actions and words have a symbolical dimension. Gestures are made in the present, but they recall events in the past (the birth of Christ [prothesis = Bethlehem: Nazareth.], the entry to Jerusalem [the Great Entrance], the burial of Christ [the placing of the Gifts on the altar]).

II “Blessed is the Kingdom”

i) The Liturgy as Heaven

When the liturgy as text appears in the East towards the end of the fourth century, the Eucharist is seen to be offered by a Church still mindful as much of Christ’s second coming as of his passion and resurrection. The sense of eager expectation was always heightened for the early Christians when they gathered for the Eucharistic meal. The eucharist was an image of the heavenly banquet, of the divine kingdom. So the early Christians looked two ways: forward and backward, upward and downward; there was a keen sense of “anamnesis” (remembering of the past) and “anaphora” (referring to the future). Here then, already adumbrated, is the double emphasis on heaven and home, or on home as heaven. The future kingdom was a present reality, not a distant hope but an experienced joy:

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also” (Matthew 18.20).

“And lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.20).

The Eucharist was a foretaste of that kingdom. On the bishop’s chair, according to Ignatius of Antioch, Christ himself was seated.

The paradox of “homeliness” and “mysteriousness” is already apparent in the second century theological descriptions, and the West seems early on to prefer images of sacrifice to models of thanksgiving. Thus while Irenaeus of Lyons (who came from Asia Minor to the West) emphasised the Eucharist as an offering of thanks, as a sharing of the first-fruits of creation, the view that came to predominate was that of Cyprian, that the sacrifice offered in the rite was the passion of Christ. We must of course be wary of simplistic distinctions. Cyril of Jerusalem (mid fourth century) underlines, in the East also, the propitiatory character.⁸ It is Cyril who introduces a pious element to liturgy (devotions preceding or during communion; decline in frequency of communion), coupled with a language of fear with regard to the sacrament. This dimension appears again in the teaching of John Chrysostom (therefore in Antioch and subsequently in Constantinople). In the East, furthermore, practical movements gradually assume symbolical value. The third-century Syrian document called *Didascalia Apostolorum*⁹ describes the deacons’ ministerial role as simply practical. In the same century, however, the great Alexandrian thinker Origen develops a theology of Christian mystery and symbol. This teaching is developed into a tradition of liturgical interpretation and imitation by Dionysius the Areopagite in the fifth century, Maximus the Confessor in the seventh, Germanos of Constantinople in the eighth, Theodore the Studite in the ninth, Nicholas and Theodore of Andida in the eleventh, Nicholas Cabasilas in the fourteenth, and

Symeon of Thessalonika in the fifteenth century. Simple, practical gestures assume solemn, profound significance:

It is the deacons who bring out this which they arrange and place on the awe-inspiring altar, a vision...awe-inspiring even to the onlookers. By means of the symbols we must see Christ, who is now being led out and going forth to his passion, and who, in another moment, is laid out for us on the altar... And when the offering that is about to be presented is brought out in the sacred vessels, the patens and chalices, you must think that Christ the Lord is coming out, led to his passion...by the invisible host of ministers...who were also present when the passion of salvation was being accomplished....

(The deacons) stand around and wave their fans...because the Body laying there is truly Lord by its union with the divine nature. It is with great fear that it must be laid out, viewed and guarded. These things take place in complete silence because, although the Liturgy has not yet begun, still it is fitting to watch the bringing out and depositing of such a great and wonderful object in recollection and fear and a silent and quiet prayer, without saying anything.¹⁰

(ii) The Liturgy as Home

When one enters the liturgy in the Orthodox Church, one is entering the familiar surroundings of one's *home*. There is, then, also a sense of homeliness and informality. Contemporary Orthodox, just like their Byzantine forefathers and foremothers used to, behave inside the church much as they behave outside. There exists, for them, no sharp division between sacred and secular. There is much movement, people drifting in and out, lighting candles, venerating icons, even talking. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom complained:

Here in church, there is great disturbance and confusion, and it is as bad as a tavern. There is so much laughing and chattering.¹¹

To an outsider, it would perhaps appear "as bad as a tavern". However, physicality and materiality are an important part of Orthodox worship. The bread is always real bread, the wine is bright and red (and it signifies not just death and sacrifice, but life and joy.) Baptism is full immersion, and confession involves physical contact in the laying on of the hand. There is bread and oil and boiled wheat. The patristic principle that "what is not assumed is not healed"¹² is very real here. And the liturgy becomes the ground on which all things meet, and outside of which all things are unrecognisable, isolated.

There is a powerful and pervading sense of home-ness: Orthodox bring to church the food and drink prepared at home. In fact, Orthodox are always leaving the church "dripping, dropping or chewing" something. They are "participants at a festive meal", sharers of a banquet. But they are not consumers; they are

worshippers. Prior to and in preparation for communion, the following prayer is recited:

The lamb of God is broken and distributed: broken yet not divided: forever eaten yet never consumed: sanctifying those who partake.

There is an important message here for a consumer society like ours, where people are always eating, or drinking while they walk. The liturgical ethic reverses the social ethos: we are not called to be aggressive, to consume and struggle in a world where “only the fittest survive.” We are to share, to be vulnerable, to repeat the words of Christ at the Last Supper, not merely as the institution of a sacrament, but as the inspiration of a new way of life: “Take, eat of this my body; drink of this, all of you, this is my blood.”

In the liturgy you breathe the clean, unpolluted air of the Resurrection. When the witness of the Revelation writes: “I, John, was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...and I saw a new heaven and a new earth”, he is telling us: “I took part in the liturgy.” St John is, here, the forerunner of Eastern / Byzantine liturgical commentators. He is saying: Everything makes sense and assumes full meaning in the liturgy. You feel at home and speak your mother tongue – the language of reconciliation and love. You know God exists, because you are embraced warmly and accepted unconditionally. You care for others because you discover them and discern their needs. You are sensitive to the “groans and pains” of creation (Romans 8.22) because everything is valued and inspired. The only response is gratitude and grace. And the only note of dissonance is that of disconnection, or of ingratitude. You learn to share and to thank: for the sun and the stars, for the pain and the tears, for the trees and the flowers, for the trials and the failures, for life and for death, for life’s realities. This is why the liturgy actually begins from the moment when we leave our homes, when we are on our way to constitute the church. There is no “moment” when it commences, or “time” when it concludes. This is perhaps why Orthodox feel free to arrive late, or to come and go.

(iii) Heaven on Earth

This is the *depth* of the liturgy, “the final mystery beyond which it is not possible to go.”¹³ This is the meaning of the liturgy as “heaven on earth” – as the presence of the angels, the archangels, the kingdom of heaven, the earth, the people, the whole of creation, and the Creator God as well. It is far more than the “here and now”. It is an all-embracing drama, a meeting-place of the earthly and the heavenly. This is made clear in our liturgy with the two “entrances”, when we pray: “Make with our entry an entry of your holy angels, celebrating the liturgy with us.” “In this mystery,” we continue, “we are icons of the

cherubim.” Again John Chrysostom affirms: “Those in heaven and those on earth form a single festival, a shared thanksgiving, one choir.”¹⁴

Now to the outsider, perhaps one of the most striking qualities of our liturgy is the opulent ritualism, at least in contrast to the apparent verbalism of other liturgies. Everything is always sung. Orthodox Christians do not come to church simply to pray. Nor do they go to church to be alone. Something is “happening” there, the kingdom of heaven is present there. There is an epiphany and a theophany, and you are called to “join in”, invited to participate. Sometimes people wonder whether Orthodox are aware of this liturgical depth in their tradition. Yet how many of those who join in a dance realise the historical origins of that dance, or even are aware of its sociological significance. And such ignorance hardly detracts from the power or profundity of the experience. Just before each liturgy, Sunday by Sunday, we pray: “God, our God, who sent your heavenly bread, the food of the whole world, to bless us, bless also this offering.” For centuries christians have been scandalised that we come together in liturgy to eat, and not just to see and hear and feel the Word of God.¹⁵

The question, however, that needs to be raised in Orthodox circles is how this “otherworldliness” will spill over and into this world. As a window to heaven, the liturgy is not responsible for disconnecting the two worlds but for holding them together in a single reality and order. But what is the Orthodox Church doing to make the spilt blood and broken body of Christ relevant and life-giving to a young child starving for bread in Africa, to a young man dying of AIDS in the United States, or to a young mother suffering in former Yugoslavia? There is no condition, no tragedy, no experience, no pain left outside of the chalice. So what are we doing to share the Body of Christ, which is “broken but never divided...for the life of the world?”

III. “Let us Give Thanks to the Lord”

(i) The Liturgy as Communion

The communal aspect of worship is central to the understanding of the Orthodox liturgical mind. There is a sense of belonging and devotion, within which one preserves one’s personal rhythm. Upon entering the church one does not pray alone, but lights a candle before an icon – an image of the heavenly “cloud of witnesses” – and places it alongside the other candles that have been lit.

So the liturgy is never merely the sum of the gathered individuals. It is not a loose collection of people with some restricted parish plan, diocesan program, church policy, or religious vision. It is the freedom and space of heaven, where each journeys freely, sails at will, thinks and chooses personally. The liturgy does not check but confirms our hopes and dreams. Of course this does not happen at

the expense or exclusion of others. The liturgy broadens our horizons and interests. There is ample room – every new presence is not stifling; every new person is not discomforting. In fact it seems as if everyone is present, crowding around the altar:

Hosts of archangels, tens of thousands of angels, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim...the prophets, apostles, preachers, martyrs, confessors, ascetics,

the living and the dead, the young and old, male and female, conservatives and liberals, sane and insane, healthy and unhealthy, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, religious and agnostic. They're *all* there! We are never alone in liturgy, but always in the company of angels, in the communion of saints, and in the comfort of all creation.

What does not feed them *all* – is not for the joy of *all* – is not food and joy for us either. In the liturgy we learn to love. We are not mechanical pieces of a political machine, individuals in an anonymous society. We have a personal ministry in the mystery of life, valued for what we are. In the encounter with the other – *every* other, created others and the Uncreated Other – Christ is formed in us. “God makes of us a home” (John 14.23). How can such a liturgy grow old or stagnate? Upon leaving the liturgy, we are a grain of mustard seed, a kind of leaven. witnesses to the kingdom in the world.

(ii) The Liturgy as Mission

We may “depart in peace”, or rather “go out (=προελθωμεν) in peace.” We move out once again to the same routine, daily schedule, to our respective work. Yet we now know otherwise; we see differently; we work at another pace, as a dynamic presence in the world. Because:

what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, this we declare...the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us...so that you also may have fellowship with us...so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1.1-4)

The goodness of God is celebrated and results in the godliness of creation. At the Small Entrance, we pray “O Master and Lord...grant us to glorify your goodness.” And in this experience of reality, in this beginning and fulfillment of everything, there is nothing to add, nothing else to say or explain. The deacon, in mind-blowing words that are often missed, sings: “Let us stand in goodness.” This is not merely a call to be upstanding or awake. It is a reminder of the radical reversal of secular values effected in the liturgy. The deacon is basically saying: “Don’t just do something; *stand* there!” Again in the Orthodox liturgy, we sing:

“Standing in the temple of your glory, we think we are in heaven.” This recalls the apostolic sentiment, “Lord, it is good to be here.” (Matthew 17.4).

And the music serves to underline the communal dimension of worship that unites heaven and earth, though it is sometimes undermined in Orthodox churches where the music is very intricate. In the early Christian times, the term choir (χοροζ), communion (κοινωνια), and church (εκκλησια) are used almost synonymously.

The crucial question then is not what happens to the elements or what happens to me, but what happens to the Church. The liturgy is not for inner consumption. This, however, means that Orthodox Christians need to find a vivid language and to recover the liturgy from its reputation of traditionalism and stagnation in order to communicate its treasures. For example, what is the Orthodox Church doing to relate its liturgy to the younger generation and to other people in the English language? And so far as concerns the music, a compelling question is whether today we can use the same Byzantine criteria for English-speaking congregations.

iii) Theory and Practice

There are some more specific critical issues with regard to the contemporary reality. The element of sharing or communion is of course *the theology, or the theory. But what actually happens in practice?* There are certain factors that tended and still tend to obscure the corporate nature of the Liturgy. Curiously, it is often these very features – which diverge from those of the early Church, which are most likely to strike, even attract, the late twentieth-century Western visitor to a typical Orthodox liturgy:

(i) First, the kiss of peace – mentioned by John Chrysostom¹⁶ and implied in the Liturgy attributed to him – gradually disappeared towards the end of the first millennium.

(ii) Second, while in the early period the singing was shared between cantors and congregation, today it is almost entirely restricted to the cantors or choir. This probably occurred around about the same time, when the hymnography and music became more elaborate, especially in monastic circles.

(iii) Third, the priest’s prayers are no longer said aloud. In the mid-sixth century, Justinian found it necessary to legislate against the growing practice of reciting certain prayers in a low voice.¹⁷ However, this proved ineffective, and liturgical texts of the eighth century prescribe that the *anaphora* prayers be said *μυστικοζ*.¹⁸ By the time of Nicholas Cabasilas, it is taken for granted that the priest’s prayers are inaudible.¹⁹ Yet in the seventh century, even children – who normally stood at the front of the congregation – were able to learn these prayers by heart precisely because they could hear them.²⁰

(iv) Not only could people not hear all the Liturgy, but they likewise could not see all the Liturgy. The use of curtains in the sanctuary is widely attested to already in the fourth century (cf. Chrysostom at Antioch, Athanasius at Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzus at Asia Minor). The “iconscreen” was originally waist-high with pillars above the “templon.” But the space between the pillars was left open until at least the thirteenth century. Clearly the triumph of the iconophiles in the ninth century gradually led to the development of a solid screen, but this was a much later phenomenon. Even so, of course, the icons are not seen as a barrier. The twentieth century Russian thinker/priest Pavel Florensky said that icons “do not conceal anything from the faithful.” Instead, “they reveal the entrance to the other world” and “proclaim the existence of the kingdom of heaven.”²¹

(v) Finally, how far did the laity actively participate by receiving communion? In the pre-Constantinian period, it was taken for granted that the whole congregation would receive communion every Sunday. Some even communicated daily (as Tertullian, Hippolytus, and even later, Basil, bear witness). This practice primarily survived in monastic circles.²² There have of course been individuals (some of them saints) who, through the centuries, have swum against the powerful swell and tried to encourage frequent communion. Yet Orthodoxy has developed a piety centered on infrequent holy communion, nourished by a rite with such profound spiritual and symbolical interpretation that actually tends to militate against frequent participation in the Eucharist.

In spite, however, of these problems – which Orthodox should at least recognise if not some day reconsider – the Orthodox liturgy has something important to offer the West:

There is a participation in worship which is contemplative rather than active, of the kind appropriate in the Anglican tradition at a cathedral sung Evensong. There is a contemplative quality about the Liturgy and other Orthodox services from which Western Christians may have something to learn. Contemporary Western worship is sometimes so active that it can seem busy and be distracting. Liturgical prayer is punctuated by directions to sit, stand or kneel. The flow of the service is interrupted by announcements of page, hymn and Eucharistic prayer numbers. The goal intended is full congregational participation. But the result can sometimes be restless and unprayerful. Revised services provide for silence to be kept at certain moments, but this is more often indicated than prayerfully used. It may be that in a busy, activist world Christians need worship which is not busy and activist. Perhaps something of the contemplative quality of Orthodox worship could impart to Western worship a dimension it has either never had, or is in danger of losing.²³

IV. "New Heaven and New Earth"

i) The Liturgy as Cosmic

Now the emphasis mentioned earlier, on "goodness" gives rise to a final point about the liturgy, and is reminiscent of another passage, this time from Scripture: "And God saw everything that was made, and indeed it was very good" Genesis 1.31). It is so easy to misinterpret the liturgy as being an escape from this world, as a divine ecstasy. However, if I have mentioned tradition and preservation in the Orthodox Church, I need now to speak of the liturgy as transforming the whole world to the last speck of dust, the liturgy as realising what "conservatives" and "preservatives" claim to do. We all *know* that the world should not be regarded as mere or useful necessity: we *say* that we should live in modest harmony with nature and not in audacious supremacy over it. Yet we are inexorably trapped – even in many attempts to offer solutions – within the stifling circle of our individual desire for self-preservation. The liturgy gives us a fresh and refreshing sense of *enlarged* life. Whenever we narrow religious life to our own concerns, we overlook the calling of the Church in the liturgy to implore – always and everywhere – for the renewal of the whole polluted cosmos.

So the whole world is the space of the liturgy. This is why we pray for people in all circumstances and of all needs: "for the sick the suffering, the needy, those travelling, for those in captivity", and "for the whole world, for this parish, every parish, for every city and land, and for the faithful who dwell in them."

There is a mosaic in Ravenna portraying saints, martyrs, hierarchs, and faithful laity, each holding a crown which they will place at the feet of Christ. The Liturgy presents the same image at the *prothesis*: the priest places the "Lamb" at the centre of the "diskos" (= the disk of the world) and all around are the fragments of bread symbolising the Mother of God, the angels, prophets and saints, all the dead and the living. Together, heaven and earth offer one hymn, one prayer, one feast, one doxology. This adds profound depth to the words of the eucharistic writer par excellence of the Apostolic Fathers, Ignatius of Antioch (d.c. 112):

Unite in one prayer, one supplication, one mind. one hope...For this is Jesus Christ and there is nothing better than he. Let all therefore hasten as to one shrine, that is God, as to one sanctuary, that is Jesus Christ ²⁴

There is a keen sense that not only is everyone present at the Liturgy, but the entire creation is focused on the sacredness of God:

We give thanks to you also for this ministry which you deign to receive at our hands, though hosts of archangels and tens of thousands of angels wait on you...singing, exclaiming, crying aloud and saying: Holy, Holy, Holy.

Everything that lives cries: "holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of divine glory." Indeed everything that lives aspires to share

in divine holiness and is an overture to paradise. It is not that the created world escapes to heaven, it is that the whole world is a part of heaven. The Septuagint translation of Psalm 8:4-6 is "you have made us a little less than the angels." I prefer the Hebrew which is rendered "you have created us a little lower than divine beings" (cf. also Psalm 84: "you are gods all of you.") So there is no feeling of being stifled. In the Liturgy one is not an individual in an anonymous multitude, but an organic part of a mystery.²⁵ There one learns to share: to deny oneself, to diminish in humility, to accept, to enjoy, to endure, to thank (= eucharist), to glorify (= doxology). In short, one learns to love, which means to participate in the inner life of God since the briefest, and the only biblical definition of God is that "God is love" (1 John 4.8 and 16).

Through the Liturgy – through this self-offering and universal offering – the world is sanctified, and transformed. The Liturgy (of St Basil) prays: "Lord, in return for things corruptible, grant us things incorruptible."

(ii) The Iconic Dimension

The vision and boundaries of the world are far broader than the limited space and life of any human being. I may be the centre of this vision or theophany, but I become aware that I am also but a detail of the world. Indeed the world ceases to be something that I observe objectively and becomes something of which I am a part personally and actively. No longer do I feel as a stranger (threatened and threatening) but as a friend in and of the world. How sadly Christians have misinterpreted the words of Christ that we are *in* but not *of* the world (cf. John 17.14,16). This is then the *iconic* understanding of the world where the "other" world penetrates and permeates "this" world, and where the eternal infests and invests the historical. Nothing is profane, nothing whatsoever is neutral. Everything is an icon revealing God and indicating a way to God. The whole world is a liturgy – what Maximus Confessor in the seventh century described as a "cosmic liturgy". And the liturgy merely confesses and celebrates what is already truly there, though often neither clearly perceived nor fully known.

The liturgy is an image of the world. As we have seen, when an Orthodox Christian enters the church, he or she is entering the comfort of their own home. And we may add that, when they leave the church, they are still in the liturgy because the whole world is a sacrament. The whole of the world reveals a celebration of liturgy unleashed.

Our "original sin" lies precisely in our failure or refusal to view life and the world in terms of a sacrament of communion with God. The liturgical approach proclaims a world imbued by a God transforming the world. An attitude of *liturgy* is a crucial corrective to our errors in *ecology*. For we have learned all too well

and only too painfully that the ecological crisis both presupposes and builds upon the economical injustice and imbalance of communion in the world.

What Orthodox and all Christians need to remember is that the Church is called not to conform to but to transform this world. For the liturgy is not a compromise with this world, but a promise of the world to come. It is an epiphany, a showering of the light and beauty that form the perspective within which one can truly see and perceive. Indeed the same *light* that pervades Orthodox spirituality marks also the rhythm of Orthodox liturgy and music. The refrain chanted after Holy Communion is: “We have seen the true light.” This is not just poetry. Liturgy is never simply a matter of “receiving the sacraments,” or of “hearing the word,” or of “composing the music.” Orthodox Christians live – habitually I would say – within a liturgical environment that transfigures body and soul. the entire world, in this vision of the light of the Transfiguration.

Concluding Remarks

Usually in religious circles, secularism is seen to be the main threat. Today I think; that secularism has produced a form of “religion” that is useful or appealing. Here in the United States it may be *multiculturalism* where everyone is entitled to their own culture and religion, where religion is good for business and politics. It is so important that we understand multiculturalism in the positive sense – where each culture is not interested only in itself and its own, whether primarily or exclusively; and where one culture does not override or overrun the others, whether indigenous or immigrant.

What is particularly striking about Orthodox worship – from an external, sociological point of view – is its intimate union with the culture of the people. Nationalism has in fact been both the bane and the blessing of Orthodoxy in recent decades. For the autonomy of the local, national Church does not produce anarchy but continuity of tradition. This does not undermine the catholicity of the Church, but serves rather to underline its universality through the diversity of expression.

It remains to be seen how Orthodox Christians will spread their roots in this country, whether they will extend an invitation to their non-Orthodox sisters and brothers. Will their attitude be the scriptural: “Do not touch me” (John 20.17)? Or will it be Philip’s: “Come and see” (John 1.46)? Just how will they “sing the Lord’s song in a strange land” (Psalm 136.1), their old song in a land that has adopted them? Yet, there is one lesson that can be learned from them, namely that “Christianity is a liturgical religion”. These are the words of the Russian theologian Georges Florovsky (1893-1979): “The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second.”

NOTES

1. *Beyond East and West, Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Pastoral Press: Washington DC, 1984) p. 116. The truth of the matter is that the Orthodox liturgy presents a far greater contrast with, and divergence from, the liturgy of the early Church as it is known to twentieth century scholarship (not excluding Orthodox scholarship itself!) than the new liturgical reforms of the Roman, Anglican, and some other Western confessions. Part of the problem lies in the confounding by the Orthodox of (lower case “t”) “tradition” with (capital “T”) “Tradition.” See V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Mowbrays, 1975) pp. 141-68. Yet the vivid sense in the Orthodox Church today is that when Orthodox celebrate the Divine Liturgy, they know that their “gathering” is one and the same as that of the first century; they are well aware of the “roots” of their tradition, with which they are one.
2. See E. Weilesz, *A History of Byzantine Music* and D. Conomos, *Byzantine Hymnography*.
3. *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, SPCK/ St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, p. 81.
4. PG 6:1028A. *Against Heresies* IV, 18.
5. *On the Holy Images* II, 12 PG 94:1297B.
6. *On the Life in Christ*, Book IV, 1 PG 150:584. See English translation in SVS: N.Y., 1974, p. 114.
7. *On the Holy Spirit*, ch. 27, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VIII, Eerdmans, 1952, p. 41. Rendering mine.
8. *Mystagogical Catechesis* 51. *On Faith and Symbol* PG 33:505-24.
9. ed. Connolly & Bishop, Cambridge University Press, 1909, p 120.
10. Cf. Taft, *The Great Entrance*, p 35.
11. *On the First Epistle to the Corinthians* XXXVI PG 61:313.
12. Gregory the Theologian, *Ep 1 to Cleidonius*, PG 37:181C.
13. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, Book IV, 1 PG 150:584.
14. *Homily 1, i On Order in the Liturgy* PG 56:97.
15. Cf. Origen, in PG 13:1734. Also see John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gen.* VI, 2 PG 53:55-7 and especially Gregory Nazianzus, *On Easter, Oration* XLV, 16 PG 36:644-5. The notion of “hearing” the Word underscores the significance of silence in liturgy. Orthodox Christians pray that they “may be made worthy to hear the Holy Gospel”.
16. *Ep. to the Corinthians* II, 18 PG 61:527.
17. *Novella* 137,6 in 565 CE.
18. cf. the Barberini *codex*.
19. cf. *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, SVS edition, pp. 50, 63.
20. cf. John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 196 PG 87:3081AB.
21. cf. *Eastern Churches Review* 8, 1976, pp. 16-17.

22. Cf. *Evergetinos* IV, 34; Symeon the New Theologian, *Catechetical Discourse IV* and the fourteenth century Hesychasts: Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, *Ascetical Works* 91 PG 147:793-800. Cf. also K. Ware, "The Meaning of the Divine Liturgy for the Byzantine Worshipper", in *Church and People in Byzantium*, ed. R. Morris, University of Birmingham, 1987, pp. 7-28, to which I am indebted for this section.
23. cf. Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy* pp. 179-80. This book is a lucid analysis of the development of the Orthodox Liturgy.
24. *Magnesians* vii, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 *The Fathers of the Church*, N.Y., 1947. My translation.
25. cf. Archim, Vasileios, *Hymn of Entry* p. 76f.

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Language fit for God?

Some linguistic comments on *A Prayer Book for Australia*¹

Michael Clyne

Recent issues of this journal have carried discussions of the new Australian Anglican liturgy, such as assessments by the liturgiologists Burge² and Silk³ which discuss very pertinent linguistic issues. The present comments focus on linguistic aspects. Although this paper deals specifically with the Anglican liturgy, much of the content could apply equally to other recent liturgies.

Towards a Theology of Language

There is no explicit language policy underlying *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA). The Church does not have a set of norms that it can refer to as a linguistic codex for its liturgical reform. However, there is a sort of theology of language informing the construction of the liturgy. Also, liturgy, together with the Scriptures, does provide model texts, which are alternatives to a language codex. Christianity, in common with Judaism and Islam, is a religion expressed through language. The Bible is described as the Word of God. St John begins his Gospel with the memorable statement: 'In the beginning was the Word'. Christianity was established as an all-inclusive religion, having overcome many of the social and ethnic distinctions of its time of foundation ('In God there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female' Galatians 3. 28). The implications are:

1. The Scriptures and liturgy must be in a linguistic form that all have access to.

2. Language use must make all feel included.

There are four main functions of language which impinge on worship:

1. Language is the most important medium of communication – with God, other believers, and other people.

2. It is a means of identification. It marks group boundaries and shows who belongs and who does not.

3. It is a means of cognitive and conceptual development. Through it, children learn to discover and experience religious truth and adults learn new concepts of religion.

4. It is an instrument of action. We do things with words, e.g. we use words to pray, the priest uses language to preside at the sacraments.

It needs to be taken into account, of course, that there are semiotic systems other than (verbal) language that are called into play in worship, including music, proxemics (where people sit or stand in relation to each other), gestures, and body movement, both independently or to amplify texts. However, these other systems fall outside the scope of this paper.

From the functions of language and the theological considerations raised, it follows that the language of worship must

- be intelligible
- allow people to identify with it (including everyone, excluding no-one)
- facilitate communication with God
- facilitate the development of an understanding of God.

It must also give the Church a discourse basis which it can take into the secular world.

Language and Liturgical Change

Language is dynamic. The liturgy also needs to be flexible and amenable to changing needs. Theological and philological research have provided new insights. The English language and perceptions of it have changed. Modifications in the liturgy can help us understand what is being said and can help us grow spiritually. Like *An Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB, 1978), the new liturgy, APBA, is clearly a descendant of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP, 1662) in format, content and, to a lesser extent, in language. However, it will serve a very large number of Anglicans whose religious socialization has been entirely through AAPB and in the future, many who will not relate to AAPB either. APBA constitutes a very rich resource of a very diverse national church. It is, in fact, sub-titled 'Liturgical Resources'. It offers much choice, it is more flexible, more generally accessible, more ecumenical than its predecessor. As APBA is intended to help the Church cope better with the diversity of spiritual orientations, of people with hitherto not specifically addressed needs, different generations, and levels of literacy, and outreach to people falling currently outside the Church, language will play a crucial role in this.

Language change does not mean that the beauty of worship needs to be sacrificed to a 'lowest common denominator'. As was the case in 1662 and 1978, beauty has resulted from creativity in moulding contemporary everyday language resources. In fact, where the language used to be somewhat stereotypical and formulaic, the full range of scriptural allusions has been utilised. For instance, God is now not always referred to as *almighty*, but also as *loving, generous, caring, gentle, forgiving, gracious, merciful, righteous, life-giving, creator, and bountiful*.⁴

The use of gender-inclusive language does not detract from its beauty or its theological accuracy. With ease, *Blessed is the man* in Psalm 1 becomes

Blessed are they

in the Psalter rendering by David Frost, himself very much a traditionalist. But in Psalm 128, for instance, *the man* is retained because there it really does refer to a male adult.

On the whole, gender bias has been addressed through gender-unmarked alternatives (eg. they, who), which is the least obtrusive option and one of those which give everyone a feeling of belonging. In a few cases, the explicitly complementarity solution is applied (male and female, brothers and sisters).

Some Linguistic Comments on Aspects of the New liturgy

The intercessions (pp. 184-85) have a common structure. The first part, expressing thanks, is based on the formula:

We give thanks for...

The second, performing a supplication, commences with the performative verb, eg. Give, strengthen, unite.

They and the other forms of intercessions provide a good model in everyday contemporary English for personal prayers. However, the pervasive verb, *grant*, used intransitively, which is recorded as such in Oxford but not in Macquarie, is a most unusual construction in contemporary English (and the Subjunctive is becoming increasingly unusual too), eg.

Grant that we may all honour one another (p.184)

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you (p.185)

Maybe it is not clear what we want God to do; perhaps this is merely expressing God's omnipotence and our inability to foresee how he will use his power to help us.

The occasional prayers for world and nation, society and everyday life, the Church, those in need, and special thanksgivings are rich resources - they are simple but beautiful, diverse, and profound. An example is the thanksgiving for this country, which is full of Australian (including Aboriginal) imagery (p. 218). Here inclusivity has become the theme: eg. The wide open spaces and other natural imagery with which Australians generally identify: the gum tree grew... vast desert and dense forest

Centrality of the Aboriginal past: the rock at the heart of our Land (see below)

Urbanisation: in cities at the water's edge

Aboriginal culture/ creativity: God of holy dreaming

Great Creator Spirit.

You spoke and the gum tree grew

the full day which has dawned

Unity of the persecuted who are seen as a symbol of different sections the Australian population: convicts, hunted, dispossessed.

Multiculturalism: gather from the four ends of the earth...walk together in trust.

The reconciling power of God in Jesus is directed towards the future in Australia. Some of these themes are taken up also, less graphically, in the occasional prayer for Australia Day (p. 204).

As throughout APBA, the style is simple and direct, with much use of co-ordination, e.g.

You spoke *and* the gum tree grew.

Your presence endures *as* the rock at the heart of the land.

Subordination is also as simple as possible:

When you hung on the tree, you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones.

Before I discuss the three forms of the Eucharist, let me say a few words about the texts that are common to all (or at least two) of them. The changes to the best – known parts of the liturgy in accordance with the English Language Liturgical Consultation will give a new sense of external unity to members of the more liturgically-inclined denominations in this country and also to Christians in Australia and other predominantly English-speaking countries. The responses to the Readings (p.122)

Glory to you Lord JESUS Christ and

Praise to you Lord JESUS Christ

are also a feature shared with the new Roman Catholic Mass. Many of the common changes also rectify some problems of gender bias, e.g.

in the Gloria (p.121)

Peace to *God's* people on Earth (not his) – detracts from strong male imagery about God.

In the Creed (p.123)

For us and for our salvation (Not: us men).

We have become sensitive to the overuse of *man* and *men* which supposedly expressed the generic human but does not now, embarrassingly giving the impression of excluding women.

In 'and became truly human' the intended meaning was that he divested himself of his divine features and became like us, he was the second person of the Trinity, and the gender was immaterial. 'Became truly human' is a more correct translation of the Greek *enanthropesanta*⁵. The German, Dutch and Swedish equivalents in the Creed have always been 'became a human', not 'man'.

Also, in the Creed: 'He has spoken through the Prophets' has become 'Who has...' The slight additional cognitive load of a relative clause (which is not unusual in the liturgy) is far outweighed by the advantage of getting rid of the totally unnecessary masculine!

The problem that some congregations used to have relating to where to come in with the positioning of the silence before the Confession in AAPB has been resolved with the introductory sentence before the silence (p.126). The additional line in the Confession:

And in what we have failed to do reintroduces the notion of sins of omission, something that is often a significant problem in a world in which Christians constitute, on the whole, one of the most affluent minorities. The Absolution, while rich in religious truth, is still quite heavy compared to the one in *Uniting in Worship*:

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

Your sins are forgiven.

The change in the Lord's Prayer (p.141) from 'Lead us not into temptation' to 'Save us from the time of trial' is truer to the Greek original *peirasmos* 'put to the test', and 'lead us not into temptation' was a bad mistranslation - God never leads us into temptation, it is Satan and other people who do that! It is true that we now have three English versions of the Lord's Prayer, but that gives us all the choice of a version/s we prefer for our personal use. Those people who speak several languages are fortunate in having different ways of expressing themselves, and most monolinguals do speak differently in different situations, e.g. when they speak in a public and a private or intimate situation (See below).

The Collects present some problems with their length, their syntactic complexity, and the switching between the innovative and the predictably formulaic (at the end). The Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, for instance, which occupies 13 lines in the book, constitutes five levels of syntactic dependency. The Collect for the Sunday between 28 August and 3 September presents not only complex syntax but also a complex juxtaposition between us and each of the three persons of the Trinity:

O God,

whose *Son* has shown the way of the cross
to be the way of life;

transform and renew our minds

that *we* may not be conformed to this world

but may offer ourselves wholly to you as a living sacrifice
through *Jesus Christ our Saviour*;

who lives and reigns with *you* and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Three forms of the Eucharist

Let us consider the language of the three forms of the Eucharist in APBA, as each form has different groups in mind. The first is for those who were socialized through BCP and who still identify very much with it. Like the AAPB 1st order Holy Communion, it is more a translation and adaptation of BCP into contemporary English. The second is a development from the AAPB 2nd order. There are more choices. To begin with, there are five thanksgiving prayers instead of four. They not only represent different historical and theological dimensions; they offer variety for use and a range of resources in language, imagery and emphasis – creation, salvation and forgiveness, stewardship. In Thanksgiving 5, the only responsorial one, we have the beginnings of sharing dialogue between priest and congregation. There is an interaction between God, ourselves and others - in brief:

- (i) *You gave us the world. We should care for it.*
- (ii) *You gave us Jesus. He showed us how to love you and one another.*
- (iii) *He freed us. Now we can love you and one another.*

This is developed between the priest's initial

We thank you

and the congregation's final

We give you thanks and praise.

At a time when dialogue is far more common in our society than monologue and in a context where the congregation is encouraged to think of everyone sharing in the Consecration, a greater opportunity for responsorial interaction could have been welcome in more than one of the Thanksgiving prayers.

While the 2nd order is relatively demanding in terms of literacy, it is still, in many parts, beautiful in its simplicity. Burge⁶ draws our attention to the second section of Thanksgiving 5.

'We thank you that when we turned away from you...', which contains only one word (*another*) that is not monosyllabic. This, in my opinion, in no way detracts from the effectiveness of this section, so rich in scriptural imagery. Apart from the fifth form, the Thanksgiving prayers do contain old impersonal legal formulae and subjunctive forms.

On the whole, the vocabulary and structures employed are within the range to be found in contemporary written English. This can be verified according to Johansson and Hofland's⁷ frequency analysis of the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus encompassing a million words from a range of texts – including newspapers of all kinds, and in the fields of religion, trades and hobbies, fiction and non-fiction literature, reports, and academic writing. Words such as *commemorate*, *fullness*, and *dawned*, were found less than ten times in the corpus (and *begotten* not at all). Other items with less than ten occurrences in the corpus

included some from the religious domain in the Eucharist, 2nd order, such as *ascension* (once in the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen corpus), *atonement* (twice), *exaltation* (not at all), *forgiveness* (5 times), *holiness* (not at all), and *resurrection* (9 times). However, *holy* was found 39 times across six text categories, *forgive* 15 times across five text categories, and *exalted* six times in four text categories. Clearly, the special register of the religious domain, of which these are part, is essential in order to transmit or impart the truths of the Faith. On the other hand, there needs to be a strong awareness that these keywords fall outside general everyday usage and need to be acquired conceptually as well as linguistically. I had marked *wrought* in

You *wrought* from nothing a universe...

(Thanksgiving 2) as peripheral to everyday usage and was interested to find ten instances from six text categories in the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus. On the other hand, always was recorded as having registered 516 occurrences in 15 text categories.

The third order has been described as the *Herald-Sun* readers' Eucharist. It adheres to a fairly simple Subject-Verb-Object word order with some relative clauses (*who*), and adverbial clauses of purpose (*so that*) and reason (*for*) and the occasional infinitive clause (e.g. *to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise*). Vocabulary and formulae are generally high-frequency and colloquial (e.g. *join in, thank you, broken your holy laws, change [us]*) As Burge writes⁸:
...people belonging to the traditional literate culture have no right to insist that the Gospel should be proclaimed only, or even primarily, to those with a refined, highly educated taste'.

The 3rd Order is not only simpler in language but also simpler to grasp theologically. It includes the 6th form of the Thanksgiving. Note that the Apostles' Creed is here an alternative to the Nicene Creed. (Young members of the congregation would rarely have occasion to encounter it even though it is so prevalent in other branches of the Church.)

Some meanings seem to be changed in the interests of simplification,

eg. On the night before he died (cf. other versions – ...before he was betrayed.

Baptism

In the new Prayer Book, Baptism is firmly based in Sunday services, and alternative services are offered depending on whether it is integrated into Holy Communion or Morning Prayer/Evening Prayer. Confirmation is removed from the special category of episcopal services and joins Baptism as a service of initiation. Baptism or Confirmation is embedded into the Eucharist so that the entire service is seen as continuous discourse and is not segmented by different

styles and the turning over of pages. The congregation plays an increased role through responses, and in my opinion these and the directives of the priest are very strong and effective.

Live as a disciple of Christ,
fight the good fight,
finish the race,
keep the faith.

The sponsors have far more to say, and perhaps some of the statements of the Faith could have been shared more responsorially with the congregation.

Diversity

The language of APBA has, I believe, successfully taken into account the diversity of Australian Anglicanism. In a small-scale study in Melbourne, Gary Bouma and I⁹ found linguistic variation between Pietists (conservative Evangelicals and Charismatics), conservative Anglo-Catholics, and ‘mainstream Anglicans’ in the way they talked about life experiences and values. These differences could be identified through vocabulary, including formulaic expressions and collocations (such as ‘coming into wholeness’, ‘bless with’, ‘since coming to know the Lord Jesus’, ‘at one with God’), and grammatical patterns (e.g. active voice with God or Jesus as subject vs. passive). Pietists, especially women, made the most use of the religious register and ‘mainstream Anglicans’ the least. The latter switched most from the secular to the religious register in certain contexts and paraphrased their beliefs in general terms and hedged the most. Conservative Anglo-Catholics applied religious vocabulary metaphorically. Again APBA enables each of these groups (or rather, cut-off points within a continuum) to take over its language as a resource into their own discourse in the way that suits them best.

The switching between religious and secular registers (‘Church language’ and ‘normal language’) prevalent among some Anglicans is not unlike *diglossia* - functional specialisation between a superposed **standard language** characteristic of a reading mode, of formality, authority and distance, and the vernacular, **dialect**, characteristic of speaking mode, of spontaneity, interaction, intimacy, and identity.¹⁰

Closing Remark

From the above it will be evident that APBA has gone a long way to satisfy the needs outlined at the beginning of this paper, based on the functions of language. Perhaps a future revision could consider a greater balance between what is said by the priest (or minister) and by the congregation. There is much more that can be said about the breadth and diversity of APBA, about the rich

resources it offers, the flowing discourse. This is up to all of us to discover, to enjoy and to assess. The development of a liturgy is something dynamic.

Postscript

The liturgy is used together with the Scriptures and the Hymnal. It is important that, insofar as this is possible, the Bible translation and the hymns reflect the intention of APBA. It is my understanding that some of the principles outlined at the beginning of this paper are also being implemented in the revised *Australian Hymn Book*. The New Revised Standard Version has gone a long way to address the issue of gender-inclusive language and also employs contemporary (not very formal) English, especially in the New Testament.

eg. So God created *humankind* in his own image. (Gen.1.27)

Can human beings be pure before *their* maker? (Job 4.17)

One does not live by bread alone (Mt.4.4)

For *all* must carry *their* own loads. (Gal. 6.5)

The Australian version of the Good News Bible creates an Australian flavour, with the use of a limited number of distinctive vocabulary items, enough to make people identify with the translation. The Good News Bible is moderately sensitive to gender bias, though less so than the New Revised Standard Version, eg.

So God created *human beings* (Gen.1.27)

Can *anyone* be righteous before the Creator? (Job 4.17)

BUT *Man* cannot live on bread alone (Mt.4.4)

Everyone has to carry *his* own load (Gal. 6.5)

However, it avoids potentially anti-Jewish expression in St John's Gospel, which gives the impression of negative stereotyping¹¹, eg.

Then *the people* picked up stones to throw at him. (Jn. 10. 31) (NRSV; The Jews...)

...because they were afraid of *the Jewish authorities* (Jn. 7.12)

(NRSV: ..for fear of the Jews.)

I wonder if any translations are 'non-discriminatory' in every way, bearing in mind cultural aspects of translation?

NOTES

1. This article had its genesis in a discussion paper prepared for the Melbourne Diocesan Liturgical Committee. I am indebted to members of the Committee, especially Ray Hartley, Jim Minchin, Elizabeth Smith, and Kevin Westfold for

helpful suggestions. This article also benefited from discussions with Penny Jamieson and Grant Ebscumbe to whom I express my thanks too.

2. Evan Burge, A Prayer Book for Australia – A Watershed for Australian Anglicans, in *Australian Journal of Liturgy* 5, 1995, 63-86.
3. David Silk, An Australian Epiclesis, in *Australian Journal of Liturgy* 5, 1996, 130-144.
4. Burge, idem., p 66.
5. Burge, idem.
6. Burge, idem.
7. Stig Johansson and Knut Hofland, *Frequency analysis of English vocabulary and grammar: based on the LOB Corpus*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989.
8. Burge, idem., p 67.
9. Michael Clyne and Gary Bouma, Talking about one's life and faith: A polit project on language and religion, in *Text* 14, 1994, 167-184.
10. An example of this language situation is the German language part of Switzerland. Charles Ferguson, Diglossia, in *Word* 15, 325-344; Michael Clyne *The German Language in a Changing Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.
11. The Diocesan Liturgical Committee's attention was drawn to this issue by the late Brother Gilbert Sinden SSM.

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In Search of Meaning

Christian Initiation & the Rite of Confirmation in the Methodist Church of New Zealand

Part II

Preparation, Celebration & Participation

Brian R. Dawson

In Part 1 of this article we were concerned primarily with reconsidering and defining what confirmation actually *is* and *could be* in terms of understanding. Rather than offering a complete review, allow me to just remind you that we sought first to recognise that Christian initiation is both process and event and then to redefine the rite of confirmation itself with reference to four distinct, but intertwined, points.

The ultimate aim of this study is to provide some sense of meaning to confirmation within modern Methodism. But no model, theology or idea can truly achieve meaning until it is grounded in the realities of practice. What needs to happen, therefore, to give 'meaning' to our new model for confirmation outlined previously?

Such a question may well necessitate long and far-reaching answers, and I do not pretend to be able to cover them all here. But while what follows may present only the tip of the iceberg, it may at least serve to indicate a path we might do well to follow further.

Here I want to draw together the intertwining strands of process and events. In doing this we must acknowledge that, in reality, Christian initiation does not break down easily into clearly definable segments. But although in practice the divisions are somewhat artificial, for the sake of simplicity we will look individually at what I have identified as three key elements of initiation; Preparation, Celebration and Participation. Finally, we shall briefly explore some of the implications this work has for the church.

Preparation – Made, Not Born

Despite Methodism's long association with education in a variety of forms, Methodists, for the most part, are unfamiliar with the term 'catechesis'. We prefer instead to use phrases such as 'Christian education' to describe the general instruction offered, and 'Confirmation classes' or 'Preparation for baptism' when referring to specific periods of preparation or learning.

For many, “education” suggests long days spent in schooling. As with the terminology used in relation to Christian initiation, the words and phrases used to describe our preparation for full participation in the faith community can often work against our best efforts, creating preconceived ideas that may be diametrically opposed to our true intentions.

As Methodists we have a unique opportunity to reclaim a term steeped in Christian history and tradition, yet largely devoid of any misconceptions in our own denomination. Catechesis in its most literal form refers to the process of ‘celebrating or imitating,’ or ‘repeating another’s words or deeds’. In many denominations today, however, catechesis has been seen in terms of learning through prearranged systems to ‘say the right things at the right time’. Sadly the same can often be said for our own processes, although different terminology may be used to describe them.

Contemporary catechesis is commonly modelled on the assumptions of a ‘Christianised’ medieval Europe.¹ In that climate, one might expect that the questions requiring answers during a period of preparation were at least being asked. Such cannot be said today. Christianity, while still regarded as a major world religion, can no longer be said to form the basis of our society. Increasingly, Christian concepts, ideas and ideals are foreign to large portions of the population.

In terms of Christian initiation, the implications of this shift are dramatic. In a perfect world the primary place of catechesis and Christian formation would be the family unit, and indeed many examples are modelled on this basis. The world, however, is not perfect, and we can no longer suppose that the family unit is either cohesive or bound to the church. If we are to take seriously the desire to see baptismal vows brought to reality and fruition, it must be the church which takes the primary responsibility for catechesis.²

So what goals are we striving for in our attempts to catechise? In many contemporary catechetical programmes, the desired end result appears to be the passing on of pre-existing ideas, concepts, questions and answers. In some cases this may be deemed appropriate. The so-called ‘timeless basics’ of the Christian faith may remain virtually untouched and unchanged by time and experience. These instances, however, would tend to be the exception rather than the rule. For the most part a new age will present new questions and challenges, demanding new answers drawn from experience and revelation rather than a text book or catechism. We must be forever wary of the temptation to indoctrinate rather than educate.

The mistake most commonly made when approaching catechesis is believing that the goal is to pass on answers. When we all too often discover that these answers don’t match up with our students’ questions, we begin to pass on the questions also. Our emphasis requires a shift, I believe, from *teaching* to

modelling. True catechesis will attempt to *model* rather than *impose* learnings and lifestyles.

The intended end result of catechesis must always be *conversion*. In our ‘making of Christians’ (to use Tertullian’s terminology) we have an ideal opportunity to concentrate on this cornerstone of John Wesley’s theology. The church itself is described as a “community of conversion”³, constantly seeking renewal and fresh revelations.

If our confirmation processes suffer from confusion, it is probably due to this great fact: that we have lost the sense that we are out to *convert* people, not merely to ‘relate’ to them, or even to ‘instruct’ them; that our purpose is to lead people to the place where they will make a fundamental turn in their lives, from self to Christ ...⁴

‘Conversion’ in this context refers to a gradual process of revelation. As each question is asked, a new stone is turned and more questions are revealed. The process of conversion can only be said to have taken place when a person can ‘own’ their own answers in such a way that their own sense of certainty in a discovered truth leads them down new paths.

To catechise in this way demands new approaches, and faith. To lead people towards discovering their own truths is a risky affair. We must acknowledge and accept that the ‘truth’ that becomes ‘owned’ by someone else may differ from that which we ourselves own. Still, as we seek to model a way of being that strives after new understandings, we must have faith in the integrity of our faith, and trust in the eventual outcome.

New approaches to catechesis will demand radical changes in our methodology. We must find ways to offer ‘signposts’ towards questions, rather than simply supplying the questions ourselves complete with compact answers. We might discover helpful models for this in the educational techniques of other peoples and cultures, where the key to learning lies in *experience*.⁵

In general, when we talk about catechesis or Christian education, we have tended to focus on ‘learning’ about God. But in what ways have we attempted to do this learning? By explaining the bases for our faith, and attempting to give light to the mysteries of the church’s life and history, we have concerned ourselves primarily with passing on ‘head-knowledge’ of who and what God and the church are. Our new model for confirmation, however, demands more cultivation of ‘heart-knowledge’. Talking *about* God deals with theology. True catechesis, however, must focus on the *experience* of God. In Christian terms, catechesis in this model is concerned primarily with *spirituality*. “Logically, spirituality must precede theology – one must have the experience first if one is ever going to have anything to explain.”⁶

I have previously recognised the dangers of returning to the old merely because it is old. Here, however, I believe we should turn to the experiences of the early church. Not because of what it is, but because of what it offers. “In many ways, the world in which Christians live today more accurately parallels the ancient, pagan world than the medieval ‘Christian’ one.”⁷

In the early church, catechesis took place in four identifiable stages: enquiry and evangelism – the catechumenate – the period of election – the mystagogia. The structure of these stages illustrates the emphasis on placing the *experience* of Christ ahead of the *explanation* of Christian belief. One writer on early Christian education offers us this insight:

What is clear is that the examination was on the manner of life of the catechumens. No questions were asked concerning their understanding of Christian doctrine, or even of their acceptance of Jesus Christ, although presumably some form of rudimentary belief must have been responsible for their initial approach to the church ... [T]he instruction which they received was primarily in Christian living and was to enable them to adopt what we would call a Christian lifestyle, not to make them theologians. ⁸

Learning For A Lifetime

The models of the early church offer us an example of what might be called a ‘wholistic’ approach to catechesis. Within the process we discover all the essential components of Christian education – grounding in scripture, liturgy, doctrine, prayer and service – all approached from an experiential understanding.

Of course, some elements of early church practice fail to sit well with contemporary reality. Adult initiation, for instance, was the norm in the early church. In our tradition, infant baptism is the normal practice. Much frustration has been expressed over the ‘problem’ of parents bringing infants to be baptised and then never being seen again. Much of the criticism in this case, I believe, should be levelled more at the church than the parents. Even in instances when the family continues to participate regularly with the faith community we seldom follow through on the initial baptism event. Sunday schools and youth groups, more often seen as holding pens for youngsters than opportunities for constructive catechesis, are the sum total of our educational activities until such time as confirmation becomes a possibility. Then, with uncharacteristic energy, we provide a ‘crash-course’ in the Christian faith and church membership which might, at best, cover a three month period. To harvest its true benefits, we must come to see catechesis as a life-long process. ‘From the cradle to the grave’ is a common way for presbyters to describe their pastoral responsibilities, but we seldom see this in action.

There would be obvious difficulties in providing a structured programme of catechesis from infancy onwards. But we should not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of seeing all catechesis as requiring an active process. Much of what we learn in life is absorbed passively, without our even realising we are learning it. The same is true for catechesis. Modelling a Christian lifestyle that demonstrates a seeking after truth and revelation must be a constant and deliberate activity of the church, but this should not be seen as requiring, or belonging within, a 'class' or 'programme'. Structured programmes are important and necessary, and our modelling should be designed to encourage people towards these. The aim is to instil through our modelling a desire to learn and experience more. Our structured programmes must then be designed to fulfil this desire.⁹

The longest and most crucial stage in this process is the first. The period of enquiry should allow years, not months. The danger is that this period can be wasted. The early church model of sponsorship, I believe, should be encouraged. We are brought to baptism by our parents and, in some cases, sponsors or Godparents. All too often, however, this represents both the beginning and end of the responsibility. Ideally, every baptised child should have a sponsor from within the faith community who will continue to act as friend, mentor and guide throughout that person's faith development.

As I have already indicated, confirmation belongs a fair distance down the track. For a variety of reasons, the early teenage years are not an appropriate time for confirmation to be considered. Before carrying on, it is important to note that this has implications in terms of the traditional structure of the initiatory process.

Liturgical purists tend to demand a return to the historical pattern of baptism – confirmation – eucharist. The problem is that few would also demand raising the age of first communion to the late teens or beyond. Eucharist is an important, even essential, activity of the entire faith community. The baptised but still unconfirmed are as much a part of that community as babies are of their family, despite not yet being ready to participate fully in that family's affairs.

I strongly believe that children should be brought to the communion table at as early an age as possible. There is no greater sign of belonging in the Christian community as this. Yet there must also come a time when a person is no longer *brought*, but comes in his or her own right. Should this wait until after confirmation? I think not.

The second stage of catechesis begins when a person is ready and able to begin searching in earnest for more answers. Although there are risks involved with putting ages on anything, ten or eleven, I believe, represents a good time for this. The first indications of puberty herald a time of searching and questioning. Often feared in the church as a time of rebellion, we should instead welcome this as a great opportunity. As young people begin to search for their own identities

and place in the world, we as the community of faith can encourage and challenge them to do this within the context of our faith. Rather than shut them out as rebellious and uncontrollable, we should provide open doors, acknowledging that this is a time when mistakes will be made and often impetuous questions asked, and that it is from these experiences that we grow.

Now more than ever, as their world changes at a blinding speed, young people need a firm foundation, a place of belonging. By welcoming them to the table in their own right, just as this onset begins, we signal strongly that the church *is* such a place. This should be done in a liturgical context. Indeed, we need to find appropriate liturgical rites and celebrations for many points in the initiatory process. As people travel towards 'Christian maturity' we must constantly acknowledge their belonging among us, and the difference that their presence makes in our lives.

This is an important point to note. Although we are looking at confirmation as the point where one is 'ordained' to formal ministry and service, we should not imagine that prior to this time we have been the only ones giving. Indeed, part of the process of belonging involves participation. It can be said that a sign of no longer being considered merely a guest in someone's home is when you are expected to help with the dishes. The same is true of the church. If we truly want to demonstrate our acceptance of a person in our midst, we must expect that person to play a part in what we do and how we do it. A major acknowledgement right from the start at baptism must be made in terms of the difference that this person's presence will make in our community. A lesson that can be well learned from scripture and history is that God is all too capable of working with the not yet ready.

Having been welcomed to the table, the young person is also welcomed into a new stage of catechesis. During this time a number of elements can be introduced, but among them must be two factors. The first is an acknowledgement of the time of searching that adolescence represents. As a church we must encourage and legitimate young people's search for their own truths.

The second factor is a consistent pointing to the future. This must be handled carefully and sensitively. Once again, we must think of this period in terms of years rather than months. Perceived pressure to 'become what the church wants me to become' will likely lead to an escape from the faith community at the first available exit point. But still we must begin to lead the way slowly to confirmation, encouraging them to discover not only who they are, but what ministries and gifts they have to offer.

Only the individuals themselves can truly know when they are ready to enter the next stage of catechesis. Indeed, a primary criterion for preparation for confirmation must be the *genuine desire* to be confirmed. Certainly we can

encourage and challenge, but we must never see catechesis as an automatic progression from one stage to the next no matter what.

Once people have reached their late teens and are wanting to be confirmed, they will be presented once again to the community in a liturgical celebration and a serious period of preparation (similar to the period of election in the early church) must be provided. Still coming from an experiential base, candidates must be encouraged and instructed in the meanings of church membership. This should include a deliberate search for strengths and weaknesses, a testing of ministry skills and opportunities.

Contemporary practices tend to concentrate on this period. But we must come to recognise it as a continuation of what has gone before. During this time a person is building on experiences and understandings already gained, not starting from scratch. An appropriate amount of time, however, should still be allowed. I would go so far as to suggest that this period be broken into two sections. The first could begin at the start of Lent, and concentrate on the understanding of what they are preparing for. The Easter celebration marks the point where, having come to understand something of what lies ahead, the candidate comes again before the assembly and commits him or her self to the path laid out. At the same point the community makes a commitment to encouraging and working with the candidate, preparing both him or her and themselves for the confirmation event.

Confirmation itself belongs on Pentecost Sunday. No time better serves to illustrate the giving of new life and ministry. Between Easter and Pentecost the preparation takes place in earnest. The candidate experiences and learns, and the church observes and takes note. Finally both candidate and church are ready. The faith community is satisfied with and ready to accept the ministry of the candidate. The candidate is prepared to make the required commitment, with at least a semblance of an understanding of what this truly means. Only then can the confirmation take place.

Celebration – Affirmation & Acceptance

If catechesis is the way in which we give structure to the initiatory process, the confirmation service and liturgy is what gives voice to all that we have learnt and become. Here we turn from the process to the event. Ideally, as noted above, this will take place on Pentecost Sunday. This presents both problems and opportunities. Traditionally, confirmation has been done by the bishop. Our branch of Methodism, of course, does not have bishops, but still we have traditionally left the confirming to either the parish or district superintendents. Roman Catholicism, in the wake of Vatican II and the implementation of the RCIA, has begun to work towards making the local priest the focal point of the

confirmation event. While this represents a positive reevaluating of the place of the local church community, it also serves to weaken the wider interpretation of the church.

Methodism has also moved away from asking superintendents to lead confirmation services. Again, I see this as a shame. One of the truly unique aspects of our church is the connexional structure. As Methodists, we are a part of a wider church family. Confirmation should, I believe, be a time when we acknowledge and celebrate this, stating clearly that the ministries to be exercised by those being confirmed will benefit not just our own small community, but the church as a whole. As we have already noted, a significant part of the confirmation event is the acknowledgment and acceptance of the candidates gifts and ministries. As Methodists, we must also acknowledge that, because our church is wider than the local community, it is the whole connexion that must accept those ministries. The superintendent is the representative of that wider connexion. As such, it is appropriate that he or she take an active part in the service, welcoming and accepting on behalf of the connexion the newly confirmed as a minister in our midst. But how can the superintendent be everywhere on the same day? One answer would be to make our confirmation services district events. In this way we could celebrate both the confirmations and our connexional unity.

The Liturgy

When considering an appropriate liturgy for confirmation I have taken into account both the ideal of this taking place on Pentecost Sunday and the need to incorporate the entire gathered community in the service. For the candidates, the time of preparation should culminate in a retreat beginning on the Friday evening. During that period the emphasis should be on quiet contemplation of what lies ahead, and final preparations for the celebration on Sunday.

In preparing a liturgy for confirmation, I have re-introduced the use of oil and anointing to the rite. Although uncommon in Methodist circles, I believe these to be powerful symbols which will be of some assistance in building an understanding of the role of the Spirit in the event, an understanding which (as noted previously) we are sadly lacking.

The laying on of hands is a particularly sensitive issue within our church. Certain cultural circumstances may make it unwise in some situations, but in general I believe it to be an important sign of what we are doing in confirmation. Recent debates have concluded that the laying on of hands is an appropriate action for ordination and, as we have already discussed, confirmation is itself a significant 'ordination'.

Participation – The Mystagogia and Beyond

In the early church the period of mystagogia included a significant amount of time explaining the meaning of the eucharist and other church activities. It is most likely, in terms of the model laid out here, that much of this will have been covered prior to confirmation. There is still an opportunity, however, to explore things in still more depth. An ‘after confirmation’ period also presents opportunities for on-going practical support in terms of specific church projects the newly confirmed member may be involved in. A time of ‘debriefing’ may also be appropriate, answering questions raised by the confirmation service, and getting valuable feedback about the preparation period.

There is another reason for a structured post-confirmation period. A common feeling among those who have been confirmed is “so that’s it!?!” In particular, when we consider the fairly drawn out catechesis process I have outlined, there is a distinct danger of people feeling they have been left high and dry after the event is over. There are really two issues here. One relates to the ways and contexts in which the preparation takes place. The other concerns the responsibility that rests on the church to live up to the commitments made in confirmation. Both of these are touched on below.

All that is accomplished during the long period of preparation and the celebration itself will be for nothing if it is not followed by full and active participation. Those preparing for confirmation must be clear that learning and growth does not come to an end with the confirmation service. Indeed, all that we have prepared for is contained in the words already quoted from St John Chrysostom, “I enter your service, O Christ”. Confirmation marks neither a beginning nor end, but rather the continuation of a journey already begun, but far from being over.

Christian initiation should be regarded as a constantly evolving process. What worked yesterday may not necessarily work today, and what works today may very well be totally useless in the future. This has been the case in the past. Indeed, the primary reason for my suggesting the changes contained here is that we have often become stuck in old ways of working that, although probably quite appropriate at the time they were conceived, simply fail to deliver the goods in today’s context.

Likewise the balance between process and event must be carefully monitored. Although I have placed much emphasis on the process, the confirmation event itself is crucial also. Worship, above all else, must be meaningful. If the event holds little or no meaning for all involved, then we have wasted our time. Alongside this is the very real fact that the gathered community is the visible manifestation of the scattered church. And confirmation, above all, is a recognition and celebration of the role and nature of the church. In the confirmation event we

stand together and say, 'This is who we are and what we are about. Come, stand alongside us and help make God's kingdom on earth a reality'.

Conclusion – The road ahead

The new model of confirmation and preparation outlined in this article presents both options and implications for the church. It should be noted that Methodism has sought to address at least some of these issues in the past, and in some cases the results have even been incorporated in the church's life.¹⁰

These, unfortunately, tend to be the exceptions rather than the rule. In most cases new ideas and developments are either acknowledged as having some worth and then filed away for possible future reference, or implemented only in part. The latter could be said for the moves towards confirmation enshrined within MPCC. Although confirmation itself has become widely accepted within New Zealand Methodism, the implications of that acceptance have, for the most part, been ignored.

It is possible that some of what is suggested here could be put in place without any major changes in church attitudes or practice. Ultimately, however, if the concepts and ideas contained here are to have any lasting value, and most importantly, meaning, the church must embrace not only the ideas themselves, but also the implications and challenges they represent.

A significant weakness in our contemporary approach to confirmation lies in the involvement, or lack thereof, of the *entire faith community* in both the process and the event. When preparing people for confirmation we have a tendency to form 'classes' led by presbyters or other church leaders. For many, the first (and sometimes, last) significant contact they have with the wider church community during their period of preparation is in the confirmation service itself.

The result of this tendency is that, at best, the confirmation class becomes a community in and of itself. By meeting regularly together, and learning and experiencing growth side by side, those who are being prepared to participate more fully in the life of the church can inadvertently become a sort of church by themselves. This is fine for the group. They become closer and stronger as a unit. The church, however, fails to gain any benefit from participating with the candidates as they prepare, and ultimately, when the service is over, the group disbands and its members are left without the spiritual 'home' which it had become. Somewhere along the way a breakdown has occurred in the most crucial area of the process – the integration of those being prepared into the wider community of faith.

For our new model of confirmation and preparation to work, we must acknowledge that the involvement of the whole faith community is an essential part of the process. "Christian catechesis is always personal and individual, and,

at the same time, social and communal.”¹¹ This must be both lived and explained. The community must make urgent efforts to be both involved in the lives of those being prepared and involve them in their own. Equally it must be continually stressed to those preparing for confirmation that “the primary community of their training is not their class itself, but the church.”¹²

In the same way, the community must continue to be involved *after confirmation*. The commitments made in the confirmation service include the acceptance and welcoming of the newly confirmed’s ministry and gifts. To live up to that commitment, the church must ensure that people have ample opportunities to exercise those ministries. Although it may now be acceptable for society at large to train people for work that may not be available to them upon completion, the church must remain committed to making full use of the gifts and resources at its disposal.

Of course none of this will be of any value if the community itself is lacking in spiritual depth. We have said that the ultimate goal of catechesis and confirmation is conversion, but what hope is there of this if the community itself fails to manifest conversion in its life and actions? We cannot hope to model the Christian lifestyle if we have not first experienced it for ourselves. For Christians to be effectively ‘built’, “the community which seeks to build them must itself have unambiguously embodied the Christian identity and life.”¹³ Can this be honestly said of the Methodist Church today?

The church faces many challenges as the end of the millenium approaches. Today many are asking anew whether we will survive to see in the new century. Emphases on social justice and action, whilst being important and an essential fruit of the Christian calling, fail to recognise that, ultimately, the church stands or falls on the health or otherwise of the local faith community.

What will it take to renew the church? How can we address falling membership and growing disillusionment with denominational ties in general? A reconsidering of confirmation and its implications may not be the final solution, but perhaps, as we begin to travel the road and visit once again what we mean by terms such as ‘membership’ and ‘ministry’, the discoveries encountered may result “not only in a renewal of confirmation itself, but in a revitalisation of the entire community of faith.”¹⁴ Such a goal is surely worthy of further pursuit.

for some time and are now ready to begin a new stage of their journeys. Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to follow and to serve, and in this service of confirmation we acknowledge the gifts and ministries that these people bring with them. In confirming their faith and readiness, we are ourselves renewed and revitalised for the work that awaits us.

NOTES

1. Those assumptions were formed at a time when Christianity and Christian concepts were inextricably woven into the fabric of society. 'God', 'Church' and 'faith' were as much a part of one's everyday experience and thinking as 'eating', 'drinking' and 'breathing'. Church and society were, for the most part, indivisible.
2. Gary Davis in Arthur J. Kubick (ed.) *Confirming The Faith Of Adolescents; An Alternative Future for Confirmation*, 1991, p 138
3. Raymond Kemp. Quoted in Kubick p 140
4. Davis in Kubick p 140 (Emphases his)
5. The Australian aboriginal, for instance, might choose to pass on the secrets of successful hunting by explaining the rules of aerodynamics with the aid of a whiteboard. Instead, however, the aboriginal student learns to hunt by *experiencing* the real thing. Only after the student has experienced the hunt is the process actually explained.
6. Davis in Kubick p 141
7. Davis in Kubick p 138
8. Leonel Mitchell in Westerhoff & Edwards pp 51f
9. Many churches today take the easy way out when it comes to structured programmes by relying on manuals and books. These may be a helpful tool, but ultimately every programme must be different, just as every person will come with differing questions and levels of experience. The only answer is to tailor each programme to the needs of both church and participant.
10. Most notably in the understandings of baptism as contained in MPCC. (*'Membership and the Place of Children in the Church (MPCC)'* Faith and Order statement, Methodist Church Conference Minutes, 1959.)
11. Westerhoff & Edwards p 167
12. Davis in Kubick p 145
13. Davis in Kubick p 147
14. Davis in Kubick p 147

Book Review

The Word in the Desert – Anglican and Roman Catholic Reaction to Liturgical Reform

Barry Spurr, The Lutherworth Press, Cambridge U.K.,
220 pages, about \$35 through the Prayer Book Society

Dr Spurr's title, *The Word in the desert*, a quotation from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, implies a parallel between the temptations that assailed Christ in the desert and the assaults we make upon our language. The title suggests that the author's main concern is the language of the liturgy assailed in recent years by "shrieking voices scolding, mocking, or merely chattering." Those responsible for liturgical revision in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches are depicted as having turned their backs upon "the transcendent power of sacred language". Instead, they have eagerly embraced an all-pervasive secular culture. This has led, in the author's view, to the adoption of humanistic and feministic liturgies, as aesthetically unworthy as they are theologically vacuous and unscriptural. Not surprisingly, there has been a strong reaction by the theologically conservative and the linguistically sensitive. This reaction during the thirty-three years from the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 is the object of the author's attention.

It is clear from the outset that Spurr is one of the "reactionaries". His study is itself part of the literature of protest. He does not find much, if anything, to admire in modern liturgical writing. Thus he dismisses or overlooks *Eucharistic Prayer A* published for study in 1986 by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), the published drafts of *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995), and the deeply felt and economically expressed prayers in *All Desires Known* by Janet Morley (1992). The rich imagery of the Opening Prayers (Collects) of the revised Roman Sacramentary (currently awaiting official approval) and the terse poetic vigour of the new ICEL Liturgical Psalter (1995) unfortunately came too late to be considered. At least some of these might have been seen to have literary merit and a sense of transcendence in addition to the directness, simplicity and relevance sought by modern liturgical commissions and many congregations.

The book, then, is one-sided. Its conservative and literary stance accepted, it is a good book – provocative and lively. Those who judge the writing of others are at risk of having their own writing criticised. Spurr, however, writes

evocatively and powerfully. Would that his gifts were enlisted on the side of liturgical renewal, as those of Professor David Frost have sometime been – almost against his will.

For all its partisanship, the book has a pleasingly detached, and occasionally ironical, manner in its treatment of some of the critics of liturgical change. Dr Spurr does not hesitate to observe, for instance, “a marked tension” between the tolerant principles of the Prayer Book Society and one of “its other pledges: to uphold the worship and doctrine of the Church of England as enshrined [*sic*] in the Book of Common Prayer.”

One Latin syllable inserted here is worth pages on the difference between the Church as a living organism inspired by the Spirit and the Church as a structure built to defy change. The author continues:

The tension becomes acute when some of the polemic of the Society’s members, an element of which is devoted to furious, and often unreasoned, denunciations of *The Alternative Service Book* and equally emotive and impassioned defences of the Book of Common Prayer, is encountered. (p.73)

Such observations are testimony to the author’s usual academic objectivity. They do not detract from one of his own most deeply felt judgements, shared by this reviewer and many of the critics Spurr refers to, that there is a corresponding contradiction between the egalitarian philosophies espoused by many clergy and their simultaneous refusal to recognise the sensitivities and spiritual needs of those who prefer traditional Prayer Book language. Translated into other terms, the cry that the Church must move on into the next century and abandon all forms of antiquarianism is the equivalent of destroying all buildings in styles before those of 1960 or of requiring people to listen only to the latest rock or pop music and never to hear Mozart or Beethoven except in the privacy of their homes.

The book ends with an amusingly provocative Appendix – the Satirical Critique. Many a truth is spoken in jest. Some extreme examples of contemporary liturgical writing are justly pilloried. When *Private Eye* printed in June 1983 a version of John 17. 1-2, it was not indulging in parody, but quoting from an “inclusive language” lectionary seriously proposed for use in the churches:

Having spoken these words, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, ‘God my Mother and Father, the hour has come; glorify your Child that your Child may glorify you, since you have given that Child power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given your Child.’

Spurr fittingly comments:

The complication of language (rather than the simplification reputedly sought by renewing liturgiologists) is preferred in order that the odious masculine noun and personal pronoun might be avoided. (p. 201)

Yet it is a pity that the book ends with what Spurr calls “a delightful lampoon of liturgical writing” – a version of the twenty-third psalm which begins:

The Lord and I are in a shepherd/sheep situation; and I am in a position of negative need.

He prostrates me in a green-belt grazing area; He conducts me directionally parallel to non-torrential aqueous liquid.

After quoting the remainder of this lampoon, he draws from it important conclusions. Admittedly, this is in an Appendix. Yet it is hardly fair for a serious work of scholarship to have as its final word a series of judgements based not on an actual modern text but on a parody of one. Moreover, the language found in the parody is not typical of any genuine liturgical text but rather of the pretentiously opaque style cultivated by too many sociologists, educationalists and third-rate academics. To call it a lampoon of modern *liturgical* writing is wrong-headed. To draw from it the book’s final conclusion (p.208) that “contemporary liturgical writing ... is demonstrably less worthy aesthetically than the idioms and cadence of the Book of Common Prayer” is at best a kind of sleight-of-hand.

In the most recent “inclusive language” version of the Psalter, the ICEL liturgical translation, which more than any other has avoided Prayer Book idiom and cadences, the first two verses of Psalm 23 are as follows:

The Lord is my shepherd,

I need nothing more.

You give me rest in green meadows,

setting me near calm waters,

where you revive my spirit.¹

The ICEL translation replaces the flowing Latin rhythms of Coverdale (not Cranmer, unfortunately printed as “Crammer” on p. 215) with the strong accentual rhythms of Hebrew. It can hardly be claimed, however, as Spurr concludes about “contemporary liturgical writing”, that this shows “the priority of relevance”, that it is “opaque ... for all its claims of comprehensibility”, that it is “afflicted with jargon”, or that it is “euphemistic” rather than “forthrightly frank”. It has its own integrity as poetry. Both the ICEL and Coverdale versions are “worthy aesthetically” but in different ways. A beautifully made wooden chair and a splendid golden throne can be appreciated equally for what each is.

In several places, Spurr joins the chorus of those who deplore the modern tendency to replace traditional relative clauses with independent sentences. In the context of discussing feminist liturgy, he speaks ironically of

the curious modern style of liturgical writing in which the petitioner appears to be informing God of His/Her role: ‘you told your people that they would be

carried at the breast and on your knees' (with the sense, here, that the Almighty has fallen short of His/Her promises). (p.139)

(The justification for Spurr's parenthetical remark eludes me. It would, however, have been pertinent to ask where God made that promise – perhaps Isaiah 40 : 11, where lambs are gathered into God's bosom, or Isaiah 66, where the nourishing breasts are those of the restored Jerusalem.)

Spurr's strongest condemnation of this feature of modern liturgies is on p.185:

This is followed by a 'prayer' which ... contains that stylistic feature of modern liturgical composition in English which is most ludicrous to the intelligence and offensive to the ear:

God our Father
you alone are holy

– as the petitioner absurdly supplies information to the Omniscient about (of all phenomena) Himself. It is the petitioners who need to be reminded of the attributes of the Godhead, as in the usual form of the subordinate clause in the collects of the Book of Common Prayer:

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed

But so pervasive is the manner of pointlessly informing the Father of what He is or has done ... that its absurdity is now entrenched.

As a matter of accuracy, essential attributes of God are not *phenomena*, which are transient. More importantly, it is a mistake to assume that all indicative sentences are used to *inform*. The sentences in question are not to inform God but to *acknowledge* who God is and what he has done for us. The function of the traditional relative clause is no different. It is part of the address to the Father, not to the congregation. It is not primarily to remind the petitioners (though it may do this incidentally) but to lay out the grounds upon which we dare to base our prayer. Our heavenly Father knows our necessities before we ask, but it is not thereby ludicrous for us to ask for them.

In expressions of love and gratitude it is normal to tell the beloved and the one who has done us a service something they already know but the speaker would like to acknowledge. "Mary, you have done so much for me." "Malcolm, you have worked really hard to help us." In modern English it is often unnatural to attach a relative clause to a vocative. Many who attempt to do so risk grammatical error, because *who* is now felt only as a third person pronoun. At a recent graduation ceremony I heard a prayer begin: "O God, who shows us the light of truth ...". If *who* had been replaced by *you*, not only would the grammar have been corrected but the writing would be more personal. The first to draw my attention to the naturalness of *parataxis* (setting sentences side by side instead

of subordinating one of them) in modern English, including poetry and liturgy, was the poet James McAuley.

The area in which Spurr most abandons academic detachment is feminism. Just as contemporary liturgical writing is condemned *en bloc* so is feminism. The author's provocative persona is adopted more consistently in Chapter 5 – Feminism and Renewal – than elsewhere. There is a passing acknowledgment that

young women, in particular, naturally accept the tremendous benefits in their own lives which have been achieved for them by the women's movement of their mothers' generation (p.152)

but it is immediately followed by turning Dr Germaine Greer's self-depreciating humour personally against her. The general picture is of women who, in the name of inclusivity, exclude the male half of the human race and all masculine terms from any legitimate place in theology or liturgy.

It may be true that "according to feminist theologians" – surely this should be *some* feminist theologians –

the most oppressive of masculinist doctrines, those of God the Father, the deification of patriarchy and of the maleness of Christ and his apostles, must be reformed or even disposed of. (p.139)

It is not, however, true that such views are characteristic of the official liturgies of the main churches, which remain rooted in Scripture, the Incarnation as a historic event, and Jesus as a unique male human being. In all of them, the Lord's Prayer still begins "Our Father" and Jesus is "God's only Son, our Lord."

The churches' attention to inclusive language is not a concession to extreme feminism, the proponents of which are dissatisfied with what they find in recent liturgies. Feminists have, however, rendered a necessary service by opening our eyes to the limitations, even when measured against the patriarchal scriptures, of traditional religious language and ways of referring to God. The reason for insisting on inclusive language is to express the truth as clearly as possible. God is beyond distinctions of sex and gender, and both male and female are made in God's image. To insist that God should always be referred to *as he* is to reinforce the myth of masculine superiority. It is, of course, equally misleading to demand liturgies where God is only feminine. In *A Prayer Book for Australia* the Anglicans have appropriately reduced the number of masculine pronouns referring to God. Yet the book contains an inclusive language version of the Psalter which pays attention only to words referring to human beings. Unlike the ICEL Psalter, this leaves untouched many unnecessary masculine pronouns referring to God. In Australia, the Anglican and Uniting Churches have adopted the English Language Liturgical Consultation's version of the Nicene Creed which affirms that at the Incarnation, God's Son came down from heaven ...

and became truly human.

This is an accurate rendering of the doctrine encapsulated in the original Greek word *enanthropesanta*. It is likely that the revised Roman Catholic version at this point will, however, revert to the more traditional
and was made man.

It is hard to find here the capitulation to radical feminism which Spurr appears to find everywhere. My own hope, probably vain, is that the singular *man* without an article (unlike *a man* and *men* which are now widely understood only as masculine) will recover its historic and unambiguous generic use. Terms like *sons of God*, *sons of men* and *brothers/brethren* will never recover the comprehensive sense they once appeared to have, while the future of *mankind* is doubtful. The pedigree of *humankind*, however, includes Abraham Cowley in the seventeenth century, Pope and Young in the eighteenth, and Farrar in the nineteenth.

The gospel and Christ's example point to powerlessness and service as the way for the disciples. The clamouring of certain feminists for power in the Church can rightly be called in question – but hardly by men who clearly enjoy the exercise of power they deny to others. I have not found in official liturgical reform any expression of the view, rightly deplored by Spurr, that males are by nature oppressors and violent. Moreover, I know many Christian feminists (not an oxymoron, *pace* Frost quoted on p.146) whose lives and beliefs give the lie to Spurr's global claim that

the ideas that authority must be based on a sense of duty and benevolence towards those it governs ... and that service might be perfect freedom, are paradoxes undreamt of in feminist philosophy. (p.138)

For all its stereotyping and generalising, I found this book well worth reading. It will be applauded by most conservatives and deplored by most – not all – modern liturgical writers. It has many virtues, in addition to its eloquence. It presents the first comprehensive account of the literature of protest, which is considerable, against trends that many leaders in the churches accept without question. It holds up to ridicule some extreme manifestations of liturgical and theological irresponsibility. It calls into question some widely accepted myths, such as that there was no congregational participation (in any worthwhile sense) in the Tridentine Latin Mass, that every word of an acceptable liturgy should be immediately understood by all (the great writers of children's stories know better), and that the spiritual treasures of the past can safely be jettisoned without damaging the transmission of the faith. It affirms (as do the rubrics of *A Prayer Book for Australia*) the great value of silence in worship. It reminds those who compose liturgies that only great words can provoke great musical settings, and that it would be a tragedy, now all too easily imaginable, if the Church's heritage

of plainsong, polyphony and inspired modern settings were to be heard only torn from their true context and presented in the concert hall – and perhaps not even there.

A virtue of the book is its constant reminder that the writing of good liturgy requires a “majesty of thought”. Spurr aptly quotes Hooker (*Ecclesiastical Polity* 5.6.2):

Signs must resemble the things they signify. If religion bear the greatest sway in our hearts, our outward religious duties shew it as far as the Church hath outward ability. Duties of religion ... ought to have in them according to our power a sensible excellency, correspondent to the majesty of him whom we worship.

Good liturgy also requires, as Spurr affirms, the resonance of individual and collective memories. That we no longer have a common tradition of authorised biblical translation means that it can be difficult to hear the Scripture reading in church as a proclamation of God’s word. If the words keep changing, it is almost impossible for the hearers to let the Scriptures enter deeply into their hearts and minds so that they may “inwardly digest them” and make them part of themselves.

This is a book that all seriously concerned with the Church’s worship should read attentively and critically. They will find that it does not adequately consider the great differences in culture and levels of literary education between the many kinds of people to whom the Church must minister. Instead, the book is a cry from the heart of a highly literate scholar. Reflection upon what he says may, however, remind those who lead or write services not to ignore the power of inspired language, whatever the literary education of the worshippers, and certainly not to withhold from those of heightened literary and spiritual sensibility the possibility of sharing in worship according to rich traditions that have nourished the faith of so many generations.

Evan L Burge

1. *The Psalter A faithful and inclusive rendering from the Hebrew into contemporary English poetry*, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1995.

News & Information

Studies in Liturgy

4. University of Notre Dame, Australia

Russell H. Hardiman

The University of Notre Dame Australia offers an extensive range of courses in Liturgical Studies which will be of interest to our readers. The unique nature of the NDA programme is that it is possible to study all units at all levels; Diploma, Undergraduate, and Masters, with a different level of assessment required for each. This enables all students to undertake personally tailored courses which meet particular needs and interests rather than fitting a pre-existing mould.

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Each semester lasts 14 weeks, although some units may be offered on an intensive basis, usually during the Long winter break (Winter Term). Enquiries about individual courses should be directed to the course coordinator or the Dean. Enquiries about research proposals or the possibility of undertaking a Masters should also be directed to the Dean (PO Box 1225, Fremantle WA 6160).

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From The Last Supper to Today's Eucharist
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Praying the Church Year
Shaping and Celebrating Church's Public Worship
History of Christian Liturgy
Eucharist I
Eucharist II
Sacraments of Healing and Reconciliation
Sacraments of Marriage and Orders
The Art of Leading Prayer
Dying, Grieving, and The Christian Funeral
Mystery of Christ IV: Church and Sacraments
Liturgy: Special Issues

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