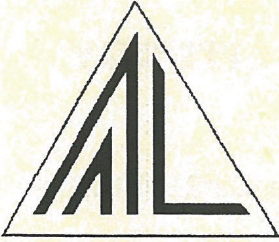

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AJL is the journal of the Australian Academy of Liturgy and exists to further the study of liturgy at a scholarly level and to comment on and provide information concerning liturgical matters with special reference to Australia. *AJL* is published twice each year.

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Contents

Hughes-Cheong Lecture, Trinity College, Melbourne

Sacramental Living: living baptismally

Rowan Williams 3

Conference 2003 Keynote Paper

The Making of the Body of Christ: worship as a technological apocalypse

Garry Deverell 19

Book Reviews

Visually Speaking Radio and the Renaissance of Preaching 36

Singing and Praying Together: a communion book for young people: from A Prayer Book for Australia 37

Contributors 40

Editorial

Issue one of *AJL* Vol. 9 brings together the first of the Archbishop of Canterbury's two lectures on "Sacramental Living" which were recently presented as the Hughes-Cheong Lectures at Trinity College in Melbourne, and a taste of the Academy's 2003 conference, "Liturgy and Technology: continuing the conversation", which was held in Sydney.

The lecture has been transcribed from a recording of the event and not reworked for publication, so it retains its freshness and will, I hope, provide a sense of Rowan Williams' personality as well as the insights he conveys.

Alert readers will have noticed that papers in this issue are longer than the journal's original 3,000-word limit. Indeed, that limit has now been changed to an expressed preference for papers of up to 5,000 words, in keeping with the nature of academic writing in the humanities. However, I am mindful of the Academy's character as a meeting-place for both the scholarly and the practical, and I hope that what is published will remain accessible to those without a specialist level of formal academic training in the field.

As always, I look forward to receiving your contributions for future issues of *AJL*, whether your interest in liturgy is primarily pastoral or theological.

Inari Thiel
Logan City

Sacramental Living: living baptismally

Rowan Williams

I have chosen as a title for these lectures the broad theme of "Sacramental Living" – hence "Living Baptismally" and "Living Eucharistically" – because my intention in these two talks is to draw out a little what it is that the sacraments are about in terms of the very shape and contour of Christian Life.

I think that it is very important that, as Christians, we remember that the sacraments are not simply *events*. They are such; but they are events because they are also manifestations of those underlying contours of the life of discipleship. Treat them primarily as events themselves, and you end up with some of those (frankly not very edifying) controversies about sacramental theology that have not only taken up the energies of many people who could have used their energies better, but have divided and embittered the life of the church. But go through to the contours of discipleship which they manifest, and perhaps it looks a little different.

I want to begin thinking about "Living Baptismally" with an image: the classical icon of the Baptism of Jesus as you see it in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. This depicts Jesus naked, up to his neck in water. You see on one side of the river John the Baptist, on the other (frequently) three angels holding Jesus' clothes. We see the hand of God descending from above, and underneath, in the depths of the river, you frequently see a little figure who represents the "river god". It is a very strange, Classical survival in Orthodox art. But that presence of the river god is often seen, by Orthodox commentators on this iconographic tradition, as a

representation of the way in which the Baptism of Jesus is understood as a descent into chaos: into a world of chaotic, unregulated reality, prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is like the waste and void which covers the face of creation at the beginning of Genesis. In Eastern Christian tradition, as elsewhere, there is a very strong element in theologising about the Baptism of Jesus which sees it as a recapitulation of Genesis. (Before you point it out – yes, there are any number of 'recapitulations of Genesis' in the Gospel story. The fact that Matthew begins his Gospel with the word "Genesis", is one. The fact that John begins his Gospel with the words "In the beginning", is another. But that is another story, or rather, lots of other stories!) But the Baptism was frequently seen in terms and imagery first seen in Genesis: once again, watery chaos is addressed by God. The Word descends into the chaos and, under the overseeing and overshadowing of the Spirit, something is brought to birth. And the something that is brought to birth, in this case, is the vocation of Jesus to live out his innermost identity as God's beloved child. When he comes up out of the water there is no longer chaos, there is the voice of calling from above.

So, living baptismally – if it has something to do with that particular image of baptism, which in turn has its roots in scriptural language itself – living baptismally is living through that process of chaos, a descent of the Spirit, an emergence into new identity. Baptismal identity is most deeply thought about, quite clearly, as identity in and with Jesus. But that, in turn, is an identity which *restores the identity* of the first creation. In baptism, God remakes out of chaos. And in our birth in baptism into the kinship of Jesus, we return to something that was lost at the very beginning of the human story and is restored in Jesus Christ. And it is a reminder that chaos is not resolved or organised by fear, by a word from a divine distance, but organised, shaped, given (even) beauty, by the

involvement of God. Whereas we might read the first Genesis story in terms of a word addressed from a distance – although you would be wrong to do so – it is impossible to read *this* "Genesis story" as about a word (or Word) that comes from a distance. *This* recapitulation of Genesis is about the naked Jesus, up to his neck in watery chaos and only there and from there, hearing fully and finally the voice which addresses him as God's beloved child and which empowers him to go forward in ministry and death and resurrection.

To take on the baptismal identity, then, is to take on an identity which is very, very suspicious both of distance and of control, and I will have a little more to say about that later on. And it also says to us that where you might expect to find a baptised person is somewhere near chaos. The baptised, I'm suggesting, are those who live in the name of God in the neighbourhood of chaos: and that may be an inner as well as an outer chaos. I don't mean by that that baptised people are called to chaotic lives: however true that is of most of us, that is not quite the point. The point is, rather, that the baptised person is aware of her or his proximity to chaos, of the impossibility of making order and shape out of our human lives by goodwill and hard thinking. To take on the baptismal identity is to take on something of that being poised over the nothingness out of which God calls us.

Now, to be aware of our nothingness in religious terms is a complicated bundle of ideas and a dangerous one, but we need to be aware of what it does and doesn't mean. To be aware of my nothingness does *not* mean to think that I am contemptible, to think that I am negligible. It means to acknowledge, head-on, that I am *of myself* nothing. It is the difference – as Iris Murdoch used to say – between suffering and death: "Suffering can be romantic and dramatic. Death just isn't." So to accept my nothingness is not to indulge in an extravagant

putting down of myself. It is to believe, as a matter of bare-faced fact, that I would not *be* were I not spoken to by God. And to know that I would not be were I not spoken to by God is part of what it means, I believe, to live on the edge of chaos. I do not have the resources to batter the world into submission and into patterns that satisfy me. But I am spoken to by the One who brings reality out of chaos. And I am spoken to moment by moment. Not once, definitively – in a way that takes me right away from the chaos and brings me into a world of order inner and outer – but spoken to in a way that keeps me aware of that nothingness over which the word (and Word) of God speaks.

That is the first general point I want to make about "living baptismally". It is living in the proximity of chaos, in the proximity of nothingness. To be aware that I only am as I am spoken to in love by God, and summoned to the identity of a child of God through and in the Spirit. It means that in my inner life I must not be afraid of confronting nothingness and chaos, I must not pretend that my inner life is tidier than it is. It means, too, that I may expect my baptismal calling to take me into the neighbourhood of other kinds of chaos. The chaos of other people's lives, the chaos of suffering, the chaos of doubt, the chaos of a real world in which people are ground-down and oppressed and denied by others who don't understand what it is to face *their* nothingness.

Now that in turn leads to a second point (and you will be interested to know that I have four not three points – I am being extremely un-Anglican!) This suggests, I believe, that to be baptised is misunderstood rather fundamentally if it is thought of as the possession of a status that marks me off from others. And here is a paradox; because obviously, from the very beginning, baptism has functioned as a marker of Christian identity, and markers of identity mark people off don't they? But here it seems we have a marker of identity which is meant to

give us precisely that identity which is not afraid of identification with any and every human circumstance. Baptism, if it is an entry into the identity of Jesus Christ, who is the identity of God entering into chaos, is an entry into the profoundest solidarity with human experience that we could imagine.

Some of the historical arguments about baptism – its conditions, its consequences and so forth – have unfortunately pivoted around the assumption that baptism really is something that marks off. In the very early church, there were great debates about whether any post-baptismal sins were allowed, and if so, which ones, and how many – "three strikes and you're out" I believe is the phrase – because a lot of people assumed that to be baptised was to be part of a body of Christ distinguished by its purity, its absolute integrity. And it took a while, I think, for the church to "discover" (as it were) that one of the features of the body of Christ which we need to ponder, is that it is a *wounded* body, and therefore one whose boundaries are breached. To live, therefore, in that wounded body is not to live in a state of sinless isolation. It took the church all of a hundred and twenty or so years to realise this. We might perhaps, with the wisdom of hindsight, have said that they could have noticed it more quickly. But this is the very paradox, of course, at the heart of any Christian notion of holiness: Christians believe that they are called to be holy. And (like others here, no doubt,) when I preach confirmation sermons, I tell people that they are being confirmed in order to be saints. This deeply alarms them of course, and I suspect that it alarms their friends and families even more! But the nature of Christian holiness is precisely that it is not something *possessed* – a set of achievements, a set of qualifications. It is a *relationship,* and can only be understood in those terms. To be holy is to be in the neighbourhood of Jesus Christ, and therefore also to be in the neighbourhood of whomever Jesus is in the neighbourhood of. And we see from the Gospels the sort of people he is

habitually in the neighbourhood of, and once again we are back to a proximity to, a neighbourhood of, chaos.

And that is the sense in which baptism, again paradoxically (I am sorry about all these paradoxes but I think they are there!), baptism is not simply about cleansing *from*: it is, in a strange sense, about being contaminated *by*. God in Christ – by living in the wounded body, which is the body of the incarnate Word – God in Christ adopts and accepts contamination by the world. "He was made sin," says St Paul very strongly and boldly, "for our sake," and only from that lowering of defences, that opening of the breaches, only from there comes openness to the Spirit. Again, that is something that already emerges in the reflection of the very earliest people to think about the identity of Jesus. We see it in the third chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, in that strange little encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist, where the Baptist says, as people have said ever since, "Why do you come to me?" And Jesus' enigmatic answer effectively says, "That's what I am here for. To be contaminated by baptism. To be affected by the need, the chaos, the darkness of the world."(Matt. 3:13-15.) And that is the paradox that runs through our baptismal living, our whole sense of holiness. Proximity to Jesus, yes; proximity to those that Jesus is in the neighbourhood of, yes. And therefore an understanding of our identity as itself with Jesus, and in Jesus, an unceasing, unyielding mission to those we might be tempted to regard as contaminating, those whose neighbourhood makes us feel awkward.

Jesus spends most of his ministry, according to the Gospels, in the neighbourhood of those in whose company people tend to feel awkward. And it is always a very good question I think, for self-examination, to ask: "Who are those in whose company I feel most awkward?" And that may have a very wide

range of responses. It may be the classic publicans and sinners of the Gospel, it may be all kinds of other people too; it may even be the respectable. And to imagine oneself before the throne of God in the company of those alongside whom one feels most uncomfortable is also always a salutary exercise. The Scottish theologian Elizabeth Templeton wrote some years ago, both movingly and entertainingly, of her attempts to come to terms with the idea that one day she might have to stand before the throne of God and make her peace with Ian Paisley, before she was allowed to grow any further. So, for "Ian Paisley" read your own particular private *bete noir*. But that is something to do with baptismal living, something to do with the proximity of those with whom we are not comfortable. And in that, we believe as baptised people, in that there is constantly re-enacted the Father's embrace of the Son in the Spirit across the abyss. In that is re-enacted the eternal action of a divine love which is all about the embrace of the totally *other*. And as the great twentieth century Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar liked to remind us again and again, God's love of creation only makes sense against the background of a God who already, eternally, loves the Other. The Father and the Word and the Spirit in love with one another because they are *not* each other, and do not in any sense assimilate or reduce to each other. It is because God is that kind of God that God, to put it boldly, is capable of creating. To put it very mythologically, by the time God gets around to creating the universe, God is already profoundly and eternally used to loving the *other*: God has had an eternity of practice at this and so is very good at it! Thus, our baptism involves an identification with, a proximity to, chaos – not a status that marks us off, but a journey into a particular kind of solidarity.

And thirdly, that has implications for how we understand the prayer of baptised people. The prayer of the baptised is bound to be a growth into conformity with

Jesus' prayer, and that means at least three things. It means what is variously called advocacy or surrogacy – "standing for". Jesus' prayer is a "standing for" in those situations in which he is – those situations of chaos or dissolution, breakdown and darkness. It is out of that, in that and for that, that Jesus prays. But again, one might deduce simply from the most superficial reading of the Gospels, that that advocacy or surrogacy – that "standing for" – is also caught up in a prayer of thanksgiving and adoration. The intercession – the painful, wrenched intercession that is offered, for example, at the grave of Lazarus – is, at the same time, a prayer of thanksgiving. If you go and read John Chapter 11 you will see that the pain of standing with the dead man and his bereaved family is caught up in Jesus' prayer into a thanksgiving: "I thank you Father, You always hear Me". And that with the tears still on His cheeks! (see John 11:28 ff, esp. vv. 41-42).

That particular fusion of intercession (or surrogacy) and thanksgiving, is surely why we have to say that the prayer of the baptised is quintessentially a eucharistic prayer: because it is there, in the Eucharist, that surrogacy or advocacy and thanksgiving stand together. The Eucharist is an entry into the prayer Christ offers for creation, and that prayer itself is, in turn, energised and sustained by the eternal act of loving thanksgiving which is (again) the life of the Trinity, and which is made real in the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus. So the prayer of the baptised needs to be seen as standing for and standing with, and at the same time *as* a thanksgiving: both together because the prayer of the Baptised is a being caught up into that everlasting movement of the Word towards the Source, the Son towards the Father.

And the third element of the prayer of the baptised – which arises out of that and which is, in some ways, hardest to pin down, to be precise about – is that that is

also, in human terms, a prayer of great risk and potential darkness. It is also Gethsemane! It is a prayer in which the presence of God is not simply that of a comforting partner, not even that of address to a loving parent, as we commonly understand it. Jesus cries out "Abba" in Gethsemane, but it is not quite the domestic picture that is evoked by that. So the prayer of the baptised is also a journey into mystery, a mystery which will challenge us, challenge us to the depths, a mystery which will require of us daily conversion, daily turning into the darkness which we have not yet understood, away from the comforting emotional and intellectual patterns that we can devise for ourselves and use to keep ourselves safe. That, then, is where baptism leads us in prayer: to advocacy, to thanksgiving and to the darkness of faith. I would go so far as to say that those three are in some important and central way the very heart of what it is for the church to be the church, and that a church that in some way fails to understand its prayer in those terms (and therefore its life in those terms), is a church that is jeopardising its very being as a church.

But there is another side to that which needs to be noted here; and again I speak with some tentativeness on this. All this should make us a bit cautious (shouldn't it?) about treating baptism as in any sense something conditional, something that is a reward for doing well. And some of the historic defences of infant baptism have rested precisely upon that. No, we don't wait for people to have adequate expressions of their faith before we baptise them. Yes, we do rush indiscriminately and recklessly into baptising people because the gift poured out is not a gift given by measure, as it says in the fourth Gospel. I believe there is much truth in that and it is at the end of the day why I go on believing in infant baptism. But it might also be the case that we ought to associate infant baptism rather more than we do with a kind of "ecclesiastical health warning", when someone comes to ask for baptism and we say, "There is a great gift to be

poured out and I am glad you asked." And we can say, (and we do say, I hope) that baptism is an entry into a particular type of solidarity. The gift given is the gift of identification with lots of people that you never know and never meet and who are there for you. And perhaps we should say baptism also, like it or not, commits you to a life in which your boundaries are less safe than you ever thought. And whether you know it or not – and whether you make it real or not and are sent to it or not – that is actually going to be a characteristic of your life from now on. Perhaps we ought to warn people about that. Who knows how that works? Who knows whether those who are baptised as infants and never do anything about it are in fact, in some way, exposed by the act of God to the world and to God in ways they never understand and have words for? Who knows? It is one of those things that makes me very wary about simply saying that people are baptised as infants and never have anything to do with God again. I suspect that God may have something to do with them, in a very particular way.

So I do not know, and this is an area of ecclesiastical delicacy as well as theological complexity and I am wary of dogmatising. But I would like us to live in a church whose attitude to baptism was both generous and realistic. Generous in saying "The first thing is gift"; realistic in saying "But you do realise what that gift brings don't you?" And I think here, as somehow summing that up, of a not terribly well known poem by my fellow townsman Dylan Thomas called *The Conversation of Prayer*, which imagines a child saying bedtime prayers half thoughtlessly, and somewhere else, a man dying in great mental and physical anguish. And as the poem unfolds, the dying man is somehow eased by something and the child drops into a kind of nightmare. And Thomas's point is that in the conversation of prayer, the exchange, the interflow of experience, can be a great deal more mysterious than anything we commonly imagine. And that remains for me one of the haunting, one of the most

mysterious, images of the whole process of intercessory prayer that I know. It relates a bit, of course, to the well-known speculations of Charles Williams about co-inherence in the body of Christ. The ways in which again, half consciously, we end up carrying things for one another in this fellowship.

But I want, in the last section of this lecture, to think further about how the baptismal identity is, in very specific ways, a messianic identity. Now "messianic" is a dangerous word, because so much of us and so many of us would like to believe that *that* was what we were involved in. "Messianism" is the curse of so much religion. But frequently, when we talk about people having a messianic complex (as we do), if we recognise in ourselves a messianic complex common to many of the clergy – it has even been known among bishops, I believe – what is happening, of course, is that the word "messianic" has lost its connection with the Messiah, and we will see what I mean in a moment.

Being "messianic" is about being anointed: the Messiah is the one who is anointed. And in Scripture (and subsequently of course) that anointing has commonly been seen as a three-fold matter: the anointing as prophet, priest, and monarch. And the theology which has looked at Jesus' messiahship in the light of that, will, I think, have some rather different things to say about what "messianic identity" might mean. And so I would like, in this, last section, briefly to look at those three categories: of the prophetic, the priestly and the royal. To think of some of the dangers that attend those ways of understanding our Christian identity and some of the vitality that goes with the words.

Jesus' anointing is to a prophetic calling, and the prophetic calling in the life of Israel is a calling to renew the community's integrity. "Have you forgotten what the Lord did for you? Have you forgotten who it is that calls you?" The prophet

is not simply a moralist, castigating the failures day after day, the moral failures of God's people. The prophet is calling people, God's people, to recognise afresh where they began, why they are there, who it is that made them who they are. And at every level of the prophetic tradition in Hebrew scripture, I believe, you can see that process going on. You can see it perhaps most eloquently in Hosea – the impassioned plea to return. You can see it also in the amazing interweaving in the second Isaiah of the themes of creation and exodus and restoration from exile – all inseparably bound together. Prophecy is about restoration, about finding your origins again. Hearing again that call that comes to you from God, to be a community. Once again perhaps, it is a recovery of that primal chaos out of which God makes something. The prophet, and I certainly think here of Isaiah, the prophet reminds God's people that they were drawn out of nothingness into community. And when the form of their communal life has ceased to express the amazed generosity which arises from thanksgiving to God, then people will have forgotten who they are and where they come from.

The priestly anointing, the priestly task, is in some ways very straightforward to understand. The priest is the unitive, sacrificial and intercessory presence, the one who makes connections. The prophet points to distance, the priest makes connections. The land and the people have abandoned or betrayed who they are and what they are, turned away from holiness. The priest is the technician of reconciliation, the one who can tell you what to do in order to reconnect. And it is a very remarkable and surprising insight in Hebrew scripture, picked up of course, in Christian scripture as well, that there is a strand of tradition which sees the vocation of the whole people of God as priestly. In this community, everybody is a technician of reconciliation, it is not simply the task of an élite – everyone is in the business of making connections.

And then what about the *royal* anointing – the anointing as monarch? Ancient Israel was rather in two minds about monarchy. It was aware of the dangers of having a monarch like the kings of the nations, and that savage bit of republican polemic that you find in the first book of Samuel still makes very interesting reading. (see I Sam. 8:4ff, esp. vv 10-18.) Ancient Israel was confused and uncertain about monarchy: they knew how badly it could go wrong, and at the same time the monarch was for them clearly a focal person, a representative person in the community. If it is true which I believe it is that a great many of the psalms are meant to be put in the mouth of the king at various ceremonies, then the complicated identity of the people is caught up in the identity of the king. And that means, of course, that the anointing as a royal person is not an anointing simply to power and control, but an anointing precisely to that identification with which we began in thinking about the baptismal identity.

So the prophetic, the priestly and the royal anointings, as the consequence of baptism, as the filling out of the baptismal identity, become something a good deal more than simply a license to exercise various kinds of power. We know that each of them can be corrupted in its own distinctive way. The prophetic calling can be corrupted into an abstract moralism, and when people self-identify as "prophetic" in the church I think one may reasonably scratch the head a little about what is going on there, and wonder if that is indeed what the Lord has in mind! It can be another way of avoiding the vulnerability of the baptised identity, whether in the form of training the prophetic for radical critique in the church or claiming the prophetic for certain kinds of charismatic utterance. (I should add that I am entirely in favour of radical critique and entirely in favour of charismatic utterance. I just want us to be extremely careful about how we use the word "prophetic" here, lest either of those turns into another way of

levering ourselves into a safer position within the church.) Prophecy is a real gift, but it is a gift that is extraordinarily difficult to employ with integrity – that does not mean it is not a gift. But yes, we can take the prophetic anointing in all sorts of strange directions, we can take it into that moralism, that isolation and purism which undermines the very basis, I believe, of baptismal living.

And we all know what can be done with the priestly anointing. It can be turned into an apology for elitism, or perhaps, even worse, for a kind of decorative sacerdotalism. The great William Stringfellow – the American lay theologian, one of the most underrated thinkers of the twentieth century, one of the greatest giants of the Anglican tradition – talked about how we could turn priesthood, real priesthood, into what he called a superfluous and decorative form of laity. Unless you understand what real priesthood is about, he said, you won't have a real laity, and that is a very sobering thought. And for him, a real priesthood is a priesthood that understands what it is to make sense and make connections, and to do so in ways which are very much more than superficial and decorative. A priestliness which is simply putting the stamp of religious approval on what anybody else happens to be doing is not a making of connections. The priest is there to make the unexpected connections, which is more than putting a stamp on what happens to be going on and that is why authentic priesthood is such a very difficult task both for those we call ordained priests and for the whole priestly people of God. In fact, the priest may be seen as the one who must perpetually be asked by (and attempt to answer for) the people, the question Prospero asks Miranda in *The Tempest*: "What seest thou else?" (I.ii.125) Making sense is hard work. Making Christian sense, making Christian connexions, is still harder. This is a world in which fragmentation is frequently the dominant theme and to make sense, to connect across the abyss – to go back to an earlier image – is no small matter.

And the royal charism, the royal anointing? Certainly, as I have already hinted, as Scripture hints, we turn that very easily into another search for control or security. We look for the wrong kinds of freedom from our environment, we assume that the royal position given to humanity within creation, according to a great deal of traditional theology, is a license to print money and a license to exploit the environment. And we fail to see that other haunting side of the royal tradition in Scripture, expressed so eloquently in the story of David, I would say, and in the psalms of David.

So all those aspects of the messianic identity; the prophetic, and the priestly and the royal are capable of distortion within the baptismal enterprise. And the distortions are judged and, we pray and hope, checked, only by the constant referral back to precisely where we began: which is the image of the naked Christ up to his neck in the world. It will not surprise you, there is nothing at all original in saying this, that baptismal identity, baptismal living, has to be interpreted and referred constantly and quite simply to the identity in the living of Jesus. We know, we have heard it said so often, that the whole notion of messiahship is redefined by what Jesus is and who Jesus is, and what he says and does and suffers. We can say, too, that the reality of being a child of God is only given its definitive sense in and through the story of Jesus.

In trying to draw these reflections to a close, it is there that I would want to put the emphasis. Baptismal living is living, as I said at the beginning, in the proximity of Jesus and therefore in the neighbourhood of those to whom Jesus is near. Those to whom Jesus is near will be very surprising to us and there is no way round that. And living in that proximity is living in a wounded body – that is, a body whose defences are very unsafe. Living in the proximity of Jesus is living in some sort of derived reality, some sort of reflection of his messiahship.

And therefore, living prophetically, living in a priestly way and living in a royal way – but only as those are given content by the story of Jesus and the identity of Jesus.

Finally, and as a bridge to the second of these talks, I would return to baptismal prayer for a moment. Living baptismally is nothing if it is not a constant discovery of who and where we are. We pray not just to get things, but we pray so that we may be truthful. We pray for the Spirit of truth and in the Spirit of truth. That is, we pray to know who God is and who we are. And baptismal prayer, I have suggested, is a discovery of how the prayer of Jesus prays in us and lives in us – in advocacy, in darkness and doubt, and in thanksgiving. So that it ought not, in any sense, to surprise us that baptismal living works itself out and realises itself above all in that act of corporate thanksgiving: corporate entry into the cross of Jesus, corporate bearing of the needs of the world before God the Father, which we call the Eucharist. And it is to that which I will turn in the second of these talks.

The Making of the Body of Christ: worship as a technological apocalypse

Garry Deverell

Introduction: Techno-worship?

Is the contemporary rush on 'techno-worship' an enhancement of that genuinely spiritual longing for God, or is it, rather, an idolatrous fetishization of technology itself? In what sense can watching television, or a sound and light performance, become a legitimate extension or substitute for ruminating upon word and sacrament? Is there any real difference between a digital image and the icons of Rublev: can't both of them mediate the face of God for people at prayer? These are questions about which all of us have an opinion, for we experience them as a pressure pushing in on us from the culture around, and therefore as a voice and spirit within. We live in a time when battle lines are being drawn and people are taking sides! In the Uniting Church, I can tell you, there are zealots who advocate the 'postmodern' worship of 'café-churches' and 'Late, Late Arthouse Shows'; and there are zealots who favour a more vigorous application of the lessons of the Liturgical Reform movement. But most press on with what can only be described as a sense of confusion and helplessness in the face of falling numbers, a rising mean age, and the omnipresence of the Matrix (otherwise known as 'the web').

For all this, I would argue that the *apparent* urgency of such questions should not be allowed to lead the churches into making *too-hasty* pronouncements either 'for' or 'against' the use of particular technologies in worship. Why? Because worship is, and always has been, a deeply technological mode of human performance. It has always been about "making" or "creating" the voice, image

and presence of God for the consumption of human subjects. At the same time however, particularly in the Jewish and Christian traditions, worship also serves to announce the limit, 'end,' or failure of that enterprise. In this more 'apocalyptic' mode, worship is something of *God's* making: an event which comes to fracture and relativise the system or symbolic matrix of our making in the name of a persistent 'secret' which may neither be theologized nor performed.

This means that Christian worship might be justly characterized as a *technological apocalypse*. On the one hand, it necessarily draws upon available technologies in order to fulfil its mission, to imaginatively make and remake material reality — church, society, and cosmos — in the image of Christ's body. On the other hand, worship is overwhelmed or exceeded by a trace or witness to something 'other,' an 'other' which effectively limits that human project absolutely. In the experience of this contradiction, of this 'double-bind,' as Derrida would have it, it is essential that the church develop a renewed capacity for discernment with regard to the production of liturgical events and resources. Whatever the technologies in use, these should be chosen and used in such a way as to express a profound and determinative *hospitality* within worship for the irreducible 'secret' who is God. Yet technologies there must be, and every kind of technology; for there is a crucial moment in God's becoming that is rightly human, and therefore technological.

Technology as the revelation of truth in the mode of making

It was Heidegger who showed that technology tends to hide its own essential meaning and mission. Veiled beneath the commonplace definition of technology as an instrument or means by which human beings try to master their own ends, Heidegger identifies a vocation and destiny which he calls 'responsibility,' a responsibility to make present or 'reveal' [*das Entbergen*] that which desires to

come into presence, namely Being (Heidegger, 1977:*passim*). The road to this conclusion is characteristically tortuous, but ingenious. Taking the usual notion of technology as instrumentality seriously, Heidegger says that instrumentality is causality, but not in the Latin sense of a 'falling out' [*cadere*] which produces some kind of material effect. Rather, causality is that towards which one is indebted [*aiton*] in the Greek sense. So, for example, a chalice is not so much *effected* by the work of a silversmith, but is rather *indebted* to him as the *logos* who gathers together materials and forms and ideas which are not his own creation necessarily, but in some sense precede him, and want to come into expression and existence. The silversmith simply starts these materials and forms and ideas on their way to arriving in the 'occasion' of a chalice (8-10).

The play which occasions the arrival of what is not-yet-present into presence is what Aristotle called *poiēsis*, from which we derive our word 'poetry'. Heidegger notes that *poiēsis* unfolds itself in two distinct modes: as a 'bringing-forth in itself,' like the blooming of a flower; or as the 'bringing forth as from another,' as with the activity of a craftsman or artist. This means that, in contrast to popular opinion, the technology of the craftsman is not in essence all that different to the creative art of a poet or painter. Like art and philosophy, technology is a 'way of revealing' the truth of Being (10-12). In the Greek mind, *technikon* properly designates not only the work of the craftsperson, but also the art/work of the mind and of the fine arts. Thus, *technē* should be understood as a synonym of *poiēsis*, and even of *epistēmē* or knowing in the sense of being 'entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert'. Technical or poetic knowing is creative in that it opens up and reveals something which 'needs' such activity in order to come to be (*passim*). Human creativity is understood by Heidegger to 'shepherd' Being into being (41, 42). Creative action, whether that of *technē* or *poiēsis*, is therefore essentially about midwifing

the birth of an ecstatic or excessive truth [*alētheia*] into the world of human consciousness and care.

Faith and technology: an affinity

Now if, as Derrida argues in several places (1989:108, 109; 2002:96), Heidegger's philosophy of Being is simply a displaced Christian theology of the most traditional kind, we might draw a number of properly theological lessons from his reflections. First, as faith is at depth a human act of making which responds to the call of the sacred Other, Heidegger's analogy of *poiēsis* with *technē* might be legitimately interpreted as a recognition of a primal affinity between *faith* and *technology*. According to Derrida, Judeo-Christian faith is first of all a response, a responsibility, or a sacramental promise 'to the other, before the other, and to oneself'. As such, faith calls upon an absent or unproducible God as the primary origin and witness to its promise. But this means that faith has no option but to produce and reproduce this 'unproducibility' over and over again in an effective performance of the promise (2002:64). Not that the promise is entirely of human making, for human promises are always already understood in faith as the messianic inbreaking of another promise, the promise of *God's* faithfulness and justice which 'inscribes itself in advance'. In this sense, the act of faith claims to be, somewhat paradoxically, the performance of a law which comes from elsewhere, which cannot belong to the language which human beings, of themselves, found or inaugurate (56, 46, 57). Thus, the structure of faith is essentially *sacramental*. It is a human act of promising which nevertheless witnesses to an eschatological promise which has already arrived in the witnessing act itself. 'The promise promises *itself*; it is *already* promised, that is the sworn faith, the given word, and hence the response.' (67)

Second, it is this strange coincidence of divine and human promising which gives to religious discourse its quasi-mechanical or technological flavour. Because the sacred referent or addressee of prayer is present as an *absence*, human intentionality attempts to compensate, to 'produce' a God in presence. Thus, one may recognize in the paschal figure of Jesus the essential '*iterability*' of faith, the mechanical and repetitious failure to produce a presence which nevertheless desires to come into presence as the sign of salvation. Here technological reproduction in words and images and artefacts becomes the very *possibility* of faith: the impossible possibility that the absent one may speak his own promise in the faithful litanies of the believer (83). Elaine Scarry (1985) has pointed out that the embodiment of Christ in Christian theology implies that God can now be created and recreated as a work of human art, for to have a body is to allow oneself to be described or inscribed by others, to be given a meaning from a place other than one's own centre of consciousness. This is the meaning, according to Scarry, of the overwhelming popularity in Christian art of scenes of birth and crucifixion. At birth, and at death, our bodies are at their most vulnerable, at their most inscribable (216). Faith, then, is a response to the call of God to 'making and material culture.' It is the responsibility to make the body of Jesus anew in our world, but in a way that recognized that we are always already responsible to 'see' him better, to express a more comprehensive awareness of the elusive body we seek to render sensible (219, 220).

Chauvet (2001), for his part, recognizes exactly that structure of faith in the creative performance or 'work' we call the liturgy. Liturgical faith, he says, is first of all the assent to a loss. In worship we renounce the immediacy of the availability of Christ as an instrumental object, in favour of a Christ 'mediated' in the repeated acts of word and sacrament (39). At the heart of these material symbols is an emptiness that witnesses to the 'other' who resists the projective

impulse to simply create, in Christ, another version of ourselves. And yet, it is the emptiness that also necessitates and even grants such projection. Chauvet says that liturgical discourse is essentially sacramental or 'sym-bolic' (bringing together) in that while Christ and the Church are presumed to be different, in the liturgy each receives their identity from the other in an exchange of voice and body. In the worship and mission of the church, Christ comes to material fullness, while, in that same movement, the church finds its true voice or vocation by borrowing the voice of Christ (85, 86). Here the *poiēsis* of human beings encounters a more pervasive *poiēsis* of God, an action and activity that slips under our radar screens, so to speak, bypassing the noetic processes of human projection. The repetition of the words of Christ in the Scriptures inscribes his mysterious otherness on the surface of material sacrament and human body alike so that he becomes the unobjectifiable President of all that is said and done in his name (110). Put simply, while human beings create an Artefact in the liturgy, the Artefact returns to create and recreate human beings; and with an excess which may not be easily reappropriated into a purely anthropological project. Scarry calls this movement 'reciprocation,' the very reason why we make things in the first place. Here the artefact is invested with the very *power* of creating so that, in the end, it is not always clear where authorship ends and artifice begins! (Scarry, 1985:306, 310-312) We are left to wonder, then, if the work of the liturgy is a human work entirely, or whether it is primarily a work of *God* after the model of Christ's incarnation.

Worship as the escha-technological activity of God

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* speaks of God as the *technitēs*, the architect or builder of a heavenly city which is the *telos* or destination towards which all the saints are journeying by their faith (Heb. 11:10). In a parallel passage from *Ephesians*, human beings are called *poiēma* or artefacts of God, created in Christ

Jesus to do the works of good (Eph. 2:10). Importantly, in this second passage, it is not the artefacts of human beings which save them, but the ontologically prior work of divine grace — a gift which from the past which opens up the human future as a work of God. There is an indisputably eschatological structure to these passages. God the *technitēs* has something in mind from the beginning. By grace God takes a body in human history, and yet this materiality is not finally allowed to capture or domesticate God's eschatological movement, to hold it down in a present. Rather, in the resurrection, the present is revealed as an *incomplete* opening onto a material future, a future which has already been figured in the Jewish stories of exile and exodus.

In Christian thought, the voice of God takes on a human body in Christ. This makes Christ vulnerable, inscribable, as in the eucharistic liturgy of the Church where Christ is made into Scripture, into bread and wine, and finally into a body of human beings. But appearances can be deceptive. For who is author and who is artifice here? This is precisely the kind of question Heidegger was asking in his *Question Concerning Technology*. Read anthropologically, technology is simply the means by which human beings make nature into an extension or projection of themselves. And there is an undeniable truth in that. As Scarry says, technology is the tool by which 'Civilization restructures the naturally existing eternal environment to be laden with human awareness.'(305) But read at another level, the level of ontology, Heidegger would say that technology is also the revealing of Being, that poetry and art and religious ritual are the occasion by which Being enters into human awareness and history. Theologically we could say, with Marianne Sawicki (1994), that while the Jesus of gospels and liturgy is certainly a *made* Jesus, a constructed Jesus, such construction is also the condition or occasion by which the real and resurrected

Jesus makes himself discoverable or recognisable in the world beyond Calvary, where 'otherwise his involvement would go unnoticed.'(8)

But what is the nature of that involvement? How, and to what purpose, does God in Christ wield his tools in the world? Let us take those tools of God which are known in the liturgy as 'Scripture' and 'Sacrament' for instance. How are these the tools of God? Certainly we must part, today, with the Scholastic notion that word and sacrament are an *operative* or *instrumental means* by which grace is produced as an object for human consumption, a magic potion to cure all ills (Chauvet, 2001:xiv). But equally we must do away with the subjectivist claim that word and sacrament are sign-instruments by which an already given and unrepeatable grace is transmitted into the hearts and minds of the community as 'lived experience' (xix). What these two historical perspectives (the one Catholic, the other Protestant) have in common is their philosophical commitment to an instrumental understanding of language and technology, that is, they both assume that the creative role of language or technology is ontologically secondary to either the object or subject of faith (Chauvet, 2001:3-5; Jungel, 1983:5-9). Put simply, such models hypostasise the *substance* of either subject or object before they are brought into *relationship* with each other. But surely this is not how sacraments work. Are they not, rather, sites of symbolic *exchange* between God and human beings, artefacts in which God and human beings mutually or 'intertextually' *make* or *change* one another? (Sawicki, 1994:326, 327) In that sense, the tools of God are also the tools of human beings, but this by God's will and consent.

This last point is crucial to our understanding of the way in which God *inhabits* the liturgical performance. As with the making of Christ in the gospels, God gives human beings the freedom to make what they make in the liturgy. God

creates the space, if you like, for another centre of consciousness to be, and to express itself in texts and artefacts. That means, of course, that God takes an enormous risk. Christ was tortured and crucified. Human beings took their creative freedom and turned it into a tool for wounding and repression. So too, in liturgical performance, human beings may choose to push their Nietzschian ideologies of power-over rather than power-with. There are many examples of such liturgy in the history of the church: worship as a weapon for the promulgation of hate and violence, usually in its negative form of exclusion. Yet, at precisely the moment when one attempts to *use* the liturgy in this way, the liturgy's subject, Christ, seems to *metamorphose*. At precisely the moment when he is fashioned into a guarantor of racism, or sexism, or repression, Christ seems to escape such nomination, taking form elsewhere as a material *contestation* of those categories. Sawicki says that this is what the resurrection is about (1994:292-299), and I agree with her.

Worship as Apocalypse

The technology of worship therefore performs a relationship with God which is fundamentally asymmetrical, but not in the sense of a Lord and his servant. Rather, in the very act of our making of Jesus in bread and wine, we find that we are ourselves being made into bread and wine for the world. 'Let us receive what we are, let us become what we receive.' As we construct, so are we deconstructed and reconstructed. This because the words and actions of the liturgy, as we have received them from bible and church, are fundamentally *apocalyptic* in that word's most literal sense: an uncovering of the will and word of God under the conditions of material reality (Chauvet, 2001:44). This will and word, spoken and acted by human beings, boomerangs back to our hearts and bodies as a new inscription, a conversion and modification of our fundamental sense of identity and vocation. 'Let no one cause me trouble,' says

Paul, 'for I bear in my body the marks of Jesus.' (Gal. 5:17). As the liturgy tells the story of the death of Christ to all that is evil in the world, and his raising by God to be a new creation, so those who repeat this story are inscribed with it. They are changed and made new. The traditional flow of the liturgy is revealing here. The reading of the word comes first, because it inscribes the sacraments of water and meal with Christological meaning. That meaning is then imbibed and ruminated upon in the sacrament. Finally, it inscribes the identity of Christ on our bodies, in our innermost parts so to speak, so that we are transformed into the very mission and message of Jesus for the world in which we live.

In this we return to the thought of Heidegger, but in a Derridean mode. As noted above, Heidegger proclaimed that even when people have forgotten about Being altogether, even when they have become captive to the belief that technology is nothing more than a utilisation of the world according to our own measure and will, Being nevertheless reasserts its claim on us precisely as revelation. Derrida, for his part, says that it is impossible for human beings to escape the *apocalyptic* structure of our human projects. It is as if, even in proclaiming the 'end' of Western thinking — which is eschatological from beginning to end — that we do so in the name of some 'other' eschatology, an eschatology which comes to contest the adequacy of our eschatology (1993:147-149). In an astonishing reading of the *Revelation of St John*, Derrida points out that the one who promises to 'come,' the Alpha and Omega, never entirely arrives. Rather, he 'posts' himself to the reader through a multivalent layering of hearing and testimony:

> One does not know (for it is no longer of the order of knowing) to whom the apocalyptic sending returns; it leaps [*saute*] from one place of emission to the other (and a place is always determined *starting from* the presumed emission); it goes from one destination, one name, and one tone to another; in always refers [*renvoie*] to the name and the tone of the other that is there but as having been there and before yet coming, no longer being or not yet there in the present of the *récit*. (156)

The result, of course, is that it is no longer possible to determine, absolutely, who is the writer and who is the speaker, who is the author and who is the messenger. When that possibility has elapsed, says Derrida, a text has become apocalyptic (156). This is exactly the case with liturgy, I submit. Whether we begin with assumption that it is a work of God or a work of the people, we can never be sure in either case. For in writing the liturgy we find ourselves being summoned by a call from elsewhere; and yet this call from elsewhere says 'write this down'. In the end, our liturgical productions are therefore both enabled and interrupted by a 'transcendental condition' which precedes and exceeds our own productive powers: God.

God and 'the Secret'

There are two explanations for the experience of the hiddenness or secrecy of God, a hiddenness which seems to persist even beyond the unique revelation of God in a human form. The philosophical explanation, enunciated by Lévinas and Derrida, is that the word 'God' announces the arrival of some kind of 'infinite' or 'zero' point from a place beyond being. The Infinite, Lévinas' God, is therefore understood as a reality that both 'is' human consciousness and yet bursts out into the 'beyond' of human consciousness as the utterly transcendent. It affects human thought by 'simultaneously devastating it and calling it; through a "putting it in its place," the Infinite puts thought in place. It wakes thought up.' (Lévinas, 1998:66) When Derrida talks of God he speaks, in the same breath, of a 'secret' which remains secret even as it is disseminated and repeated in performative testimony. There is a language that faith and belief cannot master, he says, a language that speaks *through* us as testimony [*témoignage*, 'bearing witness'] and yet is not *from* us. 'We testify [*témoignons*] to a secret that is without content, without a content that is separable from its performative experience, from its performative tracing. This would not be a secret that one

might detect and demystify.'(1995:23, 24) The secret, he says, is neither sacred nor profane, because it is beyond all such reductions as the condition of their possibility (25, 26). Because it exceeds the play of disclosure or concealment, the secret can be spoken about *ad infinitum*. But for all that, the secret will *remain* secret, 'mute impassive as the *khōra*.'(26, 27) For these thinkers, then, God is a secret because 'God,' is the name of a transcendental condition of language which, because it conditions language absolutely, can never be entirely presented *within* language.

A more theological explanation is advanced by Eberhard Jüngel (1983), but one which has a certain resonance with the eschatological structure of post-structural thought. Jüngel says that God is indeed here-and-now, but not in such a way that God is collapsed into the self-presence of the creating ego. Rather, God goes out of himself in order to address us; and that address has the consequence of taking us out of ourselves as well, such that we meet with God in a distance which is also closer to us that we are to ourselves (182). Thus, for faith, there can be no 'God with us' (*deus pro nobis*) or 'God in us' (*deus in nobis*) without a more fundamental distancing of the human self from *itself*. It is the person who lives outside of themselves that is identical with the nearness of God, which is defined most specifically, in the cross of Jesus (182-184). The designation of God as a 'secret' or 'mystery' should not, therefore, be attached to any seeming aporia between 'natural' and 'revealed' knowledge of God, as is the case for philosophy (249, 250). Rather, as in the New Testament usage of the term, mystery should be understood as a secret which remains secret even as it discloses itself. In the New Testament, the mystery is Christ, and Christ is made known as the speech of God which is also a transfigured kind of human speech: the 'parable' (252-254). 'Parabolic speech,' is a form of address in which common understanding is interrupted and transformed by the playfulness of a

naming which is far from necessary. It was not necessary to call Jesus 'God's Son,' says Jüngel. And yet 'In such talk, a certain reality is expressed through *possibilities* in such a way that this possibility leads forcefully to the discovery of a new dimension of reality and to greater precision in talk about what is real. Metaphors and parables thus express more in language than was real until now.' (290, 291) The parable of Christ is also, therefore, a *sacrament* in that it allows the hearer to find an eschatological refiguration of his or her own life in the story of another (309). Here, then, God is secret not because of the gap between God and ourselves, but because of the gap between who we are now, and who we shall be when God finally comes to himself in the *eschaton*.

Pastoral implications: boldness and humility

The pastoral implications of what I've said here might be summarised under the heading of a certain kind of Lutheran dialectic: in boldness, humility.

It seems that God has gifted us with the freedom and capacity to make all manner of things, to make a world in which we feel at home. We should therefore feel free to use whatever technology or artifice is to hand in our making of worship. I personally can't see why *any* technology should be excluded from the making of worship out of hand, unless it is specifically designed to be a weapon, to bring harm, and cannot be used in any other way. If worship is to be Christian, though, I suggest that it needs to be conformed to a number of principles, which arise directly from this discussion:

1. The structure of worship needs to be conformed to the structure of Christian belief, that is, it needs to be modelled upon the performance of belief already given us in the revelation of Scripture and of tradition. Principally, this means that our own liturgical performance will have a cruciform character. It will remember and repeat the Paschal event in all

its full and rich symbolism, and that means that the Eucharist should be celebrated regularly, as should some kind of recollection of baptism. There should always be a proclamation from the Scriptures.

2. There should be an integrity in the liturgy between word and action. There is no point in announcing that all may feed on Christ in an immediate and scandalously *material* way, but then limiting such participation to watching others so doing on a big screen. That would make as little sense as preaching a homily on 'baptism as a drowning with Christ,' and then baptising a child with only a few tiny droplets of water! In the structure of Christian belief, word must actually *become* flesh.

3. There should also be an integrity between liturgical performance and the performance of living. If we pray, during the Eucharist, that Christ might make of us bread for the world, then the missional rites ought to make that connection between worship and world very, very specific and hard to ignore. This is where images projected on screens can become powerful mediators of that connection. You know, pictures of aid workers distributing food in Africa and the like.

4. That does not mean, of course, that worship should simply be collapsed into the experience of technology that dominates the rest of our lives. We should exercise great care in showing snippets from *The Simpsons* in worship, particularly if everyone is seated and having coffee at the time. Why? Because it is important in worship that we speak our own language, but in *another register*. For it is the gap between the two registers which makes the difference, the possibility of the ordinary becoming revelatory. The artifice and language of worship should reflect this register of otherness in a fundamentally parabolic mode, which

episodes of the *Simpsons* could well fit right into. But we must work hard on *recontextualizing* the familiar and the commonplace so that it becomes unfamiliar and revelatory. Remember, in the parables Christ perplexed and challenged his hearers even as he invoked images and practices with which his hearers were already familiar.

5. I would also argue that liturgy would not be liturgy without a quasi-mechanical character, a tendency to repeat itself as in the labour of technological production. This is not only to recognise that worship is properly technological in character, but also to recognise that it is precisely in this mode that liturgy becomes revelatory. There is nothing worse, I think, than making each worship service 'new and novel'. The apparently new and novel rarely allows us to catch up with what it has to reveal. Frequently the new and the novel has very little of God to reveal, because it is really about the individual or individuals who created it. But when prayers are said more than once, and actions are repeated more than once, and even when sermons are performed more than once, human artifice becomes luminescent with divine address. The word of God is given opportunity to transfigure that which, at the beginning, communicates itself only as human artifice.

6. Christian worship should 'reposition' people in *diakonal* relationship to one another. As, in the resurrection, Christ copied himself onto the bodies of the suffering peoples of the world (Matt. 25), the architecture of worship should alert us to this fact, perhaps by placing us in such a way that we actually *see* the faces of other worshippers. God, you will remember, is the 'other' before he is the accomplished 'self.' God interrupts self-accomplishment to make us new. The worship should therefore exhibit the work and skill of a number of people, each with their

proper roles, who serve one another by their sharing of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, encouraging the other to take up their own *poiētic* vocations in worship and mission. In this connection, perhaps presidency should be redefined to encompass the role of a television/theatre 'director' or 'producer' — someone relatively invisible, 'behind the scenes,' who nevertheless pulls together artifice, skills and gifts into an ordered whole. (Roberts, nd) As this is how Christ works in the liturgy, it would seem appropriate that his presidential representatives do so as well!

7. Finally, and most importantly, worship should be hospitable to the 'secret' who is Christ, the mystery of God. That means that our liturgy should be such that it encourages such hospitality in the faith of worshippers. In order to accomplish that, the liturgy must facilitate not entertainment from the front, but an act of prayer from the hearts of the people. There should be familiar texts, sung responses aplenty, a spareness of movement in both word and sacrament, and plenty of silence and/or space for meditation. In those circumstances, it is more than likely that our own words and images will come back at us in a voice and form and tone not of our own making. But if we clutter the worship with too much frantic movement or novelty, it is unlikely that we shall hear that address above the din of our own artifice.

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Book Reviews

Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking Radio and the Renaissance of Preaching* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999) ISBN 0 567 08701 8, p/b ix + 294 pp, np

This book is a tonic for preachers. Those of us who love preaching and value it highly, and those who listen with expectation will both be stimulated and encouraged. Preaching has taken a frontal assault in recent years, especially from those who say that TV has so changed our listening habits that preaching is no longer viable in its received forms. Dr Mitchell argues carefully against this judgement. However, his central thesis is that the model for preaching is not television, but radio, and it is at recent approaches to radio broadcasting we should be looking for analysis and fresh direction. He takes the survival of radio as a positive sign.

Dr Mitchell was formerly a BBC World Service producer; he now lectures in Communication and Theology at Edinburgh University. He draws extensively on his own experience as a broadcaster both in the UK and the USA. Central to his discussion are several case studies of fine religious broadcasters – the war-time Radio Padre (Ronald Selby Smith), the 'Radio Academic' C. S. Lewis, (there is an interesting aside on the 'secular' Alistair Cooke), the contemporary Angela Tilby and Rabbi Lionel Blue; and of a range of American examples, from which Mitchell draws fruitful lessons, positive and negative.

Most clergy are rank amateurs in this context, but signposts can be observed for contemporary homiletic practice. 'Eloquence is visual, not verbal today', says Mitchell, therefore the modern preacher needs to pay attention to images, to mood and emotion, and avoid abstract concepts. It is the skill of 'visually speaking'. The words are to be used in a more vivid manner, more conversationally (but not chatty), as spoken, not read from a text: we need a 'transformation in orality' in our preaching. He gives a fascinating illustration

from MTV's music videos, with their fast-changing images, the use of flash-backs, of old footage, of surprising contrasts, of humour, all this while a single voice projects its message. Mitchell is not writing about entertainment, nor even info-tainment, but about communicating the depth and demand of the Gospel in contemporary cultural forms. His final advice for preachers is in four words: 'listen, picture, translate, edit'. Preaching today involves wisdom and discipline, not of an entirely new kind, but with a new attention to how we speak the eternal Gospel to modern hearers.

—Robert Gribben

Singing and Praying Together: a communion book for young people: from A Prayer Book for Australia (Sydney: Broughton Books, 2000) ISBN 1876677 61 9. h/b 30+ii pp. $19-95.

Singing and Praying Together is published by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia under the imprint of Broughton Books. With words from the second order for the eucharist in *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995) there are illustrations to encourage children's understanding and participation in the eucharist.

The illustrations by Chantal Stewart are undoubtedly the major feature of this production. They give a sense of joyous participation. A little girl (with pig-tails and teddy bear) leads the reader/viewer through the book and so through the eucharistic celebration. There is a sense of welcome conveyed by the illustrations which are inclusive in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. There is no doubt that this celebration is something special, but there is also a connectedness to life-outside-the-liturgy. Clergy and people are together in prayer and hearing the word, but the roles of presiding and leading are clearly set out. The ministry of deacon is affirmed. Real bread is truly broken. All in all, the illustrations are a faithful interpretation of the eucharist and should bring the liturgy to life for the young users of the book. The one thing that jars is the

stereotypical depiction of Aborigines (p12). Two loin-cloth clad figures perched on a rock is surely not an image to take us along the road to reconciliation.

The text is clearly set out, providing all words said or sung by the congregation and the minimum of those said by the priest or deacon to allow participation. A priest logo (thumbnail picture of head and shoulders) is used to designate words said by the priest, and a logo of the little girl in pig-tails is used to designate the words said by the people – and these words are printed in purple (Yes, really – but it works). The scheme is good. It is a pity that there have been a couple of slips in its execution. The words of Absolution (p3) are pig-tailed and purple (a mistake, I assume, and not an anti-priestly plot), while the "Jesus, Lamb of God" is typographically designated for the priest alone.

The second order for the eucharist in APBA has many possible variations and alternatives. The task of the compilers of *Singing and Praying Together* was one of selection. To include too many alternatives in a children's book would be confusing to the users. One's initial response to the selection which has been made probably has to do with how closely it conforms to what one usually uses. Generally, the selections made seem to be appropriate ones, but there are a couple of exceptions. The Confession and Absolution are included as part of The Gathering in God's Name whereas the clear preference in APBA is for these to be immediately before the Greeting of Peace. This will be a minor irritation to those who use the Confession in the later position. More problematic, however, is the Creed. The Nicene Creed with its obscure metaphysical language is a problem to many people, not only children. The compilers have seen this difficulty and have chosen to include instead the Apostles' Creed in the interrogative form from the baptismal rite. Even those only beginning to read will realise quickly that "This is not what the people are saying" – and the child's confidence in using the book will be diminished.

The Prayers of the People (pp12-15) include some wonderful images in the accompanying illustrations, but the type-setting is confused. Instead of using the type for explanations/rubrics the type for spoken words is used. Mention of "those who are sick or in need" is made on p13 while the pictures related to this are on pp14-15.

In The Great Thanksgiving (pp20-23) the type-setting has been got right and it is well arranged. In place of the text spoken by the priest short explanatory notes are given. Thus, after the Sanctus/Benedictus there is: "*We* remember how Jesus took bread and wine and gave thanks to God." However, for the Preface there is "*The priest* gives thanks to God ..." and for the final section (after the Acclamations) "*The priest* celebrates Jesus' dying and rising ..." [italics added]. There is here a rather serious lapse. Where is the understanding of the whole gathered assembly as celebrant with the priest presiding as president? Surely *we* not only "remember" but also "give thanks", "celebrate", "offer our thanks" and "pray" as the priest says the words on behalf of all.

The book is bright, attractive and inviting. It will be useful enjoying and learning from at home as well as in church. Its size might make its carrying to and fro a bit awkward ("A handbag size would have been more convenient", a mother commented) and its price will mean that most parishes will find it difficult to buy many copies.

Involving children in liturgy is at the heart of forming them as Christians. It is, therefore, a task of the utmost importance. *Singing and Praying Together* will be a useful aid in this task and a joy to the children who use it. It is a pity that the glitches could not have been fixed before publication.

— *R Wesley Hartley*

Contributors

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