



AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY

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# AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY

*Volume 6 Number 1 May 1997*

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## Editorial

**T**he Australian Academy of Liturgy was formed in December 1982. At the Fourth National Conference, held at Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney in August 1986, it was decided that the Academy should publish a journal. The first issue of the *Australian Journal of Liturgy* appeared in May 1987. The passage of a decade seems sufficient reason to indulge in a little reminiscing.

Since May 1987 there have been 20 issues making up 5 volumes and consisting of 1062 pages. There have been 88 articles, 40 News and Information items, and 33 book reviews. The 88 articles have been written by 62 authors (Charles Sherlock and Elizabeth Smith share the record for the most articles – 5 each). Of the 62 authors 13 have been women and 49 men – not a good gender balance. There has, however, been a reasonable ecumenical spread: 23 Anglican, 15 Roman Catholic, 12 Uniting, 2 Lutheran, 2 Orthodox, 2 Methodist, 2 Presbyterian, 1 Baptist, and 3 unknown (to me).

Articles have covered a wide range of topics and have been of various types – scholarly, practical, historical, theological, reporting, exploring. AJL has published the last four Austin James Lectures and two Leatherland Exhibition essays. When *Uniting in Worship* (1988) and *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995) were launched, AJL covered the events.

The dissemination of scholarly work, the reporting of research and the provision of a forum for scholarly exchange have been among the lofty purposes of AJL. As the Academy's journal it has sought also to be a means of maintaining contact with members, of providing useful professional information, and an opportunity for members to have material published. How well it has succeeded in achieving these purposes is not for the editor to judge.

After ten years the time has come when I should not stand in the way of someone keen to take on the editorship – with its interest, opportunity and reward as well as responsibility and sheer hard work. In the Presbyterian Church there used to be a system whereby someone could be inducted as 'colleague and successor' to the parish minister. I would be happy to explore a change-over period with a prospective new editor. The appointment of editor is made by the Council of the Academy, but I can supply information to anyone interested.

Now to the current issue. The two articles in this issue are by academics whose primary area of study is, in each case, an area other than liturgy. This contribution from perspectives outside the specifically liturgical is welcome. Dr Waddell, whose main area is medical anthropology, contributes work he has done within the College of Theology of Notre Dame University Australia. He presents new insights into an area of popular religion upon which liturgists have tended to look with disdain. Perhaps we need to look again.

Dr Spurr teaches English Literature at the University of Sydney. He comments on trends in contemporary liturgy by reviewing the Preface of *A Prayer Book for Australia*. The Preface appears over the signature of Lawrence Bartlett, Chair of the Liturgical Commission (of the Anglican General Synod). Lawrence Bartlett is a Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral Sydney. The Australian College of Theology has conferred upon him a degree of Doctor of Theology (honoris causa) for his work with APBA. It would be usual for this journal to refer to him as Canon Bartlett or Dr Bartlett but I have allowed the constant reference to 'Mr Bartlett' to remain as it is part of the style of Dr Spurr's review. Canon Bartlett's contribution to the process of preparing APBA is widely acknowledged. He is also an accomplished musician and is Chairman of The Australian Hymn Book Editorial Committee.

The decade and the current issue are both concluded with the Ten Year Index.

RWH  
*Strathmore Vicarage*  
*Ascension Day 1997*

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# Magic and Liturgical Correctness in the Church: The story of a spiritual journey home<sup>1</sup> *Charles Waddell*

## The Experience

**I**t had been a grey, cold afternoon, gradually darkening, when, wheelchair-bound Lucia Angeloni has her turn at the tap to the water at the grotto of Our Lady of Revelation, Bullsbrook, Western Australia. Already, 250 people had drunk from the tap and many of them had also filled containers with the miraculous water to give to loved ones ill at home or hospital. One hundred and fifty other people were still waiting their turn. Lucia and these 400, together with 1,600 more people, made this monthly pilgrimage to this grotto. This dark afternoon was Lucia's twenty-fourth visit to the grotto in as many months.

Coincidentally, when we met in 1989, it was the first visit to Bullsbrook for both of us. I remember that we approached the tap with equal scepticism. Mine, however, was an enthusiastic scepticism of exploring the possibilities of a new research project in medical anthropology – something along the lines of religion as a coping strategy for severely ill people; the worst that could happen was a wasted afternoon. Lucia's was a more desperate scepticism; although then able to walk, it was obvious that her body was wasting away. It was on that afternoon that Lucia told me she had motor neuron disease:<sup>2</sup>

...No one else can do anything for me. I've been to the greats (neurologists) and to quacks (iridologists, herbalists) and I'm still getting worse. It's only a matter of time before I won't be able to do anything for myself – not even talk. Do you know what it's like to have motor neuron disease? ... A neighbour told me about Bullsbrook and the apparitions and the water and miracles and all and so I said to myself, "Why not? What do I have to lose?" And so, here I am. But, I must say, I have my doubts...It's a last resort. It's either Mary or nothing...Now I'm a Catholic and all, although I don't go to Church. But I'm still a Catholic and I believe in Mary and, I guess, in Lourdes and in those sorts of things, but I really can't bring myself to believe that drinking this water will cure me. But the

priest says you got to have faith. I do want to believe it, and I do believe in Mary, but not like these people...I guess I want to be cured, but don't really believe it's possible.

This afternoon Lucia and I were silent; she was no longer able to talk clearly. I pushed her chair through the soaked sand back into the chapel. There, a public rosary was being said, so I got Lucia's beads out of her handbag and laid them on her hands. She tried to smile as she watched the colours from the lights shining through the glass rosary dance on her fingers. After several "Hail Marys", she fell asleep.

She was no longer sceptical about this grotto and to the murmur of Aves I tried, as a medical anthropologist, to figure out why. There certainly was no miracle for her here. Indeed, for a long time she had not expected one. "Charles, I know I'm not going to be cured", she said to me at least a year ago.

Orthodox and alternative medicines failed and Lucia, by and large, had abandoned them. Mary not only failed, but she had not provided even the slightest shred of empirical evidence to support a mild conviction in her efficacy. Nevertheless, to Lucia, Mary was a success; Lucia continued to make these pilgrimages, assert Mary's efficacy and encourage others to sojourn similarly.

It is easy to dismiss these adjurations as efforts to reduce cognitive dissonance, as devices to reduce relative deprivation, as means to cope with the "breaking points" of human life. Anthropologists, as well as, psychologists, sociologists and, probably, theologians, delight in unmasking ideologies by revealing the "real" functions they serve. But, when people are caught in contradictions between the ideas they profess and the reality of their lives, is the best understanding some sort of cynical functionalism?

In this paper, my answer is "no", at least with respect to Lucia. This is not to deny the anthropological story: what Lucia said and did was functional to her and to the business of Our Lady of Revelation's grotto. However, while I watched Lucia sleep, there was another story I was also thinking about but never dared to write; it was about Lucia's spiritual journey at Bullsbrook: something about magic, religious transformation, Our Lady and, finally, Catholic liturgy and spirituality. A postgraduate unit in theology provided me with the courage and opportunity to attempt to write this story. It is an attempt to interpret Lucia's spiritual journey over her last 24 months as a pilgrim to Bullsbrook. This emic understanding will not do full justice to Lucia's spiritual



journey but it does enable me to illustrate, I think, how Marian-related rituals, which, at least the way Lucia initially used them, may be characterised largely as magical, lead her through a religious transformation to a more full participation in Catholic liturgy and a more complete spirituality.

### **Magic.**

Anthropological definitions of magic, and religion for that matter, lack consensus. Furthermore, they are ordinarily etic in an effort to make generalisations; thus, anthropological definitions of magic and religion are not necessarily acceptable to their practitioners. Malinowski<sup>3</sup> provides the classic heuristic conceptualisation of magic and religion that still informs contemporary scholars' efforts to understand these entwined human activities: magic is more atomistic, manipulative, individualistic, instrumental, here-and-now; religion is more holistic, supplicatory, communal, expressive, transcendent.

While faith, superstition and ignorance, fear, hope, grief and other human factors, may have been involved, it is arguable that on that first visit to Bullsbrook, Lucia was engaged more in magic than in religion: she drank the grotto's water in order to be cured in some largely atomistic, instrumental, manipulative, individualistic way of her motor neuron disease. Religious elements of Catholicism were surely involved (a prayer whispered, a plea to Our Lady, a glance towards the heavens) but this does not necessarily obviate the magical characteristics of Lucia's first drink from the tap at the Bullsbrook grotto. After all, water sipped in the efforts to be cured while invoking Our Lady, or even the Triune God, seems to have more in common with such magical practices as bone pointing while invoking some sort of sorcery than with Catholic liturgy and spirituality. This is not to say that such practices are not understandable or efficacious for a variety of reasons. However, understanding the human frailty behind an activity and noting its efficacy does not turn magic into liturgy.

### **Marian Devotions and the Traditions of the Church**

Lucia's actions on that first day seem removed from Catholic liturgy and spirituality – an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, head and members, for the glory of God and the sanctification of humankind.<sup>4</sup> Catholic devotions are rooted in the centrality of liturgy.<sup>5</sup> While the

context within which Lucia drank the water was a spiritual exercise of popular devotion to Our Lady, it would be difficult to argue that Lucia's actions at that time were either oriented to or derived from the Church's liturgy as theologically and juridically prescribed<sup>6</sup> so as to make them more fully Catholic than magical. Furthermore, although there may have been some altruistic reasons for wanting to stay alive, primarily Lucia performed this magic by herself and for herself. In contrast, Bernier<sup>7</sup> and Thornhill<sup>8</sup> posit that liturgy is primarily corporate, communal, in action and effect<sup>9</sup>.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>10</sup> seems ambiguous on the place of Marian devotions within the Church. It states that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Catholic worship and that Marian prayer, such as the rosary, is an "epitome of the whole Gospel".<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the *Catechism* does not clarify how liturgy "calls forth various devotions of the People of God", such as Marian devotions; it merely states that this is so, almost as an afterthought in its discussion of the Liturgy of Hours.<sup>12</sup>

Tillard<sup>13</sup> warns of the danger inherent in certain forms of Marian expression, such as devotion to Mary as the coredemtrix. However, the ambiguity seems to continue as he sees Our Lady as an eschatological icon. He concludes in agreement with the *Catechism*: the wisest theology refers to Mary as *Theotokos*.

Nonetheless, theology and common everyday *praxis* may entwine in liturgy; there is hardly any material thing that cannot sanctify humans and praise God when properly redirected as sacramentals.<sup>14</sup> Lucia's Bullsbrook story is about this redirection, sanctification and praise of God. However, this story can be better appreciated if it is located within the Marian traditions of the Church.

### **Mary and the Traditions of the Church.**

Reference to Mary may arguably be found in Genesis (3:12), and "pagan" parallels to the role she plays in Christendom predate the Annunciation when the angel Gabriel announced that God had chosen her to be the virgin mother of His son. However, as far as historical evidence indicates, she was first given popular form and animation by Luke.<sup>15</sup> Since then, she has been reformed and animated many times by different people for different reasons and today's Mary is truly as much a contemporary creation as she is that pious Jewish girl who gave her fiat to Gabriel in the Gospel. And, throughout all these times, she has been

both the beloved patroness of brilliant saints, intellectually judicious popes and gallant kings as well as refuge for poverty-stricken peasantry.<sup>16</sup> Today's Mary, at least in Western industrial societies, is by and large the creation of the lay working class,<sup>17</sup> and she has been formed and animated not so much as their patroness or refuge but as an intercessor between God and them for their own spiritual and physical welfare and also, for that of all in the world.

While there are several ways to classify the historical developments leading to Mary as intercessor of the working poor, for my purpose it is not necessary to pursue such detailed chronology. It is enough to say that prior to the nineteenth century, while Marian devotion waxed and waned, what emphasis there was largely stressed Mary as virgin mother of the divine son, Jesus; icons, painting devotions and theology of these times, by and large, illustrate this. But with the western resurgence of Marian devotion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Mary as an autonomous woman interceding in personal, social and global tragedies and threats of tragedies, fully emerges. This resurgence marked the advent of the industrial revolution and with it mass geographic mobility, urban poverty and media communications, resulting in the breakdown of regional isolation and the demise of devotion to local village saints;<sup>18</sup> what is more, at this time, women more fully entered labour, market, political and economic arenas. Perhaps these socio-political, economic, geographic and sex role changes provided some impetus for the new form and animation of Marian fervour in the West: a universal female intercessor between God and the powerless lay working poor.

Four Dogmas of Mariology have been defined by the Church and correspond to these two interrelated forms of Marian animation: (1) the pre-nineteenth century cults of Mary as the virgin mother of God; (2) the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cult of Mary as the autonomous intercessor. Mary's divine motherhood and her virginity were both declared articles of faith by councils of the very early Church. It should be noted that since the articles were declared long before the Reformation, they are also accepted by most of the reformed groups.

The last two dogmas focus more on Mary as an autonomous person than directly on her virginity and motherhood of Jesus. The Immaculate Conception, declaring that Mary herself was conceived without "original sin", was proclaimed in 1854; the fourth dogma, the Assumption, declaring that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven, was

defined by Pius XII in 1950. These latter two dogmas have provided very little help in bridging the Catholic-Protestant gap.

Devotion to the Virgin Mary, particularly as intercessor, seems to depend on the notion of the Communion of Saints. Clearly in the Roman Catholic tradition, but much more ambiguously voiced in Reformed traditions,<sup>19</sup> there is a spiritual solidarity, traditionally expressed as linking the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory and the saints (whether canonised or not) in heaven in the organic unity of a mystical body – the Church. Briefly, the important point for this discussion is that the doctrine of the Communion of Saints may be interpreted to imply that, among other things, saints can directly manifest themselves to men and women like ourselves and intercede with God on our behalf. For many people this intercession is what Mary is doing today. Indeed, in some Catholic circles the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are called the Age of Mary. There have been well over 200 popular accounts of Marian apparitions throughout the world<sup>20</sup> during this Age but Rome has only recognised that Mary came to earth in eight locations during these two centuries: in 1830, at Ru de Bac; at La Salette in 1848; at Lourdes in 1858; at Portmain in 1871; at Knock, Ireland in 1879; at Fatima, Portugal in 1917; and at Beauraing and Banneux, Belgium in 1932 and 1933. Such recognition does not have the status of dogma. With various degrees of urgency, these apparitions are associated with the apocalypse and their message is, by and large, the same: repent, fast and pray, especially the rosary, for the conversion and salvation of all in the world. A shrine and a chapel is usually requested by Mary to aid people in fulfilling this message. Over 3.5 million people annually make pilgrimage to Lourdes alone each year; 12 million go to some shrine dedicated to Mary.<sup>21</sup> The apparitions have attacked materialistic and exploitative capitalism and atheistic communism as well as trends towards modernity within the Church itself. It is within this context of nineteenth and twentieth century apparitions that the place of Mary at Bullsbrook rests.

### **Bullsbrook.**

Forty kilometres north of Perth, on a twelve acre site, stands a grotto, a chapel (not quite completed in 1989) and an outside water tap. In the grotto is the fibreglass statue of Our Lady of Revelation, together with numerous rosaries, flowers, candles and petitions as well as canes, crutches, braces, a body corset and other discarded indicators of

successful healing intercessions. The chapel, when completed, will seat 400 people. The tap is to bore water; people queue to collect the water in containers of all shapes and sizes (from a cup to twenty gallon Jerry cans) for themselves and loved ones ill at home or hospital. Over 2,000 people, largely migrant Italian families, but also Anglo-Indian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Yugoslav and other Asian, Eastern European and Mediterranean migrants together with smaller numbers of white and Aboriginal Australians, come monthly to pilgrimage here: it is the classic type along the lines of Lourdes and Fatima and consists of hymns, rosary and benediction. The land, grotto, chapel and bore have been obtained, built and financed entirely by voluntary lay contributions.

The history of the establishment of this shrine at Bullsbrook was still being earnestly constructed when I met Lucia in 1989. Bits and pieces of fact and belief were in the process of being woven together into myth<sup>22</sup> that captured faithfully past events as well as (hopefully) the faith of future pilgrims while being at least acceptable if not unequivocally endorsed by ecclesiastical officialdom.

The highlights of the myth went as follows: In the early 1970s (in line with the usual tradition of female impetus for contemporary Marian shrines) Maria Rosa Lombardo, an illiterate, elderly and devout Catholic Italian migrant to Perth, during a very serious illness, for inexplicable reasons insisted that her husband and son go to Tre Fontane outside Rome, while on their trip to Italy and the United States. Tre Fontane is the legendary site where Saint Paul was beheaded. Neither father nor son intended to honour the request. In a taxi on the way to Leonardo de Vinci airport to return to Perth, the driver pointed out the Church of Saint Paul. It was then that the son, Vincent, felt compelled to go to Tre Fontane. Father and son followed the compulsion. At Tre Fontane, they learned that on 12 April, 1947, Bruno Comacchiola, a communist persecutor of the Church, with his three children had an apparition of Mary dressed in a green mantle and white dress with a pink sash around the waist. In her hands she held a dark-colored book.<sup>23</sup> She appeared several times to Bruno after that and her messages were: repent, fast and pray, especially the rosary; return to the Gospels; I am the virgin of the Revelation; I am in the Trinity; my body did not could not decay. And she gave a secret message to Bruno to give to Pius XII.

Through a series of prophesied and extraordinary events attributable to Mary, Bruno finally did meet with Pius XII and delivered the message. Bruno also received papal permission to establish an association: SACRI

– a Formation of Fervent Soldiers of Christ the Immortal King – to foster devotion to Mary.

Furthermore, as Lourdes was associated with confirmation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (the name Mary gave to Bernadette three years after Pius IX proclaimed the dogma<sup>24</sup>), Tre Fontane has an association with the dogma of the Assumption (proclaimed by Pius XII three years after Bruno's first vision: "my body did not ... decay".) Finally, as with Lourdes and Fatima, at the request of Mary a shrine was built at Tre Fontane to aid pilgrims in fulfilling the apocalyptic plea to repent, fast and pray for the conversion and salvation of all in the world.

Vincent and father briefly met Bruno who guaranteed that Rosa would be recovered by the time they reached Perth. They caught their flight and upon arriving in Western Australia they learned that Rosa was well. Later, Bruno was invited to Australia. He came twice in order to spread devotion to Our Lady of Revelation by establishing a local branch of SACRI (with Archdiocesan permission) and the Bullsbrook Grotto on land donated to SACRI by the Lombardo family. The bore was then sunk and chapel building commenced.

The Perth branch of SACRI, of course, needed money to continue its building program. For a variety of reasons the Archdiocese of Perth had, at that time, made no financial contribution to the shrine, and so SACRI turned to the lay public. Besides money, they wanted pilgrims to come to the shrine; the sincere wish to foster Marian devotion, as well as motivation to legitimate the shrine and maintain and expand SACRI, were behind the desire. In order to attract the public, the history-myth of Bullsbrook and its Tre Fontane connection needed to be formulated and communicated.

Bollingbroke said something like: plain truth will influence half a score of men, mystery will lead millions. Truth and mystery, fact and belief came together to tell the Bullsbrook story. For example, Our Lady of Revelation was always associated with the clean bore water at the shrine. From some kind of inexplicable knowledge obtained after the bore was sunk and brackish water spouted forth, a member of SACRI insisted that the compressor hose at the bore be dropped from fifty-five feet to sixty-five feet and the Statue of Our Lady of Revelation be brought to the bore: the water cleared. Now photographs of the brackish water were reinterpreted largely by accident; the watery image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was seen.

The next mystery to be added to history was that in 1980, on the anniversary of Bruno's first Marian apparition, as the statue of the Virgin of Revelation was being installed at Bullsbrook, spectacular solar events (the sun changed colours, dimmed, and turned white with the letters IHS – similar to that sometimes stamped on hosts used at the Eucharist) were seen to take place at Tre Fontane. This coincidental phenomenon was interpreted by members of the Perth SACRI as a singular sign of favour; a plaque at Bullsbrook commemorates this mysterious solar connection to Italy's shrine.

A stall selling devotional objects such as rosaries and Marian medals, pictures and statues also links Bullsbrook not only to Tre Fontane but to Lourdes and Fatima, and other ecclesiastically approved shrines of this Age. Besides contributing to SACRI's coffers, the association with the other shrines adds legitimacy and mystery to Bullsbrook for the crowds of people who make the Western Australia pilgrimage.

Finally, the miraculous soil from Tre Fontane was mixed with the soil at Bullsbrook partly with the idea of empowering the bore water at the site with miraculous healing potency. Another plaque gives testimony to the mixing of soils. Miraculous cures have been reported; rumours of cures are commonplace during pilgrimages to Bullsbrook.

And the ministry of the Maltese chaplain (recently deceased) to SACRI included storing water from the shrine in the Guildford Presbytery for the ill who come to his door or for those whom he visits at home or hospital. During the time I was doing this research the cures had not been submitted to the Archdiocese for investigation in accordance with Benedict's seven criteria.<sup>25</sup> Thus, none has the endorsement of the Church.

Minor mysteries also embellish the monthly pilgrimages. The aroma of roses permeating the church during rosary and benediction is frequently claimed. On one of my visits during these devotions, people around me started to murmur that they could smell roses. It was a very hot day, very crowded, very congested; it was not a floral scent that I noticed.

Regardless of the truth or falsity, this mixture of fact and belief creates the myth that draws the crowds. Hundreds come during the week; over 2,000 come on the last Sunday of the month on pilgrimage. The people, largely migrant, come for a variety of reasons; the grotto is indeed multi-referenced or has "multivocality":<sup>26</sup> (1) here the holy seems nearly tangible; (2) Our Lady of Revelation, wearing colours similar to those of

the Italian flag, represents much of the “old country” to Italians in much the same way as Our Lady of Guadalupe does for Mexicans;<sup>27</sup> (3) a lay, rearguard reaction to Vatican II’s restraint on many traditional European devotions; (4) fear of the apocalypse and sense of duty to save the world; (5) desire to express Marian fervour; (6) to meet religious needs not met in commonplace Australian Catholicism; (7) cures for social and physical maladies of self and loved ones; and (8) curiosity.

Among those thousands of pilgrims, Lucia came to this grotto to drink its water and be cured of motor neuron disease. At this grotto, something happened to Lucia that, no matter how theologically correct Luther, Calvin and Zwingli may have been about devotional excesses in the Roman Catholic Church, cautions pastoral insensitivity and easy dismissal of magical elements within liturgical praxis. Lucia’s fear, grief, disability and her magical way to cope with seemingly hopeless misfortune were transformed into something incomparably precious at this grotto: transformed so that her life was full of liturgical celebration; full of Catholic spirituality.

### **Catholic Liturgy and Spirituality Resolved**

*When Prophecy Fails*<sup>28</sup> begins: “A man with a conviction is a hard man to change”. Here, for Festinger *et al*, members of a millennial movement faced with unequivocal and undeniable evidence that their prophecy has failed, emerged not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of their prophecy than ever before. Lucia, faced with unequivocal and undeniable evidence that her magic had failed, emerged not only unshaken, but recommitted to the Church. With whatever help the Lord provided, through some sort of social alchemy of Catholic spirituality embedded in the Bullsbrook pilgrimage, Lucia constructed a new phenomenological world – a world where she accepted her disease; a world where because of her disease, she was healthy – whole and holy; a world in which she could live for the spiritual wellbeing of all others; a world where she celebrated Catholic liturgy and grew in spirituality.

This phenomenological world was not constructed in isolation. I conceptualise it as taking place through three strongly social and highly interrelated processes: (1) Lucia adopted a new orientation towards the grotto; (2) she experienced a Divine suffusion; and (3) she redirected her cognitive, affective and behavioural life. These three processes formed a generalised complex sequence of interlocking steps upon



which this hopelessly ill pilgrim trod with varying degrees of sure-footedness.

### 1. A New Orientation

Lucia came to the Bullsbrook grotto to be cured of motor neuron disease. However, there is a persuasiveness embedded in the social setting of this pilgrimage that soon convinced Lucia that by coming to Bullsbrook she was doing much more. Quickly Lucia perceived that Bullsbrook was part of something greater than magic. Derived from Tre Fontane, it was part of the larger Marian movement of the nineteenth century. The movement's central prophecy of impending apocalypse and its urgent plea to fast, pray and repent for the conversion and salvation of all in the world provided a poignant vocabulary of motives.<sup>29</sup> These messianic motives supplemented and finally replaced Lucia's original reason for coming to Bullsbrook. As she experienced Divine suffusion and life-redirection, the messianic motives formed the *raison d'être* for suffering with her disease – a *raison d'être* more poignant than magic.

### 2. Divine Suffusion

The water at Bullsbrook is often interpreted as some sort of magical potion. It was that type of interpretation that Lucia, sceptically but desperately, held on her first visit. However, the grotto's water has "multivocal" significance:<sup>30</sup> magical and biblical referents obviously come to mind. Above all in significance, however, is that this water is sacred; its power lies not in the empirically established truth or falsity of curing, but in Geertz's<sup>31</sup> words, the "moods and motivations" the water elicits from pilgrims.

The ability of the water to evoke powerful emotions of awe from Lucia again derived from the social setting of the pilgrimage. Sight, sound and smell (e.g. incense) of the Marian devotions at the grotto persuaded Lucia that she was immersed in the sacred; it only remained for her to drink the water and the sacred would be suffused in her. "A calmness", "the peace of God", "a oneness with God", "a solidarity with others" and "a strength to do more to save the world" are Lucia's expressions of this Divine suffusion.

And there is more. By her fourth visit Lucia was bringing a flask to carry the water home with her. Its significance was to link her not only

to the sacred but to the social fabric of the grotto's pilgrimage throughout the month.

### **3. Redirected Life**

With the new orientation and Divine suffusion came the third process in the reconstruction of Lucia's spirituality, self-redirection. That is, the social ambience of the Bullsbrook pilgrimage persuaded Lucia to redirect not only her behaviour but also her cognitive and affective patterns from concerns with herself to the messianic purpose of the Marian movement ("because that's what Jesus wants," Lucia would learn to add.) The end result was a construction of a phenomenological world where, because of motor neuron disease, Lucia was healthy – whole and holy.

Lucia's changed behaviour is not to be construed as an attempt to win Mary's favour. Lucia's transformation was more an effect than a cause of pilgrimage. Lucia came to Bullsbrook as a lapsed Catholic and within four months she was a daily communicant; icons of Jesus and Mary refurbished her house; daily she recited 15 decades of the rosary for the conversion and salvation of all in the world.

Why this transformation if not to be used in pleading for a magical cure? Because, by and large, Lucia no longer wanted to be cured. She was taken up by the persuasive ambience of the Bullsbrook pilgrimage into a logic which redefined the reality of her disease. No longer was she unhealthy, but a healthy contributor to the Church through the Marian movement; no longer was she isolated and debilitated but a powerful member of a world-saving enterprise; and no longer was she cursed for having motor neuron disease, but holy in accepting it and offering it up to God for her good and the good of all in the world.

Her disease and suffering became her contribution to world salvation; her withering presence was her witness to the importance of spiritual values; and her impending death gave her a sense of belonging to something that was very close to God. In this context it may not be too difficult to argue that Lucia bore about in her body the dying of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> In short, through the Bullsbrook pilgrimage, Lucia entered a world of transcendent meaning, purpose and identity that did not cure her disease but enabled her to live the life remaining to her full of liturgical and spiritual meaning.

This was a social and not just an idiosyncratic world. "Surefootedness" along the three steps of this world, to a large degree, depended upon the

help of others. Intensity of belief and commitment to Mary were surely involved, but this does not obviate the need for social supports to sustain faith and aid this hopelessly ill pilgrim in redefining the disconfirming evidence of a magical cure.

Lucia received and gave such support. She daily participated in the Eucharist. Once or twice a week, three to six people from Bullsbrook and Lucia's home parish gathered in her flat to pray the rosary, read Scripture and, towards the latter part of her life, on occasion share the Eucharist with the parish priest. Some of these supports may not have been performed in a fully correct liturgical way. However, elements of magic frequently may exist whenever theology and praxis come together in liturgy. To Lucia's way of thinking, she was participating in Church life, accepting her own life and, with others, praising God.

### **Conclusion**

There is no conclusive proof that anybody was cured of a disease by going to a Marian grotto. Medical nescience and psychosomatic paradigms can be used to explain miraculous cures.<sup>33</sup> Certainly Lucia did not have the slightest shred of empirical evidence to support her belief in Mary's efficacy. Why then did she believe? Why was Lucia no longer sceptical about the Bullsbrook grotto? Why did she not abandon Mary as she had abandoned orthodox and alternative medicines?

Functionalism can provide an answer: such beliefs are efforts to reduce cognitive dissonance or feelings of relative deprivation or to bridge "breaking points"; there were not many options open to Lucia and "hope springs eternal". This approach neatly accounts for the discrepancy between belief and reality, but it hardly reconciles their conflict. To do that seems to necessitate a more interpretative approach that has to do with trying to understand Lucia's spiritual journey.

One such interpretation is that through three interdependent processes (reorientation, Divine suffusion, life-redirection) Lucia constructed a new phenomenological world from the fabric of the Church at Bullsbrook. A mode of discourse is woven throughout this fabric. This discourse provides a persuasive vocabulary of motives: the urgent apocalyptic messages of Mary to fast, pray and repent for the conversion and salvation of all.

In this new world, Lucia redirected her attention from a hopeless disease to a hopeful mission; from seeking a cure to accepting gratefully

world-redemptive suffering. In short, neither medicine nor Mary would save Lucia's diseased world, but through the Marian movement, Lucia could have a new world full of spiritual meaning, purpose and identity.

It is easy to dismiss many traditional Catholic devotions as superstition, institutional ignorance, misguided piety. As a purely theological enterprise, liturgy would probably eschew many such devotions. However, Lucia's spiritual journey taught me that liturgy is not just a theological but human activity with human foibles, follies and imperfections. And here, there may be a problem.

The Church wishes to preserve intact those elements in a people's way of life that are not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error.<sup>34</sup> Are there elements in the Bullsbrook pilgrimage that may be seen, perhaps only in their misuse, as "indissolubly bound up with superstition and error"?

Huels<sup>35</sup> provides a useful interpretation of the CSL that enables circumvention of this possible problem and this question: "The law itself is seldom the problem; rather, it is the rigid way the law is applied." Applying the law here may require pastoral sensitivity, in order to steer a liturgical course between theological correctness and *praxis*.

The Bullsbrook pilgrimage may be just one example of the pastoral difficulties encountered in steering a liturgically correct course between theology and *praxis* in the post-conciliar Church. Perhaps some devotional and devotion-related practices do need to be condemned; others may be redirected so as to be more liturgically correct. Yet, there may be other practices, perhaps, those which Lucia first embarked upon, which are entry points to a journey to God; somehow, they may bring together the vision of faith and the meaning of life; as such, it may be wise to leave them to the workings of the Holy Spirit and the People of God. A liturgically correct course here, and elsewhere, is difficult to steer. It involves theological and liturgical knowledge, human wisdom, emic understanding, discussions with colleagues, and prayer.

## Epilogue

That is the way my thoughts ran that afternoon as I listened to the *Aves* and Lucia slept. By the time the rosary finished and we finally left the chapel it was very dark and cold. I lifted Lucia up into my van and put the chair in the back. As I got into the van, Lucia muttered something about wishing to leave her rosary at the grotto. I took the beads and hung

them inside the grotto where numerous other rosaries already hung. I guessed that Lucia felt she was not going to come back here.

She tried to say many things during the long trip home, most of which were unintelligible. But one thing was clear: Lucia was no longer sceptical and desperate as she had been when she first approached the Bullsbrook tap so long ago. Lucia was happy.

Two weeks later, Lucia Angeloni died of heart failure. She had completed her spiritual journey home.

I am drafting these final words at Bullsbrook; it just seems appropriate to end this story where it began. This is my first time back without Lucia. Her death, five years ago, saddened me but also released me from a sense of obligation to bring her here each month to a type of liturgy far removed from my preferred type.

The chapel is complete and it seems that the Archdiocese recognises it by the name, Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church; the Archdiocese, perhaps, does not recognise the grotto as, Our Lady of Revelation. Paving stones cover the sand; that must make it easier for wheelchairs. I do not see Lucia's rosary hanging in the grotto but the tap is still here. An old man is filling some bottles with its water. I help him carry a couple of two litre containers of the water to his car. He is taking them to his wife, Florence. She is a patient with cancer at the Palliative Care Unit, Hollywood Private Hospital, Perth. He talks and smokes, quietly cries and expresses his love for Mary, Jesus and Florence. He does not mention anything magical about the water – only that Florence likes to have her forehead bathed with it. However, he does not say anything about sacramental economy, either. Instead, he tells me that the people and devotions of Bullsbrook are important parts of his and Florence's Catholic faith. He wants me to visit Florence. I promise to do so. I ask him to come into the chapel with me.

There we say the "Hail Mary" together. We each light a candle. It is all so very simple. Is this magic? liturgy? Do we light the candles ... for Lucia? for Florence? for all of us? – to help illumine just a little bit more the path upon which we dance our shared journeys home?

NOTES

1. Thanks to Russell Hardiman for his comments on an earlier draft.
2. Motor neuron disease is a progressive wasting of neurones that conduct nerve impulses. Gradually, it severely debilitates motor functioning. The disease has no cure nor effective treatment and eventuates in death.
3. Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Magic, science and religion', in Joseph Needham (ed.) *Science, Religion and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1925) pp. 18-94.
4. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (CSL), Vatican Council II (Dol. 1), 1963, no. 7.
5. *Ibid.*, no. 12.
6. *Ibid.*, no. 13.
7. Paul Bernier, *Eucharist: Celebrating its Rhythms in Our Lives* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1993).
8. John Thornhill, *Sign & Promise: A Theology of Church for a Changing World* (London: Collins, 1988).
9. CSL, *op. cit.*, no. 1.
10. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1994).
  11. *Ibid.*, no. 971.
  12. *Ibid.*, no. 1178.
13. J.M.R. Tillard, 'The church', in Michael J. Walsh (ed.) *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 178-204.
14. CSL, *op. cit.*, no. 61.
15. Here we have the Annunciation, the Visitation, the *Magnificat*, the Birth of Jesus with Shepherds, the Presentation and Circumcision of Jesus and the *Nunc Dimittis*.
16. Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (London: Picador, 1976).
17. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Victor Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).
18. Warner, *op. cit.*
19. J.C. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today* (London: SCM Press, 1988).
20. Some people argue that the accounts number in the thousands.
21. M.P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).
22. Myth is used in the anthropological sense of that word – as a link between the past and present so as to provide a plan for action; it is not used to mean a fabrication.
23. This book has been identified as the Book of Revelation, the Gospels and the Bible.

24. Cynics argue that the Lourdes' apparitions were set up to confirm Pius' dogma of the Immaculate Conception and to lend credibility to the dogma-in-the-making, Papal Infallibility.
25. Benedict XIV who reigned from 1740 to 1758 and is considered to have been a liberal intellectual Pontiff and patron of the Arts, set seven criteria that must be met for a cure to be considered miraculous by the Church. These are : (1) the illness should be serious and very difficult to cure; (2) the illness should not be on the decline or of such a nature that it might improve; (3) no medication should be given, or if given, its inefficacy should be clearly established; (4) the cure should be instantaneous; (5) the cure should be complete; (6) the cure should not correspond to a usual crisis in the course of an illness; and (7) there should be no recurrence of the illness in question.
26. Nancy F. Breuner, 'The cult of the Virgin Mary in Southern Italy and Spain', *Ethos*: 20, 1992: 66-95; Victor Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1979); Davies, op. cit.
27. Eric Wolfe, 'The Virgin of Guadalupe: a Mexican national symbol', *Journal of American Folklore*, LXXI, 1958: 34-39.
28. Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).
29. C. Wright Mills, 'Situated actions and vocabularies of motives', *American Sociological Review*, 5, 1940: 904-913.
30. Turner, 1974, op. cit.
31. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
32. CSL, op. cit., no. 12.
33. D.J. West, *Eleven Lourdes Miracles* (London: Gerald Duckwork, 1957).
34. CSL, op. cit., no. 37.
35. John M. Huels, 'General introduction', in Elizabeth Hoffman (ed.) *The Liturgy Documents* (Chicago: Liturgy Training, 1991), pp. ix-xiv.

## A Preface Scrutinised

Barry Spurr

**A** *Prayer Book for Australia* begins with a 'Preface', written by Lawrence Bartlett, who is described as the 'Chair' of the Australian Liturgical Commission. I had supposed that Mr Bartlett was a human being, not a piece of furniture, even a symbolic one, and will refer to him subsequently as the 'Chairman' of the Commission. That he is described as its 'chair', of course, not only indicates that he filled that seat of authority (even as the seat and its occupant are here confused), but a determination to avoid the allegedly sexist term 'chairman' – the avoidance of sexism, as Mr Bartlett points out in his Preface, being one of the goals of the Liturgical Commission.

I doubt whether many Anglicans, now using *A Prayer Book for Australia*, have read this introductory document. While prefaces to works that propose a thesis or develop a theme are vital as introductions, as we seek to understand the general persuasion or scope of a work, everyone knows – or imagines that he knows – what a prayer book is supposed to contain and achieve. Mr Bartlett's Preface, furthermore, is preceded by a detailed list of contents which would seem to satisfy any preliminary queries about the book's parts and purposes. Moreover, prayer books – unlike scholarly works, for example – are not intended for study but for use. The Preface to *A Prayer Book for Australia* might seem to be a mere formality.

However, it is difficult to overestimate its importance. The insights which it gives into what could be described as the mind of Australian Anglicanism – and, indeed, of the modern Church at large – with regard to worship, are as instructive as they are appalling.

Mr Bartlett's prose style is perfectly adjusted to the character of his thoughts and argument, providing, in its gaucheries and imprecision, something of an explanation for the same qualities in the services it introduces. Mr Bartlett is a musician – a composer and performer – of rare accomplishment. However, as a prose stylist, he is tone deaf. Yet the Anglican Church has charged him and his associates with the awesome responsibility of fashioning the language with which it is to address Almighty God in worship. What are Mr Bartlett's qualifications and experience as a writer of English prose, and those of his fellow



commissioners? If a physician were to be presented with a manual on the principles of surgery, he would reasonably seek to satisfy himself, before consulting it, about the credentials of its author. Rather like parenthood, liturgical composition, today, requires no specific qualifications beyond well-intentioned amateurism in the difficult undertaking of liturgical prose-writing. Yet this undertaking, which the Church is content to leave in the hands of the demonstrably incompetent, relates directly to what Christians profess to regard as the most important activity in their lives.

What kind of qualifications and experience should be required for the endeavour upon which Mr Bartlett and his fellow commissioners have embarked with the confidence expressed in his Preface? The answer is at once simple and daunting. They should be men and women of wide liturgical learning and profound literary culture. The Anglican Church has been blessed with a host of individuals, in several centuries, in possession of these attributes. Apart from such obvious examples as Thomas Cranmer, in the sixteenth century, Samuel Johnson, in the eighteenth, John Keble and John Henry Newman in the nineteenth, and Eric Milner-White, in our own century, I would mention Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester, in the seventeenth century, as an example of the kind of scholar that liturgical composition, worthy of the name, requires. Master of fifteen languages, a preacher of acclaimed ability, one of the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible, the friend of Richard Hooker and George Herbert, but also – importantly – of continental Humanist scholars such as Casaubon and Grotius in the time of the High Renaissance in Europe, Andrewes, in his collection of *Private Prayers* based on the Book of Common Prayer, presents a model of English devotional prose, in the tradition of Cranmer.

As no one would presume to contribute to the storehouse of Anglican liturgy without first being familiar with such predecessors in its artistry as Lancelot Andrewes, we must assume that Mr Bartlett and his fellow commissioners would be well-read in the classical tradition of Anglican divinity and spirituality. So it is surprising that nothing of that genius in prose artistry appears in such modern productions as *A Prayer Book for Australia*. It is not a matter of mimicking the Cranmerian style or attempting to provide a contemporary rendition of it, which would merely be a parody. It is something much more fundamental and which is ageless – a good English prose style, suited to worship. Only once in his Preface does Mr Bartlett even begin to define what that might be. One

senses that it is not a matter that engages him. Yet it is central to the undertaking upon which he and his associates have embarked.

Turning to the Preface, let us look at its first sentence:

The publication of *An Australian Prayer Book* in 1978 was a significant step for Australian Anglicans.

The phrase which we note – it would be too much to say that it strikes us, for its clichéd metaphor is weary – is ‘a significant step’. Mr Bartlett means, we assume, a step forward. So he is setting in motion an idea that is crucial to the modern liturgical movement, but which all the facts about the modern Church contradict – that every stage in liturgical experimentation is an advance and that, *ipso facto*, this new prayer book will be a further ‘step’ in the right direction. It is a direction away from the Book of Common Prayer, as Mr Bartlett observes, acknowledging in the next sentence that that Prayer Book had been used ‘for over three hundred years’. In a good example of damning with faint praise, the Chairman concludes his first paragraph with this obituary compliment to the discarded book:

it had served well.

Indeed, we might say that it had – and even goes on doing so, in many places – having been used for three hundred years, whereas *An Australian Prayer Book* had outlasted its usefulness, as Mr Bartlett points out, after less than twenty. Not given to linguistic subtlety, the Chairman does not appear to have perceived the irony vitiating his opening paragraph.

To make matters worse, Mr Bartlett emphasises the brevity of the tenure of *AAPB* in the next paragraph where he speaks of its ‘life’ of ‘at least ten to fifteen years’. This – in human and in liturgical terms – is scarcely a ‘life’ at all, and another tired cliché affirms what is, in fact, highly questionable:

It has stood the test of time well.

The ‘test of time’? Less than twenty years in use! This would not appear to be a test that is worth anything. Indeed, in terms of the ‘test of time’ that the Book of Common Prayer has passed, since its genesis in the sixteenth century, the less-than-twenty years in use of *An Australian Prayer Book* must be reckoned a failure.

Since the publication of *AAPB*, Mr Bartlett continues, justifying his commission’s new book,

Australian society and the Anglican Church have experienced significant changes.

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Mr Bartlett enjoys the adjective 'significant', but he does not appear to recognise its essential ambiguity and imprecision. "“Significant” by what standards?" we might ask. Why should even very significant changes in the society and the church necessarily require a new prayer book? The history of liturgy – in which, we must assume, as I have said, that Mr Bartlett is deeply learned (for no-one without that learning would presume to accept the Chairmanship of our Church's Liturgical Commission) – shows that liturgies that have truly stood Mr Bartlett's 'test of time' were remarkable for surviving momentous upheavals in social and ecclesiastical circumstances beyond anything that has occurred in Australia or Anglicanism in the last twenty years.

Mr Bartlett concludes his second paragraph by noting that the demand for a more contemporary liturgy has grown.

No doubt, this is true. But that does not, by any means, prove that the demand should be met. It may well be that in liturgical matters, as in many other less important aspects of life, the majority is always wrong. Should liturgy be 'contemporary'? Is not what is contemporary today, old-fashioned tomorrow? Mr Bartlett has no time for these complexities as he comments on the commission's desire to satisfy 'many requests' and respond to 'many suggestions'. The unrecognised irony, again, of his catalogue of 'workshops' and 'consultations' – all the liturgical fiddling of modern Christianity – is that while an ever-increasing body of people preoccupied with liturgy and liturgiology have been busying themselves, the decline in the attendance at the liturgies and worship services they have been so relentlessly and persistently changing and 'improving' has been proceeding with kindred rapidity. Mr Bartlett speaks of liturgical 'evolution, not revolution', with the subtext, again, of an ever-improving worship as the defective species of the past are discarded. But the reverse is the truth.

The modern liturgical movement in Anglicanism has been as destructive of the liturgy as the English political revolution of the seventeenth century. The difference, however, is that whereas the Presbyterian Commonwealth was transitory, the damage wrought in the present day will be long-lasting, if not permanent. So much has been jettisoned that the circumstances of a recovery are all but impossible to envisage.

Masquerading as liturgy, volumes such as *A Prayer Book for Australia* derive from ideas about worship that are profoundly anti-liturgical. The catholicity of Anglicanism has been all but irreparably damaged in the

disposal of common prayer, both the book of that title and, even more importantly, the principles that animated it. Casuistically, Mr Bartlett appends to his Preface the familiar quotation from the Thirty-Nine Articles about the flexibility that has always been permissible in Anglican worship – ‘It is not necessary that the traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like’. But there is a great gulf fixed between the liberty that was envisaged in that carefully formulated teaching and the licentiousness that the modern service books of Anglicanism encourage. In Mr Bartlett’s own diocese of Sydney, some pastors are said to concoct their own ‘liturgies’, free from the constraints of any book, apart, of course, from the Bible itself. Such practices have no connection whatever with the history and principles of Anglicanism and are a congregationalism directly confronting and undermining its claims of catholicity.

The fourth paragraph concentrates on one of the most cherished achievements of modernising liturgists – ‘variety’. A *Prayer Book for Australia*, the Chairman writes, outstrips its predecessors in this regard:

Many more options with a greater diversity of style are provided here.

Again, the provision of all these alternatives is the response to ‘many requests’.

One is stunned, time and again, by the manner in which Mr Bartlett presents as automatically commendable what the theory of liturgy has regarded either as dubious or simply bad. Mr Bartlett, of course, would have studied and meditated upon the introductory material to the Book of Common Prayer, 1662. In the document ‘Of Ceremonies’ there, for example, variety – described as an ‘excessive multitude’ – is condemned, and in the Preface itself, famously, ‘the manifold changings of the Service’ are similarly repudiated, for

to turn the Book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out.

Yet this is precisely the situation that Mr Bartlett has commended in his uncritical praise of ‘greater variety’, encouraging the liturgical anarchy that now prevails in Anglicanism where not only is it impossible to move from parish to parish with any confidence of congruence in the texts of worship, but even within a parish, from week to week, there is ongoing change and innovation. The principle of common prayer has been abandoned in the Anglican Church, worldwide, and, with it, the aspiration to a measure of theological unity within our Communion. This abandonment is the direct result of the uncritical acceptance by such as

Mr Bartlett of the advantages of the chaos he happily endorses as 'many more options with a greater diversity of style'. It would be an understatement to observe that the Chairman is overly sanguine when he notes that

carefully prepared leadership... should make services easier to follow.

How is that leadership to be 'carefully prepared' and by whom? Again, we must ask the necessary question about the liturgical qualifications and experience of those leaders.

It is the next paragraph, however, to which I would draw particular attention:

Anglicans are accustomed to polished English with complex syntax. However, a church engaged in mission must ensure that its liturgy is accessible to all. Adopting the directness of contemporary style is possible without losing the sense of the numinous.

This is the one instance where Mr Bartlett addresses characteristics of style, but only to dismiss them. Anglicans have been 'accustomed' to artistic prose – that of Cranmer – with its 'complex syntax'. We should look very carefully at that disreputable phrase. Affecting to be descriptive, it is, in effect, cunningly denunciatory. What is complex, it is implied, is to be expunged – and this principle is taken as axiomatic by modern liturgists. They do not pause to reflect that the ideas and experiences which liturgical language aspires to express for use in worship may themselves be complex. How, except in complex language, might one describe the mystery of the Trinity, for example? Those committed today to the simplification of the language of liturgy do not pause to reflect that to simplify may be to traduce both the theology and the spirituality of the mystery of faith. This is not to suggest that liturgical language should be incomprehensible, but a locution that preserves the sense of transcendental meaning beyond what can be immediately and fully comprehended may be truer to the experience of faith and the nurturing of spirituality than an emphatic, unadorned simplicity.

To compose such language requires the genius of a Cranmer and modern liturgists, conspicuously lacking such gifts, are, not surprisingly, forceful in declarations of their irrelevance. In any case, Mr Bartlett is wrong. To state that Cranmer's was a 'complex syntax' is not by any means universally true, as any careful study of the Book of Common Prayer will reveal. He can be syntactically complex, when the occasion requires, as in the consecration prayer in his communion service, with its careful revisions of the canon of the mass, but his collects (for

example) have been such models of polished English without verbosity and unnecessary complexity as to have been set, in the past, for learning by heart by children. Could Mr Bartlett explain what is 'complex' in the 'syntax' of this prayer, chosen at random:

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind.

(Collect for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity)

This is not merely 'polished', nor is it 'complex'. It is simply perfect English, in the liturgical register, totally comprehensible, yet appropriately elevated, through the unostentatious use of alliteration, for instance, to the ceremoniousness of the situation in which it is designed to be used and to the dignity of the petition it embodies. Mr Bartlett and his fellow modernising liturgists have presumed to improve upon perfection, with predictable results, their project being impelled by the argument that a church engaged in mission must ensure that its liturgy is accessible to all.

Apart from inquiring about the meaning of 'accessible' and as to how accessibility might be ensured, and what tests are to be applied to see whether or not it has been achieved, and whether it is even a goal worth pursuing (for a liturgy accessible to infants, for example, may be insufficiently engaging for the mature), we must ask what it is about Cranmer's prayer that is inaccessible.

Never has literacy been more widespread in our society than today. More students than ever are completing high school and proceeding to tertiary study. More people than ever before are studying literature and language to senior levels of competence. Yet the Church maintains, through spokesmen like Mr Bartlett, that these very people are incapable of responding to 'polished English with complex syntax', or even Cranmer's perfect liturgical English with its usually straightforward syntax. Here, again, we encounter the ignorant amateurism of our liturgical masters. What professional knowledge do they possess of the linguistic capacities of the people for whom they presume to prescribe forms of worship and of whose linguistic capacities they entertain such patronising assessments?

Then, astonishingly, Mr Bartlett declares:

Adopting the directness of contemporary style is possible without losing the sense of the numinous.

His confidence is breathtaking. Every phrase in this sentence is disputable, and its teaching is both highly questionable and the subject of extensive, unresolved debate. What is 'the directness of contemporary style'? We live in an age of euphemism, in spite of our self-congratulation for our supposed frankness, in sexual matters for example. Anyone with an ear and an eye for spoken and written language today will notice circumlocution everywhere, in so-called educated discourse and in more popular forms, as in the amusing use of the term 'counselling', for instance, where we are regularly informed that after committing some misdemeanour in the workplace, this or that employee has been 'counselled'. No one has any difficulty coping daily with such circumlocution, yet Mr Bartlett tells us that we cannot abide it in church, where it might indeed have a certain appropriateness as we attempt to approach, through language, the inexpressible mysteries of divinity, with their resistance to clear-cut statements and their requirement, as we celebrate them, of a ceremonious and adorned language.

As for Mr Bartlett's contention that it is 'possible' to speak directly in contemporary language – which, in any case, modern liturgies do not (using the still-born formulae of modern liturgical newspeak, the language of the ecclesiastical computer) – without 'losing the sense of the numinous', one need only reply that it has been the experience of numerous worshippers, over the last generation, in our Church and in the Roman Catholic Church, that it is precisely the sense of the numinous that has been lost, in contemporary liturgy, to its impoverishment. Mr Bartlett is fond of referring to the commission's responses to many requests for change. He (of course) makes no reference to the many complaints, worldwide, about modern language liturgies.

Dedicated to simplicity, the Chairman notes that the rubrics, too, have been 'simplified' and he advocates

a careful reading of this material by those planning services.

This, he opines – with recourse to a curious metaphor – will ensure 'a smooth passage for congregations'. What an odd conception of worship Mr Bartlett has! 'A smooth passage'? The idea of liturgy as a sea-going cruise bears little relation to the experience of worship recounted by numerous masters of the spiritual life in the Anglican tradition. What was 'smooth' about the 'passage' of worship of John Donne, in the seventeenth century, or of Evelyn Underhill in our own, whose masterpiece, *Worship*, would be known to Mr Bartlett? Liturgy is not designed to smooth us on our way – it is meant to disturb us, to elevate



us, to cast us down, to inspire and to chasten. Certainly, Mr Bartlett is talking about rubrical simplicities that order the liturgy reasonably and effectively. But his appropriation of this metaphor (and his closing reference to 'experienced worshippers') smacks of the bureaucratic conception of worship that is one of the blights of the modern Church, whereby the concentration on the ordering of services has all but obliterated the linguistic (indeed, poetic) representation of the untidinesses of human frailty and the extraordinary scope of the human sensibility to be inspired by the beauty of holiness. *A Prayer Book for Australia* confronts these profound imperfections and capacities by neatly plotted diagrams of devotion, in bland English, with – as Mr Bartlett points out, with unconscious pertinence – 'grey shading in the margin'. What a poor reflection it is of the drama of the depths and elevations of the Christian's spiritual pilgrimage!

With reference to the matter of sexist language, the confident Mr Bartlett, again, has no reservations about an issue which, having been hotly disputed in the secular world, is now causing even feminists to have second thoughts about the necessarily beneficial effects of a wholesale desexing of the language. Is Mr Bartlett aware of these debates? If so, his Preface does not indicate it:

The Commission has adopted inclusive language in referring to human beings.

And that is the end of the matter. It is another way of attempting to render redundant everything that has gone before in liturgical composition or demanding that it be rewritten. The Chairman admits that 'address to the deity raises different issues', although he does not spell them out. The crucial matter of the man-God, however, is the true test of this policy. Of Jesus Christ, it is said, in their version of the Nicene creed, that he came down from heaven,  
 was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
 and became truly human.

To become 'truly human' (as opposed to falsely human, I suppose) required – inconveniently, for those under the sway of old-fashioned feminism – that he became either a man or a woman. The traditional rendering in English of the original Greek word *enanthropesanta*, at one stroke included the fullness of his humanity (indicated by the Greek) and – in the translation, 'and became man' – the specificity of his maleness. Mr Bartlett and his commissioners diminish the humanity of Christ, which included his masculinity, even as they affect to be affirming

it, in the name of the 'courtesy and justice' of a degendered language. Their decision does not even have the advantage of ecumenism. It is likely (Dr Evan Burge has observed) that the Roman Catholic revised version will revert to the customary form: 'and was made man'.

The Preface closes with a very familiar refrain to those of us who have had the depressing experience of studying modern liturgical documents and polemic over the last twenty or so years. It is the statement of those who, for all their claims about their productions, must recognise how far short their liturgies fall of what is required, and so they characteristically assert: 'No prayer book is the final word in worship'. Mr Bartlett, tediously echoing his many predecessors, reflects that 'liturgy is more than words'. 'The important thing', he writes, in his flat way, 'is the spirit in which words are used'. All this is true, but it is irrelevant to the matter in hand. Mr Bartlett is presenting, to his Church, its prayer book. Yet at the same time as he is pointing out its alleged virtues, he tells us that, after all, these are only words and words are incidental to worship. In the process, he denies the essential truth of liturgy: inspired words inspire. His statement that 'no prayer book' can determine the spirit in which liturgical words are used is simply wrong and has been disproved by the evidence of Anglican spirituality through the ages. The faith of countless Christians, of high and low degree, literate and illiterate alike, as they have testified, has been formed and shaped by the language of the Book of Common Prayer. That, along with Mr Bartlett's 'test of time', is the true test of a liturgical book. How well will *A Prayer Book for Australia* survive those tests? We shall see.

We are living, in the liturgical life of modern Christianity, and have been so living for more than a generation, in a situation akin to the subjects of the naked emperor in the fable of his new clothes. You remember the story of his pride in his wondrous apparel, its beauties visible only to the keenly-eyed, having been fashioned by self-acclaimed weavers. All the people, not wishing to be seen to be unappreciative of such work, affected to admire him in his new robes. In reality, those weavers were talentless and their clothes for the emperor non-existent, as the honest child, pointing out his nakedness, indicated to the multitude. It would be much more pleasant to congratulate Mr Bartlett and his commission for having clothed the Church in a language of liturgy worthy of its worship and to commend *A Prayer Book for Australia* and the principles on which it is based, as set out in the Chairman's Preface. Unfortunately, careful study of the documents cannot support such a commendation.

## News and Information

### *Conference 1997*

From 21-23 January this year, some 45 people gathered at Aquinas College in Adelaide for the Academy's conference and general meeting. The theme of the conference, 'Liturgical Inculturation in Australia', was opened out in the Monday evening session by Tom Elich, who showed video clips of three recent public liturgies (the opening of the National Liturgical Music Convention, the NCCA's inaugural service, and the Mary McKillop beatification mass) in which traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremonies were used in the context of Christian liturgy, and raised questions about how 'successfully' the rites were incorporated in each case. (The other keynote papers will be published progressively in this journal.)

Those attending generally appreciated the opportunity to discuss each of the papers in small groups, with highlights of these discussions brought back to general forum sessions. In the final session of the conference, participants were challenged to develop liturgical texts appropriate for the celebration of Australia Day, a task which proved virtually impossible in the light of our increased sensitivity to Aboriginal and non-British migrant cultures. Instead, the conference issued a press release supporting a change in the date for celebration of Australia Day, which was taken up for broadcast by two South Australian radio stations, and later published in the *Adelaide Advertiser*.

In this year's conference planning, we also revised the format for presentation of short reports by members, assigning 15-minute timeslots which were grouped into two 90-minute sessions. This proved to be an outstanding success – we learned variously about the use of Aboriginal dance forms in Arnhem Land liturgical events (Greg Anderson); preparations for the 'Year of Great Jubilee' in 2000CE (Elizabeth Harrington); the training of cantors (Angela McCarthy); ICEL's current project on initiation of children (Tom Elich); God's spirit in Aboriginal worship in a creek bed outside Mt Isa (Peter Smith); skills for (liturgical) ministry in a diverse church and society (Anthony Kain); new resource materials for worship (Jenny O'Brien); and the memorial service for Port Arthur (Cathy Murrowood); and we gained a whole new understanding

of 'keeping the wolf from the door', in the collects of the Roman Missal (Gerard Moore). We were also reminded of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*, and given some insights into its history, by Ray Hartley.

Once again, the conference was embedded in a matrix of worship, some of which was shaped especially for the conference, while some used traditional forms from the various denominations represented in the Academy. For those who needed reminding of the pain of denominational division, there was a celebration of eucharist according to the rite of the host chapter convenor, which all were welcomed to attend, but at which not all could be invited to the table.

While the weather proved unpleasant at times, the South Australian chapter, especially convenor Anthony Kain and his colleagues on the organising committee, are to be congratulated for giving the conference a home and smooth operation, and ending with an operating surplus as well. Now we look forward to the next conference, to be hosted by the Victoria chapter in mid-1998 – see you there!

*Inari Thiel*

### *The Academy and eucharistic sharing*

On occasions when Christians gather ecumenically as the Academy does, difficulties arise when the eucharist is celebrated. In many ways we are one, yet we are divided and ecclesial discipline does not allow us fully and openly to share in receiving communion. We come together on these occasions not only as individuals but as people who are part of one or other tradition/denomination/ecclesial community. As such we bring with us joy and freedom, but also the mores and expectations that such membership entails. Especially, one who presides at the eucharist does not do this as a free agent but as representative person acting with the authority conferred (by ordination) through the Church (howbeit, that ecclesial community of which he/she is part).

Official stances with regard to sharing in communion vary widely. At one extreme is the position that Christians are either in communion or they are in schism – and when they are in communion they may share in the communion of the body and blood of Christ, when they are in schism they may not. Other positions hold that ecclesially separated Christians may be admitted to communion with more or less restriction

or conditions. Sometimes the question is referred to as 'intercommunion'. However, while this term is widely used, I think it is misleading. Where we share in communion there is no need for 'inter', while on the other hand, if it is 'inter' is there real 'communion'? I prefer to see the issue as: In what way can we extend 'eucharistic hospitality'? or, How can there be 'eucharistic sharing'?

My first experience of an ecumenical conference where the question of eucharistic sharing was not only a practical issue but also a major item of discussion was the Eucharist Ecumenism Community Conference held in Melbourne in conjunction with the 40th International Eucharistic Congress in 1973. Particular consideration was given to the question as to whether sharing communion is/can be/ought to be a *means to unity* or a *sign of unity already achieved*. After careful discussion (but not so careful drafting) the following recommendation was passed:

There was a very formidable body of opinion, not necessarily shared by all, which, appreciating the difficulties and responsibilities of those in authority and respecting the sincere hesitations of a number of the faithful of all confessions, nevertheless respectfully asks those in authority to come to terms with the problem of intercommunion lest frustration be increased and perhaps explode. Intercommunion is at times de facto taking place.

It is my impression that since then (24 years ago) a great deal of the urgency has gone out of the debate but that not very much has changed in practice.

While the question of eucharistic sharing is part of much wider issues relating to Christian unity and the nature of the Church, I hope that the Academy will keep the question on its agenda (and not dodge the issue, as has happened at some conferences, by not having a celebration of the eucharist). The pain caused by not being able to share fully in communion might be a spur to keep us working at Christian unity.

Anyone wanting to read more on the question might begin with one or more of the following. All set out the issue clearly and have good referencing for further study.

Geoffrey Wainwright *Eucharist and Eschatology* (SCM, 1971) pp 135-146; and *Doxology: a systematic theology* (SCM, 1980) pp 316-319.

Oliver Tomkins 'Intercommunion' in J.G. Davies, ed. *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (SCM, 1986)

R. Wesley Hartley

**Age 21:**

**Seasons, Times and Cultures in Worship**

A worship workshop

Brisbane,

22-26 January, 1998

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*Age 21: Times, Seasons, and Cultures  
in worship*

*Age 21* is a National workshop on worship, arranged by the Uniting Church Commission on Liturgy and open to participants from all churches.

**About the Workshop and its Speakers**

*Age 21* will be held at Grace and Cromwell Colleges, on the campus of the University of Queensland. As well as the two keynote addresses, *Age 21* will offer a number of streams of interest which participants will be able to develop, along with three elective sessions. There will be opportunity for times of worship together, and relaxation in the warmth of Brisbane. Our keynote speakers are Dr Gail Ramshaw and the Revd Dr Gordon Lathrop from the Lutheran Church, USA.

Dr Ramshaw is a scholar of liturgical language and is professor of religion at La Salle University. She is the author of *Christ in Sacred Speech* (Fortress Press, 1986) and *God beyond Gender* (Augsburg Fortress, 1995). She is presently writing a book on feminist Christianity.

Dr Lathrop is the Schieren Professor of Practical Theology (Liturgy) and Chaplain at the Gordon Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He is the author of *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Fortress Press, 1983), and has contributed to the WCC publication, *So We Believe, So We Pray*. Dr Ramshaw and Dr Lathrop have collaborated on inclusive language revisions of the Psalms and the readings of the Sunday Lectionary.

Possible workshop electives will encompass issues raised in several of the streams of interest in a briefer form, as well as: banners, children and worship, the renewed catechumenate, retreat worship, charismatic worship, worship and/or evangelism (seeker services), 'contemporary' worship, worship at the time of a birth, the sacraments, and others.

### **Theme Summary:**

For 2,000 years, Christian people have gathered to worship God. In that time, the church has spread to every part of the globe, and encountered new questions and forms of thinking. This movement in time and space has necessitated changes in forms of worship. As Christian worship in a variety of cultures, their worship both reflects and critiques these cultures. In order to be faithful to its calling, the church must carefully consider what it must retain from the past, and what must be changed so that the good news of Jesus Christ may be proclaimed and heard.

The workshop will engage with these questions at a crucial time: as the Uniting Church approaches its 21st birthday, and as we all approach the 21st Century. There will be a number of streams of interest which participants may follow as they grapple with the questions of authentic worship.

### **Traditions in Crisis**

The Uniting Church is committed by the Basis of Union to be catholic, reformed and evangelical. Each of these traditions has much to offer the worship of the church today, yet each in some way is in crisis. As well as this, the charismatic movement has affected the way the churches worship God in our day. By taking some bearings from the past, we can look toward the future with worship which may reflect the fullness of the Christian church.

### **Worship and Culture**

Worship does not occur apart from culture. The principle of inculturation in worship will be examined with special reference to baptism and the eucharist. The potential future impact of Aboriginal culture on mainstream worship will form part of this stream.

### **Language in and for worship in our time**

The language for worship is another point of crisis. How can we speak of the mystery of God? In what ways, with which metaphor, should we today name the triune God? We will look at the language of psalms and the proposed revision of *The Australian Hymn Book*, among other sources, to explore these questions.

### **The Body In Worship – Using All Our Senses**

We do not worship God as disembodied spirits. As the Word became flesh, so we praise God with the senses. Drama, dance, music and the

visual arts will form separate streams which will contribute to the public service of worship on Sunday night.

### **The Seasons Of The Church**

As the millennium draws to a close, we are made increasingly conscious of time; yet we always live in time, which spirals onward and carries us with it. The church's seasons developed in the northern hemisphere; we will explore the calendar in the Australian context, including questions of image, theme and colour.

### **Our Children**

We do our children a disservice if we do not teach them the worship of the church, amidst many competing cultural pressures. There will be a stream for children, which will involve them in appropriate worship activities, and which will contribute to the Sunday evening worship service.



## Book Review

Beyond our Dreaming: a commentary on "Service of the Lord's Day" in *Uniting in Worship* by Graham Hughes, published by the author, 1996, v + 75pp

Dr Graham Hughes, from United Theological College in Sydney, takes the title of his 75-page book from the Eucharistic Prayer written by Robert Gribben. Throughout his book, as we might expect from a commentary, he sticks closely to the text of the Service of the Lord's Day in *Uniting in Worship*. After an Introduction there are four chapters, each on one of the four parts of the service.

As someone who was involved in writing the Service of the Lord's Day and who has had a positive regard for the writings of Graham Hughes, I was pleased to have the opportunity to review this book. The material for the book, Hughes says in the Preface, is from notes for his liturgy classes at UTC.

At the outset our attention is drawn to UIW's view of itself: that it is "normative in the sense of [providing] a standard", but not in the sense of its being "intended to be used rigidly and without imagination". Hughes then makes some very helpful comments about the Gathering liturgy and how it can be imaginatively handled (including some of his own texts), but he doesn't take us all the way.

My own experience of attending Uniting Church services is to be disappointed by the lack of facility many UCA ministers have in putting together a worship service. As Hughes points out, they all-too-often see themselves as entertainers or comperes, seldom as liturgical presidents. (There is also that group who all-too-slavishly or -stiltedly follow the book. Hughes mentions the experience of being at an alleged Communion Service where there was no Eucharistic Prayer. I have also sat in church where more than one of everything was read because the book provides alternatives! Perhaps this reflects the teaching UCA ministerial candidates have received in Theological Hall – and/or been willing to receive.)

In this context it would have been better if Dr Hughes had given us a couple of complete sets of his own "homegrown" propers for the day. This would have given readers a more complete idea of how to transform the skeletal bones of a service which the book is intended to

provide into something "imaginative". I hardly ever use the texts in the book, but each week write my own material (related to the lectionary), sometimes including Eucharistic Prayers. This is another disappointment: Hughes says less than I had hoped about the function of the readings in relating propers to commons. My expectations were too high for such a small book, I fear.

The commentary, then, is helpful in disclosing how much work must be done within the UCA on issues associated with worship. My guess is that the UCA will not make much real progress in the quality of its worship until it is willing to resource people to do that work. (That is not a comment on the quality of Graham Hughes' book, but on the further task that his work points to.)

*David A. Brown*



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