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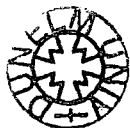
# Liturgical Theology

*Children and the City*

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Submitted for the degree of PhD  
University of Durham  
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2003



- 1 OCT 2003

## Abstract

*Liturgical Theology: Children and the City* engages academic liturgical theology, contextual sensitivity and key challenges faced by the church in contemporary Britain. From its initial focus on the emphasis on congregational participation in the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement, and on the Church of England prayer-book *Patterns for Worship* (1989, 1993) as an example of a late twentieth-century liturgical resource that stresses participation, the thesis deepens perspectives on a number of related issues.

As *Patterns for Worship* was intended especially to encourage participation in specific contexts – worship in ‘urban priority areas’, and in congregations seeking to include children – the thesis explores the themes of children and the city in order to suggest a range of challenges which need to be engaged by a contemporary contextually-sensitive liturgical theology. Then, as the discipline is largely neglected in Britain, it explores some North American expressions of liturgical theology and identifies a number of themes and features by which the arguments of *Patterns for Worship* might be strengthened, or questioned and recast on better foundations. Appreciation of the work of Gordon W Lathrop, Don E Saliers and James F White provides the basis for the thesis’ contention that engagement with articulate theological perspectives on liturgy is necessary in order for *Patterns for Worship* to fulfil its potential. Conversely, however, the thesis also identifies issues with which the discipline of liturgical theology has by no means fully engaged, and so invites a more inclusive vision in liturgical theology.

Towards the end of the thesis, the work attempts to initiate the kind of approach to liturgy that it claims is needed in order to fulfil the potential of *Patterns for Worship*. Using resources gleaned from North American liturgical theology it develops theological and practical ideas about how congregations in urban priority areas and seeking to include children can relate their celebration of liturgy to a sense of divine hospitality.

# Liturgical Theology

*Children and the City*

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### Liturgical theology

'Liturgical theology' identifies a particular discipline within the larger orbit of Christian theological enquiry. Liturgical theology, in whatever particular way it is understood within a range of possible meanings, is concerned with the relationship between liturgy and theology: most minimally with liturgy as a source for theology, and theology as a resource for liturgy. Hence, the title of this thesis identifies the relationship between the two as the heart of this work.

It can quite readily be recognised that liturgy is not always considered in close company with theological thinking and that both the inherited practices and textual traditions of Christian worship are often neglected in many forms of both theological reflection and construction. A sense of the neglect of attention to worship in theology, and to theology in the study of worship, may be seen not least in the observation that liturgical study is unfamiliar territory in vast ranges of the contemporary British theological scene, occupying a minor, if existent, place in syllabuses in universities (though perhaps a relatively greater role in some seminaries).<sup>1</sup> Liturgical theology, as opposed to the historical study of liturgy, may be especially unfamiliar, often in seminaries, as in universities. For in the UK at least, where there is any attention to aspects of the worship traditions of the faith this is likely to occur in the setting of studies in systematic theology, perhaps focused on sacramental theology, and attention may well be weighted heavily towards the tracing of historical developments and the consideration of 'landmark' figures in that history who addressed particular issues impacting Christian worship in given periods. Figures such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, among many others, are likely to be encountered and their writings are often in

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<sup>1</sup> Not least as an ecumenical response to the Second Vatican Council's pronouncement on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, in its tenth paragraph established a precedent for the teaching of liturgy in seminaries. This mandate for Roman Catholic theological education has in turn been absorbed by many Protestant traditions. (On *Sacrosanctum concilium*, see Chapter 1 below).

dogmatic, systematic, or at least in some more or less didactic form. By contrast, and despite manifold perspectives and nuances on how to proceed in terms of its content, focus and method, the range of possible meanings of liturgical theology focuses stress on the 'primary' theology of worship events.<sup>2</sup>

## Context

For the most part, this particular attempt to engage in some liturgical theology was written while I was Team Vicar in the Parish of Gateshead, which is part of the Diocese of Durham, and Director of the Urban Mission Centre for St John's College, Durham. Gateshead, where I lived, is the town where the bridges from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne touch the south bank of the river, and it is very different, in many respects, from the prosperous city centre it borders, as well as from the university city of Durham, where I worked part-time.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Bede ward in Gateshead, my home, figured in the government's deprivation indices of late 2000 as the 117<sup>th</sup> most deprived of the 8414 political wards in the country. The Urban Mission Centre was sited in Gateshead in the late 1980s in order to introduce ordinands at theological college to the characteristics of 'under-invested' urban communities following the collapse of the heavy industries that sustained their economies. Gateshead received several mentions in the Church of England's report of 1985, Faith in the City, and the town's circumstances, like those of other urban environments experiencing various forms of poverty, were at the heart of Faith in the City's concern. More recently, however, in my time living and working in the town, Gateshead has been the focus of other more positive kinds of attention. In very recent years, Gateshead has become the setting for the UK's largest piece of public sculpture – Anthony Gormley's 'Angel of the

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of worship as 'primary theology' forms part of a crucial under-girding of liturgical theology, and is discussed extensively in parts three and four, below. For a classic discussion of primary theology, see especially Aidan Kavanagh, On Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> The thesis was completed while I was on sabbatical based at St Bede's Episcopal Church, Atlanta, and in my present post as Tutor in Liturgy at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham.



North' – which has led to a number of ambitious endeavours in social and economic regeneration all supported by the public arts. One of Britain's most impressive centres of contemporary art – the BALTIC – has now opened in the town, and with a widely acclaimed 'Millennium Bridge' linking Newcastle and Gateshead, has attracted large numbers of visitors. A third major project, the 'Sage Music Centre' near the bridge and art centre on Gateshead Quayside, is due to open in 2004. Together, these arts projects are crucial to a joint bid by Newcastle and Gateshead to attain European City of Culture status in 2008.

These arts-based developments increasingly allow for diverse interpretations of the Urban Mission Centre's Statement of Purpose, which is 'to introduce students to urban life in Britain, and to provide a focus for contextual theology'. In Gateshead, with its recent endeavours in regeneration, consideration of 'urban life' now requires countenance of possibilities unimagined in the late 1980s when the UMC was established in a socio-economic climate deplored by Faith in the City.

### **Contextual theology**

So this attempt at liturgical theology is conscious of the changing context of Gateshead in which it was written. It searches for theological resources to describe, interpret and serve the urban context understood more expansively than in Faith in the City and the other English Anglican writings which form its direct legacy. Moreover, it discusses the Church of England supplementary prayer-book of 1989, revised in 1993, Patterns for Worship, which to a very considerable extent was intended as a liturgical response to Faith in the City and its concerns. Patterns for Worship is of great importance for any contemporary liturgical theology in an urban context, and a large part of my aim in this work is to serve the purpose for which Patterns was intended, namely, to encourage the participation of the 'urban poor' in Christian worship. In the following pages, I think about how liturgical theology may engage and further educate the liturgical initiative Patterns represents, doing

so from my consciously contextualised perspective. I am also aware that my thinking and writing has been shaped by participation and presidency on a daily basis in public Christian worship in Gateshead, with all the joys and sorrows that have accompanied our congregational life and contact with the wider community. Inevitably, this very specific context has had an impact on my thinking in that many personal stories and secrets, PCC debates, work with the Council and various groups in the town have all interacted within me with the theologians I have read who have shaped both my questions and responses. Whilst it would be possible to say a great deal more about this interaction, I simply note that this alongside this written work, serving the purposes for which Patterns for Worship was intended, has had daily, and many properly mundane, dimensions. As I intend this piece of thinking to be a contextual liturgical theology, marked by consistent attention to context, I specifically discuss in greater depth in this work what 'contextual theology' may mean, and towards the end, make some modest applications to the context in which I have written.

### **'Biographical theology'**

Further to this contextual awareness, I am conscious that this work is also in a sense biographical.<sup>4</sup> The first sense in which this is so is quite personal, in that long before I was aware of a particular discipline of liturgical theology within the practices of Christian theology, and many years before I lived and worked in the context in which this thesis was written, some of my first encounters with Christian theology were in the form of three books broadly related to worship and two others broadly concerned with liberation theology: in the first category, the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission's Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Kenneth Stevenson's Accept this Offering: The Eucharist as Sacrifice Today, and Daniel Hardy and David Ford's co-authored Jubilate: Theology in Praise; in the latter, Ann Loades' Searching for Lost Coins: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism and Jon

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<sup>4</sup> See James McClendon, Jr., Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Remake Today's Theology (Philadelphia: TPI, second edition 1990).

Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads. The continuing influence of the themes of these books is evident in the fact that I remain pre-occupied with many of their key themes now fifteen years after my first readings.

Another perhaps more public sense in which this work is biographical is that the choice to focus on liturgical theology at all arose from my reflections on coming to work with congregations with various kinds of sacramental spiritualities, and my obvious desire to relate well to them. I was myself nurtured in my early years within the evangelical tradition of the church, and having considerably widened my appreciation of church styles, traditions and theologies, have worked with Christian people with a quite different set of spiritual resources and foci than the ones on which I was raised. One marked difference is the relative biblical 'illiteracy' amongst those with whom I have worshipped latterly - although I hasten to add that I am aware that there is an abundance of ignorance about the bible in evangelicalism, albeit of a different nature. So in order to engage congregations, and cherish what they treasure, it easily became clear that liturgical competence, with good understanding and handling of the sacraments, is an important quality to bring to public ministry. A significant part of my own education in this area was the Sacramental Spirituality series hosted by Durham Cathedral and Professors Brown and Loades of Durham University's theology department which celebrated the first thousand years of the cathedral's work and witness,<sup>5</sup> and which coincided with my first post-graduate studies. However, work within parishes a little later revealed that not all sacramental spirituality is as encouraging as much of what I encountered in the Durham celebrations, and impoverished, fossilised and sometimes pathological forms of sacramental spirituality started to become apparent to me.<sup>6</sup> In its engagement with liturgical theology, the reflection in this thesis is part of my own continuing

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<sup>5</sup> See David Brown and Ann Loades, eds., The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time (London: SPCK, 1995), and David Brown and Ann Loades, eds., Christ: The Sacramental Word (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> For an illuminating discussion of different kinds of sacramental spirituality, see Kenneth Leech, 'Comfort or Transformation? The Crisis of Modern Spirituality', in Subversive Orthodoxy: Traditional Faith and Radical Commitment (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), pp. 30-43.

education in liturgical and sacramental spirituality, brought into dialogue with a growing awareness of how sacramental spirituality may either animate or evade humanity.

## **Practical theology**

In so far as the thinking in this thesis represents reflections on my own learning and practice in Christian ministry (including mistakes, and my becoming less ignorant little by little) and is closely related to particular contexts and congregations, it can be allied to a key characteristic of much liberation theology in its various forms. That is, Gustavo Gutierrez famously describes liberation theology in the strong image of theology 'at sundown', with reflection following action.<sup>7</sup> As in liberation theology, this work is informed by practice which has preceded much of my reflection; and although the action to which classic liberation theologians refer has the serious and dramatic focus on escape from the sufferings imposed by poverties, I assert here that liturgy has its own contribution to 'saving work', modest as it may be in comparison.<sup>8</sup> Of course, the thinking this thesis represents has in turn informed practice - 'at sun-rise' to extend use of Gutierrez's imagery - and in so far as this is the case, these reflections can be allied to the cyclical and sometimes somewhat chaotic kind of methodology in which much British pastoral theology has properly taken pride. Whilst I have obviously tried hard to order my thoughts in this thesis, I have learned from pastoral theology to remain suspicious of tidy systems, preferring partial insights grounded firmly in the horizons of their context and fragmentary conclusions that acknowledge that there is always much to learn. Whilst fragmentary convictions may at times invite a sense of incompleteness, this may of course be entirely appropriate to the depths of complexities and to the real difficulties of

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<sup>7</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, 'Theology: A Critical Reflection', James B Nickeloff, ed., Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings (London: SCM, 1997), 30-34, p.32.

<sup>8</sup> In Chapter 8 below, I apply Rebecca Chopp's term, 'saving work', to liturgy and various elements of rite. See Rebecca Chopp, Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster, 1995).

understanding others' experience 'from the inside', as it were. And, obviously without wishing to diminish the immense value of opportunities to read, think or write, a certain incompleteness may also serve as a reminder that the kinds of resolution to 'problems' that really matter are not in print but in practice.

One way in which I have tried to acknowledge and appropriate others' experience – largely, others who rarely write about their experiences – is to have occasionally related anecdotes arising from my practice of ministry. Incorporating anecdotal material also reflects the way in which I learned to engage my subject-matter, with study and practice jostling together as I worked on the thesis, and it also helps to relate something of my own experience of experience confounding and unravelling theological convictions. This unravelling is part of the 'mess' that pastoral theology attempts to cope with. This notwithstanding, I hope that where I have used anecdotes, I have not 'talked behind others' backs'<sup>9</sup> by giving account of their experience in ways in which they would not recognise themselves, but that I have chiefly used anecdotes 'against myself'<sup>10</sup> to suggest ways in which different experience has and continues to undermine my competence and so demands its reconstruction. And I hope that anecdotes, for all their limitations, contribute to a richness of description that makes this work valuable to others in their own particularity, just as I hope that the necessary partiality of insights that arise from careful contextual attention are also of wider value. As I see it, contextual attention and relaying anecdote may each facilitate the appropriation of one of the very best lessons I have learned from the contemporary theologians whose writings I explore in Part Three of this work, which is that description is more important than prescription, and certainly

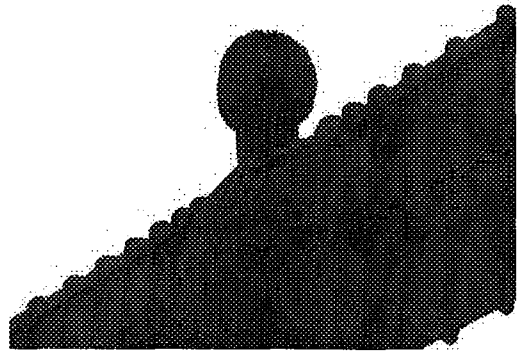
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<sup>9</sup> For splendid reflections on the demerits of 'talking behind people's backs' see Duncan Forrester, On Human Worth: A Christian Vindication of Equality (London: SCM, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer encouraged a self-critical form of bible reading which he called 'reading against ourselves'; see discussion in Stephen Fowl and L Gregory Jones, Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life (London: SPCK, 1991), Chapter 6: 'Living and Dying in the Word', especially p. 140, quoting No Rusty Swords. It is something of the spirit of this self-criticism that I see as the central merit of use of anecdote.

ought to precede it. So it has been my intention to contribute to engaged and patient description rather than premature 'lecturing' about liturgy and the ways in which it might be celebrated and understood.

I hope that each of the following chapters contain enough description and detail to make them intelligible when read independently of one another, yet I have attempted to structure my thinking to suggest a cumulative force to my arguments.



*part one*

**APPROACHING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY**  
patterns and participation

## **Approaching Liturgical Theology**

### *Opening comments on Part One*

The following two chapters, which form Part One of this work, are introductory in different ways, and together provide narratives of the background necessary for the discussion which is to follow at later stages.

Chapter 1 sketches the larger context to which the following explorations belong, highlighting key moments and core concerns in the ecumenical twentieth-century Liturgical Movement. Covering such a large topic as the Liturgical Movement, my sketch is necessarily selective, and chooses to focus especially on the insights of the movement as these found expression in the liturgical mandates emerging from the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly Sacrosanctum concilium, the 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy'. In this first introductory chapter, the wealth of literature relating to the Roman documents is explored through the Constitution's central notion of 'participation', and in turn the influence of this key concept is traced into the liturgical life of other churches too. This paves the way for a focus in chapter 2 on the key text about participation in the Church of England's recent liturgical revision.

Chapter 2 examines the Church of England prayer-book Patterns for Worship, the debates within the Church of England which led to and from it and form its context, and the prayer-book's novel content and style. As we shall see, Patterns for Worship was intended directly to address issues about participation in particular kinds of worshipping communities, specifically those in deprived urban communities, and those including children. In its exploration of Patterns for Worship, chapter 2 introduces the issues that constantly recur as foci of this present work - especially so in the following part, Part Two, 'Challenging Liturgical Theology'.



*chapter 1*

**Participation in the Liturgy:  
“Minds Attuned to Voices”**

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**The ecumenical treasure of Vatican II**

The notion of participation in the liturgy has become the keynote of liturgical renewal across the Christian traditions, and a vision of what it might entail came to clear and widely-recognised expression in the liturgical documents of the Second Vatican Council, in which the participation of all is said to be “the aim to be considered above all else”. As the ‘Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy’, Sacrosanctum concilium noted in its fourteenth paragraph,

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2: 9, 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. Therefore, in all their apostolic activity, pastors of souls should energetically set about achieving it through requisite pedagogy. . .<sup>1</sup>

Sacrosanctum concilium was the first of the documents of the council to be promulgated, on December 4 1963, and as such it has been regarded as a first fruit of Pope John XXIII’s prayer on the day of Pentecost 1959, when after recalling his summons from earlier that year (January 25) of a council of bishops, he asked the Spirit of God to ‘renew [God’s]

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<sup>1</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 14. Austin Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (New York: Costello, 1975), pp. 7-8.

wonders in our day. Give us a new Pentecost'.<sup>2</sup> Being the first of the directives to emerge from the Council, Sacrosanctum concilium can be regarded as having 'priority over all others for its intrinsic dignity and importance to the life of the Church',<sup>3</sup> just as within the document itself an important claim is made about the liturgy, its subject, being both 'fount' or source of the whole life of the church.<sup>4</sup>

If paragraph fourteen of the Constitution on the Liturgy represents an important expression of the heart of liturgical renewal, it is not surprising that its convictions find pulses and echoes throughout the documents of the council. Paragraph twenty-one of the same document speaks of the faithful being 'able to understand [both texts and rites] with ease and take part in them fully, actively and as a community'.<sup>5</sup> Paragraph thirty speaks of acclamations, responses, psalms, hymns, actions, gestures, silence and more as means of 'active participation'.<sup>6</sup> The importance of a diverse range of means aiding participation can be seen by cross-reference to Apostolicam Actuositatem, 'On the Apostolate of Lay People' of November 18 1965, which speaks of lay people's 'life of intimate union with Christ in the Church' being 'maintained by the spiritual helps common to all the faithful, chiefly by

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<sup>2</sup> Pope John XXIII; quoted by John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks, Worship in Transition: The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1995), p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Address (December 4, 1963) by Pope Paul VI; quoted by German Martinez, 'Reform, Liturgical, History of', Peter C Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 1066-1072, p. 1068.

<sup>4</sup> The conviction about the priority of liturgy is embedded in Sacrosanctum concilium itself, which states that 'the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows' (paragraph 10); Flannery, ed., Vatican Council II, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 21. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 30. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 11.

active participation in the liturgy'.<sup>7</sup> To facilitate this aim, the rites themselves, the liturgy's leaders, and the space in which they are conducted are all called to aid the faithful. The rites are to be 'short, clear, and free from useless repetitions. . . within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation'.<sup>8</sup> 'Pastors of souls' are asked to 'ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it',<sup>9</sup> so that 'minds [may] be attuned to [ ] voices'. Pastoral promotion of 'liturgical instruction' and 'participation, both internal and external' in the 'mysteries of God' is encouraged.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, 'Considerable freedoms' may be exercised by presiders to 'suit[ ] as well as possible [ ] the needs, spiritual preparation and receptivity of those who are to take part'.<sup>11</sup> And because the church is understood to find its 'principal manifestation . . . in the full, active participation of all God's holy people' in liturgy,<sup>12</sup> the church's buildings are to be scrutinised as to their suitability for facilitating the active participation of the faithful.<sup>13</sup>

These convictions of the bishops gathered for the Second Vatican Council have had import well beyond their own Roman Catholic Church, as we shall see in relation to some other theologians, traditions,

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<sup>7</sup> Apostolicam Actuositatem, 4. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 770.

<sup>8</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 34. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 11. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 19. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 313. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 199.

<sup>12</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 41. Flannery, Vatican Council II, pp. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 124. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 35. Cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 253: 'The church (or other place) should [ ] be suitable for the ceremonies and such as to encourage the people to take their full part'. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 189.

and contexts. Yet, many of the bishops' convictions were not limited to the Roman episcopate in the first place, for in promulgating the Constitution on the Liturgy, the bishops to a large extent embraced the principles of the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement. Indeed, in Sacrosanctum concilium the bishops amplified many of the perspectives of some of the actual authors of the Constitution – including Joseph Jungmann and William Klauser<sup>14</sup> - who had been actively involved in the Liturgical Movement for some time.

Undoubtedly, 'nothing has symbolized more dramatically this "age of liturgical reform" than the Second Vatican Council'.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, Vatican II may be seen to be the 'most radical thing to affect Protestantism in the twentieth century,'<sup>16</sup> as Don Saliers suggests. And Protestant appropriation of the Council has also had participation as a central concern: the 'call for "participation" can be seen as representing the leading edge of reform in the liturgies of all the Christian churches in the twentieth century, not just that of the churches in communion with Rome'.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, Gordon Lathrop writes of the key phrase of Sacrosanctum concilium 14 about 'full, conscious, and active participation' as an 'ecumenical treasure' of trans-denominational significance.<sup>18</sup> If, then, some of the reforms mandated by the Council

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fenwick and Spinks, Worship in Transition, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> Don E Saliers, 'The Nature of Worship: Community Lived in Praise of God', Robin Leaver and James Litton, ed., Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1985), 35-45, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Christian Spirituality in an Ecumenical Age', Louis Dupré and Don E Saliers, ed., Christian Spirituality III: Post Reformation and Modern (London: SCM, 1989), 520-544, p. 538. Among other examples, see also Adrian Hastings' assessment that 'the [Second] Vatican Council was the most important ecclesiastical event of [the twentieth century], not just for Roman Catholics, but for all Christians': Adrian Hastings, A History of English Christianity 1920-1990 (London: SCM, third edition 1991), p. 525.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'Strong Center, Open Door: A Vision of Continuing Liturgical Renewal', Worship 75 (2001): 35-45, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Lathrop, 'Strong Center. . .', p. 36.

looked to Roman Catholics like a 'Protestantization' of their inherited traditions of worship<sup>19</sup> – use of the vernacular being the most obvious first instance of this - the Protestant traditions have in turn been 'Romanised' by the ecumenical import of the Council. These trends together have resulted in much greater consensus in terms of the shape and form of Christian worship across the traditions after the Council than before, and the point of convergence between the traditions was typically enlarged through an understanding that the traditions were making a common rediscovery of the early churches' liturgical practice as a measure and yardstick for contemporary change. This interest in the early centuries was mediated to the church both Catholic and Protestant by the Council 'fathers' as they absorbed the core concerns of the pioneers of the Liturgical Movement,<sup>20</sup> and has remained at the centre of concern for liturgical theology since.

However, before we consider the developing sense of the subtleties involved in the notion of participation, a little more attention to the Liturgical Movement will further help to set the significance of the impact of Vatican II in context.

### **The achievements of the Liturgical Movement**

At the heart of the Liturgical Movement's achievements was a gathering of concern to identify a shared inheritance of what might be considered

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<sup>19</sup> Hastings, *History*, p. 525, among many possible examples.

<sup>20</sup> Among a wealth of literature, see introductions to serve orientation in John Fenwick and Bryan Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement*; Virgil C Funk, 'Liturgical Movement, the (1830-1969)', Peter C Fink, ed., *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 695-715; especially p. 710-711; Gordon Wakefield, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), chapter 9: 'The Liturgical Movement'.

'the essentials of Christian worship',<sup>21</sup> which, as has just been suggested, was based largely on historical reconstruction of worship practice in the early centuries. In particular, it is this endeavour that Vatican II gave unprecedented approval and energy.

### *Identifying a liturgical canon*

In considering the concerns that have pre-occupied those persons associated with the Liturgical Movement it is helpful to keep in focus the notion of a liturgical 'canon', as this has been significant to many subsequent commentators. Such a construct is comparable in some ways to the canon of scripture in so far as it is constituted by elements which are considered to be early, authentic and abiding, though of rite rather than biblical text. And as with the scriptural corpus, there are varying views about the precise content of such a canon. In the liturgical case, many traditions tend to look for verification of their practice by sifting records and assumptions of earlier times in ways which justify the construal of their particular patterns of prayer.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, quite considerable consensus about the essentials of Christian worship has been achieved, at least among the 'mainstream' or 'old-line' churches.

Included in the liturgical 'canon' according to the Catholic and many (though not all) mainstream Protestant traditions, are the eucharist; those pastoral offices which correlate closely with the sacraments of the Catholic tradition – though with a particular renewed emphasis on initiation (a complex involving at least baptism, first communion and confirmation); offices of daily prayer; and cycles of time expressed in seasons and feasts. Some of the elements of this liturgical 'canon' have

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<sup>21</sup> See Gordon W Lathrop, ed., The Essentials of Christian Worship (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress, 1996), volume I of the 'Open Questions in Worship' series, which represents one of the most recent and best expressions of this consensus, appropriating it for the North American Lutheran tradition.

<sup>22</sup> These issues will be explored in some detail below, especially in relation to the work of James F White.

greater or lesser influence in particular traditions, just as different elements are regarded as supreme in certain traditions and not others. For instance, the primacy of the eucharist in the Roman and some other traditions might be regarded as being analogous to the primacy of the gospel reading in the lectionary chain which provides a context for interpretation of canonical scripture in the custom of many churches: it is an interpretative lens for all the other aspects.

### *Convergence of liturgical structures*

If widespread recognition of a liturgical canon is a major achievement of the Liturgical Movement, another of its fruitful endeavours has been to facilitate, to a very significant extent, the convergence of structures of liturgical rites. This is particularly the case in relation to holy communion regarded as a 'service of word and table' (the title now given to eucharistic celebrations by the United Methodist Church of the USA, and some of the Uniting Churches of various lands), in which the disciplined, lectionary-based reading and proclamation of scripture has a central place. The recovery of the related integrity of word and sacrament has had a major impact on Christian worship in every continent. Protestants are shifting to a more regular, and symbolically richer, sacramental celebration, while the following imperative of Sacrosanctum concilium has set the tone for changes in much of the Roman Catholic world: 'The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word'.<sup>23</sup> The value placed on proclamation of scripture in the revised Roman rites might be regarded as another expression of their 'Protestantization', whereas the increasing frequency of sacramental celebration that the Liturgical Movement encouraged can

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<sup>23</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 51, which initiated work on the lectionary which has formed the basis for reading across the churches, through its influence on the Common Lectionary and Revised Common Lectionary. Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 17.

conversely be seen as a 'Romanising' of a number of Protestant traditions' hitherto characteristic practice.

#### *Shared appropriation of ancient texts*

As structures of rites converged in these ways, the texts of rites have similarly become a focus of ecumenical consensus. Recovery and study of early liturgical texts and rubrics has led to their incorporation into many recent expressions of liturgical creativity, the most vivid example of which is perhaps the common use of Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition in the formulation of modern texts for eucharistic prayer.<sup>24</sup> Its particularly vivid phrase 'he stretched out his hands when he should suffer', expressed in the third eucharistic prayer of the Roman Rite as 'for our sake he opened his arms on the cross' has helped to popularise the Hippolytan inheritance in the prayers of almost every contemporary tradition.

#### *Shared attention to sources*

Finally, alongside the recovery of such primary texts of prayer such as Hippolytus, the Liturgical Movement has encouraged and facilitated shared attention to secondary sources. A contemporary example is Sacrosanctum concilium itself, and more recently again the so-called 'Lima Document' which was the 111<sup>th</sup> paper of Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, overseen by Geoffrey Wainwright, is perhaps the

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<sup>24</sup> See Ronald C D Jasper and Geoffrey Cumming, eds., Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, third edition 1987), pp. 31-38. For recent critique of Vatican II's liturgical reform, and particularly the reliance of its crafters on the Hippolytan construct, see Catherine Pickstock, After Writing: The Liturgical Consummation of History (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 171-175; also, David Torevell, Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), pp. 146-169.



contemporary text *par excellence* in this category.<sup>25</sup> Such secondary texts have also clearly helped to shape celebration of rites across denominational lines, providing alternative 'authorities' to the texts around which Reformation and Counter-Reformation controversies were centred, be they the documents of the Council of Trent, Luther's Catechism, Zwingli's treatise On the Lord's Supper, Cranmer's revised liturgies, or whatever.

These various means of liturgical consensus form an essential background to the discussion that follows, for it has been liturgical theologians that have – perhaps primarily - been involved in shaping these contemporary ecumenical endeavours in the period after Vatican II. They have certainly been active in the work of aiding understanding of potential reasons for consensus by tracing the 'essentials of Christian worship' through their historical trajectories, and re-conceiving them for maximal contemporary relevance. By focusing on the rites of worship, in a way that is distinctive from the work of other kinds of theological scholars – systematicians, for instance - they have pioneered a particular kind of approach to the practice of worship, less dependent than some other theological colleagues on the secondary sources of the medieval and Reformation period where so many attempts at ecumenical convergence have faltered. They have also been the creators of a new wave of secondary theology, so often being those who have both written and shaped the texts, rubrics and rites of their traditions, and the first to offer commentaries on the revised rites for which they are responsible. In this respect, liturgical theologians are often powerfully situated at the interface of the 'rule of prayer' and the 'rule of faith', in that they may revise and write the church's liturgies and then comment as experts upon them, and so in different but related ways shape the understanding of the church.

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<sup>25</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: WCC, 1982), and a wealth of material flowing from it.

## Orientation in liturgical theology

### *Pioneers of liturgical theology: Benedictine and Orthodox influences*

While it may be argued that liturgical theology, broadly conceived, is one of the most ancient and basic theological areas of all, it is most especially with its contemporary form that this work engages. Following from the previous discussion, “liturgical theology” as it is conceived here, can be defined in relation to its roots in the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement and is especially associated with the refinement of liturgical reflection generated by the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. However, it is notable that whilst the Liturgical Movement had its roots in Europe, liturgical theology is now most advanced and developed in the continent of North America. Yet an important thread of connection between the Liturgical Movement and liturgical theology is that Benedictine communities and authors are at the heart of the promotion of liturgical theology in its present, Americo-centric form,<sup>26</sup> just as Benedictines pioneered the movement that was contemporary liturgical theology’s antecedent. And contemporary, Americo-centric liturgical theology is now a thoroughly ecumenical enterprise, just as the Liturgical Movement itself was instrumental in establishing the conditions in which it became appropriate to designate the twentieth as ‘the ecumenical century’.<sup>27</sup>

This being said, in terms of reference to written authorities, the most single influential secondary text of contemporary liturgical theology is the work of an Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann. And so,

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<sup>26</sup> Not least through Benedictine sponsorship of the primary journal of contemporary liturgical theology, *Worship*; among many examples.

<sup>27</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century, 1900 to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). See also James F White, ‘Writing the History of English Worship’, *Christian Worship in North America: 1955-1995. A Retrospective* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 51-58.

alongside the Benedictine influence, any discussion of contemporary liturgical theology wisely finds orientation from Schmemmann's Introduction to Liturgical Theology, the seminal text in its academic field.

A priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, Schmemmann studied theology in Paris under Roman Catholic teachers. Many of them were Benedictines who were immersed in the Liturgical Movement that affected their own tradition through the twentieth century, and which came, around the time of Schmemmann's writing of his Introduction, to find such an important focus at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>28</sup> Following the publication of the Introduction, Schmemmann himself spent much of his teaching career in the United States, at St Vladimir's Seminary, New York City, whose press initially published his book. The Introduction reflects Schmemmann's deep experience of Christian worship on two continents, and in at least three different contexts; and although concerned specifically with his own Orthodox tradition, it is widely regarded across Christian confessions as having shaped the discipline of ecumenical enterprise of liturgical theology as it has evolved to this day. First published in 1965, Introduction to Liturgical Theology is so influential as to aptly be regarded as a 'primer' for liturgical theology subsequent to it.

For example, in the first pages of his 'Introduction' to the Introduction, Schmemmann makes a number of points that have formed a generation of liturgical theologians across the Christian traditions: he states that 'liturgical theology' as he is to expound it is 'comparatively recent', and thus to be distinguished from much of what had passed as liturgical study hitherto. The distinction he identifies between liturgical study in earlier modes and the liturgical theology which is to be his own

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<sup>28</sup> For a brief history of the liturgical movement, see Virgil C Funk, 'Liturgical movement, the (1830-1969)', Peter C Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 695-715.

particular concern, hinges on the latter's concentration on 'the meaning of worship', as opposed to 'the study of "rubrics"' (which had, in his view, too often been considered a clerical or churchly, but not theological business). He therefore intended his work to amend 'the neglect of liturgics' by theologians, as well to develop the more positive but still under-reached 'historical and archaeological interest in worship' of much liturgical study that he considered to fall short of a genuinely theological appreciation of liturgy.

Schmemmann's seminal vision of liturgical theology as a matter of 'the elucidation of the meaning of worship' is elaborated in various ways in the Introduction: perhaps most importantly in terms of 'giving a theological basis to the explanation of worship and the whole liturgical tradition of the Church' by finding and defining 'the concepts and categories which are capable of expressing as fully as possible the essential nature of the liturgical experience of the Church'; and by then connecting these 'with that system of concepts which theology uses to expound the faith and doctrine of the Church'. In the Introduction, Schmemmann is also concerned to present 'the separate data of liturgical experience as a connected whole, as, in the last analysis, the "rule of prayer" dwelling within the Church and determining her "rule of faith".<sup>29</sup>

These trajectories expanded the range of 'liturgics' at the time Schmemmann wrote, pointing liturgical study in a consciously theological direction and focusing the agenda he wished to introduce. Yet although his work has remained a reference point against which subsequent liturgical theologians have defined their own understanding, in broadly following his vision in many respects they have by no means assented to all the details of the content of the Introduction. That the vision and the

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, An Introduction to Liturgical Theology (New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1965), p. 16-17.

detail in the work have gained different levels of assent from others can be seen in the way that subsequent scholars of liturgical theology have become conscious of the particularities of the 'data of liturgical experience' in their own ecclesial traditions, contrasting their experience with Schmemmann's Orthodoxy, and leading to some of the debates about the content of the 'canon' of Christian worship, as hinted above. This has in fact led to one of the discipline's richest areas of development, although conversely it has frustrated the possibility of arriving at an agreed definition of liturgical theology. It is now typical of the discipline that rather than focusing on a narrow definition it is commonly conceived in topographical images,<sup>30</sup> as a 'geography' with 'borders' within which two 'distinguishing characteristics' are contained, but about which prescriptive understandings are considered to be problematic. As Dwight Vogel suggests, a common contemporary view is that liturgical theology 'must deal with the liturgy and it must be theological in nature. To say more, or to attempt to define terms too precisely, would be to impoverish our geography'.<sup>31</sup> This broad approach to the discipline therefore embraces a number of perspectives shaped in unique ways by the traditions of worship from which they arise. Schmemmann saw his own work very much as a service to the Liturgical Movement, which he regarded as having 'created the necessary conditions for liturgical theology by its focus on worship'. The service that Schmemmann saw liturgical theology being able to offer was in terms of helping the Movement to avoid subsiding into expressions of

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<sup>30</sup> The geographical image may originate from the quotation from Joseph Gelineau's The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow much loved by Don E Saliers and quoted, for example, in Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1994), p. 139. Saliers uses the geographical images in his own introduction to Worship as Theology, p. 13. And it is picked up by Gordon W Lathrop, "O Taste and See": The Geography of Liturgical Theology', Byron Anderson and Bruce T Morrill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God: Essays in Honor of Don E Saliers (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 41-53.

<sup>31</sup> Dwight W Vogel, 'Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 3-14, p. 13.

either contemporary fashions or nostalgic primitivism, as at least some of the Movement's proponents would, he believed, have encouraged it to do. Schmemmann's own enterprise has not been free of such criticism itself, and it is implied in the recent works of Catherine Pickstock among others, although in her reference to the crafters whose hands shaped the liturgical documents of Vatican II, she does not name him. This notwithstanding, liturgical theology as it has been shaped by Schmemmann's influential vision has not only reflected but actively formed aspects of ecumenical consensus about worship.

*Primary and secondary modes of liturgical theology*

Defining the relationship between the two rules – the “rule of prayer” and the “rule of faith” – is one matter to which Schmemmann renewed attention, though the origins of such a distinction are commonly ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine. Writing about the intercessions of the Good Friday liturgy of his fifth-century ecclesial context, Prosper comments at one point: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*. This much-used phrase is variously translated, and has had a great many meanings loaded on to it by liturgical theologians, each with a distinctive range of implications for the relationship between the two ‘rules’.<sup>32</sup> We have already noted the wide definition of liturgical theology for which one of the most recent commentators, Dwight Vogel, settles: that it ‘must deal with the liturgy and it must be theological in nature’. And as quotations from Schmemmann have indicated, for some

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<sup>32</sup> For overviews and suggestions of best translations and meanings, see Paul De Clerk, “‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi’: The Historical Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage”, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 178-200; David W Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology? A Study in Methodology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992); Kevin W Irwin, ‘Liturgical Theology’, Peter C Fink, ed., *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 721-733; Kevin W Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994); Maxwell Johnson, ‘Liturgy and Theology’, Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks, eds., *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper* (London: SPCK, 1994), 203-227; Dwight W Vogel, ‘Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography’, Dwight W Vogel, ed., *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 3-14.

theologians prayer, regarded as primary theology, is regarded as heavily – if not wholly – determinative of secondary, reflective theology, so that doctrine is understood by them to be derived from the liturgy. For others, the church's theological traditions possess a greater power of critique in relation to liturgical experience, and are considered to have a more explicit role in the adjustment and evolution of liturgical practice. Typically, an awareness and sympathy with scripturally-grounded Reformation arguments about aspects of medieval liturgical celebration, or familiarity with forms of contemporary liberation theologies shape this latter position.

Furthermore, in the latter case at least, theological traditions that prioritise the perspectives of particular oppressed groups may relegate much of the church's received tradition – which they receive as deficient – as at best ancillary to liberative 're-constructions' with little historical authority in themselves, but which may nevertheless be necessarily regarded as the leading considerations in the evaluation of the liturgical inheritance.<sup>33</sup> What supporters of this approach are prepared to concede and which Schmemmann and others – notably, Aidan Kavanagh - will not, is the role of worship as primary theology, theology 'in the first instance',<sup>34</sup> which places all attempts to reflect upon it into secondary position.

Even among those who refuse to concede this point, the relationship between the 'rules' of prayer and belief may be 'expanded' to include a third 'rule', *lex agendi*, the rule of 'living' or of what has been called

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<sup>33</sup> Marjorie Proctor-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Akron, Ohio: OSL, second edition, 2000); see also, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Woman-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1984) is the classic argument of this point. For theology 'in the first instance', see pp. 74-75.

'belief enacted'.<sup>35</sup> Among contemporary liturgical theologians, Kevin Irwin is especially associated with this adjustment to Prosper's dictum, and it has come to be quite commonly adopted by others. Happily the expansion reflects the close interest many liturgical scholars have given to the pursuit of social justice and communal expressions and representations of holiness, and it may also in many cases be informed by the scriptural connections between liturgy and life as hinted at in the phrase 'living sacrifice', used by Paul in his letter to the Romans (Romans 12.1-2). The phrase *lex agendi* is usually used in the sense of embracing 'liturgical spirituality', the 'living out in life of some of the implications of the liturgy. . . ', and 'the challenge to live what is celebrated'.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, it has meant that attention has been cast to some of the mediating factors between forms of Christian life and the meaning of liturgical texts, and so has highlighted a diverse range of aspects of liturgy such as symbol, gesture, movement, environment, and art, which have, with time, come to be recognised as each in their own way aspects of participation in liturgy, and constitutive of liturgy's primary theology. In this sense, these elements of liturgy do more than simply mediate between liturgy and life, but are in themselves parts of the experience of worship.

#### *Liturgy as embodied activity*

Conviction about the vast and varied range of elements relevant to participation has had major implications for liturgical study in the contemporary period. They are probably not yet fully understood, but have initiated a whole-scale shift away from a more traditional focus on rite alone – and especially away from prescribed texts.<sup>37</sup> In the

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<sup>35</sup> See Kevin Irwin, 'Liturgical Theology', Peter C Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, p. 726.

<sup>36</sup> Kevin Irwin, 'Liturgical Theology', Peter C Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, p. 726.

<sup>37</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, 'Textuality and Deritualization: The Case of Western Liturgical Usage', Studia Liturgica (1993): 70-77.



academy, this can be seen not only in the desire to attend more comprehensively to the subtleties of symbol, but also in the valuing of careful description in the work of liturgical theology. For instance, a felt need among liturgical scholars for more descriptive attention to worship events became a focus of the 1974 gathering of the North American Academy of the Liturgy and led to a shift that has been incorporated into the discipline since then. Recognising the inadequacy of 'comparative textual inquiry', the academics gathered in 1974 resolved to 'undertake a detailed enquiry of case studies of liturgical celebrations drawn from actual parish life'.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the study of fifteen Roman Catholic congregations across the United States, published as The Awakening Church, was one notable result of this shift. For that study, a team of scholars observed people as part of worshipping congregations, conducted extensive interviews with worshippers about their experience of worship events, and gathered to reflect upon their findings, producing papers and responses about their work. Don Saliers, one of the contributors, expanded the range of ecclesial traditions examined by simultaneously undertaking a related study of thirteen United Methodist congregations.<sup>39</sup> As a result of such initiatives, in the era since these first major studies, seminaries in the United States have often begun to make descriptive accounts of worship a greater focus of courses in liturgy. For example, James White outlines a number of instructions for his students about 'what to observe' when they seek to understand worship as they describe it:

[Observers] must look beyond the words that are said and sung. They should be instructed to note: who the people are (age, race, sex), what

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<sup>38</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol: The Domestication of Liturgical Experience', in Lawrence J Madden, The Awakening Church: Twenty Five Years of Liturgical Renewal (Washington DC: Liturgical Press, 1992), 69-82, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy'; also, Worship as Theology, especially chapter 11: 'For the Sake of the World: Liturgy and Ethics'.

roles each group plays (including the ordained clergy and choir), what is the architectural setting of the worship, what visual arts are present, how people arrive and leave, what actions happen (such as offering, receiving communion, baptism, etc), what leadership roles are apparent (usher, reader, presider), who sings and how, the uses of music, the use or not of printed materials, use of the body (handclapping, hands raised), and how strangers are treated.<sup>40</sup>

The observation that 'much more is done in worship than is said'<sup>41</sup> finds expression also in James White's preferred description of worship: 'speaking and touching in God's name'.<sup>42</sup> The tactile, the kinetic, the aural and visual environment are all now commonly regarded as part of the primary theology of worship.

Here, we may see the potential that liturgical theologians conversant in this developing sensitivity to worship as primary theology have to educate the debate centring in the Church of England around Patterns for Worship, beginning with the comment with which the Liturgical Commission open their commentary, the third section of the prayer-book: 'Worship is not worship until you do it'.<sup>43</sup> We may also perceive the evermore complex and subtle ways in which 'participation' is understood. As we shall see, Don Saliers – amongst others – is concerned with 'resistance and vulnerability to the non-verbal and symbolic dimensions of liturgical celebrations in specific social-cultural contexts'<sup>44</sup> in ways which deepen appreciation of what participation

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<sup>40</sup> James F White, 'Forum: Some Lessons in Liturgical Pedagogy', Worship 68 (1994): 438-450, pp. 442-443. A similar set of questions has recently been published in a liturgical textbook arising from the British setting in Susan J White, Groundwork of Christian Worship (Peterborough: Epworth, 1997), pp. 235-237.

<sup>41</sup> White, '...Pedagogy', 443.

<sup>42</sup> James White, Introduction to Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), p. 22.

<sup>43</sup> Patterns for Worship, p. 264.

<sup>44</sup> Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy. . .', p. 71.

may mean. In his own contributions to The Awakening Church project he discovered that 'in our preoccupation with reformed texts and rubrics, we may have neglected the most difficult challenge: to uncover the intersection of human hopes and fears, longings and hungers, with the symbolic power and range of liturgical rites authentically celebrated'.<sup>45</sup> Interviewees were apparently almost wholly concerned with what Saliers names the 'expressive' dimensions of participation, while 'the inner relations between the formative and expressive power of primary symbol' were neglected. He calls attention to the nature of symbolic participation in order to deepen ongoing appropriation of the Council's core mandate at paragraph 14 of Sacrosanctum concilium.

### *Inculturation*

Furthermore, since the Second Vatican Council a wealth of literature has also evolved around the minimal hints about widening participation in worship offered by paragraphs 37-40 of the Constitution. They read in part:

Even in the liturgy the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather does she respect and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations. Anything in these people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy, and, if possible, preserves intact. She sometimes even admits such things into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit.

Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission countries. This should be borne in mind when drawing up the rites and determining rubrics (37-38).

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<sup>45</sup> Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy. . .', p. 71. I assume that there is an intended allusion here to the opening of Gaudium et spes, 1- "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the [people] of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well"; Flannery, Vatican Council II, p. 903.

'Sacraments, sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music and the arts' are each mentioned in paragraph 39 as the possible focus of adaptation, yet paragraph 40 concedes that 'in some places and circumstances [ ] an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed', though it prescribes boundaries around who may legitimately make changes.<sup>46</sup>

These short paragraphs are concerned with what has come to be called 'inculturation' and are headed 'Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples'. The term 'inculturation' was not used in an official way to describe the processes imagined in paragraphs 37-40 until 1979 when, in an address concerning biblical interpretation, Pope John Paul II used the term to 'express[ ] one of the elements of the great mystery of the incarnation'.<sup>47</sup> Studies of inculturation in the liturgical realm have been especially developed by Anscar J Chupungco, who writes in turn: 'liturgical pluralism is an incarnational imperative, rather than a concession of Vatican II'.<sup>48</sup> A key example of what liturgical inculturation, in the spirit of the Constitution 37-40, might mean is the Roman Rite authorised for Zaire in 1987, which incorporates African images, prayers (involving 'ancestors' for instance), music, and dance.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium 37-40; Flannery, Vatican Council II, pp. 13-14.

<sup>47</sup> Pope John Paul II, 'Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission'; quoted in Mark R Francis, Shape A Circle Ever Wider: Liturgical Inculturation in the United States (Chicago: LTP, 2000), p. 58.

<sup>48</sup> Anscar J Chupungco, 'The Theological Principle of Adaption', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 247-252, p. 252, referring to Gaudium et spes, 58. See also, Anscar J Chupungco, Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).

<sup>49</sup> See Chris Nwaka Egbulem, 'An African Interpretation of Liturgical Inculturation: The Rite Zairois', Michael Downey and Richard Fragomeni, ed., A Promise of Presence: Essays in Honor of David N Power (Washington DC:

Among contemporary liturgical theologians, the attention paid by David Power to embodied celebration of liturgy is an important contribution to the unfolding implications of liturgical inculturation. Power has been particularly trenchant in his critique of the assumption that liturgical celebration can be regarded as homogeneous, whatever impressions may be given by use of shared texts. Noting the plasticity of popular devotion among Roman Catholic people in different cultures around the world, he has argued that liturgical inculturation has often failed 'because people are rarely invited to express [their faith] in their own way. Rather, they are given models of doctrinal belief to follow, instead of being expected to generate their own expressions'.<sup>50</sup> And from this observation his critique has expanded to a number of 'imposed' or assumed liturgical traditions and gestures which change in meaning from one culture to another and so may at best diminish their authenticity or at worst alienate participants from the liberating experience they have been found to convey in other cultures. Consequently, Power is hostile to the notion of liturgy as 'the work of the elite' and calls for the incorporation of 'indigenous' traditions of popular devotion into corporate celebration.<sup>51</sup> It is easy to imagine how the comparative study of liturgy across different cultures might have given its own particular impetus to a 'whole-rite' focus for liturgical theology in the contemporary period. These concerns are clearly relevant to the agenda of Patterns for Worship and its desire to relate to particular local cultures.

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Pastoral Press, 1992), 227-250; see also Aylward Shorter, Toward a Theology of Inculturation (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), pp. 191-195.

<sup>50</sup> David N Power, Worship: Culture and Theology (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1990), pp. 67-68.

<sup>51</sup> Power, Worship: Culture and Theology, p. 83.

The concerns of The Awakening Church and similar projects with deepening appreciation of participation through attention to meaningful symbol and the concerns of liturgical inculturation marry in Saliers oft-repeated statement that worship is 'always culturally embodied and embedded', and this statement serves well as a summary of the range of elements constituting the malleable notion of 'participation' that now contributes to primary theology as this is understood by contemporary liturgical theologians.

### *Liturgical theology and sacramental theology*

Given a sense that primary theology may now be recognised to be any aspect of a liturgical event, and their configuration in ritual events, it can be appreciated that the distinction between liturgy as primary theology and reflective theology (such as sacramental theology) as secondary theology is not simply about the use of different kinds of texts – prayer texts, or reflective theological texts. This in turn has led to an understanding of liturgical theology which is drawing sacramental theologians' attention away from secondary texts and inviting their engagement not only with liturgical texts themselves but many aspects of the primary modes of prayer and its links with living. Liturgical theology may therefore be seen to have an important contribution to make to the systematic agenda of contemporary theologians, encouraging sacramental theology to envision an inclusive focus on the whole rite, and more.

### **Gathering fragments from Chapter One**

Our next chapter focuses on one particular product of contemporary liturgical reform, Patterns for Worship, a recent and – as we shall see – unusual Church of England document. This present chapter is included primarily because the commitments of the Liturgical Movement form a

theological background to Patterns for Worship that is not explicit in Patterns' own pages, nor widely appreciated. Yet the concerns that this chapter has outlined need to be in view in order to have a sense of the wider context to which Patterns belongs (as with all liturgical texts produced in the mainstream churches in the last decades of the twentieth century).<sup>52</sup> That the concerns of the Liturgical Movement are so little discussed or understood in the general culture of the Church of England, and that the Liturgical Movement's concerns are not clearly related to the liturgical texts produced for use in the denomination, is problematic. That the rubrics accompanying liturgical texts - and the things with which rubrics have traditionally been concerned - also do not unfold with anything approaching clarity the perspectives of the Liturgical Movement is an even greater problem and one that this present work seeks to redress as it develops in what follows.

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<sup>52</sup> In a lecture at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta on October 22 2002, Beverly Wildung Harrison correlated 'mainstream' with 'old-line', suggesting that the latter is a more accurate description of the churches usually included under the designation 'mainstream'. Questions arising from consideration of 'mainstream' and 'marginal' liturgical traditions are addressed in Part Three of the present work, particularly with respect to the views of James White.

*chapter 2*  
**Patterns for Worship  
in the Church of England**

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***Patterns for Worship in the Church of England***

Patterns for Worship was published by the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England in July 1989, almost half-way into the period of the authorization of the Alternative Service Book 1980. One of Patterns' key aims, at the request of the house of bishops, was to 'provide greater freedom' in liturgical celebration, so that services of worship might be either 'enriched or shortened'. Two particular issues were at the centre of the bishops' concern to see such provision made available: the widespread but unauthorised use of 'family services' in many parish churches and the special needs of worshipping congregations in 'urban priority areas' (UPAs).<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this second introductory chapter is to explore these issues and to trace the ways in which they were discussed in the Church of England leading up to and beyond Patterns to Worship, through to the present moment in which we read and write.

In the interval between the Alternative Service Book and Patterns, a number of reports related to 'family services' and to worshipping congregations in UPAs had received considerable attention in the church's general synod, most notably Faith in the City (February 1986) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Children in the Way (February 1988). Both of these reports critiqued the ASB, and their 'urgently expressed' convictions relating to the church's worship were acknowledged by the bishops to have led to their commissioning of Patterns. These reports on

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<sup>1</sup> See the Prefatory Note by the House of Bishops printed in Patterns for Worship: A Report by the Liturgical Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England, GS 898 (London: Church House Publishing, 1989), p. v-viii.



cities and on children, and the further reports to which they led, will be explored in greater detail below, though we may note at this initial stage their shared central critique of the church's inheritance of liturgical worship. Faith in the City suggested that 'a 1300 page Alternative Service Book is a symptom of the gulf between the Church and ordinary people in UPAs', and so commended requests from UPA parishes for 'short, functional service booklets or cards, prepared by people who will always ask "if all the words are really necessary"'. Children in the Way also suggested 'the need for new liturgies to serve all-age worship and in particular a form of Eucharist suitable for when children are present' (bishops' notes 2 & 3).

Following the bishops 'prefatory note' to Patterns, the Liturgical Commission themselves presented their work with an acknowledgement that 'the coming of the Alternative Service Book in 1980 marked a new stage in the development of Anglican worship'. The commission suggested that the *ASB* looked 'both backwards and forwards': back to 'the principle established by Cranmer of having all the texts for worship available in one book' and into the more recent past in order to 'distil the best' of the Series' of experimental booklets produced from the middle of the 1960s, and forward to 'a new era of flexibility in the Church of England worship' [sic].<sup>2</sup> This aspect of forward-lookingness in the *ASB* may be overstated by the commission - perhaps in order to down-play their own innovation in Patterns? - as it was undoubtedly the specific foci of concern with urban deprived and 'all-age' congregations in the post-*ASB* period which led to the freedoms permitted in the later book. Nevertheless, they cite as a sign of emerging flexibility in the ASB the recurrence of what are sometimes referred to as 'soft spots' - those 'open-ended phrases' in its rubrics - allowing for 'other suitable prayers', 'other appropriate words', and such like as alternatives to the printed texts for prayer. Patterns developed this principle and although

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<sup>2</sup> Patterns for Worship (London: Church House Publishing, 1989), p. 1.

in its 1989 edition it was neither 'authorised' nor 'commended' for congregational use – except in specially authorised 'liturgical experiments' (bishops' note 4) – it is Patterns that will almost certainly come with time to be recognised as a more significant shift in the Church of England's approach to liturgical provision than the ASB itself. As the bishops acknowledged, Patterns expanded the 'bounds of choice and variety . . . more widely than [had] been customary' (bishops' note 5), though, significantly, the bishops also recognised that this expansion would be likely to cause 'anxiety' to some in the church perhaps more content with the ASB or Book of Common Prayer (1662) than those consulted and supported by Faith in the City and Children in the Way.

### **The structure of *Patterns for Worship***

The make up of Patterns was markedly different to both the BCP or ASB, and its make up was key to its novelty. It consisted of three main parts. Part One offered a range of templates for worship, 'outline services' consisting of minimal prayer texts and rubrics. One of these, sample service 6, 'The Lord is Here: The Eucharist', was intended as a direct embodiment of the kind of order required in response to the criticisms of Faith in the City. It is divided in five sections: 'We prepare', 'the ministry of the word', 'we pray', 'the eucharistic prayer' and 'after communion'. Later versions standardised these headings to place consistent stress on action, the second heading becoming 'we hear God's word', the fourth, 'we give thanks', and so on. Rubrics are kept to a bare minimum, and only congregational texts and their necessary 'triggers' are printed. For instance under the heading 'We prepare' we find:

*Singing, greeting and prayer, which may include*

This is the day that the Lord has made.  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Lord, direct our thoughts,  
teach us to pray,  
lift up our hearts to worship you  
in Spirit and in truth,  
through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*or*

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open . . .**

(the text of the collect for purity follows).

A confession using imagery from the story of the 'forgiving father' or 'prodigal son' and an absolution emphasising the 'fellowship of [God's] table' follow, then the 'Peruvian Gloria' and the rubric that 'the president says the Collect – the prayer for the day' conclude the section. The whole rite is presented in this relatively spartan style, with explanations of 'specialist' terms (for instance, 'collect'). The presentation of the whole order amounts to no more than 4 A5 pages of minimal text, a radically different alternative to a 1300 page book.

Part Two, the bulk of Patterns, consisted of 'resource sections' offering alternatives for every liturgical element of services, including 'samples of new lectionary material' and (in the 1989 edition only) eucharistic prayers. Although the eucharistic prayers were never authorised, and edited out of the 1993 edition, it is clear from anecdotal evidence that they did enjoy wide use – well beyond the parishes granted permissions in liturgical experimentation. Also, the provisions in the book for use of 'A Service of the Word' - a list of rubrics requiring use of alternative texts within a flexible structure - allowed for contemporary expressions of 'the third service' which had enjoyed unofficial status in many parts of the Church of England for a long time.<sup>3</sup> Using the resources of this section, it was also possible for the Service of the Word to restructure or

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<sup>3</sup> Bryan Spinks, 'Not So Common Prayer: The Third Service', Michael Perham, ed., The Renewal of Common Prayer: Unity and Diversity in Church of England Worship (London: SPCK, 1993), 56-67.

replace the synaxis at the eucharist, allowing much greater flexibility in the presentation of eucharistic worship. Acknowledging that

the needs of the UPA parish for worship reflecting local culture, language and concrete expression are not best met by a group of experts at the centre laying down all the words of the liturgy, but by creating the framework and the environment which will enable a new generation of worship leaders to create genuinely local liturgy which is still obviously part of the liturgy of the catholic Church,<sup>4</sup>

Patterns presented alternative texts for liturgical greetings, introductions to confession, confessions, absolutions, introductions to the peace, blessings and other elements of rite. Many of these alternative texts make explicit reference to cities, as in the echoes of Hebrews 12.22-24 in an opening greeting: 'We have come to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. . .' or the reference to Jesus weeping over the sins of the city (Luke 19.32) in a '*kyrie* confession'.

Most unusually, Part Three of Patterns was a 'commentary', the inclusion of which was a remarkable feature of a Church of England prayer book, commentaries having never been part of the tradition's liturgical literature. This commentary section took the form of 'the stories of four entirely imaginary congregations' whose circumstances and reasons for employing various elements of the resource sections were described. Although perhaps tending at times towards caricatures of congregations in different traditions or divergent social circumstances, the point of these imaginary congregations was to underscore the particularity of in fact every congregation, while an ancillary aim of the commentary section was to highlight the Liturgical Commission's conviction that 'worship is not worship until you do it',<sup>5</sup> a point that the commentary style could expand and explore in ways that were not possible in prayer-books consisting of prayer-texts alone.

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<sup>4</sup> Patterns for Worship, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Patterns for Worship, p. 264.

Apart from the contextual considerations that surface in the descriptive accounts of the churches, the accent on performance underlined the charge of insufficiency against a worship book consisting simply of texts – either those for prayer, or rubrical - such as the BCP or the ASB. In retrospect, however, although the commentary section mentioned some aspects of the performative, non-textual elements of worship, it is with regard to such elements of rite that even Patterns is weakest, with the result perhaps that too often new, flexibly arranged texts were in the practice of many of the congregations that employed them easily left competing with unrevised approaches to use of space, gesture, symbol and ceremonial.

Anxiety about this departure in style of presenting the church's liturgy inevitably focused on the notion of 'common prayer', as in Patterns the Book of Common Prayer was clearly being considered deficient for pressing needs in the late twentieth century. The sense of common prayer that the commission suggest was feasible in the climate of the church in their times was defined around a number of 'marks' which they considered to maintain continuity with 'historic Anglican tradition':

- a recognizable structure for worship
- an emphasis on reading the word and on using psalms
- liturgical words repeated by the congregation, some of which, like the creed, would be known by heart
- using a collect, the Lord's Prayer, and some responsive forms in prayer
- a recognition of the centrality of the Eucharist
- a concern for form, dignity, and economy of words. . .
- . . . a willingness to use forms and prayers which can be used across a broad spectrum of Christian belief.<sup>6</sup>

These ideas were later expanded by one of the commission members, the late Michael Vasey, in the foundational contribution - 'Promoting a

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<sup>6</sup> Patterns for Worship, p. 5.

Common Core' - to The Renewal of Common Prayer,<sup>7</sup> a series of essays amounting to a rationale by the commission of their purposes in the post-*ASB* period. The notion of promoting a common core has remained at the heart of the task of liturgical revision in the Church of England to the present day,<sup>8</sup> and outlines of services noting minimal text and rubric are now gathered in the major land-mark of revision, Common Worship, which has been published in stages since 1997. For instance, Common Worship includes its own Service of the Word adopted from Patterns.

However, progress towards Common Worship also involved a considerable share of the 'anxiety' picked up the bishops in 1989. Following tensions in the church's General Synod the commended version of Patterns, published in 1993, omitted the eucharistic prayers included in the earlier edition, and when new eucharistic prayers were again revised for approval in 1996, they were again rejected – although, like their forebears, they enjoyed wide use, in the later case due to their publication as a Grove Booklet, Six Eucharistic Prayers as Proposed in 1996.<sup>9</sup> Authorised new prayers for the eucharist had to wait for the core-book of Common Worship published in late 1999, though in some respects Common Worship represents a retreat from, rather than an advancement of, the vision of Patterns a decade before. Its collects, based on the BCP opening prayers, have been much lamented in many

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Vasey, 'Promoting a Common Core', Michael Perham, ed., The Renewal of Common Prayer (London: SPCK, 1993), 81-101, p. 101.

<sup>8</sup> The notion also relates to discussion in synod as to how a minimal number of key texts might come to be 'known by heart' among Anglicans as a basic bedrock of contemporary Anglican spirituality. In ensuing debates the image of the "knapsack" was used to suggest the scale of this common core, and the devotional prayer-book An Anglican Companion, edited by Alan Wilkinson and Christopher Cocksworth (London: CHP/SPCK, second edition 2001) develops the idea and suggests some possible contents of a spiritual "knapsack".

<sup>9</sup> Colin Buchanan and Trevor Lloyd, eds., Six Eucharistic Prayers as Proposed in 1996: The Official Texts for Final Approval with Introduction and Commentary (Grove: Cambridge, 1996).

parishes, and are one example of direct contradiction of the request from the bishops in 1986 which supported the call in Faith in the City for the exercise of the criterion of whether 'all the words are really necessary'.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps more significantly, however, the suggestion of Faith in the City, promoted by Patterns, that 'short, functional service booklets or cards' should be popularised has arguably happened not due to the force or right of arguments embraced by the bishops and Liturgical Commission in the late 1980s, but rather due to the unforeseeable widespread use of computing technology in the intervening period. At the same time, Faith in the City, which with its follow-up reports Living Faith in the City and Staying in the City caused considerable interest and debate for a number of years after its publication, is no longer so highly regarded for its relevance to the contemporary urban situation – not least due to changes precipitated by the revolution in new technology.

In contrast to Faith in the City, Children in the Way never received the same sustained attention from the church, although further reports in its mould have been produced – most notably Youth A Part<sup>11</sup> - at the same time as numbers of the young involved in Church of England worship have declined considerably. Interestingly, however, this decline has happened most sharply in a predominantly rural diocese, Carlisle - a 62% decline through the decade of the 1990s. Decline in urban areas, if acute, is not quite as drastic.

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<sup>10</sup> Disappointment with the Common Worship collects has led to widespread use of the lectionary-based ICEL collects produced by the Joint Liturgical Group and published as Opening Prayers: The ICEL Collects for Cycles A, B and C (Norwich: Canterbury, 1998). (Incidentally, Opening Prayers is dedicated to Michael Vasey, who wished to promote their use in the Church of England).

<sup>11</sup> Youth A Part: Young People and the Church: A Report by the Board of Education (London: Church House Publishing, 1996).

### ***Faith in the City and its legacy for liturgy***

It has been suggested that Faith in the City was the most important Anglican document of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> The report by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, published in 1985, took a comprehensive approach to 'the serious situation that has developed in the major cities', that situation being the continuing decline of quality of life in 'what have been designated "Urban Priorities Areas"'. Undoubtedly, the whole report was forceful and had an important impact on church and society, though it may be noted that the church has been more effective in responding to at least some of the parts of it directed to the church than governments or any other body has been to those parts attending to the state of the nation. Perhaps few parts of the commission's concerns have received as much steady attention as their comments about worship in UPA churches, which formed part of the section of the document entitled 'Developing the People of God'. Although the section specifically relating to worship is relatively small – amounting to just under three pages of the 398 page publication – it is remarkable that the commission's reflections and proposals have shaped the evolving liturgical resources of the whole Church of England, not only its urban congregations. In the following paragraphs, the authors of Faith in the City's reflections on worship are recalled, interspersed with some commentary upon them.

In the report, two particular characteristics were demanded of the church in the UPA environment, that it be 'locally rooted and outward looking' (6.99). Many of the comments that followed this demand gave some substance to what might be entailed in the achievement of a locally rooted and outward looking church. The theological notion of

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<sup>12</sup> David F Ford and Laurie Green, 'Distilling the Wisdom', Peter Sedgwick, ed., God in the City: Essays and Reflections from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group (London: Mowbray, 1995), 16-24, p. 16.



'incarnation' was immediately introduced to provide a broad and basic rationale for the demand for local roots. As an 'indispensable characteristic of a worshipping community' the "incarnational" side of the Christian religion' is said to call the church in UPAs to 'live in and be part of the local world' (6.100). This is said to involve, at the very least, 'talk[ing] people's language, so that they have a chance of hearing and understanding'. Next, however, a key qualification was introduced to shape this incarnational requirement, as the commission wrote of a necessary tension between incarnation and transcendence. They stated that worship is (in whatever context) worship of a transcendent and 'Other' God. So the necessity of worship to 'emerge out of and reflect local cultures' relates to God who is to be 'found, worshipped and served through the realities of UPA life' (6.101). Although not explicitly stated, the tension between transcendence and incarnation serves to resist the limits of narrow self-reference, which may be as unhelpful for coping within the horizons of 'UPA life' as it would be over time in any other situation. Nevertheless, it is held that 'certain aspects of UPA life will necessarily greatly affect the formation of the worshipping life of the UPA church' (6.102). Local life is to be 'gathered up' and 'informed' by worship, and one facet of what this is likely to demand is an acceptance at least of the 'positive aspects' of working class culture, two of which are identified as the strong senses of 'family' and 'community'. Other aspects of 'UPA life' which are said to be needful of attention are the tendencies to relate through 'feeling rather than the mind' and to communicate non-verbally rather than verbally, as well as to employ 'informal and flexible. . . urban language'. While it might be feared that too-easy assumptions were being made about the marks of other people's lives, this important paragraph of the report (6.102) introduced a key principle which itself transcends the many possible flaws of the particular examples used to illustrate it. The principle, taken up vigorously as a result of the report, and in various ways, is that worship in UPAs must 'reflect a universality of form with local variations'. Here the theological themes of transcendence and incarnation find their

liturgical counterparts – universal and local forms – to be balanced in the practice of an urban congregations' worshipping life. The next paragraph, 6.103, recognised that greater involvement of congregations in worship is desirable in UPA churches, and this point is illustrated with some biting examples that uncover the racism that may be operative, though perhaps unacknowledged, in practices that deny participation.

Paragraph 6.104 relates to some possible further features of the 'working class culture' which was the concern of paragraph 6.102, in that 'local UPA people' are said to be concerned that 'things [ ] be more concrete and tangible rather than abstract and theoretical'. The importance for many UPA congregations of traditional and contemporary symbols – crucifixes and banners, for example – is noted, as is a particular 'love to tell the stories of their lives'. The following paragraph, 6.105, encouraged UPA congregations to resist the kind of formality – the sense of 'go[ing] through the correct motions from start to finish' which inhibits people from 'coming and going' from the church as they feel the need, and the next paragraph (6.106) draws attention to the potential of worship as a form of evangelism,<sup>13</sup> which is said to be likely to be most attractive when 'lively and participatory' – an expression, in positive mode, of the complaint of paragraph 6.103, perhaps? The balance between transcendence and incarnation reoccurs in some measure at this point also, as it is said that worship that is appropriately evangelistic will combine 'a sense of the presence of God while showing concern for the real things in people's lives'.

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<sup>13</sup> 'Faith in the City and similar reports have made us uncomfortably aware that the forms and patterns which cradle-Anglicans have, perhaps too easily, accepted as the norm are exceedingly blunt instruments of evangelism when placed in the hands of those who have the task of proclaiming the gospel to an increasingly indifferent and sometimes even hostile world', Donald Gray, 'Postscript', Michael Perham, ed., Towards Liturgy 2000: Preparing for the Revision of the *Alternative Service Book* (London: SPCK, 1989), 101-102, p. 102.

Various commissions attending to UPAs have been more successful at avoiding a patronising tone about the people who live in such areas than the group responsible for Faith in the City at paragraph 6.107, which is a low-point of the liturgical section of the document. Here, they were concerned about the sense of 'inferiority' which might be imposed upon UPA dwellers when 'their debts, their court cases, their sufferings at the hands of their husbands', and other such 'realities', are not faced. There can be little question that such realities occur in UPAs, though much greater care is needed when others write about such matters, in order to ensure that any supposed sense of inferiority is not further magnified. The point that the commission is making is expressed without the grating overtones in the principle delineated in paragraph 6.108, that 'worship will put the harsh realities in a new light. It may enable people to withdraw for a time from the pressures, but it will be "withdrawal with intent to return", not evasion'. When in paragraph 6.109 the commission stressed the importance of attention to 'the ordinary', we should note that this will of course include realities that may be bright and delightful as well as harsh.

Paragraph 6.110 noted 'many' suggestions from UPA contexts that small service booklets or cards be provided as an alternative to the Alternative Service Book, which the commission had already recognised earlier in the report as being severely problematic in non-book culture. This proposal has been of great significance for the whole church, and it has carried implications far wider than the UPA church itself, for whom the commission acknowledged the 'the work of reforming the liturgy has really only just begun'. If resources for liturgical worship were to be presented as single service booklets or cards, rather than a combined book, a more expansive need again was for appropriate permissions to be given for 'informal and spontaneous acts of worship'. 'The Way of the Cross' was cited as an example of the kind of informal and spontaneous form which would 'complement' formal liturgies (6.111); though the commission insisted that occasions for increased informality

and spontaneity demand care and preparation, as do more formal occasions, as both are concerned with and express 'beauty' and 'excellence' (6.112). Finally, although informality may be readily associated with small groups, the commission asserted that 'glorious occasions' would continue to have a most important role in complementing smaller gatherings (6.113).

It has already been noted that these proposals have shaped an agenda for the whole church, not only UPA congregations, to a quite remarkable extent. Of course, in their own way some of the proposals magnify aspects of liturgical renewal that also gathered strength from other sources, and some of these will become apparent as this work progresses. The stress on participation is perhaps the most obvious example, receiving as it does a much fuller theological understanding in the documents of the Second Vatican Council than its practical or ethical underpinnings in this particular Anglican report.<sup>14</sup> For whereas Faith in the City related its stress on participation to its combative approach to racial exclusion, Sacrosanctum concilium required 'full, conscious, and active participation' because such participation 'is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy' and is the 'right and obligation' of the baptised as 'chosen... royal... holy... redeemed' (paragraph 14, cf. I Peter 2). Some other developments suggested by the report have affected the whole church rather than the church in UPAs but have emerged separately from the report's recommendations – as in the massive and pervasive expansion of electronic technology to enable very widespread use of service booklets and cards well beyond the UPA environments in which the commission deemed them to be especially necessary.<sup>15</sup> While this was both felt to be desirable and found to be

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<sup>14</sup> See Sacrosanctum concilium 14. See extended discussion following.

<sup>15</sup> This is exemplified in Electronic Patterns for Worship and in Visual Liturgy, for use with computers. For discussion of some of the general issues, see Susan J White, Christian Worship and Technological Change (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

helpful, what is not always so readily recognised is that it perhaps severed many besides UPA dwellers from a sense of the resources of the 'ecology' of their worship and doctrine, which may be represented by a prayer-book of rites for a whole life-cycle and for a range of human conditions. Narrowing this wider 'habitat', cards may limit spirituality and related resources to a restricted range of foci – and perhaps for many to a single, eucharistic focus. Perhaps particularly in a culture conscious of its post-modernity, use of a prayer-book including many resources expressing different moods for different occasions could suggest a possibility of integrity and fullness of life under God that extracted samples of a limited style may not? Such questions notwithstanding, the commission's work on worship in UPAs has prompted some significant changes in the worship of the Church of England which have carried implications for the wider church and shaped its shared liturgical tradition.

Five years after Faith in the City, the follow up report Living Faith in the City was published. It dedicated some attention of its own to matters of worship. In the chapter 'Celebrating Faith: Worship in UPAs' some of the key concerns of the original report are reiterated, and two especially significant consequences were identified: the work of a sub-group of the Liturgical Commission to prepare services responsive to the needs of the UPA parishes; and the fresh impetus by clergy and congregations to explore forms of worship arising from their own experience. This new impetus was said to have resulted in forms of worship which included the 'bright', 'beautiful', 'banal' and 'bizarre', and so the two consequences of the original report are in this follow-up related to one another – and it was suggested that one aspect of the work of the Liturgical Commission might be to 'rein in' some of the forms of worship emerging from the fresh impetus of the original report.

The Liturgical Commission had by the time of Living Faith in the City published Patterns for Worship. Living Faith in the City commended

Patterns for its jettisoning of 'excess verbiage', its 'orientation towards congregational participation' and its provision of services on small, foldable cards. It drew particular attention to the conviction of the members of the Liturgical Commission themselves when they wrote in the introduction to Patterns: 'The needs of a UPA parish for worship reflecting local culture, language and concrete expression are not best met by a group of experts at the centre laying down all the words of liturgy, but by creating the framework and the environment which will enable a new generation of worship leaders to create genuinely local liturgy which is still obviously part of the liturgy of the catholic Church'. And it recognised that, if accepted by synod, this statement by the Liturgical Commission could prove both 'exciting' and 'revolutionary' (3.4), as indeed it has.

Echoing the bishops' concern about 'anxiety', Living Faith in the City recognised eucharistic revision as a particularly 'painful nettle' to grasp in the light of Faith in the City's call for more pictorial, concrete images and shorter texts for prayer. For a tradition which had expressed its unity in a particular notion of 'common prayer' - the shared use of a particular, limited set of carefully nuanced prayers - the diversification of options and a more poetic or pictorial mode of speaking within them represented a range of potential threats, in addition to the loss of the 'ecology' of a particular rite, as noted above. As also noted, as it happens Patterns' eucharistic prayers did not receive synodical authorisation and were not published in the commended version of the prayer-book in 1993, despite Living Faith in the City's affirmation of the Liturgical Commission's conviction that 'the forces of tradition, inertia, fear of insecurity and upheaval should not be allowed to prevent the continuing growth and development of the liturgy which is necessary to met the needs of those in our cities' (3.5).

Taking up the observation brought in to focus in Faith in the City's paragraph 6.104, that UPA dwellers appreciate being able to tell stories,

Living Faith in the City 3.6 suggested that the Liturgical Commission attend to lectionary provision which included scriptural material excluded by the two-year cycle of the ASB which would cohere with enjoyment of stories. Following from this, it suggested that consideration be given to the question of how opportunity within the liturgy for UPA dwellers to tell their own stories might be facilitated, yet in such a way as not to disrupt the movement of the liturgy. In the intervening years, both of these suggestions may have come to fruition in so far as adoption of the Revised Common Lectionary has enabled a greater sweep of scripture to be voiced, including its great stories.<sup>16</sup> Churches within the charismatic tradition, amongst others, have also taken up freedoms granted with the authorization of the Service of the Word, and have modelled to churches in other traditions ways in which congregational response to scriptural reading may be developed.

Finally, Living Faith in the City insisted that care, preparation and training would remain as important as ever in the context of more informal and spontaneous worship, and that 'in an age when the tv set and video player are to be found in most homes, the demand for visual as well as spoken presentation becomes increasingly insistent in worship', so that the church must respond (3.7). One appropriate way to engage in appropriate preparation and to enable training of those with public forms of participation was said to be the development of opportunities for communal preparation for the presentation of worship, which would 'nurture prayer' and grow 'spiritual confidence' as well as evoke livelier liturgies (3.8).

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<sup>16</sup> Fritz West, Scripture and Memory: The Ecumenical Hermeneutic of the Three-year Lectionaries (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997) is an extended study of the lectionary. For continuing critique of the lectionary, from a feminist perspective, see Marjorie Procter-Smith, 'Feminist interpretation and liturgical proclamation', Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., Searching the Scriptures, Volume 1: A Feminist Introduction (London: SCM, 1993), 313-325, and Marjorie Procter-Smith, In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition (Akron: OSL, second edition 2000). Also, Elizabeth J Smith, Bearing Fruit in Due Season: Feminist Hermeneutics and the Bible in Worship (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999).

After thinking about the work of the Liturgical Commission, Living Faith in the City suggested that dioceses themselves be able to designate 'areas of Liturgical Experiment'. This would in effect be a means of testing the balance between universality and locality by allowing certain congregations, with appropriate permissions, to explore diverse forms of worship without culpability of illegality (3.9), and yet would allow their explorations to be accountable beyond their own particular local circumstance. It commended the notion of 'people liturgy' – informal, perhaps, but deep communal expressions emerging without centralised directives (as was believed to have been encountered in the responses to the Hillsborough football stadium disaster) as an element with which such experimental practices should work (3.10). (In the intervening years, popular responses to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, including the funeral service itself, perhaps represent some other possibilities for consideration). Exuberant as well as solemn moods might appropriately find expression in such 'people liturgies'. The final point on worship in Living Faith in the City focused on the role of 'celebration', especially when congregations meet in 'drab and depressing situations', and an explicit link between celebration and the biblical motif of feasting was encouraged (3.11).

Staying in the City: Faith in the City Ten Years On, published in 1995, devoted less attention to worship than previous reports. But it followed, by two years, an authorised form of Patterns for Worship that had clearly developed many of the suggestions of Staying in the City's predecessors. It did, however, reiterate the link between 'appropriate forms of worship' and evangelism (4.103) and in its update on the work of the Liturgical Commission drew attention to the theoretical and theological elaboration which the commission had offered on Faith in the City's proposals about worship. This led the Liturgical Commission to publish, in The Renewal of Common Prayer, some extended reflections on how a 'common core' might be promoted as a unifying



and identifying strand of Anglican worship, as well as some thinking about liturgy in its social and congregational context. Staying in the City rightly suggested that The Renewal of Common Prayer indicated the seriousness with which the Liturgical Commission took Faith in the City, in that they 'felt it necessary to address these broader questions before embarking on the nitty gritty of liturgical revision' in terms of texts (4.132). And the principles developed in response to these broader questions were, Staying in the City suggested, employed in Patterns even to the extent that the 'Service of the Word' 'consists almost entirely of introduction notes and a balanced "menu" rather than liturgical text' (4.133). (Indeed the Service of the Word might be regarded as an illustration of the title of the larger book – it is little more than a pattern for worship). A more oblique note was struck in Staying in the City's final comment reviewing the work of the Liturgical Commission, noting that liturgical language needs to be both 'simple and direct' and to allow "space" for individuals to bring to it deeper levels of meaning' (4.134). This is a possibility which was of course emphatically not opened up by the general synod in its refusal to authorise the commissions' work on eucharistic prayer, either for the 1993 edition of Patterns, or again in 1996.

Another important publication relating to UPAs, and also post-Patterns in its 1993 form, was the 1995 essay on 'Praise' in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group's collection God in the City.<sup>17</sup> Although not a liturgy, nor a liturgical theology, it suggested important theological perspectives with direct reference to the situations described in Faith in the City. For instance, responding to the notion that

in areas shot through with poverty, powerless and other disadvantages, the last thing that Christians ought to do is undermine the sense of the seriousness of the situation by being "too joyful",

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<sup>17</sup> David Ford and Alistair McFadyen, 'Praise', Peter Sedgwick, ed., God in the City (London: Mowbrays, 1995), 95-105.

David Ford and Alistair McFadyen assert that ‘no account of a situation is truly realistic if it is disconnected from the transforming God’ and warn Christians in UPAs against living ‘in the grip of [ ] false normality’ which denies an account of God’s presence.<sup>18</sup> Worship, they asserted, may create an environment that involves the affirmation of personal dignity and also celebrates the dignity of others, so worshippers may “praise open” an alternative culture with a different future.<sup>19</sup> They may also exercise judgment on their present social circumstances, if praise can be seen as ‘a witness to the ultimate contradiction of idolatry and sin’ which UPAs may represent as places where ‘there is a specially intense convergence of the negative consequences of our society’s habitual idolatries’.<sup>20</sup> According to Ford and McFadyen, praise may help worshippers: ‘imagine how things might be different’; ‘find multiple ways of remembering who God is and who people are in God’s sight’; resist ‘problem-centred’ mentalities; ‘analyse situations so as to expose the idols that dominate them’; ‘not to despair when good things prove fragile or short-lived’; and ‘imagine time differently’, repeating and teaching stories which can vie for allegiance over-against other less helpful narratives by which people may live:

It seems a weak gesture ‘just’ to worship. What are we doing every Sunday, every day, as we ‘waste’ time on this? We are resisting the most dangerous of temptations – to turn stones to bread, manipulate the world to suit ourselves, dazzle with successful gestures – in favour of a message that says to love God with all we have and are, and to worship God alone. And when we do that in the extreme

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<sup>18</sup> Ford and McFadyen, ‘Praise’, p. 96. The insight is developed by Alistair McFadyen in ‘Sins of Praise: The Assault on God’s Freedom’, Colin E Gunton, ed., God and Freedom: Essays in Historical and Systematic Theology (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 32-56, and Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), chapter 1: ‘the loss of God: pragmatic atheism and the language of sin’, pp. 3-13.

<sup>19</sup> Ford and McFadyen, ‘Praise’, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Ford and McFadyen, ‘Praise’, p. 102.

situations of UPAs there is a sign of faith, hope and love that is desperately needed elsewhere too.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly, these are important possibilities, though Ford and McFadyen do not engage directly with liturgies,<sup>22</sup> even Patterns for Worship, to suggest how such things might happen.

### ***Children in the Way and its legacy for liturgy***

Children in the Way: New Directions for the Church's Children did not receive the wide readership nor range of attention given to Faith in the City, though in their preface to Patterns, the bishops clearly recognise its importance for the church. Like Faith in the City, very little of the report is spent making liturgical recommendations, although a later, related report, Youth A Part, is much more explicit about engaging young people in worship, and so both Children in the Way and Youth A Part are considered here in terms of their evaluation of the young in the church's worship.

Children in the Way itself belonged to a line of documents on its subject, and a quote from its most important predecessor, The Child in the Church, opens the report:

The Church that does not accept children unconditionally in its fellowship is depriving those children of what is rightfully theirs, but the deprivation such as the Church itself will suffer is far more grave.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ford and McFadyen, 'Praise', p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> Similarly, another of David Ford's works on 'praise', Jubilate: Theology in Praise (London: DLT, 1984) [US title Praising and Knowing God (Louisville: Westminster, 1985)], co-authored with Daniel W Hardy, is not generally regarded as liturgical theology; see Kevin Irwin, Liturgical Theology: A Primer (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> The Child in the Church, cited in Children in the Way, p. 1.

The powerful language of deprivation in this quotation resonates having just considered Faith in the City, and introduces a vigorous point of critique for churches that may then be seen to aid and abet already virulent forms of 'multiple deprivation' in UPAs. The language of deprivation also serves as a reminder that both the Child in the Church and Children in the Way were written before the widespread acknowledgement of forms of child abuse, deprivation being one, though the latter report was aware of the realities of abuse and represented an early church-based engagement with some of the issues (1.11-1.13). Children in the Way's timely consideration of child abuse may be seen as an illustration of a conviction it makes at a later point, where stress is laid on the need for the church to engage in societal issues as the basis on which it 'is more likely to be judged by people outside its own community', although such engagement is paired to a detrimental comment about 'the niceties of the ordering of Church worship' (2.24) with the implication that worship is of no or little interest or importance. Whilst abuse forms one aspect of awareness that the authors of Children in the Way brought to their work, a more pervading awareness for them was that children had 'become the centre of attention in our society today' (1.4), not least as consumers.<sup>24</sup> It was primarily this changed position of the child in society with which they wished the church to engage.

Unlike later reports on the topic, Children in the Way demonstrated some optimism about the levels of young people's involvement in the life of the Church of England; it noted that 'some 400,000 children are regularly involved' in a variety of ways. Sunday Schools, uniformed organisations, networked youth groups (such as those overseen by CPAS) and choirs are among such forms of involvement. Significantly,

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<sup>24</sup> See, more recently, Rowan Williams, Lost Icons: Essays on Cultural Bereavement (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), chapter 1: 'Childhood and Choice'.

and in a chapter whose title is relevant to the point – ‘Children on the Edge’ – the report stated that ‘an introduction to Christianity through worship only can be an ambivalent experience’ (2.12), and so although ‘School models’, especially Sunday School, are seen to have some limitations (3.10-3.12) they are nevertheless regarded as very important in the church’s mission among the young. The report extends special wariness to ‘family services’, which are recognised to be variously successful in helping attract and hold young people and their families in the church (4.27). A particular weakness of such services is identified as their dependence in many cases on the ‘charisma’ of a leader, such that when particular charismatic leaders are not available, the services flounder (5.12). Although not explicitly stated, there is considerable unease with this focus on a particular person, the unstated underlying assumption presumably being that authentic worship is necessarily God-centred. And the tendency for such family services to be non-eucharistic is doubtless behind the report’s recommendation that new liturgies for ‘all-age worship’ be developed, and in particular a form of eucharist especially inclusive of children (recommendation 4.3). The call in the same recommendation for ‘full consultation with leaders and parents of young children’ is developed further still in Youth A Part, published in 1996, which although having older children as its focus, demands that they themselves become much more central in the consultative processes of the church, not least in relation to worship.

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s foreword to Youth A Part articulated part of the ‘challenge’ of fostering the young in the worship of the church as balancing ‘experimentation with flexibility and accountability whilst at the same time finding ways to help the members of [alternative worship] services remain a part of the Church of England’ (viii). This statement reflected a much less buoyant mood about the potential of the Church of England to hold young people, and stands in marked contrast to the optimism of Children in the Way’s authors who cited their 400,000 young fellow-worshippers. In a distinct change of mood, Youth

A Part charted an alarming decline (1.13-1.15): young people were acknowledged to be departing rapidly from the church, increasingly less willing to consider confirmation (5.34), and 'conspicuous by their absence' in 'most church congregations' (p. 1). Enormous gulfs (cf. 4.2) between 'youth cultures' and 'church cultures' are expounded by the report's authors as the reasons for the decline, and worship is understood by them to be symptomatic of 'church culture' with which young people are likely to struggle. A recurring point is the strong challenge that 'the primary frontier which needs to be crossed in mission to young people is not so much a generation gap as a profound change in the overall culture' (2.11 & 4.14).

The report demanded that 'spiritually invigorating' (3.14) worship be made available to and for the young, amending the notable 'marginalisation' of their contributions to worship (4.1). 'Liturgy that is youth friendly – forms of prayer and praise that are authorised by canon' and the possibility of young people being 'able to participate in, rather than be an observer of, worship' (4.3) are said to be needed. Because 'liturgy and the style of worship can [ ] exclude young people' (4.3), 'the Church has to be prepared to ask young people how they feel about worship and to engage in a real dialogue with openness and with a willingness to try new things and to change' (4.4). 'Youth congregations' (4.11) and 'alternative worship' (4.13-4.16) are cautiously commended, and attention is drawn to the 'messages' which may be given by the timing of such events: 'if they are tucked into a time when the "real congregation" will not be affected there is an implicit message that the group is marginal and not part of the main church' (4.18).

Whereas Children in the Way stated that

if children are to continue in the way of faith, if they are to continue on the path to which the Church welcomed them at baptism, then they must be aided and supported by the adult fellow-Christians who

are also on that journey and must be acknowledged as those who sometimes lead the way (p. 3),

the tone of official reports changed in the intervening years to Youth A Part's more urgent and sharp demands:

Young people must be taken seriously if they are to stay within the Church, or if the Church wants to attract young people into its work and mission. . . because they are the Church of today. . . (4.29).

For Youth A Part's authors, this meant at least that the young 'plan, lead and take part in worship, and help develop new ways to worship' (recommendation 6), for which 'a bank of resource material' needed to be developed (recommendation 6.1). Furthermore, 'liturgical experimentation' needed to be licensed (recommendation 6.2), and liturgical revision groups also needed to undertake to consult with young people themselves (recommendation 6.4).

### **Gathering fragments from Chapter Two:**

#### **Constructing a conversation**

Youth A Part shows little awareness or appreciation of Patterns for Worship, and many of its recommendations would seem to suggest that the provisions of Patterns are inadequate to engage youth cultures, despite the considerable development in liturgical flexibility in the Church of England that Patterns' recommendations represent. Youth A Part could, then, be seen to have raised a number of very sharp challenges about the worship of the church which are at least as difficult as those articulated in Faith in the City. Perhaps the central question the documents read together may generate is how the different concerns and demands of the urban documents and those relating to the young are in turn to be related to the 'common core' that the Liturgical Commission was concerned to promote. Part of the purpose of this

present work is to discuss these matters, as mutual testing grounds. Surely, a 'core' that excludes the needs of the young or UPA dwellers will be inadequate according to these influential documents, while according to the Liturgical Commission, worship formed outside the core will be impoverished. Each of these claims will in the course of this work be tested in relation to the subtle and illuminating writings of three liturgical theologians, Gordon Lathrop, Don Saliers and James White, who are in turn a major focus of the following study not least for what they can contribute to the consideration of issues concerning 'common prayer' and cultural diversity in liturgical celebration, such as Faith in the City and Children in the Way and their related documents promoted. The theological discipline, liturgical theology, which White, Saliers and Lathrop represent and lead has flourished in the period since 1980 as the Church of England has revised its liturgy, though it remains little examined in England or elsewhere in Britain. So the contributions of these authors will provide a context in which to attend to the notions regarded as essential by the Liturgical Commission in Patterns for Worship and the Renewal of Common Prayer, and will provide a solid basis for their critique and expansion, as the liturgical theologians are tested in their own turn by the special challenges of the contexts under consideration. For, perhaps surprisingly, the discipline of liturgical theology has not to any great extent focused the specific issues that were brought to the fore by Patterns for Worship: deprived urban congregations and children as congregants. A mutually critical and enriching dialogue might then enlarge both the insights of liturgical theology and the contextual concerns of some in the English church.

Whilst both the principles and achievements of Patterns for Worship and the theological writings of noted liturgical theologians are important features of this present study, so is the context in which it is written, as the preface of this work noted. Gateshead is one of the places that was visited by the authors of Faith in the City; it is repeatedly mentioned in their text, and much of what follows is devoted to the



attempt to understand the needs and challenges of deprived urban congregations, as well as of congregations wishing to include children in gatherings for worship, from a “practical”, particular location. To underline just one reason for this study’s relevance, we may note that Patterns for Worship is now, at least in part, being incorporated into the range of material being published as Common Worship, which will become the alternative service book of the Church of England, alongside the Book of Common Prayer (1662), for the foreseeable future. The place of Patterns for Worship material in Common Worship will therefore to some measure determine the longevity of the perspectives it represented and of the resources it offered to the church in its perceived need. It is in this context interesting to note that in at least the preliminary edition of Common Worship: Daily Prayer there are no rites specifically said to be for children, or for use with children among the group of worshippers using the book. Daily Prayer is an adult prayer-book in so far as it acknowledges no concessions to children as members of a daily praying church. This is despite its publication at a time when the church appears to be wanting to affirm the ‘sacramental belonging’ of children in terms of their eucharistic participation, and despite precedents of liturgical prayer designed to include material for children in the recent prayer-books of other provinces of the Anglican Communion, ‘Family Prayer’ in the New Zealand Prayer Book – He Karakai Mihinare o Aotearoa being a significant example. Whether or not material for use by and with children is actually included in the final version of Daily Prayer will speak a great deal about children’s ‘belonging’ and concern for their flourishing in Christian faith and habits of worship. So our conversation matters.

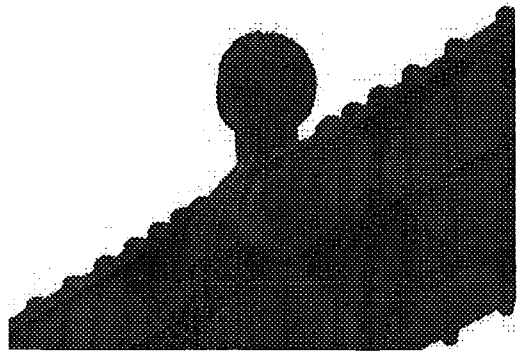
## **APPROACHING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY**

### *Closing comments on Part One*

Part One of this work has been concerned with 'patterns and participation': participation in the liturgy as the central theme of the liturgical renewal that was a feature of the life of the churches through the twentieth century; and Patterns for Worship as one particular fruit of liturgical renewal in just one of the many denominations influenced by the Liturgical Movement, the Church of England.

These chapters have laid the groundwork for the following parts of this present work. In Part Two, the central contextual concerns of Patterns for Worship are re-examined. The chapters constituting Part Two offer supplemental material that is needed for an adequate grasp of the same core issues that generated Patterns, but now a decade or more later than the prayer-book's publication. In Part Three, I set out some perspectives in liturgical theology that I believe can helpfully advance the development that Patterns represents in the Church of England's liturgical life. And in Part Four I make some practical applications of what I think there is to be learned from a study such as this one.

Next, then, we turn to focus on the ways in which the key issues to which Patterns for Worship was meant as a response have changed in the interval through which the prayer-book has been in use, and look at the ways in which it might now need to be adapted, corrected, and expanded to account for new challenges.



*part two*

**CHALLENGING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY**  
**children and the city**

## **Challenging Liturgical Theology**

### *Opening comments on Part Two*

Part Two of this work seeks to deepen appreciation of the central concerns of Patterns for Worship, and to impress their continued relevance for contemporary liturgical theology. It indicates, in chapters 3 and 4 respectively, how the situation of British urban churches and of congregations incorporating children has shifted even in the period since Patterns' publication, effectively suggesting that the good work of Patterns needs to be repeated in a new time. In doing so, it exposes and explores issues that I am convinced liturgical theology has not yet fully grasped. 'Urban deprived' congregations, and those including children remain a challenge for liturgical theology and for communities celebrating liturgical worship.

This part of this study, then, sets out an evolving agenda which I believe an adequate liturgical resource and liturgical theology needs to engage. And so as well as referring back to Patterns for Worship, which was the focus of chapter 2, it also looks forward, anticipating the discussion which is to follow in the next part of this work, Part Three. It prepares for Part Three where I introduce three theologians - Gordon Lathrop, Don Saliers, and James White (who are in turn the centre of my attention in chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively) - as fruitful dialogue-partners with whom to engage many of the problems and possibilities with which Patterns was concerned. As I hope to show, each in their own way offers clarity and direction to the issues at the heart of Patterns. And yet, notwithstanding my appreciation of the three liturgical theologians, it remains, to my mind, that the liturgical theology developed by these three, as more broadly, has also not yet given as it might explicit and generous attention to the lives of the young and the poor. Part Two, then, is meant to grate. It invites a liturgical theology that consciously articulates a more fully inclusive vision and range of resources.

### **Context and theology**

In Antonio Skarmeta's novel *Il Postino* (The Postman), the character Mario Jiménez makes a tape recording of sounds collected around his Italian island in order to send it to his friend and associate, the poet Pablo Neruda. Mario's tape pays extraordinary attention to the details of his environment, as he records the breeze moving chimes, waves breaking, the movement of a motor-boat on water, the beating of his unborn baby's heart through the wall of his girlfriend's stomach:

. . . his life and work were reduced to pursuing the waxing tide, the waning tide, and the rough waters churned up by the winds.

He tied the Sony to a rope and lowered it into crevices in the rocks where crabs sharpened their claws and the seaweed clung for dear life.

He rode out beyond the breakers in his father's boat, and wrapping his Sony in a piece of nylon, almost managed to capture in stereo the crashing of the six-foot waves that brought the driftwood tumbling onto the beach.

On calmer days, he was fortunate enough to catch the hungry snapping of the gulls' beaks just as they fell vertically upon sardines and then took off along the surface of the water, having secured their prey.

Then there was the time some pelicans – those anarchic, questioning birds – flapped their wings along the water's edge . . .

The magical Japanese machine was recording the sounds of bees at daybreak just as they reached their solar orgasms, their noses clinging passionately to the calyxes of coastal daises; of stray dogs barking at the stars that fell into the Pacific Ocean as if it were New Year's Eve; of the bells on Neruda's terrace rung manually or capriciously orchestrated by the wind; of the foghorn from the lighthouse as it expanded and contracted, evoking the sadness of a ghost ship lost in the fog on the high seas; and of a tiny heartbeat in Beatriz Gonzalez's belly. . .<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Skarmeta, *Il Postino* (London: Bloomsbury, 1987), pp. 77-78.

Mario's project serves as a vivid image of what contextual theology seeks to achieve: careful attention to the particularities of a specific environment.

Although contextual theologies are variously characterised as 'disposable', throwaway', 'provisional' and such like, these evaluations do not diminish their merit. The value of a contextual theology lies precisely in its detailed particularity and its possibly restricted relevance. This emphasis on particularity has led to attention to context becoming one of the most important features of modern theology, as increasingly it is recognised that the particularity of a social situation informs theological reflection and action. Whole schools of theology have now developed which are 'constructed with maximal concern for [their] relevance to the cultural context in which [they occur]'.<sup>2</sup> Vincent Donovan's text Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai,<sup>3</sup> on Donovan's experience of missionary work among an African people, is widely regarded as a classic of contextual theology, though the subject can also be approached through other forms of literature. Skarmeta's novel has already been mentioned, and perhaps none is better than Margaret Craven's extraordinary story I Heard the Owl Call My Name about the young priest Mark Brian's life and death among the indigenous people of the village of 'Kingcome' in British Columbia, Canada.<sup>4</sup>

As contextual theology takes its themes from its contexts, it does not usually begin from 'a conventional academic syllabus' by considering

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<sup>2</sup> Charles H Kraft, 'Contextual Theology', R Hunter, J Patton et al, eds., Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 604-606, p. 604.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai (London: SCM, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name (London: Picador, 1967).

items on the systematic agenda: God, Christ, salvation, church, sacraments, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Rather, it begins and proceeds by attending to context through listening to those who inhabit a particular environment – hence the importance of testimony, understood very broadly. Part of the point of attending to testimony can be grasped by attention to the insistence of a ‘peasant’ in conversation with the late Archbishop Oscar Romero, as he powerfully forces the view that although they share the same faith, they ‘carry it in different containers’.<sup>6</sup> The exchange provided Romero with one of several encounters with the poor of his land that radically changed his perspectives and led to the politicisation of his archepiscopate. In addition to testimony, gathering perspectives from the social sciences is also important to a great deal of contextual theology, and the descriptive and analytic value of social science material is highly valued as it is in turn brought into dialogue with more traditional sources in theological construction: scripture and commentators upon it, representative figures in the Christian traditions, texts and practice in liturgy, etc. Robert Schreiter offers a sense of the wide range of potential dialogue-partners involved in developing a contextually sensitive theology when he suggests that ‘being a

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<sup>5</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas, Faith in the City (London: CHP, 1985), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> Lopez Vigil, Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic (London: DLT/CAFOD, 2000), p. 136-137: ‘. . . Monseñor, [d]o you believe in God?’. ‘Of course I believe in God’. ‘And do you also believe in the Gospel?’ ‘Yes. I also believe in the Gospel’. ‘We’re tied then! Because I believe in God and in the Gospel. We both say the same thing, but it’s different! So guess my riddle, I’ve got a pain in my middle! Guess, your Magnificence, what is the difference?’ Polín was going strong now, having fun with his gibberish.

‘I have no idea Polín. You’ll have to tell me’. Monseñor was laughing.

‘You believe in the Gospel because it’s your job. You study it, you read it and you preach it. Your thing is being a bishop! And me . . . I can hardly read, and I haven’t studied all the “indiology” in the Gospel, but I do believe it. You believe in it as an occupation, and I believe in it because I need to. Because God says that He doesn’t want there to be rich and poor. And I’m poor! See the difference? Do you get it? We have the same faith, but we’re carrying it around in different containers’.

Monseñor looked at this man Polín who was all spark. And from that day on, they became the greatest of friends.

theologian is gift, requiring sensitivity to context, an extraordinary capacity to listen, and immersion in the Scriptures and the experience of other churches. . .'.<sup>7</sup>

Contextual theology is better understood as a related 'family' of theologies than as one single entity, and the family would include liberation and feminist theologies as some of its most well-known members. Most of the theologies specifically identified as contextual are among those which have gained ascendancy since the early 1970s; and together they have argued for recognition that in fact all theology, preceding it or contemporaneous with it, is indeed also contextual. What they mean is that every theologian is affected by his or her 'blood' and 'bread' – blood: family, race, gender, sexuality, psychology; bread: location, livelihood, dependencies, socio-economic status, and so on.<sup>8</sup> John Vincent makes the point:

All theology is, and has always been, contextual. All theology is done in the first place by listening to the questions which arise for people, and those questions are determined by their contexts. Even and especially theologies which come to us as dogmatic were created originally within and by their contexts.<sup>9</sup>

Liberation theologians have shaped all subsequent contextual theologies in the shared emphasis that the starting place of theology is its context. Since Gustavo Gutierrez's classic Theology of Liberation, first published in 1971, liberation theologians have consistently stated that theology is

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (London: SCM, 1985), p. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> John Vincent, 'An Urban Hearing for the Church', John Vincent and Chris Rowland, eds., Gospel from the City (Sheffield: Urban Theology Unit, 1999), 105-116, p. 115. See also: John Vincent, 'Developing Contextual Theologies', Epworth Review 27 (2000): 62-77.

<sup>9</sup> John Vincent, 'Liberation Theology in Britain 1975-1995', John Vincent and Christopher Rowland, eds., Liberation Theology UK (Sheffield: UTU, 1995), 10-20, p. 18.



'a second act, a turning back, a reflecting, that comes after action'. Theology is 'not first... it arrives later on', following analysis of a particular situation - and, they would add, a resolve to confront and alleviate poor living conditions.<sup>10</sup> That situation, as liberation theologians are likely to see it, is 'the present life of the shanty towns and land struggles, the lack of basic amenities, the carelessness about the welfare of human persons, the death squads and the shattered lives of refugees', which result, in Gutierrez's words, in the 'premature and unjust death of many people'.<sup>11</sup> Gutierrez writes that

poor and exploited people, the ones who are systematically and legally despoiled of their being human. . . do not call into question our religious world so much as they call into question our economic, social, political and cultural world. Their challenge impels us towards a revolutionary transformation of the very bases of what is now a dehumanising society.

He continues,

The question, then, is no longer how we are to speak of God in a world come of age; it is rather how to proclaim him Father in a world that is not human and what the implications might be of telling nonhumans that they are children of God.<sup>12</sup>

Feminist theology, which might minimally be defined as 'a movement that seeks change for the better for women',<sup>13</sup> may begin with a similarly committed stance: the recognition that, apart from both massive disparities in opportunity and injustices in what is for many the 'privileged West', human life in large parts of Asia and North Africa

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<sup>10</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', James Nickeloff, ed., Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings (London: SCM, 1997), p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Rowland, 'Introduction', Christopher Rowland, ed., Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Duncan Forrester, On Human Worth: A Christian Vindication of Equality (London: SCM, 2001), p. 157.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Loades, ed., Feminist Theology: A Reader (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 1.

suffers from a persistent failure to give girl children and women medical care, food, or access to social services similar to that which men receive. Together, this amounts to the charge that 'sexism is not something that hurts women's feelings, sexism is something that kills millions and millions of girls and women each year'.<sup>14</sup> In the case of both liberation and feminist theology, explicitly *theological* reflection is 'bracketed out' of the first stage of the process of reflection upon particular situations, as the first stage is occupied with simple acknowledgement of a situation, albeit in its sometimes profound horror. A related method is now also familiar in articulate forms of pastoral theology - as developed, for instance in John Patton's book, From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action and Reflection (the title of which conveys the order of shifts in attention: 'from...to, action...reflection.').<sup>15</sup>

Many forms of theology's increasing concern with context notwithstanding, the point that all theology is in fact contextual and that the setting in which a theology is constructed is not neutral or non-determining of the theology that results is not even now a matter of universal assent. For example, the Vatican document Interpretation of the Bible in the Church is one significant and powerful indicator of resistance to the idea that theology is necessarily shaped by its context, despite Sacrosanctum concilium's emphasis on inculturation. In that text, the Vatican authors argue for the primacy of historical method in biblical interpretation and so privilege academic 'northern-hemisphere' perspectives, consequently downgrading the status of other exegetes who explicitly acknowledge their debt to their own, different, settings. Similarly they argue for an emphasis on transcendence in eschatology, against the liberation theology emphasis on change in the present social

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<sup>14</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, 'Just Women's Problems?', Ann Loades, ed., Spiritual Classics from the Late Twentieth Century (London: CHP, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> John Patton, From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action and Reflection (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

order. And against feminist engagement with scripture, they criticise all attempts to reconstruct events described in the texts, in which women may have been more prominent than scripture suggests, as a 'rejection of the contents' of inspired texts.<sup>16</sup> With regard to these comments from Vatican sources, we may appreciate something of the promise of liturgical work on inculturation to educate the debate about other aspects of the church's ministry; yet these comments on scripture may also conversely suggest something of the threat that is associated with inculturation when its implications are grasped, if only in part.

### **Urban theology**

The primary context that shapes this present work is an active urban congregation and the community in which it is set in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. 'Urban theology' is itself a discipline which is as yet emerging, and which is marked by an acute consciousness of the distinctive situations in which it is developed. Clearly, not all urban situations are alike, and care should be taken to resist assumptions that may emerge from use of generalisations such as 'urban theology'.<sup>17</sup> Yet as with other forms of contextual theology, because the Latin verb *contexere* means to "braid", "weave", "connect",<sup>18</sup> one task of any urban theology should be to understand 'interweavings' between one context and another, as well as where possible, between contexts, Christian tradition and interdisciplinary perspectives. Another dimension of this

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<sup>16</sup> Chris Rowland, 'Gospel', Ian Duffield, ed., Urban Christ: Essays in Response to John Vincent (Sheffield: UTU, 1998), p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Some helpful recent remarks on the theological character of urban theology may be found in Kenneth Leech, Through our Long Exile: Contextual Theology and the Urban Experience (London: DLT, 2001), chapter 7: 'The Captivity and Liberation of Theology'.

<sup>18</sup> See Daniel W Hardy, 'The Future of Theology in a Complex World', God's Ways With the World: Thinking and Practicing Christian Faith (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 11-30, p. 32.

last point can be grasped by attending to the dynamics of two widespread trends in the modern world: urbanisation and urbanism, which reveal in different ways the interconnections between different contexts. The first trend, urbanisation, is focused upon *places* – cities – marked by their large size, the density of their human and human-made environment, and by cultural heterogeneity. Urbanisation is a massive world-wide issue, as an estimated half of the world's population now lives in cities, as compared with under ten percent one hundred years ago, and as population growth in urban areas has escalated most dramatically in the past quarter century. Urbanisation on such an enormous scale is especially focused around the Pacific Rim, though it is apparent in every continent. Urbanism is another world-wide trend, in which the varied *cultures* of cities – the values, products and lifestyles of their inhabitants – are reflected into their environs, which are coming increasingly to be linked to the cities by means such as the mass-media, which are usually centred upon cities. Urbanism, then, is a process by which cities come to influence society in their decreasingly dominant non-urban hinterlands.<sup>19</sup>

The vitality associated with influence and cultural creativity is one obvious factor of urban reality. Indeed, creative vitality is often an intrinsic element in the definitions of cities. Twentieth century understandings of cities have characteristically stressed the proximity of intense, diverse cultures, enabling personal and social transformation. Yet because lively cultures can tend in urban environments to be the principal reference points for personal identity, the possibility of personal disassociation and social disintegration also emerges, as those in close physical proximity may live very different lives, with little sense

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<sup>19</sup> These themes have only very recently been incorporated into urban theologies: see, for example, Andrew Davey, Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future (London: SPCK, 2001), Part I, 'Understanding the Urban'.

of shared 'community'.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this, 'worlds within cities' emerge,<sup>21</sup> geographically juxtaposed, but intensely different in terms of their particular cultures, and their prospects. The possibility of creative enclaves generates staid enclaves, and those whose populations cope with – and benefit from – the opportunities of new cultural interaction become separate from those which do not, and the urban environment becomes spatially segmented. The spatial boundaries between these different environments often become especially 'charged environments' as those places in which the relative poverty of the inhabitants of the poorer 'world' may be seen most starkly.

The designation 'urban priorities area', used by both Faith in the City and Patterns for Worship, identifies spatial casualties of urbanisation: those parts of cities and urban environments in which social disintegration has been most acute. The designation does not refer to those areas which have flourished as diverse cultures have mixed and enriched one another, so providing new opportunities for their inhabitants, but rather to their spatially and culturally distinct neighbours. The subtitle of Michael Pacione's study, Britain's Cities - 'Geographies of Division in Urban Britain' – is powerfully descriptive, and Pacione's work itself is one of the most salient recent examples of concern that outlines and expands upon an 'anatomy of multiple deprivation' in such areas: it refers to a circle of low pay, dereliction, delinquency, segregation, unemployment, poor services, one-parent families, poor housing, ill-health, powerlessness, stigmatisation, vandalism, poor schooling and homeless, all of which are held together by the central problems of poverty and crime.<sup>22</sup> John Vincent, of the

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<sup>20</sup> Steve Pile, 'What is a City?', Doreen Massey, John Allen and Steve Pile, eds., City Worlds (London: Routledge, 1999), 3-19.

<sup>21</sup> John Allen, 'Worlds within Cities', Doreen Massey, John Allen and Steve Pile, eds., City Worlds (London: Routledge, 1999), 53-95.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Pacione, 'Urban Restructuring and the Reproduction of Inequality in Britain's Cities: An Overview', Michael Pacione, ed., Britain's Cities:

Urban Theology Unit, one of the most longstanding theological engagements with urban life in Britain, in his book Hope From the City helpfully puts 'faces' onto this 'anatomy', insisting from a Christian perspective that the issues are discussed and addressed with a focus on: low-paid people, derelict human environment, delinquent children, segregated people, and so on.<sup>23</sup> Such a humanizing perspective may be a distinctively religious or theological approach to the issues involved, and it is very much a feature of a wealth of theological literature associated with and emanating from Faith in the City.

This recognition brings us forcibly to one point that may characterise urban theologies: that, like liberation or feminist theologies, theology aware of its urban context is likely to involve recognition of an intolerable state of affairs. For example, Faith in the City underlines the plight of inner-city Britain as a 'grave and fundamental injustice'.<sup>24</sup> Conscious of an immediate environment marked by such injustice, Anthony Harvey suggests in his 'theological response' to Faith in the City that a contextual theology in an urban setting might then

begin with genuinely urban and working class perceptions and build up a repertory of resources from all parts of the Christian tradition which would become the theological equipment of these local "theologians" in the same way . . . as traditionally trained ministers are equipped with a smattering of Bible, doctrine, history, ethics, and liturgy.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the most contextually sensitive 'urban theology' has in fact arisen in the light of the Church of England report Faith in the City, which was pivotal in provision of guidelines, adopted from those used

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Geographies of Division in Urban Britain (London: Routledge, 1997), esp. p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> John Vincent, Hope From the City (Peterborough: Epworth, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Faith in the City, p. xv.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Harvey, 'Introduction', Anthony Harvey, ed., Theology in the City (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 12-13.

by the Evangelical Urban Training Project, for parish audits as a basis for understanding the distinctive characteristics of local areas. In very recent years, however, rapidly evolving new dynamics in urban scenes have loosened the descriptive and analytical relevance of Faith in the City, at least in part measure. This has in turn led to fresh forms and foci of urban theology, although the challenge to remain focused on particularity, especially the particularity of the circumstances of the poor, has remained vibrant within evolving modes of urban theology, as we shall see below. It is attention to this kind of particularity that we wish to insist upon in this work, with special reference to the liturgical resources and liturgical understandings engaged by urban congregations. First, though, we may consider ways in which urban theology has been refined since Faith in the City and the Church of England documents which formed its direct legacy.

### **Refining urban theology**

At least until recently, almost all urban theology in the British situation has taken its point of reference from Faith in the City. Yet that document itself represented a development in the discipline of urban theology as it was being appropriated and developed in the UK, for the Anglican reports and their Methodist counterpart, The Cities: A Methodist Report developed a perspective on cities that was distinct from what in hindsight was recognised as the naivety of previous forms of theological reflection on urban life, particularly those versions of 1960s urban theology, among which Harvey Cox's The Secular City is most notable. Cox's text adopted a basically optimistic slant on urban forms of life, so that, for example, he found himself able to interpret 'urban anonymity' as a form of 'deliverance from the Law' in the spirit of Paul. So, for instance,

Urbanization can be seen as a liberation from some of the cloying bondages of pre-urban society. It is the chance to be free. Urban man's [sic] deliverance from enforced conventions makes it necessary for him to choose for himself. His being anonymous to most people permits him to have a face and a name for others.<sup>26</sup>

Admittedly, Cox is concerned to establish 'responsible living' amidst anonymity,<sup>27</sup> yet his stress fell on the 'glorious liberation' that a metropolis may permit, freeing inhabitants from the 'saddling traditions and burdensome expectations of town life'.<sup>28</sup>

In sharp contrast to Cox's early optimistic excitement about the hopeful possibilities of city living, the later form of urban theology of which the Anglican and Methodist reports are indicative interpreted cities as scenes of various kinds of crisis. They took as their focus particular dynamics concentrated in spatial areas designated as 'urban priority areas', and in ways very much unlike the bourgeois tones of Cox's early seminal text, the church reports lamented a range of forms of deprivation afflicting UPAs. So Faith in the City called both 'church and nation' to attend to 'a vicious circle of causes and effects' that sustain 'the decline of the quality of life' in UPAs.

Part of the legacy of Faith in the City was two publications by a group convened by Peter Sedgwick, which became known as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group. (One of these publications, God in the City, was mentioned in Chapter Two, above). The work of the group

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<sup>26</sup> Harvey Cox, The Secular City (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> Cox, Secular City, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> Cox, Secular City, p. 49. It should, however, be noted that Cox's own later writings recognise that 'instead of contributing to the liberative process, many cities have become sprawling concentrations of human misery, wracked with racial, religious, and class animosity', among many other comments and that latterly he makes special references to the liberative contributions of new theologies emerging since the 1970s, especially liberation, feminist and black. Cf. 'The Secular City 25 Years Later', The Christian Century 1990 [November 7].



arose out of the critique of one of their members, David Ford, who in various papers examining Faith in the City had pointed out a lack of theological vigour in the report itself whilst he at the same time suggested some relevant theological themes to animate and enrich the report's key convictions.<sup>29</sup> The group's two books were published in 1995 and 1998 respectively, the second being a 'reader' in urban theology. This reader may be regarded as marking an end of the line of at least semi-official Anglican studies consciously referring back to Faith in the City (and the Urban Theology Group disbanded on the book's publication). In the themes explored by the reader, it is obvious that it clearly relates to the era of the initial report itself, the 1980s, without great – if any – conscious awareness of the changes overtaking cities at the time of publication in the late 1990s. Perhaps the most notable omission is any serious reference to the rapidly advancing trend towards globalisation. The reader's overlooking of vast contemporary trends perhaps indicates a certain decline in attention to urban issues in theological circles in the 1990s, and it also suggests perhaps the enormously powerful influence of Faith in the City in its day, so much so that its agenda was so dominating – for good reasons, because of the agenda's own seriousness and importance – that it nevertheless overwhelmed other questions and perceptions to a very large extent.

However, change in British government in the late 1990s reinvigorated more general attention to life in cities and brought British cities to a point of renewed focus in politics. For instance, two areas of work, that of the Social Exclusion Unit and that of the Urban Task Force, have each received a high national profile in their consideration of the problems and possibilities of cities, and each have had considerable influence on government practice. In addition to this, a series of white papers have highlighted an effort to shift political weight away from centralization

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<sup>29</sup> Notably, David Ford, 'Faith in the Cities: Corinth and the Modern City' in Colin Gunton and Daniel Hardy, eds., On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 225-256.

towards more local governance. In this new political climate, the inadequacy of Faith in the City has slowly begun to become apparent to a number of theologians alerted to the growing range of issues unimagined in the era of Faith in the City's ascendancy. For example, Andrew Davey suggested some first hints of dissent from Faith in the City in a review for the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility's journal Crucible when he proposed that the Open University series of course-books Understanding Cities presented an approach to urban life appropriate to the contemporary situation with which successors of Faith in the City in the theological field would need to engage. He began to publish his own such engagement in his Urban Christianity and Global Order of 2001. Unlike the urban theology reader published by the group of Anglican theologians, trends such as globalisation shape the whole perspective of the Understanding Cities series, and in turn the others that have learned from it. The three volumes of the series, City Worlds, Unruly Cities and Unsettling Cities, and their related video material, are also closely related to another publication co-written by some of the same authors who were also largely responsible for the Open University texts. The related document, Cities for the Many Not for the Few, arose out of conferences sponsored by the Open University and the Universities of Bristol, Durham and Newcastle, and engaged directly with UK government policy under New Labour, especially the work of the Urban Task Force. In particular, it critiqued the keynote report of the Urban Task Force, Towards an Urban Renaissance, also commonly known as the 'Rogers Report' as it was chaired by Lord Richard Rogers of Riverside. And although not engaging in any formal theological reflection, nor involving any professional theologians, these publications have provided a basis for a third wave of urban theology – following Cox et al in the 1960s, and then Faith in the City and its trail of spin-offs from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. And so the OU and related texts are just now beginning to be appropriated by professional theologians in their reflection. Philip Sheldrake, for instance, in his Spaces for the Sacred of 2001, suggests

that the Rogers Report in itself may be marked by a scriptural vision, whether or not its author was conscious of this possibility. And so he writes that, 'In his definition of a sustainable city of the future, it is interesting that Richard Rogers adopts seven principles that are scriptural as much as or more than purely functional'.<sup>30</sup> Sheldrake succinctly summarises these apparently biblical principles as follows:

A city will need to be just (fundamentally accessible to all and participative), beautiful (with an aesthetic that uplifts the spirit), creative (able to stimulate the full potential of all its citizens and able to respond easily to change), ecological (where landscape and human action are integrated rather than in competition), 'of easy contact' (where communication in all senses is facilitated and where public spaces are communitarian), polycentric (integrating neighbourhoods and maximising proximity), and finally diverse.<sup>31</sup>

The recent work of Laurie Green is also representative of this most contemporary wave of urban theology. Formerly a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group, he has since the folding of the group gone on to consider factors not conceived by the group in its time, particularly the impact of globalisation. His publications in this area, notably The Impact of the Global – An Urban Theology of 2000, have provided a focus for a new initiative, the Urban Bishops' Panel, an inter-continental concern that stretches across the Anglican Communion, established at the Lambeth Conference of 1998.

A very significant commonality between these representative texts of what we have labelled the third wave of urban theology and the perspectives of those in the OU team and its related manifestations is that they are forcefully asking questions about *vision* for cities – about 'what and who cities are for, and what kinds of societies they might

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<sup>30</sup> Philip Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 166.

<sup>31</sup> Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred, pp. 166-167; cf. Richard Rogers, Cities for a Small Planet, pp. 167-168, where these qualities are summarised; also, Massey et al, Unruly Cities, p. 367.

most democratically embody<sup>32</sup> and 'why cities – what are cities for?'<sup>33</sup> Sheldrake insists that such questions are both theological and spiritual,<sup>34</sup> and notes their omission from many influential texts in urban studies. For instance, he cites, rightly, the obvious interdisciplinary textbook co-edited by Richard T LeGates and Frederic Stout, The City Reader, in which this weakness is not made good in the second edition of 2000. Likewise, Doreen Massey and other co-writers for both the OU series and Cities for the Many... point out the lack of framing vision in current government related documents. The third wave of urban theology can be seen, therefore, to have a potentially major contribution make to wider public discussion at the present time.

Meanwhile, it is important to note the shift in terminology employed in the UK by New Labour, which has also contributed to the awareness of outmoded aspects of Faith in the City and earlier forms of urban theology. For the language that Faith in the City identified as central to the 'grave and fundamental injustice' attending Britain's urban priority areas - namely 'poverty' - was sidelined by New Labour in favour of the notion of 'social exclusion'.<sup>35</sup> A mark of the powerful analysis of Faith in the City might be that it did in fact link poverty to dynamics of exclusion, although it fervently held economic poverty at the centre of its analysis of the grave situation it identifies. It acknowledged that:

Poverty is not only about shortage of money. It is about rights and relationships, about how people are treated and how they regard themselves; about powerlessness, exclusion and lack of dignity. Yet the lack of an adequate income is at its heart.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ash Amin, Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, Cities for the Many Not for the Few (Bristol: Policy Press, 2000), p. v.

<sup>33</sup> Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred, p. 163.

<sup>34</sup> Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred, p. 148.

<sup>35</sup> See David Byrne, Social Exclusion (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Faith in the City, 9.4.

If a downside of the newer terminology of exclusion is that it detracts from the poverty that remains at the core of the urban crisis, a positive counterpoint of this is that notions of exclusion are *dynamic* - involving active and passive agents - and so with appropriate thought, questions of power can perhaps be more openly brought to the surface of discussion by use of the newer terms. Nevertheless, the shift in language has exposed some of the key weaknesses of theological and churchly understandings of cities, still employing more generally superseded terms. As a third wave of urban theology develops, a fundamental task for it will be to appropriate the renewed possibilities of the political climate whilst being alert to suspicions that globalisation threatens various forms of damage to human flourishing. Fundamental also, however, will be that this third wave of urban theology can at the same time remain continually aware of abiding realities - like poverty - which might otherwise be disguised by shifting rhetoric.

**Mapping urban theology onto other urban studies:  
the shape of the city**

A sense of the spatial concentration of diversity in cities can be quickly discerned in the most basic identification of ethnic, cultural, and 'lifestyle choice' ghettos, as indicated by the popular designation of areas as 'the Chinese quarter', 'the theatre district', 'the gay village', and so on. With these very different areas in mind, Steve Pile writes in City Worlds from the Understanding Cities series, that

living in cities has consequences for people's way of life. They are brought into close proximity with people who might be very much richer or poorer than they; or from an entirely different country; or

have completely opposite views of lifestyle, politics, religion and so on.<sup>37</sup>

Cities are often celebrated for their capacity to accommodate diverse cultures in geographical proximity, enabling great vitality and creativity in the resulting mix of social juxtapositions. This potential for the blossoming of diverse but proximate communities is a feature often marked out by urban commentators as the central achievement of urban life, and in turn it is seen as allowing persons and communities to be transformed by encounter with the strange, or difference, made accessible by geographical nearness. So it is said that the fact of the heterogeneity of urban life 'tends to break down stable identities because there are great opportunities for people to form relationships with others: to meet, to mix – and to change'.<sup>38</sup> One important social consequence of this is that by allowing for participation in these various communities without participants needing to reside in them, cities permit wider possibilities to attach to the notion of 'community' than is customary in more rural circumstances in towns and more so villages. And, importantly, this at least partially redefines 'community' in terms of *interest*, rather than geography.

Pile continues the quotation cited above with awareness that urban heterogeneity may itself be experienced as much as being threatening as well as exciting and hopeful, for

the consequences of this [heterogeneity] are uncertain – it is impossible to say how an individual will react to all this diversity. But it does suggest that the city exaggerates and contrasts, disorganizes and reorganizes, and changes speed (faster and slower), manifesting itself as an intensity that cannot be found elsewhere.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pile, 'What is a City?', p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> Pile, 'What is a City?', p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> Pile, 'What is a City?', p. 49.

In refraining from wholesale commendation of urban life, Pile's reserve strikes a note that is not always sounded by other urban commentators and the uncertainty of which he speaks is absent from some positive assessments of the intensity of urban life. His tone stands in obvious contrast, for instance, to the positivity inherent in the key-word of the architect and urban planner Le Corbusier's vision, the 'radiant' city. Those less cautious than Pile may not be so ready to acknowledge that urban geography is also marked by spatial arrangements that are shaped primarily not by interest and choice, and that ghettos of a different kind - less glamorous than the 'theatre district', for instance - are created by high concentrations of the economically poor. In Michael Pacione's incisive phrase, already noted and particularly apposite at this point, is that cities are marked by 'geographies of division'. It helps to magnify the point that although the language of poverty is not central in government-led discussion at the present time, vogue references to the 'socially excluded' catch something of the dynamic of geographically poor areas being actively contained by more powerful 'communities' which may converge on a variety of shared interests. The dynamics of exclusion can be pernicious, if more subtle than the physically (sometimes electrically) 'fenced communities' that are increasingly being created in many world cities by the middle classes in order to preserve residential enclaves of their own.

One of the OU team's complaints about the Urban Task Force's Towards an Urban Renaissance was the absence from its vision of the sustainable city of what they called 'a whole side' of contemporary cities. They refer to that 'side', which although not named as such, is what were previously referred to 'urban priority areas', those poor geographical areas that were the concern of the churches' reports. The dependence of Lord Rogers' proposals on the flourishing of forms of the New Economy, as opposed to majority 'elementary occupations', may be one aspect of this absence or oversight. But what is missing from so many upbeat assessments may take many forms, affecting the lives of many people

who may themselves miss out on much of cities' creative potential. As the OU team suggest,

the vibrancy of urban life, bringing as it does diversity in close proximity, is certainly about creative intermingling, cultural mixture, and exploratory potential. But for many it is also about the desperate search for privacy, sanctuary, and anonymity, about coping with loneliness, fear and anxiety, about being seen, heard and recognised, about jostling for space, work and welfare, about resentment, anger and intolerance.

The absence of these latter aspects from the Rogers Report is exposed directly as they continue with further echoes of Pile's conclusions about the heterogeneity of cities, cited above:

In part there is an absence in this Report of ethnicity, and of the general mixity of cities. And in part there is an absence of what we might call the underground of the unseen city: not just the illegality but the car-boot sale, the huge networks of hobby groups, the myriad of everyday concerns. . .<sup>40</sup>

Because the churches have moved well beyond the naivety of what was labelled above as the first wave of urban theology, they too may have a very strong and important contribution to make helping others, even governments, avoid falling for notions of utopian harmony or visions of cities which effectively marginalize the perspectives of the socially excluded. Duncan Forrester's recent theological explorations in On Human Worth of the dangers, even in sophisticated ways, of 'talking behind people's backs'<sup>41</sup> - by which he means excluding some from discussion, or assuming others' experience to be the same as one's own - is just one of many lively and forceful theological arguments that open a space for critique of any kind of 'centralised' or imposed 'solutions' to other people's perceived problems. Such a critique might well be allied to the conviction that notions of centralisation is a core flaw of current

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<sup>40</sup> Amin et al, Cities for the Many, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Forrester, On Human Worth, p. 14.



urban policy, so that despite its own appeals for more local governance, the monies of the major current funding pool, the Single Regeneration Budget, are released through a process that involves local bodies bidding – and bidding against one another – to a central board administering the budget. Not the least of the problems with this is that for each of the last several years over two thirds of such bids have been unsuccessful, leaving many places bereft of obvious means of progress. In turn, this invites suspicion that, in the process, some of the founding principles of the welfare state may be at stake in the continuation of such an arrangement over time.

Notwithstanding such criticisms, the OU team note that there is ‘much to be welcomed’ in the Rogers Report at a time when ‘after years of Conservative neglect’ ‘the positive tone on urban possibility is overdue’.<sup>42</sup> Pacione’s book Britain’s Cities, published in 1997, the year in which New Labour came to government, can be seen to chart a range of aspects of the neglect that the Rogers Report seeks to remedy, and which were also the focus of the church reports. Pacione’s articulation of aspects of life in certain geographical areas includes this concentrated summary of the realities of the side of cities that the OU related authors suggest are out of focus in the Urban Task Force’s work:

The spatial concentration of poverty-related problems, such as crime, delinquency, poor housing, unemployment and increased mortality and morbidity, serves to accentuate the effects of poverty and deprivation for particular localities. Neighbourhood unemployment levels of three times the national average are common in economically deprived communities, with male unemployment rates frequently in excess of 40 per cent. Lack of job opportunities leads to a dependence on public support systems. The shift from heavy industrial employment to service-orientated activities in major urban regions, and the consequent demand for a different kind of labour force, has also served to undermine long-standing social structures built around full-time male employment and has contributed to social stress within families. Dependence upon social welfare and lack of disposable income lowers self-esteem and can lead to clinical

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<sup>42</sup> Amin et al, Cities for the Many, pp. 1-2.

depression. Poverty also restricts diet and accentuates poor health. Infant mortality rates are often higher in deprived areas and children brought up in such environments are more likely to be exposed to criminal sub-cultures and to suffer educational disadvantage. The physical environment in deprived areas is typically bleak, with extensive areas of dereliction, and shopping and leisure facilities that reflect the poverty of the area. Residents are often the victims of stigmatization which operates as an additional obstacle to obtaining employment or credit facilities. Many deprived areas are also socially and physically isolated and those who are able to move away do so, leaving behind a residual population with limited control over their quality of life. Although support groups, community organizations and pressure groups can engender social cohesion and make tangible gains, the scale and structural underpinnings of the problem of multiple deprivation generally precludes a community-based resolution of the difficulties facing such localities.<sup>43</sup>

This kind of analysis is continuous with the claims of Faith in the City itself, and can be regarded as updating the state of the difficulties exposed so readily by the churches in 1985. Through the climate of 'neglect' the churches also provided a vital ministry, as noted above, that nuanced the sharp focus on the issues identified so forcefully by Pacione and others. Invariably, representatives of the churches, perhaps more than others concerned with the issues, typically encouraged a 'humanizing' perspective on urban priority areas, so that as awareness grew of an 'anatomy' of multiple deprivation in UPAs, the focus fell on the people afflicted by it. So this 'anatomy' was consistently given a striking 'face', as it were. And although the issue has received less attention from theologians in the UK, in the US, Pamela Couture in the same period drew particular attention to the fact that this 'face' is likely to be female, and/or young, addressing the trend towards the 'feminization of poverty' and the effects of poverty upon children's lives.<sup>44</sup> For example, alongside the very real disadvantages of economic

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<sup>43</sup> Pacione, 'Urban Restructuring in Britain's Cities', p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> Pamela Couture, Blessed are the Poor and Seeing Children, Seeing God; cf, also from the US, Dennis Hollinger and Joseph Modica, 'The Feminization of Poverty: Challenge for the Church', Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., Envisioning the New City: A Reader in Urban Ministry. Ann Loades' paper for the Centre for

poverty, Couture identifies some contours of a poverty of 'tenuous connections' that afflicts the lives of children, often in addition to socio-economic deprivation, and found within its matrix. This very personal aspect of impoverishment - tenuous connection- is by her account especially concentrated in cities, in which children may be more likely to be separated from their extended families, a factor which, she asserts, may well destabilise a crucial element in children's social ecology, particularly in an environment in which relations with other adults in social institutions in the neighbourhood are vulnerable, and this apart from the children's families' socio-economic security. The economic forces that prevail in a neighbourhood, alongside other influences upon its milieu - government programmes and social services, and - not least - belief systems used by family or neighbours to make meaning to life, are other factors which may feed into each other and foster tenuous connections in children's lives, so that this exacerbates experience of poverty.<sup>45</sup>

In response, Couture develops an argument for the church's role in such circumstances as an agent seeking to influence all of the systems of which children are part, and with responsibility for the 'promoting the resilience' of children and children's caretakers as they seek children's flourishing. Certainly, where such children and the other people in their lives remain in danger of still being overlooked in current government policy, despite white papers that apparently promote their inclusion,

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Theology and Public Issues, 'Feminist Reflections on the Morality of the New Right', is an exception to the British dearth: found in Michael Northcott, ed., Vision and Prophecy: The Tasks of Social Theology Today (Edinburgh: CTPI, 1991), 49-61.

<sup>45</sup> Couture, Seeing Children, Seeing God, p. 24. Interestingly, she draws attention to the remarkable, multi-national consensus over the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'the treaty that has created more international consensus than any treaty in history', as a means for assessing children's poverties. For consideration of some of the same issues from a British setting, see Michael Northcott, 'Children', Peter Sedgwick, ed., God in the City: Essays and Reflections from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group (London: Mowbray, 1995), 139-152.

there is a special urgency that their experience of urban priority areas is noted. And while the rhetoric of regeneration is more and more current, the constant influx of asylum seekers to many deprived urban communities means that this group of persons, in all their diversity, by their presence and sometimes very visible 'difference', demand recognition that places remain foci of acute social need. Asylum seekers bring their own particular configuration of problems that very easily become knotted in to the already debilitating arrangement of social problems, as well, of course, in many places bringing a black or brown 'face' to the anatomy of urban deprivation. Among the particular challenges faced by asylum seekers, very considerable language difficulties, adjustment to unfamiliar climactic conditions, widespread resistance to the recognition or revalidation of professional skills, racism, inadequate and disorganised provision and social isolation, often magnified by emotional instability associated with post-traumatic stress, apart from the need for physical healing.<sup>46</sup>

An interlude to focus on some testimony by some refugee children hints at the kind of experience such children may have endured and may crave. Inger Hermann relates her experience of working in a Hamburg school as religious educator:

[One child asks:] 'Is praying and that any use?'

We reflect. Can people influence God? Doesn't God do what he wants anyway?

'I believe that the devil does what he wants and God can't do anything anyway. You see that on the TV,' says Dragomir, a passionate Croat.

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<sup>46</sup> The plight of asylum seekers is a topic that has as yet received almost no attention from theologians in the UK. The very sparse resources include: Helen Kimble, Desperately Seeking Asylum (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1998) and Patrick Logan, 'Open and Shut Case: The Asylum Crisis', Michael Simmons, ed., Street Credo: Churches in the Community (London: Lemos and Crane, 2000). An important contribution from another perspective is Michael Dummett, On Immigration and Asylum (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

'And if people do such devilish stuff, kill others and that – I mean criminals and such people – does God still love the criminals? Mario wants to know.

Otto, 'Of course, they're God's children'.

Mario, 'Even when they do shit?'

Otto, chewing, 'My mother loves me even when I do shit'.

Mario, 'Idiot, God isn't your mother'.

Dragomir, 'Then my father. My father hits me sometimes, but he still loves me. He said he would visit me even in prison'.

. . . Otto, 'Wait a minute, I think that God loves me, whether or not I do shit,

because God can't do anything but love. Isn't that right? Only we humans can do lots of other things, kill and so on'. Otto breaks off and sinks into philosophical reflection.

Dragomir (top of the class – why is he in this school?) sums up: 'The devil can do shit, God can only love, and only humans can do everything: shit and love'.<sup>47</sup>

We may note that persons such as Dragomir, Mario and Otto are not always central to some of the new modes of urban theology, however much their plight is itself an aspect of globalisation. One danger of some newer urban theology is that in its concern to harness fresh interest in the potential of cities, it may become 'gentrified' – like cities themselves – and so 'overlook' or even 'hide' some people and their experience.

The danger to be avoided, if at all possible, is expressed by the OU team in relation to both UPAs and to the newer phenomenon of middle-class fenced communities that mark an extreme of the tactics of exclusion that operate so pervasively in contemporary cities. They lament the trends making possible cities constituted as 'mosaics of geographically inward-looking communities',<sup>48</sup> spatially proximate but disengaged from any attempt to facilitate the 'creative intermingling, cultural mixture, and exploratory potential' which are cited above as being within the capabilities of cities at their best. And, beyond the polarities of utopia and UPAs, Philip Sheldrake's modelling of a new phase of

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<sup>47</sup> Inger Hermann, *Born into Violence: Children in the Shadows* (London: SCM, 2001), pp. 11-12.

<sup>48</sup> Amin et al, *Cities for the Many*, p. 41.

urban theology makes a crucial point related to the hope to avoid this danger:

Theological reflection on cities in recent years has tended in England to focus largely on what have been called, especially in Anglican terms, 'urban priority areas'. This may actually produce an unbalanced result. If there are sinful structures of exclusion and social deprivation these are not limited to particular districts within cities but effect, or perhaps I should say 'infect' the city as whole, both as built space and human community. If there is a message of liberation and transformation that the Christian gospel proclaims, it must be an integral one for the concept of the city as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

In this regard, perhaps one of the strongest challenges to the 'whole' city inclusive of those who may most vigorously resist the 'infection' of their own enclaves by the excluded - comes from Robert Furbey in his critique of New Labour rhetoric of urban 'regeneration':

Recent British urban policy, for all its seeming 'inclusiveness', utilises the idea of 'regeneration' within a restricted discourse. It rests on an apparently expansive and diverse, if not contradictory, amalgam of spiritualities, psychologies and social organicisms. However, its blend of individualism, conservatism, liberalism and statism invites compliance with a policy agenda that excludes perspectives and questions that imply change for the whole 'body' in favour of an emphasis on its most obviously dysfunctional extremities. It is the excluded poor, the alarming 'underclass' who are assigned the fullest responsibility to be 'born again'.<sup>50</sup>

### **Gateshead as illustrative of these phenomena**

The Urban Mission Centre is a project based in Gatehead to which ordinands and others from Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham, come as part of their training in Christian ministry. The Centre was

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<sup>49</sup> Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, p. 166.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Furbey, 'Faith in Urban "Regeneration"?', *Modern Believing* 42.4 (2001), 5-15, p13; and see also Robert Furbey, 'Urban "Regeneration": Reflections on a Metaphor', *Critical Social Policy* 19 (1999), 419-445.

established at least in part in response to the demands of Faith in the City for more appropriate theological training in urban contexts, and it provides different kinds of opportunities for students to engage with aspects of life in the town. Placements at the UMC are intended especially to explore two areas: the nature of 'urban life in Britain' and the influence of context on theology.

Students may encounter considerable dissonance as they shift from the privileged, academic environment of Durham to the less salubrious context of Gateshead. Something of this is indicated in Catherine Fox's novel, The Benefits of Passion, in which Annie, an Anglican ordinand at Cranmer Hall ('Coverdale') has a discussion with her principal about coming to Gateshead ('Bishopside') on placement:

. . . 'Have you done your Bishopside placement yet?' *Oof! Mouldy old swizz, you rotter!* Annie shook her head. 'That might contextualise your sense of calling and ministry a bit. We can all get so frightfully ivory-towerish in Coverdale, you know. How does the idea strike you?'

Like a stake through the heart. Annie knew it was cowardly, but she dreaded the idea of Urban Experience. Bishopside, in her imagination, was a place where ten-year-olds stole cars and malevolent green-eyed GPs told you to fuck off. Suddenly Coverdale seemed infinitely rewarding and fulfilling.

'I'm due to go on the three-week placement.'

'In July. Hmm.' He was massaging the bridge of his nose again. 'Have you ruled out the possibility of spending a term in one of the college flats in Bishopside?'

YES.

'Um. . .' She began to fear that a show of reluctance would make him send her there.

'Just a thought.' Annie crossed her legs and took another gulp of coffee. 'It just strikes me that there may be a lack of *edge* here for you. This place, somehow. . .' His gesture seemed to indicate the kitchen. Annie stared around. The encroaching boxes and bags bulged with metaphor. Wasn't her life full of the moral equivalent of empty yoghurt pots and old pairs of tights? She was helpless in the face of things she didn't want or need, but knew she oughtn't to throw out.

'Um. . .'

'Look. I'll tell you what. Why don't you take a morning to pray and wander around Bishopside and see what you think?'

'OK.' She wondered meanly whether someone was leaning on him to send more students on Urban Experience.

[Then she arrives in Gateshead itself, to spend her morning in prayer.  
..]

. . . Her heart sank again as the metro train crossed back into Bishopside. She came up from the underground station and stood looking around. She felt lonely and bewildered. Buses roared past. What am I supposed to do? She was reluctant to get out Tubby's A-Z in case someone asked her where she was trying to go and she couldn't answer. Children with brutal haircuts were playing in the undergrowth on a steep bank above the bus station. Why weren't they in school? Their shouts floated down at her. A large Victorian church stood on one street corner, the Co-op on another. She guessed it had been built in the sixties. What had been pulled down to make way for it? An ugly grey concrete multi-storey car-park loomed behind other buildings.

Annie began walking towards some shops and this led her on to what she supposed must be the high street. Dirty Victorian buildings, tatty modern shop fronts. Everywhere was selling things at bargain prices. It felt like a foreign country. The people looked different. Their accent was impenetrable. She felt raw, as though every tiny brush against someone scraped an exposed nerve. More shouting. She flinched, but it was only a bantering exchange. I can't distinguish between joking and aggression. Her heart pattered fearfully as she skirted round some old filing cabinets standing on the pavement. Someone in the doorway called a friendly greeting, but she wasn't sure if it was meant for her. She smiled nervously and hurried on. How has this happened? How have I become so scared of my fellow creatures? She reminded herself that this was the North, the home of legendary friendliness.<sup>51</sup>

Whatever particular shape placements take, students are likely to spend time in churches or in agencies within the voluntary sector; to encounter those living in situations of deprivation, minority communities, and the 'socially excluded'; and to meet religious and other professionals within Christian and other faith traditions, as well as from a range of agencies, who may not live but work in the town. Alongside these people, councillors and policy makers may also be met in order to gain a wider range of perspectives on the place, its inhabitants and their various environments.

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<sup>51</sup> Catherine Fox, The Benefits of Passion (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1997), pp. 82-83, 88.



After years of focusing on Gateshead's deprivation and the possible responses of the church to it and to other places at least in some ways like it, new factors are emerging for the first time in the Urban Mission Centre's lifetime and are making their mark on the kinds of placement in which students engage. Recently placements have begun to attend to local signs of regeneration, as much of Gateshead is presently undergoing large-scale and high profile development. The 'Gateshead Millennium Bridge' was opened in September 2001 and is one focus of change that has attracted both massive publicity and high praise. The opening in March 2002 of the BALTIC, a national centre for contemporary art, is the next in a line of major projects that promise the potential of transformation for at least part of the town. At the same time, other areas of Gateshead *remain* marked by many of the aspects of deprivation that are well-rehearsed in Faith in the City and other tomes of 'urban theology'. Some pockets of the town are left untouched by the monies that are being poured into the new and developing 'zones' against which they verge. Nor is there as yet a clear confidence that such pockets of severe deprivation can be secured, ordered and changed for the better in the precarious 'renaissance'. Whatever change is beginning to happen, it remains that in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Indices of Deprivation of December 2000, Bede Ward in Gateshead - in which the Urban Mission Centre and its related churches are based - was ranked 117th most deprived of the 8414 political wards across the nation. Alongside statistics, anecdote can play a significant role in describing the place, and the Tyneside author Beatrix Campbell hints at some of the town's characteristics:

Gateshead. . . is an iconic industrial landscape, worn and wasted, built and rebuilt, majestic and modest. The landscape of Tyneside belongs to labour, to the conflicts and solidarities of communities that homesteaded along the banks of the Tyne for 400 years, where people have dug coal, wrought iron, baked bread, blown glass,

brewed beer, built ships, fed children, served dinners and kicked footballs and each other. . .<sup>52</sup>

Gateshead, then, is both a setting for life lived in certain deprived environments and also increasingly provides ever more harsh contrasts between new wealth and more familiar poverty, between the benefits of regeneration and the legacy of deprivation. It is in this respect a crucible which grinds together some of the familiar foci of urban theology – such as the aspects of deprivation brought to attention above all by Faith in the City - and the kinds of realities that are now beginning to change the focus of urban theology by stretching it into newer concerns: the dynamics of globalisation and the impact of the New Economy and cyber technologies, for instance.

In the midst of these changing circumstances, Gateshead focuses important questions facing many urban environments at the present time, about what can and cannot be said about the potential of attempts to regenerate the town, and about how are those already entrenched in dynamics of exclusion are to be heard, honoured or helped as their relative poverty is magnified by local 'gentrification'.

### **Approaches to the urban church**

In the light of this discussion it is important to consider some voices that resist the bleak picture of the urban situation as represented in the tradition flowing from Faith in the City and which may also contest the need for resources such as Patterns. For example, Rod Garner asserts that 'there are unacknowledged "mission gains" in the inner city that elude the predictable parameters of success, yet nevertheless make a

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<sup>52</sup> Beatrix Campbell, 'Gateshead and the Angel', Anthony Gormley and Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Making an Angel: The Angel of the North (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1998), 52-55, p. 53.

qualitative difference to local communities and the wider Church alike'.<sup>53</sup> One of his key assertions is that 'the Church is capable of being perceived by outsiders as an inclusive institution of indeterminate membership that is still prepared to blur the distinction between the household of faith and the wider community'.<sup>54</sup> An interesting question to pose to these assertions relates to specifically liturgical concerns, for while churches in various ways at the service of local communities might through their social provision be regarded as porous, it does not seem to be commonly held that the church's liturgy as a form of 'public service' is so inclusive.<sup>55</sup> Particular perceptions of exclusivity may attach to the eucharist, perceived in the common memory as a rite of commitment and less readily identified as a celebration of hospitality.

The Methodist experience, upon which The Cities: A Methodist Report reflects, provides an instructive comparison to some of the Anglican approaches to questions of liturgy that have been considered in previous parts of this work. It made few references to worship, although at one point suggests:

City churches are providing Christians everywhere with opportunities or new forms of devotion and prayer, worship, hymnody and meditation. Churches should encourage, and provide support for, such expressions of indigenous and rooted spirituality from and for the city.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Rex Garner, 'Affirming the Urban Church', Theology 53 (2000): 266-272, p. 267.

<sup>54</sup> Garner, 'Affirming the Urban Church', p. 268.

<sup>55</sup> Odo Casel defines 'liturgy' as 'public service' in The Mystery of Christian Worship; see Odo Casel, 'Mystery and Liturgy', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000), 29-35, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> John Vincent and Helen Dent, eds., The Cities: A Methodist Report (London: NCH Action for Children, 1997), p. 125.

Experiments emanating from the Urban Theology Unit elaborate on the Methodist perspective. Yet, for a range of reasons, the influence of the Urban Theology Unit on liturgical matters is much less easy to trace than Faith in the City in the counterpart Anglican situation. It makes no claim to be systematic, but develops a style that collects and reflects on stories that allow inner-city dwellers to speak for themselves about experience of inner-city churches. Of course, some of this experience necessarily concerns worship, though the UTU books above all else provide examples of the kinds of struggles urban churches face as well as signs of what John Vincent calls 'manifestations of the kingdom', and they are perhaps best regarded as pen-portraits and illustrations, often vivid ones. So, as one example, Jane Grinonneau tells the story of a congregation battling with a group of older children who gather outside their chapel. Having decided to set up a club for them, the congregation encountered all kinds of difficulties, but found the will to persevere through encounters like that of one senior member of the congregation collecting from door to door in Christian Aid week: she was greeted on one doorstep by the shout of one of the children known to gather outside the chapel, who on this occasion called her mother to announce that 'her friend is at the door!'.<sup>57</sup> From this unexpected sense of amiable connection, the woman helped the church realise that the child had found an acceptance they had never appreciated, and so on. Here is an instance of porosity (in Rod Garner's phrase), as well as an illustration of a modest means of alleviating a vulnerable child's 'tenuous connections'. Similarly, Duncan Wilson writes of working with children who inflict damage in the church building and 'snatch handbags from unwary elders on their way to church' and who 'later in the same week in junior club [will be] apparently happy to accept the company, love and tolerance of the same people whose church they made their target. . .'. Yet the hope of the church is that, as he puts it, 'by some little miracle

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<sup>57</sup> Jane Grinonneau, 'City Kids as Signs of the Kingdom', John Vincent and Chris Rowland., eds., Gospel From the City (Sheffield: UTU, 1997), 12-29, p. 28.

they become puzzled by their acceptance among those they have already wronged'.<sup>58</sup> In ways such as these, UTU books allow writers to give specific, focused, lived examples of fragments of transformation.

Indeed, the publications by the Urban Theology Unit have sometimes provided the brightest assessments of the urban church, as for instance in Duncan Wilson's identification of 'twelve signs of life' which might in turn be related to Faith in the City's vision of 'local, outward looking and participating churches'. He sees signs of life in urban churches in what he calls indigenous individualism: 'the retention of distinctive characteristics of origin, memory and upbringing' in the life of any particular church; in smallness, so that churches operate at their best as 'extended families'; in the value placed on elders, whose example, wisdom and experience of 'remaining stable' through many changes is treasured; in non-planning, which 'trusts in the God-send': in the grasping of 'gospel opportunities', being open to receiving grace in situations of uncertainty and failure; in the recognition of failure as 'sacramental', re-emphasising the need for patience and love; in the witness of an open eucharistic table as mediating unconditional acceptance; in prophetic recognition of 'God's will' in circumstances to which others often refuse to attend; in 'imagining ourselves in the role of Christ for others', which leads to taking risks and sustaining losses; in emphasis on growth from within and the crucial role of 'talent spotters for God' in congregations who will encourage and promote the use of others' gifts; in the kind of creative accounting which lives from 'the memory of a man with five loaves and two fish'; and in generosity which can flourish in the midst of poverty. For Duncan Wilson, where these signs of life are found, 'the lame walk, the deaf hear and the dumb speak': by which he means that the elderly faithful still struggle to meet and serve despite increasing debilitation, that even those whose hearing is steadily impaired by age can become careful listeners to individuals

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<sup>58</sup> Duncan Wilson, 'Gospel Values in the Urban Church', Vincent and Rowland., eds., Gospel From the City (Sheffield: UTU, 1997), 86-104, p. 94.

and impulses within their local community, and that churches may be places where the weak and poor lose their shyness as they find dignity through the love of God. In Wilson's thinking, we see a worked example of a characteristic of much of the UTU material: the building up 'imaginative identifications' between contemporary situations and biblical texts which trusts a lot to Bible readers' sense of 'intuitive resonance' between readers' situations and those portrayed in scripture.<sup>59</sup> And, because Wilson has found that, in his experience, inner-city Christians' biblical knowledge is story based - focused on the gospels rather than more abstract didactic strands of the Bible - each of his points is illustrated with a story, as stories are seen as the most appropriate mode of this theology.<sup>60</sup>

Of particular relevance to the quest for an urban liturgical theology and practice is the recognition that the Methodist background of the UTU may have meant that many of those influenced by the unit have not been expected to minister within the same liturgical confines as Anglicans preoccupied with 'common prayer'. Where writings of the UTU discuss liturgical matters, most of the references suggest highly participative, informal gatherings, using little liturgical text, though the project has generated a series of hymns, Hymns of the City, the best of which - associated with the Iona Community - have since appeared in mainstream hymnbooks and have enjoyed very wide use. Examples include 'Will you come and follow me?', 'Jesus Christ is waiting', and 'Inspired by love and anger'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ian Duffield, 'Theology', Duffield, ed., Urban Christ, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, 'Gospel Values...', *passim*. Compare the echoes of emphasis on story in the urban church in Janet Walton and Eleanor Scott Meyers, 'Ritual Expression in the Urban Church', Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., Envisioning the New City (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 156-167, p. 157.

<sup>61</sup> Music books from the Iona Community include Love from Below (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1989), amongst many others. A number of hymns from the Iona Community have recently been incorporated into 'mainstream' hymnbooks.

Congregations associated with the UTU appear sometimes to meet in pubs or social clubs rather than traditional ecclesiastical buildings. The Furnival is one such example, a public house on the Manors estate in Sheffield, converted into a worship space which resembles other facilities used by local people, traditional churches and chapels being reckoned to be alien to their experience. Where traditional church buildings have been employed, they may have been quite radically altered, made to resemble for instance a café, with people gathering around tables and chairs and meeting perhaps over food, or arranged more like domestic living space, with arrangements of sofas and seats rather than pews or chairs. The spatial focus of worship in such settings is much more diffuse than various inherited ways of arranging worship space, arguably stripped of the transcendent dimensions sometimes suggested by traditional arrangement of liturgical areas and liturgical furniture, though it should be underlined that such assemblies often remain highly focused on the eucharist – indeed explicitly celebrating some facets of the eucharist muted in more traditional settings, such as its roots in the table-fellowship of Jesus. Yet in order to understand the importance of this theme, some consideration is necessary of the possibility of a distinct urban subjectivity, and its special needs.

### **Towards understanding of urban subjectivity**

Steve Pile's comment, cited above, that 'living in cities has consequences for peoples' way of life' suggests the possibility of the reality of distinct urban subjectivities; and that, as Philip Sheldrake suggests, 'cities reflect and affect the quality of human life'.<sup>62</sup> One aspect of the former dimension might be the ways in which, in UPAs, enmeshment in 'the cycle of deprivation' leads in turn to involvement in 'the benefits

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<sup>62</sup> Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, p. 153.

culture', itself a major product of the welfare state, but with a shadow side. One aspect of this shadow side to the benefits culture is that dependence upon public services arguably in many cases inhibits initiative on the part of participants within that culture. As a simple instance, the occupant of a council property may find part of the property broken and in need of repair but may deal with this structurally only by referring the 'problem' to the local authority rather than taking personal initiative to undertake the work. Although minor in itself, a lifetime's worth of such simple instances is not perhaps such a trivial matter, as material poverty may be seen as being compounded by a social system that permits referral of problems but discourages and may penalise personal agency. A recognition of the range of factors which foster passivity of the kind just mentioned need not entail the dangerous arrogance of 'blaming the poor'<sup>63</sup> as such passivity may instead be seen as itself a form of social exclusion. However, alongside examples of the inhibition of initiative, the theological claim might also be made that such lack of initiative diminishes human beings when measured against the Christian tradition's best notions of human capabilities, including self-governance,<sup>64</sup> which play their part in the possibility of fuller life.

One point that should be underscored with special reference to the central concerns of this thesis is that envisioning a church comprised by those living within the benefits culture as 'local, outward-looking and participative', as in the vision of Faith in the City - indeed envisioning such a church celebrating 'full, conscious and active participation' in the liturgy (as in Sacrosanctum concilium 14) - is likely to be a more demanding task than the application of the same principles in a liturgical church in circumstances outside that culture. At the same

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<sup>63</sup> See: David Byrne, Social Exclusion, chapter one.

<sup>64</sup> On 'self-governance', see Ann Loades, Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past (Oxford: Polity, 2001), chapter one.



time, the liberative potential of such a liturgy in a culture marked pervasively by dependence on benefit may also be very great, capable of encouraging flourishing human being. In such a context, the liturgy itself may be one of fewer available resources offering a kind of opposition to limits imposed by the culture, and encouraging instead an expansion of human capacities.

A further example, important perhaps because it is a local one, of the 'pathology' of inhibition that a 'participative' liturgy may need to overcome can be found in the key characters in Jonathan Tulloch's recent novels set in Gateshead, The Season Ticket, which was successfully scripted for film as Purely Belter, and The Bonny Lad, which offer powerful anecdotal access to the subjectivity of urban life as some people know it.

The Season Ticket is the story of two teenage boys growing up in poverty and trying by a range of means – many dishonourable – realise their aspirations, limited though these are to the financial lucre to obtain season tickets to watch Newcastle United play football:

'D'ye ever wonder why things are the way they are, and not different?'

'Different?'

'Different. Ah mean it's not as if every bugger's oot robbin' the day they hoy off their nappies . . .' Gerry stared at his friend, thought about spitting in the fire and then stopped. 'Sometimes ah wonder if there's anyone up there. Y'kna. Looking over wor or summink.'

Sewell half shrugged. 'There's the Angel.'

Gerry nodded. 'That's what ah mean. Is there summink that stands above wor like the Angel stands over Gateshead?'

Sewell leant forward and brought his face to rest in two upturned palms.

'Ah hope there is.'

'Summinnk to look after wor,' said Gerry, dreamily repeating his own words. 'If there is then ah hope it's like the Angel and not the polis helicopter. Summink to, y'kna, help not chase.'

'Mebbes summink like Kevin Keegan. Making everything better like. Or . . .'

Sewell stopped abruptly. 'Like a dad. A good dad. One that loves ye an' that. One that really wants ye.' . . .

Slowly Gerry turned to Sewell and looked into his friend's eyes. 'They call us scum,' he said. 'All of them dee. And even when they divven't say it to yer face, ye kna they're thinking it all the same. Scum, they're thinking, ye're all scum. Caird. The swots in top sets. The doctor. The polis. Them at the Job Centre. They all think we're scum.' He paused and sat rigidly upright. 'Sewell man, mebbes we cannot change it. Mebbes things cannot be different. . . '65

In the second novel, The Bonny Lad, the central character, Joe, is grandfather to a boy who is abandoned to him, and whom he accommodates in his old age. The child's experience of life to that point has unambiguously been damaged by the adults who have neglected and abused him, requiring Joe's best efforts to change the setting of the youngster's life. Yet the legacy of Joe's own life-circumstances find a commentary in the 'pitmatic' songs so beloved by the old man, which sing of an embittered resignation to situations which generate great resentment: poor working conditions, poor wages, poor housing. As Joe explains in his pitmatic vocabulary,

Once coal powered Britain. But thens what dug it up, why we were always dirt poor. For hundreds of years people have dug coal here. Dug it oot from under the ground. And they've always had nowt. Everyone o' wor. Wherever ye gan in the world, it's the same. Thens that make the wealth have nowt. That's how it was for me. And me dad and me granda before.<sup>66</sup>

Such resentment goes unchallenged by the songs, and is perhaps even cherished for its part in identity formation, while according to the songs, the poverties they recognise are supposedly countered by 'sharing' one's meagre resources, and moreover, defied by 'love'. Yet in one incident, very much in the mood of the pitmatics, Joe takes his

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<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Tulloch, The Season Ticket (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), pp. 215-216. (See the cover page and first page of each Part of this work for an image of the Angel of the North).

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Tulloch, The Bonny Lad (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001), p. 251.

grandson to contemplate a large house, at which he recalls his own grandfather's comments: 'If ye ever think ye're clever then come here and take a look at this mansion. 'Cos ye and people like ye built it, with the sweat of yer brows, brick by brick, and yet look where ye're living. . .'.<sup>67</sup> It is the struggle to overcome this bleak inheritance, in order to recognise and realise his own capacity to govern his own life, that concerns the heart of the novel.<sup>68</sup>

Acknowledgement of the difficulties of overcoming cultural factors that inhibit initiative need not stand alone without any sense of how cultures might be changed. Richard Sennett's influential 1990s text in urban planning, *The Uses of Disorder*, is aware both of the problems that may so readily be encountered in the urban environment, as well as identifying structural aspects which good urban planning might change for the better. Sennett catalogues many ways in which 'ordinary lives' may be 'lived in disorder' in cities, though he is anxious to highlight the potential as well as the dangers of an 'anarchic urban milieu'. A powerful extract imagining the progress of an 'intelligent young girl' suggests a range of situations she will need to contest as she grows, simply by virtue of living in the dense, multi-ethnic environment of a city-square rather than in the midst of a separated, stable and homogeneous community. Her life, as Sennett imagines it, is likely to involve: play on unclean and littered lawns, if lawns exist; constantly shifting neighbours, among whom 'everyone is in some way different'; and her school is likely to be a 'focus of conflict and conciliation for the parents' in that it needs to accommodate a great range of cultures. While elements of difference in the girl's experience may bear some benefits, working life (should it come) is likely, as Sennett imagines it, to present its own stretch of difficulties: gender-related inequalities in the work-place and 'two equally unacceptable alternatives of isolation:

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<sup>67</sup> Tulloch, *Bonny Lad*, p. 254.

<sup>68</sup> Tulloch, *Bonny Lad*, p. 239.



either a professional life where opportunities of social encounters are limited to colleagues who feel competitive and men who want possession, or the more usual housewifely and community routines, which offer no field for intellect'. If the arrival of Tulloch's character Joe's grandson represents the traumatic, uninvited disordering of Joe's life, albeit in order to prepare for its reconfiguration in more generous and mature mode, Sennett seeks greater structural 'disorder' in the city in order to free the women he imagines from the cultural constructs and constraints which may inhibit them.

Likewise, in Sennett's view, more 'anarchic' cities would have some other boons, and for a wide range of people - not least others of those effectively marginalized in many current ways of organising communal life. Among these benefits imagined by Sennett are, in relation to issues gathered around multi-ethnic identities, that 'enemies [may] lose their clear image, because every day one sees so many people who are alien but who are not all alien in the same way'. Furthermore, to aid 'the working class', the 'impersonal bureaucracy and faceless power' that can be 'used as the great weapon of the middle classes today over those who do routine labor' may be weakened through the re-configuring of 'personal influence and personal alliance'. And this in turn would, he thinks, 'tone down feelings of shame about status and helplessness in the face of large bureaucracies'. For Sennett, what disorder promises is that 'men [sic] will become more in control of themselves and more aware of each other'.<sup>69</sup> In so far as Sennett's vision is realisable, the kinds of subjectivities possible within the urban environment need not be considered as necessarily diminished by their setting, but rather full of liberative potential. Yet whereas Tulloch's literary portrayal of the forces shaping the old man Joe's subjectivity is descriptive (albeit imagined), Sennett's work shifts into a highly prescriptive vein. And,

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<sup>69</sup> All references to Richard Sennett, The Uses of Disorder are from Doreen Massey et al., eds., Unruly Cities (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1999), pp. 364-366.

just as in the different 'waves' of urban theology noted above, Faith in the City tempered the optimism of Cox's early texts, so narratives such as Tulloch's - dealing with deeply embedded identities and their seeming intractability - may temper any naïve assumptions that the creative disorder beloved by Sennett may be easy to achieve in any pervasive way. What we can expect is that different kinds of literature can inform a more complete picture. Furthermore, such breadth of reference and wide styles of insight yield a range of questions for liturgical theology, such as, for instance: how liturgical texts and participation (whatever may be meant by that phrase) may confirm identities which militate against and inhibit self-governance or the necessary taking of responsibility for those who are dependent; and how liturgical texts and participation might conversely expand capacities for creative disorder which allow identities to be enlarged and resourced, rather than liturgy as functioning as a limited suspension of enmeshment in oppressive orders to which participants are otherwise subject. As Duncan Forrester warns, 'even the eucharist could perform the function of confirming the social order by periodically enacting its opposite'.<sup>70</sup>

Robert Orsi is helpful in approaching such questions in so far as he develops awareness of distinct urban subjectivities by considering their specifically religious dimensions, and so he mediates between the urban and the liturgical. He writes, 'The spaces of cities, their different topographies and demographics, are fundamental to the kinds of religious phenomena that emerge in them'.<sup>71</sup> Orsi endorses perspectives which might be imagined from attention to Sennett's work, such as that 'the arrangement of ethnic neighborhoods in relation to each other; the location of markets, schools, different sorts of recreational sites, and

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<sup>70</sup> Duncan Forrester, On Human Worth (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 119.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Orsi, Gods of the City (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 2000), p.43.

workplaces; the possibilities for and forms of intersections of neighborhoods; and the architectural details of different urban landscapes – including stoops, fire escapes, rooftops, and hallways’ are geographical factors relevant to the formation of distinct perspectives – in Orsi’s case, religious ones - in an urban setting. Indeed, Orsi uses the term ‘architecture’ to describe the limits and possibilities of ‘urban religion’:

Specific features of the urban (and perhaps post-urban) landscape, which differ from city to city, are not simply the setting for religious experience and expression but become the very materials for such expression and experience. City folk do not live in their environments; they live through them. Who am I? What is possible in life? What is good? These are questions that are always asked, and their answers are discerned and enacted, in particular places. Specific places structure the questions, and as men and women cobble together responses, they act upon the spaces around them in transformative ways.<sup>72</sup>

In the light of this view, religion can be seen to help to envision and realise the potential of constructive proposals, such as Sennett’s prescription, for good life in cities. Specifically, the liturgical environment may be seen as itself a place of contest potentially enabling a range of questions and answers to questions such as those hinted at in the above extract from Orsi. Liturgical space may be regarded as a place of contest with the wider built environment - a liminal zone, in which the emergence of fresh identity may be possible as liturgical space makes its contribution to ‘disorder’ an otherwise more limited configuration of space which is lived in.

In the context of the UK, Laurie Green has offered some observations of his own on the topic of urban subjectivities (though he does not use the term as such) and his reflections, specifically on approaches to religion that seem to him to characterise UPA dwellers, are insightful pieces of

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<sup>72</sup> Orsi, *Gods of the City*, pp. 43-44.

testimony about the variety of particularities in the British context. Reflecting upon his own years of living as both a child and an adult, and then of working as a priest in a UPA, he concludes unsurprisingly that 'the Church does not seem to most inner-city people to be the appropriate vehicle of expression of their religious beliefs'. The church, indeed, may be regarded by many as 'a foreign world', and the content of faith, in term of Christian practices and doctrines, may well be unfamiliar to several generations - often all those living - within families. It is the various ad-hoc aspects of Green's personal reflections that are most interesting and valuable about his work, as few people have undertaken analysis of the kind that he dares to venture, perhaps for fear of the danger which Green himself acknowledges of making 'the crass mistake of resounding generalization'. Yet believing that he is in as good a position as anyone to undertake the task, Green perseveres to attempt to discern 'some of the assumptions that make inner-city people feel that church religion is not for them.' These include the church's seemingly 'fruitless hierarchy of values which, whilst being called "moral", do not convince them as worthwhile'. The perceived problem with so much of the church's morality is that, according to Green, it is understood to 'denigrate[ ] feelings of aggression, sexuality and other important survival instincts with the stigma of guilt'. But as well as questioning the morality which may be assumed as appropriate to human beings - and more fundamentally perhaps - 'there are problems about God's own morality too' for many in UPAs. For 'it would be easier for inner-city folk to accept a God who is above right and wrong - one who simply demands assent and obedience. But, as Fred would say, "God gives you a load of crap and then you're supposed to believe he loves you"'.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Laurie Green, 'Blowing Bubbles: Poplar', Peter Sedgwick, ed., *God in the City* (London: Mowbray, 1995), 72-92, p. 82. Perhaps in a similar vein, a piece of graffiti near my home in Gateshead read 'God is a shit'.

The church's seeming desire to 'wrap God up in abstraction' is seen by Green as a further factor in the church's alienation from the dominant order of the UPA context: 'So the assumption of inner-city people is that they trust the truth of their senses whereas the Christian faith is so often presented in terms of metaphysical and subjective experience'. Another dimension is the common sense, which conflicts with perceptions of the church, that 'it is not necessary to find ultimate meanings': 'So when the Christian theologian sees the faith as a way of finding answers to questions, searching for meanings, and making causal connections, they are working against the language system of UPA life. That system seems to prefer to focus in detail on the things at hand and define it rather than to place it in relationship with other things.' Related to this, 'working-class language emphasises belonging' while 'the middle-class focus upon exclusive, private, subjective experience as the locus for encounter with God is often reflected in the language of the Church, and Christian professionals may thereby alienate the people of the inner-city'.

The major factor, however, apparently relates to spontaneity, which is related in turn to prayer, and therefore to liturgy:

Living for today and never minding about the consequences for tomorrow is spawned of having a tomorrow which is so untrustworthy and beyond control that the discipline of long-term strategy proves always to be a nonsense. To save for such a precarious future is not a strong element in the culture! Many will lower their sights, feel happy with the life they lead now and 'have a laugh', whereas they see church people saying goodbye to the fun of today in order to participate in a life hereafter which doesn't sound much fun and, as with any future, may not exist anyway.<sup>74</sup>

Drawing various threads of his reflections, Laurie Green concludes, 'Urban Priority Area inhabitants have every reason to mistrust authorities and the Church has often not served them well. Class, literacy, ethos and hierarchy have all taken turns to promote an

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<sup>74</sup> Green, 'Blowing Bubbles', p. 83.



alienation' which the people of the inner-city feel from the institutional church. Yet, notwithstanding his critique, Green also notes a religious sense among UPA inhabitants, albeit at a distance from institutional expressions. Factors of this religious sense which touch on the life of the institutional church - although not in ways in which might be most welcomed by the institution and its representatives - include, he senses, that 'the constant help and availability of the Church, especially its clergy, is taken for granted not as charity but a right'; that there is a representative quality about church attendance; that buildings are sacrosanct; and that 'in general the presence of clergy is counted as a blessing'. In the context of both his critique of institutional Christianity and his awareness of 'folk-religion', Green asserts,

Worship's task is to affirm the continuing importance of the transcendence in the midst. Candles, smell, movement and music are all shared ways to touch on the numinous, whereas words seem to be less universal as a vehicle. It is difficult to know what a more working-class liturgy would be but I suspect that it would have to be similar to the temple worship in a Raiders of the Lost Ark movie. The atmosphere is all important, with the right mixture of emotion and toughness. Medieval plain chant from a heady choir or the gentle strumming of guitars do equally as well, but it must be direct, moving and challenging.<sup>75</sup>

To respond to the range of issues identified by Green, worship would need to embrace spontaneity and fight against abstraction in expression to a greater degree than may be the case in much of the UPA church's inheritance from the wider institutional church. But other factors perceived by Green may prove more difficult to accommodate, such as amendment of the 'hierarchy of values' to which he refers, it being one thing to adjust such a hierarchy and another to dispense with a thoughtful ordering of virtues, which may be implied by trends within UPAs and elsewhere; and assuming that meanings likewise may be amended so that prescriptive meanings are called into question, without events and actions - not least personal agency - becoming meaningless

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<sup>75</sup> Green, 'Blowing Bubbles', p. 85.

through thoughtlessness. The 'tribalism' that may be a part of some ideas that could be associated with Green's comments on 'belonging' may yet be the most fundamental of difficulties attending any attempt to make worship more amenable to the kind of culture with which Green is concerned.<sup>76</sup> And yet Green's proposals do overlap in significant ways with the views of other respected urban commentators, such as Kenneth Leech, whose recent articulation of an 'agenda for urban spirituality' centres on the importance of the material, conflict, wonder, the strange, and 'unknowing', among its central concepts.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the challenges that emerge from Green's reflection on the structurally insignificant in the emerging urban scene, the UPA dwellers, Graham Ward's studies in his recent Cities of God explore another range of realities in urban life at the moment more accessible to those who find themselves as the more powerful inhabitants of cities. Ward's burden is precisely with the advances associated with the New Economy, that is, the dual trend towards globalisation and towards atomisation (one example of which is the urban fenced community noted above), but both of which are represented particularly by the post-industrial new technologies such as the internet. As a piece of urban theology firmly located in the third wave of literature, Ward strongly dismisses Faith in the City - at least its relevance to the rapidly changing contemporary scene. His concern with 'the redemption of cyberspace' represents one attempt to interpret the present fragmentation - in Sennett's word, disorder - of urban forms of life as a

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<sup>76</sup> On 'belonging before believing' as a pattern of finding faith, see Grace Davie, 'Believing and Belonging' Geoffrey Ahern and Grace Davie, Inner-City God: The Nature of Belief in the Inner City (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), pp. 71-74. For the general context of discussion about the relationship between belonging and belief, see John Finney, Finding Faith Today: How Does it Happen? (Swindon: Bible Society, 1992) and for some helpful reflections on the potential danger of exclusivity, see Peter Selby, Be-Longing: Challenge to the Tribal Church (London: SPCK, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> Kenneth Leech, Through our Long Exile: Contextual Theology and the Urban Experience (London: DLT, 2001), pp. 206-209.

means of beginning to reclaim the ancient Christian concept stretching back at least as far as Augustine of cities as settings for 'eternal aspiration'. Ward's argument is so complex as to be hardly digestible in brief reference, but from brief citations we can learn at least that as he begins to conclude his explorations he expresses an understanding of the redemptive aspect of cyber technologies:

Power today, the power to change human behaviours, the power to change minds, lies in the dissemination of information, the use and abuse of modes of representation by various forms of media. Theology is not either without access to this power or free of its problems. Theology can speak.<sup>78</sup>

One of the ways in which Ward wants theology to speak is to critique cyberspace for its tendency to diminish materiality, spatiality and temporality – the first of these three being very much part of Leech's key to a viable 'urban spirituality'. Yet Ward's own attempt to do what he suggests is needed constitutes one of the first major theological engagements with the new technologies, and also one of the first theological attempts to weigh its advances. Ward also thinks that theology

can argue for the establishment of an analogical world-view in which the materiality of bodies is maintained and sustained by a theological construal of creation. It can amplify and transform what other, non-theological discourses are announcing as the direction in which we are heading. Analogically contextualised, the internet and the virtual communities it establishes, could then supplement our social relatedness and we would employ the computer prosthetically. This vision would constitute the theological response, and interjection, to the culture of virtual reality which is the non-foundational foundation of the contemporary city.<sup>79</sup>

Ward's proposals, for all their complexity, are undoubtedly most important. His insistence that the redemptive elements of cyberspace

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<sup>78</sup> Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 256.

<sup>79</sup> Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 256.

are to be found in its capacity to promote and celebrate difference might be seen as essentially continuous with other perspectives in that he transfers some of the potential identified in the geographical space of the modern city to the virtual 'world'.<sup>80</sup> However, Ward's theological twist, distinguishing his view from the promotion of difference in non-theological contexts, is a push for a further possibility: that theology's vocation in such a context is - beyond its role as critic - to 'announ[ce] to the postmodern city its own vision of universal justice, peace and beauty'<sup>81</sup> that reclaims the materiality and so on that are currently 'being lost'.<sup>82</sup> So he begins to do some of the envisioning work called for by Sheldrake, the OU team, and others, when they ask questions such as 'why cities – what are cities for?'. For Ward, one practical consequence of this recovery is the 'recognition that I belong to myself only insofar as I belong to everyone else',<sup>83</sup> hardly a novel theological statement, despite the post-modern concerns of Ward's thought. Yet it is this note that keeps Ward's work free from the accusation that attention to the heart of the New Economy overlooks those excluded by it, a criticism which has been levelled at many celebrations of the New Economy, including those of Richard Rogers, as noted above.

### **Gathering fragments from Chapter Three**

Taken together Green and Ward's reflections represent the beginnings of a comprehensive perspective on the modern city, however difficult the two kinds of realities with which they are respectively concerned might be to integrate. Such is the fragmentation of the city. Yet, as Sheldrake insists, the redemption of the city must be comprehensive, for

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<sup>80</sup> Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 224.

<sup>81</sup> Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Ward, *Cities of God*, p. 224.

<sup>83</sup> Ward, *Cities of God*, 260.

all the complexity that appreciating holistic salvation may involve. Ward and Green's different understandings of what this will entail are at least two poles to which urban liturgy and liturgical theology might seek to be related and relevant. And something of central significance is likely to emerge as each in their own way question the notion of 'common prayer', as they also seek to probe its potential. That common prayer in any particular context might represent the possibility of at least an awareness of difference might in itself be one of liturgy's 'saving works',<sup>84</sup> all the more so if that common prayer can carry and communicate the tradition's best vision of flourishing human being. By contrast, accommodation to a culture, either excluded or atomised, may diminish a vision of fully human life, so a crucial question to emerge for liturgical theology is how it might contest the likes of the 'pitmatic' drear encountered in Tulloch's character, Joe, or the virtual atomisation of a technophile, and come instead to function as an energising and critical source of encouragement for appropriate self-governance, interdependence, and indeed dependence upon God and others. An urban liturgy celebrated in any specific urban situation surely needs to promote a theological anthropology which resources personal freedom from manipulation and oppression in the manifold forms that these threats occur, and so offer a broader and better 'traditioning' than various cultural accommodations could possibly represent. In order to do this, urban liturgy at least needs to give expression to the concerns of the second wave of urban theology with poverty and its diminution of human potential, which still remains crucial as a forceful critique of contemporary cities.<sup>85</sup> Beyond this, urban liturgy certainly needs to be

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<sup>84</sup> Rebecca Chopp, Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995) develops the phrase 'saving work' to elaborate upon the task of theology. We return to this phrase in chapter 8 below.

<sup>85</sup> Thus far, in the UK, such empathy and condemnation has been voiced in the likes of John Vincent's edited collection, Hymns of the City (Sheffield: UTU, no date) and in the occasional urban references within the Iona Community prayer-texts.

educated in the school of the third wave of urban theology, and resources for this are fast emerging. (Of which this work means to be one - we shall return to this question at various points through Part Three).

An eye to both 'waves' suggests at least that in the urban situation, the importance of culturally diverse worship may be especially important if congregations are not to close down into mono-cultural enclaves that absorb the problems generated by urban conditions, and then sustain divisions, rather than challenging divisions by seeking to embrace and express diversity. In fractured communities, it remains that the church, better than almost any other urban institution, may foster local leadership which is ever more unusual in some groups and institutions, and also celebrate and sustain a sense of community that fosters the 'dignity' that may be felt to be hard to find.

This chapter develops the second core concern of Patterns for Worship, looking at the present situation of children in the church.

### **A theological oversight**

Children are a neglected topic in Christian theology, as is evidenced by reference to almost any dictionary or standard text book in any of the various subject areas of theology's related disciplines – biblical studies, systematics, ethics, pastoral theology, or liturgy, for example. In such dictionaries, whole articles devoted to topics such as 'child', 'childhood', or 'children' are extremely rare, and, indeed, passing references to children in relation to other topics are also strangely infrequent. An example of this phenomenon in the field of liturgical studies can be found in the widely used standard reference work The Study of Liturgy, edited by a team of leading liturgical scholars – in its initial edition by the Anglican Cheslyn Jones, Methodist Geoffrey Wainwright, and Roman Catholic Edward Yarnold - and representing a variety of Christian traditions, as well as being republished and updated in 1992 (having originally appeared in 1978). The first edition includes no references to children in the headings of its sixty-five articles, and no subject heading exists in the index to suggest any substantial references to children. Nor do the fourteen years between editions of the book seem to have generated fresh reflection about children in liturgy (itself an indicator of the very newness of concern with children's participation in the eucharist, which began to come into in a world-wide Anglican

focus only in 1985).<sup>1</sup> One of the major parts of the book is given to topics relating to 'initiation', in which the historical shift from adult to infant baptism is delineated in the sketchiest terms. However, consideration of children as worshippers is entirely absent from other major parts of the book concerned with 'theology', 'setting' and 'pastoral orientation'.

Notwithstanding the book's achievements, this oversight of children in what is a basic orientation to important concerns in liturgical studies must count as one of its limitations (alongside the fact that although some of its authors have experience of life and worship in other cultures, they all write from their particular setting in either the USA or a limited area of Europe - all but one of the Europeans from the UK, all but two are ordained in their respective denominations, and all but one are men). The absence of thinking about children in such standard reference works may therefore be partially determined by the reality that theology in both its academic and ecclesial contexts remains dominated by men 'privileged' by post-Enlightenment versions of patriarchy. A recent book - possibly the first of its kind - about 'the child in Christian thought', edited by Marcia Bunge, includes only four (of eighteen) chapters about theologians writing since 'the birth of modern theology' - Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, and then a collection of some recent Christian feminist writers who are considered together in one chapter. Of the three figures deemed major enough to receive a chapter to themselves, only Rahner devotes very focussed attention to thinking about childhood - even then amounting only to a few articles in the enormous corpus of his work.<sup>2</sup> This notwithstanding, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Stanley Hauerwas deserve some recognition alongside Rahner, among contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Meyers, ed., Children at the Table: A Collection of Essays on Children and the Eucharist (New York: Church Publishing, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> And interestingly, a 'Rahner Reader' includes none of his reflections upon children in what might be supposed to be his most significant work (Gerald McCool, ed., A Rahner Reader, [London: DLT, 1975]).



theologians, for their consideration of children or childhood.<sup>3</sup> Had the project been more comprehensive, their perspectives might well also have been included in a survey of recent writings in theology devoted to 'the child'. However, as Bonnie McClemore-Miller points out in The Child in Christian Thought, it has been feminist theologians who have begun to make the most significant contributions to modern Christian thought about children, and in their case this has happened only very recently as the arguments of feminist theology have become established enough in broader theological discourse not to risk dissolving primary concern about women's self-determination by diverting attention to other matters, however important these might also be. In an environment that is ignorant of its patriarchal assumptions, feminists have needed to be particularly careful about not undermining their initial concerns in their emerging quest for justice for the young.

If children are mentioned in liturgical studies in reference to infant baptism, but in few if any other contexts, a similar neglect across the theological disciplines is observed in Ann Loades' remark that children are virtually absent from consideration in theological ethics from the stage of embryonic life through to adolescence, when in any case questions of sexuality are usually the narrow focus of concern.<sup>4</sup> Very gradually, sexuality is being considered as a linking theme between these periods of pre-natality and post-pubescence, and this is especially the case with forms of sexuality that have been grievously distorted by harmful adult-child relationships. The emerging concern of some theologians (again, often feminists) with the abuse of children testifies powerfully to these phenomena. Likewise, a limited amount of pastoral

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<sup>3</sup> See John Seward, 'Youthful Unto Death' John Seward, 'Youthful Unto Death: The Spirit of Childhood', Bede McGregor OP and Thomas Norris, eds., The Beauty of Christ: A Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 140-160, and Samuel Wells, Transforming Fate into Destiny (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Ann Loades, Thinking About Child Sexual Abuse: The John Coffin Memorial Lecture 1994 (London: University of London, 1994).

theology, such as that developed by Charles Gerkin and others who adopt developmental-psychological insights from 'life-cycle' perspectives such as those of Erik Erikson,<sup>5</sup> may do something to widen theological horizons and attend to some other needs of the young. However, pastoral-theological consideration of the young often remains strongly related to questions of well-being for children's primary carers. It is another feminist theologian, namely Pamela Couture, who has made some important connections between different theological subject areas, addressing the 'feminization of poverty' in her book Blessed are the Poor, and considering some of the implications of this for children's lives, alongside other matters, in a following work Seeing Children, Seeing God.

### **Retrieving the tradition**

It may be significant that the widespread dearth of thinking about children is mirrored in the silence of the canonical gospels' stories of Jesus. Mark and John make no reference to Jesus' years prior to his public ministry as a grown man, while only Matthew and Luke include some infancy narratives, the historicity of which are highly debated. The historically disputable status of the infancy narratives has itself become the subject of some thinking about children by pastoral theologian Donald Capps. In The Child's Song, he posits that the infancy narratives' 'theory' that Jesus was born of a virgin may function as a religious source of very real trauma, in so far as it may 'keep what really happened in Jesus' case from coming to light' and ally dynamics inherent in child abuse and children's struggles to free themselves from it.<sup>6</sup> Elaborating upon Jane Schaberg's studies of the illegitimacy of

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<sup>5</sup> E.g. Charles V Gerkin, Introduction to Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Donald Capps, The Child's Song (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 54-55, 99.

Jesus, Capps understands Jesus' view of himself as 'son of Abba' to be a means of keenly internalising what was for him a secure means of self-affirmation, challenging the stigma of being the biological son of the Roman who sexually assaulted his mother, resulting in his birth.<sup>7</sup> Jesus' charisma, and his capacity to infuse others with power and strength, which characterise his later ministry, are grown, according to Capps, from Jesus' understanding of his own childhood struggles with his fate, and his own emerging sense of God, together galvanising his conviction that 'dramatic changes occur when we view ourselves and others as persons of inherent worth, celebrating one another's expressions of self-affirmation as a most "beautiful thing"' – a cross-reference to one of the women who anointed Jesus' feet.<sup>8</sup> Noting the 'verbal shaming' conducted by some academics in response to Schaberg's work, Capps invites those sceptical of Schaberg's work to offer some imaginative alternatives of their own, which suggest links between Jesus' unknown childhood and the gospels' presentations of his adulthood.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter two of Luke skips from Jesus' babyhood to a single incident (which only he records) about Jesus as a twelve-year old boy, and then shifts quickly to the advent of his public ministry. Elaborations on Jesus' 'hidden years' are found in some of the extra-canonical gospels, such as Thomas,<sup>10</sup> and despite their strongly 'magical' tone - degrees beyond the canonical infancy stories – it is possible that their exclusion from the canon may reflect in part the kind of discussions that were

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Capps, The Child's Song, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Capps, The Child's Song, p. 115.

<sup>9</sup> Although making no reference to Capp's The Child's Song, nor to Capps' challenge just cited (indeed one predates The Child's Song), two interesting and imaginative reconstructions of Jesus' 'hidden years' are Margaret Magdalen, The Hidden Face of Jesus: Reflections on the Emotional Life of Christ (London: DLT, 1994), pp. 3-40, and Jack Dominian, One Like Us: A Psychological Interpretation of Jesus (London: DLT, 1998), pp. 57-71.

<sup>10</sup> The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Ron Cameron, ed., The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 122-131.

evidently taking place in the early church about the theological significance of children. Nestorius' incredulous, and notorious, comment that 'God is not a baby two or three months old. . .'<sup>11</sup> brought him into conflict with the orthodoxy of his day, although records of any great improvement on the part of the orthodox do not seem to be very apparent.

If the historicity of the canonical infancy narratives is disputable, the historical basis of the evangelist's reports of Jesus' ministry among children is less problematic, and the survival of at least a construct of Jesus' ministry among the young is itself significant, whatever it reflects of various historical occasions and conversations. It is this material, which is relatively untouched in any form of contemporary theology, which may provide a central aspect of what might be imagined as the potential 'blessedness' of children or childhood. And perhaps now, more than ever, an understanding of flourishing in the childhood years is needed to set against emerging perceptions of abuse-related pathologies, which will begin to fill the gaping space in most theological discussion about children as human beings meriting consideration alongside men, and latterly, women, in a fully inclusive theological anthropology.

### **Gospel traditions**

The gospels contain records of Jesus eating with children (for example, Matthew 14.21), though not specifically among children alone.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 192; also Frances Young, *From Nicea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM, 1985), p. 234.

<sup>12</sup> See Stephen C Barton, 'Child, Children', Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 100-104.

clear that Jesus' ministry was directed to children, as it was directed to sinners, tax-collectors and others. Significantly, the gospels portray Jesus' understanding of children as distinctive from the Jewish and Gentile cultures of the early Mediterranean world,<sup>13</sup> so that in a context where children were seen as 'essentially adults in the making... [and] contrasted with adulthood... weak in mind, deficient in "logos"... non-participants in the adult rational world',<sup>14</sup> Jesus' openness to children appears to have been not principally for their potential, but rather to their present state.<sup>15</sup> So when gospel stories record disciples attempting to prevent children being brought to Jesus for blessing, they may well be reflecting the widespread perception of children as 'non-participants' in the 'adult' world that they themselves shared:

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them (Mark 10. 13-16).

According to Mark's account of this incident, Jesus defied the disciples' attempt to prevent the children, conveying his indignation (the only time this emotion is ascribed to Jesus in the gospels) to his circle of friends, and setting his blessing upon the 'little ones'. The symbolic significance of this gesture of tenderness towards children may have held a range of resonance for the gospel's early hearers. It mirrors two contemporaneous traditions, in Plutarch and Diodorus, who tell similar

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<sup>13</sup> See William A Strange, Children in the Early Church; Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament and the Early Church (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>14</sup> James Francis, 'Children and Childhood in the New Testament', Stephen C Barton, ed., The Family in Theological Perspective (Edinburgh, T and T Clark, 1996), pp. 65-85, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Strange, Children in the Early Church, p. 50.

stories of women embracing children. The gospel's underlining of the responsibility of all disciples, men included, for the service of children introduces a new element of responsibility into patriarchally conceived social relationships.<sup>16</sup> It also would allow for hearers of the gospels to recall the scene in which Simeon took up the child Jesus in his arms (Luke 2.28) as well as the image, from Jesus' story of the forgiving father of the two sons, of the father's running to embrace and kiss the prodigal who had returned home (Luke 15.20). Among the gospels' Jewish hearers, it may also have resonated with rabbinic treatise in which 'the resurrection of the people of Israel was portrayed as an event in which "God embraces them, presses them to his heart and kisses them, thus bringing them into the life of the world to come"',<sup>17</sup> further underlining Jesus' challenge to his unwelcoming peers who did not wish him to convey to children the blessing for which they themselves hoped.

As well as recognising the children and, blessing them - as a gesture affirming their worth in God's sight - Jesus turned attention to children to speak of his understanding of God's new order. In his teaching, children become teachers of how the divine reign is to be received ("Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it"). Commentators tend to stress either the humility or trust of which children are capable as the marks of 'child-likeness', though a perhaps less sentimental interpretation is also emerging, as developed by Bruce Chilton: 'children are the image of the confusing, grabby, unruly way in which the kingdom is to be greeted... the purity required by the kingdom is a purity of response, of being like

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<sup>16</sup> Judith Gundry-Volf, "To Such as These Belongs the Reign of God": Jesus and Children'. Theology Today 56 (4), 2000, 469-480, p. 473.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Ruedi Weber, Jesus and the Children: Biblical Resources for Study and Preaching (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979), p. 19, quoting Seder Elijahu Rabba, 17.

children at rough play in grasping at the kingdom.<sup>18</sup> Further, a more historically conscious view is also now being postulated, which relates the command to embrace 'child-like' humility or trust to Jesus' own relationship to the torah, and the attitude to torah he encouraged in others. Children were not expected to keep the law, so child-likeness may refer to being neither obedient to, nor obligated to, the law,<sup>19</sup> with the stress instead on direct dependence on God's mercy.

Further, in the gospels' presentations of Jesus and children, they demonstrate what it means to aspire to please God (to be 'first' in God's reign), so that Jesus' setting of a child in the midst of his disciples suggests their role as an example to others: for Jesus, children are models of discipleship who challenge disciples to turn from false values:<sup>20</sup>

They came to Capernaum; and when Jesus was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me" (Mark 9. 33-37).

Matthew records a related but non-identical tradition to Mark's version:

He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If any of you put a stumbling block

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce Chilton, Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God (London: SPCK, 1996), p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> Gundry-Volf, "To Such as These", pp. 473-474.

<sup>20</sup> See Bruce Chilton and J I H MacDonald, Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom (London, SPCK, 1987), p. 82.

before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18. 1-6)

Indeed, children provide a test of disciples’ acceptance of ‘kingdom values’. A capacity - or otherwise - to welcome children suggests a capacity - or otherwise - to welcome the saviour himself: how disciples respond to children indicates how they respond to Jesus (for further parallels on this theme, see Matthew 25.34ff): ‘Welcoming children . . . has the greatest significance. It is a way of serving Jesus and thus also the God who sent him. Conversely, failing to welcome children is a way of rejecting Jesus and God’.<sup>21</sup>

The brutality to which children were sometimes subject in the ancient world is a further key to Gundry-Volf’s interpretation of the significance of children, in that the experience of unfortunate children in the ancient world is seen by her as providing a way of alluding to the suffering of Jesus: Jesus’ ‘betrayal into human hands by one of his own’ parallels the various forms of infanticide and acute dangers faced by children in his day. So ‘we can construe both the little child and the Son-of-man as suffering figures and explain Jesus’ self-identification with the little child in the light of this parallel’.<sup>22</sup> Donald Capps provides a point that relates to this approach to Jesus’ suffering in that his understanding of Jesus’ response to his illegitimacy supports his view of a ‘protective approach to children’ in that ‘as one who knew what it meant to be a “despised” little one, Jesus’ charge to his followers here is more than a moral injunction. It is a powerful act of personal self-affirmation. . .’.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gundry-Volf, ““To Such as These””, p. 476.

<sup>22</sup> Gundry-Volf, ““To Such as These””, p. 477.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Capps, The Child’s Song, p. 57.



In so far as this set of Jesus' gestures, and their background, and the many possible interpretations of them – beginning with the gospel texts themselves – can be condensed, it is evident at least that in Jesus' teaching, God's new order belongs to children and the child-like. So learning from children and caring for them become key tasks for his disciples. That such themes have received relatively little attention in the Christian tradition is a matter of some puzzlement. Such teaching may well have been at the forefront of the concerns of many of those Christians who have galvanised practical action to protect or improve children's lives in different times and places, but it has attracted little concentrated theological focus.

The beginnings of an adequate theology of children might be found in the kind of fragmentary hints offered by feminist theologians, whose attention to children has been recognised in the above. For instance, contrary to Nestorius' statement cited above, Sara Maitland bluntly asserts the orthodox conviction that 'the neo-natal baby in Bethlehem is where "the fullness of God was pleased to dwell..."',<sup>24</sup> while other feminists propose that children might be regarded, in Ann Loades' phrase, as 'living prayers', or in Helen Oppenheimer's word, as 'epiphanies'.<sup>25</sup> An expanded theology of children and childhood is not what is attempted in what follows, though such a theology is most certainly reckoned to be needed. Rather, in what follows, the more limited task of a theologically alert discussion of children in the worship of the church is undertaken.

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<sup>24</sup> Sara Maitland, 'Ways of Relating', Ann Loades, ed., Feminist Theology: A Reader (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Loades, 'Death and Disvalue: Some Reflections on Sick Children', Hospital Chaplain (1985): 5-11; Helen Oppenheimer, 'Blessing', Daniel W Hardy and Peter Sedgwick, eds., The Weight of Glory: The Future of Liberal Theology: Essays in Honour of Peter Baelz (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 221-229.

## **'Sacramental belonging'**

As suggested above, questions about children's participation in the eucharist have been on the agenda of the Anglican Communion, at least, since 1985 when members of the International Anglican Liturgical Commission met in Boston, USA, to prepare the document Walk in Newness of Life. This recommended a whole-scale reconsideration of practices of initiation, not least as these related to children. Fresh attention was given to other traditions of the church, perhaps especially the Roman Catholic Church, which had in the reforms resulting from the Second Vatican Council produced its Rite for the Initiation of Christian Adults.<sup>26</sup> In the UK, churches in other traditions had also begun to admit children to participation in the eucharist, notably the growing charismatic-evangelical churches, which had, knowingly or unknowingly, come in some respects to align their patterns of initiation and communion to churches in the Frontier tradition of American Protestantism. In this American tradition, infant-baptism is uncommon but children's place at the eucharist is usually assured - although eucharist is characteristically celebrated less often than church in those traditions touched by the liturgical renewal of the twentieth century. At the same time, Anglicanism in its land of origin began to recognise acute falls in numbers of participants in worship, most especially among children and young people, a trend which has not abated.

These factors suggest some of the background to a major shift that is presently taking place in the Anglican Communion, amongst other Christian traditions, relating to the inclusion of children in the central sacrament of the eucharist. Across the world-wide Anglican scene many provinces now practice communion before - or without - confirmation, and without always following the Roman Catholic tradition of a formal

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<sup>26</sup> See Aidan Kavanagh, The Shape of Baptism (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1978) for perhaps the most authoritative interpretative guide.

first communion, which in a different though related way involves children in sacramental practices. These Anglican provinces, following other churches, have based the policy of communion before or without confirmation primarily within a theological retrieval of some early church practices.<sup>27</sup> A bed-rock of this retrieval is the discovery that children received communion at least in some places by the early third century; for instance, Cyprian's witness to children taking 'the Lord's bread and cup' from 'the very beginning of their nativity' is consonant with other patristic 'fathers'. Moreover, the practice of infant communion to which they testify was clearly well-known in the medieval west and is still followed today in the eastern Orthodox tradition's pattern of sacramental initiation. In the east, 'confirmation' has never been practiced and, in the west, 'confirmation' was not recognised as a separate rite until the thirteenth century - shortly before communion, at least 'in both kinds', was withdrawn from all laypeople, child and adult, following certain developments in eucharistic theology.

It is this history of baptism and confirmation to which the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC)<sup>28</sup> were referring when they recommended 'That since baptism is the sacramental sign of full incorporation into the church, all baptised persons be admitted to communion': as in the church's earliest known practice, and its practice through most of Christian history, communion should be open to all the

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<sup>27</sup> David Holeton, 'Children and the Eucharist in the Tradition of the Church' and 'The Communion of All the Baptised in the Anglican Tradition' in Ruth Meyers, ed., Children at the Table (New York: Church Publishing, 1995), 11-18 and 19-41. Among the prayer-books from the churches of the Anglican Communion, the Book of Common Prayer (1979) of the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Book of Alternative Services (1985) of the Anglican Church in Canada do not require confirmation before communion and permit children to receive the sacrament at their baptism and thereafter.

<sup>28</sup> IALC is a body of bishops and scholars who oversee the writing, compiling and theology of the prayer-books of the Anglican Communion. For a list of its members see the signatures attached to the 'Dublin Statement' in David Holeton, ed., Our Thanks and Praise: The Eucharist in Anglicanism Today (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998).

baptised. Historic practice also lies behind their request 'That each province clearly affirm that confirmation is not a rite of admission to communion', in which they simply followed a principle affirmed by the world-wide bishops meeting at Lambeth in 1968.<sup>29</sup> Since that Lambeth conference over thirty years ago, several important Anglican consultations and studies have been undertaken, with a clear trend emerging for change to inherited Anglican theology so that baptism, not confirmation, is now coming to be seen as the rite of initiation which admits to communion. At the heart of another IALC document is this theological conviction:

We wish to affirm on theological grounds that children of all ages are included among those for whom Christ died, that children of all ages are recipients of his love, that children of all ages are equally persons in the people of God, and that children of all ages have an active ministry in Christ among his people and in the world. We see no dogmatic or other credible basis for regarding some who are baptized as eligible to receive communion while others are not. We believe this is to run contrary to the inclusive character of the Gospel....<sup>30</sup>

It is now widespread for the implications of such convictions to be stated as a priority for future practice. For example, the 'first principle and recommendation' of the important IALC document on the eucharist affirmed that 'in the celebration of the eucharist, all the baptised are called to participate in the great sign of our common identity as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the community of the Holy Spirit. No baptised person should be excluded from participating in the eucharistic assembly on such grounds as age, race, gender, economic

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<sup>29</sup> See David Holeton, ed., Christian Initiation in the Anglican Communion: The Toronto Statement "Walk in Newness of Life" (Findings of the Fourth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Toronto, 1991) (Nottingham: Grove, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> 'Children and Communion: An International Anglican Liturgical Consultation held in Boston, USA, 29-31 July 1985', Ruth Meyers, ed., Children at the Table (New York: Church Publishing, 1995), p. 132.

circumstance or mental capacity'.<sup>31</sup> Yet in the implementation of this principle, the Church of England has proved more resistant to reform than many of its related churches,<sup>32</sup> so that in response to the words at the fraction in the Church of England's ASB Rite A or Common Worship Order One, 'We break this bread to share in the body of Christ...', it has been noted that children might retort, 'No! We don't...'.<sup>33</sup> As the Church of England is beginning to embrace the notion of the 'sacramental belonging' of children, a new risk arises, that of attending to traditions and practice about eucharist, yet failing to recover and enlarge the church's tradition and practice of concern for children. Decisions about whether or not to allow children to partake in bread and wine at one particular point in the eucharistic celebration, in isolation from considerations about what their involvement may mean for the whole eucharistic assembly, miss many of the opportunities presented by present considerations of sacramental belonging. The debate about children and communion needs to be connected at least to those elements in the gospel that preserve the tradition of Jesus' approach to children, along with his understanding of their particular merits.

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<sup>31</sup> David Holeton, ed., Renewing the Anglican Eucharist (Findings of the Fifth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Dublin, Eire, 1995) (Cambridge: Grove, 1996), p. 7. It is not only in Anglican churches that appeal to these historic foundations has been made: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry challenged 'those churches which baptize children but refuse them a share in the eucharist before such a rite [as confirmation]' to 'ponder whether they have fully accepted the consequences of baptism'.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Gray, 'Pushing the Door: (i) The Church of England', Meyers, ed., Children at the Table (New York: Church Publishing, 1995), 99-106, compared with the reports in the same volume of changing practice in other churches in the Anglican Communion.

<sup>33</sup> See John Leach, Visionary Leadership in the Local Church (Cambridge: Grove, 1997), p. 1.

## **Roman Catholic perspectives**

The period in which the Roman Catholic Church has produced its Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults has also seen the publication of the Directory of Masses for Children and some texts of eucharistic prayer proposed for celebration with children. As Joan Patano Vos notes, the Directory represents the very highest level of concern about the inclusion of children in the worship of Roman Catholic communities, though its import has by no means always been appropriated in local congregations.<sup>34</sup> The Directory opens with the following strong statement:

Today the circumstances in which children grow up are not favourable to their spiritual progress. In addition, parents sometimes scarcely fulfil the obligations of Christian formation they accepted at the baptism of their children. . . Although the vernacular may now be used at Mass, still the words and signs have not been sufficiently adapted to the capacity of children. . . We may fear spiritual harm if over the years children repeatedly experience things in the church that are scarcely comprehensible to them. . . The Church follows its Master, who 'put his arms around the children. . . and blessed them' (Mark 10:16). It cannot leave children in the condition described.

Insisting that adults can 'benefit spiritually' from their experience of sharing liturgy with children, and children's contributions to such liturgy, the Directory stresses the need for a gathering of 'a single assembly', inclusive of different generations and ages, as opposed to the 'splitting' of the assembly into different age related groupings. Proposing a variety of means of children's participation, from thoughtful bodily posture and gestures to engagement in reverent silence, the text outlines some contours of a participative worshipping community, including both adults and children engaged in public ministries.

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<sup>34</sup> Joan Patano Vos, 'Unpacking the Directory for Masses with Children', Eleanor Bernstein and John Brooks-Leonard, ed., Children in the Assembly of the Church (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 81-99, p. 81.

It is attention to the kinds of issues taken up by the Directory, such as how children may not only partake of 'elements' of bread and wine but also share in worship as fully participative members of the assembly, which is characteristically lacking in much English Anglican discussion of sacramental belonging. Much of that latter discussion is apparently fixated with concern about the potential of children to receive eucharistised elements 'unworthily', as in Paul's phrase in 1 Corinthians 11, or at least upon notions of children's proper reception which renders Jesus' apparently positive view of children naive. Mention of the word 'reception' raises the specter of eucharistic theologies particular to the Protestant traditions, which, at least on not always fully acknowledged levels, may effectively require the 'protection' of eucharistised elements from the 'unworthy'. This has resulted in a tradition which is still practiced among some Plymouth Brethren of 'table fencing' in which only the (s)elect are welcome to participate. The tradition of confirmation in the Anglican tradition has functioned in a less acute but nevertheless destructive way, dividing those who 'belong' at the eucharistic celebration from those who do not, which is more than problematic when allied to the twentieth-century liturgical reform making eucharist central to congregations' patterns of worship, rather than some form of 'word' service which is believed, and is apparently widely experienced, to be more inclusive.<sup>35</sup> If this sense of exclusion at the eucharist were to be diminished, a more concerted effort to root eucharistic theology in the gospel traditions of Jesus' table-fellowship, rather than the Pauline texts just alluded to, would need be made at a popular level. The Roman Catholic tradition has (perhaps in view of its eucharistic theology that incorporates a very strong sense of divine presence in the eucharistised elements, apart from their reception) been perceived to be less anxious about questions of 'worthy reception',

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<sup>35</sup> On the Parish Communion Movement see Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, new edition 1996)

though it has 'fenced the table' in manifold other ways. Nonetheless, from a perspective within the Roman Catholic tradition, Joan Patano Vos is one among a number of authors who take up the vision of the Directory for Masses with Children so as to make a series of practical proposals about how children might be made fully participative members of eucharistic worship.

Suggesting that music included in children's masses needs to be of a kind which relates to that used in assemblies incorporating adults, and uncompromising about the need for children to be exposed to and increasing their comprehension of scripture which will animate participation in the eucharist, the heart of her concern is that children are incorporated into a genuinely participative assembly. Similarly, Mark Searle makes a range of proposals, representing some of the best thinking in North American Roman Catholic circles. As he begins his reflections, he magnifies the emphasis of the Directory to stress the 'ideal' of the liturgical assembly as 'a gathering of all God's people in a given place: men, women, children, the elderly, the sick, representatives of every social group and social stratum' and adds that this is important in order to make manifest the church's share in Christ's work of 'gathering the scattered children of God into one'.<sup>36</sup>

Conscious of the absence of children in treatments of liturgical history, Searle seeks to redress this in so far as it may be possible by underlining the 'significant, indeed often prominent' role that young boys if not girls have performed in liturgical worship. He cites fourth century practice which ordained boys to reading and singing in liturgy. He notes from the fifth century onwards training for such liturgical roles within the context of general education offered by the church to youngsters, and

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Searle, 'Children in the Assembly of the Church', Eleanor Bernstein and John Brooks-Leonard, ed., Children in the Assembly of the Church (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 30-50, p. 32.



the gradual expansion of children's ordination, including those as young as four or five, to lector, psalmist and acolyte, among other things.<sup>37</sup>

More importantly, however, Searle probes the symbolic meaning of children's participation in the liturgy. Expanding the understanding, already cited in relation to New Testament material, of children as 'defective adults', Searle traces the view that children were regarded in their supposedly diminished humanity as therefore being closer to the 'non-human. . . invisible. . . supernatural world',<sup>38</sup> and therefore valued precisely for this. Examples of this 'unworldliness' which make their mark in the Christian tradition are the shout of the child in Milan who was heard to voice "Ambrose for bishop!", and the sound of the child's encouraging Augustine to "Take up and read" the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, children's place in liturgy was based upon the view of them as 'standing closer to the veil that divides the visible from the invisible, the temporal order from the eternal'.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, despite the remarkable medieval tradition of 'role-reversal' in the liturgy for Holy Innocents' Day, when children would preside as 'bishop', preach and so on while senior clergy were demoted as choristers, acolytes and the like,<sup>41</sup> it remains that children's participation was for their symbolic significance for adults, still subservient to adults, as the exception to the rule itself demonstrates, for all its extraordinariness.

This notwithstanding, Seale is fully alert to the symbolic significance of children in contemporary assemblies, and he cites three kinds of

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<sup>37</sup> See also: Susan Buynton, 'The Liturgical Role of Children in Monastic Communities from the Central Middle Ages', *Studia Liturgica* 28 (1998): 194-209.

<sup>38</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 37.

symbolism which attach to children latterly. Firstly, they may mark the exclusivity of a worshipping 'community' and in fact expose its antithetical relationship with Searle's ideal of 'gathering the scattered children of God'. Sound-proof 'cry rooms, for example, are highly ambivalent in this regard', for as well as providing 'a genuine service to parents with restless children', they may also be used to communicate that children are unwelcome in an assembly which is hostile to them.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, children may be 'paraded' in child-centred liturgies, and for various reasons, one of which may be to attempt to make worship accessible to unchurched adults unfamiliar with practices of worship, without exposing them to the embarrassment or unease of more demanding forms. At its worst, this may be a 'concession to our enormous cultural appetite for entertainment',<sup>43</sup> which ultimately subverts authentic worship. More dangerously again perhaps, children may be paraded 'for the entertainment or ego-building of adults' as youngsters are pushed into 'vicarious' roles "because if they succeed, that is marvellous and reflects glory on the parents; whereas if they make a mistake, well, they are only children'. These may simply be means of 'pursu[ing] the glory of public roles, while minimalizing the risks of losing face'.<sup>44</sup>

Such insightful reflections give way to Searle's vision of 'children as members of the assembly'.<sup>45</sup> At the heart of this is the conviction that 'we should make no accommodation to our children. Rather than bringing the liturgy down to their level, I believe them better served by being surrounded by adult Christians celebrating an adult faith in adult

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<sup>42</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 42.

way'.<sup>46</sup> This is not, however, a simple call to leave the status quo unquestioned. It entails recognition that 'radical equality in the Christian community [ ] is betrayed – and the children know it – when we condescend to them', while the active care that children call forth from adults demands that those adults 'work for the conversion of children, the deliberate effort to help them recover from the harmful influences to which they have been exposed'<sup>47</sup> so enabling them to be free in their 'natural affinity to God'<sup>48</sup> as is suggested by all those early liturgical roles.

Searle's last point here, about the harm that may be done to children, is one that resonates with another strong voice in Roman Catholic consideration of children at worship, that of Mary Collins, who argues that the rejection of children is culturally pervasive.<sup>49</sup> Like Searle, she does not wish simply to 'accommodate' children:

On the basis of the evidence in published resource books on Christian celebration for the young it seems that those who are presently exploring children's liturgies have a romantic view of childhood and youth. Such a view actually denies their experience and ours. It also denies access to the mystery of our faith, namely that life's terrors and dangers are real, but our God gives life even in the face of cruelty and death. The children of the Hebrews have regularly cultivated the memory of suffering, hostility, and death. Why not the children of the church?<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> Seale, 'Children in the Assembly', p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Collins, 'Is the Adult Church Ready for Worship with Young Christians?', Worship: Renewal to Practice (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1987), 277-295, p. 279.

<sup>50</sup> Collins, 'Is the Adult Church Ready?', pp. 280-281.

She recognises that such accommodation may be more for the supposed benefit of adults than for children themselves, and furthermore may in fact represent a form of the harm that may be done to children - in this respect by shielding them from the realities of the world in which faith may be found and may flourish, even in the midst of difficulties. Collins regards the Passover Haggadah as one means by which children in the Jewish tradition are introduced to the memory of suffering, with Purim being another example, and with Christians able to learn from both. As Collins develops her convictions, she suggests that all children's liturgy should be 'implicitly paschal' for 'anything less than a profound liturgical ministry for the young is a betrayal of trust, another form of exploitation of the young at their expense'. The issue at stake, as Collins sees it, is whether children are presented with the 'euchatastrophy' of the gospel - by which she refers to the demanding story, but nevertheless 'a story with a happy ending', which is true, and worthy of a lifetime's dedication; or whether they are not, and offered in its place an altogether less durable 'resource'. As she elaborates, she insists that strictly upbeat celebrations create illusions, lacking both tension and ambiguity, and mimicking the 'simplistic situation comedies of prime-time TV'. By contrast, she asserts, 'the mystery proclaimed in Jesus is that the forces of diminishment and destruction are very real indeed, but the power and purpose of God will ultimately prevail'. Finally, Collins observes that 'liturgists for the young, like all of us in a consumer culture, tend to want to create novelty, not depth of significance'. Yet she insists as she continues, 'ritual redundancy and repetition are not of themselves inherently boring unless they are the activities of boring people who lack both memory and imagination'.

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## Anglican appropriation

David Holeton is one of very few Anglicans who have begun to appropriate the kinds of thinking articulated by Roman Catholic liturgists reflecting upon the implementation of the Directory for Masses with Children, and the possibilities it represents for more genuinely inclusive worship within their Roman Catholic tradition. As convener and chair of the conference of Anglican liturgists gathering in Boston and Toronto to make their powerful joint statements about baptism and eucharist respectively, he is as able as anyone to assess movements to more fully incorporate children in worship across the Anglican Communion, in so far as such a task is possible at all. Holeton is well aware, for instance, of developments in New Zealand, where children's communion is now most clearly established of all the Anglican provinces. The late New Zealand archbishop Brian Davies, who with Holeton has widely encouraged the world-wide Anglican Church to offer children communion, includes in his notes and evaluation of its consequences for congregations that: many have introduced weekday 'Sunday schools' (then called 'church school') to give children their own time for learning and free them to attend worship on Sundays with those of all ages; some provide 'church school' during the ministry of the word in communion, in order to offer age-appropriate learning for adults and children separately, but gathering together for sharing in the sacrament; and some provide liturgy with sections directed in turn towards children and then adults. Furthermore, Davies notes that practically, the presence of children has also 'encouraged a re-thinking of church design and furnishings', demanding more carpeted areas for children's play, more use of freestanding chairs and less of traditional pews, banners, drama, dance, new music and liturgical roles for children and young people.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Brian Davies, 'New Zealand Initiation Experience: (i) Changing Initiatory Patterns', Meyers, ed., Children at the Table, pp. 85-93, especially pp. 91-92.

Also writing from the Australasian context, though from Australia itself, Elizabeth Smith imagines changes that the full inclusion of children in worship will bring to churches who have sidelined them into Sunday Schools, made children wait for sacramental participation and so on:

Renewed worship that happens as a result of children's inclusion will mean some changes in practice. It will also mean a shift in the spiritual orientation of the adult worshippers. Over time, some of the children's naïve confidence will rub off, and it will smooth down some of the adults' doctrinal hackles. Some of the children's hunger for physical connection and bodily movement, for touch and caress, for eye-contact and direct verbal addresses, will rub off, and it will awaken some of the adults' dormant awareness of their own bodies in prayer. Some of the children's questions will stay around, and create a climate in which some of the adults feel free to ask questions too. . . . Those who seek the renewal of eucharistic worship will do well to pay close attention to the children whom the Spirit is giving to the church.<sup>52</sup>

Her views are not simply naïve hopes, but reflect her experience of participation in North American Episcopal church-life.

It is with similar convictions that Holeyton develops his own proposals and assertions, which are perhaps flavoured by a willingness to push further than his Roman Catholic counterparts Collins and Searle are about just what children may demand of adults in the church, and what kinds of possibilities may emerge from more inclusive worship:

Once the right of presence in the eucharistic assembly and, consequently, admission to communion is guaranteed, we need to ask some serious questions about what children will find in the midst of that assembly. It is here that the most serious work will need to be done because this will involve the reconstruction of ourselves and our attitudes towards worship.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth J Smith, 'Whose Prayer Will Make the Difference? Eucharistic Renewal and Liturgical Education', David Holeyton, ed., Our Thanks and Praise: The Eucharist in Anglicanism Today (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), 99-114, p. 104.

Like Searle and Collins, however, Holeyton does not wish to advocate the preparation of children's liturgies. These would, he thinks, at best counterbalance worship encountered at other times. Rather there must be a 'serious evaluation of what most Anglican communities present as their regular fare of Sunday worship' and questions must be explored about how this could be opened up and made more generally and genuinely inclusive. At the very least, this will mean amending the Anglican tradition of its emphasis on the 'generally cerebral', the 'visually and emotionally unengaged' - 'book-bound, logocentric, clerical and male-oriented' - which, while it may very well nourish the intellect, may be regarded as deficient in other respects. A constructive critic, Holeyton looks for clues and helpful insights in both orthodox and oriental traditions which he recognises to be 'indisputably liturgical yet formed on premises that are quite different from those of Anglicanism in the waning years of the twentieth century'<sup>54</sup> and in which he finds 'children [ ] expected to be present and welcomed when they are' whereas 'Anglican worship is, in most parishes, basically seen as an adult activity in which children are allowed to participate as long as they conform to adult patterns of worship and follow adult rules'. Orthodox worship, as Holeyton expounds it, combines both 'highly complex rites and [a] dense symbol system of allegories' with open liturgical space, filled with movement, light from candles and colour from icons, into which children find themselves welcomed and, moreover, integrated.<sup>55</sup> Holeyton locates the possibilities he praises in Anglican contexts like the well-known St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, and Portsmouth Cathedral, and calls for more patronal concern for the arts and artisans

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<sup>53</sup> David Holeyton, 'Welcome Children, Welcome Me', *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1999), 93-111, p. 105.

<sup>54</sup> Holeyton, 'Welcome', p. 107.

<sup>55</sup> Holeyton, 'Welcome Children', pp. 107, 109.

who in their turn may vivify the notion of 'play' as a key to participation in liturgy.

If and as such changes are embraced, Holeton is not naïve about the 'revolutionary' consequences not only for children, but much more widely, and so he sees that the 'rightful claim of children to eucharistic communion challenges value systems, and can cause discomfort'. There is, however, a long way to go to complete the tasks he articulates as 'the significant consequences of welcoming children in our midst have yet to be incorporated into the liturgical life of most parishes'. Yet, he insists, the distance remaining should not deter Anglicans from a 'serious revisioning so that [Anglican worship] will become more holistic, truly inclusive, and less cerebral'.<sup>56</sup> His comments can be aligned to the assertion of Youth A Part that 'The primary frontier which needs to be crossed in mission to young people is not so much a generation gap as a profound change in the overall culture' of the church.<sup>57</sup>

#### **Gathering fragments from Chapter Four**

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<sup>56</sup> Holeton, 'Welcome Children', p. 111.

<sup>57</sup> Youth A Part, 2.11. While arguments for age-streamed congregations, such as 'youth congregations' are often vigorously resisted, and for some good reasons as may emerge from appropriation of some of the concerns expressed by Lathrop, Saliers' and White in relation to American megachurches, among other reasons, the American fragmentation of the North American Roman Catholic scene into congregations catering for the special needs and preferences of a range of ethnic groups may offer models for how age-streamed congregations may be established. On ethnic parishes, see Mark R Francis, Shape a Circle Ever Wider: Liturgical Inculturation in the United States (Chicago: LTP, 2000), pp. 100-104. Reserve in the British context about the appropriateness or need of ethnic congregations might well be educated by Kenneth Leech, 'Racism and the Proclamation of the Gospel', Kenneth Leech, Struggle in Babylon: Racism in the Cities and Churches in Britain (London: SPCK, 1988).



What we can see from this brief survey is a range of perspectives between the practice of Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox approaches to the involvement of children in the liturgy, with each tradition formed by its particular history which has itself celebrated or marginalized the presence of children in a variety of ways. To press in the narrower Anglican context of the Church of England the kind of issues that David Holeton brings to light, we may note the work of the Church of England doctrine commission on sacramental initiation as analogous to 'adoption',<sup>58</sup> and all the suggestive related imagery of process, and ask what such gradualism will imply for a congregation concerned to include the children in its midst. We may also note, however, that the most sustained thinking about issues overlapping with David Holeton's concerns has in the Church of England been conducted by the arm of the Board of Education responsible for the report Youth A Part. Among many recommendations, that report urged that 'Young people must be taken seriously if they are to stay within the Church, or if the Church wants to attract young people into its work and mission... they are the Church of today...',<sup>59</sup> suggesting firstly that young people's alienation from church culture, and secondly, the churches' worship patterns and styles may be significant factors in the decline of those from the younger generations in touch with church life or participating in worship.<sup>60</sup> Related material apparently suggests that this possibility is perhaps most relevant to churches designated as being 'traditional', from which, it appears, young people are most likely to leave at transition points (such as confirmation (!), school-leaving,

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<sup>58</sup> See [David W Brown], 'Spirit, Sacraments and Structures' in Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, We Believe in the Holy Spirit (London: CHP, 1991), chapter 5.

<sup>59</sup> Youth A Part, 76. Emphasis in original.

<sup>60</sup> Youth A Part, 95. See also Bob Mayo, Gospel Exploded: Reaching the Unreached (London: Triangle/SPCK, 1996).

going to college, etc) as they progress through their teens.<sup>61</sup> However, the perspectives of liturgical theologians are absent from the work of the report, and the debate with the kinds of perspectives articulated by those cited in the course of this chapter is still waiting to happen.

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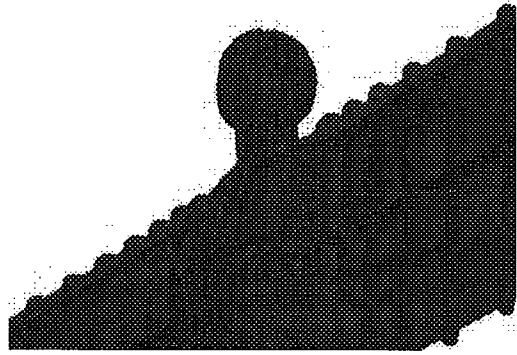
<sup>61</sup> Patrick Angier, Changing Youth Worship (London: CHP, 1996), p. 73. Traditional worship is 'characterised by beauty in building, music, liturgy, drawing on the historical resources of choral music and hymnody accompanied by organ and choir...', page 57. For analysis of recent statistics, see Leslie J Francis and David Lankshear, Continuing in the Way: Children, Young People and the Church (London: National Society, 1991) and In the Catholic Way: Children, Young People and the Church in Catholic Parishes of the Church of England (London: National Society/Church Union, 1995) and In the Evangelical Way: Children, Young People and the Church in Evangelical Parishes of the Church of England (London: National Society, 1995).

## CHALLENGING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

### *Closing comments on Part Two*

Part Two of this work has developed perspectives on the key issues that led to the production of Patterns for Worship, bringing up to date discussion of urban theology and of various churches' attempts to incorporate children. The 'gentrification' of at least some parts of some British cities, and the possibilities arising from fresh concern with the 'sacramental belonging' of children are issues of major importance that Patterns, nor Faith in the City and Children in the Way (and their related documents) fully anticipated in their day. Indeed, in the case of key issues in what I have labelled a 'third wave' in urban theology, the issues were barely imagined.

Such developments require that liturgical theology and the resources it attempts and is able to produce are reconceived in their light. And it is to voices in our 'conversation' that I think can assist this to which we now turn.



*part three*

**EXPLORING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY**  
**body, heart, home**

## Exploring Liturgical Theology

### *Opening comments on Part Three*

Body, heart and home are key-words – but not comprehensive descriptions – that I use to provide some clues to the central features of the illuminating contributions to liturgical theology made by the three thinkers who are the focus of this part of this work, James White, Don Saliers and Gordon Lathrop. Each one of these authors takes themes that emerge in Patterns for Worship and offers considerable direction to the debates in which Patterns engages.

Gordon Lathrop's contributions to our liturgical-theological conversation centre on one of his key-words, 'body'. He is concerned with people gathered together as 'the body of Christ' as the primary symbol of liturgy: consequently, Holy People is the title of his 'liturgical ecclesiology'. At least equally significantly, however, Lathrop gives unrivalled attention to what we may think of as the 'bones' of Christian worship: its essential skeletal elements from which the body lives and which bring order and structure to the praise, doctrine and practice of faithful people.

Lathrop's emphasis on aspects on the humanity of worshipping human beings finds a complementary voice in the work of Don Saliers. Consideration of the 'heart' is Saliers' most significant contribution to liturgical theology, and consistently, and quite distinctively, he encourages worshippers to bring their human 'pathos', the full stretch of their humanity - from sorrow to joy – and all their senses to the 'ethos' of God, in order to be made more fully alive.

James White makes a crucial counterpoint to perspectives expressed by both Lathrop and Saliers, in his reminder (that neither of the others would deny, but do not express with the same force as White) that the faithful are to be found not only in churches known as 'liturgical', for the 'non-liturgical' traditions (a misnomer, but commonly applied to many of the more recent Protestant churches) also produce their saints. His key contribution to

liturgical theology is to explore these traditions as 'homes' that nurture Christian people, despite the fact that they may have been almost entirely overlooked by the vast majority of other liturgical scholars. White's contribution can be seen as encouraging a wider sense of hospitality in the discipline of liturgical theology, while an important ancillary concern of his work relates to the theme of hospitality in another way, giving detailed attention to the architecture of the church's buildings. And so 'home' relates also to the 'house of the church' and a range of environmental factors relevant to the church's gatherings.

All of these themes, with others, will emerge in the explorations of Part Three of this work, as Lathrop, Saliers and White's writings are explored in order to educate the kind of conversation that is in my view needed in urban-deprived and child-inclusive assemblies in the British context. In each of the chapters about their work some organising categories are identified in the writing of the three theologians, around which I group their insights. I believe that these organising categories cover the main themes in their own work, yet in order to attempt to ensure that I do not misrepresent them, my presentation of their distinctive contributions has not here been standardised by use of over-lapping terminology, except where this occurs in their own work. By attempting to allow the distinctiveness of their own perspectives to emerge, it will more readily be seen that they are sometimes in contradistinction, and even contradiction, as well as at times in harmony with one another. Read together they offer a fascinating and fruitful dialogue relevant to my concerns.

*chapter 5*

**Exercising the 'body' – Gordon W Lathrop**

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**Introduction**

Gordon W Lathrop is a leading North American liturgical scholar, active in both his own denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and in a number of ecumenical, scholarly bodies, such as *Societas Liturgica* and the North American Academy of Liturgy, of which he was vice-president in 1984.

Lathrop was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 1969, going on to serve pastorates in Washington State and Wisconsin, though for most of his career he has taught candidates for ministry at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, where he is Charles A Schieren Professor of Practical Theology and Chaplain. Beyond that particular institution, his main local ecclesial connection is the Episcopal Cathedral, Philadelphia, where he was recently appointed Lutheran Pastor, a new and unusual initiative following the recognition of full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church of the USA.

That Lathrop's professorial chair is in the discipline of practical theology is of interest, as his doctoral studies were not liturgical in any strict sense either, but rather in the biblical field, on the 'tradition and redaction of Mark 6.1-6'. Consequently, concern about the biblical roots of liturgy, and the use of the bible in the liturgy, as well as practical aspects of liturgical celebration all feature strongly in Lathrop's writings.

Lathrop's PhD was undertaken at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands towards the end of the 1960s. This context for his studies assured Lathrop's contact with a particular kind of Roman Catholicism emerging in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, and which was fostered in Nijmegen by characters such as Edward Schillebeeckx, who had at the time recently published influential material, controversial in the wider Catholic world, on sacramentality. (The alternative approach to eucharistic transubstantiation, transignification, is widely attributed to Schillebeeckx's The Eucharist and Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God). Nijmegen in the 1960s was a context in which both scripture and sacrament were able to become focal for Lathrop, and these twin themes - which have been consistently held in tension, or in his characteristic phrase, in juxtaposition throughout his life's work - can be traced back to this time.

Lathrop has himself been deeply involved in the reform of prayer books in the ELCA in the period after the production of new Roman books after Vatican II. Central sections of the Lutheran Book of Worship, on baptism, eucharist and holy week are contributed by Lathrop. Lathrop has also been involved in the production of liturgical texts of a less authoritative status, and much of his work has been concerned with providing resources for good use of the lectionary, not least his Psalter for the Christian People, Lectionary for the Christian People, and a series of Readings for the Assembly<sup>1</sup> for the three-year lectionary cycle. This Psalter and these cycles of readings were undertaken in collaboration with his wife, Gail Ramshaw, who had earlier compiled a single volume book of readings for liturgical use, Richer Fare for the Christian People,<sup>2</sup> among other notable texts in the liturgical field. That

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon W Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw, eds., Readings for the Assembly, three volumes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Gail Ramshaw, ed., Richer Fare: Reflections on the Sunday Readings, Cycles A, B, C (New York: Liturgical Press, 1990).



Lathrop is married to another highly regarded figure in North American liturgical 'circles' is significant, especially given that they have undertaken a number of joint projects, and focused their writings on the same areas – notably, baptism and eucharist, as may be seen from Ramshaw's popular books for Liturgy Training Publications, Words Around the Font<sup>3</sup> and Words Around the Table<sup>4</sup> - apart from developing their particular academic interests. (Ramshaw's most acclaimed independent writings tend to focus on liturgical language, as represented recently in her Reviving Sacred Speech,<sup>5</sup> updating her thinking about an earlier, very influential book, Christ in Sacred Speech).

Lathrop himself has been publishing in academic journals, notably Worship (of which he is now an associate editor), since the early 1980s. One particularly important contribution was his essay 'A Rebirth of Images',<sup>6</sup> printed in 1984, which was a version of his vice-presidential address at the North American Academy of Liturgy. Joyce Ann Zimmermann claims that this essay/address was 'a blueprint for academic and pastoral activity that has been carried out by liturgists for the two decades since',<sup>7</sup> and its concerns have quite evidently remained central in Lathrop's own writings. It was, however, in the 1990s that Lathrop developed a reputation as a most significant liturgical scholar,

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<sup>3</sup> Gail Ramshaw, Words Around the Font (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Gail Ramshaw, Words Around the Table (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Gail Ramshaw, Reviving Sacred Speech: The Meaning of Liturgical Language: Second Thoughts on 'Christ in Sacred Speech' (Akron: OSL, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'A Rebirth of Images', Worship 58 (1984), 291-304.

<sup>7</sup> Joyce Ann Zimmermann, 'Gordon W Lathrop: Word Meets Ritual', Dwight Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader (Collegeville: Pueblo, 2001), 213-214, p. 214.

particularly for his companion books Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology<sup>8</sup> and Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology.<sup>9</sup> The first of these books in particular received great acclaim almost instantly, and is constantly cited - perhaps more than any other contemporary text - in works of liturgical theology to date. Both Holy Things and Holy People were published by the Lutheran publishing house in the US, Fortress Press, but more than that they relate to and develop academically Lathrop's work in a body with a clear official Lutheran status, the World Lutheran Federation, of which he was leading member in a study group preparing the document Worship and Culture in Dialogue,<sup>10</sup> which in turn shaped a series of official statements and 'declarations' about the Lutheran Church in relationship to contemporary culture. Lathrop has also recently edited and introduced a series of influential short pamphlets, Open Questions in Worship,<sup>11</sup> which are aimed at a more popular dissemination of the approach represented in his companion books and in the Lutheran World Federation materials, and which draw in a series of scholars and pastors to comment and reflect upon eight aspects of contemporary experience of worship, such as changing sacramental practice, and the ethical and evangelistic potential of liturgy.

It is not only the titles of Holy Things and Holy People that relate to the invitation to communion cited in Cyril of Jerusalem's Mystical Catechesis (5.19-20): 'Holy things for the holy people: one is holy, one is

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). A third volume of the trilogy, Holy Ground, is in preparation.

<sup>10</sup> S Anita Stauffer, ed., Worship and Culture in Dialogue (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, ed., Open Questions in Worship, eight volumes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995-1996).

Lord, Jesus Christ. O taste and see that the Lord is good'. The focus of the books concerns the kinds of transformation, both personal and communal, which may be possible as worshippers yield to the flow of the liturgy, open to its influence upon them. To this end, Holy Things and Holy People are an attempt to identify the central 'essentials of Christian worship' and to develop a theology specifically from the various possible juxtapositions of liturgy's primary symbols – baptism, bible, eucharist, and assembly – as they are involved in the enactment of liturgy. Lathrop locates these four elements of liturgy as the heart of a common ecumenical inheritance, more or less constant through the various centuries. But in order to promote fresh inquiry about their meaning and significance he strips layers of accumulated interpretations from them by characteristically identifying them by the simple designations bath, book, meal and people.<sup>12</sup> Fundamentally basic to his inquiry is this question: 'why is it that people assemble, that biblical texts are read, that people are sometimes washed, that the fragment of a meal is held, and that these things are done side by side?',<sup>13</sup> especially amidst a 'flood of modern conditions' – wealth and decay, new knowledge and ignorance, pluralistic democracies and fierce new xenophobias, among many other ills - all of which might seem to threaten the survival of the ritual patterns which constitute Christian worship.<sup>14</sup> This question is key to 'liturgical theology', which

inquires into the meaning of the liturgy, to use the ancient name of the assembly for worship and its actions. As theology, as word-about-God, it does so especially by asking how the Christian meeting, in all its signs and words, says something authentic and reliable about God, and so says something true about ourselves and about our world as they are understood before God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, pp. 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, pp. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 3.

Liturgical theology is, then, at least for Lathrop, a particular stream of liturgical studies that is not content to limit its orbit to historical reconstruction. Practices of retrieval have contemporary import in shaping ‘a new public symbolism . . . able to hold and reorient, in material and social realities, our experience and our lives. . . .’, and capable of yielding fresh ‘bearings for both public thought and personal hope’.<sup>16</sup>

Lathrop develops his liturgical theology in three modes – primary, secondary and pastoral. Combined these modes make the task of liturgical theology one of ‘critical classicism’, meaning that it is ‘marked by the willing reception of traditional patterns and archaic symbols, in the belief that these classics bear authority among us. . . [yet] at the same time. . . marked by the willing elaboration of a contemporary critique of received tradition’.<sup>17</sup> Following Aidan Kavanagh, Lathrop asserts that primary theology is the liturgy itself, and then not the texts for the rite, but such texts alongside action in which persons participate. In its primary mode, liturgical theology is the ‘communal meaning of the liturgy exercised by the gathering itself’. In its secondary mode, it is ‘written and spoken discourse that attempts to find words for the experience of the liturgy and to illuminate its structures, intending to enable a more profound participation in those structures by the members of the assembly’.<sup>18</sup> In doing so, ‘it speaks of God as it speaks about the ways the assembly speaks of God’, but it is not simply descriptive and must also have a ‘critical, reforming edge’.<sup>19</sup> That edge, when ‘turned toward specific problems of our time’, is what Lathrop refers to ‘pastoral liturgical theology’. In this respect, Lathrop adds to

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<sup>16</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 7.

the tasks of liturgical theology as seminally identified by Alexander Schmemmann (to whom Holy Things 'is meant as a homage of thanks' for Introduction to Liturgical Theology),<sup>20</sup> by placing weight on the critical – 'pastoral' - aspect of the task, akin to the model of Geoffrey Wainwright's Doxology, at least as that very influential text is understood by Maxwell Johnston.<sup>21</sup>

Several key features of Lathrop's work will be outlined in what follows: the juxtaposition of scripture and sacrament, word and action; people in the place of worship – his concern with the primary symbols in liturgy in their environment; and liturgy and cultural criticism - liturgy's tasks in relation to experience of the modern world.

### **Scripture and sacrament**

As might be expected from Lathrop's expertise in biblical studies, the bible is a major feature of his theology. 'Patterns of reading and preaching the parts of the book, of praying the language of the book, of doing the signs of the book – these are the principal patterns of Christian worship', and yet 'the biblical foundations of Christian liturgy are more subtle than the obvious presence of the Bible',<sup>22</sup> as the 'old book' is juxtaposed with people present, situated as they must be, amidst their 'flood of modern conditions'. Not only are the scriptures present within the liturgy – read and preached, perhaps also processed, sensed, kissed – they create an 'environment' of memory for worship,

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<sup>20</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. x.

<sup>21</sup> Maxwell E Johnston, 'Liturgy and Theology', Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks, eds., Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper (London: SPCK, 1991), 202-225, which compares a number of contemporary liturgical theologies and theologies of worship. Cf also David Fagerberg's What is Liturgical Theology?

<sup>22</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 16.

and in their juxtaposition with contemporary readers and hearers, say ‘a new thing’, ‘greater than they have contained’.<sup>23</sup> They also set patterns of sacramental action within the worshipping assembly, narrating stories and interpretations of baptisms and eucharists, suggesting alignments of words (for example, Jesus’ name or a naming of the Trinity; or fragments of a narrative) against actions (for example, pouring water; or wine), whilst fixing these juxtapositions in a particular history – that of Israel and the early church. This, too, creates fresh meanings in present contexts, whilst following a pattern which is itself what might be called intra-biblical, interpreting new practices in relation to old stories, so that old traditions are freed up to infuse freshness and depth into the present. This is what Lathrop means by ‘the rebirth of images’, the title of his seminal article. Echoing that earlier work in Holy Things, he writes,

Christian corporate worship is made up of chains of images: our gathering, our washing, our meal are held next to biblical stories, themselves read in interpretative chains, and this whole rebirth of images is itself biblical.<sup>24</sup>

It is forms of this biblical pattern that Lathrop finds amplified in the Christian practice of assembly for worship from earliest times. Noting the description of worship which Justin Martyr provided in his Apologies for Emperor Antonius Pius, Lathrop suggests that Justin’s reference to several readings – perhaps from what became portions of the Old and New Testaments, the ‘writings of the prophets’ and the ‘memoirs of the apostles’ – itself testifies to a dynamic of juxtaposition, as ‘old words are caused to speak the new’.<sup>25</sup> Justin wrote,

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<sup>23</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, pp. 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, pp. 31-32.

On the day named after the sun all, whether they live in the city or the countryside, are gathered together in unity. Then the records of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as there is time. When the reader has concluded, the presider in a discourse admonishes and invites us into the pattern of these good things. Then we all stand together and offer prayer. And, as we said before, when we have concluded the prayer, bread is set out to eat, together with wine and water. The presider likewise offers up prayer and thanksgiving, as much as he can, and the people sing out their assent saying the amen. There is a distribution of the things over which thanks have been said and each person participates, and these things are sent by the deacons to those who are not present. Those who are prosperous and who desire to do so, give what they wish, according to each one's own choice, and the collection is deposited with the presider. He aids orphans and widows, those who are in want through disease or through another cause, those who are in prison, and foreigners who are sojourning here. In short, the presider is a guardian to all those who are in need (1 Apology 67).

This extract is of the utmost importance to Lathrop, shaping his vision of worship, and providing contours for his critique of contemporary worship practice. Just as Justin recounts the practice of a presider in the early assemblies inviting hearers into 'the pattern of these beautiful things', so Lathrop understands preaching and sacramental action, indeed 'all the liturgy',<sup>26</sup> as a graced pattern of experience that promises transformation for those who yield themselves to it.

Lathrop's perspective builds also on the view he expressed in an early article 'At Least Two Words' which was more recently reprinted in The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal, a collection of the best contributions to Liturgy, the journal of the Liturgical Conference, and which remains salient. In it, Lathrop outlines some key aspects of the understanding of juxtaposition that would later become so central to his work: Proclamation of

the truth about God. . . takes at least two words. . . In this world speaking about God with just one "word" - one connected and logical

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<sup>26</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 34.

discourse for example - will almost inevitably mean speaking a distortion, even a lie. It will suggest that God is a consequent idea, not a burning fire and a mysterious presence. . . . for us the mystery of God, for all that it may indeed be graciously present in human speech, must be proposed by triangulation. Words, even such contradictory words as "now" and "not yet" or "judgment" and "mercy" or "absence" and "presence" or "death" and "life" or "one" and "many", will necessarily be put side by side, like two candles near the altar or the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant . . .'.<sup>27</sup>

So it is that lectionary readings stand in juxtaposition to one another, speaking 'different - even wildly contrasting - views',<sup>28</sup> and the ministry of the word is juxtaposed to the "visible word" of the table, and central sacramental symbols are themselves set in a context which juxtaposes sign or movement and dominical or deeply traditional words.<sup>29</sup> And 'Christians believe that among these pairs God is encountered in worship, not just talked about'.<sup>30</sup>

For Lathrop, this juxtaposition of word and word, and word and sacramental action, is basic to the way in which elements of Christian worship are patterned with meaning, and with grace. Such patterns constitute the 'shape of the liturgy', or in the phrase which Lathrop adopts from Alexander Schmemmann, the 'ordo' of Christian worship. However, unlike Schmemmann, for whom the *ordo* was defined by a very particular version of the Eastern Orthodox rite and its rubrics, Lathrop adopts an understanding of the *ordo* in harmony with many other

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<sup>27</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'At Least Two Words: the Liturgy as Proclamation', in Blair Meeks, ed., The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 183-185, p. 183. On juxtaposition in Holy Things, see p. 10 for the first mention of 'intentional juxtaposition' and follow references in the index. Note also Geoffrey Wainwright's review in Worship 69 (1995), 287-288, p. 288.

<sup>28</sup> Lathrop, 'At Least Two Words. . .', p. 183.

<sup>29</sup> Lathrop, 'At Least Two Words. . .', p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'Afterword', Gordon W Lathrop, ed., What is Contemporary Worship?, Open Questions in Worship 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 31-32, p. 31.



liturgical scholars of the twentieth century, influenced by the Liturgical Movement and in turn by the Second Vatican Council. In so doing, he focuses upon some core elements of activity in worship and their interpretation, and although noting awareness of ‘cautions about . . . too-easy harmonizations’, particularly as articulated by Paul Bradshaw (but represented in this work by James White), he asserts ‘that there is a core Christian pattern which, in its largest outline, can be explored in early sources’.<sup>31</sup> This ecumenically conscious *ordo*’s ‘root elements’ include gathering on Sunday, daily prayer, praise and intercession, scripture, meal, teaching to inquirers, and bathing,<sup>32</sup> though not all of these find full or equal expression in his own Lutheran tradition, formal forms of daily office being a case in point. Another set of elements constitutive of the *ordo*, which lie ‘only a little behind [the root elements] in importance for Christian meaning’<sup>33</sup> are another set of juxtapositions: praise and beseeching, teaching and bath, and pascha and year.<sup>34</sup>

Yet from early times – at least perhaps in Lukan communities, or those reconstructed, if not reported, in the writing of the Acts of the Apostles (20.7-12; 2.42; and the Emmaus story [Luke 23.13-35]) – Lathrop proposes that the elements of ‘word’ and ‘table’ appear to have gained place as governing the range of authentic patterns for worship, as the early church effectively appended a shared meal to a synaxis related in style to the synagogue meeting. This pattern, grounded in two poles, had certainly become embedded in at least some places by the end of the second century as it is represented in the first available descriptive writings about Christian worship, beyond the very sketchy possible

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<sup>31</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 35, n. 9, with reference to Paul Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, chapter 3, *passim*.

allusions within scripture, provided by Justin Martyr in the late second century. In addition to Justin's description of worship as he perhaps knew it, Lathrop gives precedence in his contemporary articulation of the meanings of worship to Justin's interpretation of the pattern as 'thanksgiving', and to its outcome, evoking from participants a collection for the poor. However, it is the basic two-fold pattern of word and table which Lathrop holds as not only ancient but historically continuous, at least to a considerable measure, in that it

has been called by a variety of names in the Christian East and West, but it has been universal. Even when the *ordo* has decayed, as in the loss of preaching or of vernacular scripture reading among Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, or as in the disappearance of the weekly meal among Western Protestants, the resultant liturgical practice has often been accompanied by a memory that the full twofold action was the classic Christian norm for Sunday.<sup>35</sup>

While Lathrop is more confident than some others about the centrality of this *ordo* and its elements, his stress upon it stands in continuity with many forebears, mentors and peers. It is his accent upon juxtaposition in the *ordo* which is distinctive and refreshing, and not only that, for if he is correct to stress them, 'a loss of these juxtapositions carries with it a diminishment in the clarity of the faith'.<sup>36</sup>

### **People in the place of worship**

Lathrop's stress on scripture and sacrament in the pattern of the *ordo* represents a particular construct of what he would himself recognise as secondary liturgical theology. Other major themes of Lathrop's work emerge in Part Two of Holy Things, concerned with 'things', and in Holy People, the second of his related major works. These attempt to shift the

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<sup>35</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 52.

focus to primary theology, the discernable, material elements which are needed for the *ordo*, and which secondary liturgical theology interprets. Following the emphasis of Robert Hovda's influential presider's manual, Strong, Loving and Wise, Lathrop argues that the key 'thing' is people, and Holy People is dedicated to the exploration of human beings gathered in one place as the first and dominating symbol of worship: 'People are primary',<sup>37</sup> but 'to "have church" you do need some things',<sup>38</sup> such as bread and wine, bible and chalice, whether those used are simple or elaborate, and whatever the setting for their use (frugal home or dazzling basilica, indoor or outdoor, and so on). Lathrop draws on a seventh-century Byzantine tradition in which Peter counsels one of his converts, Pancratius, about the necessary equipment for the establishment of a church: '. . . two gospel books, two books of Acts composed by the divine apostle Paul, two sets of silver paten-and-chalice, two crosses made of cedar boards, and two volumes of the divine picture stories containing the decoration of the church. . .'.<sup>39</sup> Whatever the historical foundation of this tradition, it represents both the continuity of aspects of the *ordo*, as understood by Lathrop, and some embellishments around its core. Although Lathrop does not use the term 'sacramentality' to describe these items, the notion is implied and of importance: 'for the great Christian tradition, the spiritual is intimately involved with the material, the truth about God inseparable from the ordinary', which in a reference from Luther is said to act as 'ford, bridge, door, ship, and stretcher', helping humans find access to the divine.<sup>40</sup> So a variety of 'sacred objects' are considered – bread, wine, water, and also cup, plate, and tub – all of which have both practical usefulness and symbolic significance, though with the former

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<sup>37</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 87, referring to Robert Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Liturgy, pp. 55-56.

<sup>38</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 89.

in the list containing more symbolic significance than the latter. For instance, 'Bread suggests a larger order. Wine gives festivity, leaving troubles behind. Water comes from a source away from here'. And all three are ambiguous: 'All three give life. All three suggest death'.<sup>41</sup>

Lathrop refers to a definition of symbol as 'a complex of gestures, sounds, images, and/or words that evoke, invite, and persuade participation in that to which they refer',<sup>42</sup> and underlines the polyvalence of things in so far as what they may symbolise. Given that the central symbols are themselves polyvalent, Lathrop underlines the danger that the 'lesser symbols' of plate and cup, tub, and less so again in his view things such as fire, oil, incense and garments, may obscure the *ordo* if special care is not taken that they are used only to enrich the key things and their core symbolism.

This distinction between central and lesser symbols, though now ecumenically recognised, is a strong Lutheran theme, and the focus of Lathrop's thought on 'Lutheran liturgical hermeneutics', in another place: 'In his "Treatise on the New Testament, that is the Holy Mass" of 1520, Martin Luther proposes that the ability to distinguish what is central and constitutive in the Eucharist from what is additional and secondary in its celebration is "the greatest and most useful art"'.<sup>43</sup> Essential to the range of meanings which emerge for the central and lesser objects is, for Lathrop, their juxtaposition to the word and the symbolism that the word either excites or inhibits. Yet the word,

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<sup>41</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 95.

<sup>42</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 92, n. 6, referring to Stephen Happel, 'Symbol', Peter E Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship (Washington DC: Liturgical Press, 1991), 1237-1245, p. 1238.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'A Contemporary Lutheran Approach to Worship and Culture: Sorting out the Critical Principles', Anita Stauffer, ed., Worship and Culture in Dialogue (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 137-151, p. 137.

signalled by the book of scripture is also 'a kind of vessel',<sup>44</sup> infused with significance in its own turn by other elements in its environment. Place and time, the ordering of space and the taking of shape (circles, ranks, open, facing) all form part of this wider environment.

Particular fragments of Lathrop's writing have concerned one of these lesser symbols which is often central in many liturgies – money. Lathrop links this to notions of offering and sacrifice, with a very clear desire to reform the way in which many churches perform the likes of their 'offertory processions' and the gathering and giving of finances in liturgical contexts. Unlike other Lutherans, Lathrop is not primarily concerned about what such processions may do to ally ideas of humans being able to 'give to God', but rather with the ways in which they distort, by diffusing, or perhaps diluting, notions of sacrifice. Lathrop recognises that 'at the heart of genuine offering there is always killing',<sup>45</sup> if only of the flowers on the altar, and yet it remains that contemporary cultures continue to be fascinated with sacrifice in its grossest extremes, as evidenced in the crowds attending viewings of the frozen bodies of 'Juanita', a child once sacrificed on Nevado Ampato, or various rediscovered 'Bogmen'. Lathrop seeks a reorientation of Christian liturgical practice along the lines of the ancient and occasionally revived practice of giving money or food away as an integral action of assembled worshippers, and so he wants to invigorate the accent on a less familiar 'offertory procession' – that of 'going into the world to serve' at the end of liturgy. Precedents for his convictions are found in Paul, Chrysostom, Luther, and above all in Justin Martyr (whose record of the collection for the poor is cited above). A contemporary expression of this tradition is also located, in the practice of the Episcopal Parish of St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco. The kind of involved and costly giving that the

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<sup>44</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'The Bodies on Nevado Ampato: A Further Note on Offering and Offertory', *Worship* 71 (1997): 546-554, p. 552.

maintaining of such a tradition is likely to entail would, for Lathrop, incorporate this lesser symbol into a liturgical framework more clearly governed by its central word and sacrament, together magnifying the costly sacrifice of Christ. And so this concern with money serves as an example of how Lathrop wishes all lesser symbols and secondary liturgical elements to operate.<sup>46</sup>

Lathrop's final point about 'things' is that people, the primary symbol, shape the pattern of things in their environment. And people, assembled, are also polyvalent. Knowing that their assembly will certainly be prone to 'self-selecting characteristics', Lathrop holds that the *ordo* is a corrective to exclusivity, in that

it will continually propose that this gathering is too small, too narrowly conceived. The holy circle is not holy enough, the sacred assembly not wide enough. . . After all, the center of this circle and the meaning of the *ordo* is Jesus Christ, the one who is always identified with the outsider.<sup>47</sup>

In his contribution to the Don Saliers *Festschrift*, Liturgy and the Moral Self, Lathrop intensifies this conviction by reference to a 'remarkable dictum': 'Draw a line that includes us and excludes many others, and Jesus Christ is always on the other side of the line'.<sup>48</sup> However, another possibility is that people, assembled, may - as they hold things dear to

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<sup>46</sup> For a related critique turned on Catholic liturgy's propensity to obscure a 'sense of solidarity with the hungry' in the acts of offering, see Gordon W Lathrop, 'The Revised Sacramentary in Ecumenical Affirmation and Admonition', Mark R Francis and Keith F Pecklers, eds., Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary: Essays in Honor of Anscar J Chupungco (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000) 129-141, p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> Duane Priebe, quoted in Gordon W Lathrop, "'O Taste and See": The Geography of Liturgical Ethics', E Byron Anderson and Bruce T Morrill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God: Essays in Honor of Don E Saliers (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 41-53, p. 51.

them in common - bear marks of community, which Lathrop envisions as a particular kind of assembly, with some depth:

So, go into church. Before you, in some form, are some things: a pool, a book, bread, and wine. Around you are some people, the primary thing. In this place, at an appointed time, these all will interact. If you let them, they will interact with you, inviting you to the breaking, surrounding you with the faith, engaging you in sending portions.<sup>49</sup>

### **Culture and liturgical criticism**

Part three of Holy Things shifts the focus to 'pastoral liturgical theology' and a number of 'applications', concerned with local embodiment of the *ordo*, leadership in the assembly and the relationship between liturgy and society. The first of these three concerns are expanded in the essays collected in the 'Open Questions in Worship' series edited by Lathrop, with each volume introduced and concluded by him. Indeed, in many senses, the seventh chapter of Holy Things, 'Liturgical Criticism', can be seen as setting the very questions that the pastors and scholars featured in 'Open Questions' address. Some characteristic examples are:

Is the Sunday meeting clearly people gathered graciously and peacefully around the two events of word and table? There is an order to the assembly, even when the group calls itself non-liturgical; is the order this ancient one of scripture and meal? Is that what a visitor would say was going on? Is that what the children would portray if they play-acted this meeting? . . .<sup>50</sup>

To begin with, evidence of concern with such questions can be seen in the titles of the 'Open Questions' series – 'What are the essentials of Christian worship?', 'What is contemporary worship?', 'How does worship evangelise?', 'What is changing in baptismal practice?', 'What is

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<sup>49</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 115. See also Gordon W Lathrop, 'Koinonia and the Shape of the Liturgy', Studia Liturgica 26 (1996): 65-81.

<sup>50</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 167.

changing in eucharistic practice?', 'What are the ethical implications of worship?', 'What does multicultural worship look like?', and 'How does the liturgy speak of God?'. They can also be seen in a collection of essays by Lathrop's peers as liturgy teachers in American Lutheran seminaries, Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission, to which Lathrop contributes an endnote piece.<sup>51</sup> As well as sharing Lathrop's questions, all of these separate publications promote the central emphasis of 'Liturgical Criticism' on the need to 'call attention to the major oppositions of the *ordo* and to encourage their lively presence in the local assembly'.<sup>52</sup>

It is also in the same chapter of Holy Things that Lathrop's thinking finds a strong christological focus: "The fullness of the central signs is to be accentuated not for their own sake, but in order to communicate the meaning of Jesus Christ to present human need. Assembly, Sunday, bath, word, meal, prayers and ministries are called upon to "speak and drive Christ", a quote from Luther. For,

Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection and the faith that is through him, juxtaposed to these pre-existent rituals, is the institution and consecration of sacraments. He was baptized; he read the scriptures; he ate with sinners. His death was a baptism and the meaning of baptisms. Risen, he opens to us all the scriptures. He is known as risen in the bread. His death was a cup that he gives us to drink. The patterns of the liturgy root in Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup>

And Lathrop's grasp of the need for the centrality of liturgy for understanding Jesus Christ emerges in his essay 'Liturgy and Mission in the North American Context' in Inside Out:

There is much talk about God and about Jesus in North America. In many ways, our cultures are soaked in religion and spirituality. But

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<sup>51</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'Liturgy and Mission in the North American Context', Thomas H Shattauer, ed., Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 201-212.

<sup>52</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 179.

<sup>53</sup> Lathrop, Holy Things, p. 173.



without the stories of the scriptures, without “this is my body, given for you,” without the living water of baptism, this talk can be hazy, unhelpful, perhaps Gnostic, often simply code words for the self. The life-giving presence of God is actually given in word and sacrament.<sup>54</sup>

Lathrop’s criticism of North American churches’ accommodations to their cultures are particularly striking. He notes the ways in which Roman Catholic communities ‘often experience the temptation to obscure the *ordo missae* with secondary matters’, though the fact that they are not authorised to do so encourages restraint, for which Lathrop is grateful. Yet he is clearly more troubled by the state of much contemporary Protestantism:

North American Protestant churches – and churches of the world which are influenced by their choices – have been drawn toward patterns of worship which accentuate those words and music which move the individual Self toward conversion, or to use more modern language, engage in the “marketing” of personal “happiness” and the “meeting of needs”. Such religion, for all of its Christian vocabulary, is easily tempted to Gnosticism.<sup>55</sup>

It is this collapse towards merely “meeting needs” to which Protestant may become prone which also may drive Catholics to accentuate elements that obscure word and sacrament. Yet the greatest threat to the *ordo* shaped around word and sacrament is readily identified as the apparently thriving ‘seeker services’ of Megachurches. Contrary to the stress on ‘participation’ arising from the Liturgical Movement and crystallised in Paragraph 14 of Sacrosanctum concilium,<sup>56</sup> the alternative embodied by the mega-church minimalises participation; reduces music to easily sing-able and oft-repeated choruses; operates screens and TV monitors as a mode of easing passive observation, often using such technology to beam out images of staged drama which often

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<sup>54</sup> Lathrop, ‘Liturgy and Mission...’, p. 208.

<sup>55</sup> Lathrop, ‘The Revised Sacramentary...’, p. 137.

<sup>56</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, ‘Strong Center, Open Door: A Vision of Continuing Liturgical Renewal’, Worship 75 (2001): 35-45, pp. 35-36.

precedes a 'message' of some kind. The message itself may be introduced or concluded with a few verses of scripture, but this is likely to be the limit of explicit biblical content. Such services tend often to close abruptly after the message, and may often feature a period of time in which people are asked to give some visible signal of response to the message, such as the raising of a hand to indicate a decision of commitment to Christ as proclaimed. Although money may be collected at some point in the proceedings, there is no sacrament to which this 'offering' might be juxtaposed in order to enhance its depth and meaning. Indeed, sacraments are entirely absent, whilst the form of the word is radically reshaped, as is implied in the rejection of the terms 'preaching' and 'sermon', and as is openly indicated in the virtual absence of bibles or biblical reading.<sup>57</sup> Although this pattern and style of worship can be traced through the evolution of 'frontier' worship in North America, it is acutely at odds with the ecumenical consensus celebrated in liturgical renewal. The critical point of disagreement between liturgical churches and Megachurches is identified by Lathrop as

the question of means . . . Is the church centred on individuals and their processes of decision-making? Or is it centred on – indeed, created by – certain concrete and communal means which God has given . . .? From the classic Christian point of view, if decision-making is the central matter, the meeting will not really be around God, no matter how orthodox or trinitarian a theology may be in the mind of the "speaker".<sup>58</sup>

While Lathrop's criticisms are acid and strong, he is fully aware of the attractiveness of the kind of assembly that seeker-services represent in a culture to which such services are attuned. His response centres on the need for churches in liturgical traditions 'to work on a kind of

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<sup>57</sup> Gordon W Lathrop, 'New Pentecost or Joseph's Britches? Reflections on the History and Meaning of the Worship *Ordo* in the Megachurches', *Worship* 72 (1998): 521-538, pp. 523-524.

<sup>58</sup> Lathrop, 'New Pentecost...', p. 537.

participation which is lively – in singing, praying, bathing, eating and drinking – but which does not exclude. The participants are not insiders. All of us . . . are seekers. . . All of our Eucharists must be “seeker services”.<sup>59</sup> But this will not mean for him any compromise of the ‘strong center’ of the *ordo*, which by virtue of its relationship to Jesus Christ is held to promise deep and genuine inclusivity. Finally, it is Lathrop’s understanding of Lutheran liturgical hermeneutics that ensures both open welcome and some borders to hospitality towards expressions of contemporary cultures in liturgy. For Lathrop, at all times, the centre of word and sacrament must be clear, whilst the assembly is also porous to ‘the gifts of many cultures of the world: their languages, their music, their patterns of festivity and solemnity, their manners of gathering, their structures of meaning’.<sup>60</sup> Yet cultural patterns, not least western or northern cultural forms, may never ‘usurp the place of the center’.<sup>61</sup> Rather,

They must come into the “city” to gather around the “Lamb” (Revelation 21: 22-27); they must be broken to the purpose of the Gospel of Christ. Cultural patterns of all sorts – southern and northern, western and eastern, rural and urban, specifically local and increasingly world-wide – are welcome here. But they are not to take the place of the Lamb. They are not welcome to obscure the gift of Christ in the Scripture read and preached, in the water used in his name, and in the thanksgiving meal.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Lathrop, ‘Strong Center...’, pp. 42-43.

<sup>60</sup> Lathrop, ‘A Contemporary Lutheran Approach...’, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> Lathrop, ‘A Contemporary Lutheran Approach...’, p. 138.

<sup>62</sup> Lathrop, ‘A Contemporary Lutheran Approach...’, pp. 138-139.

## Engaging the debate about *Patterns for Worship*

Establishing a dialogue between the work of Gordon Lathrop and the issues considered in earlier parts of this work might find a focus in a number of areas:

It is obvious to state that the *ordo* that is so clearly valued by Lathrop is simply not considered as a 'treasure' in many of the urban assemblies or those with children that have been the concerns of Part Two of this work. This can be seen in the common, somewhat laissez-faire approach to the presentation of the kind of services that have come in many places to be known as 'family services'.<sup>63</sup> These may often involve a simplification of the *ordo*'s juxtapositions if not a jettisoning of much of its content, perhaps especially its sacramental heart.

In relation to such practices, Lathrop's appreciation of the *ordo* has a great deal to contribute to the consideration of the shape of Christian worship, even when the young or barely literate are present. Given the concern of many proponents of 'family services' with evangelism, Lathrop's critique of worship that decimates the *ordo* offers an important challenge to assumptions about the kind of truth and the characteristics of the community into which the evangelised are to be invited. More mundanely, though also important, wider knowledge of the views that Lathrop promotes would cast much discussion about rules and rubrics for worship in a new light. Even when rubrics offer unprecedented freedoms, as in *Patterns for Worship* in the English Anglican tradition, their being set in a much broader context by cross-reference to the seriousness with which Lathrop approaches the topic of essentials for Christian worship might enable rubrics - perhaps

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<sup>63</sup> See: *Patterns for Worship*, pp.2-5; also, Michael Vasey, 'The Family and the Liturgy', Stephen C Barton, ed., *The Family in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996), 169-185.

especially minimal ones - to be valued to a greater extent than is often apparent.

Lathrop raises very important concerns about juxtaposition as a key means by which theology is learned. These concerns need to be brought into conversation with those responsible for worship with children and in urban contexts, and they merit careful attention by those who plan and lead worship, or create resources for worship. For instance, if children are to be recognised as constituent of the primary symbol of Christian worship, the assembly itself, then facilitating children's understanding of theological juxtapositions is a crucial task of Christian catechesis, as is drawing out and celebrating children's own contributions to the juxtapositions by which the church articulates its seeking and praise of the divine. Here, Gail Ramshaw's work to make liturgy accessible to children may be a leading light for many more contributions towards the same end. And accessible 'abecedaries' of the kind of which Ramshaw has developed – for instance, Letters for God's Name, revised as A Metaphorical God – may also be significant among urban Christians resistant to the temptation to which theologians are apparently often regarded as being prone – to that which Green labels as 'wrapping God up in abstraction'.

If children are to encounter the juxtapositions of the liturgy, and so to become conversant with at least enough theology to enable a relationship with God, it is clear that children need above all to be present as participants in liturgical celebration. And yet this point is by no means uncontentious. The presence of children at all in many British churches is unusual enough, though even where they are present they are very often subject to congregational practices that remove them from most if not all parts of the liturgy. Their removal – even with 'blessing' mediated by appropriate adults (among others, the vicar's 'let's pray for the children before they leave for Sunday School') - may be largely for the convenience of the adults present, while conversely, the

presence of children may also be largely for the benefit of adults seeking or requiring simple presentations of aspects of the faith, a reality of which Mark Searle was aware, as we saw in citations from his work in chapter 4 above.

The practice of children departing from worship may communicate very much about perceptions of children – if, for instance it is considered appropriate for children to be present for a confession of sin but not for reflection on scripture or for reception of the eucharist, a particular view of children may be operative, even if acknowledgement that this is the case is difficult to elicit. Even in congregations in which children’s ‘sacramental belonging’ is accepted, and in which children participate in communion, particular views of children may be operative if liturgical roles open to lay adults are not also open to children. And yet resistance to children’s involvement in the proclamation of scripture or in the distribution of the sacrament is sometimes quite vigorously resisted, and even legislated against: bishops’ licences to lay eucharistic ministers may be restricted to the over 16s.

In the case of these two particular examples – scripture reading and handling the sacrament – echoing the expectation of a psalmist that ‘out of the mouths of babes Yahweh ordains his praise’<sup>64</sup> does not seem be easy, while neither does facilitating the embodiment in public roles of the status of children as created in the divine image and so capable of serving as sacramental channels of divine grace. The apparent resistance to children’s involvement in handling of the eucharist at least reveals the paucity or discomfort attending images of God as child – compare ‘father’ and for some though not for all, ‘mother’ – and this at least suggests an image beginning with ‘c’ that might fruitfully emerge in an abecedary.<sup>65</sup> Children’s participation in liturgy as an expression of

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<sup>64</sup> Psalm 8.2 (ICEL).

their own capacity, and the capacity of aspects of their lives, to symbolise the divine is crucial, as is their own participation in symbol. And both their participation in symbol and the symbolism of their participation are desirable in the catechesis of the church as an all-age community. The young's contribution to the Passover, not least their leading questions – 'Why is this night not like any other night?' and so on – suggest important cues and leads to the ways in which children may not only be involved in symbolic reality but be valued in the role of leading others into participation in God's work according to scripture and tradition.

Perhaps as problematically for both adults and children, the removal of children from the worshipping assembly in order for them to attend Sunday School may communicate that worship is an adult activity whilst learning is for children. This threatens to rupture the appropriate life-long association between discipleship and learning.<sup>66</sup> Many British churches have much to learn from the commonplace North American practice of Sunday School as an all-age activity, in which many members of congregations will be involved in some form of religious education, and most likely in a form distinct from the didactic style of sermons. The removal of children from the assembly in ways that are characteristic of many British churches, may not only disenfranchise children from the traditions of worship which so many seem to find it impossible to (re-)engage on 'growing out' of Sunday School, and so leave – as they grow out of and leave other forms of schooling - it may also disenfranchise adult Christians from means of learning the Christian faith that are perhaps most appropriate to their own adult capacities and needs. Even the concession to adult learning represented by mid-week 'home-groups', popular in Britain in many

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<sup>65</sup> Janet Pais considers the metaphor of God as child in Suffer the Children: A Theology of Liberation by a Victim of Child Abuse (New York: Paulist, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> 'Learner' is a meaning of μαθητης.

evangelical and charismatic churches as a means of fellowship between Sundays, allows adult Christian learning to become the pursuit of a keen 'elite', whereas attempting to establish the normalcy of all-age Sunday School on Sundays would hold more potential for strengthening the ordinariness of the connection between 'disciple' and its etymological links to learning.

Even in assemblies where it is for whatever reasons considered appropriate for children to depart from parts of services of worship intended primarily to include adults, other lessons could be learned by many British churches from another commonplace North American practice by the Christian churches – that of provision of 'children's chapels'.<sup>67</sup> Children's chapels are perhaps the closest equivalent to the Sunday School as it is commonly practised in Britain, as they involve the church's children in activity limited to their own age range. However, in contrast to the mainstream British view of Sunday School, children's chapels typically offer liturgical experience, and are likely to use prayer-text and ritual performed in a specially designed liturgical environment. The environment may include a miniature scaled altar-table, ambo from which the bible is read, pews if these are present in the sanctuary, and liturgical arts such as stained glass and religious images. The prayer-text and ritual will also typically be aligned to that which is used in the sanctuary. For instance, the 'Preschool Children's Worship Service' at St Philip's Cathedral, Atlanta includes a procession involving some children as acolytes, the ritual lighting of candles, and dialogue between a liturgical leader and the children that incorporates amongst other things the Lord's prayer, a lection for the day and both trinitarian

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<sup>67</sup> Disappointingly, children's chapels receive little attention in books about the creation and design of liturgical architecture and environment: note, for example, lack of reference in James F White and Susan J White, Church Architecture: Building and Renovating for Christian Worship (Akron: OSL, second edition 1998) in which the omission is not rectified in the second edition, even in a chapter on 'subsidiary spaces'. It is to be hoped that children's chapels are designed on very similar principles as space for all-age assembly, and that this is the reason for the failure to mention them in texts.



greetings and the *sursum corda*. Song and intercession are clearly crafted with the aptitude and appetites of the under 5s in mind, but the various elements of prayer appear in the children's liturgy in the same order as they are likely to do so in the eucharist of the Book of Common Prayer (1979) of the Episcopal Church. Examples of text from the St Philip's order include, at the confession:

**Forgive us, Lord, for things we've done  
that were not kind and good.  
Forgive us, Lord, and help us try  
to do things as we should.**

And, at the offertory, the following exchange, as not money but a cross and flowers are presented on the altar-table:

What does the cross mean?  
**God loves us.**  
What do the flowers mean?  
**We love God.**

This exchange is a prelude to the singing of 'All things bright and beautiful'. This latter example of liturgical dialogue may not be profound, but it is at least a crude juxtaposition of meaning revealed in the context of Christian liturgy, and in a clearly ritualised way that has few parallels in British Sunday Schools as they have typically operated. Notably, material that is much used in British Sunday schools among parallel age groups, for example, Susan Sayers' Pebbles and Scripture Union's SALT, may typically include a prayer (and Sayers' is likely to include a lection of the day, though both use scripture), but neither assumes a ritual context such as the St Philip's preschool liturgy.

As understood by Lathrop, the *ordo* both in terms of its characteristic content and historic shape offers treasures to children in so far as it fosters capacity to manage and state theological juxtapositions and to participate in symbolic reality. Consequently, loss of the *ordo* may frustrate children's – as well as others' – progress towards 'full maturity'

in Christ. Opting for, or being directed to, apparently 'simpler' forms of Christian worship may, perhaps despite claims to the contrary, in fact enlarge the 'hazy, unhelpful, gnostic, self-referential' forms of theology of which Lathrop is wary. In so far as Lathrop's hesitancy is prudent, he offers a sense of how the *ordo* may foster Christians in various counter-cultural perspectives, and so on the basis of Lathrop's work we may hold that participation in the *ordo* constitutes a radical alternative to removing children into Sunday School, as well as to entertaining adults in family services, seeker services, and a range of other possibilities.

As well as offering critical gifts for discipleship to children and those who worship alongside them, counter-cultural views encouraged by the liturgy may have a special poignancy in urban contexts. For churches meeting in geographical space which touches proximate but separate communities such as are characteristically found in cities may be challenged by their liturgy to abandon at least some of the selectivity which, unrestrained, might enable worship to centre on the narrowly perceived needs of one 'community of interest' or another. Embracing the *ordo* enjoyed or endured by the Christian people if not 'at all times and in all places' then in a good many of them may correct or resist any tendency to exclusive self-selectivity which is in Lathrop's estimation the inevitable consequence of the dark side of human polyvalency.

These comments relating Lathrop's perspectives to thinking about worship with children and urban congregations are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, and they do, I believe, suggest the fruitfulness of attending to his insights.

In our next chapter, we consider the contribution of Don Saliers.

*chapter 6*

## Expressing the ‘Heart’ – Don E Saliers

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### Introduction

Don E Saliers is William R Cannon Distinguished Professor of Theology and Worship at the Candler School of Theology and the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Prior to joining the Candler faculty in 1974, he worked at Yale Divinity School, after completing his PhD at Yale University. Previous studies were undertaken at Cambridge University, England, and Ohio Wesleyan University.

Saliers is himself an ordained Methodist, and has indeed crafted some of the United Methodist Church’s liturgical resources – most notably, the seasonal material for Advent and Christmas, ‘From Hope to Joy’, and for Lent and Easter, ‘From Ashes to Fire’. Yet more significant perhaps is the fact that he was involved, as both contributor and commentator, in the church’s hymnbook, the United Methodist Hymnal, giving him extensive influence on the shaping of the American Methodist people’s spirituality. Saliers’ ecclesial and academic contexts merge in so far as Emory University is itself a Methodist foundation, and in so far as a body of his own writing reflects Methodist concerns quite directly.

Although occupying a significant place in the United Methodist Church, Saliers has wide ecumenical interests, having since the period of growing liturgical consensus in the 1970s – that he helped to foster and

to promote<sup>1</sup> - occupied a major role in encouraging his denomination in ecumenical convergence. Saliers is an oblate of the Benedictine Order, with strong connections to St John's Abbey, Minnesota, the foundation of Orate Fratres, which became Worship (of which he is associate editor, as well as regular contributor).

Apart from United Methodist Church liturgical resources, Saliers is the author of many articles and several monographs: notably, The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections,<sup>2</sup> Worship and Spirituality,<sup>3</sup> Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine<sup>4</sup> and Worship Come to its Senses.<sup>5</sup> He is co-author with his Anglican colleague Charles Hackett of the presider's manual The Lord be With You,<sup>6</sup> the (Revised) Common Lectionary resource book (New Handbook of the Christian Year,<sup>7</sup> and The Conversation Matters,<sup>8</sup> a

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<sup>1</sup> James F White, 'Shaping the 1972 United Methodist Eucharistic Rite', Christian Worship in North America 1955-1995: A Retrospective (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 143-154; and other essays in the same volume.

<sup>2</sup> Don E Saliers, The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections (New York: Seabury, first edition 1980; Akron: Order of St Luke, second edition 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Don E Saliers, Worship and Spirituality (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, first edition 1984; Akron: OSL, second edition 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Don E Saliers, Worship As Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Don E Saliers, Worship Come to Its Senses (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Hackett and Don E Saliers, The Lord Be With You: A Visual Handbook for Presiding in Liturgy (Akron: OSL, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Hoyt L Hickman, Don E Saliers, Laurence Hull Stookey and James F White, Handbook of the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon Press, first edition – 1984); Hoyt L Hickman, Don E Saliers, Laurence Hull Stookey and James F White, New Handbook of the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). The new handbook accounts for the publication and use of the Revised Common Lectionary.

<sup>8</sup> James Knight III and Don E Saliers, The Conversation Matters: Why United Methodists Should Talk with One Another (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

treatise on the contemporary shape of United Methodism which he co-wrote with Henry Knight III. Saliers is also co-editor of Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation to Modern in the 'World Spirituality' series,<sup>9</sup> contributing an endnote piece on 'Christian spirituality in an ecumenical age', and of Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice, to which he adds a piece on the 'spirituality of inclusiveness'.<sup>10</sup> He is also the subject of a *Festschrift*, Liturgy and Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God,<sup>11</sup> which gathers writings that reflect Saliers' concerns as expressed in his particularly influential article, 'Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings'. Contributions to the collection are written by former students, renowned Methodist scholars, colleagues at the Candler School of Theology and those in organisations such as the North American Academy of Liturgy, of which he was President in 1982, and from which he received its Berakah Award in 1992. An extraordinary, anonymously scripted tribute used on the occasion of his Berakah Award presentation hints at some of the marks of his work, and may act as a kind of preface to more thoroughgoing exploration: 'To. . . a fountain among us. . . From your pen flows philosophy for the learned, piety for the faithful, music for a thousand tongues to sing. For us who are thirsty you pour out yourself, singing a spirit of praise, teaching a grammar for prayer, giving us words for our blessings. A blessing yourself, you have strangely warmed our hearts, and for you we give thanks.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Louis Dupre and Don E Saliers, ed., Christian Spirituality III: Post-Reformation to the Present (London: SCM, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Don E Saliers and Nancy Eisland, ed., Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> E Byron Anderson and Bruce T Morrill, eds., Liturgy and Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God: Essays in Honor of Don E Saliers (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Editorial notice, Worship, 66 (1992): 184-5.

The editors of Liturgy and Moral Self, Ron Anderson and Bruce Morrill, identify some themes of Saliers' work in their introduction: 'prayer and belief', 'prayer and the Christian affections' and 'practicing a liturgical aesthetic'. These themes are reflected in their organisation of the various honorary articles that follow, which are structured into three main parts under the headings: 'Liturgical theology: tradition, practice, and belief', 'Formation of character: person, practice, and affection', and 'Word and music: forming a liturgical aesthetic'. In their introduction, Morrill and Anderson write that 'Saliers consistently articulates a liturgical theology that unites prayer, belief and ethical action',<sup>13</sup> and in relation to their chosen themes they emphasise in turn: the prior and normative role of prayer in theology; liturgy as an arena in which Christian affections may be formed through practice; and liturgy well conceived and well celebrated as an enabling 'art'. In a dense foreword to the same book, Rebecca Chopp concentrates these themes further: 'the Christian pattern' encoded in worship is, she writes, for Saliers the beginning of theology, for theology 'gestures to God through the communal symbolic, ritual, and cultic acts of how Christians know God and world'.<sup>14</sup> Crucially, ecclesial practices 'order the fullness of life', and in the closest she allows to an example of how this might happen she suggests that 'shaped to stand before God, the body bows in prayer in the intimacy of partaking in liturgy. In this intimate partaking, the moral imagination of reverence and solidarity is nurtured.'<sup>15</sup>

Her use of 'reverence' relates to Anderson and Morrill's stress on prayer in Saliers' work, while 'solidarity' perhaps especially reflects particular

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson and Morrill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Chopp, 'Foreword', Anderson and Morrill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. ix.

<sup>15</sup> Chopp, 'Foreword', p. x-xi.

concern of her own with 'the praxis of suffering',<sup>16</sup> which she finds amply echoed in Saliers' writings. Reflecting again on these two themes, she writes that: 'the Christian pattern teaches one, shapes one, to have an attitude of awesome wonder and deep recognition of suffering and death'.<sup>17</sup> As Chopp sets these emphases in the wider context of contemporary theology, she finds interest with worship as primary theology and ethical guide 'quite startlingly antimodern and yet not quite postmodern'<sup>18</sup> - at least in Saliers' unfolding of such interests. Referring, I think, to Saliers' understanding of primary theology, she sees this as offering not 'a remaking of theology' but an opportunity for the 'refashioning of . . . the enduring spaces, full of character and memory, to invite vital forms of holy Christian dwelling'.<sup>19</sup>

While my own reflections on the central themes of Saliers' work will at times simply set out a different ordering of things already distilled by Chopp, Anderson and Morrill, I also want to underscore some points not drawn out by others. The three keys to Saliers' thought I wish to explore are: the range of the heart, the travail of liturgy, and grace as an eschatological gift.

### **The range of the heart**

Saliers is unabashed in his employment of some traditional – and popularly used – Christian terminology. While such language may – especially in its traditional and popular forms – invite the charge of

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<sup>16</sup> See Rebecca Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Chopp, 'Foreword', p. xi

<sup>18</sup> Chopp, 'Foreword', p. ix.

<sup>19</sup> Chopp, 'Foreword', p. xii.

vagueness, or even non-rationality, Saliers attempts to define a range of meaning for such terms as 'heart' and 'soul', without at the same time wishing to eschew the merits of poetic expression. For instance, his first book, The Soul in Paraphrase takes its title from George Herbert's sonnet 'Prayer', from The Temple,<sup>20</sup> while focusing a particular spiritual tradition's use of the language of feeling in tension with some contemporary questions about character formation.

For Saliers, 'to characterise the heart is to say what a human being is by calling attention to how the world is experienced and regarded'.<sup>21</sup> The comprehensiveness of this quotation is a clue to the fact that, for Saliers, the concept of the heart acts as a point of convergence for the central foci of his earliest to latest writings. The Soul in Paraphrase sets out many of his themes in a particular order, while many of his later works – as Rebecca Chopp may suggest – refashion their arrangement into different shapes, with each new writing pointing in a different direction, with fresh implications.

From the first, Saliers has been concerned to refuse the familiar dichotomy between the anti-doctrinal bias sometimes encountered among experientially-oriented religious seekers and distrust of experience sometimes found among the theologically reflective.<sup>22</sup> In response to the former, he wishes to distinguish intense experience and deep emotion, which are not necessarily linked.<sup>23</sup> In response to the latter, he seeks to convince that 'there is . . . a pattern of particular

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<sup>20</sup> The same sonnet has inspired at least the titles of a flurry of contemporary Christian books, including Monica Furlong's Bird of Paradise, David Stancliffe et al., Celebrating Common Prayer: Something Understood, and Nicholas Lash, Easter in Ordinary.

<sup>21</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, p. v.

<sup>22</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, p. 4.



affections which constitute and govern the life of the Christian': gratitude, awe, sorrow, joy, and so on, and that 'to confess faith in God is to live a life characterized by these emotions'.<sup>24</sup>

Such emotions, he suggests, are essential to the meaning and practice of prayer, for prayer is the school or activity in which affective knowledge of God may be gained. With special reference to the eucharistic prayer, Saliers writes:

At the heart of Christian liturgical prayer and action is a pattern of thanksgiving and praise which – when addressed to its most fitting object, the God of all creation – opens a way of life and consequently a way of knowing God. Such a knowing is not simply doctrinal or cognitive; it is profoundly affectional.<sup>25</sup>

According to Saliers, prayer – at least when learned well (a standard for which his successive books provide evermore refined criteria) - enables encounter with both 'the mystery of God' and 'the ambiguous reality of our own humanity before God'. This 'double-journey', as he sometimes calls it, into divine and human mysteries, is another notion to which Saliers returns again and again; and for him the journey to get closer to God and to humanity is always coterminous, as it were.<sup>26</sup> Saliers' mature writing re-expresses this central conviction in terms of the relationship between 'human pathos and divine ethos' (a chapter title in Worship as Theology). When at once 'open to the world's sufferings. . . [and] also open to the grace of God', 'authentic liturgy lures us by grace

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<sup>24</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, pp. 6, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Liturgy Teaching Us to Pray', Eleanor Bernstein, ed., Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 62-83, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, p. 3; for hints at the continuity of these themes, see Worship as Theology, pp. 88-89 and Worship Come to Its Senses, p. 17.

into a new pathos, now directed to the passion of God at the heart of the gospel'.<sup>27</sup>

In Saliers' accounts, emotions may be 'lived into' through encounter with 'a wide range of life' expressive of such emotions (as mediated by, for example, literature, poetry, ritual, scripture) and in this process, a person's capacity for emotional dispositions is enlarged, just as such emotions may also be 'honed' to precision. Prayer, in partnership with the other means just mentioned, and focusing those other means, may 'evoke and educate', 'express and critique' a constantly expanding and sensitive emotional life.<sup>28</sup>

Emotion-terms are part of a proper description of the life of prayer: thanksgiving, adoration, awe, remorse and sorrow, pity and compassion. These are features of the form of life in which praying has meaning and point. To take up a prayerful way of being in the world requires readiness; the language of prayer and worship not only expresses such emotions, it also forms and critiques, it shapes and refines these emotions in persons.<sup>29</sup>

Although Saliers admits that it is particularly in communal forms of prayer that emotions may be shaped, his earlier work focuses on resources more likely to be familiar in the 'holiness' tradition of Methodism which was his own context of nurture in younger life. (Only later are the shape and structural aspects of the classical *ordo* explored in depth – the preface and afterword to the second edition of The Soul in Paraphrase can disguise this fact, as they to some extent redress the

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<sup>27</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, pp. 35, 38.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, pp. 23, 24. On the process of acquiring, refining and transforming emotions, see James R Averill and Elma P Nunley, Voyages of the Heart: Living an Emotionally Creative Life (New York: Free Press, 1992), which does not refer to Saliers' work, though is broadly consonant with it, blending appreciation of the role which may be played by religious practices in the development of emotional life into its overarching psychological perspectives.

<sup>29</sup> Saliers, Soul in Paraphrase, second edition, p. 36.

emphases of the main text by including more references to 'ritual practices', 'common worship' and so on).

At the early stages of his thinking and writing, a particular inspiration was the nineteenth century revivalist Jonathan Edwards, whose writings clearly shape Saliers' own interest in and conception of emotions, and the scriptures. It is apparent that themes which in later work like Worship as Theology are unfolded from their liturgical context and function are in the earlier Soul in Paraphrase rooted in their biblical 'soil'. Special attention is given to the Psalms, which have remained an abiding focus for Saliers, as may be seen in the manner in which the core of his article 'David's Song in Our Land',<sup>30</sup> has found many later expressions. He calls the Psalms 'acoustic metaphors'.<sup>31</sup> Correspondingly, Saliers has set several of the Psalms to music for liturgical use, and many are included in the United Methodist Hymnal. What the psalter may have especially impressed upon Saliers is its 'full expressive range' of emotions that may school the heart in 'passional life before God'.<sup>32</sup> Psalm 104 reaches to the limits of beatitude at one 'pole' of the emotional range contained in the psalter: 'I will bless you, Lord my God! You fill the world with awe. You dress yourself in light, in rich, majestic light. . . .'<sup>33</sup> Saliers is, however, keen to characteristically stress contrasts between, for example, the psalmists' sense of jubilation and despair, and between the sense of divine presence and divine absence. He also considers the ways in which such contrasts may be explored through acoustic harmony and dissonance in musical

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<sup>30</sup> Reprinted in the 'best of' collection of articles from the Liturgical Conference's journal Liturgy: Don E Saliers, 'David's Song in Our Land', Blair Gilmer Meeks, ed., The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997), 235-241.

<sup>31</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 212.

<sup>32</sup> Saliers, 'David's Song', pp. 236, 240.

<sup>33</sup> Psalm 104.1-2a, ICEL Psalter (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995).

accompaniment and singing. He is clearly fond of the Methodist hymn-writer Fred Pratt Green's piece 'When in Our Music God is Glorified', which combines in music and song a range of contrasts:

And did not Jesus sing a psalm that night  
when darkest evil fought against the light?  
So let us sing, for whom he won the fight: Alleluia!

The potential of musical contrasts to widen and refine the emotions is another repeated theme in Saliers' work and one that helps to yield fresh insight into the range of the heart.<sup>34</sup> Further depth is also lent to these insights in his explorations of liturgical 'feasts and seasons' – the contrasts gathered into Advent, for instance, like desert and fiesta - and all that they may entail when entered into (for more on Advent, see below). And, to re-iterate a point introduced earlier, the various activities – praising, invoking, confessing, interceding and so on – contained in the inherited patterns of the classical *ordo*, may open divine grace to participants, at least those prepared to engage in 'authentic prayer', as distinguished from more simple willingness to recite prayer texts (the deeper engagement being marked by 'wholehearted attentiveness and attunement to God in and through the utterances'<sup>35</sup>):

The meaning of praying is not a simple matter of saying the words. To pray is to become a living text before God. In this sense, meaning what we say requires more than the onset of lively emotions.

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<sup>34</sup> See especially Don E Saliers, 'Liturgical Musical Formation', Robert Leaver and Joyce Ann Zimmermann, eds., Music and Liturgy : Lifelong Learning (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 384-394; Don E Saliers, 'Singing Our Lives' Dorothy C Bass, ed., Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 87; cf. Saliers, 'Liturgy Teaching Us to Pray', p. 63.

Meaning what we pray involves sharing a form of life in which the affections and dispositions are oriented towards God.<sup>36</sup>

Like the breadth of Psalms and the richness of seasons, the range of elements in classical liturgical structures may enact the full stretch of life and constitute 'primary theology' - forms of knowing God. So for Saliers, these three dynamics of liturgical worship – employing psalmody, observing fasts and feasts and keeping seasons, and following classical structures - are means by which the heart may learn its range. All may be means which invite discovery of, or offer resources for coping with, life 'at full stretch'.

Saliers' vivid image of life or humanity 'at full stretch' is one that Saliers puts to repeated use and which has come increasingly to characterise his writings, as its inclusion in the subtitle of the *Festschrift* suggests. It acts as a kind of summary for his conviction that what he has come in his latest writings to call 'durable emotions'<sup>37</sup> yield abilities to recognise and respond to the 'fullness of life' in both its joyous and painful extremities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings', Anderson and Morrill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 15-35, pp. 25-26.

<sup>37</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means: Sunday Worship in United Methodist Congregations', Karen Westerfield-Tucker, ed., The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Studies in Worldwide Methodism: Essays in Honor of James F White (Nashville: Kingswood, 1997), 137-156, 152.

<sup>38</sup> Also illuminating on some of these neglected themes are three essays – John A Bernsten, 'Christian Affections and the Catechumenate', Jeff Astley, 'The Role of Worship in Christian Learning', and Craig R Dykstra, 'The Formative Power of the Congregation' - collected together in Jeff Astley, Leslie J Francis and Colin Crowder, eds., Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996). Bernsten makes reference to Saliers' work on emotions. See also Craig Dykstra, Growing in the life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices (Louisville: Geneva, 1999), which includes 'The Formative Power. . .' and other related essays.

## The travail of liturgy

By use of the word 'travail', Saliers means to engage several dimensions of the realities of worshipping communities. His explorations of humanity at full stretch relate the resources of Christian worship to ministries of pastoral care and their work of aligning with those who in various ways may be embracing travail.<sup>39</sup> For instance, he suggests that attention to lament ensures that liturgy is not irrelevant or insensitive to those experiencing difficulties. Yet Saliers also seems to mean more than this, as contemporary North American culture is understood by him to set a context with which liturgy must wrestle to make known divine grace. He regards that culture as an environment whose diminution may be contrasted to that 'formation and expression of God's grace in human form'<sup>40</sup> which practices of worship, at their best, may display. Saliers' short book Worship Come to Its Senses hints at some aspects of the ways in which contemporaries may be malformed. In it, he identifies four dimensions of a related problem. He asserts that participants in North American culture are fast losing their capacity for awe, especially as the culture becomes more distant from nature and domesticates death. Further, they are confusing delight with entertainment 'or the frivolity of mere self-expression'. Additionally, they are kept at a distance from other persons by failing to question social habits of polite niceties or the simplicities weaved by 'spin', instead of seeking the 'social grace' which may yet be a fruit of truth - for all its complexities. Finally, they are too content to dissolve hope

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<sup>39</sup> Among many examples, Saliers, Worship as Theology, pp. 28-29, 37-38, 147, 150.

<sup>40</sup> Saliers, Worship Come to Its Senses, p. 81.

into hope's shadow, optimism, as they lose their knowledge of the resources offered by scripture's 'long memory'.<sup>41</sup>

'Liturgical Travail in Contemporary American Culture' (the title of an as yet unpublished manuscript, for which Saliers received the Luce Fellowship in 1999-2000)<sup>42</sup> may then turn out to be about the struggle for worship formed around classical patterns to yield its sense of awe, delight, truth and hope (the subjects of the central chapters of Worship Come to Its Senses) in the face of pervasive societal malady. Saliers notes that, mercifully, 'none of these [cultural] captivities can separate us from the grace of God',<sup>43</sup> but he is certainly to be counted among those North-American liturgical theologians who are anxious to resist captivities of these kinds, if they can.<sup>44</sup> And this struggle may be especially acute in a new situation in which the muscles of the Megachurches are pressed against the mainstream Christian traditions and the latter are drawn increasingly into the "culture war" between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' worship that now characterises much of contemporary North American Christianity.<sup>45</sup> As Saliers has in his

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<sup>41</sup> Saliers, Worship Come to Its Senses, pp. 20, 47, 54, 56, 67, 43; and also Don E Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', Anderson and Morill, eds., Liturgy and the Moral Self, pp. 216-218.

<sup>42</sup> Abingdon Press have, however, released an audio-cassette of Saliers lecturing on 'Christian worship in a culture of hype', on related themes: Don E Saliers, Christian Worship in a Culture of Hype (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001 [audio]).

<sup>43</sup> Saliers, Worship Come to Its Senses, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> James White and Gordon Lathrop also express concern about these matters. Marva Dawn's recent companion books, Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: a Theology of Worship for the Turn of the Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) and A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) are significant, extended discussions of some these themes.

<sup>45</sup> Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', p. 217. Carol Doran and Thomas Troger, Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) is an excellent introduction to nature of this 'war', written jointly by a Roman Catholic and an Anglican [Episcopalian] author.

time exerted significant influence upon the United Methodist Church to take on classical patterns of Christian worship, the pressure of Megachurches' methods and forms – some of which are adopted from the Frontier and holiness traditions which had been integrated with other church styles in the UMC - may seem especially troubling. But perhaps the Megachurches represent only the sharp end of a longer-standing dilemma, and another aspect of 'liturgical travail' may be found closer to the heart of the liturgical mainstream in some of the less than encouraging findings of the consortium entitled *The Awakening Church*, which studied the appropriation of liturgical renewal in North American Roman Catholicism in the twenty-five years following the Second Vatican Council. This project, and Saliers' contribution in particular, revealed the paucity of 'the sense of transcendent mystery in the experience of the primary symbols' of liturgy,<sup>46</sup> such as light, water, bread, oil, wine, fire, gestures, and touch. Saliers was, however, able to suggest some reasons and practical remedies for such malaise (for more on symbol, see below), though the new depth and direction that emerged from the acknowledgement of failures of connection are now again eclipsed by more contemporary challenges. For instance, distress is expressed in a recent edition of *Worship* by various authors who reflect on the North American liturgical scene in the twenty-five years to date and voice disappointment at trends towards 'new rubricism and absolute uniformity' and with attempts to reverse the mandates of Vatican II. Although especially pertinent to the Roman Catholic situation, the ecumenical environment which liturgical renewal has ensured mean

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<sup>46</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol: The Domestication of Liturgical Experience', Lawrence J Madden, ed., *The Awakening Church: Twenty-Five Years of Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 69-82, 72.



that these trends have gathered a wider range than one might have expected.<sup>47</sup>

Saliers' own response to at least those aspects of this travail which touch directly on United Methodism has been to underscore the 'rich diversity' which comprises the ethos of recent Methodist worship. In terms of the challenges presented by the Megachurches, which generate the question of whether, in the attempt to 'target' the unchurched, Christian worship is possible without employment of central symbols from the tradition (even such basic ones as those employed in baptism and eucharist), Saliers insists that exploration of 'the tradition in all its richness'<sup>48</sup> need not be 'boring' as commonly supposed, and will readily provide access to the kind of resources adequate to the demands of 'life at full stretch', whereas symbols, scripture, sacramental actions, rituals and so on, when pared right down - or forgotten - will most probably not.

In some of his most recent writing, Saliers notes that 'Christian worship is always culturally embedded and embodied, although the theological and liturgical implications of this have come only recently to general awareness'.<sup>49</sup> Saliers traces the meaning of the statement through a patient study of the cultural situations in which various popular forms of American Methodist spirituality have emerged, each of which are constitutive of the tradition 'in all its richness'. The urban context gave rise especially to 'revivals', shaped after Frontier camp meetings,

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<sup>47</sup> See especially Rembert G Weakland, 'Liturgy in the United States These Past Twenty-Five Years', 5-12, and Robert F. Taft, 'A Generation of Liturgy in the Academy', 46-58, Worship 75 (2001).

<sup>48</sup> Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means: Sunday Worship in United Methodist Congregations', Karen Westerfield Tucker, ed., The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism: Essays in Honor of James F White (Nashville: Kingswood, 1996), 137-156, p. 156.

<sup>49</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means', p. 138.

emphasising free-forms and enthusiasm, within a simple liturgical structure: 'preliminaries', message and 'altar-call'. In other areas, a 'Sunday School' model pertained in which all, of whatever age, attended lay-led classes, and where faith was 'learned' in this way, in contrast to the revival model which often stressed sudden conversion. In yet other places, an 'Anglican aesthetic' permeated Methodist worship, especially in prosperous areas of cities. Texts played a more prominent part in proceedings than in the other spiritualities, and there was more emphasis both on the architectural environment and to beauty expressed in choral singing for instance. A fourth mode of spirituality arose in American Methodism at a later stage, after the Second Vatican Council, and in some measure in response to it. This mode sought a steady, shared pattern for worship and yet fostered pluralism, seeking to include diverse elements in a binding shape of worship. Saliers himself has been at the forefront of this fourth mode of Methodist worship, appropriating the historic and contemporary ecumenical corpus of worship for the Methodist tradition, writing liturgical texts and contributing to its key hymnbook.

Reflecting on the legacy of these four modes of Methodist worship in the American history of the denomination, he poses three questions which are relevant to the British situation, and are indeed close to the surface in the thinking underlying Patterns for Worship and the understanding of Anglican worship which that prayer book represents.

Firstly, 'how can we "liven up" our Sunday morning worship?' Saliers asserts that 'being more "alive"' may or may not involve dispensing with 'traditional' forms and styles. In line with criticisms noted above by White and Lathrop, Saliers states that 'captivity' by contemporary culture may invite 'lifelessness', inhibiting 'the sense of joining in the one church's praise and vulnerability to God "in all times and places"'.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means', p. 151.

He suggests that the best way to curtail 'boring worship' is to explore the tradition more deeply.

Secondly, 'how can worship form a deeper spirituality?' It is this question with which most of Saliers' work is in fact concerned, but in the context of his particular reflections on the four modes of American Methodist worship he underlines 'the formation of durable emotion' as the means to ensure spiritual depth. Also, the importance is stressed of the content of services cohering with the style of both leadership and congregational participation, for 'attention seeking leadership –either folksy or pompous' especially debilitates 'ownership by the assembly'. Exploring the necessity of congregational ownership and participation, Saliers' expands on the 'content' of Christian worship in another piece of writing, identifying its 'heart' as 'a broken symbol. . . [so that] unless we break open the symbols by bringing our life to them, taking into account human pathos, they will remain inaccessible'. Liturgy must be 'of the real, the palpable, the incarnate'.<sup>51</sup>

Thirdly, 'How can Christian worship "target" the unchurched?' According to Saliers, there is a great need to 'unburden the Lord's day of trying to do too many things at once, including evangelism', especially as he believes that

more people are convinced that Christianity is real when they see the quality of concern, commitment and responsible facing of the complex issues of life and death than when they are given spiritual entertainment',<sup>52</sup>

though the search for 'more honesty and joy' in worship is most certainly appropriate, and the subject of his book Worship Come to its

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<sup>51</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Toward a Spirituality of Inclusiveness', Nancy Eisland and Don E Saliers, eds., Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means', p. 153.

Senses.<sup>53</sup> The point is that the kind of celebration which promotes the formation of durable emotion is the key connection ‘between liturgy and life’. By insisting that ‘what is done in our public worship of God rehearses what we are to be in our life relationships’,<sup>54</sup> Saliers places evangelism a step away from worship events themselves, in the context of relationships which may emerge with those who worship.

On several occasions, Saliers quotes Joseph Gelineau: ‘Only if we come to the liturgy without hopes and fears, without longings and hunger, will the rites symbolize nothing and remain indifferent or curious “objects”’.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, for Saliers, the ‘art of liturgy’ is always of central importance. And he means by this language of art at least ‘the quality of texts, gestures, movements, and the form of the symbols . . . [and a]ttention to each element and to their interrelation in the whole pattern of the liturgy. . .’,<sup>56</sup> (on which, see more below). An extended quotation from Saliers’ Worship and Spirituality is suggestive of what may be missed by the jettisoning of tradition and reflection upon it. He thinks about the eucharistic action – ‘take, bless, break, share’ – as follows:

The pattern gives us the very shape of the life God calls us to live responsibly in this world. . .

We offer ourselves. . . Giving ourselves over to the mercy and to the compassion of the One who created all things and called them good is to discover our own best being. This discovery is so powerful that it is called “conversion”. . .

The act of the great thanksgiving is what our lives are meant to be. . . We may follow in our lives the structure of the ancient eucharistic

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<sup>53</sup> Don E Saliers, Worship Come to its Senses (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

<sup>54</sup> Saliers, ‘Toward a Spirituality of Inclusiveness’, p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> For examples, Worship and Spirituality, p. 35; ‘Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol’, p. 70; Worship as Theology, p. 139.

<sup>56</sup> Don E Saliers, ‘Aesthetics, Liturgical’ Peter E Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 30-39, p. 37.

prayers: acknowledge God in praise for who God is, a mystery of being yet a furnace of compassion, our creator hidden in glory yet revealed in the whole created order. . . Then we acknowledge God's holiness . . . And, as the prayer of thanksgiving develops, so do our lives. We remember all the mighty works of God in creation, covenant and redemptive history. But we also remember our alienation, our turning aside. . . Our lives come to light and to identity the more we enter into this story of God prayed by the community. In everyday life we are to be places of living memory – telling the truth and reminding ourselves and the world of God's intention for us. It is in the context of our lives that we discern, if at all, what it means to remember that Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and took the cup. In the midst of our desolation and complicity and bitter denial and death-dealing and hope for a society of justice and peace, we may begin to understand what we remember when we remember him. . .

To the great "Amen" our lives lean. . . But our lives, too, must be broken in order to be shared, so we must be prepared to be given for others. The image of bread, itself composed of wheat and kneaded by hands over a process of growth and maturing – that is what we are to become for God's world. . . even in our ordinariness, to be a feast others. So we must be speaking and touching and feeding and reconciling in God's name. . .

. . . and this is the most terrifying and beautiful matter – through this form of life we receive back our own lives. . . Grace is given in the eucharist, but this is the grace we also encounter in offering, blessing, breaking open, and sharing our lives with all in this needy world. This is our lost identity; this is the secret hidden from the eyes of the detached and self-possessed world.<sup>57</sup>

### **Grace as an eschatological gift**

A number of themes may be gathered from the corpus of Saliers' work that point towards grace as an eschatological gift. An obvious one is suggested by the woodcut, 'Dancing Figures' by Stephen Alcorn, an image of grace that Saliers uses to illustrate his thinking, not least as the cover-piece for Worship as Theology. Depicting a Shaker dance, it is expressive of Saliers' stress on undiminished celebration – at least on some occasions - as a characteristic of good liturgy, and the need for cultivation of practices such as 'delight-taking' in order to imbibe such

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<sup>57</sup> Saliers, Worship and Spirituality, pp. 61, 67-68.

occasions with appropriate joy. The woodcut of the Shaker dance also invites association with Saliers' wide-ranging explorations of what he calls 'the tradition in all its richness'. The appropriate subject of liturgical theology is, for him, not only the mainstream traditions with their now widely recognised classical patterns, as he also attends to marginal aspects of the tradition, being suspicious of excluding, which is sometimes 'disguised cultural imperialism' in liturgical 'aesthetics',<sup>58</sup> a point that is anticipated in the subtitle of Worship as Theology - 'foretaste of glory divine' - which takes up a quotation from a 'folksy' Frontier hymn.<sup>59</sup> So along with the Shakers (whose dancing, with others', 'is that part of the tradition that can best express God's wisdom - the playful, creative aspect of God's activity'<sup>60</sup>), the hymnody of African-American and Hispanic churches, and - among some ancient examples - elements of non-canonical gospels are also considered in his work. A prime example of an early marginal tradition to which Saliers gives heed is the Acts of St John's account of events on 'the night in which Christ was betrayed', which elaborates on Jesus' vigil on the Mount of Olives and pictures him engaging the disciples in a dance:

Grace dances.

"I will pipe; dance, all of you." -

[And we circled around him and answered] "Amen."

"I will mourn; lament, all of you." -

[And we circled around him and answered] "Amen." . . .<sup>61</sup>

(Echoing Saliers' other key themes, as outlined above, here festivity and sorrow converge in a dance on the threshold of death, the movement

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<sup>58</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 194.

<sup>59</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 210.

<sup>60</sup> Saliers, Worship Come to Its Senses, p. 44.

<sup>61</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 198; on the hymn from the Acts of St John, see also James Miller, Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 81-87, 98-110.

and song embodying humanity at full stretch). In respect of these marginal elements, Saliers insists that 'God regards the sincere gestures of the faithful, no matter how humble and how less culturally elaborate the form: here the widow's mite and the dance of David are not rejected'.<sup>62</sup> For he is adamant that it is not only in the 'folksy' but also in the 'overly formal', and not only in 'low' but also in 'high' traditions of worship that 'forms employed and the style of celebrating Christian liturgy may subvert the very saving mystery that resides in the incarnate action of God waiting to be realised in particular Christian assemblies'.<sup>63</sup> And so only the 'broken'<sup>64</sup> symbols of Christ at the heart of the liturgy may set ultimate standards for liturgical aesthetics, and liturgical symbols themselves must correspond to those central christic symbols, by being 'real. . . palpable. . . incarnate. . .' in their turn. (And it is in this light that Saliers' problems with the Megachurches become clearer, as these, for him, cannot be categorised with the marginal elements of the tradition that he does explore – instead, they subvert it).

It is in the context of discussion of apparently marginal aspects of the tradition that one of Saliers' more recent emphases is rightly considered. His latest work has given special attention to questions raised by interaction with feminist and liberationist perspectives, which may bring guidance to liturgical theology as to how marginal elements may not only come to be considered, but also critique, the mainstream. So marginal theologies have taught Saliers that 'naming liturgical "oppressions" . . . highlights the vulnerability of Christian worship to

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<sup>62</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>63</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p. 194; also, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', pp. 216-218.

<sup>64</sup> On corresponding to broken symbols, see especially Don E Saliers, 'Towards a Spirituality of Inclusiveness', p. 28; cf. Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol', p. 82.

immoral and unethical captivities'<sup>65</sup> - just some of which he identifies as 'excessive clericalism, exclusion of women from primary roles, lack of hospitality, lack of vital preaching juxtaposed to the ritual actions, and the loss of participation in the bread and cup'.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, aware that consciously non-Western or gendered theologies employ a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' about the 'malestream' or dominant strand of tradition considered to be at least in part responsible for their 'problems', Saliers holds that the hermeneutics of suspicion may 'require some suspicion too'. Notwithstanding the force of criticism of the mainstream, it remains for him that authentic celebration of worship - that which is 'engaged in the struggle to show in life what is implied in the gathering' (another dimension of 'liturgical travail'?) - may yet permit the kind of vulnerability to grace which 'transforms not simply the inner life of feeling and desire but the social relationships that make us human in the sight of God'.<sup>67</sup> So it may be that as liberationists and feminists prioritise their praxis and amend their theology in its light, so Saliers underlines the priority of worship as primary theology expecting more truthful and refined secondary modes of theology to emerge from it.

According to Saliers, it is particularly in its eschatological references that worship may 'lure'<sup>68</sup> persons into transformed perspectives and behaviour, as 'what is seen and what is heard in Word and sacrament over time reveals what is not yet fully seen or heard in human life'.<sup>69</sup> As the Shakers founded their dancing on a confident realised eschatology,

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<sup>65</sup> Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', p. 216.

<sup>66</sup> Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', p. 222.

<sup>67</sup> Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', pp. 223-224.

<sup>68</sup> An image used, for example, in Worship and Spirituality, p. 89; Worship as Theology, pp. 38, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 17.



Stephen Alcorn's woodcut is a key to a crucial aspect of Saliers' work: his constant return to eschatological dimensions of worship, such as Advent and the image of 'the heavenly fiesta', as hinted at above. Whereas eschatologically weighted theological systems may often tend towards escapism, Saliers' approach 'implies a realism about life that confronts pain and anguish squarely but does not pronounce them to be victorious',<sup>70</sup> a strength blended in the meeting of this third central theme and the first, as discussed above, the 'range of the whole heart'.

Saliers relates a pastor's reflection on a fragment of conversation with a parishioner that vividly summarises his hope that the eschatological impact of worship may be felt:

It's like a dream. . . a vision. . . that people gather for prayer, worshipping, offering praise, thanksgiving, the music, the responding, singing. At some point they say "we could stay here forever." That's the kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

Good liturgy, then, may do more than critique bad liturgy and its captivities to cultural oppressions (apart from those forms of oppression that rest on the foundations of religious traditions) - 'good liturgy disturbs, breaks open, and discloses a new world'.<sup>72</sup> Using a string of olfactory images, Saliers suggests that worship may offer a taste of 'the complete palette of delight', 'a feast for all peoples', 'the heavenly fiesta'.<sup>73</sup> Sustaining his cultural critique, he admits that 'for us who already are too fat with our own consumption, this is an

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<sup>70</sup> Laurence Hull Stookey, review of *Worship As Theology*, *Theology Today* 52 (1996), 524-525, p. 524.

<sup>71</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p. 145.

<sup>72</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p. 213.

<sup>73</sup> Saliers, *Worship Come to Its Senses*, pp. 44-47.

ambiguous picture',<sup>74</sup> and yet he can also re-conceive communal worship as a dance in the light of the eschatological vision:

To redescribe coming to the sanctuary, greeting friends, sitting down, standing for singing and certain prayers, moving towards the altar for prayer and for Holy Communion, and movement out of the building as a slow, complex dance can be revelatory. For in fact, this is a deep feature of the experience for many.<sup>75</sup>

So liturgy is, in his view, a 'revelatory' experience in which dancing and all worship's aesthetic dimensions – beauty in its manifold forms - may play a part. And it is not simply that the arts may be employed in worship, but rather that liturgy itself is an art form, and an art form with a distinctive eschatological bent: all living and dying is to be oriented to the heavenly feast.<sup>76</sup>

It is in this context - of consideration of art and taste and dance - that Saliers' stress on symbol is most pertinent. One of his key contributions to liturgical theology has been to stress the need for primary theology to get 'beyond words alone' and 'beyond the text', and by so doing give proper acknowledgement to the non-verbal aspects of liturgical celebration. The considerable significance of this theme in Saliers' work has been hinted at in much of the above, but it deserves to be made explicit. The consortium The Awakening Church in which Saliers was involved helped to force recognition of the lack of attention such dimensions had received in the reflection generated as a direct response to the renewal of Vatican II:

"Full, conscious, and active participation" is only a receding slogan from paragraph 14 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy if we do not attend to specific questions concerning resistance and

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<sup>74</sup> Saliers, Worship and Spirituality, p. 86.

<sup>75</sup> Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 164.

<sup>76</sup> Saliers, Worship and Spirituality, p. 90.

vulnerability to the non-verbal and symbolic dimensions of liturgical celebration in specific social/cultural contexts.<sup>77</sup>

As might be imagined, those who engaged in reflection on reformed rites characteristically had neglected such questions more than even their Roman Catholic counterparts, making the study of non-verbal components of liturgy a kind of 'virgin territory', at least for theologians – it has of course been subject to social scientific thought, especially by anthropologists. Saliers' own mapping of the area has called for renewed attention to space and architectural shape, movement and gesture, sound and silence, and considerations about the quality and quantity of material used for sacramental purposes, among other things. Yet in relation to such neglected considerations, he has also wished to resist a 'biblical minimalism' that would run the risk of increasing 'subjective projection into the symbol (and, ironically onto the biblical texts themselves)'.<sup>78</sup> It is the alignment of word and gesture or matter, the convergence of symbolic and cognitive suggestion that together form the multivalent environment of liturgical celebration. And it is precisely the shifting juxtapositions and potential for ever fresh alignment of meanings that may unveil eschatological hope and propel participants on in their 'double-journey' into God and into their own human depths. So he can write that:

the liturgy is not a static system or structure to which we bring our life experience; rather it is a crucible for meanings that, if entered into with our whole humanity, makes experience possible: deeper gratitude, deeper awe, a greater capacity for suffering, hope, and compassion.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p. 141; cf. Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol', p. 171.

<sup>78</sup> Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol', p. 75.

<sup>79</sup> Saliers, 'Symbol in Liturgy, Liturgy as Symbol', p. 75.

And through the imparting of such possibilities, liturgical formation constitutes for Saliers a 'rehearsal' of participation in the undiminished glory of God to be revealed in the social grace of a heavenly banquet and yet also prefigured in the paschal events. Engagement in such rehearsal may itself enable human beings, for all their frailties, at times to experience life as sublime and luminous. Yet the sense of frailty and the demand for continual conversion remain ever-present:

Christian conversion points towards participation in the Messianic banquet that continually offers the grace of Christ to a lacerated, self-destructive world. Yet comprehending what the Eucharist gives and asks humankind takes continual practice over time. No one dares presume to claim the fullness of this mystery in language, much less claim to have made it fully manifest in all its spiritual and ethical dimensions. Yet it is the most radical meal, the most revolutionary symbolic action in which human beings can partake.<sup>80</sup>

As partakers yield to the symbols and imagery of the biblical and sacramental vision of the messianic banquet 'this relativizes all lesser human good, yet supplies the moral imagination with root images to sustain intention and action amidst the ambiguities of human existence'.<sup>81</sup>

Saliers' imagery of dancing invites associations with the notion of participation, that central under-girding principle of contemporary liturgical renewal, as inspired by paragraph 14 of Sacrosanctum concilium. Dancing will certainly also require rehearsal, which links in with the notion of practice, which with others, Saliers has done much to rehabilitate in contemporary theological circles.<sup>82</sup> And, further, dancing

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<sup>80</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Pastoral Liturgy and Character Ethics: As We Worship So We Shall Be', Joanne M Pierce and Michael Downey, eds., Source and Summit: Commemorating Josef A Jungmann, SJ (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 183-194, p. 191.

<sup>81</sup> Saliers, 'Pastoral Liturgy and Character Ethics', p. 193.

<sup>82</sup> See Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C Bass, 'Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith', Bass, ed., Practicing Our Faith, pp. 1-12.

may demand improvisation – as liturgy calls for enactment in ethics. Unlike less ambitious liturgical theologies, Saliers' is, he writes, concerned

with the performed liturgy, the actual "lived" liturgy that throws together our lives and what we do in the assembly. It is the worship of God in cultic enactment and service of God in life that constitutes the "primary theology".<sup>83</sup>

### **Engaging the debate about *Patterns for Worship***

Establishing a dialogue between the work of Don Saliers and the issues considered in Chapters 1 - 4 might be focused on a number of themes:

Saliers, himself a musician, illustrates the way in which music and song are central to many Protestant spiritualities, and in various writings he is concerned with the capacity of song to evoke feeling, not least through notions which bolster Lathrop's insights gathered around his key concept of juxtaposition. Saliers' attention to the liturgical year's feasts and seasons offers another trajectory for uncovering and entering into juxtapositions. Here in Saliers' work, then, is another set of lenses for approaching liturgy that promises to enrich the discussion that has been focused in Britain by *Patterns for Worship* and the reasons for its publication. For music is experienced by many worshippers as more readily mediating experience they consider to be spiritual than prayer-text may be.

How children's participation in both song and shifting time may be facilitated is perhaps a particularly crucial agenda for the church's catechesis. The music included in St Philip's Cathedral preschool liturgy, which was considered in the closing section in the chapter on

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<sup>83</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p. 16.

Lathrop, draws on both traditional hymnody and simple rhymes. This is markedly in contrast to so much music in age-grouped gatherings that does not, and this reality in itself may suggest that finding or creating music that allows styles of music to be 'blended' in single events is an art that deserves attention.<sup>84</sup> This at least is a generous interpretation of worshipping communities whose musical expression is restricted in one particular stream or style of music or another – a less generous interpretation being that music so easily colludes with self-selecting characteristics of congregations not alert enough to the inclusivity implied in the gospel of Christ. This notwithstanding, intelligent critique of both popular worship music and traditional hymnody is just one instance of the way in which 'worship wars' often fix on music. In Britain, Pete Ward's studies of the ways in which the musical styles of one generation prevail in the next suggest the influence gained, and cost of the losses, entailed in 'victory' in battles over music for the assembly's praise. Saliers' own distinctive twist on the merit of maturing in musical juxtaposition focus on the range of music's capacity to resonate with, accompany, and so nurture the potential transformation of many forms of the human pathos that is an ordinary part of growing through life.

Saliers also makes other important contributions that enlarge concern for inclusivity in liturgy. Generally, his convictions mediate between the positions of Lathrop and White, who of the three authors in the focus of this work represent poles of opinion about expressing either a central consensus or legitimate diversification in the celebration of worship. Saliers' willingness to search what he calls 'the tradition in all its richness' for precedents, correctives and influence of different kinds suggests an attitude to mediation in liturgical matters that helpfully challenges any temptation to settle prematurely at one pole. For

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<sup>84</sup> See Carol Doran and Thomas H Troeger, Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); Brian Wren, Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

instance, Saliers' approach might both question the sense that 'family services' and what they often seem to entail are a utilitarian necessity in the cause of evangelism, and would resist pressure towards uniformity as that is represented by very powerful bodies such as the proponents of particular kinds of liturgical conservatism - or romanticism - in ascendancy in some Catholic circles: the views of a Cardinal Ratzinger, for example. Saliers' mediating position encourages deep knowledge of the tradition, and yet is also aware that the edges of tradition may sharpen up options that may re-focus the mainstream, or cut through the mainstream so as to broaden it out. Saliers' sensitivity to the contributions of revivalism to the revitalisation of his own United Methodist Church, especially in many urban areas of his nation, is a case in point, and one that lays bare his sense of the subtle balances needed between generosity and defence in matters that involve the wielding of 'cultural imperialism', or suspicion of it.

As befits a stance so focused on 'the heart', the search for integrity in worship is one that Saliers illumines. His conviction that the first purpose of worship is praise of divine glory so that it ought not to be distorted so as, for example, primarily to 'target' persons evangelistically, reflects great confidence in worship's integrity as a worthy activity in itself.<sup>85</sup> And in Saliers' own configuration of the way in which worship does relate to evangelism, his insistence that the ethical quality of worshippers' lives must mediate between the work of worship and the work of evangelism itself demands integrity of all who would worship. Proponents of 'family services', and many others, would do well to explore the implications of his understanding.

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<sup>85</sup> Ann Loades, 'Why Worship?', In Illo Tempore: Ushaw Library Bulletin and Liturgical Review 16 (2000): 34-42, notes the difficulties she and others encounter in attempting to answer the question. For Saliers' own posing of the question, see Don E Saliers, 'The Nature of Worship: Community Lived in Praise of God', Robin Leaver and James H Litton, eds., Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1985), 35-46, p. 39.

Saliers' stress on the educative promise of liturgy also magnifies the links between discipleship and learning, as noted in the final section on Gordon Lathrop's work. This stress further questions assumptions that liturgy can offer any kind of 'quick-fix', instantaneous conversion perhaps especially included. His constant references to prayer as a 'school' and such like underline Saliers' understanding of worship as a forum and support for life-long learning, with his explorations of affectional knowing and ethical response expanding narrower doctrinal or cognitive approaches to conversion in the assumptions he wishes to question. Wisely, his own approach has time built into it.

Of particular relevance to his approach to time, Saliers' stress on eschatological themes and imagery underlines another distinctive feature of his work. Others might learn from this also. For his concern to appropriate eschatology represents a serious dialogue with theology in his liturgical construction, and Saliers' eschatological reflections offer a worked example of the potential of theological understanding to influence and deepen the meanings inherent in the celebration of worship. Yet it is perhaps around his eschatological focus that Saliers is also potentially most open to critique, for eschatology is notorious for its unhelpful potential to accommodate persons to intolerable versions of the status quo. For instance, the Holocaust survivor Tadeusz Borowski's charge against the Jewish tradition in which he was raised, that 'we were never taught how to give up hope, and this is why today we perish in gas chambers',<sup>86</sup> is one appalling commentary on the weakness of unchecked eschatology, while another son of Saliers'

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<sup>86</sup> Tadeusz Borowski, This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentleman; cited in Richard L Rubenstein and John K Roth, Approaches to Auschwitz: The Legacy of the Holocaust (London: SCM, 1987), p. 277. Compare Michael Downey's comments on Yaffa Eliach's account of Hanukkah in Bergen Belsen, as the faithful crafted artefacts from clogs and string, with shoe polish to serve as oil: Michael Downey, 'Worship Between the Holocausts', Worship at the Margins: Spirituality and Liturgy (Washington: Pastoral, 1994), 223-237, p. 224.



Atlanta, Martin Luther King Jr, in one of his sermons offers a critique of eschatology as it sometimes appears in the Christian tradition:

It's alright to talk about "long white robes over yonder", in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey", but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about New York, the new Atlanta. .  
.87

Saliers' searching in his later work of liberationist and feminist theology is one guard against the risk to which he is perhaps most vulnerable, and such explorations have in turn bolstered his sense of the healthy way in which initially marginal elements of the tradition may generate friction in the mainstream. Through these searchings, Saliers offers the hope that preoccupation with liturgy need not necessarily lead to an evasion of necessary contest with injustice but rather resource the cause of the marginalized in the contest. Indeed, one of the things of which Saliers is most clear is the potential of liturgy to open out a vision of alternative possibilities among those who most need change in their circumstances. Comments about finding and choosing to live 'in the kingdom' as the divine reign is revealed in the liturgy hint at what he thinks is possible. Others offer suggestions that resonate with his view, and possibilities imagined by Catherine Hilkert, Robert Hovda and John de Gruchy about word, sacrament and liturgical environment revealing and enabling transformation will be considered below in chapter 8. These possibilities, of which Saliers is the principal champion in the context of this work, are vital in the divided arenas of cities, in parts of which life is crushed, and in a situation in both church and nation in which children are neglected in thought and deed.

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<sup>87</sup> Martin Luther King Jr, "I've Been to the Mountaintop", April 3, 1963; cited in Gabe Huck, Gail Ramshaw and Gordon Lathrop, An Easter Sourcebook: The Fifty Days (Chicago: LTP, 1988), p. 41.

Our next chapter considers James White's perspectives on shared themes.

*chapter 7*

**Extending the 'Home' - James F White**

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**Introduction**

James F White has recently taken up a post as Professor of Liturgical Studies at the University of Yale Divinity Faculty's Institute of Sacred Music. He has moved there from a short-term post at Drew University as Bard Thompson Professor of Liturgical Studies. These recent shifts in location are in marked contrast to the many years which Professor White spent as Professor of Theology 'with a primary specialization in Liturgical Studies' at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, where he taught for over thirty years. It was whilst at Notre Dame that he cemented his reputation as one of the most distinguished and longstanding academics working in the area of liturgical studies in the United States, having taught the subject for over four decades – before Notre Dame for seven or so years at Perkins School of Theology, Texas. White's distinction among liturgical scholars is recognised in his reception of the North American Academy of Liturgy's Berakah Award in 1983, among other notable achievements.

Like Saliers, White is an ordained Methodist, and has spent parts of his teaching career at United Methodist Church theological schools, such as Perkins School of Theology and Drew University. However, the vast majority of his career, based at University of Notre Dame, was in the context of a Roman Catholic foundation that has been a most important centre of renewal, liturgical and charismatic, in North American Roman Catholicism.

White's published work is extensive and diverse. He is the principal author of the present eucharistic rite of the United Methodist Church, the development of which he charts in an illuminating article gathered in a retrospective collection. Moreover, he has penned over a dozen monographs covering a wide range of topics broadly related to the study of worship. A version of his Duke University PhD was published as The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival,<sup>1</sup> and marked the beginning of a sustained interest in the historical study of Christian worship. Indeed, White regards himself as 'first and foremost an historian'.<sup>2</sup> Other early works dealt especially with the relatively neglected theme of architecture appropriate to the celebration of worship, including Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations, and this work marked out at an early stage another abiding concern in White's work, that 'not only does space form faith but it can, and frequently does, deform and distort faith'.<sup>3</sup>

White's first published work on the Cambridge Movement was perhaps his most specialised and technical work. Other writings have been deliberately designed to make accessible the field of liturgical study to a 'more general audience'. In his 'tribute' to White, Grant Sperry-White makes the comment that 'it is clear that White's writing in the 1980s

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<sup>1</sup> James F White, The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival (Cambridge: CUP, second edition 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Grant S Sperry-White, 'Tribute: James F White: Historian, Liturgist, and Teacher', Karen B Westerfield-Tucker, The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism: Studies in Honor of James F White (Nashville: Kingswood, 1998), 333-346, p. 334; also, James F White, 'Some Lessons in Liturgical Pedagogy', Christian Worship in North America, A Retrospective 1955-1995 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 307-318, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> James F White, 'Liturgical Space Forms Faith', Christian Worship in North America, 211-215, p. 212. White's statement may be modelled on a similar one in Music in Catholic Worship, 6: 'Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it'.

reflected the pastoral and strategic concerns so central to his overall work<sup>4</sup> and this is verified by books such as Introduction to Christian Worship<sup>5</sup> (now in its third revised edition), Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources<sup>6</sup> and A Brief History of Christian Worship,<sup>7</sup> which have become some of the most influential textbooks in liturgical studies. The Introduction has been translated into several languages and has been used widely by seminarians and others across Christian confessional traditions.

That White's work has become ecumenically significant, used as a basic text across traditions, is appropriate to another major feature of the corpus of his work: his desire to attend to the particularities of various traditions. Three books are especially important in this regard: Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition,<sup>8</sup> Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today<sup>9</sup> and The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith.<sup>10</sup> These books suggest the broad sweep of his interests and expertise, reflecting lessons appropriated from both his ecclesial and academic contexts. While these books also embrace a broadly historical approach to his subjects, the ecumenical dimension of White's work is also apparent in the closest he has come to an attempt at systematic

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<sup>4</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 335.

<sup>5</sup> James F White, Introduction to Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, third edition 2000).

<sup>6</sup> James F White, Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> James F White, A Brief History of Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> James F White, Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> James F White, Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today (New York: Paulist, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> James F White, The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

theology, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving,<sup>11</sup> which includes a response from a Roman Catholic colleague at the University of Notre Dame, Edward Kilmartin of the Society of Jesus.

In addition to these singly authored texts, White is also co-author of a number of books, notably Church Architecture: Building and Renovating for Christian Worship,<sup>12</sup> written with Susan J White, to whom he was married, and The (New) Handbook of the Christian Year,<sup>13</sup> with Hoyt L Hickman, Don E Saliers and Laurence Hull Stookey, colleagues on the United Methodist Church panel of worship.

Beyond this considerable corpus of major writings, White has written a large number of articles and shorter pieces on themes related and non-related to his key publications. Many of the most significant essays were collected together and published as Christian Worship in North America, A Retrospective: 1955-1995,<sup>14</sup> which with Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition especially reveals another key interest of White's – what may be thought of as the 'Americanisation of Christian worship'. White is also celebrated by a book of essays in his honour, The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism, edited by Karen Westerfield-Tucker. However, rather than relating directly to White's work, the *Festschrift* attempts a 'descriptive and analytical study of [Methodist] Sunday worship' across the globe and includes at its end a 'tribute' to White, followed by a

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<sup>11</sup> James F White, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> James F White and Susan J White, Church Architecture: Building and Renovating for Christian Worship (Akron: OSL, second edition, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Hoyt L Hickman, Don E Saliers and Laurence Hull Stookey and James F White, The (New) Handbook of the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> James F White, Christian Worship in North America, A Retrospective: 1955-1995 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997).

complete bibliography of his writings. The studies in the book of Methodist worship in global perspective complement White's characteristic focus on the North American scene, though White himself lived and studied for a time abroad in Cambridge, England, in preparation for his PhD on the Cambridge Movement, in Rome just after the Second Vatican Council, and again in the British Isles, in Lincoln, when Susan J White taught for a time at its Anglican theological college.

In what follows I draw attention to three particular features of White's writings: his situation as 'a scholar in the trenches', his developing understanding and critique of liturgical theology, and his stress on attention to the particularities of worshipping traditions in different ages, and the Americanisation of Christian worship especially.

### **'Scholar in the trenches'**

In his tribute to White in The Sunday Service of the Methodists, Grant Sperry-White describes White as 'a scholar in the trenches, a figure far removed from the ivory tower stereotype pilloried today by those with little understanding of academia'.<sup>15</sup> A most obvious example of the engaged nature of White's contribution is his work as the principal author of the 'Service of Word and Table', the eucharistic liturgy of the United Methodist Church. By his own admission, this was the most important work in which he participated.<sup>16</sup> Because of his involvement in the construction of the contemporary eucharistic rite, White has had perhaps more influence on his denomination than Lathrop or Saliers have had on theirs (Saliers' of course being the same United

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<sup>15</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 333.

<sup>16</sup> James F White, 'Shaping the 1972 United Methodist Eucharistic Rite', Christian Worship in North America, 143-153, p. 143.

Methodism), and because of his involvement in the actual production of the text, it is certainly notable that White can be regarded as having no direct Roman Catholic peers either. This is so in the sense that most of the persons who did most of the work of liturgical reform in the Roman tradition did so in the 1960s when White, with Saliers and Lathrop, was a student or teacher at the beginning of his career. The Roman Catholic equivalents of White (and to lesser extents Lathrop and Saliers) in his work on actual texts and the contents of prayer-books were figures such as Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, followed by Cardinal Arcadio Larrona, and Annibale Bugnini and Ferdinando Antonelli, who were respective chairs and secretaries of the Central Preparatory Commission on the Liturgy, established by Pope John XXIII in anticipation of the Second Vatican Council, and of the Conciliar Commission on the Liturgy.<sup>17</sup> So any direct parallels between these Roman revisionists and White and his North American counterparts are therefore quite strained. And White's contemporary Roman Catholic academic peers – Mary Collins, Aidan Kavanagh, and David Power, for instance – have not had the opportunities to reshape and write the 'heartlands' of their liturgical tradition as White has had within United Methodism.

As well as shaping liturgical texts clearly indebted to these liturgical forebears, White took much of his inspiration from Wesley's Hymns on the Lord's Supper, in order to introduce a sacrificial tone to his Protestant eucharistic prayer that would find at least some resonances with the rites of other churches crafting prayers in an ecumenical spirit:

Wesley's study of patristics had led him beyond the negativisms of the sixteenth-century Reformation on eucharistic sacrifice. Indeed, a major portion of the eucharistic hymns is entitled "the Holy Eucharist as it Implies Sacrifice" and the imagery of the hymns is replete with Old Testament images of sacrifice. I think it was

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<sup>17</sup> See Frederick R McManus, 'Reform, Liturgical, of Vatican II' in Peter Fink, ed., New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 1081-1097.



important that, by using Hebrews 9 and 13, Romans 12, and Augustine, I was allowed to make a strong positive statement of the Eucharist as sacrifice, perhaps for the first time in a Protestant liturgy. This I consider an important ecumenical step that Wesley encouraged.<sup>18</sup>

The liturgy that White produced reflected some especially novel concerns too, including quite directly White's own sustained concern with 'liturgy and justice', as he himself admits. The concern with justice comes out in certain stresses in the prayer-texts themselves, such as the memory of Jesus' citation of Isaiah 61 in the record of his speech in the temple in Luke 4: good news for the poor, release for captives, and liberating activities recalled by Christ from Isaiah are set alongside remembrance also of his healing of the sick, feeding of the hungry, and eating with sinners.<sup>19</sup>

The connections between liturgy and justice in White's work complement Saliers' interest in the worship and ethics. White has used several forums to state his belief that liturgy demands and generates justice, in one place, for instance, writing characteristically of his conviction that 'the Church's contribution to social justice derives largely from its power of making God's love visible in the world through the sacraments'.<sup>20</sup> The post-communion dialogue of the liturgy is especially significant for another insight into White's particular contribution to the rite: he introduced at this point a prayer from his own pen which echoes much of his more academic prose about the sacraments as 'God's self-giving': 'Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we

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<sup>18</sup> White, 'Response', p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> The standard Great Thanksgiving for the Service of Word and Table Order 1; United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> White, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving, p. 109.

may go into the world, in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others. . . .’

Sperry-White draws attention to a number of other distinctive features of the rite, after first reiterating a point we have just seen illustrated in the recollection of Jesus’ reading in the temple in the prayer’s anamnesis:

the 1972 and subsequent texts included the recitation of salvation history, epiclesis, and eschatological dimension so often found in early Christian eucharistic prayers but also almost totally lacking in Protestant traditions. Thus the text moved the celebration of the eucharist away from an exclusively theological focus on the death of Christ by crafting a wider euchological framework for proclaiming the content and meaning of Christ’s saving work. The invocation of the Spirit signalled a return to a Wesleyan emphasis on the work of the Spirit in the Lord’s Supper, and the euchological note in the prayer also drew on a dominant theme in Wesleyan eucharistic spirituality. Finally, the 1972 text highlighted the character of the Lord’s Supper as a joyful feast celebrating the resurrection, not the mournful remembrance of the death of Jesus which the Lord’s Supper had become for many American Methodists.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from this most obvious influence on the ‘popular’ celebration of liturgy, White’s significance can be gauged in other ways. It may well be the case that White has enjoyed ‘arguably a larger readership than any other Protestant author in those fields at that time’, and that ‘the Introduction. . . may someday be celebrated as the foremost liturgical primer of its era’.<sup>22</sup>

These achievements indicate the felt-tension which White at times articulates, between scholarship and activism, ‘love for both Church and academy’<sup>23</sup> and their resolution in his enjoyment of the nearness of theory and practice in liturgical studies: ‘That is one thing that makes it

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<sup>21</sup> Sperry-White, ‘Tribute’, p. 338.

<sup>22</sup> Sperry-White, ‘Tribute’, p. 335.

<sup>23</sup> James F White, Preface, Christian Worship in North America, pp. vii, ix.

a joy to teach. One touches both the Apostolic Tradition and next Sunday'.<sup>24</sup> As White suggests in the introduction to his most accessible book, the Introduction to Christian Worship, in his thinking and writing 'the whole thrust is always in a pastoral direction for strengthening the worship leadership of Christian communities'.<sup>25</sup> Yet scholar 'in the trenches' is a quite appropriate designation for one who can also assert that he 'would like to think I have helped shape the teaching of the subject through my textbook. . . source book. . . and my doctoral students'.<sup>26</sup>

### **Relishing Diversity<sup>27</sup>**

White has been deeply immersed in the liturgical renewal of his particular ecclesial tradition, the United Methodist Church. Indeed the circle of UMC liturgists, of which White was at the centre, working in the 1980s towards ecumenically-minded liturgical reform of their tradition were apparently known as the 'liturgical mafia'.<sup>28</sup> He writes,

I attend a United Methodist Church in South Bend, Indiana, where every Sunday service for the last twenty years or more has been a Eucharist. I am fond of saying that the only difference between our worship according to the official United Methodist "service of Word

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<sup>24</sup> White, 'Some Lessons', p. 309.

<sup>25</sup> James F White, Introduction to Christian Worship, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> James F White, 'Thirty Years of the Doctoral Program in Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, 1965-1995', Nathan Mitchell and John F Baldwin, eds., Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh OSB (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 324-342, p. 333.

<sup>27</sup> James F White, A Brief History of Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 180, cf. p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> James F White, 'A Short History of American Methodist Service Books', Christian Worship in North America, 93-102, p. 101; also, White, 'Shaping the 1972 United Methodist Eucharistic Rite', p. 150.

and Table” and the Roman Catholic Mass is that they use real wine and we use real bread. So similar have the revised rites become in recent decades that an analysis of the texts would not yield any real significant theological differences and not many in structure.<sup>29</sup>

He observes that ‘four centuries of antagonism’ have collapsed into ‘five decades of rapprochement’.<sup>30</sup> As might be imagined from his approach to eucharistic sacrifice, White was keen to

encourage Protestants to see and listen to what goes on in the rites and ceremonial of their sacraments. . . We must be willing to go beyond the Reformation of the sixteenth-century. No longer can we rest content with the resolution of practices and understandings in that time, any more than Roman Catholics now can be satisfied with that of the Council of Trent. A true Catholicism cannot be limited to any century or culture. Our concern here is with reformation of the present, not reformation as past.<sup>31</sup>

This key-note statement from Sacraments as God’s Self-Giving gives theoretical weight to his praxis in the compilation of the rite. As Sperry-White notes, ‘Sacraments moves Protestant theological discourse about sacraments into a more complex understanding of the relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*’.<sup>32</sup>

This is a move dependent upon his involvement in discussions of liturgy as primary theology, most probably appropriated from the Roman Catholic context in which he taught, and promoted in that context by Aidan Kavanagh in particular, who went on to publish On Liturgical Theology. What may be distinctive about White’s understanding of primary theology will emerge shortly. At this point, it may be noted that White’s writings on the history and theology of

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<sup>29</sup> James F White, ‘Roman Catholic and Protestant Worship in Relationship’, Christian Worship in North America, 3-15, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> White, ‘Roman Catholic and Protestant Worship in Relationship’, pp. 4, 10.

<sup>31</sup> White, Sacraments as God’s Self-Giving, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Sperry-White, ‘Tribute’, p. 340.

Christian worship have consistently insisted that 'a strong conviction of mine is that practice often shapes reflection',<sup>33</sup> and that this conviction comes to a particular focus in his most systematic work, as he develops and employs what he terms the liturgical cycle:

We begin the circle by observing what the church says and does in its gatherings for worship. These experiences are considered very significant expressions of the faith of the church. On the basis of such observation, we then move to theological reflection, as to the meaning of the faith expressed. We complete the circle by using such reflection as the basis for suggesting worship reforms by which faith can be expressed in more effective ways. Practice leads to theology, which then returns to practice.<sup>34</sup>

This, he admits, is a 'functional' approach. However, there have been some considerable shifts in his thinking as his thought has matured. For instance, he has always given due attention to the traditions of mainstream Protestantism – what he terms the 'MELP' traditions: Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran and Presbyterian - but increasingly he has come to admit that it is important to recognise also 'the gifts of the younger churches' – Quaker, Pentecostal and Frontier, among others, as well as manifestations of mainstream and marginal traditions beyond the dominant continents. He writes, 'we can no longer think of Protestantism in purely European or North American terms'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it is often the case that the churches of other parts of the world have not marginalized the sacraments and aspects of liturgical history and celebration now being recovered and emphasised, because unlike those in the 'west' the churches of the developing world have not been as dominated by the enlightenment legacy.<sup>36</sup> So they may therefore have much to teach Christians in the west diminished by cultural confines imposed by the enlightenment.

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<sup>33</sup> James F White, The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> White, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> White, The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith, p. 142.

<sup>36</sup> White, The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith, p. 142.

Reflecting upon his own role in developing 'the law of prayer' in his own tradition, White notes that 'in the whole process of liturgical revision one question keeps coming back to haunt me: "What right do we have to change the way people pray?" It is the only liturgical question that ever keeps me awake at night'.<sup>37</sup> However, in answering his own question, White gives a four-fold response as to why he regards making such changes necessary:

The first is to make liturgical or personal prayer reflect more accurately the true nature of God and God's relation to humans. For example, prayer addressed to God as the purveyor of success needs change. Second, prayer must be made to reflect and teach justice, though it ought not to preach. Prayers in former wedding services, which prayed that the woman alone "fortify herself against weakness", certainly need replacing. In the third place, the language must be made accessible to all, not just to those who understand what it is to be "sore let and hindered". "Plight thee my troth" always made me think of how we feed hogs, hardly what Cranmer intended! And fourth, the way we pray has to be shaped to relate to the prayer of all Christians. Christian prayer demands the company of many voices, present or unseen. We proclaim the same story and implore God's continuance of the same work.<sup>38</sup>

Yet while White's 'uncompromising ecumenical stance' may have been expected from his ecclesial and academic contexts – that is, the 'importance of listening to as many of the voices of the churches as possible'<sup>39</sup> - he has over time come to criticise aspects of the ecumenical 'convergence movement' in which he had participated so fully. Notwithstanding his appreciation of many positive aspects of the convergence movement, such as the fact that 'the blending of charismatic and holiness liturgical practices with a rich sacramental and liturgical life drawing on the resources of the so-called classical

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<sup>37</sup> White, 'Response', p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> White, 'Response', pp. 144-145.

<sup>39</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 345.

traditions certainly signals a trend unforeseen twenty years ago',<sup>40</sup> White has in the past twenty years become increasingly aware and articulate of some of its downsides. In particular, a critique of liturgical theology has emerged from this point. This critique comes into sharpest focus in some of his most recent writing, particularly his contribution to the Don Saliers *Festschrift* Liturgy and the Moral Self, in which White challenges the 'natural assumption of ecumenism that homogeneity is better than heterogeneity'.<sup>41</sup> Questioning the appropriateness of this assumption in turn sets question-marks against the achievements of the World Council of Churches, particularly as represented by a document such as Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and the work of individual theologians to focus a core *ordo* of shared practice and understanding. Gordon Lathrop's Holy Things, though 'brilliant', 'beautifully written' and 'the finest available description of classical Christian worship' is used as an example.<sup>42</sup> For while these writings, and those of others – he cites his former colleague Kavanagh, other Roman Catholics such as David Fagerberg, Kevin Irwin and David Power, and fellow Methodists Saliers and Wainwright – may 'represent magnificent theological achievements', 'unfortunately, most liturgical theology tends to be historically naïve',<sup>43</sup> based upon 'a single period of a single tradition', often 'idealized' at that, and usually in its present day manifestations, reflecting a construct of 'post-Vatican II Roman Catholic worship or its near counterparts'.<sup>44</sup> This point is enormously important, and derives from his studies of particularities in

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<sup>40</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 345.

<sup>41</sup> James F White, 'How Do We Know It Is Us?', E Byron Anderson and Bruce T Morrill, Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God: Essays in Honor of Don E Saliers (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 55-65, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> White, 'How Do We Know. . .?', pp. 56-57.

<sup>43</sup> White, 'How Do We Know. . .?', p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> White, 'How Do We Know. . .?', p. 56.

different Christian traditions as represented especially by his collection of books on Protestant and Roman Catholic worship.

White himself 'consider[s] the most important of my books to be Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition and Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today'.<sup>45</sup> In quite distinct contrast to efforts at convergence, these books suggest the breadth not only between these two major worshipping traditions, but also within them, especially as is revealed by Catholicism conceived historically and Protestantism surveyed for its manifold contemporary forms. As he sums up his point in Liturgy and the Moral Self:

The fact that there are at least twelve major traditions of Eastern and Western Christian worship in North America alone makes generic statements almost impossible. And when one considers the multitude of ethnic and cultural styles within those traditions, generalities become still more difficult. One can do liturgical theology for a carefully defined tradition at a given time and place. . . . But one cannot make normative statements on that basis for any other Church. At best, one can be descriptive: this is prayed and believed by these people in this time and place. But one cannot leap to a normative declaration: this is what all Christians believe.<sup>46</sup>

It is the descriptive task to which his later books on Protestant and Roman Catholic worship each attend, and these later books quite clearly stand in some contrast to his own earlier work as well as to those of other liturgical scholars. For instance, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving includes a great deal of prescription, whereas the phase of his work beginning with Protestant Worship is marked by the desire to attend in much greater detail to worship 'as it happens for ordinary worshippers'.<sup>47</sup> He describes the shift as follows:

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<sup>45</sup> James F White, 'Thirty Years of Teaching Liturgical Studies at Notre Dame', p. 333.

<sup>46</sup> White, 'How Do We Know. . .?', p. 57.

<sup>47</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 15.



The greatest conversion experience in my own teaching has come about in moving from a normative approach to a descriptive approach. After years of trying to reform United Methodist worship I came to feel maybe I should have spent those two decades listening to United Methodists.<sup>48</sup>

What his studies of Protestant worship seemed to have impressed upon him is the great diversity of contemporary Protestant worshipping styles, and also their very significant distinctive features as opposed to the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic paradigm. This suggests to him at least that 'if we come to liturgical theology with normative judgements already made in advance, the result will be highly predictable',<sup>49</sup> but also demands the constructive proposal that a broader and more comprehensive approach is necessary to do liturgical theology, and one which includes Protestant worship as a major and necessary source of data.

White takes the point that Paul Bradshaw's work The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship impressed upon studies of liturgy in the early period, that 'history turns up no facile homogeneity',<sup>50</sup> also needs a contemporary application. And so he draws attention to the fact that 'the study of Protestant worship has been conducted by methods derived from the study of Roman Catholic worship',<sup>51</sup> with greatest emphasis on liturgical texts and the centrality of the eucharist. These two central themes together pressed focus on the texts of eucharistic prayers as a (if not the) key source of primary theology. But as White points out, this gives a distorted image of a great deal of Protestant worship, which may value extempore prayer forms above inherited,

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<sup>48</sup> White, 'Some Lessons', p. 315.

<sup>49</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> White, 'Some Lessons', p. 314; also White, 'Thirty Years', p. 334.

<sup>51</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 13.

written texts; involve a good deal more spontaneity in liturgical structure than its Roman Catholic 'equivalents'; and celebrate eucharist, by whatever name, with much less frequency than Roman Catholics celebrate mass. Indeed, the history of Protestant practice may suggest that worship may be 'strong and vital but not primarily sacramental',<sup>52</sup> at least in the 'narrow' sense of referring only to either two or seven sacraments. White suggests that in Protestant traditions, preaching and singing of hymnody may be the appropriate key sources for liturgical theology, and that his characteristic stress on architecture should also play a part: for 'to confine attention to printed texts as the sole documentation is to miss much, if not most of the reality of worship',<sup>53</sup> apart from being 'totally irrelevant to the worship of most Protestants in America and other lands as well'.<sup>54</sup>

Notwithstanding that 'it is not always easy to mark the edges of a tradition',<sup>55</sup> White believes it is possible conceptually to organise the variety of Protestant worship into a number of families or traditions. He sees Protestant history as being marked by an explosion of new traditions close to its origins – with five new traditions emerging in the fifty years from 1520 to 1570, and followed by the emergence of one enduring tradition in each successive century. 'It is significant that each century has found new possibilities of worship necessary, resulting in the origination of a new tradition'. In so far as he is able, or attempts to explain this, he suggests that 'perhaps this reflects a slow process of liberation as more peoples successively achieve power to worship in

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<sup>52</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 212.

<sup>53</sup> White, Protestant Worship, pp. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> White, Protestant Worship, 13. For a related discussion, see James F Kay, 'The *Lex Orandi* in Recent Protestant Theology', David S Cunningham, Ralph Del Colle and Lucas Lamdrud, eds., Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine and Life: Essays Presented to Geoffrey Wainwright on his Sixtieth Birthday (New York: OUP, 1999), 11-23.

<sup>55</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 18.

ways they find natural'.<sup>56</sup> In addition to this hypothesis, White notes that within existing and established Protestant traditions 'change. . . does not seem to lessen a tradition's sense of identity as long as it is change that comes from within that tradition'.<sup>57</sup> Together these comments amount to a conviction that Protestant worship has recognised that historical realities shape people in different ways,<sup>58</sup> and that the worship of Protestant traditions should be conceived in its pioneering capacity: 'It is the peculiar vocation of Protestant worship to adapt Christian worship in terms of people as their social contexts and very beings change'.<sup>59</sup> Cumulatively, what Protestant worship may insist upon is that people are the primary liturgical document.<sup>60</sup>

These features of White's thinking begin to show how his conception of liturgical theology is dependent upon liturgical scholarship which is committed to help identify the distinct characteristics of particular traditions, which he asserts are vulnerable to abuse and misunderstanding when they are undocumented. And against the stream of thinking and activity aimed at convergence between traditions, White has come to hold that, 'if convergence becomes too prominent, we must ask whether some of the richness of the variety of Protestant worship will suffer. The richness of Protestant worship consists in its diversity and its consequent ability to serve a wide variety of peoples'.<sup>61</sup> So Protestant Worship, after first of all noting some features of 'medieval worship and Roman Catholic worship' considers

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<sup>56</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 210.

<sup>57</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 211.

<sup>58</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> This perspective has clear resonances with the contribution made to pastoral studies by Anton Boison in his insistence on attention to human beings as 'living human documents' to be studied alongside authoritative inherited sacred texts.

<sup>61</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 212.

in turn Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Anglican, Separatist and Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, Frontier and Pentecostal practices.<sup>62</sup> While White insists, in continuity with his earlier work, and the focus of others', that 'Protestants can learn much from contemporary Roman Catholic reformers, and the enormous changes they have brought about in sacramental practice and faith', he continues, 'there are enormous riches in the various Protestant traditions that more Protestants would cherish greatly if they were aware of their value'.<sup>63</sup> This is a corrective to much liturgical theology, yet 'if we profess that the way people worship establishes the way they believe, we have to accept the consequences'. Moreover, his revised account of 'the purpose of worship reform' is in his later work defined as being 'not the elimination of multiplicity or the achievement of administrative efficiency. It is simply to enable people to worship with deeper commitment and participation – which may require more denominations and traditions rather than less'.<sup>64</sup>

It is exactly this that attempts at convergence may not concede, as they may indeed 'have the effect of ignoring the worship of most North American Christians'.<sup>65</sup> White states his point forcibly in the form of this question, 'do we want to say that what happens in most churches in the United States on a Sunday morning is "baby worship," since it does not match up to some ecumenical or historical standard?'<sup>66</sup> White also

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<sup>62</sup> The procedure of study is much the same as that attempted by Evelyn Underhill a generation earlier in her Worship (London: Collins, 1936) of which chapters 12-15 discuss, respectively: 'Catholic Worship: Western and Eastern', 'Worship in the Reformed Churches', 'Free Church Worship', and 'The Anglican Tradition'. See also Ann Loades, Evelyn Underhill (London: Fount, 1997).

<sup>63</sup> White, Sacraments as God's Self-Giving, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 213.

<sup>65</sup> White, 'How Do We Know...?', p. 57.

<sup>66</sup> White, 'How Do We Know...?', pp. 57-58.

turns the features of this critique on the Roman Catholic tradition, in order to shatter the myth that the worship forms of the Catholic tradition have been a static reality. White's studies suggest that a historical approach to its development reveals the deep ambiguity of seeing the tradition too much in the light of contemporary concerns alone, which may be one of the failures of much liturgical theology; and in parallel with his stress on diversity within Protestantism, he is also well aware that 'Catholic' itself refers to a diverse range of traditions, including those Catholic churches following eastern rites rather than Roman ones,<sup>67</sup> though he chooses to attend to the latter.

For White, then, descriptive accounts of liturgy can challenge both the notion of the 'benign abnormality' of infant baptism and also take fully into account the kind of reality acknowledged in the recognition that through much of the southern US, believers' baptism is normative, apart from the fact that under the increasing influence of the church growth movement, the sacraments themselves may be being marginalized from the experience of Christian worshippers, whatever a contemporary appropriation of a classical *ordo* may imply. As Sperry-White rightly asserts, White's more recent insistence in the variety of Protestant worship traditions . . . points to a significant ideological shift in North American liturgical studies'.<sup>68</sup>

### **Understanding the 'Americanisation' of liturgy**

White's observance of worship in the North American context has already been noted. Quite clearly, he has helped greatly to create 'what might be called "a North American school of liturgical history"',<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> White, *Roman Catholic Worship*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>68</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 334.

through his teaching and doctoral supervision. In so far as this is the case, White has done much to redress the point that North American liturgical history had been neglected by European scholars. For instance, attention to Quaker and Pentecostal worship was unusual enough at the time of Protestant Worship's publication, but his survey and reflections upon the Frontier tradition were virtually unique.

Adding to his critique of the convergence movement, White admits that much of American Christianity is 'doing well' without ecumenism, in which it shows 'no interest':<sup>70</sup> 'Many Protestant groups, especially within the Quaker, Frontier, and Pentecostal traditions, seem to be continuing in their own distinctive ways, little affected by recent tendencies among other Protestants and Roman Catholics'.<sup>71</sup> If liturgical scholars ignore them, White asserts, they violate the *lex orandi* they profess to be primary, when proper attention to its implementation should in fact demand much greater respect for the younger traditions and change liturgical theology in turn. Yet White himself is not enchanted by the prospect of what this may in fact mean in relation to recent developments in the Megachurch movement:

In our own times the Frontier tradition has continued to grow in variety and skill. I interpret the latest manifestation of it to be the emergence of the Church Growth Movement and the disciples of Donald McGavran (1897-1990). It passes under names such as the Mega-church movement or the seekers' service model and I would like to call it high-tech worship.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sperry-White, 'Tribute', p. 335; also White's own comments about justifying a study of liturgical history from a North American perspective, for the two-fold reason of rectifying the oversights of Eurocentric liturgical study, and allowing the importance of American liturgical experience as it has been 'exported' in missionary endeavour to be traced, in Brief History, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> White, 'How Do We Know...?', p. 58.

<sup>71</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 35.

<sup>72</sup> James F White, 'Evangelism and Worship from New Lebanon to Nashville', reprinted in Christian Worship in North America, 155-172, p. 161.

'Entertainment evangelism' is another commonly used term for this form of assembly. The Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago is a 'flagship' representative of the phenomenon, marked as it is by highly 'culture specific' form and purpose: to 'reach out to men between twenty-five and fifty'.<sup>73</sup> Quite deliberately, minimal cultural and linguistic barriers are imposed in the effort to 'reach the unchurched' and whatever sense of 'community' as may be possible is formed around the notion of the "homogeneous unit principle" – i.e., individuals are attracted by those like themselves'.<sup>74</sup>

In this movement inculturation has become a fine science. Perhaps Anscar Chupungco and other Roman Catholic champions of inculturation would have second thoughts if they could visit Willow Creek. The premises are not all that different from those in use at Mobil Oil headquarters down the road and worshipers must feel quite at home on Sunday just as they do at corporate headquarters on Monday. There is not a single Christian symbol visible in the auditorium. Maybe it is time to stop theorizing about inculturation. It is here and its results are dramatic.<sup>75</sup>

To White's mind, this 'extreme example of inculturation. . . makes one wonder whether successful inculturation is all that desirable. We may now have to show its limits!'<sup>76</sup> though these comments should be set alongside his critique of 'centralization' in the Roman Catholic tradition, of which he is equally critical. In Protestant Worship he laments the fact that the Vatican document 'Declaration on Eucharistic Prayers and Liturgical Experimentation' of 1988 curtails local innovation in liturgical celebration, noting sardonically that a full quarter century after the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy mandated

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<sup>73</sup> White, 'Evangelism and Worship', p. 162.

<sup>74</sup> James F White, 'Protestant Public Worship in America: 1935-1995', Christian Worship in North America (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 115-133, p. 132.

<sup>75</sup> White, 'Evangelism and Worship', p. 162.

<sup>76</sup> White, 'Some Lessons', p. 313.

inculturation (in paragraphs 37-40), the 1988 document's still unfulfilled promise of 'guidelines on the adaptations to the cultures and traditions of peoples' hardly suggests that the production of such guidelines or the granting of freedom to embrace the implications of inculturation is a high priority.<sup>77</sup> In Roman Catholic Worship he makes a similar critique of 'the grip which the Congregation for Worship has increasingly tightened' around liturgical inculturation.<sup>78</sup>

In a climate in which liturgical studies is evolving as a discipline, and in which theological approaches to the liturgy are making more impact on a scene dominated by a historical approach,<sup>79</sup> James White has done much to define the realities of the practice of worship in different historical eras, as well as revealing the diversity at given times and places. He has also offered important correctives and direction to the future of the discipline of liturgical theology, defined in the stricter sense of 'theology derived from the liturgy'.

### **Engaging the debate about *Patterns for Worship***

The implications of White's views for debate around Patterns for Worship are important, not least in implying that attention to the actual practice of churches that have departed from the authorised provisions of Liturgical Commissions and such like is significant. Yet an appreciation of heterogeneity in liturgy that is knowledgeable of the mainstream traditions and its merits as well as its potential weaknesses, and which grounds convictions about heterogeneity in liturgy in recovery of aspects from the edges of the tradition's history is

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<sup>77</sup> White, Protestant Worship, p. 215.

<sup>78</sup> White, Roman Catholic Worship, pp. 143-144.

<sup>79</sup> White, 'Thirty years', p. 340.



a different thing to an embrace of heterogeneity without such historical insight. White's convictions about variety in worship are not licence for laissez-faire, thoughtless presentations of liturgy. His critique of the trends of the Megachurches in his own North American context are witness to that, as is the attention he has given to the sacraments throughout his career – notably in reflecting ecumenical agendas in his construction of the UMC eucharistic rite, and in his concern with the sacraments in his most recent major work, The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith, at a time when the Megachurches and the drift from the sacraments which they represent are still increasing in their influence on the North American Christian scene. Clearly, then, White's revision of earlier perspectives on ecumenical convergence has not been whole-scale, but rather selective. And very significantly, White's intention in seeking to broaden liturgists' appreciation of worshipping traditions and styles continues to focus on the notion of participation. As he writes in relation to the later Protestant traditions, his view of the 'purpose of worship reform. . . is simply to enable people to worship with deeper commitment and participation. . .'. So his is indeed a shift, but it is not an abandonment of convictions long held both by himself and others associated with the ecumenical vision of liturgical renewal. White's liturgical constructs are not detached from his sense of the freedoms and demands of liturgical history. He represents a series of important reminders, then, that encourage resistance to footloose liturgical construction for and with urban persons, young persons, and others.

What White, with Lathrop and Saliers each in their own way, may do to focus thought about worship with and for young or urban persons, however, is to call attention to the potential of non-textual aspects of liturgical celebration. For White, with Saliers and Lathrop, has pioneered an approach to liturgy that moves beyond the earlier emphasis on texts and in particular the eucharistic prayer. Contrasting White's concerns with architecture for instance as constitutive of liturgy

with the concerns of a prime example of the previous generation of liturgical scholars, such as Josef Jungmann, with his massive stress on the Roman canon, reveals an attempt to concentrate on a more diffuse centre latterly, of which White is representative. This contrast can be paralleled with the shift in the English Anglican prayer-books of the late twentieth century, even between the approach of the Alternative Service Book 1980, with its texts and rubrics, and Patterns for Worship under a decade later, in which liturgy was presented in a quite different way – with the Service of the Word simply a set of guidelines with notes, and the novel commentary section introducing reflection on architectural influences and other non-textual considerations. White's interest in the architectural setting of liturgy finds its own parallels in Lathrop's fascination with vessels, objects and 'things', and in Saliers' stress on affective involvement as just one partial way of approaching that most diffuse constituent of liturgy – people. White, with Saliers and Lathrop, offers considerable material for reflection towards an approach to liturgy and liturgical theology that simply was not imagined before their time, and the ways in which they have expanded the orbit of their discipline has much to yield to congregations constructing worship simply on the basis of guidelines and notes, and plotting their way through a wide range of options for possible inclusion in rites, so freed from narrow attention to texts alone. For instance, White's thinking about architecture as and in liturgy might fruitfully be brought into conversation with the kinds of perspectives on the influence of architecture on urban subjectivity as Robert Orsi understands it:

City folk do not live in their environments; they live through them. Who am I? What is possible in life? What is good? These are questions that are always asked, and their answers are discerned and enacted, in particular places. Specific places structure the questions, and as men and women cobble together responses, they act upon the spaces around them in transformative ways.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Orsi, Gods of the City, pp. 43-44.

How the architectural environment of liturgy interacts with the 'stoops, fire escapes, rooftops, and hallways' to which Orsi calls attention is a question congregations might not have considered in their hope to be free of liturgy understood narrowly as text alone.

White's emphasis on relishing diversity may also provide the most valuable tools for justifying age-streamed congregations, if and when attempts at inclusivity fail, as is so often the case, despite aspirations to the contrary.<sup>81</sup>

Above all, White can help contemporary liturgical thinking revitalise the point for contemporary appropriation made by James Baldwin in the unfolding of his study of the ancient liturgy's encounters with the cultures in which it was set: 'worship never takes place outside of a specific context, a context which reflects the social, political and economic condition of its participants'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> White's historical perspectives are helpfully allied to Mark R Francis' account of the growing trend towards ethnic parishes in the contemporary North American context, in Mark R Francis, Shape a Circle Ever Wider: Liturgical Inculturation in the United States (Chicago: LTP, 2000).

<sup>82</sup> James F Baldwin, The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Studiorum Orientium, 1987), p. 253.

## EXPLORING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

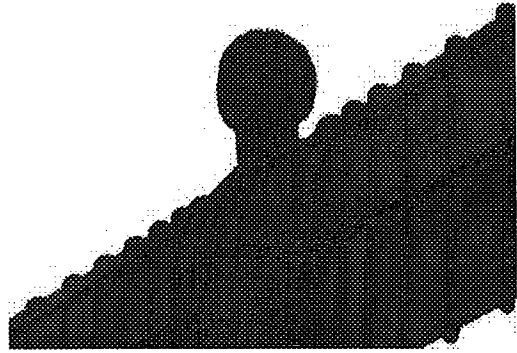
### *Closing comments on Part Three*

Each of the three authors who have been under consideration in Part Three of this present work is still living and working, fully engaged in their career, and so my survey of their opinions and convictions is necessarily provisional. We have seen especially with reference to James White that over time they have changed their minds, and they may of course do so again. Yet I have explored their work, such as it is – unfinished - because I perceive James White, Don Saliers and Gordon Lathrop, both in relation and distinction to one another, to open up a wide range of topics in contemporary liturgical theology. To my mind, they convincingly suggest the richness and fruitfulness of their discipline.

One of my reasons for exploring of Saliers, Lathrop and White's work has been to reveal the comparative paucity of argument in the Church of England's Liturgical Commission, not least with respect to Patterns for Worship – yet in such a way as to hint how the Church of England's thinking can find new and steady direction. For instance, Lathrop's exploring of the way in which he believes abiding liturgical patterns to be 'bound up with who Christ is', revealing the self of Jesus, as it were, might potentially strengthen the view that the bishops and Liturgical Commission promote in both Patterns and the Renewal of Common Prayer. Similarly, Saliers' attention to the affective dimensions of worship might improve argument for the retention or loss of particular patterns of worship. It can, I believe, aid discernment about which aspects of liturgy might yield under contemporary cultural pressures, and which might be especially valuable in order to engage with the maladies of our given time in different places. Whilst the subtleties of Lathrop and Saliers' perceptions cannot of course be reduced to the possible contributions I have just cited, I believe these to be the heart of how they might clarify and assist conversations about liturgy in the Church of England that are comparatively underdeveloped. However, as chapter seven has shown, the thrust of James

White's considered position is to offer a fierce challenge to any attempt to over-centralise liturgical provision. The abrasion of his own earlier and later views, and of the latter against the views of Lathrop and Saliers where they differ with him also foster sensitivity to the question of how a properly contextualised understanding of liturgy and liturgical theology can mature. So at least the following questions emerge from the conversation I have attempted to facilitate in this work to this point: How might White, Lathrop and Saliers' contributions to the wider discipline of liturgical theology be appropriated in a particular situation concerned with liturgy engaging deprived urban Christians in modern Britain, or involving children? How do actual celebrations of liturgy in particular urban assemblies, or congregations constituted by significant numbers of children, reflect the classical *ordo*? How might the culture of urban or age-inclusive congregations manage the subtle juxtapositions of which Lathrop speaks? What kind of judgement on the 'durability' of the classical *ordo* might contextually alert urban or age-inclusive liturgy represent? What kind of 'characterizing activity' (in Saliers' phraseology) do these particular urban or age-inclusive celebrations promise? What might urban or age-inclusive worship learn from the 'newer' or 'non-liturgical' traditions? What affectional or ethical 'fruit' may be jeopardised by omission of traditional components of the *ordo*? I think that Patterns for Worship – and then other Church of England liturgies - might be reconceived with these questions in mind.

Part Four of this present work attempts to offer some partial answers to these questions and to make practical suggestions about how liturgy might be celebrated effectively in the contemporary urban context and including the young.



*part four*

**CONSTRUCTING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY**  
**votive context, ritual event**

## Constructing Liturgical Theology

### *Opening comments on Part Four*

Part Four consists of one long chapter which applies some of what there is to be learned from the preceding discussions to the planning and presentation of worship events, and particularly with respect to the shaping of worship in the urban British context and among children. It specifically does this by exploring the issues raised in the questions with which I closed Part Three in relation to my own practice of ministry in the particular place and context in which this work was written, Gateshead.

The chapter considers a range of topics that emerge out of the conversation thus far, connecting to Lathrop, White and Saliers' perspectives as exponents of an understanding that sees liturgy as so much more than texts. To develop a 'whole rite' focus and to relate my work to the discipline I seek here to construct, I follow a pattern familiar in liturgical theology<sup>1</sup> and discuss in turn a range of factors relevant to this wider understanding of liturgy. And so my chapter includes reflections on image, song, and gesture, among other examples. I repeatedly connect these to Lathrop, Saliers, and White's work, to discussion of the *ordo*, affections and the impact of environment – 'bones', 'heart' and 'home' - to identify just one key issue from each of them.

Consistently in this Part of the work, my explorations of Lathrop, Saliers and White's writings are grounded in my context in Gateshead by anecdote. I mean such anecdote to show the need for a transforming practice of liturgy in a place such as Gateshead, as well as to indicate some beginnings I was able to make towards a transforming practice of liturgy. In this Part of my work, I

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<sup>1</sup> For liturgical theology patterned around similar headings to those that appear in my chapter here, see Philip Pfatteicher, *Liturgical Spirituality* (Valley Forge: TPI, 1997), Don Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Akron: OSL, second edition 1996), Frank Senn, *The Witness of the Worshiping Community* (New York: Paulist, 1992), James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, third edition 2000) and William Willimon, *With Glad and Generous Hearts* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1986) as just a handful of examples.

explore Robert Hovda's suggestion that liturgy may 'create of a kingdom scene' to develop my reflections on the need for a transforming practice of liturgy and address questions about the relationship of worship and evangelism, hospitality and catechesis. As Part Three has shown, Lathrop, Saliers and White raise important questions about the configuration in practice of these things.

This Part of my work does, then, suggest a wide range of practical applications based on contextualised experience. It is in no sense intended as a manual, but rather a model of a way of relating liturgical theology and contextual sensitivity that may act as an invitation to the reader to reflect on the practice of liturgy in the particularity of their own context.



*chapter 8*

**'Creating a kingdom scene' –  
Liturgical Construction in Gateshead**

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**Introductory comments**

In this chapter I consciously adopt the first person 'I'. Hitherto, such first person reference has been excluded from all but the Introduction and the brief connecting sections between the main Parts of the work. The repeated reference to 'I' in this chapter therefore recalls the Introduction in which I suggested that what was to follow is a form of both biographical and contextual theology (see above, pp. 3-6),<sup>2</sup> and here I demonstrate some of the implications of this study for liturgical practice in my own limited experience.

To do so, throughout the chapter I use the kind of anecdotes I mentioned in the Introduction, which, I suggested, relate how I have been forced to recognise the limits of my competence and seeks its reconstruction as I have engaged with liturgical issues (above, p. 7). Anecdotes from my Gateshead experience intersperse my reflections on a range of issues relevant to the kind of approach to liturgical theology that Lathrop, Saliers and White suggest, attending to much more than texts for prayer. In order to maintain the broad approach to liturgy which liturgical theology invites, as the chapter develops the relationship between worship and mission, evangelism and catechesis is explored, and a whole rite focus is developed with special reference to the eucharist. I consider environment, music, image, ceremony, and

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this chapter, I make widespread use of cross-reference to demonstrate main points at which the reflections on contextualised practice in this chapter relate to earlier parts of the thesis.

gesture, as well as different kinds of texts,<sup>3</sup> and relate these to my experience. At various points, I attend to two contextual issues in particular: liturgy in a culture of low-level literacy, and in a multi-cultural environment that includes the particular problems of asylum seekers. Both of these were major features of the setting in which this thesis was written, and as the chapter develops, fragments of understanding are gathered about liturgical practice can relate to them. At the end of the chapter, I focus the contextual nature of the chapter in another way, by offering a commentary on one pattern for worship from my Gateshead experience that shows in specific ways the interaction between my particular context and liturgical construction in the light of the issues addressed in the preceding parts of the work. It is a case study that acts as a particular point of convergence for some of the issues addressed throughout the thesis.

I am, of course, conscious of the irony of focusing at the end on a text, when so much of what has preceded has stressed the text of liturgy as only one aspect - and one that may easily be overemphasised. Lathrop, Saliers and White, amongst others, have convinced me that a textual focus is utterly inadequate without also attending to the complex 'votive context, ritual event' to which this Part of the work's subtitle refers as a counterpoint to my focus at the close of my reflections. Constantly remembering that liturgy is 'votive context, ritual event', this chapter repeatedly asserts in different but related ways that the kind of liturgical theology I am seeking to construct one that is conscious of the severe limits of text, and especially in a place like Gateshead. I hope, therefore, that the parts of this present chapter that lead to my closing commentary will be recognisably of significance to the more narrow textual focus at the end.

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<sup>3</sup> Countering the narrow focus on text which is characteristic of much British liturgical study, I develop a broader focus on 'votive context, ritual event', which I see to be part of the complexity of liturgical theology.

By contextualising the conversation I have tried to stage between the English Anglican liturgical experience and contemporary liturgical theology in my own experience and practice of liturgical ministry in Gateshead, I show how, in that place, some responses were being shaped to the questions which I stated at the end of Part Three (see p. 231), and which I identified as the key ones arising from my discussion of Lathrop, Saliers and White:<sup>4</sup>

How might White, Lathrop and Saliers' contributions to the wider discipline of liturgical theology be appropriated in a particular situation concerned with liturgy engaging deprived urban Christians in modern Britain, or involving children? How do actual celebrations of liturgy in particular urban assemblies, or congregations constituted by significant numbers of children, reflect the classical *ordo*? How might the culture of urban or age-inclusive congregations manage the subtle juxtapositions of which Lathrop speaks? What kind of judgement on the 'durability' of the classical *ordo* might contextually alert urban or age-inclusive liturgy represent? What kind of 'characterizing activity' (in Saliers' phraseology) do these particular urban or age-inclusive celebrations promise? What might urban or age-inclusive worship learn from the 'newer' or 'non-liturgical' traditions? What affectional or ethical 'fruit' may be jeopardised by omission of traditional components of the *ordo*?

The present chapter aims, then, to be a worked example of contextually sensitive liturgical theology that has learned from White, Saliers and Lathrop and searched for and found resources to respond to the challenges of the practice of ministry.

I am not entirely comfortable with the first person speech I adopt in this chapter. In fact, I am barely comfortable with it at all: this 'I' is an introvert. But, more than that, I am conscious that this 'I' itself has a

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Professor Duncan Forrester and Dr Alan Suggate for urging me to speak 'from my experience' in the light of the preceding discussion, and to do so as a means of grounding this work as a piece of contextual theology. I am aware, however, that such an approach risks inviting censure from the congregation with whom I worked, which is clearly identifiable in this work, and whom I know would speak from their collective experience to suggest that they have not always appreciated the ways in which they has been identifiable in others' writing.

context in a “we”, a particular group of people in and beyond the church in Gateshead. And I am aware that this particular group is sensitive to the idea of finding reflections of itself in print, as it has in the past had as one of its members a novelist (cited above, pp. 89-90) who shaped characters around personalities identifiable among them, so that there is a first-hand perception of what ‘talking behind other people’s backs’ (also p. 7) may feel like. Moreover, this particular group of people are central to the situation about which theological students attending the Urban Mission Centre (pp.2-3, 88-92) have written considerable numbers of essays for more than a dozen years, and members of the congregation have not always appreciated or enjoyed such attention. My reserve is an important part of what I mean by understanding this work as contextual theology, for my own location was among that particular group as one who holds pastoral trust. The chapter has been an extremely uncomfortable one to write, and has engaged my fear of amplifying already sharply-felt feelings in such a way as might be perceived as a betrayal of pastoral trust, or as inappropriately dishonouring of frequent valiant attempts to function as a hospitable community in challenging circumstances.

Related to this, I am conscious also that as I attempt to connect the conversation so far in this work to the context and conversations I have shared with this congregation, that I am sometimes speaking more from a sense of personal conviction (a more ‘isolated’ ‘I’), and sometimes more out of the kind of perspective that emerged as the point of convergence between a number of different perspectives - including my own, but also many others – and which represented the kind of settling around a compromise that is part of belonging to a group in which individuals aspire to maturity and who together aspire to inclusivity. My own role as presider in this context was primarily as catechist and mediator in conversations. Although it is perhaps sometimes and sometimes not obvious where I am speaking out of a deeper sense of personal conviction about the issues I explore, and where I am doing so

from the 'place of convergence' I have just mentioned (that the contextual nature of the reflections in this chapter do not require clarity about where my personal preferences about addressing and resolving questions involved in such compromise). All this underscores for me the helpfulness of the image of 'conversation' as central to this work.<sup>5</sup> Apart from its key place in Saliers' own work where that touches most directly on questions of maturity and inclusivity (e.g. p. 174),<sup>6</sup> and from which I have learned, the image invites recognition that one's voice is one among others. Yet for all my discomfort and reserve about use of the first person, I recognise it as positively highlighting the particularity of my own context in a way that I hope enables others in other contexts to set their own first-person perspectives alongside mine, and to relativise aspects of my perspective which are seemingly not so pertinent to their own, even as they are, I hope, drawn further into the conversation.

Claiming the status of simply one voice in a conversation, or as a narrative about one particular way of making compromises, helps, then, to underscore that my work here is by no means a manual or blue-print for others, nor a perspective on issues that can be employed as any kind of simple guide. My contribution in this present chapter is an attempt to reflect on practice in a particular setting, and that practice was sometimes discerned but not properly or effectively enacted, sometimes

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<sup>5</sup> My own understanding of pastoral work and pastoral theology has been greatly influenced by the perspectives of Charles Gerkin, for whom the image of 'conversation' is central. See, amongst other works, Charles Gerkin, An Introduction to Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997) and Pamela Couture and Rodney Hunters, eds., Pastoral Care and Social Conflict: Essays in Honor of Charles V Gerkin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995). Also, Stephen Burns, 'Abuse and Forgiveness: Theological and Psychological Aspects' (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996), chapter 1: 'Abuse and forgiveness as pastoral theology'.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Knight III and Don Saliers, The Conversation Matters: Why United Methodists Should Talk with One Another (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998). See especially their 'guidelines for civility' (p. 73) that have much to offer local congregations in their conversations and decision-making, as well as the intra-denominational context to which they are primarily directed.

begun but not finished, and certainly never perfect. What follows, then, is perhaps above all a contextualised exploration of, in Saliers' words, 'liturgical travail' (pp. 184ff). Yet recognition of this may in fact make it better contextual theology. In so far as it has relevance for other contexts, the relevance of this study may perhaps largely be found at the level of resonance, for the demanding work of discerning the particular challenges of other contexts can be done only by those who indwell those situations, rather than by outsiders to them, such as myself.<sup>7</sup> This point enforces one I have learned especially from James White in his insistence on the priority of *description* rather than prescription in liturgical theology (pp. 218-219; cf. pp. 63ff), for while of course I do venture to make a number of proposals about liturgical practice in this chapter, I am mindful of the perhaps narrow direct relevance of these proposals to others, and this in the setting of awareness of the extremely demanding nature of any contextualised liturgical practice, which will become clear in what follows if it is not already. I am acutely conscious from my own experience that addressing even one or two of the issues arising from the earlier parts of this work in my own situation has been an enormous and costly undertaking not only for 'me' but also for 'us', and that others in different situations will become alert to this as they refer this conversation to their own particularities. Yet one of the merits of setting down my sense of such demands is clearer to me now from my present setting as a teacher of liturgy. For, as a teacher of worship, I have not found it easy to direct students to descriptive examples of the challenges of practicing liturgical presidency. Explorations in print of 'liturgical travail' are so very rare. If Robert Hovda's Strong, Loving and Wise is an excellent and almost isolated exception, I hope that this

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<sup>7</sup> The present work is an encouragement to others to do similar work – and, as I have suggested that the Liturgical Commission and bishops of the Church of England might find their work critiqued and enriched by reference to White, Saliers, and Lathrop, encouragement perhaps particularly to bishops and the Liturgical Commission.

chapter may contribute a more modest range of insights into related issues.

### **Exploring liturgy as saving work**

Alertness to the demands of contextualised liturgical practice prompts the question, 'why bother?' - either to encourage contextualised liturgical practice, or to accept the challenges of liturgical presidency in communities in which many diverse voices add to a conversation, and oftentimes in such a way that 'conversation' lapses into the least impressive kind of 'argument', marked by entrenchment and intolerance. Responses of different kinds come to mind in relation to this sharp question.

Firstly, I believe contextualised liturgical practice to be central to questions about evangelism and mission (for the same connection in Faith in the City, see above, p. 44). Given the concerns of, among many other possible examples, Faith in the City and Children in the Way, the need for appropriate forms of mission and evangelism among the young and in the context of urban deprivation is beyond question. Donald Gray, a member of the Liturgical Commission during the period of Patterns for Worship's production, sharpens the focus on evangelism and liturgical ministry:

Faith in the City and similar reports have made us uncomfortably aware that the forms and patterns which cradle-Anglicans have, perhaps too easily, accepted as the norm are exceedingly blunt instruments of evangelism when placed in the hands of those who have the task of proclaiming the gospel to an increasingly indifferent and sometimes even hostile world (see p. 44 [n. 13], above).

I can elaborate my own perspective by explaining that in my role as director of the Urban Mission Centre in Gateshead, I found questions about mission and evangelism most powerfully addressed to the challenges of my setting by Haddon Willmer, who writes: 'If people do

not become Christian in such a way that they become church, there will be no base community for urban mission', and that 'serious urban mission must now become serious evangelism in order that there should be a church for others in future'. Willmer sets out these convictions in direct challenge to urban mission activity conceived, as it often has been – quintessentially in forms of Industrial Mission – as 'adjunct of the state,' supporting 'Christian values' through the sustenance of 'token representation of the church in certain areas of society', despite the fact that, in Willmer's charge, it may not be able to 'demonstrate that its way of engaging is effective, either in altering society or in making plain the message of Christian faith'. His argument rests on the sharply stated view that 'we can [ ] no longer assume that there is a base, a sufficient resource of committed people to be a serious active audience for Christian social teaching in our urban society'.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, his convictions provoke a range of questions for an 'urban mission' project.

Although perspectives and proposals such as those of Willmer in the statements just cited have recently received some vigorous disputation in Anthony Harvey's By What Authority?<sup>9</sup>, in direct contradistinction to the implications of Harvey's continued confidence in what might be called the consensus tradition, Willmer holds firmly that

social action, or urban mission, cannot be plausibly Christian unless Christianity means enough to people for them to choose to be Christian so that it makes differences to their living, and to what they hope and work for in society. So-called Christian urban mission, which claims that the church should be engaged in it, needs to be able to give meaning to the adjective 'Christian' if it is not to be deceiving

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<sup>8</sup> Willmer, Forms of Urban Mission: Social Action and Evangelism (Leeds: Leeds Church Institute, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Harvey, By What Authority? The Churches and Social Concern (London: SCM, 2001). Harvey argues for the continued vitality of engagement with the secular world in terms of argument that can gain general consensus without specific recourse to theology or theological language. See especially pp. 13-15 for a concentration of Harvey's argument.



*itself and others. Does Christian faith have meaning? Is it worthwhile for people to choose to be Christians in our society today, with such seriousness that they can give time and energy to being Christian (rather than being merely 'nominal')?*<sup>10</sup>

Willmer's argument is not simply critical of forms of urban mission, however, as it also includes constructive proposals. One of his constructive points concerns the need for convincing apologetic presentations of the faith in the climate he describes, so that the questions of 'what the gospel, the Evangel, is and how it may be set forth today'<sup>11</sup> receive the urgent attention he thinks that they merit. Willmer's comments have a jaggedness about them, but time in Gateshead led me to think that they are not necessarily inappropriate to the sharpness of the crisis he seeks to address. Indeed, I came to see Willmer's basic stance as quite aptly describing the kinds of difficulties faced when thinking about the mission of the church in Gateshead. At the very least, I would wish to assert that Willmer expresses the kind of robustness that is likely to be crucial as part of any adequate response to the stark realities of the discouraging demographic shifts in church attendance and church involvement in Gateshead, as well as, of course, many other urban communities.

Taking some leads from Haddon Willmer, my own particular concern in this chapter is with liturgy's potential relation to forms of social action, evangelism and catechesis as key to what may be achievable. By seeking to indwell my context I have correspondingly come to think (somewhat to my surprise) that Harvey's confidence about the continued vitality of a consensus tradition is highly questionable, although I do not doubt that it may be more firmly linked to strong awareness of the particular context in which he writes as canon of Westminster. Nevertheless, if Willmer's contribution to the conversation in which I found myself

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<sup>10</sup> Willmer, *Forms of Urban Mission*, p. 5. Italics in original.

<sup>11</sup> Willmer, *Forms of Urban Mission*, pp. 9, 10.

engaged in Gateshead is in a sense negative – in that it is developed in relation to threats: of church decline, of loss of numbers, and so on – to my mind, another compelling argument is rooted more in a sense of promise, yet one that I think is more appropriately modest to the situation than Harvey's confidence in a consensus tradition of which I could find few traces in my own situation. The promise of liturgy might, I think, be encapsulated in the phrase 'saving work', borrowed from Rebecca Chopp (one of Don Saliers' former colleagues at the Candler School of Theology) and developed by her from her particular feminist perspective. She writes that

Christian theology is about saving work. By this I mean that it is the work of feminist theologians to produce and create discourse (what all thinkers do, even when they say they are only interpreting), through the ongoing envisioning of Christian symbols. What links and interrelates these symbols and their constructions is the quest for emancipation, the belief that this is the goal, activity and being of God in the world, that this is the movement of Christian praxis and the nature of Christian community.<sup>12</sup>

My sense is that the notion of 'saving work' might well be transferred to the contribution of good worship to the good life, so that adopting aspects of Chopp's understanding of 'saving work' in the context of a conversation about liturgy underlines the need for serious appreciation that communal and personal capacities for human flourishing are at stake in questions about the best conceiving and proper ordering of Christian worship. Encouragement to flourish is surely a large part of evangelism.

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<sup>12</sup> Rebecca S Chopp, Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Knoxville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), pp. 85-86. I became aware of the 'flexibility' of applications of this term in reading Roberta C Bondi, Memories of God: Theological Reflections on a Life (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) and In Ordinary Time: Healing the Wounds of the Heart (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998). Specifically on liturgy, compare also Robert Hovda, 'Liturgy Forming Us in the Christian Life', Eleanor Bernstein, ed., Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 136-150, pp. 149-150: 'A spirituality that has dug up, uncovered, made its own, those sources of Bible and sacrament we have in the liturgy and is therefore ecclesial and of this world rather than private and angelic, is liberating and reconciling – which is to say, saving'.

Furthermore, I find that Robert Hovda amplifies the notion of liturgy as 'saving work' when he writes of liturgy's potential to 'creat[e] a kingdom scene' within which participants might enjoy an experience which 'relax[es] the tight grip of the status quo, so that people can move and breathe and envision alternatives'.<sup>13</sup> Don Saliers' citing with approval the vision of a pastor reflecting on the liturgy might also be recalled in close company with my understanding of Chopp and Hovda's visions: 'at some point [the people may] say "we could stay here forever." That's the kingdom' (above, p. 195). And Garrison Keillor's recollection of a visit to a New York congregation is another fragment that might, I think, exemplify what Hovda may mean:

. . . a hundred souls on lower Ninth Avenue, a church with no parking lot, which was in need of paint and the sanctuary ceiling showed water damage, but which managed (I learned the next week) to support and operate a soup kitchen that fed a thousand New Yorkers every day, more than a million to date. Black faces in the sanctuary, old people, exiles from the Midwest, the lame and the halt, divorced ladies, gay couples, a real good anthology of the faith. I felt glad to be there. When we stood for prayers, bringing slowly to mind the goodness and the poverty of our lives, the lives of others, the life to come, it brought tears to your eyes, the simple way the Episcopalians pray.

A woman stood in the aisle, to the rear, and led us in prayers, stopping after each call to leave a long silence where anybody could breathe a word or two in response – a prayer in which the people fill in the blanks. She called us to pray for the Church (help this church, God) . . . for peace and justice in the world (stop the drugs, the corruption of government) . . . for all those in need or trouble (for the sick and the dying) . . . for all who seek God (for my family and all the Plymouth Brethren) . . . for those who have died (Corinne, the people on the Iranian airliner) . . . and offer our thanks. Thanks for bringing me here. Thank you.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Robert W Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Liturgy (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 18; see also Robert Hovda, 'The Vesting of Liturgical Ministers', John F Baldwin, ed., Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 213-233, pp. 232-223.

<sup>14</sup> Garrison Keillor, We Are Still Married (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 206-207.

Saliers' own examples of other luminous moments help to enrich the sense of what talk of saving work may convey: he writes, for instance, of speaking with a child who liked a hymn because 'the words taste so good', of sharing in a service of baptismal renewal after which the presider asked 'was that a sacrament or a revival. . . ? I couldn't tell the difference',<sup>15</sup> and of adding one voice to the *Exultet* of Easter being proclaimed 'in several languages. . . as though the whole world had gathered in one place'.<sup>16</sup> It emerges from Saliers' reflections that moments of such luminosity may be spontaneous, whilst Hovda, somewhat differently, is convinced that the presider's task, carefully prepared for and thoughtfully exercised, may contribute to liturgy in such a way as to facilitate not less than what he calls the 'expan[sion of] the life' of God's creatures.<sup>17</sup> Whilst by no means wishing to reduce liturgy to 'techniques', his point is that good planning and good execution of liturgical celebration may play their part in persons being led into a sense of the divine reign in which they may find their worth, dignity, and fulfilment, and the measure of resources available to them. In Gateshead the citations here from Keillor and Saliers provided enough hints of what liturgy's 'saving work' could be for members of the local congregation to identify for themselves luminous experience of worship which were able to enrich the development of liturgical celebration in the parish, and in particular to nourish two major discussions. The first of these revolved around the shift from the ASB to Common Worship resources and the opportunities that the required shift offered to reassess the role of worship in the church's mission in the wider community; the second, about the full participation of

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<sup>15</sup> These examples from Don E Saliers, Worship as Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> This example from Don E Saliers, Worship Come to its Senses (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Liturgy (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 19.

children in communion (though the issues quickly broadened out to questions of hospitality to the unconfirmed, which is related, but not the same). Indeed, thinking about luminous moments in worship shaped long-term conversations about what adults hoped for children coming to take part more fully in sacramental worship, and what worshippers of all ages hoped for both for themselves and others in our use of Common Worship as the key resource for parish liturgy.

To my mind, then, Chopp suggests an important category around which many insights can be gathered. 'Saving work' can be used to focus thoughts about judgement and prescription in worship, and to approach the range of questions identified at the end of my survey of Lathrop, Saliers and White (page 231). For example, Saliers writes of the *ordo* supplying a 'common morphology – the shape of our common humanity when attracted to the glory and holiness of God',<sup>18</sup> which is an image of flourishing human beings in whom liturgy is doing its saving work. Both Saliers and Lathrop would each make a strong case for the *ordo*'s irreplaceable contribution to the capacity of liturgy to perform saving work: in their view, without the practices imbibed through engagement with the *ordo*, the human propensity to engage life 'at full stretch' would be diminished, and the ethical forces and resources working upon, and available to, a community may go unchallenged or unrefined by less than very careful use. So to lose from the worshipping assembly liturgical elements which begin to engage the full stretch of life - as happens in much contemporary urban celebration, and in much worship with children – can then be seen to risk the full stature of persons' humanity, to move towards diminution rather than whatever is entailed in salvation. This is of direct relevance to Patterns for Worship's uneasy concern about shortening services and supplanting inherited liturgical resources with novel or merely local ones (above, pp. 34ff). Through Lathrop and Saliers' emphasis on the *ordo*, we have,

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<sup>18</sup> Don E Saliers, Worship as Theology, p. 209.

then, particular insights into how and why concern expressed by the bishops of the Church of England in their prefatory note to Patterns for Worship is merited. Moreover, I think that the bishops' affirmation of liturgical worship could gain much from resources in the work of the three imaginative liturgical theologians considered here. In their more explicit relating of questions about the ordering of worship to questions of human flourishing (above, among many examples, p. 156, p. 180) they suggest why the bishops might be clearer than they are in print about some good reasons why the issues they identify are so critically significant. The category of 'saving work' offers important direction for developing the bishops' arguments.

Something of the value of Lathrop and Saliers' perspectives can be illustrated by consideration of what may be at stake if aspects of the *ordo* are lost in urban and child-inclusive congregations, in Gateshead and elsewhere. To lose from one's consciousness the Collect for Purity,<sup>19</sup> 'Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known. . .', can be seen in the light of discussion of Lathrop and Saliers as perhaps to be severed from a crucial Christian approach to self-perception and understanding of one's place in the created world.<sup>20</sup> To omit confession and reflection on sin may be to diminish the individual's and community's propensity to effect reconciliation. To conflate the breadth of eucharistic prayer may potentially reduce persons' capacity for gratitude. To fail to recollect baptism at opportune moments may be to leave unchallenged cultural captivities in the Christian assembly that may undermine a sense of identity and purpose that stands in harmony with the broad stream of the Christian tradition. With reference to children, the focus of chapter 4 above, to include children in gathering rites which include confession before dismissing

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<sup>19</sup> For more on which, see Stephen W Sykes, 'Cranmer on the Open Heart', Unashamed Anglicanism (London: DLT, 1995), 24-48.

<sup>20</sup> Saliers closes The Conversation Matters with reflection on this collect: Henry Knight III and Don E Saliers, The Conversation Matters, p. 99.

them prior to the proclamation of 'good news' in scripture, preaching or discussion may promote a truncated and imbalanced perception of faith's content and 'mood' among the young.<sup>21</sup> Here, then, are some reasons why Patterns for Worship attempted to shape child-inclusive and urban liturgies in particular ways, though Patterns does not make its points as effectively as either Lathrop, Saliers or White. Questions about conflating or overlooking the *ordo* relate to the potential of liturgy to perform saving work, about the *ordo*'s potential to bear fruit in those who worship in its ways.

Each of the examples just cited is highly relevant in Gateshead, for as a place in which worship around the *ordo* of Christian worship has, as in so many other places, become a habit which has not attracted many of the 'urban deprived' and even less 'urban deprived' people who happen to be young, the examples raise important issues that need to be set in the context of an insistence, such as Haddon Willmer's, about the importance of evangelism. Of course, both Willmer's focus on evangelism and this range of issues associated here with liturgy as saving work have to do with 'the making of Christians', or in Saliers' language, with the 'characterising activities' which form persons' faith (above, e.g. pp. 178-179).

At this juncture, there is an important connection that may be made between one of the threats that Lathrop, Saliers and White have consistently in their sights through their writings and conversation in the British context about Patterns for Worship and the forms of liturgy the bishops sought to promote with it. Lathrop, Saliers and White are critical of evangelism by American Megachurches (above, pp. 163-164, 185-187, 224-225), primarily because they think that it may tend to collapse into whole-scale narcissism, whilst, in Lathrop's words,

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<sup>21</sup> See Jacques Pohier, God in Fragments (London: SCM Press, 1985) for some important related discussion of the appropriateness of beginning services with confession, esp. pp. 212-222.

'evangelism . . . is always about inclusivity' in direct challenge to worshippers' narcissistic tendencies (above, p. 165). This means for him that 'when we tell the truth about our need of God and about God's astonishing mercy to us in the crucified and risen Christ, we are the more free to identify with outsiders than distinguish ourselves from them'.<sup>22</sup> The central point of connection between the American and British contexts is that aspects of the approach to evangelism adopted by the Megachurches are clearly a feature of many so-called 'family services' and other styles of worship that may conflate or completely overlook the *ordo* in strands of Anglicanism and in other streams of the church. Relevant to both American and British variations of tendencies to omit the *ordo* is the comment of the late psychologist of religion Paul Pruyser on contemporary religion and its practices of worship. He makes biting remarks about the 'haplessness of much so-called celebratory activity in religion – the rituals and liturgies that are advocated, fought about, tried out, promiscuously tinkered with, syncretistically arranged, artfully managed' and yet which may simply 'tend[ ] to condone, steady or augment the narcissistic penchants which are already so abundant in the culture at large':

In casting our eyes on the current religious scene we should be arrested by the sudden popularity that the word celebration has gained. The religious world today seems full of joyful noises and happenings. Or should I say that it is full of strenuous talk about these desirable things and replete with strained efforts to produce them, often with rather hapless results? . . . I see a wide gap, however, between wishing to celebrate and knowing what to celebrate; the cart seems to be put before the horse. A wish to celebrate may come from sheer boredom; it is a longing for affective experience per se, which may prompt one to going through the celebratory motions so as to capture some emotion. It is like saying with a yawn, "Let's have a party!" without having an occasion, reason or disposition for one.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lathrop, 'Foreword' and 'Afterword', How Does Worship Evangelize?, pp. 5, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Paul W Pruyser, 'Narcissism in Contemporary Religion', H Newton Maloney and Bernard Spilka, eds., Religion in Psychodynamic Perspective: The Contributions of Paul W Pruyser (New York: OUP, 1991), 66-82, pp. 80-81.



Lathrop's delicate balance of inclusivity and truth resists capitulation to one or few particular cultural styles, but demands broader expressions such as those that may be mediated by traditions practised in many times and places in Christian history, such as those conveyed in the *ordo*. For Lathrop, truth is christic, discerned in relation to Jesus Christ and particular narratives about him: crucially, those that recall his social boundary-crossing, as biblical narratives often do (above, p. 160). Truth, for Lathrop, may also be said to be cruciform, for he is aware of the ways in which boundary-crossing activity demands sacrifice. It is precisely this challenge that may be evaded by an over-emphasis on 'celebration'. And so explicit reference by Lathrop to the identity of Christ as crucified and risen suggests Lathrop's resistance to shirking from costs entailed in authentic conformity to Christ, whilst the sacraments are for him 'visible words' that convey the same challenge: '*baptism* – and the word that accompanies it and the supper to which it leads – *is what we have to give to any seeker*'.<sup>24</sup> For Lathrop, evangelism is centred and held by the sacraments, which juxtapose the name of Jesus to a wider and more demanding frame of reference than mere 'celebration'. This is in quite stark contrast to forms of evangelism emerging in relation to much discussion of 'all-age' worship or liturgy for the urban British context, each of which find a particular focus in Gateshead, and therefore are challenged by Lathrop's particular understanding of the saving work that liturgy may mediate.

It is, of course, easier to determine liturgical theologians' judgment on the loss of the classical *ordo* in certain forms of Christian assembly than it is to state the force of any possible judgment upon the *ordo* itself, such as may be represented by the widespread tendency to reject the *ordo* in urban communities or among children. Yet it is precisely here that the challenge of contextualising this conversation in a place such as

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<sup>24</sup> Lathrop, 'Afterword', p. 31.

Gateshead is valuable. For the realities of a situation in which 'occasion, reason or disposition' to partake in public worship shaped around the *ordo* are, as demographics of attendance show, scarce, Gateshead may 'bite' in turn. It may be that in some respects the limits of the *ordo* as a liberative 'patterning' of life may become apparent through increased contextual awareness and sensitivity to the demands of the urban environment or the full inclusion of children. It may at least be said that the most obvious beginning of a retort to the kind of claim that liturgy is saving work could be to take seriously the recognition that in Britain at least it seems in broad terms true to state that it is the liturgical churches which are emptiest and failing to thrive in the urban environment and among the young. To nuance this statement, there are, of course, other factors that begin to explain the apparent dearth in numbers of worshippers, not least the Victorian expansion of church buildings regardless of local populations and current migratory patterns within urban communities, the joint legacy of which is often large buildings housing small congregations. However, the general trend of decline is evident in many places to an extent that is beyond question, which is most sharp in the Church of England in the Diocese of Durham,<sup>25</sup> of which Gateshead is the most extreme example, and factors such as those just cited do little to mute the force of Haddon Willmer's call to appropriate forms of evangelism.

At the same time, frank acknowledgement of the British situation by no means empties liturgical theologians' arguments of power or content. Perhaps what it does most forcibly, however, is invite the realistic recognition that any potential growth in human maturity that Saliers, for instance, or others, may expect to emerge out of liturgical participation may in reality need to be a focus for another generation of the urban church's life, still ahead of the present time. A larger 'audience' for the *ordo* needs to be sought and found before more

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<sup>25</sup> See statistics cited in Bob Jackson, Hope for the Church (London: CHP, 2002).

ambitious proposals like Saliers' become central. In the interim, the crucial ecclesial task in the urban environment is perhaps, therefore, following Willmer, to rehabilitate practices of evangelism in order first to welcome persons into liturgical worship and so open up at least the possibility of some kind of experience of emancipation through contact in one way or another with the gospel of Christ.<sup>26</sup> This was a constant tension in my experience of church-life in Gateshead, and it is reflected in the shape of this present chapter where I focus in what follows on marginal elements of the liturgical cycles, and then the weekly eucharist. In relation to each of foci, questions about the relation of worship and evangelism are crucial, and the necessity to engage with marginal elements is itself one essential factor in any assessment of the 'durability' of the *ordo*.

It is my view that Saliers' contribution to discussion of the relation of evangelism and worship may offer particular direction to the urban British context where the *ordo* does not have a central function in evangelism, simply because so few people are exposed to the *ordo*. Part of the helpful challenge of Saliers' work concerns the way in which he wishes to ground the evangelistic witness of the church in the *lex agendi* of worshippers' lives (see, for example, his understanding of how eucharistic prayer may be appropriated; above, pp. 190-191). He argues that through faithful liturgical participation and appropriation of the practices of the *ordo*, those worshippers' lives may come to cohere with the assembly's meanings in word and sacrament and themselves become living reminders of Jesus Christ. By means of this emphasis, the

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<sup>26</sup> For helpful explorations of the evangelistic potential of worship, see William Seth Adams, 'Liturgical Hospitality', *Moving the Furniture: Liturgical Theory, Practice and Environment* (New York: Church Publishing, 1999), 87-105, and Patrick R Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

Sunday assembly as such may in his view be 'unburdened'<sup>27</sup> of some of the pressure that 'family services' and so on may place on it to itself be a primarily means of evangelism (above, pp. 189-190). Clearly, evangelism is not as central to Saliers' liturgical thinking as it is to Willmer's convictions about British urban mission, but at the same time, neither is Saliers' thinking unconcerned about the relationship of liturgy and evangelism. It is rather that Sunday services are not the focus of evangelism in Saliers' view, and acknowledging his perspective may in itself ease some of the pressure felt by congregations to make their evangelistic task converge with occasions for worship.

In so far as evangelism has a liturgical focus at all for Saliers it is in his understanding much more likely to find that focus in the 'pastoral' practice of hospitable baptism, marriage and funeral services, which may not be on Sunday mornings<sup>28</sup> (though in the English context, if not Saliers' American setting, there is of course strong encouragement for baptism to be celebrated in the main act of Sunday worship). Nevertheless, meshed with some of Laurie Green's observations on the British UPA context about the help and availability of the church - and especially its clergy - being 'taken for granted not as charity but a right' at times of transition in the life-cycle (above, p. 107), there may well be considerable scope in the British situation for the kind of 'pastoral' evangelism that Saliers has in mind. Of course, by contrast, Haddon Willmer's sense of the fragility of Industrial Mission and other established means of making contact between the church and wider

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<sup>27</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Divine Grace, Diverse Means'; and for some complementary views, also: John F Baldovin, 'Must Eucharist do Everything?', Robert A Leaver & Joyce Ann Zimmermann, eds., Liturgy and Music: Lifelong Learning (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 117-127; also, Robert Hovda, 'What Should We Ask of the Liturgy?', John F Baldovin, ed., Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 68-72.

<sup>28</sup> See also James F White, 'Thirty Years of the Doctoral Program in Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, 1965-1995', Nathan Mitchell and John F Baldovin, eds., Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh OSB (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 324-342.

society question the potential of the church and its ministers' 'availability' to further the process of helping the nominal or more distant from the worshipping life of the church to appropriate the meanings of its central things. Whatever the potential remaining in the church's ministry in the life-cycle being taken more or less for granted, the importance of Willmer's point in insisting that mission must have evangelistic edges in order simply for the church to survive is sharp here, and needs to grate against any easy sense of 'solutions' to the missionary difficulties of the church. Gateshead is a place where that grating can be felt, perhaps more sharply than in Harvey's Westminster, for instance.

### **Contextualised reflections on "para-liturgical" activity**

Beyond the pastoral presence of which Willmer is impatient, and also the pastoral offices in which Saliers finds hope, Gateshead was a setting in which I learned that forms of what Saliers calls 'para-liturgical' activity<sup>29</sup> may indeed be a crucial means of aiding the process of appropriation of Christian meanings that is a feature of evangelistic endeavour. The notion of para-liturgy signals for Saliers an area of activity that mediates between worship and life, the respective foci of Lathrop and Saliers' understandings of evangelism. For Saliers, developing sensitivity to para-liturgy requires careful attention to the ways in which 'mass media, social rituals, and "lifestyle" options in a consumerist society' may be 'far more powerfully formative of habit, perception, and moral character than are religious practices found in Christian liturgy'.<sup>30</sup> These are, in effect, 'characterising activities' that may – and often do - contest the characterising activity of liturgy: Saliers concedes that the rituals of non-church gatherings such as

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<sup>29</sup> In conversation with the author, February 15 2001, Emory University.

<sup>30</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited', E Byron Anderson and Bruce T Morrill, ed., Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 209-224, p. 216.

'sports events, the arts, entertainment, and the workplace' may well be the "primary" liturgies of people's lives.<sup>31</sup> And because this is so, Saliers' argues, music and song, high and low forms of art, popular and professional sport may, among other means, play an especially important role in para-liturgy's mediation between worship and culture.<sup>32</sup>

Attempts to engage in para-liturgy are quite consciously different to evangelistic efforts that are non-liturgical, and of those by Megachurches and others who may believe themselves to be non-liturgical because they jettison printed texts for prayer.<sup>33</sup> Para-liturgy is distinguished from the non-liturgical and the liturgical activity of those who are unaware of their own engagement in liturgy by its conscious endeavours to extend liturgical dynamics into less than strictly liturgical contexts, by means of music and song, high and low art, and such like. So attempts to create and explore para-liturgy that may begin to facilitate participation in church liturgies by those familiar with non-church rituals seek to duplicate aspects of sacramental celebration and the patterns discerned therein but in actions and events which are themselves not acts of worship but which are likely to be social in some way. By insisting upon the shaping influence of liturgical dynamics, however, para-liturgy recognises that social events collapsed into

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<sup>31</sup> Saliers, 'Afterword', p. 216.

<sup>32</sup> Music and song, and art, are considered in greater detail below. For more on sport, see C E Thomas, 'Sports', David Ness, ed., Spirituality and the Secular Quest (London: SCM, 1996), 498-519, and various essays in the edition of Concilium on sporting topics: Geoffrey Baum and John Coleman, ed., Sport (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> See Lathrop, 'New Pentecost or Joseph's Britches?' Worship 72 (1998): 521-538 for a discussion of liturgical aspects of Megachurch worship; and insightful studies of other self-perceived 'non-liturgical' traditions in Steven Land's Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) and F F Bruce's articles on the Plymouth Brethren, especially 'Plymouth Brethren Worship' in J Gordon Davies, ed., A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship (London: SCM, 1986), pp. 435-437.

'entertainment' mode are liable to under-reach their potential as themselves lacking formation in sacramental depth. In Gateshead, it was indeed 'para-liturgical' events that were able to attract a crowd, while the eucharistic worship of the church, in and of itself, generally did not. Para-liturgical church events were needed to introduce persons to the dynamics of the church's gatherings. And of special importance were a number of occasions through the year.

Occasions such as Christingle services, All Souls' memorials, Harvest Festival and 'Mother's Day' are often the most widely attended events in the urban church's year, whilst being – with the exception of All Souls – at best peripheral to the church's liturgical calendar. They do not feature in the *ordo*. Yet Christingle was by far the best-attended service of the year in my experience of ministry in Gateshead, attracting many hundreds of people – indeed, some years ten times the average Sunday attendance. Christingle is a relatively recent addition to the church's repertoire and it involves a hand-held symbol: an orange to represent the world, four sticks of fruit or sweets to represent the 'four corners' and 'four seasons' of the earth, red ribbon to represent the blood of Christ, and a lighted candle to represent Christ's appearance. Although employing the traditional seasonal imagery of light and darkness to powerful effect, often in practice the Christingle service seems in its 'explanation' of the meaning of the images it employs to invite prescribed and predictable interpretations that mute some of the challenging aspects of traditional Christmas narratives. Yet the challenge of the Christingle service in the light of the preceding conversation is how it might serve as a bridge to participation in the *ordo*. Of course, Christingle has its own context in the meeting of the Advent and Christmas seasons, of which many aspects of the former have been forgotten and many aspects of the latter have also been sentimentalised - notably many carols. And in the case of both some carols and standard descriptions of the Christingle it is not surprising that more central or disturbing aspects of themes expressed in the

liturgical season of Advent or described in the biblical narratives of Christmas, are decentred from the means of celebration.<sup>34</sup> Making Christingle unfold 'euchatastrophy', in Mary Collins phrase discussed in chapter 4 above (p. 134), seems a long way away from most actual Christingle presentations. In the Christingle, red ribbon may intend to point towards 'the blood of Christ', but if it does so in a context which has to a great extent long lost use of such imagery,<sup>35</sup> it is likely to do so in an altogether less disturbing way than the memory of Jesus' suffering enacted in bread being broken and wine poured out in the setting of a narrative of 'betrayal' by 'night' (cf. pp. 190-191). It is a pity, then, that the tradition of Las Posadas, which originated in Latin America but has spread to the North, has not been popularised in Britain as it has elsewhere, for this may better relate the shades of darkness in the Christmas narratives and so might encourage resistance to sentimentalising of the tradition. In the Las Posadas, miniature figures of the holy family are 'housed' at the homes of various parishioners through the Advent season, and then are eventually brought to the gathered church community for a service on Christmas Eve, the time at which Christingle is most popular. The ritual of movement from one home to another represents the holy family's journey to Bethlehem according to biblical tradition, and the liturgical text which accompanies the rite of welcome and departure at each home, as well as the

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Coates, 'Standing in the Stable', Heather Walton and Susan Durber, eds., Silence in Heaven: A Book of Women's Preaching (London: SCM, 1994), 4-8 is an interesting attempt to contest the sentimental images of some popular Christmas carols.

<sup>35</sup> Some reasons for the loss of focus on imagery of blood in understandings of atonement following experience of the Great War are explored in Alan Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War (London: SPCK, 1978) and Alan Wilkinson, Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900-1945 (London: SCM, 1986). In a very interesting essay, George Lindbeck notes decline in use of the imagery with proposals for vibrant alternative foci for contemporary doctrine of the atonement, George Lindbeck, 'Atonement and the Hermeneutics of Intratextual Social Embodiment', Thomas R Philips and David L Oakholm, eds., The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 221-240.



culminating Christmas Eve finale, incorporates a strong sense of the desperation of the family in their vulnerable state, with obvious resonance with the plight of contemporary refugees (above, pp. 86-87). Fragments of dialogue include, on the lips of Mary and Joseph: 'we are tired and we are cold. May we please have shelter? . . . It is not by our own choice that we travel. . .'. And from the mouths of those who refuse them, 'You look dirty and you smell. . . for your kind there is no place, our inn is decent. . . For your reasons we care not, every room is taken. . . you are bad for business'.<sup>36</sup> Housed in people's homes, perhaps amidst children's fashion and action toys - Barbie, Action Man and such like - the possibilities of para-liturgical linking of children's habits of play and euchatastrophic realities may be vividly explored in this ritual. The beginnings of the potential of this supplement to Christingle were beginning to be seen in Gateshead and considerably redressed the tendency of Christingle in and of itself to lapse into an unchallenging sentimentalism.

Harvest is another celebration with no fixed place or status in the liturgical canon, and one which is also easily sentimentalised in any setting, and yet which may grate in extraordinarily bizarre ways in urban contexts. Contesting the sentimentality of harvest in an industrial context is likely to invite travail, yet may be important in the catechesis of an urban congregation. Attempts to translate the agriculturally-derived themes of harvest to industrial settings, as in some of the Hymns of the City collection (above, p. 96), are by no means always elegant, yet their stylistic want is not the only reason for the often fierce resistance to any contemporising of harvest in many urban churches, which may prefer the less 'cutting' sentimentality of its traditional performance. Of course, it is the case that globalised markets now allow for agricultural produce to be bought and sold in urban contexts

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<sup>36</sup> This text taken from 'A Christmas Eve Service of Las Posadas', United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: UMC Publishing House, 1992) 280-284, p. 282.

irrespective of such produce's dependence on the locality or the prevailing season, but it remains unusual, for instance, for churches with immediate industrial surroundings to reconfigure the notion of harvest with liturgies that incorporate industrial machinery or produce that may be the 'fruit' of that particular time and place. Yet this is a reconfiguration that may be highly appropriate, and which may determine whether or not harvest marked in an urban context is merely an exercise in escapism. 'Mother's Day' may likewise lapse into deep sentimentality, loosed from moorings in the liturgical and theological traditions of 'mothering Sunday' as thanksgiving for the church, or Mary, and perhaps not clearly related either to some of the realities of urban life in families which feature in the discussion of chapters 3 and 4, above. In these three examples – Christingle, Harvest and Mother's Day – we have, in my experience, the three best attended 'celebrations' of the year, each of which may without careful and critically informed practice reflect very little of the heart of the liturgical canon or the full stretch of life for which the *ordo* has resources.

All Souls' is somewhat easier to map onto the *ordo*, although its practice may submerge any connections to a focus on God under affective desire for 'a family reunion', as that it too may so easily be vulnerable to the kinds of over-sentimentalising for which I have just critiqued other celebrations. As Colin Crowder notes with special relevance in this context to engagement with All Souls, 'the character of our convictions may have much more to do with the strength of human affections than with the force of reasoning from theological first principles',<sup>37</sup> and this observation can in fact be related to each of the examples just cited, as well as serving to alert us to the potential of sentimental 'folk rites' to evade some of the more demanding aspects of liturgical celebration as these may be mediated by the juxtapositions of longer-standing

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<sup>37</sup> Colin Crowder, 'The Family Reunion: Reflections on the Eschatological Imagination', Stephen C Barton, ed., *The Family In Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996), 329-344, p. 342.

elements of the liturgical canon that encourage a focus on boundary-crossing, sacrifice, and such like. For folk celebrations may share liturgical dynamics without being shaped by the 'essentials' of word and sacrament, and here Lathrop's concerns about the centrality of word and sacrament are particularly salient (above, p. 156): what popular folk-rites may 'characterise' is not the Christian faith as Lathrop expounds its centre, nor for that matter is their sentimentality the affective maturity to which Saliers' writings aspire, reflected in his sense of the affective stretch of the Psalms, for instance (above, pp. 181-182). Yet whilst the examples of Christingle, harvest and so on, are salutary reminders of the need for critical appreciation of the possibility of para-liturgy, they have the counterbalancing merit of being an arena into which more challenging dynamics might carefully be introduced (such as supplementing Christingle with Las Posadas rituals). This is especially important when liturgies with established challenging dynamics must be recognised, whatever their merits, as in and of themselves no longer to attract people's presence. That this may apply to baptism and eucharist in an urban context such as my own highlights the huge importance and potential of para-liturgical folk celebrations in making contributions to evangelism and to aspect of liturgy's 'saving work'.

Most occasions of worship in Gateshead were, however, eucharistic rites, and for the remainder of this chapter I relate the conversation of earlier parts of this work to my experience of liturgical practice at the eucharist in the particular context of Gateshead. Given the multifaceted understanding of liturgy developed through this work, learned in conversation with Saliers, White and Lathrop, I take a whole-rite focus, as is characteristic of liturgical theology, beginning with the place of meeting.

### **Contextualised reflections on the place of meeting**

In urban communities in the UK, ancient church buildings often carry significant symbolic power, as Laurie Green hints at in his reflections on years of ministry in Poplar, and referred to in chapter 3 above (above, p. 105). The church building for which I was responsible was set on a high street in a town centre, and was in fact the oldest building in the town, dating from the thirteenth century. It had over time enjoyed many uses, as a nunnery chapel, hospital chapel, private chapel at different times for both Anglican and Roman Catholic families, place of public worship in both Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions, and more recently for a time as the diocesan store for redundant liturgical furniture. It had twice – once in the nineteenth and once in the twentieth century – been deconsecrated and unused as a place of worship, and twice through the twentieth century had very narrowly escaped demolition to make way for urban expansion. Despite this diverse history the building was clearly perceived by some in the local community to represent an abiding presence amidst great change, it being one of very few buildings in the town centre older than fifty or a few more years. That church building, then, itself may illustrate the way in which perhaps especially in geographical areas blighted by rapid and thoroughgoing change in the physical landscape, historic ecclesiastical buildings may be felt to convey particularly powerful resonances of stability, at least for some for the time being. Undoubtedly, in so far as buildings help to anchor a sense of stability they may make a most important contribution to such geographical areas, and consequently, some people, with members of the Gateshead congregation among them, trust that such buildings may also make a crucial contribution to the church's evangelistic ministry. David Stancliffe, for instance, makes the point that 'stability. . . evangelises'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> David Stancliffe, 'Evangelism and Worship', Jeffrey John, ed., Living Evangelism: Affirming Catholicism and Sharing the Faith (London: DLT, 1996), 25-42, p. 41, although this suggestive idea is not directly related to the church's buildings and should be understood in the context of his own reforming work at Portsmouth Cathedral, on which see David Stancliffe,

This notwithstanding, the pressure to re-order church buildings is very clearly felt at the present time (for White's understandings: above, pp. 206, 208), especially with encouragement from diocesan bodies and such like for buildings to function not only as places for worship but also to serve other community uses. This pressure was keenly felt in Gateshead, at least by some, and in order to encourage further conversation in which people with very different perspectives might come to agree, the liturgical consultant Richard Giles<sup>39</sup> had done some initial work for the congregation to envision how the building might practically be put to more diverse community uses were reordering to be undertaken. That envisioning work was 'safe' for people with different opinions because it could not in itself facilitate actual change: any more diverse community use was in our case impossible until major amendments could be made to the interior as almost all the floor space was filled with static, ranked pews. Whilst perhaps the fact that change could not easily be achieved without major reordering created for some a sense of safety from the threat of any imminent reordering, it clearly was a factor in a large measure of frustration for others. These ones were most aware of the fact that the building was, in its excellent location, only open for a handful of hours each week for public worship, and due to the severe restrictions on space imposed by the pews, inappropriate or unusable as a venue for anything else. Questions about liturgical space therefore gathered a number of tensions between those holding to the sense of stability associated with the building – many of whom seemed to find themselves profoundly threatened by the possibility of almost any kind of change to the physical space, despite its obvious limitations - and those enlivened by the possibilities opened up

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'Creating Sacred Space: Liturgy and Architecture Interacting', David Brown and Ann Loades, eds., The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time (London: SPCK, 1995), 44-58.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Richard Giles, Re-pitching the Tent: re-ordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission (Norwich: Canterbury Press, second edition 1999).

by liturgical consultation about the space allied to a series of open visits to newly-built and recently renovated church buildings which expressed in a variety of ways multi-purpose use. Recollection of the image of 'conversation' is again appropriate at this point, as in the 'heat' generated around the possibilities of re-ordering, I expressed no personal opinions about use of space, but rather tried to mediate between various perspectives. At the very least, my experience in Gateshead suggests that change of the kind involved in multi-purpose use, if this requires the removal or reordering of furniture, may be much more controversial than change to liturgical texts. For by way of contrast to discussion about reordering space, the shift to Common Worship texts was not perceived as a threat of anything like the same measure. And the difference in the same people's responses to different kinds of change to the liturgy in itself testifies to the power of environment as a shaping factor in the primary theology of a congregation, of the impact on or contribution of space to liturgy (above, p. 206). These aspects of my context in Gateshead shape the following reflections on liturgical space, to which this particular experience of liturgical travail introduced me.

The question of change to the space of the church in Gateshead is one that also overshadows many others, notably the many buildings constructed in Victorian 'expansion' of urban areas and which have in fact perhaps never been well attended for the sole purpose of worship. These and other buildings, including perhaps our own, are increasingly made to conform to the 1991 Care of Ecclesiastical Buildings Act that directs that the church's buildings are intended for a dual purpose as 'local centres of worship and mission'. That vision is itself an echo of the dual qualities considered essential by the influential Roman Catholic text on liturgical space, Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, which speaks of 'climate of hospitality' that 'invites contemplation'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, 11, 12.

Clearly, these dual qualities have great relevance to any discussion of participation.

In relation to the American context of the three theologians who are the focus of Part Three of this work, it is significant that the legacy of historic church buildings is one that is not so widespread in North America, and that Roman Catholic directives on the construction and order of buildings for churches, such as Environment and Art, have been influential in consideration of the form of the church's buildings across the traditions. James White, one of the three liturgical theologians key to Part Three, particularly in some his joint work with Susan White, has been a major Protestant apologist for attention to church architecture and design, much in line with Environment and Art.<sup>41</sup> He suggests, in a pithy phrase, 'space is faith', that is it encourages or inhibits various understandings of relationship between elements of the faith. Indeed, space is 'perhaps the most important single factor' in worshippers' formation in faith: 'not only does space form faith, it can and frequently does deform and distort faith. Thus we are frequently caught in a conflict between the faith we profess and the faith the building proclaims'.<sup>42</sup> So, for example, where the baptismal font and altar-table are made to compete for attention with other pieces of furniture of much less significance, the spatial clutter may, at best, confuse understanding of faith. Hence, attempts to re-order church buildings in such a way as to allow the central pieces of furniture to 'speak' uncontested, clarified. The conflict to which White is alert was

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<sup>41</sup> James F White and Susan J White, Church Architecture: Building and Renovating for Christian Worship (Akron: OSL, second edition 1998); James F White, Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations (New York: OUP, 1964); James F White, Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Sources (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1992), chapter 3: 'Space as Communication'; and various essays.

<sup>42</sup> James F White, 'Liturgical Space Forms Faith', James F White, Christian Worship in North America (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 211-214, p. 212.

clearly apparent in some in the Gateshead conversations about liturgical change.

Among British Christians, appreciation of the power of architecture is something about which there is little official liturgical guidance in the Anglican and Protestant traditions. Helpfully, David Brown and Ann Loades present a rare example of reflection on liturgical space in the British context, and develop ideas about architectural ambience by suggesting that the 'house of the church', for better or worse, communicates to those who dwell within it an 'alternative geography' to that of its secular environs. In a book celebrating Durham Cathedral, they write that

the traditional position of the baptismal font at the entrance [of the church building] warns that one is entering a temporal zone which tells a different story from that which begins at one's birth. Then the fact that one has to move through the church to reach the altar speaks of a time which culminates in something other than one's own death.

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In ways such as this, they suggest, architecture can itself introduce 'new co-ordinates' into human life, which can possibly enable the transformation of participants' identity. This is a strong claim about liturgy as saving work, and one that underlines for me the potential of pursuing reflection on the primary theology of liturgical space.

Among the insights to emerge in the Gateshead conversations were three that were central, and which over time in which people listened to different points of view gained a level of common assent: how space permits or inhibits movement, how pieces of liturgical furniture are positioned in relation to one another, and who may use them freely communicates a great deal of importance about the nature of the Christian community. Almost everyone involved in the conversations,

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<sup>43</sup> David Brown and Ann Loades, 'The Dance of Grace', David Brown and Ann Loades, eds., The Sense of the Sacramental, 1-16, p. 5.



whatever their conviction, could acknowledge this much. Continued wrestling with how a conversation might be facilitated between those in my local congregation who cherished the stability of an ancient building, and those who hoped it might come to offer some new co-ordinates, led to a series of further insights, none of which were easy to discuss as a congregation, because responses to them revealed some quite divergent understandings and approaches to liturgy. Among these, though, was a growing awareness on my part that the architectural environment in which liturgies are set may be inimical to the understanding of a sacrament as expressed in a contemporary rite and may indeed frustrate sacramental celebration. Minimally, it may be that liturgical space may hinder, or maximally may undermine the possibility of a community embodying the grace envisaged as being available in sacramental rites. One corollary of a conversation about worship and evangelism in an urban British context may, then, be promotion of awareness that unlike the use of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults in space shaped by Environment and Art, the environment in which many contemporary urban British liturgical celebrations are set – often, ancient, inflexible buildings governed by faculty restrictions - may be almost entirely inappropriate to the dynamics of the present rites, and simply agitate participants' unease by contesting the sense of divine reality, and relationship to divine reality, that the rites themselves seek to express. Re-ordered buildings, which are likely to move the font from its 'traditional' position to one in direct proximity to the altar (as we ourselves in Gateshead were suggesting was a possibility), raise some interesting related questions, as does the fact that it is possible that contemporary fonts may also contain running ('living') water, and be large enough for an adult to step into it. In buildings re-ordered in ways that accommodate the likes of such large fonts for flowing water near the altar-table, some different co-ordinates again are on offer to any kind small basin-like construction (like our own), however grandly designed or disguised in the traditional position by the western doors (like Durham Cathedral's). Hence, to relate the

point to James White's terms, such re-ordering carries major implications for how faith is conceived. And what is the case for fonts may also be so for altars: re-ordered buildings are likely to house only one altar, which is spatially open as opposed to 'fenced' with rails or steps, so that a special 'sanctuary' area – which has been effectively the province of the priest – is not marked off. This introduces a significantly different perception of faith to one in which 'sanctuary' space is preserved by use of rails or, to a lesser extent perhaps, steps. Through such reflections, I was divested of any naivety about the possibility of such re-orderings being little less than revolutionary in their impact on the whole experience of liturgy.

These comments point to some of the complex relationships between what may be signified by 'lex orandi, lex credendi' (above, pp. 24-26), as clearly space and its contents may be changed in order to shape a new context for prayer that in turn reshapes belief - a possibility that in its own way challenges any simple notion of inherited 'primary theology' of space always being adequate or up-building in the present. An important strand of thinking in consideration of change to liturgical space, then, is the cognisance that the inherited forms of spatial arrangement will in any old or ancient building be diverse (as Durham's cathedral amply testifies and as the history of the Gateshead church building suggests), having undergone perhaps manifold changes over time. Even if the original arrangement of the building can be traced or reconstructed, it is important to situate the original vision in its historical moment within the flux of the wider Christian tradition in order not to absolutise a particular potentially restraining vision of the relationship between prayer or belief. Nevertheless, decisions to change the placing of altar and font, and their perceived spatial relationship to one another, are likely to be among the most significant a congregation makes. To suggest some examples that relate specifically to the conversation of earlier parts of this work: making a font or the baptismal space around it speak of the welcome place of children could

conceivably be done by the placing of toys, tents, slides and climbing frames in proximity to the waters. Furthermore, the close proximity of font and altar may allow associations that nurture acceptance of children in communion in ways that their traditional positioning may not so obviously (especially if the altar is railed). Likewise, it is conceivable that their proximity may, with care taken about how they are related in ritual performance, facilitate the development of the 'shared ministry' of clergy- and laypersons, including children, if increasing visibility and use of a font can be made to signal the baptismal dignity of all without distinction.

Other architectural considerations are immensely important also. The arrangement of either ranked or circular seating may embed a particular 'theology'. For arrangement of the community's seating and its relationship to other pieces of furniture may suggest at least: where divine presence is located – among us, between us, perhaps, in the case of circular arrangements? Beyond us, apart from us, perhaps, in the case of ranked seating separated by space from a distinct 'sanctuary', to which, perhaps, only some members of the community have access? Whatever arrangement is likely to 'emanate' very strong signals about the nature of ministry: whether the assembly is able to meet in a circle, or at least semi-circular formation and so be able to see one another's faces is likely to have a profound influence on the wider possibilities of 'shared ministry'. Perhaps, those ranked in pews, looking only at the back of others' heads with sight of only 'ordained' faces are perhaps likely to struggle more with the options. Similarly, whether children are seated separately from the assembly, or remain in some spatial relation with the altar or the font (perhaps among the adults, or perhaps in an age-related group) is likely to influence thinking about the appropriateness of their full sacramental participation, fostering or frustrating it. Whether they are present at the altar in roles open to lay adults is likely to be highly determinative too. The central point of which I became aware by immersion in such questions in the Gateshead

context was that the arrangement of liturgical space in any particular place is more likely than almost any discussion to determine how such contemporary ecclesial questions are framed and addressed.

The place of gathering is, then, important in all sorts of ways to the potential of liturgy to do 'saving work' by suggesting access to God's new order. In the forgoing discussion, we have, in addition to following the Gateshead conversations, considered some further possibilities centred on how pews or seats arranged in ranks or circles, and whether the space most closely associated with word and sacraments is open or closed in by rails or other restrictions on its use communicates responses to questions of human worth. These concerns are often considered as at best peripheral to understandings of liturgy, and they are seemingly sometimes further again from the thought of some of the bodies that contribute to the oversight, care and renovation of church buildings in the English context. Yet they are concerns that I have learned need to be magnified in order to relativize the important but limited agenda of English Heritage and their various counterparts.

### **Contextualised reflections on texts and images**

The form in which texts for prayer are presented is another crucial factor when considering the possibilities of full participation. The kinds of service cards for which Patterns for Worship called have now become commonplace largely due to advances in, and wide access to, computer technology (pp. 35ff). Yet, as I found in the context of ministry in Gateshead, congregations including the non-literate may not welcome such 'aids' as service-cards, suspecting an implication of the congregations' 'inferiority' or 'inadequacy' as distinct from those able to cope with the 1300 page ASB which Faith in the City berated, or one similar.<sup>44</sup> In my Gateshead context this sense of implied inferiority was

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<sup>44</sup> My own experience of trying to introduce service cards to an urban congregation has generated responses centred on the fear of 'not being a proper church'. Despite a non-book culture and low literacy levels, people

stronger among the churchpeople than a sense of the necessity to present texts accessibly in a congregation where some child members were the only ones in their family who could read, and who read the liturgy for their parents, just as at other times they read the household bills and much else on their parents' behalf. In fact, such children were not at all uncommon, especially after the influx of asylum seekers into the community, some of whom joined the church, and among whom the children were, through school, the first (and sometimes only) members of the family to learn to read English.<sup>45</sup> If the computer-assisted production of service cards has introduced a new normative way of presenting texts for prayer, it may eventually free the low- or non-literate from the 'tyranny of normality'<sup>46</sup> represented by use of a book people struggle actually to use and yet find difficult to relinquish as a matter of pride. The compromises on which in time the congregation in Gateshead settled were 'booklets', though always several sheets of A4 paper, which included only minimal amounts of text but careful use of imagery to suggest the flow of liturgical structures. After much negotiation and once professionally produced, such booklets were considered to be appropriately 'respectable' for public use, reflecting the congregation in a good light.

Such booklets were produced using computer technology, though that itself may before long be outdated in worship, as newer technologies also now present the further possibility of use of 'Powerpoint' projection in liturgical events, enabling necessary texts for prayer or song to be projected electronically on to screens, but also allowing for much greater use of imagery. This form of technology – though not

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preferred the 'proper book'. Visual Liturgy for computers will do much to decentre the normative status of a large bound prayer-book.

<sup>45</sup> I am presently preparing a Grove booklet on the congregation's involvement with asylum seekers, in which some of the points made in this chapter will appear.

<sup>46</sup> This phrase is Stanley Hauerwas'.

necessarily so much for projection of images - is at the present time commonly adopted by Megachurches (and for songs more than for texts of congregational prayer, of course), and in charismatic contexts – in which it is valued because it frees worshippers' hands from books, allowing them more easily to be raised, clapped, grasped and so on. Use of such technology has as yet not received sustained attention from liturgical theologians, and yet, I believe, it merits such attention. For this mode of presenting texts itself makes a powerful impact on the visual environment, focusing attention sometimes on blank space and at other times on words, with the subsequent loss of much of the iconic environment that has played so large a role in worship for many people.<sup>47</sup> The subversion of liturgical art that this could in some cases amount to may be drastic because art bears great potential to provide a sense of God's new order by presenting 'an alternative vision and set of images of what it means to be human'.<sup>48</sup> As John de Gruchy insists, 'good art, whatever its form, helps us both individually and corporately to perceive reality in a new way, and by doing so, opens up possibilities of transformation'.<sup>49</sup> The worshipping environment may be seriously impoverished when the visual arts are diminished, for visual art may 'stretch' those who attend to it the kind of 'new co-ordinates' which Brown and Loades illuminate. Yet it might of course be argued that 'Powerpoint' could be used to introduce more rather than less imagery, including moving pictures, into the context of worship,<sup>50</sup> and this possibility might assuage the fear that use of 'Powerpoint' and such like might sideline the power of visual imagery in favour of projected text

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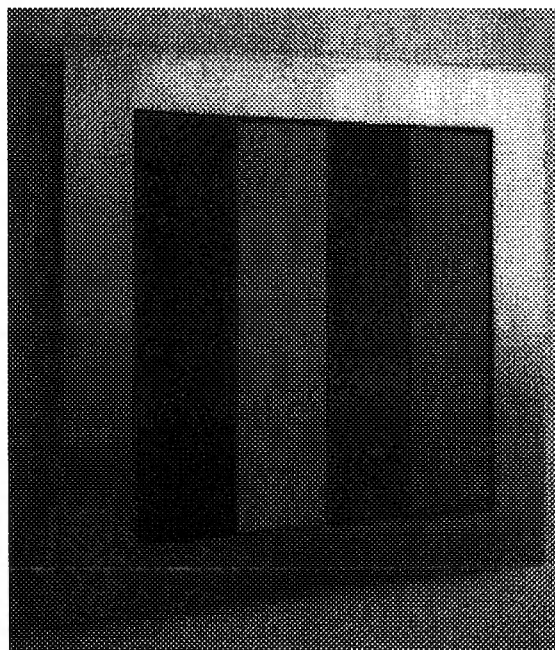
<sup>47</sup> Such foci may also distract from the faces of others in the congregation, and weaken the sense of the assembly as itself a primary liturgical symbol.

<sup>48</sup> See John de Gruchy, Christianity, Art, and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 253.

<sup>49</sup> De Gruchy, Christianity, Art and Transformation, p. 253.

<sup>50</sup> In relation to this possibility, Don Saliers notes: 'One of my students went to a contemporary worship service recently and overheard someone say: "Wow, that was almost as good as a movie!" Those perceptions are not going to go away; they are a central part of our culture.' Emory Report 50.33, June 8 1998.

alone. Clearly, cautions about 'Powerpoint' need not rule out the possibility of technological projection in worship, and its advancement may well in any case be inevitable. Yet less so need cautions about Powerpoint hinder use of contemporary art in other modes, as this is greatly to be welcomed given my experience in the church in Gateshead in which it became quite obvious that conversation about pictures was found by the majority to be much more accessible than reflection on texts. A sense of the way that contemporary art may be deeply suited to liturgical contexts emerged in my experience by tentatively testing use of packs of images – some contemporary, and some in more classic styles - produced by Christian Aid for the seasons of Advent and Lent. It was simply so well received that with universal assent images came to be used to focus every liturgical event, and to bolster understanding of elements in the structure of liturgical events, such as images for each aspect in the four-fold flow of a eucharistic service: 'gathering', 'word', 'table' and 'sending'. In Gateshead, images were projected by use of overhead projectors rather than the more advanced and expensive 'Powerpoint' technology, yet nevertheless, more ambitious use of art can perhaps be seen from some examples that have at different times provided a distinct liturgical focus in Gateshead:



Christian Eckart's 'Sacred Conversation' (above) adopts a theme that has long been a focus in Christian art, though his installation of 1991 that bears that name, and which is housed in Vienna's Museum of Modern Art, the 'Mumak', is a mixed media piece of highly coloured vertical plastic strips – from left to right, blue, green, red, yellow - in a heavy aluminium frame. The effect is clearly quite unlike the famous 'Sacred Conversations' of the Italian Renaissance such as those by Giovanni Bellini, for instance. In response to the obvious question, 'where is the Madonna? Where are the saints?' Eckart writes,

instead of a pious assembly of saints [the beholder] sees four "empty" monochromatic panels set in an aluminium frame and – himself, his own reflection in the industrially standardised paint. What was a religious scenario appears transformed into an aesthetic situation determined by industrial materials and involving the beholder.<sup>51</sup>

The image revivifies an ancient tradition of artistic contemplation, and in so far as its intended aim is realised, invites the personal participation of the beholder. Reproductions of the image have provided a focus for All Saints Day in Gateshead.

Sue Hayward's 2000 work of beeswax, pigment and gauze, 'The Female Philosopher' (below) provokes its own set of questions that invite the beholder's participation, not least because of the association in the work's title of 'female' and 'philosopher' which itself contests much of the Christian tradition's ambivalence about women's intellectual and other capacities. Hayward's image is part of her series 'Palimpsest' that was on extended display in the liturgical context of St Matthew's in the Kultureforum, near Berlin's Potsdamerplatz, through much of 2001.

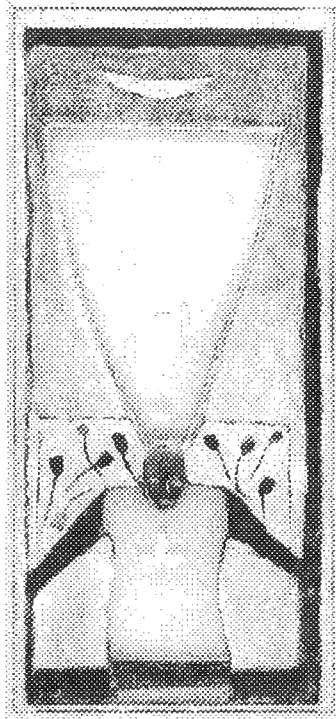
The central figure of the image, the philosopher,

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<sup>51</sup> [www.austria.eu.net/MMKSLW/sammlung/eckart](http://www.austria.eu.net/MMKSLW/sammlung/eckart) My reflection in the photograph of the work illustrates Eckhart's point about the beholder's participation.



carries a shape on her head that opens towards the top, depicted as a blank space in which single-bowl or pod-like shapes are resting. . . Is it a funnel through which the head receives wisdom? Is it a giant crown, symbolising knowledge and power? Is it wrong to think of a fool's cap, behind the emptiness of which single flowers dance a mocking dance of transience? . . .<sup>52</sup>



Here, then, is another instance of contemporary art that revisits aspects of Christian tradition and allows for the reconfiguration of possibilities. It has been used in Gateshead to accompany reflection on the figure of 'wisdom', and to invite women's own testimony about their experience.

Yet as well as revitalising and recovering themes from the inherited tradition, contemporary art is perhaps especially able to fashion reflective response to experience that is uniquely modern and focus attention on some of the most stretching aspects of recent history. It may, for instance, aid the expression of lament in Christian worship, as

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<sup>52</sup> Hans J Lieder, 'Palimnese: Knowing – Forgetting – Remembering', Susan Hayward, *Palimnese* (Berlin: St Matthäus, 2001), 12-13, p. 13.

liturgical theologians such as Saliers (above, pp. 183-184), David Power and others, have called for. Lament, as a part of the full stretch of life which worship needs to embrace in order for Christians to become fluent in their emotional responses before God may find the challenges of art like that of Karl Stojka invaluable, for all that his work is likely to grate. Stojka's remarkable images were made in his adult life, but remember his childhood in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Flossenbürg and Buchenwald concentration camps. An Austrian Roma, at age eleven Stojka was deported to the first of these camps. Remarkably, he survived the three years that led to the liberation of Dachau in April 1945, unlike most of the members of his immediate family, who perished - including his young siblings. Stojka's post-script to his collection of images, Gas, laments the concentration camps in which his childhood was spent:

I saw with my own eyes how they shot the many people who used to play the violins, how they gassed and burned them. . . I saw them, pregnant women, little children in the arms of their mothers, children of three to fourteen years, the old and the sick. . . First I saw them, then I heard them screaming, crying - then it was silent but I saw fire and smoke.<sup>53</sup>

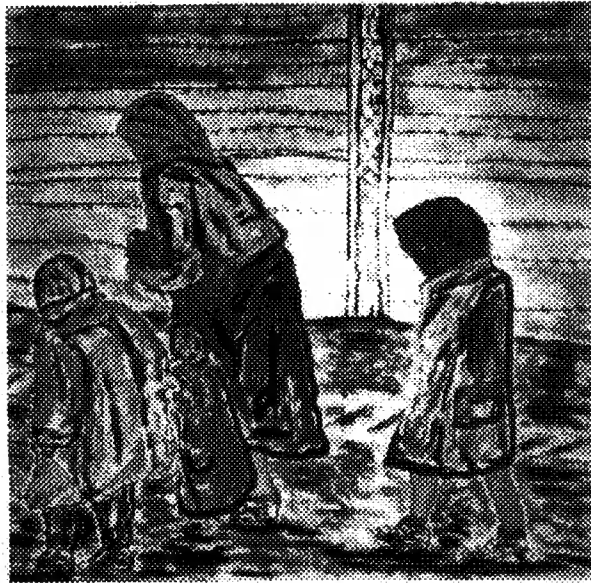
But, he writes, 'I cannot [adequately] describe it in words . . . I hope you will understand the misery and horror of the Third Reich when you see my pictures'.

Stojka's images are typically abstract, but part of their power lies in the fact that they deliberately resemble the art-work of children: they are designed to speak of unfulfilled potential, of the immaturity of life incomplete and yet taken away. So stylistic elements of the pictures jar with their content and also with Stojka's commentary accompanying each one. For instance, an image of a young, beautiful Roma woman, who is both radiant and bejewelled, grates with the text accompanying

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<sup>53</sup> Karl Stojka, Gas (Vienna: Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998), post-script.

her: 'They burned her'. In another image, a mother cradles a babe-in-arms as she stands with a uniformed guard's rifle pointed at her head: 'They didn't cry for long'. Some pictures include self-portraiture: four gaunt children sit behind barbed-wire, with the numbers branded into the flesh of their arms at the centre of the beholder's perspective: 'My brother and sisters and me. They deprived us of our names and we were nothing but numbers'. The text accompanying the following image reads: 'The Last Journey'.



This Stojka image and the others just mentioned have been used in Gateshead on Remembrance Sunday, and to facilitate conversation about war, loss, and approaches to people of other faiths. Stojka's images, disturbing as they are, might for example, possibly be used to open up reflection on David Power's question, 'where does the fate of the Jewish people get attention in liturgy. . . ?' and Power's own answering demand that the liturgy ought to attend.<sup>54</sup> Power's personal contribution to revitalising the tradition in which lament has been marginalized includes the production of texts for prayer which seek to

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<sup>54</sup> David N Power, The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalising the Tradition (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p. 9.

explore and express a sense of divine solidarity in human suffering, and so we might imagine the likes of Stojka's images juxtaposed to these lines that lead to the eucharistic Sanctus:

We thank you, O God, whatever our trembling, because when we are laid low, we find you in our midst, in the one on whom the Spirit descended, on whom your strong right hand has rested.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, for he is the one in whom suffering your judgement speaks and in whose fire we are baptized.

In him we have been promised another rule, a compassionate presence, even amid strife and suffering and in hours of darkness.

Joining the abandoned of the earth, with the poor who are the blessed of your reign, and with the peacemakers who are the children of predilection, we raise up our voices in a hymn of yearning and awe that has never ceased to give you praise.<sup>55</sup>

Visual art also has an obvious contribution to make to the recovery in contemporary liturgy of what Bruce Morrill calls 'stinging images of the apocalypse' that could relate prayer to those living in acute suffering, turmoil, and different afflictions. Morrill suggests an expansion of *anamnesis* to embrace the memory of early eastern *anaphoras* such as that of St Basil in its concern for the married, the young, the old, the faint-hearted, the scattered, those troubled by 'unclean spirits', and others.<sup>56</sup> Imagery of the so afflicted might well make an important contribution in the urban and other contexts to facilitate intercession, and in Gateshead, visual imagery mostly drawn from news reports in the recent media often accompanied the prayers of the people. Yet if images that reflect life when stretched to extremities and which so

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<sup>55</sup> Power, *Eucharistic Mystery*, p. 337.

<sup>56</sup> Basil's anaphora also mentions those who sail and make journeys, widows, orphans, captives, the sick, accused, workers in dangerous conditions, slaves, those facing tribulation and affliction, the helpless, hopeless, 'tempest-tossed', and victims of famine, plague, earthquake, flood, fire, sword, national invasion and civil war. Bruce T Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Liturgical and Political Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 207-209; cf. R C D Jasper and Geoffrey J Cuming, ed., *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, third edition 1992), pp. 121-122.

require lament seem scarce in the liturgy,<sup>57</sup> there is perhaps a dearth also of liturgical use of art on joyous themes. The preponderance of images of the cross – not all of which are Grünewald's in the intensity of their portrayal of suffering – may nevertheless militate against production of Christian images as intensely joyous as the laughing Buddha who focuses the devotion of many Buddhists or the dancing Shiva or Krishna and Radha of strands of popular Hinduism. Attention to other religious traditions may reveal not just obligations – to represent painful memories of the Holocaust, for instance – but also provide inspiration to stretch traditional images into new territory. It is surprising that the now well-known line art of 'the laughing Christ' that may have its origins at Bangalore Ecumenical Centre is a relatively rare artistic expression of Christian imagination of a joyous Jesus (cf. Saliers, on 'delight', above: pp. 191-192).<sup>58</sup> That such images of joy and delight have in my experience been particularly difficult for persons in the urban context with which I am most familiar may itself be a powerful ally of one of the key points emerging in some of the literature that forms the legacy of Faith in the City: that communication of a sense of 'abundance' may be a greater stumbling-block than imagery and themes more readily associated with suffering.<sup>59</sup> This notwithstanding, these examples from my Gateshead experience hint at the capacity of diverse pieces of contemporary art powerfully to invite participation in liturgy.

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<sup>57</sup> A parallel issue is that many prayer books omit the full text of the Psalms, typically editing out verses that vent anger, rage and lament. Saliers' understanding of the place and potential of the Psalms in worship is notably different and contests this practice.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Laughing Christ', The Christ We Share: Theological Background and Notes on Images (London: USPG, 2000), p. 11. In Protestant Worship, James White suggests that 'we are content to represent Christ and the saints with only one head, two legs, and two arms, but maybe more attributes can be expressed in multiple appendages as in some Hindu art. The artistic experiences of other religions can teach us much' (p. 214). See David Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', James A Scherer and Stephen B Bevens, eds., New Directions in Mission and Evangelization II: Theological Foundations (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 73-86.

<sup>59</sup> David Ford and Alistair McFadyen, 'Praise', Peter Sedgwick, ed., God in the City (London: Mowbray, 1995), 95-105, p. 95.

### **Contextualised reflections on music and song**

Participation is perhaps most readily enjoyed in song, which may of course, like art, express festivity and conversely structure lament, and so embrace a wide stretch of emotions in such a way that gives depth, as might be expressed in the moniker widely adopted from Augustine, 'one who sings, prays twice'.<sup>60</sup> As we have seen, James White's contribution to the focusing of liturgical theologians' attention on song is especially important for recovering overlooked traditions' contributions to the wealth of Christian worship, with song as perhaps the first means by which some Protestants engage in primary theology (above, pp.210, 220). A sense of the potential of song does not, however, diminish my perhaps stronger sense, formed especially by experience in Gateshead, of the challenges involved in using music in worship with an urban and mixed-age congregation. Some aspects of this challenge map directly onto comments I have just made about art on joyous themes: similarly, joyous music may be encountered as much more deeply challenging than that which evokes associations with suffering. Other aspects of the challenge relate to the ways in which music is often the focus of a great strain of burden about issues of inclusivity in the Christian community. Saliers makes a point that is directly relevant to this: 'What we sing and how we sing reveals much of who we are, and entering into another's song and music making provides a gateway into their world, which might be much different from our own'.<sup>61</sup> The capacity and willingness to 'enter into another's song' was certainly not as evident as I might

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<sup>60</sup> See Brian Wren, Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000). Also, Christopher Campling, The Food of Love: Reflections on Music and Faith (London: SCM, 1998); Jeremy Begbie, 'Theology through the Arts: Music' in David F Ford, ed., The Modern Theologians (Oxford: Blackwell, second edition 1996), 686-699, and Jeremy Begbie, 'Music and prayer', Fraser N Watts, ed., Perspectives on Prayer (London: SPCK, 2001), 67-80, and David F Ford, Self and Salvation: Being Transformed (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), chapter 5: 'Communicating God's Abundance: The Singing Self'.

<sup>61</sup> Don E Saliers, 'Singing Our Lives', p. 181.

have hoped in Gateshead, and entrenchment around music was at times as pervasive as around issues relating to liturgical space. Here, then, is another indication of the inadequacy of a focus of 'primary theology' narrowly as liturgical texts.

The interpretive power of an insight by Carol Doran and Thomas Troger in their significantly-titled Trouble at the Table was one around which some, if not much, conversation was possible in Gateshead:

We want to give ourselves to the music, yet we fear what will happen if we do. We want to give ourselves to God, yet we fear what will happen if we do. These are more than parallel statements. The first is an expression of the second.

The Bible depicts both our hunger for God – “My soul thirsts for the Lord more than the deer for the stream” – and our fear of God – “Where shall I go to escape from your spirit?” But we are not usually as direct about our negative feelings for God as the biblical writers. The piety of most of our churches presumes that we will always thirst for God, always desire God. As a result, our prayers, unlike the Bible, do not normally give expression to our ambivalence about God. Nevertheless, our ambivalence remains. . .

Our responses to music bear the weight of our spiritual struggle. This helps to account for the passion that usually fills people's voices when they talk about music that has disturbed them in worship. Through music they are dealing with their relationship with God, the center of faith. . .<sup>62</sup>

This rare depth of insight is, I think, intensely relevant to controversy about music in worship, and particular insights within the citation above are ones that I have found that others have acknowledged as I have tried to mediate between very different preferences about the kinds of music used in worship, and the sometimes very hostile responses to them. This insight in particular undergirds the following further reflections on music and song.

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<sup>62</sup> Carol Doran and Thomas Troger, Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 62-65.

Whilst the kinaesthetic experience of singing may provide a 'container' for memory, etching it into the body, corporate ritual song may also function to delineate a social body. In many contexts, inviting people to share in song at all may be counter-culturally significant where singing in unison in public is uncommon, and may in itself be perceived as deeply threatening. So it is notable, for instance, that congregational song is not typically a feature of Megachurch events, which capitulate to the trends and tastes of the wider culture in this respect, as well as fascinating that some congregations seem to resolve their tensions about music by choosing not to sing together, even when and perhaps because they have recognised that willingness to sing 'another's songs' may give significant meaning to what it may in part mean to be a 'social body'.

Some of these tensions are focused not only on styles of music, but on possible alliances between music and space, which are together a heady combination in the setting of many churches, including Gateshead. Where a choir or band of musicians are situated in relation to the rest of the congregation may convey powerful messages about their role and function. And both traditional choirs and contemporary worship groups that mimic popular styles may each threaten a sense of bodily or communal participation, whatever merits they nevertheless each in their own way might also uniquely contribute to the ambience of liturgy as 'the people's work'. The latter form of song, popular worship music, is much used in Megachurches and at 'family services', and is often criticized for its characteristic first-person mode ('I love you, Lord' and so on, potentially decentring God in favour of the singing subject). Of course, the Apostles' Creed consciously articulates faith in the first-person, because it is foundationally a baptismal creed, handed to a person, and the comparison of creed and contemporary song serves to underline that it is the alliance of the first-person mode with music's acknowledged capacity to create *mood* that is more accurately the concern of those anxious about the sentiment that attaches to much



contemporary worship music. However, 'traditional' hymnody may be as theologically dubious as many modern choruses. 'Father, hear the prayer we offer', for instance, 'briskly set[s] the psalmist straight' in its reflection on the twenty-third Psalm, in much the same way as chorus-texts may subvert scriptural and traditional meanings, a point well made by Brian Wren.<sup>63</sup> In a different but related way, evensong performed by men and boys in the majestic setting of a cathedral may, as Christopher Rowland suggests, make it 'difficult to *hear* the words of Mary's song, the Magnificat' due to 'the opulence of the surroundings and the close identification of that institution with the dominant cultural ethos of the powerful',<sup>64</sup> and so we see at least that problems about *congruence* between words and music in ritual song are not confined to any one tradition, style or era.

However, congruence is perhaps especially vulnerable when forms of electronic musical technology are introduced into contexts of worship, which is likely to be in Megachurches seeking to mimic contemporary synthetic 'pop' with which its sought audience is familiar, or in the kind of context in which I encountered the issues, deprived urban

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<sup>63</sup> Wren, *Praying Twice*, pp. 210-212. The text of Psalm 23,

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
he makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters. . . (NRSV)

becomes, in the words of the hymn,

Not for ever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be:  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.

Not for ever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay:  
but would smite the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way. . .

<sup>64</sup> Christopher Rowland, *Radical Christianity: A Reading of Recovery* (Oxford: Polity, 1988), p. 14, and compare feminist consternation about this.

congregations - or in other contexts of socio-economic deprivation - where numbers of congregants are perhaps small, and musical skills may be scarce or absent. In such contexts, congregations may have little choice, if they wish to sing, to do so accompanied by pre-recorded music on CDs or disks that may be played through an electronic keyboard. To some measure, consideration of such technology parallels the discussion above about 'Powerpoint'. In this case, however, the risk involved in such technology is primarily that so easily it decentres the human voice, and so may even, according to Saliers, do 'dishonor' to participants.<sup>65</sup> This is an especially significant charge if by means of such technology liturgy colludes with a wider environment in its diminution of human being, which may be most likely in urban situations like Gateshead (above, pp. 99-101). It also highlights the task of identifying good voices in a congregation, and finding ways to celebrate and, in Saliers' word, 'honor' them, despite a range of limitations imposed by the context.

In the preceding reflections on music are a number of correctives to notions of a 'kingdom scene' that may become confused with escapism. The line from a chorus - 'in your presence our problems disappear' - as the line from the hymn - 'sweet sacrament of rest, ark far from the ocean's roar' - may each be open to particular kinds of critique that require the contribution of song in worship to relate authentically to canonical narratives of God's 'saving work' as these are expressed also in sacramental action (above, p. 45). One of the best examples of what in my view might be sought is Carl Daw's 'As Newborn Stars' that traces its thought through many scriptural memories and especially the core symbols of the exodus and triduum:

As newborn stars were stirred to song when all things came to be,  
as Miriam and Moses song when Israel was set free,  
so music bursts unbidden forth when God-filled hearts rejoice,  
to waken awe and gratitude and give mute faith a voice.

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<sup>65</sup> See Don E Saliers, 'Liturgical Music and Electronic Technology: Contemporary Soundings', *Studia Liturgica* 28 (1998), 166-176, p. 174.

In psalms that raise the singer's sense to universal truths,  
in prophet's dark-toned oracle or hymn of three brave youths:  
the song of faith and praise endured through those God called to be  
a chosen people bearing light for all the world to see.

When God's redeeming Word took flesh to make salvation sure,  
unheeding hearts attuned to strife refused love's overture.  
Yet to the end the song went on: a supper's parting hymn,  
a psalm intoned on dying lips when sun and hope grew dim.

But silence won no victory there; a rest was all it scored  
before glad alleluias rose to greet the risen Lord.  
The church still keeps that song alive, for death has lost its sting,  
and with the gift of life renewed the heart will ever sing.<sup>66</sup>

### **Contextualised reflections on ministry of the word**

A context such as Gateshead presents the challenge of a non-book culture in which reading is under-developed, or perhaps never learned (above, pp. 17-18, 151ff). Song - as in the likes of Daw's 'As Newborn Stars' - may therefore have a special significance as a means of learning a measure of scripture. Indeed, such means may have a crucial role if those from non-book cultures are to come to share the concern with the role of scripture in liturgical celebration that has been a major feature of worship renewal across the Christian traditions. The concern was famously expressed in the mandate of the Second Vatican Council that 'the treasure of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly. . .' (above, p. 17). And, as we have seen, Gordon Lathrop and Don Saliers are among those contemporary liturgical theologians who have taken keen interest in how scripture and liturgy interact: Lathrop especially in his subtle understanding of juxtaposition, an 'intra-biblical' phenomenon as he expounds it (above, pp. 151-155); Saliers in his insistence that nurture of 'long memory' of scriptural narratives is required of Christian

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<sup>66</sup> Carl P Daw, 'As Newborn Stars Were Stirred to Song', Hope Publishing, Carol Streams, IL 60188; tune: *Alexandria* by J K Hirten. Wonder, Love and Praise: A Supplement to the Hymnal 1982, 788.

people if 'biblical minimalism' that in turn deadens symbolic engagement is to be avoided (above, pp. 185, 197).

My own understanding of what might be involved in a best-case scenario of biblical formation is shaped by Charles Elliott's work in his Memory and Salvation, which delineates a three-fold inter-related means of appropriation, and which is essentially therapeutic:

interaction between our story and the story of salvation, focused on the destiny of Jesus, plays the role that social constructionists ascribe to the discourse between the therapist and the client. . . 'a discursive space' in which the client (or reader, in our cases) can reconstruct a series of narratives about him or herself in the light of the conversation with the text (or therapist).<sup>67</sup>

As in much therapy, Elliott is concerned with the reconstruction of experience that has had damaging aspects on human potential to flourish. At a first level, scriptural 'memories' of Jesus may relativise personal memories, so as to decentre personal recollections from being taken 'improperly seriously' in the sense of being the mainspring of personal decisions, actions and relationships. Elliott suggests that freedom from improper seriousness about personal memory may be especially important when personal memories need to be 'rendered less harmful' and sapped of destructive power. In allowing such personal recollection to be relativised by scriptural 'memory', 'the believer allows the counter-memories of Jesus to become his or hers at a level of intensity that is at least as immediate as the memories of his or her past'.<sup>68</sup> Counter-memories of Jesus may then have the capacity to contain painful personal memories, Elliott's second level:

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<sup>67</sup> Charles Elliott, Memory and Salvation (London: DLT, 1995), p. 202. For more on this outline of Elliott's understanding, see Stephen Burns, 'Abuse and Forgiveness: Theological and Psychological Aspects' (unpublished MLitt thesis, Cambridge, 1996), pp. 149-151.

<sup>68</sup> Elliott, Memory and Salvation, p. 202-203.

Properly internalised, Jesus becomes a container for the individual or the group in the sense that either can project their negative emotions on to him and possess them back in a way they can handle, mediated through the memory of loving acceptance and forgiveness that lies at the heart of his destiny.<sup>69</sup>

This containment creates the possibility of gaining a new identity and so relating to the past in a different way. And these two factors – relativisation and containment – allow persons, according to Elliott, to take responsibility for what is genuinely theirs: the history of Jesus makes them see themselves in a more honest light, and so there arises the possibility of a ‘decisive “cutting at the roots” of my original self-understanding’.<sup>70</sup> Projections may be withdrawn, splitting may be resisted, and acceptance of personal failings may all be facilitated. This third stage Elliott calls explanation. Once achieved, the person at this level of engagement with scriptural memory may be resourced to embark on repentance, responsibly beginning to amend that over which they have power. As just one example of the potential for transformation that may emerge in relation to scriptural memory, Elliott’s understanding adds force to the point that liturgical mediation of scripture entails a considerable capacity for saving work. Yet an obvious question to set alongside the obvious sense of potential in Elliott’s comments on scripture, concerns how people might be encouraged to imbibe scripture in such a way as for its memory to enable kinds of transformation he envisages. The question can be related to a range of practical issues that found a focus in my experience of ministry in Gateshead. The first concerns the lectionary.

In Britain, Patterns for Worship was particularly concerned to extend lectionary provision beyond the bounds of the rather limited ASB lectionary operative at the time (above, p. 49), in order to draw upon more vivid imagery and the narrative qualities of scriptural traditions,

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<sup>69</sup> Elliott, Memory and Salvation, p. 204.

<sup>70</sup> Elliott, Memory and Salvation, p. 204.

which the Liturgical Commission deemed to be especially relevant to the urban context and the appetites of the young. What is gained from the much wider pool of scripture included in contemporary lectionaries as opposed to that of the ASB might be contrasted against the arguable advantage of the ASB lectionary preserving a more manageable 'canon within a canon' of carefully selected texts which over time might have more readily been absorbed by worshippers than the more wide-ranging selection offered, for example, in the Revised Common Lectionary used in Common Worship.<sup>71</sup> The actual form of the lectionary can therefore be related to questions about the 'characterising activity' of scripture in worship, and perhaps especially so in contexts populated by those 'who can read but don't'. As suggested, in my context in Gateshead, 'those who can read but don't' included almost everyone not included in the considerable group of people who could not read at all. For example, I recall an octogenarian in the congregation in Gateshead taking proper pride in having read for the first time a book 'from cover to cover'. The book transpired to be what might more accurately be described as a pamphlet, of biblical reflections to be digested one page at a time day by day. Yet in its context, this achievement was considerable. Given that this kind of level of reading may be considered ambitious, my earlier point about the power of accessible images may be bolstered. And as the advent of forms of electronic technology, notably Powerpoint electronics, allows for the use of cinematic presentation of scriptural narrative in novel ways, popular films such as The Prince of Egypt, a Hollywood production of the exodus tradition, and The Miracle Maker, a UK-based mixed media presentation of the life of Jesus, perhaps offer examples of what may be both possible and attractive to audiences who may not encounter biblical narratives in printed form. Yet on a congregational visit to the cinema to view The Miracle Maker, the same octogenarian revealed that this was her first visit to the cinema in over

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<sup>71</sup> For some related but more broad-ranging arguments about familiarity and repetition in liturgy, see Stephen Sykes, 'Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word', David Brown and Ann Loades, Christ: The Sacramental Word (London: SPCK, 1996), 157-167.

fifty-five years, and indeed her first visit to the leisure and shopping mall, the MetroCentre, which housed the cinema, and which had been built nearly twenty years ago less than two miles from her home. This woman's experience suggests a deeply challenging reminder of what might be involved in catechesis in scriptural traditions, which remains a very significant task for the church, as Haddon Willmer argues. Consideration of scriptural catechesis can of course in turn be related to Saliers' comments about biblical minimalism (above, p. 197), linking scriptural learning and liturgical celebration, which help to force the point that 'without proper catechesis liturgy will not be sufficient as an agent of transformation'.<sup>72</sup> As Sacrosanctum concilium itself notes, at least an 'initial grasp' of Christ's mystery through 'faith and conversion' is required for proper participation in the paschal mystery.<sup>73</sup> Critical and constructive engagement with catechetical resources is, therefore, of major importance.

Haddon Willmer's sense of the urgency of the catechetical task in urban communities can be developed by reference to Andrew Davey's complaint about the charismatic Alpha Course, which dominates the current 'market' of resources:

Through effective marketing it has become a 'brand' rather than a 'model', dominating church life. Adherence to the structure and full content of the course is stressed if the integrity of brand is to be honoured. The course offers little scope for critical inter-action with the material presented (with a notably selective use of scripture) or with the systems of injustice in which the participants are caught through their work or social location. There is no opportunity to analyse the impact of current practices in financial markets or the consumption aspects of suburban lifestyles; cultural inclusion and social transformation are not considered as part of the gospel mandate or baptismal covenant. All in all, the process of the course

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<sup>72</sup> L Edward Philips, 'Liturgy and Ethics', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 297-299, p. 298.

<sup>73</sup> Sacrosanctum concilium, 9; cf. Joyce Ann Zimmermann, 'Paschal Mystery – Whose Mystery?', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources in Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 309-312, p. 311.

assumes a social and cultural base for church life that is remote from the urban experience in poor urban areas.

In the ways to which Davey alerts us, Alpha has capitulated to various suburban agendas, using 'the rhetoric of transformation and change, but ignor[ing] or fail[ing] to promote critical reflection on wider issues of lifestyle, social responsibility or power',<sup>74</sup> and this may unfit the course for urban use. Disappointingly, a self-professed 'alternative' to Alpha developed and promoted by the Urban Theology Unit, John Vincent's Journey, fares little better than Alpha in that it too struggles to expand beyond narrowly theological concerns, and in its own case assumes considerable engagement on the part of participants with some relatively sophisticated liberal and liberation theologies. This may not be impossible for participants but it is surely likely to invite struggle with accessibility in the same urban communities that are Davey's concern. Remarkably for a self-proposed 'basic' way of 'getting started' with exploration of faith in a context conscious of deprived urban community life, Journey suggests use of Volker Küster's The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology on session three of the course.<sup>75</sup> And whilst Journey states the conviction that 'there are many other "ways" you could encounter Christianity. We are not writing this course to criticise or correct other ways. But it is true that many of us have been involved in other courses – for example, "Alpha" courses – and found them in the end not something that we really want to promote',<sup>76</sup> - in its discussion of 'contemporary church Jesuses' (*sic*) – that is, ecclesiastical, devotional, sacramental, evangelical and radical models of Jesus – Journey ungraciously summarises the convictions of

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<sup>74</sup> Andrew Davey, Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future (London: SPCK, 2001), p. 92.

<sup>75</sup> John Vincent, Journey: Explorations into Discipleship (Sheffield: Ashram, 2001), p. 13. See also Volker Küster, The Many Faces of Jesus: Intercultural Christology (London: SCM, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Vincent, Journey, p. 7.



Christians of other traditions in caricatures of just one sentence, whilst at the same time expressing a vigorous preference for the last of these personal Jesuses. These basic critiques of Alpha and Journey strengthen Willmer's recognition that appropriate forms of catechesis are yet to emerge.

Perhaps Peter Selby offers a more subtle and expansive view of the kind of contemporary catechesis that may be required in contexts that are enmeshed in the dynamics of the global economy and such like - in which contemporary scripture readers must live. He hints at the kind of challenge which neither Alpha nor Journey have begun to embrace, and the scope of the contest that contemporary 'idols' may present to biblically-informed faith, and vice-versa:

the globalised economy offers itself to us as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, vastly exciting, overwhelming in its power and potentiality, an expansion of our horizons beyond our wildest imaginings, a real rival to the living God. That being so, I cannot accept a doctrine of the word of God, or procedures with the Scriptures, that make them less exciting, less overwhelming in their power and potentiality, less ultimately mysterious, less radicalizing.<sup>77</sup>

In Gateshead, all forms of catechesis in the form of 'courses' proved deeply unpopular, because as both churchpeople and 'enquirers' testified, 'course' was perceived as being too close to the notion of 'education' from which they had by and large been excluded a long time ago, or with which many of the young currently struggled. A telling comment by a participant in one attempted course - 'I don't have time to think about God' - is resonant with liberation theology's critique of western theology as a 'leisure' activity and may suggest the demandingness of other aspects of life which leave little sense of space for engagement with theology. It also reinforces an earlier point about the importance of para-liturgy in the urban context, where more

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<sup>77</sup> Peter Selby, 'The Silent Word Still Speaks: Globalization and the Interpretation of Scripture', Charles Reed, ed., Development Matters: Christian Perspectives on Globalization (London: CHP, 2001), 97-105, p. 105.

verbose, less symbolic, means of catechesis may be experienced as more demanding.

Perhaps, then, some helpful precedents for liturgical engagement with the word may be found in sources from origins in liberation theology base communities, such as those described in Leonardo Boff's Ecclesiogenesis, and the likes of The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname and the recently published Just Jesus trilogy, which each in their own way describe the kind of conversations, not least those relating to 'lifestyle' issues, that may unfold from engagement with scripture.<sup>78</sup> In the foreword to Just Jesus, Ignacio Ellacuría, a Jesuit catechist who had worked and was murdered in El Salvador, writes that

sometimes a direct reading of the Bible in ecclesial communities is sufficient to recapture the living word of God and to stimulate people to action. However, this is not always possible. A greater catechesis is needed which can be done through a discussion in community of books like Just Jesus.<sup>79</sup>

Her foreword also shows her alertness to the relevance of such catechesis not only among 'the poor' of the original context of its production, but in the evangelisation of those in other situations who may have heard the gospel but whose translations have 'mummified' the message, whose 'traditional religiosity' may have disguised the vitality of the message, or who may have otherwise neglected the 'praxis' of faith and so require a 'shock' and a 'jolt'.<sup>80</sup> Art-forms are often a

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<sup>78</sup> Leonardo Boff, Ecclesiogenesis: Base Communities Reinvent the Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985); Peter Scharper and Susan Scharper, ed., The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984); José Ignacio Lopez Vigil and Maria Lopez Vigil, Just Jesus, 3 volumes: A People Starving for Love, The Message of a Better World, the Passion Book (New York: Crossroad, 2000); see also Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies (London: SPCK, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> Vigil and Vigil, Just Jesus, p. xi.

<sup>80</sup> Vigil and Vigil, Just Jesus, p. x.

significant feature of catechesis in base communities, and as The Gospel in Art demonstrates, these may offer particularly relevant models for urban communities in which people can't, or can but don't read.<sup>81</sup>

Any ambition to develop the US practice of all-age Sunday School temporally adjacent to the assembly for worship may yet be very distant from the reality of many urban British congregations (cf. above, pp. 169-171). In Britain, perhaps the Sunday assembly itself remains the most obvious arena for catechesis. Within the assembly, as we saw Mark Searle observe in chapter 4 (pp. 131-132), all-age activity may very often be for the benefit of adults as much as children, the reasons for which may be better or worse: worse, perhaps, when addressing children may leave adults unchallenged, particularly if this ignores or fails to promote critical reflection on wider issues of lifestyle, and so on, which concerns Davey; better, though, if appearing to address children acknowledges the actual stage of faith development at which many adults may find themselves.<sup>82</sup> Practices that draw on habits developed in the context of base communities include time in liturgical celebration for participants to offer their own verbal 'responses' to the unfolding event, and this has also flourished in some charismatic congregations.<sup>83</sup> In the recent Urban Theology Unit collection Bible and Practice, a number of practitioners describe ways in which a number of practices draw on the base community tradition of inviting verbal responses from the congregation as integral to ministry of the word.<sup>84</sup> My own encounters

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<sup>81</sup> A number of images from The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname featured in the Christian Aid material that was the first art-work with which we engaged in Gateshead (see above).

<sup>82</sup> Fraser N Watts, Rebecca Nye and Sarah Savage, Psychology for the Christian Ministry (London: Routledge, 2002), Part Two; David M Wolff, Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1991), Chapter 8 on approaches to epigenetic development.

<sup>83</sup> Though note Aidan Kavanagh's disparagement of such practices in Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style.

with charismatic congregations suggest that they may well associate such opportunities with liturgy's saving work in so far as they provide for testimony and appropriation. For example, following a reading from the first verses of Romans 5, I recall a woman who had just undergone chemotherapy observing that 'so often in this world, suffering leads to bitterness and bitterness to isolation, but it does not have to be this way. These days, I have discovered that suffering may lead to endurance and endurance to hope. . .'. On another occasion, I recall a woman, apparently new to church, suggesting that 'tonight, in this service, I have realised that I can be beautiful, even in my own eyes'.<sup>85</sup> What these persons' testimony may yield is some insight into possible meanings of Hovda's comment relating liturgy at its best to 'parables' and their distinctive qualities:

Good liturgical celebration, like a parable, takes us by the hair of our heads, lifts us momentarily out of the cesspool of injustice we call home, puts us in the promised and challenging reign of God, where we are all treated like we have never been treated anywhere else. . . where we are bowed to and sprinkled and censed and kissed and touched and where we share equally among all a holy food and drink. . .<sup>86</sup>

In Gateshead, the practice of 'responding to sermons' developed out of awareness of this base community and charismatic practice, and was fuelled by encouragement of such practice being appreciated in other urban settings. In Gateshead, the practice developed of hearing questions, comments and reflections from members of the congregation following sermons. A stress on a more narrow focus on text, which people may not have been able to read, was in this way avoided, whilst

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<sup>84</sup> Christopher Rowland and John Vincent, ed., Bible and Practice (Sheffield: UTU, 2001).

<sup>85</sup> Stories related from experience of worship at St Patrick, Atlanta, 1998; St Barnabas, Cambridge, 1995.

<sup>86</sup> Hovda, 'The Vesting of Liturgical Ministers', John Baldwin, ed., Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 215-234, p. 220.

the context of texts preached upon in an environment including a visually prominent image related to the text proved a manageable means of participation. Here, supposedly 'non-liturgical' or new traditions came to have an important influence on our worship (cf. above, e.g. 192, 219), which was consciously shaped around the patterns of the *ordo*, and enabled the *ordo* to be juxtaposed to our particular contemporary context in ways which participants themselves developed.

Hovda's analogy between 'good liturgical celebration' and the parables can be related to Anthony Harvey suggestion that the parables, with much of Jesus' ethical teaching, 'were – and have remained ever since – a challenge to act as if a state of affairs were present that normally we think of as a distant ideal'.<sup>87</sup> Yet

in so far as we cannot be resigned to such a desirable state of affairs being for ever unrealisable, living "as if" it were already within the range of possibility cannot be dismissed as totally visionary and impracticable.<sup>88</sup>

The challenge to realise the desirable 'world' that an alliance of scripture and liturgy may reveal suggests a modest sense of liturgical events' potential to effect transformation, to create a 'kingdom scene'. The challenge of scripture and liturgy's propensity to yield a 'foretaste of glory' (cf. p. 174, 192) might at least suggest a modest base which more ambitious estimates of liturgy's 'saving work' could then begin to elaborate, beyond liturgy and scripture's capacity to foster a continual sense of unease with the status quo, and hope for more.<sup>89</sup> Martin

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<sup>87</sup> Anthony E Harvey, Strenuous Commands: The Ethic of Jesus (London: SCM, 1990), p. 207.

<sup>88</sup> Harvey, Strenuous Commands, p. 208.

<sup>89</sup> Susan J White, The Spirit of Worship: The Liturgical Tradition (London: DLT, 1999), pp. 116-119, 'to imagine the world "as if": 'A spirituality which issues from faithful participation in the liturgy, then, will never be content to rest in the status quo. At the very least, the abundance of the liturgical symbols of God's generosity towards us reveals to us the impoverishment of all around us' (p. 119).

Buber's tall-tale encourages the hope that participation may be transformative:

A rabbi, whose grandfather had been a disciple of the Baal Schem, was asked to tell a story. 'A story', he said, 'must be told in such a way that it constitutes help in itself'. And he tells: 'My grandfather was lame. Only they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the holy Baal Schem used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke, and he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!<sup>90</sup>

### **Contextualised reflections on sacramental celebration**

Kenneth Leech's distinctions between sacramental spiritualities that foster either the 'comfort' or 'transformation' of participants and their circumstances present stark alternatives that promise very different kinds of engagement with reality:

The question is: Is the main purpose of "the spiritual life" to provide comfort, reassurance, new sources of inspiration to improve our lives? Or is it to challenge, confront, and transform our lives? (above, p. 5, cf. 108)<sup>91</sup>

Part of the task of liturgical presidency in Gateshead, as in many other places, was to encourage the aspiration to embrace the latter of Leech's options. Liturgy as saving work may recognise the value of comfort,

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<sup>90</sup> Related in: Duncan B Forrester, Truthful Action (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2000), p. 104; Elizabeth A Johnson, Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints (London: SCM, 1998), pp. 170-171, and Mary Catherine Hilbert, 'Naming Grace: A Theology of Proclamation', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 227-236, p. 236. Also on bible study, see Craig Dykstra, 'When the Bible Happens', Craig Dykstra, Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999), pp. 151-157.

<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Leech, Subversive Orthodoxy: Traditional Faith and Radical Commitment (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), p. 43.

reassurance and so on, but ultimately invites the 'transformation' alternative proposed by Leech.<sup>92</sup>

Leech quotes Tawney, whose comment Leech refers to the church: 'they tidy the room but they open no windows in the soul', and he incorporates this line into his critique of the dilemma he identifies in contemporary Christian spirituality. Recovery of the sacraments, and their alliance with scripture, is a key part of his proposal for fostering the kind of perspectives and habits that may yet make transformation possible. Leech writes from within the British context with hints at notions that could be considerably strengthened by reference to Lathrop and Saliers, among others, in order to construct a more vigorous notion of the sacraments' saving work. This notwithstanding, he is already insistent that a baptismal spirituality will 'take seriously and live out the renunciation of the world, . . . [and] stress the continuing conflict with structures of oppression and injustice. . .', and that a eucharistic spirituality will 'raise the imagination to a vision of a world transfigured and [ ] provide the resources to help make that vision real', and it will blend 'physical crudity' and glory (cf. p. 179). And, Leech thinks, these central sacramental resources, related to scripture and rational inquiry, make for inclusive communities: the centrality of the meal ensuring space for 'riff-raff, the ritually impure, outcasts, people of dubious morals', as in Jesus' practice of table-fellowship.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Resonating with Leech's alternatives, the third eucharistic prayer of the ECUSA's Book of Common Prayer 1979 asks that worshippers be spared approaching the altar-table for 'comfort only and not for strength, for solace only and not for renewal'.

<sup>93</sup> Leech, Subversive Orthodoxy, pp. 41-42. Leech relates his perspectives to the ministry of Stewart Headlam in late nineteenth-century London, who as advocate of theatre, stage and dramatic arts, as defendant of those whose sex lives caused scandal (including Oscar Wilde), and whose theological convictions relating incarnation to 'human passion, mirth and beauty' caused considerable notoriety. Further reflections and references to Headlam can be found in Kenneth Leech, The Eye of the Storm: Spiritual Resources for the Pursuit of Justice (London: DLT, 1992), pp. 168-171.

In some communities, the lack of transformation that sacramental spirituality may challenge could be that identified by 'Mariita', a commentator on biblical narratives of the eucharist whose view is recorded in The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname: 'there are people who believe that Christ is in the host that they eat, but they don't believe in the Christ that's us'.<sup>94</sup> For others, the challenge may be to foster the sense of the sacramentality of those participating in the rite, so that persons come to regard themselves as 'graced presences' with potential unrealised until that point.<sup>95</sup> This may be especially so in a context where the umbrella culture does much to diminish human being, such as in deprived urban communities, as persons such as Jonathan Tulloch's character Joe (see chapter 3, above [pp. 100-101]) may remind us.

In her intriguing essay 'Critical Questions for Liturgical Theology', Mary Collins offers insightful suggestions about the ways in which choices about even such apparently trivial matters as the use of particular kinds of bread at the eucharist may reflect or shape believers' understanding of the work of grace. Her conviction that choices in such matters are themselves the concern of liturgical theology is another important expression of expansive understandings of the primary theology of liturgy (above, pp. 24-25), including much more than texts used in celebration. And as she suggests, a great deal is at stake in such matters, for choices about type of bread may reveal the contours of belief about divine manifestation and mediation. In fact, 'the bread sign is not peripheral but has significant relationship to the Church's

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<sup>94</sup> Scharper and Scharper, The Gospel in Art by the Peasants of Solentiname, p. 52.

<sup>95</sup> On 'graced presences' see David Brown and David Fuller, Signs of Grace: The Sacraments in Poetry and Prose (London: Cassell, 1995), 119-133.



doctrinal teaching about salvation'.<sup>96</sup> She finds that use of 'ordinary' bread – that is, that 'using culturally available ingredients and preparation techniques'<sup>97</sup> – is often aligned to convictions that ordained and non-ordained persons, both women and men, may be perceived as capable of divine mediation, and conversely, she finds that specially-prepared breads – wafers of various kinds – limited to ecclesial contexts is sometimes aligned to a symbolic context that may tend to focus notions of mediation around traditional hierarchical understandings of sacral priesthood. At least within Collins' Roman Catholic context, 'ordinary' bread being handled by an expanded range of 'bodies' means that use of daily bread is empowering to those traditionally regarded as lowly within the hierarchical ordering: 'an ordered world is indeed being subverted by such ritual changes'.<sup>98</sup> This is the kind of discussion that is entirely overlooked (cf. pp. 130-131) when liturgy is understood narrowly as text.<sup>99</sup>

Collins is among those feminist Christians who have played a particularly important role in coming to stress the continuity between the everyday and the sacramental, with major implications for liturgical theology in turn.<sup>100</sup> Her research can be related to the important and rarely articulated sense that

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<sup>96</sup> Mary Collins, 'Critical Questions for Liturgical Theology', Dwight W Vogel, ed., Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 151-162, p. 161, note 11.

<sup>97</sup> Collins, 'Critical Questions', p. 160.

<sup>98</sup> Collins, 'Critical Questions', p. 161. See Susan J White, Christian Worship and Technological Change (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), pp. 86-87 on 'hygienic communion' for some related comments on appropriation of the wine symbolism of the eucharist in Protestant contexts.

<sup>99</sup> Compare Searle's comments on children in the liturgy, above, pp. 130-131.

<sup>100</sup> Susan A Ross, Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 168.

divine presence may very properly be associated with the fleeting, the contingent, here today and gone tomorrow, with 'travelling light'. After all, most of the 'material signs' of specific sacraments are fluid, or consumable, transient, except in their immediate or longer term effects on the persons concerned, themselves the pilgrims,<sup>101</sup>

as Ann Loades observes. For while the desire to stabilise material elements of liturgical celebration may seem quite understandable 'in societies in which there is a near-obsession with recording everything',<sup>102</sup> nevertheless resisting this modern obsession may yet be crucial to the proclamation of divine activity amidst the fragility of human life and its multiple contingencies. What Collins' particular explorations imply is that use of breads limited to ecclesial contexts alone may hinder discovery of selves as 'graced presences' capable of mediating the divine. And so in this way bread, handled and tasted, may make a significant contribution to liturgy's saving work, because it insists on a link between liturgy and life. The symbolism of members of the congregation taking turns to bake the eucharistic bread, the practice that developed in Gateshead, was also, in my experience, an effective way to begin to grasp this connection.

The kind of considerations that Collins engages focus more commonplace dissatisfaction with wafers for their dearth of sign-value (Robert Hovda writes of 'shrivelled, dissected' symbolism),<sup>103</sup> as opposed to leavened 'every day' bread. By celebrating the ordinary, Collins' reflections suggest a line of thought that can also be allied to attempts to re-focus theologies of the eucharist in the meal-time hospitality of

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<sup>101</sup> Ann Loades, 'Word and Sacrament: Recovering Integrity', Neil Brown and Robert Gasgoine, eds., Faith in the Public Forum (Adelaide: Openbooks, 1999), 28-46, pp. 33-34.

<sup>102</sup> Loades, 'Word and Sacrament', p. 34

<sup>103</sup> Robert Hovda, Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Liturgy (Collegetown: Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 73.

Jesus, rather than the Last Supper, and which may have very important consequences for the inclusivity of the meal.

Use of gesture in the liturgical event can be another important and related point of connection between liturgy and life - between the 'graced presence' of sacramental matter and the persons engaged in sacramental celebration. In my experience, the gesture of bowing is perhaps most relevant in this connection, and is explicitly mentioned by Hovda as one means by which people may gain a sense of treatment in liturgy that raises their sense of dignity. The gesture is explicitly related in the Catholic tradition to the understanding of the altar as symbol of Christ,<sup>104</sup> though bowing towards altars placed in sanctuaries at the eastern end of church buildings perhaps arises out of an earlier tradition associated with bowing to the east from which scriptural traditions suggest Christ will return. No directives bind Anglicans to any such practices or perspective – a little recognised point remaining that no Church of England prayer-book refers to an 'altar', rather always to a 'holy table' - though many Anglicans perform the gesture of bowing whilst enjoying greater freedom to construct its meaning. For where The Catechism of the Catholic Church, drew on the theology of Ambrose to assert that 'the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us',<sup>105</sup> in at least some places Anglicans develop notions of real presence through the practice of not bowing at the altar after people have ingested the sacrament, for those who receive the eucharist 'are now

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<sup>104</sup> And because it 'is Christ' it is in the rites relating to its installation 'baptised', 'anointed', 'clothed' and so on, as a human person might be. See Mark G Boyer, The Liturgical Environment: What the Documents Say (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), chapter 2: 'The Altar is Christ'.

<sup>105</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Cassell, 1994), p. 1083.

[themselves] the tabernacle of the presence'.<sup>106</sup> This is the understanding that was developed in Gateshead as itself an assertion of the dignity of participants:<sup>107</sup> eucharistic services began with the presider's deep bow towards the altar; the eucharistic prayer was followed by a deep bow from the eastern side of the table, in a deliberately ambiguous way towards both the altar and the people beyond it; after communion, following ablutions and from a place between the altar and the people, the people only were the subject of a deep bow. The way in which the gesture of bowing was used to juxtapose the altar 'as Christ' to the people as 'body of Christ' was perhaps little, if any, less subtle than the kind of juxtapositions present in some of the children's chapel liturgies considered earlier in this work (pp. 171-172); nevertheless, with appropriate catechesis, it made a powerful point, contesting aspects of an umbrella culture that may undermine persons' worth, and fostering a sense of the sacramentality of the participants in liturgy.

These gestures, as use of 'ordinary' kinds of bread, made a modest contribution in Gateshead to decentring the kind of ordered world in which 'graced presence' is confined to distinctive kinds of churchly 'things' (such as wafers) and is hierarchically concentrated in some members of the church (the ordained). Gestures, then, may also perhaps play an important part in extending welcome to 'the riff-raff, the ritually impure' and others whom Leech regards as central to Jesus' concern as remembered by the gospels.

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<sup>106</sup> 'Tradition and Renewal', a paper published by St Patrick's Episcopal Church, Atlanta, Georgia, by Grey Temple, Jnr (Rector).

<sup>107</sup> For more examples of how bodily ritual may foster personal dignity, see S Paulsell, 'Honoring the Body', Dorothy C Bass, ed., Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 13-27. See also: Gertrude M Nelson, 'Christian Formation of Children: The Role of Ritual and Celebration', Eleanor Bernstein, ed., Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 114-135.

### **A Gateshead case study**

What this chapter has shown so far is a number of points where contextualised experience provoked my reflection on liturgical matters, and ways in which this reflection was enriched by the contemporary North American liturgical theology represented by Lathrop, Saliers and White. The questions posed at the end of the last chapter, arising from my survey of the three theologians' work, have received some partial responses. I have shown what a broad-based approach to liturgy might look like, and how powerful non-textual elements of liturgy may be – and need to be – in a culture marked by a low level of literacy. I have gathered some reflections on two particular challenges to the *ordo* in such a context – low-level literacy, and the problems of asylum seekers. I have suggested how urban Christians, including children, can be drawn into the meanings of the *ordo*. And I have shaped some reflections around experience of working in the 'para-liturgical' sphere, one that hopes to excite and prepare persons for celebration of more central aspects of the *ordo*. Above all, perhaps, I have indicated some of the very real challenges – liturgical travail - of shaping worship around classical patterns in a particular kind of context, though I hope also to have celebrated the modest steps that may be made to establish durable and fruitful patterns of worship within that kind of context.

In drawing towards a conclusion, a case study narrows the focus on Gateshead in a very specific way, as I relate much of the preceding conversation explicitly to a liturgical text used in our parish's worship. In what follows, I intersperse that text (congregational text for prayer, and related rubrics) with a commentary that shows how liturgical resources and reflection were developed in the one very specific situation that has formed my convictions and practice.

The text presented is that used in eucharistic worship through the Easter season. It belonged to a series of related orders of service

presented in a very similar style: each was typeset in the font used in Common Worship (gil sans) and each was presented in the 'house-style' of contemporary Church of England publications, using the Church of England logo, and so on. All of these related orders were separated into four sections corresponding to the major sections of the eucharistic service – gathering, word, table, sending - and so although the elements within that fourfold structure were variable, a very clear and fixed structure linked the different orders used throughout the year. As noted above, images interspersed the texts (although only the texts are presented here).

The variable content of the different orders was decided upon by a group of lay and clergy people working together with the range of available authorised resources, and was then 'trial run' over a year through which the coherence of text and ceremony was tested, and the feedback – appreciative and critical – of the congregation led to a number of amendments. The liturgies were themselves, then, very much the product of conversation. The process began in 1998, shortly after the first publication of Common Worship resources, and was settled a little over twelve months later, in 2000. It is the texts in their final form that are presented here.

In the development of our local liturgy, it was decided that only officially authorised texts would be used where these were required according to the Church of England's canons, but that at 'soft-spots' - where rubrics indicated alternatives could be used - wider resources would be drawn in. The New Zealand Prayer Book was the main source used at these opportunities. Use of only authorised texts when required, and use of wide resources when permitted, were both seen as ways of expressing the relationship of a particular congregation to others, as gestures of catholicity. The decision related to the sense discussed earlier about feeling 'inferior' if special cases were seen to be necessary (p. 270-271).

The liturgies were always closely related to catechesis, in different contexts. The exercise of preparing liturgies in conversation was itself a key means of catechesis but opportunity for learning and practicing liturgy took place not in the kind of meetings that made decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of variable texts, but in training for those involved in public ceremonial or vocal roles in liturgy, and with the congregation as a whole. A particular impetus for all-age catechesis in liturgy was generated by opportunity in the diocese for children to begin to receive communion. As part of the parish's own move to introduce children to communion, provision of sacramental catechesis for church members of all ages was built in to all of the parish's policies about the eucharist, and part of this involved a commitment to partake in regular 'instructed eucharists' at which the sermon of the day would be located at a particular point in the service (for example, the intercessions) where reflection would be centred. These instructed eucharists happened several times a year.

The following text and commentary focus many of the points made throughout this chapter, and show the ways in which one local liturgy was structured around the patterns of the *ordo*, whilst taking into account a range of factors particular to our context. Perhaps inevitably, the text and commentary do not convey very well how environmental, architectural and musical aspects of liturgy were employed, and so cross-reference to the sections above on 'the place of meeting' and on 'music and song' may be necessary at a number of points.

## **WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE**

### *Peaceful greeting*

The risen Lord came and stood among his disciples and said:  
Peace be with you.  
And he showed them his hands and his side.  
They were glad when they saw the Lord. (John 20)  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

*Please move around greeting others.*

*A song of praise may be sung.*

*The minister welcomes everyone to the celebration  
and this or another opening prayer may be said:*

**Loving Lord, fill us with your life-giving,  
joy-giving, peace-giving presence,  
that we may praise you now with our lips  
and all the day long with our lives,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In the Easter season, services began with the greeting of peace. In catechesis, this position for the peace was related to the biblical narratives of the risen Christ appearing unexpectedly to disciples gathered together behind locked doors. The abrupt beginning of the service without any kind of formal or informal introduction therefore attempted to relate something of the surprise of the resurrection appearance. In the liturgical context of Gateshead, beginning abruptly with the peace was meant to be a faint 'aftershock' of such appearances, now into the mêlée of our gathering.

At different times of the year, the position of the peace shifted, and this functioned, along with changes in environmental colours, as one of the main indicators of a change in liturgical season. Throughout the year, the position of the peace varied through all of the options suggested by the notes of Common Worship. In ordinary time, it was positioned in the 'classical' position suggested by Justin Martyr's early witness (cf. p. 153), between intercession and preparation of the table for communion. During Advent and Lent, the peace replaced the closing dismissal, underlining the theme of reconciliation as a mark of these seasons. During Christmas and Epiphany, it was positioned in the commonplace Roman Catholic position between the Lord's prayer and the breaking of bread. This (as with the gesture of bowing) was, in the context of Gateshead, a small attempt to relate different senses of the body of



Christ, people being closely juxtaposed to sacramental matter. In this position the peace was meant to function as an invitation to relate to neighbours who necessarily interrupted the privacy of individual preparation for communion immediately before reception.

During the Easter season, the peace was introduced from the west end of the church, behind people sat in preparation for worship. In all seasons, a procession led from the west to the east end during the opening hymn, with adults and children forming the procession to carry a lectern bible and lights before presider and assistant. Services always had a clear presider (distinguished by vesture), and the presider was always accompanied by an assistant. At a eucharist, the presider was always priest, although at other times (such as services of the word), ordained persons assisted lay presiders as a gesture of shared ministry.

In the Easter season, an alternative opening prayer from Patterns for Worship replaced the more familiar Collect for Purity (which was used in ordinary time).

*Invitation to repentance*

Christ Jesus says: Do you love me? (John 21)  
**Spirit of God, search our hearts.**

*In silence, we remember our need to be forgiven . . .*

**God our Father, long-suffering, full of grace and truth,  
You create us from nothing and give us life.  
You give your faithful people new life  
in the water of baptism.  
You do not turn your face from us,  
nor cast us aside.  
We confess that we have sinned against you  
and our neighbour.  
We have wounded your love  
and marred your image in us.  
Restore us for the sake of your Son,  
and bring us to heavenly joy,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*The minister declares God's forgiveness.*

*The Collect*

*The presider calls everyone to prayer and after a silence, collects all our offerings in a special prayer for the day.*

Through most of the liturgical year, confession and absolution formed part of the gathering rites.<sup>108</sup> The response 'Spirit of God, search our hearts', from the New Zealand Prayer Book, consistently provided the congregational response to the range of scriptural sentences used throughout the year as an invitation to repentance. In the Easter season, the sentence echoed the risen Christ's question to Peter, as above. During ordinary time, the 'great' and 'new' commandments from Matthew 22 were used as our 'standard fare' with the New Zealand response repeated after each. In Advent and Lent, a version of the ten commandments was used, again using the New Zealand response. In the 'kingdom season' from All Saints through to Christ the King, the Johannine sentence 'If you love me, keep my commandments' was used. The response, 'Spirit of God. . .' amplified the collect for purity and allowed a connection to the sense of that cherished prayer even when it was not actually used.

A range of forms of confession were used throughout the year, drawing mainly on Patterns for Worship resources, and using responsive *kyries*, variable from week to week, through the long season of ordinary time. In the Easter season, an authorised confession amplifying baptismal imagery was used, anticipating a special focus on baptism later in the

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<sup>108</sup> My reflections on Jacques Pohier's God in Fragments, esp. 212-222, generated some reserve about this in my mind. In one season, the brief 'kingdom' season, the confession was moved to an alternative position after intercession, so that it formed part of the response to the ministry of the word. A place much nearer the beginning, as in the Easter order, was, however, felt by most of the congregation to be the preferable place for confession. Perhaps this relates to the observation made earlier (in relation to art, and music, for instance) about joyfulness being more difficult to express in some urban contexts than bleaker emotions.

service. (It is notable that with only one exception – the Nicene Creed, used for the short Kingdom season - this was the longest single block of congregational text used at any point in the year). Absolutions were never prescribed in the local order, allowing reference to a range of authorised forms.

In every season, the collect marked the close of the gathering rites.<sup>109</sup>

## WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

### *Bible reading*

*At the end of the reading:*

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*A song of praise may be sung.*

### *Gospel reading*

*When the reading is introduced:*

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, the living One;

**I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.**

**Alleluia!** (Revelation 1)

Hear the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ...

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the end of the reading:*

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ!**

### *Sermon*

*The sermon may be followed by questions and comments*

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<sup>109</sup> The collects were the element from the texts of Common Worship that were experienced as particularly difficult in Gateshead. The problems with them are widely recognised and documented, and they are now being radically recrafted for later editions of the prayer-book. The collects were in fact the one point where we in Gateshead departed from our decision to use only authorised texts. Generally, the Joint Liturgical Group's edition of the collects for the Roman sacramentary, published as Opening Prayers (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1998) were used.

*or silence or instrumental music for reflection.*

*Statement of Christian faith*

Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess with me the faith  
of the Church in the saving death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus:

**Christ died for our sins**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**He was buried;**

**he was raised to life on the third day**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**Afterwards he appeared to his followers,**

**and to all the apostles:**

**this we have received and this we believe. Amen. (1 Corinthians 15)**

Scripture readings were always read by lay people - often children - and this often required patience while readers took time over the readings, given that many – especially adults – could but didn't read. Scripture readings would sometimes involve members of the congregation encouraging readers with pronunciation and 'long words'. If only to find volunteers to read, it was essential to encourage a culture in which participation was valued whatever the 'standard' of the contribution. This proved an ongoing task that was in fact crucial to raising the standard as people participated and received encouragement, improving in quality over time.

The gradual hymn was, with the exception of ordinary time, fixed for each season and used each week. This, with changing colour, and the shifting position of the peace, lent a sense of marking time. Sometimes a gospel procession to the church door at the west end of the building was incorporated, as a gesture of proclamation to those 'outside' as well as present, and meant to link liturgy and the rest of life.

Sermons were often accompanied by projected artwork and were always followed by a brief time of communal reflection, 'chaired' by either presider or assistant, though highly informal in tone. Children participated in these discussions alongside adults, and this reflective

time was a chief means of shared catechesis in the congregation, often involving testimony and encouragement by one to others.

Creedal statements varied through the year. The normative eucharistic creed, that based on the Nicæan statement, was in fact used only through the short 'kingdom' season. A responsive form of the shorter Apostle's Creed, drawn from Patterns for Worship, was used through ordinary time. In Advent and Lent, the Patterns version of the 'Christ-psalm' of Philippians 2 was used, emphasising as it does both kenosis and sacrifice with their connections to the incarnation and the triduum for which these seasons respectively prepare. In Christmas and Epiphany, the Patterns version of the 'prayer' from Ephesians 3 ('I bow my knees before the Father. . .') was used, linking the season marking the childhood of Christ to an affirmation of all as children of God. Through these seasons, this connection was strengthened by having children from the congregation introduce this particular affirmation of faith, so addressing others of very different ages as 'brothers and sisters'. In the Easter season, another scriptural creedal statement was used, 1 Corinthians 15 as presented in Patterns for Worship, and this provided a set of biblical imagery that juxtaposed that of the 'Christ-psalm' used through the previous season.

*Prayers of God's people*

*We pray for the needs of the world, the renewal of the church,  
and grace for one another.*

Your kingdom come,  
**Your will be done.**

*At the end of the prayers:*

Hasten, Lord, the day  
**when people will come from east and west,  
from north and south, and sit at table  
in your kingdom and we shall see your Son  
in his glory. Amen.**

| *A song of praise may be sung.*

Intercessions were on most occasions led by lay members of the congregation, including children who prepared prayers with family members or other adults. Often the intercessions were accompanied by visual imagery presented on screens. The habit grew of inviting specific responses from the congregation – naming the sick, the recently bereaved, local concerns, world events, and so on – as a means by which people could participate in a way which was often felt to be personally significant.

The collect gathering the various intercessions changed with the seasons of the year. Through Easter this prayer, with others through the service, especially emphasised some inclusive 'global' imagery. This became especially significant in shaping response to the many asylum seekers who became the neighbours of many of the congregation – almost 1000 asylum seekers became resident in the town in under twelve months from July 1999 – and several of them joined the congregation. Some of the church's most focused work in the community came to be in response to asylum seekers' needs, and various 'drop ins' and visiting schemes were established - some shared with the local interfaith forum, and some developed independently. The catechetical point to which this and other prayers were related was linked to the baptismal associations of Eastertide, stressing common identity as 'children of God' when much of the wider culture was emphasising difference and division between longstanding inhabitants of Gateshead and the influx of asylum seekers.

The offertory hymn was often one drawn from a pool of hymns which members of the congregation identified as their favourites. Such hymns were often acknowledged as a particular person's most cherished hymn, and that person would often at this point in the service, as the hymn was sung, be involved in the offertory procession, alongside both other

adults and/or other children. Identifying hymns as favourites of members of the congregation at least partly enabled use of a wider repertoire of music in worship than might otherwise have been the case had hymns not been so closely associated with particular people. At least, tolerance of others' cherished music could be encouraged because critics of particular styles of music would themselves become vulnerable to criticism when their favourite hymnody was used and they were identified with it in the community's ritual. Over time, this strategy for encouraging inclusive approaches to music did begin to change the way diverse kinds of music were evaluated, because music was always identified with names and faces, and had to be judged with that in mind.

## **WE CELEBRATE AT GOD'S TABLE**

*Prayer of great thanksgiving*

The Lord is here.

**His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

*In a special prayer led by the presider,  
we give thanks to God for all his goodness,  
especially in the life of Jesus the Saviour.*

*We join the praise of the saints and angels of heaven, saying:*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory,  
hosanna in the highest.**

*We recall Jesus' command to remember him with bread and wine.*

*These responses are used:*

This is his story:

**This is our song. Hosanna in the highest.**

This is our story:

**This is our song. Hosanna in the highest.**

*We pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, ending*

**Blessing and honour and glory and power**

be yours for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Sharing the Lord's prayer*

We pray with Jesus, present with us now:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.****

*Breaking the bread*

As the grain once scattered in the fields  
and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside  
are now reunited on this table in bread and wine,  
**So, Lord, may your whole Church  
soon be gathered together  
from the corners of the earth  
into your kingdom.**

*Invitation to the table*

*The presider invites the people to share the bread and wine  
as the signs of Christ's love. Everyone is welcome to share the sacramental gifts.*

*During communion, songs of praise may be sung.*

Patterns for Worship's presentation of eucharistic prayer – eliminating all text needed only by the presider – was the model followed in the local Gateshead orders. Through the year, the full range of authorised eucharistic prayers from Common Worship were used.

Adults and children together prepared the altar-table, setting out bread (baked by a member of the congregation) and pouring out wine. They also gathered together around the altar with the presider for eucharistic prayer and the Lord's prayer. As a means of gesturing shared ministry, no spaces were reserved for ordained persons, and children shared all



the spaces accessed by adults. The ritual at this point intended to suggest the equality of adults and children in the community, and children and adults both acted as 'prompter' during eucharistic prayer, in the case of prayer D used through Eastertide, announcing the trigger-phrase 'this is our story' to invite congregational response.

The words at the fraction in the Easter season, drawn from the Didache, consolidated the 'global' emphasis that other prayers through the order also sought to express.

Different arrangements of liturgical space, within a range of limited options, allowed for different patterns of sharing communion. An important principle to try to embody was that children might administer the sacramental gifts, given that latterly they were deemed to be as eligible as adults to receive them. However, diocesan policies on this matter had not yet been reformed in the light of new openness to children receiving communion, and regrettably, the administration of communion was reserved to those over sixteen years old.

The shift to sharing communion with children also raised a wider range of issues about sharing communion with others who also had not been confirmed. The issue came into focus particularly at occasions like baptisms, when many non-churched persons were present, although in fact, the issues were felt almost every time a visitor or guest attended a eucharistic service. Worship in Gateshead, as in so many other places, had been influenced by the Parish Communion Movement, and a pattern of weekly eucharist had been long established. What had not been a focus of attention in Gateshead, as in so many other places, was that despite the benefits of regular eucharist, other foci from the church's 'repertoire' of worship had been lost, not least baptism. Furthermore, such eucharistically-based worship presents the demanding problem of how hospitality can be offered in such a context, particularly in a wider culture in which patterns of significant decline in

church attendance predate the influence of the Parish Communion Movement, when services of the word of various kinds, perceived to be more hospitable than the eucharist as a rite of commitment, were the main acts of weekly worship. Sacramental catechesis focused on biblical memories of Jesus' table fellowship with outcasts and sinners led to an unwritten policy that all would be invited to share communion with 'no questions asked'. Although this practice in fact stepped beyond the legalities of Anglican eucharistic hospitality, a number of precedents shaped the convictions that began to emerge. For instance, eucharistic services at St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, always include the invitation to 'all, without exception', to share the sacramental gifts, with a rationale for such practice clearly linked to the gospel traditions of Jesus' meals in contradistinction from the 'worthy reception' traditions elaborated from Pauline material that are often the focus of more traditional Anglican approaches to the issues.

The practice of an 'open table' developed in Gateshead in response to the widespread perception among visitors that the eucharist divided members of the church from those who were more casual attendees. Our emerging practice of inviting all to communion was meant to contest the perceived lack of hospitality at eucharistic events, and also spurred a quest to widen out the sacramental focus of most of our gatherings, particularly in terms of recovering a greater role for baptism.

Before turning more specifically to the matter of recovering baptism, it is worth noting that hospitable practice at the eucharist had particular implications among the asylum seekers attending worship. Not all were Christian: some Muslims attended sporadically, before being put in contact with other Muslims worshipping locally. They attended Christian worship on the basis of their sense that Christians and Muslims 'both believe in one God'. Some shared the eucharist. Also, some Buddhists attended, some of whom eventually of their own accord

converted, and were baptised, although they had been sharing communion for some time before that formal mode of sacramental initiation. Again, St Gregory of Nyssa's provided some points with which we linked this practice: their icon project, 'the Dancing Saints', which surrounds their altar-table, includes figures from non-Christian religions and people of no faith as well as Christians. Clearly, our practice of admitting members of other religions, at their request, to the eucharistic table introduced a measure of confusion to our sacramental practice. We did so, however, whilst recognising that of course the practice of baptism and eucharist in Gateshead was already very 'messy' – to employ a phrase associated in the Introduction with practical theology (p. 6) - long before numbers of believers of other faiths began to worship with us.

## **WE ARE SENT TO SERVE IN GOD'S NAME**

*Prayer after communion*

*A time of silence is kept for personal thanksgiving,  
and this or another prayer may be said:*

**We thank you, Lord,  
that you have fed us in this sacrament,  
united us with Christ,  
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet  
prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

*Water is poured into the font as the people of God recall God's gift  
of baptism and the new life to which Christ calls his people.*

Those who are baptised are called to worship and serve God:

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching  
and fellowship, in the breaking of bread,  
and in the prayers?

**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you persevere in resisting evil,  
and, whenever you fall into sin,  
repent and return to the Lord?

**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you proclaim by word and example  
the good news of God in Christ?  
**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people,  
loving your neighbour as yourself?  
**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you acknowledge Christ's authority  
over human society, by prayer for the world  
and its leaders, by defending the weak,  
and by seeking peace and justice?  
**With the help of God, I will.**

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,  
that you may be rooted and grounded in love  
and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. **Amen.**

*The service ends as people come to the font as a song of praise is sung.  
Each person uses the water to sign themselves with the cross, saying,  
'I belong to Christ. Amen.'*

As with prayers used earlier in this service, the post-communion prayer emphasised the 'global' scope of divine love, and was related in catechesis especially to response to the many asylum seekers who were becoming resident in Gateshead and members of the church during the period in which the services were constructed.

In the Easter season, services closed with an explicit connection to the longstanding practice of baptism at Eastertide. Baptisms in the parish were themselves clustered around four nodal points in the year – the festival of the baptism of Christ, Easter, Pentecost and All Saints, as Common Worship suggests they might be. Common Worship's resources for remembering baptism, particularly the affirmations used at confirmation, were used throughout the Easter season, however. The responses from confirmation were used in part to try to secure a role for confirmation when its place was being renegotiated in relation to questions about access to the eucharistic table. By employing these responses for a whole season of the liturgical year, the concrete

implications of the personal commitment represented by confirmation were underlined.

Emphasis on baptism through the Easter season was also an attempt to widen out the congregation's sacramental spirituality from an almost exclusive focus on the eucharist. The decline in number of actual celebrations of baptisms, and their celebration outside the main (eucharistic) event of worship each week meant that baptism certainly did not have a central place in the communal life of the church. Yet recovering baptism came to be considered central both to underlining the place of children in the church, and to encouraging evangelism, one key means of which was the pastoral offices in which both lay and clergy members were involved with many in the wider community.

The ritual of pouring water and inviting worshippers to mark themselves with the sign of the cross of course has wide ecumenical resonances. It recalls the aspersion that may form a central part of the gathering in the Roman rites, and now the Common Worship funeral services, and it also draws on various Protestant traditions' recently recovered means of remembering baptism. In our practice, the recollection of baptism in the Easter season was often accompanied by the aspersion common to both Roman and Uniting Church rites, as well as signing with the cross that is also shared by both Protestant and Roman traditions. These ecumenical resonances were themselves a matter for catechesis and a variant trajectory of the 'global' theme developed throughout the services of the Easter season.

By concluding this chapter with commentary on an actual order of service used in Gateshead, I have shown one attempt to foster 'full, conscious and active participation' in worship, such as has been the vision of ecumenical liturgical renewal (above, p. 11, etc), and a special concern of Faith in the City (above, p. 44) in its influence on Patterns for Worship (chapter 1, *passim*). Moreover, I have addressed a number of

specific issues that relate to how liturgical celebration, understood broadly as votive context and ritual event, may communicate the hospitality of God. Resonance with divine hospitality is, I believe, the possibility and challenge at the centre of liturgical theology.

The Gateshead liturgies, of which the above case study forms a part, were an attempt to enact hospitality to both adults and children in the context of our particular urban setting, with all its attendant demands. The Gateshead liturgies were constructed in the context of my conversation with the writings of Lathrop, Saliers and White and with a congregation conscious of some its needs and open to catechesis. So the liturgies represent the meshing of some of the key insights of these three theologians with the demanding context of a living community. That community was one in which the liturgical resources of Patterns for Worship were certainly helpful, but which, I believe, Saliers, White and Lathrop's insights have much to offer to enrich understanding of the issues Patterns sought to address in the English Anglican context. Importantly, the Gateshead liturgies were themselves the product of a conversation to which a number of members of a congregation participated, and they represent a communal response to our wider circumstances.

Recalling the questions which I introduced at the end of Part Three (see pp. 231, 235 etc), and which have echoed through this Fourth Part of this work, the liturgies were intended to engage with and reflect the classical resources of Christian worship known as the *ordo*. They were intended to allow different juxtapositions in the *ordo* animate the faith of participants in liturgy in our setting. At times, the liturgies embodied Saliers' and White's encouragement to learn from the newer 'non-liturgical' traditions. The liturgies were an attempt to wrestle with a range of issues that are often overlooked in writing about worship, and moreover with issues that represent some deep challenges to the *ordo* which may not be apparent when the *ordo* is discussed abstractly,

detached from particular challenges facing actual communities. The liturgies were an attempt to identify clearly some of the characteristics of the *ordo* and to make these available to a particular congregation, and to facilitate affective response to divine hospitality in such a way as to enable participants to engage with others generously in the midst of ethical challenges that confronted us as we came to share our space in new ways with those with particular needs and in very specific kinds of difference. As I insisted at the outset of this chapter, good practice in Gateshead was sometimes discerned but not properly or effectively enacted, sometimes begun but not finished, and certainly never perfect. Because my examples are contextual, the reflection developed in this chapter is necessarily partial, and hence it is appropriate at this stage to underline the importance of the metaphor of conversation in my thinking. As is clear from the above, conversation was central to seeking a genuinely contextualised liturgical practice, constructed and tested by participants in a particular context of living. But whilst the present chapter may, I hope, be a helpful conversation partner for those in other settings, it makes no claim that its reflection is 'transferable' in any simple sense – and if at all, perhaps in terms of resonance which readers in other situations may recognise or find intriguing. The challenge of enacting, in some partial measure, the divine hospitality that is the heart of liturgy's saving work must be undertaken in each and every place.

## CONSTRUCTING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

### *Closing comments on Part Four*

The Fourth Part of this present work has been intentionally contextual. Within its necessary limits it has intended to hint at what a broad approach to liturgy might look like, advancing the development in the Church of England's liturgical life represented by Patterns for Worship, and enriched by the kinds of consideration that arise from exploration of contemporary liturgical theology such as we have encountered in the thought of Don Saliers, Gordon Lathrop and James White.

In the foregoing discussion, we have been alerted to the possibilities that - amongst many examples - liturgical space may form faith for good or ill, aiding or distorting it; that music may either honour or dishonour those who sing praise; that the choice of bread for eucharist may be far from trivial in terms of what it signifies for participants. I have explored how questions about formation are relevant to many aspects of liturgy, with 'liturgy' of course being understood at many levels, as multi-textured. Questions of congruence between liturgical texts and the theologies they suggest have been raised and related to the theological dimensions of other aspects of liturgy more broadly understood as more than texts for prayer. And liturgy has been related to what I have called 'para-liturgy', an essential focus of evangelism in contexts like my own. Finally, a text for prayer has been surrounded by a commentary that focuses at least some of the issues that were central to one particular setting. It demonstrated some creative engagements with the *ordo* rather than jettisoning it as in so much worship with children and among the urban deprived, apart from others.

What the conversation I have attempted to stage above has shown is that without more widespread attempts to think about liturgy in multifaceted ways - at least as 'votive context, ritual event' - much of the potential of liturgy to perform saving work will be lost.



## Conclusion

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In my introduction to this work, I suggested an approach to liturgical theology in which contextual theology, biographical theology and practical theology were important ancillary concerns. In the intervening pages, I have contributed to liturgical theology in a way that is contextually sensitive, personally involved and concerned with transforming practice, with liturgy as saving work.

I began Part One by identifying the notion of participation as central to liturgical theology (chapter 1, above). I then studied Patterns for Worship as one example of concern with participation in the Church of England, especially among the urban poor and among children (chapter 2). I showed how Patterns for Worship, Faith in the City and Children in the Way, and their successive and supportive legacies in related documents of the Church of England, raised important and provocative questions for the church. And I asserted that, at the present time, not all of the questions brought into focus by these documents are receiving the attention they merit. My own work through this thesis has been an attempt to redress the lack of connection between the various reports that have emerged from the Church of England in the period that I have considered. An obvious instance of the lack of connection is that neither Youth A Part nor God in the City paid attention to Patterns for Worship, despite the fact that the authors of the former could have been greatly encouraged by what was to be found in and elaborated from Patterns if they had done so.

Part Two of this work, 'Challenging Liturgical Theology', introduced a number of complexities to my task, and I traced the trajectories through to the present day of Faith in the City and Children in the Way's respective concerns with urban life (chapter 3) and with the young (chapter 4). Whilst recognising much of continuing relevance in the documents, I posited some ways in which the focus of the original documents now requires a shift – for instance, by acknowledging globalisation as being of major importance to contemporary

urban theology, and by embracing opportunities now presented by widespread shifts to allow the 'sacramental belonging' of children. I asserted that such shifts are necessary if the documents and their legacies are to continue to possess interpretative power.

I then turned to resources that I think can assist in understanding and encouraging the participation in liturgy with which Patterns for Worship was especially concerned, with the young and the urban poor. So in Part Three, 'Exploring Liturgical Theology', I looked in detail at the writings of Gordon Lathrop (chapter 5), Don Saliers (chapter 6) and James White (chapter 7). In these chapters, I showed that read alongside each other, White, Saliers and Lathrop are in some instances mutually affirming, and in others mutually critical. I went on to suggest that in the coherence of the three theologians' work, and in their questions of one another's perspectives, the contours of a liturgical theology can be discerned that helpfully expands the horizons of the Church of England's public thinking about its worship. In my own appropriation of the work of the three theologians, I developed a series of questions to which this work has provided some answers: for example, how might White, Lathrop and Saliers' contributions to the wider discipline of liturgical theology be appropriated in a particular situation concerned with liturgy engaging deprived urban Christians in modern Britain, or involving children? How do actual celebrations of liturgy in particular urban assemblies, or congregations constituted by significant numbers of children, reflect the classical *ordo*? How might the culture of urban or age-inclusive congregations manage the subtle juxtapositions of which Lathrop speaks? What kind of judgement on the 'durability' of the classical *ordo* might contextually alert urban or age-inclusive liturgy represent? What kind of 'characterizing activity' (in Saliers' phraseology) do these particular urban or age-inclusive celebrations promise? What might urban or age-inclusive worship learn from the 'newer' or 'non-liturgical' traditions? What affectional or ethical 'fruit' may be jeopardised by omission of traditional components of the *ordo*? (p. 231, above).

Some of my own responses to these questions were developed in chapter 8. One of the main things I have learned from Lathrop, White and Saliers is to contest the one-dimensional, text-based, approaches to liturgy, and so in the Fourth Part of this work, 'Constructing Liturgical Theology', comprised of chapter 8, I developed an alternative to narrowly focused liturgical study. Part of this involved an emphasis on the 'para-liturgical', relating liturgical theology and practice to the tasks of evangelism, social action and catechesis. Each of these, I asserted, is essential if liturgy - at least liturgy involving what I have explored above as the *ordo* - is to relate to an urban setting, such as my own. I borrowed the notion of 'saving work' to underscore the importance of what I discovered in my own practice of ministry as, conscious of my context, I read together relevant church documents and a range of liturgical theology.

Another part of contesting one-dimensional, text-based, approaches to liturgy was my development, later in chapter 8, of what I called a 'whole rite' focus to eucharistic worship. I explored a range of ways in which the *ordo* has been celebrated with the young and among the urban deprived in one particular context, suggesting that transformative practice of liturgy can be developed in the kind of challenging circumstances that earlier Parts of the thesis (especially Part Two) explored. Many of my examples through chapter 8 focused on two issues that were among the most acute and urgent in my experience - engaging those with low-level literacy, and offering hospitality to asylum seekers. But I also made wider applications, suggesting a number of means by which persons' sacramentality - their potential as 'graced presences' - could be affirmed, even as the wider umbrella culture shaped urban subjectivity in diminutive ways. Through chapter 8, then, I illustrated, from my consciously contextualised perspective, some modest and piecemeal ways in which liturgical theology can engender both an inclusive vision and hospitable practices in the life of the local church.

Throughout, I have been conscious that my contextual reflections are of limited direct relevance to other settings, yet I have offered them in the conviction that attention to one setting can help to generate sensitivity to the demands of other situations and the quest for transformation in the

particularity of their otherness. I trust that my work might even indicate something of what might be gained on the Liturgical Commission and bishops' thinking - at least that which has to date been committed to print - about worship with the urban deprived and the young, on which Patterns for Worship focused.

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