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**Issues Raised by Contemporary Theories of Language for the Language
of Worship:**

Their Impact on Liturgy in the Church of England 1955 - 1995.

Revd Jeremy James Fletcher.

Submitted for the degree of Master of Arts,

University of Durham,

Department of Theology,

1995

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13 NOV 1995

Abstract

Issues Raised by Contemporary Theories of Language for the Language of Worship:

Their impact on Liturgy in the Church of England 1955 - 1995.

Revd. Jeremy James Fletcher.

This thesis examines the development of liturgy in the Church of England from the inception of its Liturgical Commission in 1955 until the present day. The emphasis is upon the development of thinking about the language of worship, in relation to contemporary linguistic and philosophical approaches to language.

Chapters one and two chart the new liturgies produced by the Liturgical Commission, and note writing about their language by Commission members and others. The move away from one book containing all the services of the Church of England to a 'directory' approach with suggested structures and a multiplicity of resources is noted.

In chapter three linguistic descriptions of the language of worship are discussed, noting their emphasis on the function of words rather than their meaning, and this thought is examined with regard to the work of Saussure and the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein. This leads to a discussion of the performativity of liturgical language, following the work of J.L. Austin, in chapter four.

In chapter five some issues raised by these developments are discussed, concluding that though contemporary theories of language might call the possibility of meaning and reference into question, they also allow the language of worship to have an external reference, and do not simply articulate the desires and beliefs of the community alone. This particularly relates to the work of A.C. Thiselton who uses contemporary theories of language to study the biblical texts, whilst holding onto those texts' external reference also.

Acknowledgements

This work began under Dr. David Jasper, continued under Revd. Gordon Jeanes, and ended under Professor David Brown. I am grateful to them all.

Three parishes have endured their clergyman wrestling with this work: All Saints' Stranton, St. Nicholas' Nottingham, and St. Andrew's Skegby. I am grateful too for assistance from the Dioceses of Durham and Southwell.

Were it not for Julia, I would never have completed this. I owe her everything.

Declaration

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in the University of Durham or any other University.

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Introduction

Worship in the Church of England has been transformed beyond all recognition since the Liturgical Commission was founded in 1955. The Book of Common Prayer remains, but has been replaced in most services by the ASB, with its contemporary language, and use of 'you' rather than 'thou'. Though the ASB was partly designed to give stability by having all the services in one book, as in the BCP, it was already pointing the way by its extensive use of alternatives, and slimming down of material which was to be mandatory. In the fifteen years which have elapsed since then that trend has grown: subsequent books have encouraged diversity within certain bounds, and given structures rather than texts of complete services.

In forty years the Church of England has moved from fixity to pluriformity. It is the argument of this thesis that this change has not been the result of liturgical thinking alone. The study of language has become a central one in academic circles, and theories of language, from Saussure onwards, have emphasised the difficulty of defining meaning and reference. Where once the dictionary definition of a word was enough, now language study demands knowledge of context and usage, and shies away from formal definition. Just as the Church of England has moved away from fixity, so the study of language has become pluriform and specific rather than general.

This study examines developments in liturgy (in chapters one and two) and developments in the theory of language, particularly as they relate to the language of worship (in chapters three and four). Current theories of language have been and are used (in their most extreme form) to deny any possibility of referentiality and agreed meaning: it is the tentative conclusion of this study that though liturgical and linguistic development is towards diversity, this change still allows for the possibility that language can be shared, and that in worship it can point to God. These conclusions will be drawn in chapter five.

Chapter One

Policies and Pronouncements on the Language of Liturgy in The Church of England, 1955 - 1980.

R.C.D. Jasper, in his book The Development of the Anglican Liturgy 1662-1980 points out the difficulty of defining a historical period for study. In his case, a book covering two decades of liturgical reform became a study covering 350 years.¹ However, for the purposes of this study 1955 makes a good starting point, since the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England was created in this year.

The Commission's work has been characterised by creative approaches both to the shape and the language of liturgy, particularly from the introduction of 'modern language' rites such as Series Three. Occasionally too the Commission has examined the writing of liturgy, and there are guidelines (usually self-imposed) as to the type and range of language used. Chapters one and two of this study will examine the approaches taken by successive Commissions in their official pronouncements on language, and also review writing on the language of liturgy by individuals on or connected to the Commission.

Roots of Change

Having said that the Commission has been instrumental in radical change to the language and shape of liturgy since 1955, it has to be agreed with Jasper that such change did not come out of a vacuum. After the abortive attempts to introduce the 1928 Prayer Book, it would seem that change in liturgy went underground. However, in his chapter 'The Middle Decades: Pressures for Change', Jasper outlines the factors which contributed to the changes which were to occur later.

From the late 1920's onwards, these included Biblical Theology, with its concentration not only on the person of Christ, but also on 'a worthier conception

of the church and its central place in Christian faith and practice as the mystical Body of Christ.² The Liturgical Commission's report to the 1958 Lambeth Conference, Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England also highlights the emphasis in Biblical Theology upon 'the eschatological dimension in the idea of the Kingdom of God'³, an area of weakness in the 1928 Prayer Book.

Alongside this, much work was being done on the theology of the Eucharist (particularly in attempting to unite Evangelicals and Catholics over the issue of Eucharistic Sacrifice), and on Initiation. There were also pressures on the Lectionary, the Psalter, and on services such as those for the Sick, and the Burial services.⁴

This new thinking (particularly on the nature of the Church, and the Eucharist) began to work itself out in liturgical and pastoral practice. Gregory Dix's seminal work The Shape of the Liturgy appeared in 1945. Not only did this have implications for the order of the Communion service (with its four-fold 'shape'), it also came out of an essay on the nature of the church, and provided the academic stimulus for the newly emerging Parish Communion movement. As Jasper comments:

With the basic assumption that the Eucharist should be the chief expression of the Body of Christ in a particular parish, it strove to put into practice a number of important theological insights: the active participation of the laity, a clear presentation of the four-shape action, and the unity of the Word of God in the use of both the Old and New Testaments and in preaching.⁵

All this resulted in great pressure being put upon the forms of the Eucharist then available. There was a desire for a more flexible form of service, one which included provision for Psalms and Old Testament Readings⁶, and one which could be celebrated more informally. Liturgical reform was being pursued from the grass roots as well as by the liturgical professionals, and this allowed the events of 1955 onwards to unfold.

Other pressures for liturgical change noted by the Commission included the resurgence of church music, the influence of the BBC with its broadcasts of well ordered worship (with some contemporary language), the increasing use of processions (which had no 'official' liturgical provision), and the greater frequency of 'services for special occasions'.⁷

A key pressure on the language of liturgy came with the appearance of The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apocrypha 1957).⁸ Though there had been 'contemporary' language versions produced before, its express purpose was to make the Word of God clear: 'it must stand forth in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today'.⁹ Given the work of J.B. Phillips, and the appearance of the New English Bible, together with other new versions, contemporary language was forcing its way into the liturgy. As Jasper puts it: 'the Church of England was being confronted by a variety of new Bible translations differing in style and idiom from those she was accustomed to use in public worship.'¹⁰

It has to be said though that the pressure on the style and idiom of the language of liturgy was not a major issue in this period. Pressures for change were mainly to do with the shape of services, and with a change in the view of the church the services expressed. The liturgical movement of the 1950's placed the Eucharist at the centre, and sought greater involvement and participation by the laity.

First Principles of Language

Thus, when the Liturgical Commission was formed and set about its work of drafting new liturgy, its first report for the 1958 Lambeth Conference, Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England had six guidelines, only one of which related (and that only in part) to the language in which liturgy was to be written. After saying that liturgical revision should be conservative, should not be repugnant to Holy Scripture, and should give expression to theological and liturgical insights of the time, it then said that liturgical revision should be 'related

to the world of thought and life in which the Church's task has to be done in the modern age'.¹¹

Here we have the modest beginnings of a debate about the language of worship in itself. The guidelines give three areas where the language of worship was under pressure. With regard to 'intelligibility', the Commission noted that 'the great Bible words round which so much Prayer Book worship gathers its rhythm and depth have become unintelligible to the masses.'

The removal of archaisms was fraught with danger (as experience of the use of the 1928 book showed), because 'the distinctively Christian content of the words may be lost'. In an interesting sentence (in view of later developments) the Commission said that 'the use of up to date language cannot by itself create meaningful symbols to those whose minds are dominated by the categories of the machine age.'¹²

The Commission ends this section by noting that people could often 'take' more than is supposed, and that if services were conducted carefully, intelligently, audibly, and reverently, few problems would occur. Complaints about intelligibility usually came from parishes with a weak church life, and much ignorance of the Bible. Nevertheless, it recognised that some words had become obsolete or had changed their meaning, and that something should be done about this.

After 'intelligibility', the other two areas where the language of worship was under pressure ('the need to be contemporary', and 'the call to give expression to new knowledge') are less concerned with specific questions of language. The Commission recognised that the nature of society had changed, and that therefore what is officially prayed for should reflect this. Similarly, new scientific knowledge expands and deepens our understanding of God, and services of worship should reflect this.

Comment

Principle 4 (a) of Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England was the first official utterance of the Liturgical Commission on the language of worship in itself. It is contained in three paragraphs, and concerns itself mainly with archaisms and intelligibility. Nevertheless, its thought is of great interest here. Its main concern is how things are understood. In accusing 'popular education' of causing 'great Bible words' to become 'unintelligible to the masses' it assumes that there is something which, given proper education, can be understood by, or become intelligible to, the majority of people.

In saying that, if services are conducted intelligently, carefully, audibly, and reverently, they will be 'taken' by the laity, the Commission is in danger of saying that if you say something loudly and slowly enough, it will be therefore be understood, rather like the archetypal Englishman abroad. It is on surer ground in saying that people can 'take' more than is often supposed. People's register of words recognised is greater than their register of words used. However, the context of this statement is that, given a proper grounding, people will be able to find the Prayer Book 'intelligible': i.e. they will be able to understand what it means. There are huge questions here, none of which is elaborated.

The only statement about words themselves is that they change their meaning, or become obsolete. Presumably, though, with the right education, even such obsolete uses or changed words could be understood. There is no concept here about what a later commission would call a 'nervousness about meaning'¹³, nor any mention of poetry, ambiguity, rhetoric, or the like. The Commission has obviously recognised a need to do something, but it is not sure how or what. Even so, an awareness of pressures for 'up to date' language, archaisms and the fluidity of meaning, and the need for 'meaningful symbols', does set the tone for future thinking.

Policies in the Making 1958 - 1962

The report itself was the Church of England's contribution to the liturgical debate at the Lambeth Conference of 1958. Most of the issues discussed at that Lambeth Conference and in the subsequent few years were to do with eucharistic doctrine, and the Prayer Book of 1662 as the locus of doctrine for the Anglican Communion. The language of worship in itself was not an issue, but only arose inasmuch as protagonists in the debates wanted to make sure that services were 'intelligible': i.e. that the language used conveyed what was intended. At this stage there is no discussion of the wider meaning of language, only about intelligibility.

One example of the application of these overall guidelines was in the production of a new version of the Psalter. The Lambeth Conference of 1958 had asked for this, pointing out that 'there could be no spiritual benefit in repeating archaic words and phrases'¹⁴. Jasper says that the Commission called the final work a piece of 'invisible mending'. In being conservative, the group had only sought to rid Coverdale of the archaisms, and did this by the application of new theological insights, especially those of Hebrew scholars. It also sought to make the Psalms accessible to a contemporary congregation, by using two renowned writers: C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot. However, the result was not popular. It was clear, but lacked the poetry of the original. Even given the discord between Lewis and Eliot, trying to tinker with an established literary text rather than starting from scratch was presumably all that could be attempted, but was nevertheless a mistake. More thought needed to be given to the language of worship.

Reshaping the Liturgy

The Liturgical Commission appointed in 1962 produced two documents on Prayer Book revision: Reshaping the Liturgy and Why Prayer Book Revision at All? Each of these contained sections on the language of liturgy. Reshaping the Liturgy¹⁵ was written by Henry de Candole and Arthur Couratin on the Commission's behalf, and dealt with future possibilities for the Eucharist. Jasper calls it 'a

layman's guide to the 1958 Lambeth recommendations',¹⁶ and as such it covered each section of the rite, with questions for further study. In its section on language it made six points:

1. Though the Prayer Book is written in 'antique' language, certain parts of the service are inevitably in 'modern' language, and it is not 'generally felt that this "blending" of "antique" and "modern" is incongruous'.
2. A distinction can be drawn between those parts of the service which address God, and those which address the congregation.
3. 'An express principle of the Prayer Book is that such language should be used as the people can understand'. With regard to Scripture, should not all the readings be from a version in contemporary language?
4. There is perhaps a case for more 'formal' language in the parts of the service addressed to God, such as the consecration, the gloria, etc. The RSV still uses 'thou' for God but 'you' for others. 'Is this still desirable?'
5. If intercessions are to be topical, should not their language be contemporary?
6. 'There are in fact a variety of levels of language in common use - e.g. poetical or literary language, the language of *The Times*, of the popular newspapers, of colloquial conversation. Which of these should we aim at?'¹⁷

This further defines areas of future debate, in that the possibility is raised of allowing old and new to coexist. This was to be a recurring theme in the Commission's debates on language. However, the decision of 1. above to allow 'blending' was not perhaps the wisest conclusion to be drawn from the evidence. It took some years for the Commission to be convinced through David Frost that the old should be left alone, and the new should be made to work using its own merits. Other important areas raised include the level of language to be used, and whether an 'elevated' mode of address to God was appropriate. Along with note 6. about register, the Commission's attention was drawn here to more complex levels of the debate about language.

Why Prayer Book Revision at All?

Why Prayer Book Revision at all was the work of Basil Naylor, but authorised by the Commission, and again talked in general terms about the need to revise the rite. Jasper calls this booklet 'the first indication of a constructive approach' to the study of liturgical language, in that it drew on 'recent philosophical discussions on the function of language'.¹⁸ It was to be this booklet, along with Stella Brook's The Language of the Book of Common Prayer, which would spur the Commission into doing serious work on the study of liturgical language in its own right, but this would only happen after the work on the language of Series Two.

Naylor's section on 'The Problem of Language' takes two pages out of a booklet of fifty-four. He draws attention to philosophical discussions in recent years 'on the meaning of words and symbols and the function of language',¹⁹ and points out that the discussion often centres on 'the character and meaning of religious language'. The first half of the section concentrates on the question as to whether 'Christian truth can be communicated to a scientific age in terms that can be understood',²⁰ and draws on the recent work on symbolism by F.W. Dillistone. Naylor's conclusion (with Dillistone) is that the historic symbols of christianity, those of Baptism and Eucharist, are still of relevance to the modern world, even if their 'dynamic meaning' is more suited to a more agricultural or nomadic community. As long as they 'and the significant ritual associated with them' are allowed to claim attention 'unobscured by....additions and developments', they can still 'carry meaning'.²¹ Naylor's plea is therefore for 'liturgical simplicity', which he says is essential.

The two remaining paragraphs are on 'liturgical language'. Naylor makes the point that 'liturgy is drawn into any debate on religious language', and that any philosophical discussion will in time 'affect the climate of popular thought'.²² There were already pressures on the language of liturgy, not least brought to bear by new translations of the Bible. What Naylor does is to raise some questions which he says need further thought:

- What is the language of worship?
- Is the nature of common prayer such as to require archaic expression?
- What traditional elements in liturgical language must be preserved in keeping with the church's continuity with the past?
- Does the undoubted success of the revisers of the sixteenth century mean that they provided a norm which is valid for today?

The age was passing through 'a revolution in language', and once again 'attention is turned on the liturgy'.²³ Though Jasper may be over generous in calling these pages a 'constructive approach', they do raise questions, and treat issues in a way not seen before in an official publication.

Stella Brook

Naylor's last question was one addressed by Dr. Stella Brook, a Manchester English Don, in the final chapter of The Language of the Book of Common Prayer, published the year after Naylor's booklet. This work caused her, along with other 'specialists', to be invited onto the Commission in 1965. Jasper refers to Brook as 'the Commission's first acknowledged expert on language'.²⁴ The concluding chapter is called 'The Book of Common Prayer and Twentieth Century English', and concerns itself both with the influence of the Book of Common Prayer on current language use, and also with the 'suitability of current English for new or revised liturgical writing'.²⁵

Brook argues that, though much of the pressure for the use of current English comes from the desire for 'intelligibility', 'intelligibility and style do not...necessarily live at each other's expense'.²⁶ When traditional liturgy is being modernised she advocates changes which do not alter the rhythm ('precede' for 'prevent', for example), and using modern verb forms where they do not draw attention to themselves ('does' for 'doth', but not in the Magnificat, where 'My soul does magnify' brings 'an unfortunate note of emphasis'²⁷).

She attacks attempts to harmonise modern liturgies with The Book of Common Prayer by using a form of 'Prayer Book English', and highlights the 1928 Book's use of the verb form 'willest'.

Willest does not form part of the vocabulary of the original Collects and other prayers of the Book of Common Prayer, so there is no question of preserving an old formula.²⁸

Archaisms can be acceptable, and current prayers often use 'unto' where 'to' is in current usage, but Brook is clear that current English can be used in liturgy, though not without reference to traditional forms. This might happen in two ways.

First, new prayers can work by being a 'patchwork' of old and new. She dislikes prayers which put old phrases in new contexts so that the old phrases are obvious quotations, but points out examples where the inclusion of a phrase from an old collect (in this case 'changes and chances') fits neatly and unobtrusively into a new prayer. Secondly, new prayers can harmonise with the Book of Common Prayer because they copy 'its principles rather than its turns of phrase'.²⁹ She defines the character of sixteenth century Collects as 'simplicity and unobtrusive word-play', and later says that they do not use 'literary' vocabulary. Thus she commends A Liturgy for India, because those who wrote it were so steeped in the earlier idiom that they could 'think in it, as opposed to merely imitating it'.³⁰

Brook goes on to commend new writing from the Commission (the Orders of Baptism and Confirmation) which are reminiscent of the Book of Common Prayer, but composed entirely in a new idiom. She praises the way certain parts of the services capture 'the manner and rhythm of living contemporary speech'³¹, but wonders whether this idiom will be able to sustain a whole service (other parts of the services being Prayer Book Versions of the Psalms, for example). Brook's final point develops out of this. The difficulty of finding a 'satisfactory modern English liturgical style' comes because of the divorce between written and spoken English: a problem which the sixteenth century did not have. Written style is stylised, spoken style is slipshod and limited.

Brook says that liturgical style 'needs to reach the mind and heart and daily experience of those who hear and use it', and that it 'needs to express profundities in a decorous and comely manner'.³² The divorce of written and spoken English makes the creation of a new liturgical style immensely difficult, and the result is often a 'wobbling' between one style and the other:

If the vigorous cross-influence of written and spoken English is restored, then a living liturgical style may well once more emerge, as it did four hundred years ago.³³

Though she ends by pointing out difficulty rather than opportunity, Brook's discussion gives some pointers to the style of language which can be used in 'modern' liturgy (though not to its function or the way it 'carries meaning', in Naylor's phrase). She ended any thought of producing services in 'Prayer Book language', but commended the use of the rhetorical style of the Book of Common Prayer, and isolated principles which make for good liturgy, of which imitation was not one, nor the inclusion of old forms for their own sake. She drew attention to the sound and style of language, and obviously greatly influenced the Commission while she was a member.

Comment

Though it is beyond the purpose of this study to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of Brook's treatment of the Book of Common Prayer, some comments by David Frost in his essay 'Liturgical Language from Cranmer to Series Three' in The Eucharist Today are of interest. Frost doubts whether there has ever been a time when written and spoken English were not 'divorced', and that it is indeed possible in the twentieth century to write good liturgical language. 'It is only because we are dazed before the present bulk of print that we cannot isolate our good performers from the ruck'.³⁴ He cannot agree with Brook in her admiration of the CSI rite, calling it a 'magnificent and exotic piece of literary ventriloquism',³⁵ and is concerned at its lack of some of the rhetorical devices which give quality to the Book of Common Prayer. Indeed, Frost notes Brook's

'silence' on the rhetoric of the Book of Common Prayer.³⁶ His points are worthy of note because though Brook gave a sustained treatment of questions surrounding new liturgical language in this volume, it was to be David Frost who influenced the Commission most in its creation of new liturgy, and his grounding in rhetoric was to be a key feature of the Commission's new writing.

The Liturgical Conference 1966

It had become generally apparent that the best way to revise the Prayer Book was to keep it as it was, and place 'alternative services' alongside it. At the Liturgical Conference of 1966, the Commission produced two sets of Alternative Services, Series One and Series Two. Much of the work for these was concerned with structure rather than questions of language *per se*, but the Conference did express 'a general desire for the use of more modern language', something which Jasper (now the Commission's chairman) 'realized the Commission must tackle far more seriously than it had done hitherto'.³⁷

Stella Brook made one of the key speeches at the conference, and developed her ideas further. She said that the question about liturgical language was not whether it was traditional or contemporary, but whether it was good or bad. It was not possible to produce a liturgy solely in the idiom of 1966, because 'current idiom is fleeting, the liturgy is not'.³⁸ The difference between 1966 and the world of the sixteenth century was that people had lost the art of listening. Liturgical language was spoken language. 'It involves a heightening of customary speech forms, not a levelling down'.³⁹ Though she does not develop the point further, merely using it as an example of the pressure on the language of liturgy, Brook here adds another point into the overall discussion: the way people respond to the spoken word has changed, and liturgy is not there simply to be read silently. It is spoken too, and should therefore relate to the way people speak.

Brook asks for 'the evocative power of words' to be the criterion for new liturgy, not 'easy intelligibility'. Here she might be taken to assert that understanding is not the main priority of the language of worship. 'The encounter with liturgical language should be an enrichment of experience, not a repetition of the ordinariness of everyday life.'⁴⁰ She makes the point that liturgical language should make use of current idiom, but not be dependent on it. Again, her starting point and theoretical framework are largely literary, but her points about the spoken word are groundbreaking, though not expressed in the idiom of linguistic theory.

Series Two

Most of the debate over Series Two had little to do with principles of language, and much to do with what particular phrases meant. In the 'Interim report on Holy Communion' in Alternative Services, Second Series, as presented to the Liturgical Conference 1966, the Commission said this:

We have..., where matters of Eucharistic doctrine are involved, tried to produce forms of words which are capable of various interpretations.⁴¹

The example given is the phrase asking that bread and wine 'may be unto us' the body and blood of Christ. The Commission says: 'Only by using such language as does not require any one interpretation can we produce a liturgy which all will be able to use, and which each will be able to interpret according to his own convictions.'⁴²

This is quite a striking statement, but stands with no surrounding explanation, and is not commented upon by Jasper. It introduces ambiguity of interpretation as a positive aspect of the language of liturgy, but only in this context insofar as it allows a Church which thought it agreed on eucharistic doctrine and then discovered that it did not, to use the same words but mean different things by them. This is a long way from making the Prayer Book 'intelligible', and begs as

many questions as it raises. The desire is to have a liturgy which all can use, intentionally capable of various interpretations. There is no clarification as to whether this ambiguity is inherent within the language itself, or whether this is a deliberate ploy by the Commission to control the language in such a way as to please all of the people all of the time.

The debate on Series Two would appear to indicate the latter. As Christopher Cocksworth shows in his study of evangelical thought at the time⁴³, arguments raged over the interpretation on what 'we offer' meant, and far from allowing different sides to use the same words but mean different things by them, the question of what the words actually meant was the focus of the debate. Many of the protagonists thus displayed a desire for the language used to be capable of one interpretation only. When the compromise formula 'we make this memorial' was agreed, the comment of one leading evangelical was: 'Though not entirely unambiguous, it may be the best on which to agree for the present.'⁴⁴ Jasper does not report any other debate on the language or principles used, and it would seem that the basic understanding of the way language functioned in Series Two was that a word meant something which everyone would understand, unless the word or phrase was deliberately ambiguous, in which case people could bring their own previously held beliefs to interpret the phrase.

Jasper's comment on the 'linguistic approach' of Series Two (by which I take him to mean the principles used to deploy particular words) is that Series Two is 'more modern than...1662. It is best described as "RSV language", with God still addressed as "thou", but people as "you"'.⁴⁵ There is no indication as to how these principles came into use. Indeed, Jasper notes that during the gestation period of the first two Alternative Services, whenever a language specialist was asked to address the Commission (as Helen Gardner did in 1961 on 'An English style for modern liturgy'), or whenever principles of language were discussed in the early 1960's, the result was that 'no conclusions were reached.'⁴⁶

Modern Liturgical Texts

Only in 1966 did the Commission have what Jasper describes as 'its first really constructive discussion on language'.⁴⁷ This covered sentence structure, word forms and meanings, rhythms and poetry, and led the Commission to produce 'rites in modern language'.⁴⁸ Given the desire for there to be a debate on the subject at the 1968 Lambeth Conference, the Commission produced another booklet, Modern Liturgical Texts, in time for that Conference. In this booklet six principles for the use of language in liturgy were spelled out (derived, as Jasper notes, from work done by the Roman Catholic ICEL document English for the Mass).

Jasper summarises them thus:

1. Translation of sense is prior to translation of words.
2. Modern language requires the removal of all archaic words and, in most cases, of esoteric words.
3. 'Thou' and its cognates have been eliminated.
4. Subject to the requirements of theological accuracy, Anglo-Saxon words have been preferred to Latin ones.
5. Relative and other dependent clauses have been avoided in favour of co-ordinate main clauses.
6. Self-consistency between the texts has been kept in view.⁴⁹

Comment

As Jasper notes, these principles are all to do with clarity and intelligibility. He says that they are applicable both to the translation and creation of texts, though in Modern Liturgical Texts they are only applied to the translation of the Gloria, the Creeds and the Te Deum. As such they paved the way for clear thought on the production of texts in 'modern language', but the space they allow for imagery

is small, and the philosophical understanding of the way language functions is impoverished. Clarity and simplicity are all.

David Frost

The arrival on the Liturgical Commission of David Frost meant that these principles were immediately challenged, and the functional approach to language gave way to something more coherent in literary and philosophical terms. Frost accused the Commission of seeking to produce a 'Form of Words', not a liturgy. A Form of Words could communicate clearly and to a large number, but this did not make it a liturgy. Frost argued that 'liturgy should have some of the qualities of poetry, yielding further meanings at each repetition', and that 'too many of the earlier texts' were in the 'Form of Words' category.⁵⁰ The Commission accepted these criticisms, and Jasper notes that a new set of principles was agreed, both in the minutes of the Commission, and in a memorandum. The principles were these:

1. Each item or prayer should be judged on its own merits.
2. There should be no general rule forbidding relative clauses.
3. Good syntax and rhythm should be preserved
4. Cross-fertilisation of language between daily experience and the needs of worship was necessary. While some urban and other new images were needed, the poetic and evocative were also desirable. Thus soldier and servant images were still strong, but pastoral and royal images were decreasingly viable.
5. Some technical theological words must be retained.
6. People recognised many more words than they themselves used.
7. Ancient and well-loved prayers should be retained with the minimum of change. If major change in thought or structure were required, it would be preferable to write a new prayer.⁵¹

Comment

These principles can be divided into two main areas of thought. One is that previous 'functional' attitudes to language are now toned down, retaining a place for the ancient and well loved. The second is that modern language is now seen as a potential strength, rather than a necessary evil. In this, the principles mark a deepening in the Commission's attitude to the function of language in worship. As noted above, previous thinking had been wary of the use of 'modern' language, and in 1958 the Commission had said that 'the use of up-to-date language cannot by itself create meaningful symbols to those whose minds are dominated by the categories of the machine age.'⁵² The implication would appear to be that such symbols as might be accessible to those dominated by the categories prevalent in the late twentieth century are not suitable for worship.

However, the experience of stripping away archaisms from existing prayers had convinced the Commission that the paucity of what was left required drastic action, and that so called modern symbols may be necessary after all. Hence the comment in 4. above that two worlds (and two world views?) should 'cross-fertilise'. Some of the imagery central to the Book of Common Prayer was now poetic rather than functional, but could still function in worship if that was recognised (and this joined with the common sense recognition that well loved ancient prayers, though not necessarily expressing the reality of life in the twentieth century, could still work in worship). What was new was that the Commission saw that new prayers could contain new imagery and new symbols, and still express the worship of the Church of England.

The Composition of Series Three

David Frost was to argue for these two general principles in his work The Language of Series Three, published in 1973. The polemical section, 'A Dying Church or a Living Word' was a reprint of an essay published in Theology two years before, and was, as Frost himself notes, wider in its scope than the Series

Three service which was finally approved by Synod. In it, Frost describes the result of the 'stripping away' or translating of seventeenth century material:

We found ourselves left with bare bones, stripped of imagery, lightened of ideas, with the beauty and emotive power of admittedly old-fashioned rhetorical structures and effects quite lost - and with nothing to take their place.⁵³

His solution was to say: 'accept that bits of the service will sound archaic.....but the modern can only be beautiful if it achieves its effect in distinctively modern ways.'

Such principles were those put into effect in the writing of Series Three. The Commission quickly decided to leave Series Two as it was, and concentrate the processes of revision onto the new Rite, which remained similar in structure but gained much new material. This included 'seasonal sentences both introductory and post-communion, extended intercessions and penitential material, more proper prefaces, provision for further consecration, seasonal blessings, and the new eucharistic lectionary.'⁵⁴ There were elements which were almost unchanged, such as the Collect for Purity, but Jasper comments that where Series Two had encouraged people to break with the structure of 1662, but retained some of the language; Series Three should encourage them to break with the language as well.⁵⁵

The Recipients of Modern Liturgy

Jasper reveals a striking part of the policy in his discussion of how the Commission thought it might get the proposals through Synod. When misgivings about the early drafts were voiced by Frost and others, consideration was given as to who the texts were aimed at. This is the first acknowledgment made by the Commission that liturgical language and liturgical texts function in different contexts. The answer to the question is revealing:

As for the consumer level, it seemed to me that for severely practical purposes we should be aiming to cater for the members of the General Synod, since in the first instance they were the people who would decide.....what was acceptable; and on the whole they were a middle-aged, middle-class, fairly well-educated group.⁵⁶

In the light of today's discussions about context, this is an amazingly simplistic (though politically astute) way of going about things. Jasper is right to say that 'it was a rough and ready principle', but is perhaps overstating his case to say that 'it was as good as any other.'⁵⁷ Whether his view was held by the Commission as a whole is not made clear, but at least the question was raised.

Series Three

The debate on the language of the Eucharistic Prayer continued along the same lines as Series Two, being concerned with what people would understand the words meant. A form of words which pleased the different sides involved was agreed, and, after some fine tuning, was agreed by the Synod. This process had benefitted from two major theological and doctrinal statements: the World Council of Churches' The Eucharist in Ecumenical Thought, published in 1968, and the agreed Windsor Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in 1971.

These opened up the way for the use of the words 'memorial' and 'celebrate', and encouraged the Commission (now working alongside the Doctrine Commission) to include the word 'sacrifice' alongside the phrase 'once for all upon the Cross'. The Archbishop commended the proposed rite as being something which Evangelicals would not object to, and which Catholics could accept, even though it did not state Catholic doctrine explicitly.⁵⁸ Again the hope was that a form of words would allow people to incorporate their previously held beliefs.⁵⁹

The Liturgical Psalter

Other work on Series Three had to take greater note of liturgical precedents with regard to their language. The new Liturgical Psalter was self evidently an existing text made new, but the principles of Series Three required that the translation was of the original text, and not a revision of Coverdale. Frost wrote that his aim in the project was to stick 'close to the Hebrew idiom', but that whilst using modern language 'we accept that the result should sound a little foreign, archaic, compared to the rest of the service'.⁶⁰ Whilst this conforms to the desire to have what Jasper calls 'a judicious blend of old and new'⁶¹, it is neither obvious use of the unchanged old, nor the achievement of modern beauty by the use of modern ways, as Frost himself urged in the same essay.

Comment

The Psalms are obviously a special case, not simply because of the constraints put upon them in the need to be sung (because this applies to 'modern' prayers too). The translation of sacred texts is different from the creation of new prayers, and yet I believe that here lies the genesis of new liturgical writing: it eschews obsolete words and syntax, yet is self-consciously different to the language forms it uses. Frost's point that the Psalms should sound different to the rest of the service only highlights the point that the Service as a whole sounds different from many of the contemporary language forms of which it makes use. In the writing of Series three a self consciously modern liturgical language begins to be developed.

Collects

The other area to which Jasper draws attention in the writing of Series Three is the composition of new collects. For the simple reason that there was to be a new Calendar and Lectionary, collects had to be found from somewhere, and Jasper details the questions of language which arose. The question which prefaced all

these however was: should collects remain, given issues of position, purpose, and grammar? The collects had a 'court approach', ultimately derived from their Latin origin, which was revealed in their use of the relative clause. If this were challenged, should prayers be written in the same format and fulfil the same function? These questions were answered in the affirmative, and so work had to begin on the thorny problem of the relative clause.

The linguistic issues were partly covered by use of the collects published as Modern Collects by the church in South Africa in 1972. Jasper notes the work on these of Leonard Lanham, Professor of Linguistics and Phonetics at the University of Witwatersrand. His opinion was that the relative clause could be introduced by 'who' with a third person verb, retaining the second person in the rest of the prayer. 'He argued that this was a paraphrase for "You, Almighty God, who has taught us...", and that "usage, rather than traditional grammar, has influenced our choice in this case."⁶² This detailed piece of linguistics is of interest. Writers of prayers for use in liturgy were consulting experts in linguistics, and they in turn were looking at questions of usage rather than traditional grammar.

The solution the Commission finally came up with was to treat the relative clause in one of four ways:

1. The use of a different kind of relative clause - 'Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted' (Lent I).
2. The use of the past definite tense - 'Almighty God, who anointed Jesus at his Baptism' (Epiphany I).
3. The substitution of a statement - 'Almighty God, you have knit together your elect' (All Saints).
4. The substitution of a noun in apposition - 'Lord of all power and might, the author and giver' (Pentecost 17).⁶³

Jasper comments that the traditional form of the collect was preserved, that seventy of the Prayer Book collects were used in whole or in part, and that a

number of ancient collects which did not appear in 1662 were included. Jasper wonders whether the collects 'might well....have been one of the really significant pieces of revision'.⁶⁴

The collects, like the Psalter, are a very specialised aspect of the liturgy, and it can be argued that they have always been a particularly 'sacred' form of speech, artificial even in Cranmer's day, or in the day of their latin composers. They have a particular form, spelled out in the Commission's The Alternative Service Book 1980, A Commentary by the Liturgical Commission:

- (i) [The collect] is addressed to God the Father.
- (ii) The address is followed by a clause describing the particular quality of the Godhead to which we appeal.
- (iii) Then comes the petition which we wish to make.
- (iv) The consequence which hopefully will result if the petition is granted is then expressed.
- (v) The prayer ends with an affirmation that it is offered through the mediation of Jesus Christ.⁶⁵

Comment

Once it is agreed that the collect in itself should remain, and retain that form, then the revision process has narrow lines down which to travel. Again, though, language questions which are very specialised do reveal something of the general question of modern liturgical language. The relative clause of the traditional collect was expressed grammatically by archaic syntax: 'hast' or 'wilt'. A new form of the relative clause was required, so that contemporary language could be moulded into an ancient literary form. Thus language and grammar were contemporary, the form was ancient, and the liturgical language which resulted was recognisable from both ends of the timescale, but representative of neither of them. In this sense they are rather self-conscious, and seek to answer the question: 'how can we express the thought required by a relative clause without

being archaic?'. With Jasper it can be agreed that they stand as a classic example of liturgical revision. Whether they will stand as a model for new writing is debatable.

Official Commentaries on the Language of Series Three

There were two publications which addressed the issues of language in Series Three: The official A Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3, in the name of the Commission, and The Language of Series 3, by David Frost. Frost was the author of the language section of the Commentary, and his booklet expands (and in part predates) that brief chapter. In the Commentary there is reference in the chapter which precedes Frost's to the controversies over the choice of words for the eucharistic oblation, with the stop-gap compromises, and the desire for new texts which would perform the task.⁶⁶ In a subsequent section on 'Eucharistic Theology' the Commission states that the 'theological purpose' of Series 2 was to:

provide a rite which would permit differing emphases of understanding without excluding any legitimate standpoint. The aim was devotional and liturgical, not didactic and confessional. A liturgy is not necessarily the place for precise theological statement.⁶⁷

However, after this expression of the 'practical ambiguity' position, the Commission then seeks to make a different point. The language and phrases may be usefully ambiguous, but the structure of Series 2 had a doctrinal purpose:

The reshaping of the structure of Series 2 was not just liturgical or psychological; it was also doctrinal.⁶⁸

Comment

There are two concepts here elaborated by the Commission which at first sight seem almost to be contradictory. Precise theological statement should not be sought in the language of the liturgy, but the structure is intentionally doctrinal

(and presumably didactic). There is no acknowledgement of the possibility that the text once placed into the context of a worshipping community might function in exactly the opposite way: that a confessional standpoint might indeed be read as the eucharistic theology of the text. There is an inability to see that simply because one part of the rite is not intended to be didactic, but the structure is, people are capable of doing exactly what they are not supposed to do, and thus actually receive teaching and doctrine from devotional writing. The paradox raised in these two paragraphs is one which looms large over later liturgical writing: how can doctrine be conveyed when language and meaning are such shifting things?

These paragraphs express the problem in somewhat simplistic terms: though the Intentional Fallacy (that the intention of the author has no place in criticism of the text) had been a commonplace in literary studies for some years by this stage, it would seem that it had not reached the study of liturgy. There has to be some form of intention on the part of the writers of the liturgy, because there are doctrinal norms to be adhered to (here seen in the structure), but words also work independently of intention, and will be ambiguous in their meaning, therefore it is impossible to load them with the burden of conveying precise doctrine. There is indeed a dilemma, only hinted at here. The Intentional Fallacy aimed to remove the intention of the author from any subsequent discussion of a text, and recent language study had confirmed the difficulty of defining any kind of meaning once words are allowed to function, but it was also clear that it was possible to understand something from a text, and that this understanding might be shaped by its author. All the Commentary does is to express both parts of the debate, without aiming to reconcile them in any way.⁶⁹

David Frost on Series Three

David Frost's work elaborates some more of the principles used in the composition of new prayers. Series 3, he says 'is now offered as a rite for those who desire to worship in a language closer to their own.'⁷⁰ He explains the problem of the change of use of the word 'thou': from intimate mode of address

in Cranmer's time to a sacral usage in the present. He allows for the possibility of words which only function in a sacral context, but points out the implications of this for 'thou': that it brings with it syntactical and grammatical forms which themselves are archaic (as in the collects). The case for 'wilt', 'art' and 'hadst' could not be made. Interestingly, in relation to the Collect discussion above, Frost writes this (during the period when the new collects were being written) about the possibility of keeping 'thou':

To avoid disturbing clashes between modern and archaic language, the whole syntax, rhetoric, vocabulary and tone of modern compositions would be forced back into older patterns. The result could only be a 'church diction' not fully in contact with the living language of either the sixteenth or the twentieth century.⁷¹

The collects just avoid this because they are forced more into a poetic form than a syntactical one, but it is a close run thing. There is a strong argument for saying that the collect is a piece of 'church diction' par excellence.

Frost writes of the difficulty of translating old material into twentieth century English, and says that where there was pressure for much loved material to remain, it was incorporated with 'only minimal updatings (on the analogy of the R.S.V.)'.⁷² Using an architectural analogy he says that buildings of different periods can blend together 'provided each is in its own way excellent'⁷³, and so allows there to be old material in a new service, 'provided the sense remains clear and the material is left harmonious with itself.'⁷⁴

A brief section on the type of modern English used looks at the weaknesses of conversational English, and decides that 'the vocabulary of worship should not be the language of daily chat.'⁷⁵ In The Language of Series 3 he writes that 'formal discourse', even that of a modern television play, is more likely to be the model for liturgical language.⁷⁶ Other areas covered include the retention of technical terms, 'since any specialized human activity has them', and the desire to work as a modern poet would work. The language used in liturgy needs to be robust, and

be capable of spawning different meanings at each reading. The language must have 'rhythm, imagery, and verbal punch.....in other words it needs something of the qualities of poetry.'⁷⁷

The Problem of Meaning

The 'richness of association and beauty of sound', and the use of metaphor and symbol the Commission sought for in new liturgy was to be found mainly in Scripture. 'Through the centuries liturgical prayer has commonly been a tissue of scriptural allusion',⁷⁸ and in a telling phrase:

the rationale of our new material and its full meaning can be seen from the scriptural texts from which it is derived.⁷⁹

This is the first occurrence I can find in official texts of the word 'meaning'. Obviously the Commission had been working with assumed concepts of meaning: the comment above about the doctrinal nature of the structure of Series 2 carries with it the assumption that the structure means something, and that meaning can be transmitted and understood by those who use it.

In The Language of Series 3 Frost certainly justifies the new texts against criticism by referring in some detail to their Scriptural allusions, but spends the early part of the booklet justifying the necessity of poetic technique in liturgy, precisely because it hints at a range of meanings, and does not have one and one only. He begins by pointing out the poetic depth and range of meaning of established prayers. Speaking of the prayer 'Lighten our darkness' he says: 'The language here is fruitfully ambiguous.'⁸⁰ Frost encourages the 'liturgist-poet' to use poetry:

for most religious ideas are such that they can only be hinted at, talked about, emotionally carried home to the heart, through image and metaphor.⁸¹

‘Cranmer’s men...were more conscious than we of the precise meaning of words, but they were also conscious of the power of words to mean two or three things at the same time.’⁸² Frost attacks the literalism required by the scientific age. Science avoids verbal ambiguity, but makes us insensitive to layers of meaning. Frost even defends poetic language in liturgy from the charge of being misinterpreted: ‘Unfortunately, the use of images always involves such misunderstandings.’⁸³ All this would seem to indicate a desire on the part of the Commission to move from ‘controlling ambiguity’, where they found a form of words which would express all that differing sides wanted to say, to allowing metaphor and imagery to have its own life, and therefore be capable of misunderstanding.

However, the other side of the coin is Frost’s comment that the meaning of the texts is found in their sources, and the theory of language which would appear to be in use is one which will allow language to function and have its own life, but on quite a short lead. Frost’s defence of some of the new texts (admittedly in a booklet which still has, as he puts it, ‘the whiff of battle’⁸⁴), rests quite heavily on what they actually mean, and as such there is still the thought that words are there to be controlled. In defending the alternative Prayer of Humble Access, (which was rejected by the Synod in 1971 during its ‘fit of winter madness’⁸⁵), Frost talks of the fact that ‘its purpose had not been understood’⁸⁶. However, his justification of the ‘tissue of scriptural allusions’ is that ‘the prayer becomes increasingly rich in interconnections, fresh meanings, and material for meditation, whilst remaining basically simple.’⁸⁷ His theory is that this prayer is a poem which must withstand repeated use, and that there should be depth of meaning with surface simplicity. His technique is to point to the texts of scripture the prayer alludes to, and say that here the purpose of the prayer is to be found.

Fruitful Ambiguity

Later in his booklet, Frost elaborates on the Commission’s aim to have language that was deliberately ambiguous. Their desire to control the meaning and function

of words is clearly stated here: he is pleased that 'remembrance' was not replaced with 'memorial', because in 'ordinary English' memorial has only one context, 'that of commemorative tablets for one who is dead as a doornail.'⁸⁸ He applauds the use of the word 'celebrate', which he says was 'intentionally multi-valent, intentionally unitive, and was aimed at giving both Anglo Catholics and Evangelicals something to which they could whole-heartedly assent.'⁸⁹ This acts as the necessary elaboration of the Commission's statement of 1966, in the introduction to the draft order of Communion in Series Two, that the language of liturgy should not require any one interpretation.

Comment

In The Language of Series 3 passage, Frost uses a truism about poetry: that it can sustain a number of meanings as it is read by different people, and he maintains that new liturgical language should have the same qualities. This would fit with the Commission's desire to provide language which is devotional rather than didactic. However, in the 'official' Commentary Frost says that the new material has a 'rationale', and that its meaning can be understood by researching the Scriptural allusions in the text. Again this raises many questions and begs them all. What exactly is the 'meaning' of a liturgical text? Given his comments in The Language of Series 3, would he want to say that the 'meaning' of a poem is accessible by looking at its sources? And how can an extremely diverse group of scriptural texts provide a rationale and meaning for another text, given huge differences of exegesis and hermeneutic technique?

Frost commends the Commission's aim not to allow extremists 'to ram their interpretation down people's throats', and justifies the use of the word 'celebrate' not only because of 'its long association with the eucharistic act, but because it is readily comprehensible in everyday terms.'⁹⁰ In the end though, Frost's arguments about 'fruitful ambiguity' are of the same order as the arguments he seeks to refute. The Commission may not be pushing only one interpretation of the eucharistic act by the language it uses, but by saying that it intends language to be

multi-valent it seeks to impose the same kind of control on language as the extremists it opposes. This language is designed to express a range of meanings which are already on the table, and to allow permitted resonances from the everyday (that of celebrating a birthday) whilst omitting others (the argument about memorial). The language of poetry is here to serve a purpose which the Commission has clearly in its mind, and though there are some pleasant spin-offs in the ambiguities which result, the desire for their control remains paramount.

The Eucharist Today

In 1974 members of the Commission and others published a volume of essays on Series 3 called The Eucharist Today. Its main interest here is for its essay on 'Liturgical Language from Cranmer to Series 3' by David Frost, which he sees as being read in conjunction with The Language of Series 3, and makes some additional points.⁹¹ However, in his introduction as editor, Jasper makes a point which illuminates some principles behind Series 3, and indicates again the importance given to matters of language. Naturally, some of the opposition to a modern rite is the loss of well-loved linguistic forms, and Jasper refers to David Crystal, a linguistics professor, to establish that:

language is a constantly changing and evolving medium, which does not have an historical zenith and nadir. We should try to use language as it is, and not perform a prescriptive function, forcing the sense of words back to their seventeenth-century meaning.⁹²

Language has been tackled in a way appropriate to the times, and though one might argue that it is more than difficult to ascertain what the seventeenth-century meaning of words actually was, the principle remains that language is a servant of the age. Jasper goes on to say that 'in another ten or twenty years the situation may well have changed' (and presumably the language of liturgy with it): finding principles to serve the times is therefore crucial.

This is what Frost's essay seeks to elaborate. He demolishes the desire to have an artistic creation for liturgical language, calling it a 'humanly created veil' which would once again hide the 'holy of holies'.⁹³ He makes a strong case for 'modern English', and looks at some of the arguments against it, in order to show how Series 3 follows in Cranmer's footsteps. As an example, he looks at the rhetoric and cursus of the BCP, and shows that if anything Series 3 displays more of these features, and perhaps (though not always) to greater effect. Given that in rhetorical terms there is little difference between the two texts, Frost shows that the undoubted difference between them is one of style and syntax. Series 3 is simpler in its sentence construction, depending less on latinate subsidiary clauses. Frost comments that 'modern English has discovered again the value of simplicity, the telling effect of a pause'⁹⁴

For this reason Frost is critical of attempts (lauded by Stella Brook) to write in 'traditional' liturgical language, and of the mangling that took place in Series 2. He notes that in Series 3:

the principle has been accepted (though not always applied) that where the Church still wishes to use ancient prayers, these should be kept as nearly as possible in their original rhetorical form and vocabulary.⁹⁵

As regards modern style, he makes general points about the need for imagery, for an acceptance of anthropomorphic ideas of God, for scriptural allusions, and for use of rhythm, alliteration, assonance and other aids to good communication. Modern liturgy will recognise the difference between formal utterance and conversation, and not worry unduly about what constitutes an archaism.⁹⁶

In returning to the need for modern liturgy to be poetic, Frost makes the comment that it needs to be 'clear and many layered, so that priest and congregation may return to it and find further meaning after many repetitions.'⁹⁷ In talking of fruitful ambiguity he later makes further reference to 'complexity beneath simplicity', and cites the controversial phrase 'Do not lead us to the time of trial' in the then current version of the Lord's Prayer as a good example of this.⁹⁸ In

the context the point makes sense, and only slightly elaborates the plea for 'multi-valent' language made above. However, in allowing for 'many layers' of meaning, the possibility occurs that any control of meaning might be lost.

As an example, Frost looks at the word 'trial' in the ICEL form of the Lord's Prayer, and elaborates its resonances (such as illness, disaster, doubt, persecution, or test of faith), but does not include an actual trial before a judge, which is a possible meaning of the phrase, but presumably out of the remit of the concept in this context, given the inevitability of judgment for all. Conversely, allowing for 'layers' of meaning could open the possibility that there may be a 'real' meaning at the bottom of all the layers.

A final section of the essay opens a different area of thinking that will be pursued hesitantly later in the Commission's life. Frost turns to 'Liturgy as Drama', moving away from the text to the interaction of text, president, and worshippers. In highlighting the importance of seeing, hearing, and participating in the liturgy, he goes beyond the primacy of understanding which has been such a bedrock of the study of the language of liturgy. In this essay Frost's points are actually about worshippers having something useful to contribute to the sense of the liturgy, in that congregational responses add to the drama and move things on; they are participants rather than spectators. This tends to reinforce the primacy of understanding. However, the interaction of text and participants will become a key area in the study of liturgical language, and this introduction to a small aspect of it presages much in years to come.

The Alternative Service Book 1980

The transition from Series Three to the Alternative Service Book entailed differing types of revision for the various texts involved. Morning and Evening Prayer were only changed typographically, and required sentences and other material common to both services to be merged into a single group. Jasper notes that the procedure involved meant that the Revision Committee and the House

of Bishops did not need to be consulted, and that Synod considered these changes only twice.⁹⁹ The process for Holy Communion was of a radically different order.

It was decided to revise the whole service. This entailed some careful market research, and the decision of the Commission to produce supplementary material, rather than change the existing text. In the end, after Synod had tabled over one thousand amendments to the texts as offered, and the Commission and Revision Committee had produced much supplementary material including four Eucharistic Prayers as an integral part of the rite, the new Service of Holy Communion was approved. Jasper says that, though on first impressions the rite was significantly different from Series Three, in fact very little material had been discarded¹⁰⁰, and for this at least the principles of language use remain the same.

The only major change to the text of Series Three was in the original eucharistic oblation, and even here Jasper notes that all the vocabulary remained: all that was different was its order.¹⁰¹ The principles involved were also as before: find the form of words which allows all sides to express their existing belief with a good conscience. Jasper is less clear as to the production of the material new to ASB, except to say that the Third Eucharistic Prayer was the result of an 'arrangement' between a leading Anglo Catholic and leading Evangelical, which also allowed a separate prayer based on 1662 to be included.¹⁰²

Language and the ASB: James Kinsley

In language terms, the new elements of ASB were produced in the same way as Series Three, with contentious texts aimed at securing approval through compromise. The Commentary produced by the Commission when ASB was published had the most extended article on language ever produced by the Commission. It was written by James Kinsley, a clergyman and Professor of English Studies at the University of Nottingham¹⁰³, and in many ways stands as a watershed between two periods of liturgical revision. It expresses many questions about the use of language in liturgy, and though the Archbishops had

hoped that the ASB would mark the end of liturgical revision for the foreseeable future, Kinsley's article has some warning signs that the confident use of language in the ASB probably marked the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one.

Kinsley gives two levels of the relation of language to religion: philosophical and literary. By philosophical, he means 'the way in which language expresses (or fails to express) the reality of the unseen God', and by literary 'the way in which language serves the needs of the worshipping church'.¹⁰⁴ He confines himself to the latter, thus concentrating on the function language plays in worship. In modernising the translation of the Bible the aim is 'to understand better what God is saying to us', but the Prayer Books 'are instruments for our communication with God.' He therefore makes the distinction between the language problems of a literary text and those of a text whose aim is communication: 'we have to accommodate our audience.'¹⁰⁵

For the first time in the official writings at least, the problem is fully spelt out. Different people have different linguistic registers, and liturgy is the prayer of the community:

The community at prayer assumes that God understands all that they are all saying on all their own terms - a desperate but seldom noticed hazard this, for anyone who sets out to write prayers for others.¹⁰⁶

In his writing on Series Three David Frost had pleaded for liturgists to make use of the techniques of poetry, but his call was never expressed in these terms. Frost looked for 'multi-valent' language so that at best the same users of the language could find a range of meanings in it for themselves, and at worst so that people who understood different things could find those meanings in an intentionally ambiguous text. Kinsley here raises two important issues. One is that, as he puts it, 'we have no measure for the rightness of our communication with God', so that we cannot know whether the language we have used is appropriate. The other is that even with language we are sure of, the difference of linguistic registers and

of linguistic communication of people means that we cannot be sure whether meaningful communication has taken place even between the people involved.

Quoting T.S. Eliot, Kinsley talks of the 'inadequacy of language' when directed towards God. 'Words strain,/Crack and sometimes break under the burden.'¹⁰⁷ Given that not all are mystics, who need no more than silence, Kinsley then speaks of the necessity even of inadequate language: 'the common concern for others and for the salvation of the world demands communal utterance.'¹⁰⁸ There is a theme to be developed here. Liturgical language will always be inadequate for the task for which it is designed (the worship of the unseen God), and it may not be adequately understood by those by whom it is to be used (the worshipping congregation).

Kinsley rather sidesteps these direct issues, but does point to further difficulties in the language of liturgy. Firstly he notes that from the time of the establishment of Christendom the Latin Church took over the language of the monarchy, diplomacy, and the law. Though, as he notes, 'there is a kind of propriety in styling our public prayer...in a high rhetoric', because God is ruler of the world and lord of the universe, this is in stark contrast to 'that simple utterance associated with sincerity, intensity of feeling, concern and crisis.'¹⁰⁹ Secondly he draws attention to the tendency to preserve the language of liturgy from change or decay. 'This sense of an established religious language underlies the distinction in many languages between secular and sacred...'¹¹⁰ Wherever the language of worship has power and quality 'it will in time become a sacred language', thus destroying the idea of 'common prayer', and this will lead the church of the day to seek a replacement, unless 'an individual mysticism' is to spring up 'in the midst of public worship.'¹¹¹

Though these are obvious concerns for the language of liturgy, they are not perhaps at the centre of the thought of the essay. A realisation that the terms and structures used for the language of liturgy might only draw their life from one aspect of society is a useful one (and influenced the discussion of the 'court' style

of the collects, for example), but need only be remedied by looking for other modes of address (of which Scripture is full). Similarly, the inevitable tendency towards conservatism in attitudes to the language of liturgy and the need to make that language 'understood of the people' only points out the need for some kind of regular liturgical change (and rather gives the lie to the Archbishop's hope in 1980 that 'we stand at a point where the heroic age of constitutional and liturgical change is over.'¹¹²

In addressing these concerns, Kinsley therefore opts for a 'vigorous modern vernacular liturgy', which will do battle with the tendency of people of this age to be 'hearers and viewers rather than listeners'. Again, 'this is not one of the golden ages of the English language anywhere', and the flat drab style we hear all around us is a bad starting point from which to find a language for worship. However, Kinsley finds hope in ancient texts, which he defines as being 'simple, live speech ordered in pattern and rhythm which make the expression seem inevitable.'¹¹³ He believes that the ASB, used imaginatively, could be used in similar ways: that it is the language of live speech ordered to point to God, and that its phrasing and rhythm can be used to express common prayer in a new way.

It is, however, in a small section of the essay before his optimistic ending that Kinsley returns to the more intractable problem, hinted at in his Eliot quotation, of the inadequacies of language in general, not simply those of liturgical language (which, in the terms he expresses them, can be remedied). Here is what he says:

at a deep level - perhaps this is the main reason for our loss of assurance - philosophers and philologists have made the highly literate conscious, almost to obsession, of the ambiguities, inadequacies, and shifting references of language. The matter is not merely academic. This nervousness about meaning is widespread, sterilizing, negative rather than creative...¹¹⁴,

and he attributes the breakdown of the Anglican - Methodist scheme to a misunderstanding of the 'nature, limitations and potentialities of religious language, and not.....theological differences.'¹¹⁵

Comment

Much of the energy in writing about the language of liturgy in the production of Series Two, Series Three, and the ASB, was devoted to justifying the use of contemporary idiom, in the face of a hieratic and sacred language whose position was deeply entrenched. Much of Kinsley's essay does just that, and were it not for the passage quoted above, and his initial comments on the difficulty of finding a suitable 'register' for liturgical language, the essay would be an unremarkable development of Frost. As it is he raises three areas which are not developed, but signal the start of a new area of thought for those framing the 'language of the rite'.

First, writing language to be used in public means addressing the issue of by whom it will be used, their differing linguistic competence and the differing registers with which they are familiar. 'They won't all respond adequately to the same vocabulary, reference, and tone.'¹¹⁶ This is a long way from writing for the members of General Synod, and prepares the way for the request in Faith in the City for 'something radically different from the ASB' in areas of urban deprivation.¹¹⁷

Secondly, language addressed towards God becomes inadequate for the task. It is, as Kinsley puts it, the finite moving towards the infinite. In a way this develops Frost's point about the language of poetry: it is precisely where language breaks down that new meanings and insights are to be found, and in trying to speak of God language has to point beyond itself. But this is a profoundly dangerous thought to those who seek to make liturgy clear and unambiguous, or who seek ambiguity only to settle a theological argument by having both sides agree. Kinsley's point is that when it moves towards God, language breaks down, and can no longer be controlled.

Thirdly, Kinsley points to contemporary difficulties with the whole area of meaning. From Saussure onwards the problem of referentiality loomed large over

the theory of language: the drabness of contemporary English is put down here to lack of assurance about meaning. Much of the debate over the previous fifteen years had been precisely about what certain phrases meant: the world into which the ASB was born had already moved on, such that that particular debate over meaning was now a strange irrelevance.

Kinsley does not develop these points, but they remain as a record of the end of the era of liturgical revision which established that the liturgy could be expressed in contemporary ways. His unanswered questions though set the scene for more detailed discussions on the nature of language in the liturgy, and how indeed language can function in worship in the contemporary world.

Further Reflections on the ASB

Paul Bradshaw and Ronald Jasper allude to the need for a debate on the nature of the language of liturgy in their magisterial A Companion to the Alternative Service Book, published in 1986. Unfortunately they do this in one paragraph in the introduction, pleading that 'this...merits a separate study', and that 'a companion to the ASB is hardly the place to explore such a vast and complicated subject.'¹¹⁸ What they do say is that the ASB, despite all the protestations that it was a 'modern' liturgy, is actually quite conservative in its use of language.

The imagery employed has been traditional: collects and prayers still appear in the traditional form, with much of their traditional language and phraseology:.....the ASB still conforms to the laws of classical rhetoric.¹¹⁹

They make the point that this age 'lacks a public rhetoric to engage people in large numbers emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually', and they wonder whether there is a need to 'forge a new rhetoric within the tradition of Christian worship, yet open to the developments of the English language as a whole in the late twentieth century.'¹²⁰

Their question is a rhetorical one, and no official publication has as yet taken it up on behalf of the Church of England. However, six years after the publication of the ASB it points to the limitations of the new prayer book, and, as with Kinsley's essay, at least raises the questions. Language is now seen as a much more fragile thing, and the changes of culture and theory in the late twentieth century are now seen as a challenge to be faced, not a retrograde step to be lamented. From 1980 to the present the activity of the Liturgical Commission would appear to have been at least influenced by these questions. Services have multiplied, options have increased, and there is a much more open attitude to the language of worship. Developments in thinking have been acknowledged (the debate over gender specific language being an example), and in Patterns for Worship a text exists which encourages individual congregations to try a prayer, discard it if it doesn't meet a need, and write a new one (see below). Even without a policy, change in the use of language is an influence on the production of new liturgy.

Notes to Chapter One

1. R.C.D Jasper, The Development of the Anglican Liturgy 1662- 1980, p. vii
2. Ibid., p. 162
3. Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England, A Memorandum of the Church of England Liturgical Commission, 1957, p.18.
4. Jasper, op. cit., pp. 167 - 177
5. Ibid., p. 181.
6. Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England, op cit., p. 24.
7. Ibid., pp. 26-28.
8. Jasper, op. cit., p. 183
9. Preface to the Revised Standard Version, cited in Jasper, op. cit., p. 183.
10. Ibid., p. 184.
11. Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England, op. cit., p. 31.
12. Ibid., p. 31.
13. The Alternative Service Book 1980, A Commentary by the Liturgical Commission, 1980, p. 166.
14. Jasper, op. cit., p. 218.
15. Henry de Candole and Arthur Couratin, Reshaping the Liturgy, 1964.
16. Jasper, op. cit., p. 226.
17. All quotations from Reshaping the Liturgy, p. 6.
18. Jasper, op. cit., p. 286.
19. C.B. Naylor, Why Prayer Book Revision at All?, 1964, p. 38.
20. Ibid., p. 38.
21. Ibid., p. 38.
22. Ibid., p. 39. This is perhaps the defining statement for the developing theme of this study. The language of worship changes because of many factors in contemporary society, culture and thought, not simply pressures found within the worshipping community.

23. Ibid., p. 39.
24. Jasper, op. cit., p. 243.
25. S. Brook, The Language of the Book of Common Prayer, 1965, p. 192.
26. Ibid., p. 207.
27. Ibid., p. 207.
28. Ibid., p. 213.
29. Ibid., p. 214.
30. Ibid., p. 216.
31. Ibid., p. 218.
32. Ibid., p. 219.
33. Ibid., p. 219.
34. Jasper, R.C.D. (ed), The Eucharist Today, 1974, p. 150.
35. Ibid., p. 159.
36. In a footnote, number 19, p. 167.
37. Jasper, op. cit., p. 251.
38. The Liturgical Conference, 1966, Report of Proceedings, p. 11
39. Ibid., p. 12.
40. Ibid., p. 14.
41. Alternative Services: Second Series, 1966, p.146.
42. Ibid., p. 146.
43. Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England, 1993, esp pp. 113 - 124.
44. R. Beckwith and C. Buchanan, 'This Bread and This Cup: An Evangelical Rejoinder', Theology LXX (June 1967), quoted in Jasper, op. cit., p. 259. (Italics mine)
45. Jasper, op. cit., p. 260.
46. Ibid., p. 286

47. Ibid., p. 287.
48. Ibid., p. 287.
49. Ibid., p.292, quoting from Modern Liturgical Texts, the Liturgical Commission, 1968, p.4.
50. Ibid., p. 296.
51. Ibid, p. 296, quoting Liturgical Commission Minutes 62.8, and Liturgical Commission Memorandum 111.
52. Op. cit., p. 31.
53. D. Frost, The Language of Series Three, 1973, p. 8. Also in A Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3, 1971, p. 7
54. Jasper op. cit., p. 311.
55. Ibid., p. 311.
56. Ibid., p. 311.
57. Ibid., p. 311.
58. Ibid., p. 310.
59. Though not elaborated clearly at the time, this thinking has been developed in current discussions of eucharistic doctrine. See Christopher Cocksworth, 'Eucharistic Theology', in The Identity of Anglican Worship, (ed) Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks, 1991, and David Glover, 'Liturgy and Doctrine', in Liturgy in Dialogue, (ed) Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks, 1993.
60. Frost, op. cit., p. 12.
61. Jasper, op. cit., p. 311.
62. Ibid., p. 304, quoting LC Text 48.
63. Ibid., p. 305.
64. Ibid., p. 305.
65. The Alternative Service Book 1980, A Commentary by the Liturgical Commission, 1980, p. 49 (slightly adapted).
66. A Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3, p.4.
67. Ibid., p. 6.

68. Ibid., p. 6.
69. A.C. Thiselton wrestles with this in New Horizons in Hermeneutics, and comes up with the principle of 'directedness', such that the function of certain texts is only possible if they are understood to be 'directed'. See chapter 15, pp. 558 - 563.
70. A Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3 op. cit., p. 7
71. Ibid., p. 7.
72. Ibid., p. 7.
73. Ibid., p. 8.
74. Ibid., p. 7.
75. Ibid., p. 8. Also The Language of Series 3, p. 8
76. The Language.... p. 8.
77. Ibid., p.9.
78. A Commentary...., p. 8.
79. Ibid., p. 8. Italics mine.
80. The Language... p. 9.
81. Ibid., p. 9.
82. Ibid., p. 10.
83. Ibid., p. 11.
84. Ibid., p. 3.
85. Ibid., p. 18.
86. Ibid., p. 20.
87. Ibid., p. 20.
88. Ibid., p. 25.
89. Ibid., p. 25-6.
90. Ibid., p. 26.
91. R.C.D. Jasper, (ed), The Eucharist Today, op cit, p. 166, note 6.

92. Ibid., p. 4.
93. D. Frost, 'Liturgical Language from Cranmer to Series 3' in Jasper, The Eucharist...., op cit, p. 144.
94. Ibid., p. 158.
95. Ibid., p. 160.
96. Ibid., pp. 161-2.
97. Ibid., p. 162.
98. Ibid., p. 163.
99. Jasper, The Development....., p. 345.
100. Ibid., p. 352.
101. Ibid., p. 350.
102. Ibid., p. 352. Christopher Cocksworth has more information on this deal. Evangelical Eucharistic Thought...., p 131 ff.
103. Jasper, op.cit., p. 369, ftn 91.
104. 'The Language of Worship', in The Alternative Service Book 1980, A Commentary by The Liturgical Commission, 1980, p.162.
105. Ibid., p. 163.
106. Ibid., p. 163.
107. Ibid., p. 163.
108. Ibid., p. 164.
109. Ibid., p. 165.
110. Ibid., p. 165.
111. Ibid., p. 166.
112. Jasper, op cit, p. 360, quoting Archbishop Robert Runcie's speech in General Synod.
113. Kinsley, op. cit. p. 167.
114. Ibid., p. 166.
115. Ibid., p. 166.

116. Ibid., p. 163.
117. Jasper, op cit, p. 361
118. R.C.D. Jasper, and P. Bradshaw, A Companion to the Alternative Service Book, 1986, p. viii.
119. Ibid., p. viii.
120. Ibid., p. viii.

Chapter Two

Policies and Pronouncements on the Language of Liturgy: Beyond the ASB.

New Material After the ASB

Before 1980, and in the debate finally approving the ASB, the hope was expressed that once the book was widely available, there would be a period of liturgical stability. With the widespread use of the ASB Eucharist, that hope has in some ways been fulfilled, and the extension given for use until the year 2000 has further established the ASB's position. However, the period up to 1995 could hardly be described as unfruitful in the production of new liturgical material. The Commission has worked not only on new services (Ministry to the Sick appeared after the ASB, but was the work of that Commission and would have been in the ASB had there been time; Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage was new), but also on a range of 'Directory' material for particular seasons of the liturgical year. Currently these comprise Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and The Promise of His Glory, with an unofficial companion volume by members of the Commission called Enriching the Christian Year. Pressure on gender exclusive language resulted in the report Making Women Visible, where not only were changes suggested to existing texts, but also new texts were offered where the place of women was at least acknowledged, if not carefully highlighted.

The other major change was found in the report Patterns for Worship. Written largely in response to the plea in Faith in the City for the provision of material suitable for use in Urban Priority Areas, and also to the burgeoning and largely unregulated 'Family Service' movement, Patterns gives outlines of services, and large quantities of resource material for inclusion both in existing services, and in those framed by the local church community. In 1994 A Service of the Word and Affirmations of Faith received authorization, being a part of Patterns, but given approval before the revision of Patterns to be published in 1995. The development from the 'Directory' approach of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, via The Promise of His

Glory is significant. Where LHWE provides actual services whose material could be used in other service structures, and Promise gives services with an encouragement that 'there are many instances where worship will be more effective if the material is pondered carefully and adapted to local circumstances', Patterns provides only the bare outline of services as suggested structures, and encourages local forms to be produced. Patterns also has suggestions for the language of liturgy, whereas the Directory material largely follows the ASB in its wording and structures.

Directory Material

Lent, Holy Week and Easter: Services and Prayers (LHWE) was published in 1984, and made widely available in 1986. Its introduction describes how it was composed as a result of an instruction to the Liturgical Commission from the House of Bishops. Though it does not have the same linguistic innovation as the period of liturgical change which immediately preceded its publication, it does in its way mark a change in the creation of liturgy which is not unrelated to shifts not only in academic theories about language, but also wider shifts in cultural thinking. The only linguistic innovation was the use of gender inclusive terms for human beings in new and existing material (as explained later in Making Women Visible).

The change is revealed in the Introduction. The project began with an analysis of the 'needs of the Church'. Having decided that these were so varied as to be impossible to satisfy in one volume, the Commission also agreed that 'there must always be a place for initiative and experiment.'² In a revealing sentence the Commission says:

It is not our purpose to lay a monolithic and inflexible order on the Church of England. Indeed, there are many who question the wisdom of this undertaking. Let the parishes carry on with their freedom.³

This is something of a change in spirit from the desire to give the Church of England a book so that people could have something like the Book of Common Prayer, and engage in a period of liturgical stability. Where the ASB had given a range of options within a defined framework, (and indeed hidden its options rather carefully), the Commission here says that freedom and innovation on the ground are the stuff of liturgy, and in order to help in all the 'variety and uncertainty, it seems prudent to chart a viable course through the competing orders.' Later, they say 'we are providing a directory from which choices may be made.'⁴

Comment

There are grounds for saying that this is the defining statement of liturgical change in the 1980's and beyond. Partly it is practically prudent: the ASB is the authorised bedrock, and there need be no other 'core' material until its authorization runs out. Any material produced during this period is therefore optional. But it is also possible to see this as a trend away from a fixed prescribed centre towards a range of material within very broad safeguards. In language terms this reflects the movement away from perceived fixity of meaning to a much more context based model, and in broadly cultural terms responds to the movement away from central authority to the pluralism of the postmodern world.⁵

Paul James, writing on 'Liturgical Presidency' notes Kavanagh's suggestion that fixity of liturgical texts from the sixteenth century is in complex relationship with developments in printing: it was possible 'to put into the hands of the laity, relatively cheaply, a "controlled" text', and from this Kavanagh argues that the action of the rite becomes the 'inaction of didactic talk.'⁶ James makes the point that the 'directory' approach now favoured by the Church of England is one part of the revolution away from fixity, and back to the type of 'presidential creativity' painted by St. Justin. Interestingly, in view of the relationship of liturgy to popular and academic culture, and to industrial and scientific developments to which

Kavanagh refers, James cites the rise of the computer and the photocopier in this development: 'wordprocessing and photocopying [enable] the quick and cheap production of parish based texts, and therefore [free] the liturgy'.⁷

To be fair to the Commission, the Introduction to LHWE goes on to describe a classic liturgical process where the tradition is given its full importance. In saying that 'liturgy is essentially conservative because of the nature of the church as a historical body founded in Scripture'⁸, the Commission makes a fundamental point about the relationship of the present liturgical world to the past: to use terms from the study of language the diachronic in many ways has a controlling influence over synchronic practice and variety (where diachronic stands for study of origins and processes, and synchronic stands for description of the present situation with no reference to the history of how the present came to be).

Our task has been to distil from the experience of the past the forms appropriate to the present and to present them in the idioms of the present.⁹

However, this does not mean that something new has not happened. In giving a blessing to local practice (perhaps not before time), and encouraging diversity of rites with a suggested form, the Commission is taking part in a further cultural shift, and perhaps giving the lie to those who thought that the ASB would steady things for a while.

In passing, the Introduction to LHWE raises another point foundational to the study of the language of liturgy. In saying that these services had been 'tried out' with a congregation, the Commission makes this comment:

the service on the printed page is one thing. The service prayed is literally another world.¹⁰

This follows a passage where the Commission says that the text of the services has 'not always succeeded' in doing what they intended. 'It may be that the rest is a

matter of presentation', says the Introduction, noting that the reservations of some towards the provision of an agape were in some ways removed by participating in one. This points to the area of the performativity of liturgy, covered in the linguistic study of pragmatics, defined as 'the relationship between [linguistic] signs and their users'.¹¹

Though many of the official publications of the Commission acknowledge that texts will be used in different contexts, this area has not been explored in any detail, and yet is surely responsible for the diversity of usage even of the same text which prompted the provision of directory material in the first place. Prior knowledge of how the text will relate to its users in different contexts was something acknowledged by the 'market testing' of the alternative services in the period up to 1980: this 'try out' of certain texts before they are 'tried out' on the whole Church takes the process one stage further. Knowledge of the performativity of language has been available ever since Austin's work on How to Do Things with Words¹². A study of the performativity of a text in context would seem to be what this comment merits, and this will be explored in chapter four.

The Promise of His Glory

The 'Directory' approach was furthered by the publication of The Promise of His Glory in 1991. As a companion volume to LHWE the Commission did not seek to go over the principles they had already established, but, perhaps due to detailed liturgical questions, a progression can be observed. There is no direct discussion of language in Promise, but there is a greater encouragement to make local choices than was given in LHWE. Promise explains this as the natural consequence of the variety of rites and local customs around the season which in itself is a creation of the book. As the Preface explains:

Unlike the Easter cycle this 'winter season' does not have a single liturgical shape which emerged fairly uniformly in the early centuries, and which the mainstream churches have retained.¹³

Promise uses a variety of sources, rather than the 'ancient symbolic rites that originated in the Mediterranean'¹⁴, and because of this variety, and the different contexts towards which the book is aimed, there is less direction given as to how the services should be used (though there is much suggestion). In certain cases (such as the Crib and Christingle services) provision is given for services which have come up from contemporary and recent usage, rather than what the Preface calls 'fundamentalist exercises in liturgical archaeology'.

Comment.

The approach of Promise is that much more flexible than LHWE. Though the explanation is historical and liturgical in nature, the progression is obvious and relates to the theme of decentralisation outlined above. Indeed, a member of the Commission in an introduction to Promise makes a key point:

This more flexible approach is likely further to undermine a common Anglican distinction between liturgical texts (authorization required) and hymns and songs (anything goes).....the implications of this flexibility for unity and doctrine in the Church of England will need to be faced.¹⁵

The same writer makes a further comment about the nature of doctrine and the texts of worship in a discussion about the provision of services commemorating the departed. Though intended as a 'get out' for those who could not countenance prayer for the dead in any form, the point has wider reverberations in the context of the flexibility of words and structures envisioned by Patterns:

These services [for the departed] are not determinative for the doctrine of the Church of England. Judgments about whether they are useful will involve balancing the pastoral needs of the grieving with any danger that faith in Jesus; decisive victory over death is undermined by their use.¹⁶

Patterns has things to say about the locus of Doctrine in worship which will be explored below, but this comment reveals much. Acknowledgement is being given to local pastoral needs, and the place for wrestling with doctrinal issues (given the

broad 'soundness' of any service produced by the official liturgical body of the Church of England) is firmly taken to be the local congregation, and within that the conscience of the local minister.¹⁷ To allow people to use a text if they wish, whilst not saying that this is doctrinally normative, is a significant development from the compromise the ASB sought to achieve, and the provision of one book for all. There may be little development of language *per se* in Promise, but there is much development in underlying thinking.

Making Women Visible

The Standing Committee of the General Synod published a report in 1985 called The Worship of the Church, which, amongst other things, called for attention by the Liturgical Commission on the issue of inclusive language. It described this as 'a problem that will not go away', and said that there should be a 'sensitive recasting of offending passages [in the ASB].'¹⁸ The Commission's report, called Making Women Visible addressed the issue, and in its work revealed that some progress had taken place in the understanding of the function of language. Making Women Visible is a detailed work on a specific area of language use, but the very fact that this area was under scrutiny at all indicated that questions of language in the contemporary world were also being taken seriously within the church. Though related to what might be deemed a narrow field, the principles involved point to wider issues, and the method of the study, together with its recommendations means that, in language terms, Making Women Visible is a landmark report.

Making Women Visible is, in effect, a series of proposals for changing certain gender exclusive texts in the ASB and making them 'inclusive'. Along with the proposals, which form the bulk of the report, there are three chapters outlining the area under discussion, and some appendices giving the ecumenical background to the debate (including the ICEL Guidelines for inclusive language, originally published in 1980). The report concludes that:

the way forward lies in attempting a proper balance between male and female in new liturgical work rather than ad hoc adaptations of existing texts¹⁹,

and indeed the text of the previously published Lent Holy Week Easter was 'more sensitive to the issue of sexist language.'²⁰ This has been continued in the reports Patterns for Worship (1989), and The Promise of His Glory (1991). However, the Commission felt that the area was important enough to outline the debate in some detail, and this forms the first part of the report.

Much of the work in the first three chapters is therefore taken up with specific issues of gender and feminist critique of linguistic theory. In essence the Commission recognises that though the ground is still there to be argued over, the use of language which is gender specific is indeed a problem that will not go away, and as such it proposes to take note of the debate by offering some interim changes to existing texts, and by encouraging balance in new writing.

After noting the complexity of the debate, and that much of the pressure for inclusive language has come about in very recent times, the report says that 'the English language is in a continuous process of change.'²¹ Not only has that change been diachronic (i.e. down the years), but there is also synchronic diversity: usage is different in different parts of the country even at the same period of history. The Commission is keen only to change existing texts 'where this is felt to be appropriate'²², but 'at the same time we do not think that linguistic usage is uniform in England.'²³ The specific reference of this point is that a term heard to be exclusive in one part of the country will not be taken that way in another place. However, the point is surely more widely applicable, and in wrestling with this problem the Commission is on difficult ground. In the context of the report the Commission feels that the problem is magnified by changing existing texts, and certainly this draws attention to the words being used in a way which newly minted inclusive texts do not. However, even with new texts the point remains: usage is not consistent, and what is heard in one context may not be heard in another. This causes great problems for liturgy.

The second chapter reviews feminist critiques of language, and notes the homage to lex orandi lex credendi in the ASB: 'Christians are formed by the way they pray, and the way they choose to pray expresses what they are.'²⁴ However, the debate is such that there is little certainty that changing people's language actually changes the way they think. The issue centres around whether language is 'symptomatic' or 'causal'. The use of an exclusive term can either express an underlying belief, or it can be the mechanism by which that belief is both created and transmitted. The Commission favours the work of Deborah Cameron, who in Feminism and Linguistic Theory says that 'male control over meaning is an impossibility', because there is no one to one correspondence between word and meaning.²⁵

The Commission feels that this insight helps to calm the inclusive language debate. People might not mean what they are heard to mean:

There is no need to regard a word's meaning as fixed irrespective of the social context or the user's intention. Not every user may consciously intend a particular meaning.²⁶

It is hard to see what the Commission wants to do with this statement. On the one hand it seeks to take the wind out of more strident feminist criticism by saying that it is impossible for a gender to control language, or for language to enhance a gender, in the way that some theorists suggest. This would make the movement towards inclusive language (which it sees as unstoppable) a peaceful trend in language change, rather than a moral crusade of the kind which caused David Frost to resign from the Australian Liturgical Commission²⁷, and caused Graham Leonard, Iain MacKenzie and Peter Toon to write Let God be God.²⁸

On the other hand, it causes doubt to be raised about putting inclusive language into liturgy at all. If a word's meaning is not fixed, and the author's (or user's) intention is not the primary factor in a piece of communication, the presence of language designed to make women visible may indeed be counter-productive, because such a text may not be used in the way it is intended. There are also

wider issues raised. The Commission here agrees with a statement about language not having a meaning fixed irrespective of context. This accords with most generally held linguistic theory, but again raises problems for the production of liturgy. The Commission acknowledges that changing language will not by itself change attitudes and beliefs, but in a sense that is what new liturgy seeks to do. The question is therefore raised as to whether liturgy is 'symptomatic' or 'causal', and this may help to frame further liturgical debate. Does new liturgy seek to influence, or reflect? Are the debates on specific terms therefore arguments about what doctrinal change might result from new liturgy, or about what doctrines are already prevalent which new liturgy might seek to reflect?

Chapter three starts in similar vein. In a sentence which will again have serious repercussions for the writing of new liturgy the report summarises the findings of much linguistic theory:

The meaning of words is not rigidly fixed and depends not only on the user but also on the social context and the hearer.²⁹

In the context of the paragraph in which this sentence occurs, the fluidity of meaning is particularly related to diachronic language change. The work cited is C.S. Lewis's Studies in Words, where particular words are charted with the new meanings which they have taken on. This is used as the justification for looking at three groups of words to see how they might have changed their meanings in common usage: personal pronouns; terms like 'sons' and 'brothers' which can include both sexes; and terms like 'man' and 'men' which originally 'carried a generic sense but increasingly are heard as exclusively male.'³⁰

The study of personal pronouns is carried out with a diachronic base (after an initial synchronic description of other languages and their use of 'grammatical gender'). English, the report concludes, rarely uses grammatical gender, and its decline is noted from the sixteenth century onwards. The use of the plural pronoun is resisted, and the option he/she is offered where recasting cannot solve

the problem. The use of terms which are masculine but in scripture can include both sexes is more of a technical argument based on Greek and Hebrew usage. Again the report suggests adding to the word ('sons and daughters'), or using 'children'. In cases of difficulty it suggests using another piece of scripture.

The case of 'man' is examined both synchronically and diachronically. The etymology and word history of 'man' as a generic term is discussed, as are contemporary usages, and the crucial part played by context, given that other words can have the same form but carry different meanings dependent on their context. Though the report does not say so explicitly, it seems to acknowledge that because of change of usage, context cannot now guarantee meaning, and so the word must be changed so misunderstanding does not occur.

What the report does say is that it is not seeking either to respond to the pressure to remove masculine 'bias' from the liturgy, nor to the pressure to resist change at all costs because 'man' still remains a generic term if only people would agree to its grammatical sense. The Commission recognises only that 'language is fluid and words have often changed their meanings and associations.'³¹ In a key statement the report continues:

The Christian church cannot simply take a stand against such change and recognises the formative influence of the language used in worship. This means that it must try to be sensitive to changes in language, to make allowances for the feelings of those men and women who find certain usages unhelpful or offensive, and to be responsible in influencing the way Christians think.³²

Presumably the description of what 'the Christian church' does in the first sentence (apparently it 'recognises' the formative influence of language) should be a gentle encouragement: 'should recognise' would fit the sense of the paragraph. The history of liturgical change would suggest that not all recognise the 'formative influence' of language in the way the Commission urges them to here. Nevertheless, this is an important statement, which will bear further scrutiny.

The central points are that language changes, that certain usages are offensive to certain people (though not to all), and that the language of worship influences the way people think. Here the Commission comes up against almost conflicting concepts. Language forms people's thinking, yet meanings received from language vary not only according to the textual context but also the social context, and the context within which the text is used. As noted above, the meaning of words depends not only on the user, but also the social context and the hearer. The Commission allows for the possibility that language influences the way people think, but also acknowledges that language cannot be controlled by its framers and users. In other words the influence of language cannot be circumscribed: a concept used as the justification for changing gender exclusive language has become an argument against itself, for even changing the language, if this theory is to be believed, will not of itself guarantee that users and hearers will be influenced in the way intended.

This last paragraph may be taking the argument to its logical extreme, but all the statements come from within the Commission's report. In their way they reflect a wider debate in language study: surely in some way words must carry meaning, and author's intention must have a part to play, even if most contemporary theories rest on the basis that the meaning of 'meaning' is in the end so complex as to be ultimately undefinable. The report's stated intention is to make women more visible, and in the end it probably succeeds, though clarifying the basis of that judgement would take more space than is possible to assign to it here.

Comment.

Making Women Visible only indirectly deals with the creation of new liturgy. Its primary purpose is to redress the balance of certain existing texts, and then to establish policies about the creation of new texts with regard to gender exclusive language. However, some of its comments about language in general show a knowledge about general linguistic theory which points to more detailed policies about language use in the future. Following on from Kinsley's comments about

meaning, the Commission here makes telling linguistic (but not philosophical) points: meaning depends on a matrix consisting of user, context and hearer; meaning varies synchronically as well as change occurring diachronically; and language has effects which can influence the way people think.

In a report of this nature it should not be expected that much detail of the debate would be entered into. Nevertheless, there are serious omissions in the Commission's analysis. For example, in talking about the nature of meaning and the relationship of user, context and hearer, the report is silent as to the question of who the user of liturgy actually is. In the report's terms it is probably the 'framer' of the text, but surely the user is also the speaker in the context of the service; thus the users are president and people. In that case, the relationship between them and the hearer (who could conceivably be God, but is more likely to be the worshipping assembly) becomes that much more complex. Similarly, the 'social context' is ill defined. It is true to say that there is a particular generic usage of the word 'man' in the North East, but does it follow that 'man' is heard in that way in a church in the North East? The word functions in a number of ways even where there is a dominant usage. Context is complex, and there is no discussion of speech act theory or discourse analysis, which related disciplines would provide careful nuances for the discussion.

There is a small nod towards the nature of language used in religious contexts, whereby certain words take on an explicitly religious resonance quite apart from other social contexts. In the report the phrase 'Man shall not live by bread alone' is cited as one which is unchangeable because of the proverbial role it plays in contemporary language. There are other examples of words and constructions which now only find their meaning in religious contexts (Alleluia and Hosanna, for example). It is quite possible, as in the case cited, that other apparently gender exclusive terms have different nuances in liturgical contexts, but the report makes little mention of this function of liturgical language, preferring to restrict itself to responding to external change in language use.

The major feature of the report as regards use of language is that it makes changes to the language of liturgy mainly on linguistic grounds. As mentioned above, there is little discussion of the philosophical areas of the debate, and only a little theology. The linguistic theory is sound as far as it goes, but it does seem like a change made in isolation, where greater integration with other areas of study might have yielded greater dividends.

Patterns For Worship

With the report Patterns for Worship, published in initial form as a General Synod Report in 1989, (and designed in this form to be as 'user unfriendly' as possible), liturgical revision took a further step away from the provision of unified services to be celebrated in all places, at all times. However much the House of Bishops' 'Prefatory Note' emphasised that Patterns was only a report, and therefore had no authority, its very presence on the liturgical scene signalled the new chapter heralded by LHWE and Promise.

As the Prefatory Note makes clear, the House of Bishops had asked the Commission:

- a) to provide some indication of different ways of doing liturgy, taking into account sociological, architectural and churchmanship differences.
- b) to indicate where advantage might be taken of notes and rubrics in the ASB to develop and enrich the liturgy.
- c) to provide outline structures and mandatory sections for some main services, which, if authorised alongside ASB, would provide greater freedom for those who wish either to enrich or shorten the services (including 'family' services and worship in UPAs).³³

It also quotes from the report The Worship of the Church, which in 1986 asked for a 'directory' of resource material, which would need to 'set boundaries to the proposed freedom'. This referred to the 'loosening up which the ASB 1980 clearly had in mind but of which real advantage is yet to be taken.'³⁴ This is obviously

a matter of interpretation, in that many would say the ASB wanted to tie things down for a while³⁵, but the point is clear: because of the pressure for change from family services, UPAs and the possibilities which ASB did not grasp, a new resource book was needed. Given the now mandatory acknowledgment of differing needs and practice, this material should not be unduly prescriptive, but allow flexibility within agreed bounds.

At all points in its writing about itself, Patterns is keen to tread this line carefully: flexibility within bounds. The Prefatory note refers to this also:

the House [of Bishops] is mindful of those who want a period of stability in the liturgical life of the Church, and who might be anxious lest the Commission's proposals extend the bounds of choice and variety of liturgical provision more widely than has been customary for the Church of England.³⁶

Indeed, part of the purpose of Patterns is to 'be a reining in of the unco-ordinated, unauthorised and unstructured provisions which are now widespread in the context of non-statutory services'.³⁷ Patterns is designed to be a framework, within which is recognisable Anglicanism, and within which is the greatest possible opportunity for local expression. How this tension is maintained will form the main part of this discussion.

The Introduction to Patterns faces the point head on, and finds both precedent and justification in the ASB. This it says, both looked back to 'the principle established by Cranmer of having all the texts for worship available in one book' and 'looked forward to a new era of flexibility in the Church of England worship [sic].'³⁸ The Introduction makes much of this second point: the Church of England already has a principle 'of allowing considerable freedom in some areas of the liturgy where there is no danger of harm or division if people do different things', not only because of the ASB, but also because it was extended to Lent, Holy Week, Easter. :

We have used the already established principle of flexibility to provide forms of worship which will still be part of the Anglican family, whilst encompassing the enormous variety that exists within the Church at present.³⁹

Patterns therefore provides three types of material: service structures, (with indications of what must be used and samples of how it might be done); resource material, (with an introductory paragraph which gives 'guidance' on how to use it); and a Commentary, 'to show how structures and resource sections might be used, and how worship relates to differences in architecture, churchmanship, and cultural background.'⁴⁰ The Commentary itself begins with a note that it is not designed to be prescriptive, and will go about its work by telling stories. In all this the impression given is of possibility rather than prescription, with rather lengthy rationales for how this fits into the Anglican scheme. As the Commentary says, the desire is not to put it all 'in rubrics, or mandatory stage-instructions.'⁴¹

These points are reinforced by specific reference to one of the pressures which led to the creation of Patterns: that of worship in Urban Priority Areas.

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 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.⁴²

However, this focus on the local community as the creator of 'local liturgy' immediately raises the question of 'common prayer', given that worship is not only definitive of the local assembly, but also the Church of England, and beyond that to the universal church. Patterns makes a series of points, both in the Introduction, and in an appendix.

The first point is a recognition that the idea of common prayer does not match the reality of the situation now, and cannot therefore be put under pressure by the publication of Patterns. The Introduction states that Common Prayer:

does not in fact exist, in the sense of being able to walk into any church in the land and find exactly the same words to follow. Nor should we pretend that it would be good or right to return to a position - well over a century ago - when that might have been the case.⁴³

As a result of this the Introduction makes a play for 'family likeness', rather than uniformity. Common Prayer now means 'recognizing, as one does when visiting other members of the same family, some common features, some shared experiences, language and patterns and traditions.'⁴⁴

However, the appendix makes three points which tighten up this definition, and seem to lay down some clearer guidelines. This intention to clarify could be because they are written in answer to a question about whether Patterns 'undermines' Common Prayer in the Church of England, and their aim is to 'identify three aspects of the Anglican understanding of Common Prayer.' Nevertheless, they are 'compiled by the Liturgical Commission, with the approval of the Legal Advisor'.

First, Common Prayer consists of 'the valuing of patterns of worship which are recognised as the common possession of the people of God.....Corporate patterns of worship must exist and be developed which are recognised by worshippers as their corporate worship.'

Secondly, these patterns must not be determined at the purely local level, 'but must bear witness to participation in the wider common life of the Church'.

Thirdly, 'patterns of common prayer play an important part in maintaining the unity of the Church in its confession of the Christian faith'. The traditions of others should be respected, and this is why authorization of service leaders and main texts is important.⁴⁵

Patterns in its Introduction seeks to avoid this 'prescriptive' line, and instead sketches out some broad areas for discussion. The 'marks of Anglican worship'

which the Commission feels 'should be safeguarded for those who wish to stand in any recognisable continuity with historic Anglican tradition' are:

- a recognisable 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.⁴⁶

Another 'mark' of Anglican worship is seen as 'a willingness to use forms, and prayers which can be used across a broad spectrum of Christian belief', and here the Commission re-enters the doctrine debate, especially about orthodoxy, and the divisions caused by 'party' texts. In saying that 'most debates about doctrinal conformity are really about how to stop the other person doing something you don't like because you think it is right on the edge of being heretical'⁴⁷, the Commission looks briefly at the debates over forms of words, but then proposes a broader solution in use of the Canons, especially those which place the locus of doctrine in the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and the Ordinal. Nothing in any new service can be contrary to this doctrine in any essential matter.

The Canons do then safeguard doctrine, 'but we suggest...that there should be some parts of the service with a limited number of options'. This includes the creed, the confession and absolution, specific prayer for the departed, and the eucharistic prayer. As the Commission says:

There will be some who will think that even this minimum amount of regulation goes counter to what we have said about local creativity, and infringes local control of worship. To them we would point out the

traditional function of 'catholic' faith and worship in providing a critique or alternative viewpoint for looking at local (or national) culture.⁴⁸

Thus the boundaries are firmly drawn, however hesitantly, though questions must remain about the function of the boundaries in practice. Given issues of meaning and reception of words and structures, can it really be guaranteed that they will be recognised or understood as such by worshippers in context?

In Patterns the Commission makes other interesting points about language and its function within a worship event. In a section on reading the Bible, the point is strongly made that the reading of Scripture enables the church:

to identify ourselves again as the people to whom God is speaking. The Doctrine Commission's Believing in the Church report makes the point strongly that by publicly rehearsing its corporate story the community is proclaiming its identity as the people of God. Shared stories bind people together.⁴⁹

The concept that the corporate proclamation (with its implication of reception) of the words of scripture constitutes and defines the community of God in an almost sacramental way is an engaging one, and relates to the words of the liturgy doing the same thing. The specific point about scripture cannot be followed up here, but the use of language in its context (socially, historically, textually, practically and functionally) is the basis of all this present study, and the 'sacramental' point will be explored in chapter four.

The Commentary also makes the point made in LHWE that 'worship is not worship until you do it.' In this context it refers to the production of a service: the text is not enough, but hard and fast instructions allow little flexibility. The Commission says:

It is no longer sufficient in the Church of England to produce a worship book which consists simply of texts, to say or sing. That is a bit like producing a recipe which is a list of ingredients without the instructions for putting them together⁵⁰,

and goes on to introduce the format of storytelling in helping churches to form their own worship. Stories are given of four caricatured churches, with suggestions for local practice in each area. There is a recognition here that worship in context can only be hinted at, not prescribed, and the stories enable churches (who follow the guidelines and think about their own context) to look at how the texts will function in context. As with the section in LHWE there is an area of Pragmatics here which could be the subject of fruitful comment.

Along with all the above, Patterns is especially noteworthy because in it the Commission outlines some more guidelines on language. They are tucked away on page 273, and are given without comment, save the implication that they are the ones used by the Commission in the material for Patterns, and the suggestion that they be used to ensure the level of writing of people's own material is the same as that of Patterns. The guidelines are these:

1. Use concrete visual images rather than language which is conceptual and full of ideas.
2. Avoid complicated sentence constructions
3. If there is a choice, prefer the word with fewer syllables
4. Address God as you.
5. Keep sentences as short as possible. Use full stops rather than semicolons.
6. Use language that includes women as well as men.
7. Watch the rhythm. The language should be rhythmic and flow easily, but take care not to have a repetitive poetic 'dum-de-dum'.
8. Liturgical language should not be stark nor empty. It is not wrong to repeat ideas or say the same thing twice in different words. Cranmer recognised that people need time and repetition to make the liturgy their own: we need to do it without a string of dependent clauses.
9. Be prepared to throw it away after using it, and to do it differently next time.⁵¹

Comment

In this section comments will be related to specific questions of language, and some general principles. Indeed, the interest in Patterns is in what might be called its metatheory of worship, rather than its particular outworking within the text. Just as contemporary theory is concerned mainly with theories beyond texts, so Patterns represents something not always accessible from its guidelines or suggestions. It is the very process of offering guidelines rather than rubrics and structures rather than mandatory texts (in many cases) which marks Patterns out as a revolutionary text, and this is worthy of a more detailed treatment.

The guidelines on language in Patterns are mainly functional. There is no rationale for the use of language, and the inference of the nine sections is that simplicity and clarity are paramount, presumably due to the origins of the report in UPA's and Family services. Images are to be concrete, sentences short (where previous guidelines had not been afraid of the relative clause), words derived from Anglo Saxon are to be preferred to Latin constructions, and above all, language is to be disposable: we are encouraged to throw things away and try something else. There is a very different feel here from previous thinking on language, and presumably this is not the sum of the Commission's thinking about the language of worship. There is little on metaphor, poetry, meaning, or the role of language in worship. All that is given here is a set of tools, rather than the overall plan with parts to assemble.

A member of the Commission, in an introduction to Patterns, makes some further comments about these guidelines. The Commission was keen to move away from 'the more formal, conceptual, committee and ideas-based style of the ASB, towards something more direct and personal, using concrete, tangible and visually vivid language.'⁵² This was influenced greatly by the difficulty found in interpreting the ASB's eucharistic prayers in sign language. Picture language is better than conceptual language in this regard. Lloyd goes on to say that the needs of a minority were found to bring the church back to a more biblical model of

language. 'Making our worship more vivid in this kind of way makes us use both language and methods of communication which are nearer to those of Jesus - and that is not "simpler" or bringing the level "down".'⁵³ It has to be said that this is not clear from the guidelines themselves (which might gain some flesh in the final form of Patterns), but the point is carefully made.

In one paragraph of the Commentary, the Commission likens previous prayer books to a list of ingredients with no recipe for putting them together. It is by no means certain that this image works, given the statements about the ASB within Patterns itself. The ASB is commended for allowing 'these or other suitable words' in many places: surely this is a recipe with a suggested ingredient, and hints on what others might work in its place. Having said this the point is sound: what was given before was not just a list of ingredients, but the text was the thing argued over and worked on carefully. Little official attention was given to how the texts might function in their context, although some of the resource material which appeared with Series Three did popularise other things than the text: the Cassock Alb made its appearance in a filmstrip, and caught on widely.⁵⁴ Patterns has at its foundation level the assumption that worship is something created by the local community, thought about deeply, and only resourced and guided by the centre.

The key issue, as raised above, is the relationship between flexibility and boundaries. Patterns is wary of defining the strength of boundaries, or how they are created, and indeed what they are. Following on from the thought of the report The Worship of the Church which allowed 'interim texts for interim solutions' as far as doctrine was concerned⁵⁵, Patterns seems to allow for a multiplicity of texts, saving only confession and absolution, affirmations of faith and eucharistic prayers for official authorization.

As noted above, Patterns does give an official view of doctrine (that nothing should differ from the doctrine of the Church of England as contained in its historic formularies), but makes no comment as to the nature of the relationship between doctrine and the texts offered which do not need official authorization

(nor those that do!). It would appear that implicit acknowledgment has been given to the complexity of meaning within language, and therefore positions are stated, canon law is made plain, but no conclusions are drawn. Language in Patterns, despite the simplicity of its own guidelines, is a much more elusive thing than in the debates which surrounded the ASB.

In its Commentary section, Patterns makes points about doctrine and context which relate clearly to the area the use of liturgy in context. Rather than concentrating solely on a text, a church is urged to consider its own situation and needs, to find structures and usages appropriate for its own context, and then to find texts and orders of service which suit. The aim is always to be relevant and expressive of context and relevant belief, rather than to find the best way of expressing a set text. Liturgical language and texts are here regarded as functional texts in use, rather than primarily as the holders of meaning to be delivered. To use its own image, only certain parts of recipes are given, others are suggested, and some ingredients are offered. Control of meaning and doctrine is slackened considerably, and it is by no means certain exactly where the boundaries are. More weight is given to the theologians in the pew, less to the providers of doctrine and liturgy.

This is the logical progression from providing a service alternative to the text which is normative and determinative of doctrine in the Church of England, and, it will be suggested, entirely in line with philosophical, literary and linguistic theories of language. As C.B. Naylor pointed out in 1964, any philosophical discussion affects the climate of the age in the end, and it will be argued that the progression from Series I to Patterns exhibits just that: the reasons for the change are not simply liturgical, and to an extent it is possible to attribute much of the thought behind Patterns to its contemporary context. However, there are serious questions here about the locus of meaning, interpretation of texts, and the postmodern refusal of the 'grand narrative', which can be seen in the tension between flexibility and common guidelines and boundaries in Patterns. Those questions will also be explored in a final chapter.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. The Promise of His Glory, 1991, p. 3
2. Lent, Holy Week, Easter, 1984, 1986, p. 1
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
5. See Graham Cray, From Here to Where? - Speaking about God in the Culture of the Nineties, Occasional Paper for the Board of Mission, 1991.
6. James, P., Liturgical Presidency, Alcuin/Grove Joint Liturgical Study no. 24, 1993, p. 9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
8. LHWE, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
11. This is the standard and oft quoted definition, here taken from V. Fromkin and R. Rodman, An Introduction to Language, 4th Edition, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch.
12. J.L. Austin, How to Do Things With Words, 1962 and 1975.
13. Promise, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
15. M. Vasey, 'A Winter Directory', in Introducing Promise of His Glory, 1991, p. 5. The Standing Committee Report to General Synod, The Worship of the Church, (GS 698), notes that:

The words of hymnody have never been brought into any authorization process.....thus, whilst keen disputes have been fought over minutiae in the wording of official texts.....the Church has appeared largely indifferent to the wording of what was sung from the hymnbooks. (p. 6)
16. M. Vasey, 'The Saints and the Dead', *ibid.*, p. 28.
17. The Worship of the Church (GS 698), 1985, comments on this dilemma. 'Conscious of the close relationship between believing and worshipping', the report nevertheless refuses to allow questions over 'doctrinal decisions'

to 'get in the way of the general development of the liturgical strategy of the Church'. (p. 26, para 48). Earlier it talks of situations where there are doctrinal disputes, and advocates that texts should still be produced: 'interim texts for interim solutions'. (p. 16, para 29).

18. The Worship of the Church, GS 698, p. 14, para 26.
19. Making Women Visible: The Use of Inclusive Language with the ASB (GS 859), 1989, p. vi.
20. Ibid., p. 3.
21. Ibid., p. 3.
22. Ibid., p. 3, their italics.
23. Ibid., p. 4.
24. Ibid., p. 9, quoting ASB, Preface, p. 10.
25. Ibid, p. 9, quoting Cameron, D. Feminism and Linguistic Theory, 1985, p. 5.
26. Ibid., p. 10.
27. Referred to in the report, p. 13.
28. G. Leonard, I. MacKenzie, P. Toon, Let God be God, 1989.
29. Making Women Visible, *op cit*, p. 16.
30. Ibid., p. 16.
31. Ibid., p. 22.
32. Ibid., p. 22.
33. Patterns for Worship, GS 898, 1989, p. v.
34. Ibid, p. v, quoting from The Worship of the Church, *op cit*, p. 21, para. 40.
35. Noted in Patterns, p.1.
36. Patterns, *op. cit.*, p. vi-vii.
37. Ibid., p. vii.
38. Ibid., p. 1.
39. Ibid., p. 1, my italics.

40. Ibid., p. 2.
41. Ibid., p. 264.
42. Ibid., p. 2 (my italics).
43. Ibid., p. 5.
44. Ibid., p. 5.
45. Ibid., p. 288.
46. Ibid., p. 5.
47. Ibid., p. 6.
48. Ibid., p. 6.
49. Ibid., p. 9.
50. Ibid., p. 264.
51. Ibid., p. 273.
52. T. Lloyd, 'New Texts', in Introducing Patterns For Worship, 1990, p. 19.
53. Ibid., p. 20.
54. Jasper, R.C.D., The Development..., op. cit., p. 314. Architecture and ceremonial were also considered.
55. The Worship of the Church, op cit, p. 16, para 29.

Chapter 3

Liturgists and Linguists on the Language of Liturgy

The purpose of the two previous chapters has been to note the changing use and perception of the language of worship in the Church of England. The influence of contemporary theories of language has been increasingly seen in the work of the Liturgical Commission, almost from its inception. However, in the debates and official texts this influence is often submerged under material whose subject matter is more specifically liturgical. Thus in many ways the influence of new theories of language has been indirect, and reference is rarely made in the primary literature to the findings of philosophers of language or other language specialists.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how language has been perceived in the writing of liturgy, with reference to two areas of study: those of liturgists about the language of liturgy; and those of philosophers of language and experts in linguistics, where they look specifically at the language of worship. After a survey of work on the language of liturgy written by liturgists themselves, and a discussion of linguistic study of the language of worship, there will be a more detailed study of the philosophy of language as it relates to liturgy.

Liturgists on Language

Michael Perham: Towards Liturgy 2000

In this book,¹ liturgists look at the possibilities for Church of England worship as the ASB comes up for revision in the year 2000. The chapter on 'The Language of Worship' is written by Michael Perham, a member of the Commission. Perham is aware of those who feel that some of the riches of the Prayer Book were lost in the ASB, and recognises that the main objection to the ASB is not its new texts, but the bringing 'up to date' of old ones.² His points are that for most supporters

of the Prayer Book it is the texts which are important, and that it is possible for these texts to exist side by side with well written new ones in new liturgies.

Perham suggests that the desire for uniformity of language in the 1960s and 1970s was inevitable and that 'anything less drastic would not have allowed the new liturgies to make their impact.'³ However, the use of the ASB has shown that the desire to keep old and new language apart was misplaced. Though in certain contexts the use of sixteenth century language is never appropriate, for those who are used to it, old and new can coexist. Perham's hope is that texts will in future will be printed with parallel alternatives, and that new eucharistic rites which use old material could be printed alongside wholly new texts.

In conclusion, Perham says:

for many the abandonment of the principle of a single linguistic style for any particular service, and the acceptance that the best from across the centuries (including our own) can exist together, presents an attractive possibility of a cross-fertilisation that has the power to reconcile.⁴

Perham's practical approach to language continues in the chapter on 'Affirming the Feminine' in the same volume. His argument is that the inclusive language debate is founded on two issues: hurt, and truth. That women are hurt by exclusive language could be because, though the language is not intentionally exclusive, it is felt to be so, and pastorally we should stop a practice which hurts even when this hurt is not intended. The greater argument is that it is possible that the language is exclusive, and that this conditions thought in subtle ways. In a deep sense language serves people badly if it restricts everything to one gender. 'Language, that has been a tool of [women's] repression, must now be a tool of their liberation'.⁵

Comment

Perham refers to little academic study in his initial essay, but it can be shown that his argument rests upon some key linguistic points: that language use does not always proceed uniformly, and that language change cannot therefore proceed uniformly; that usage has priority over meaning and sense; and that texts can function in ways above and beyond their ability to be understood. Though there is little reference to any theory of language, he has accepted the points that words function in a context greater than their immediate linguistic context, and that once the principle has been accepted that contemporary usage is appropriate for liturgy, these texts can function alongside existing ones. It is context and purpose, as well as the language, which defines it as being liturgical.

The essay relates most closely to those linguistic studies which concentrate on function and context, rather than grammar and meaning alone. In fact, some recent linguistic studies of the language of worship, such as those undertaken by Professor David Crystal and studied below, recognise the valid use of archaisms on the same lines that Perham's essay illustrates. However, Perham does not examine this point technically, and could be accused of legitimising nostalgia rather than making a point about the appropriate use of established texts. How, for instance, does an ancient text actually function for the worshipper, beyond being familiar in a world of change and decay?

With regard to his discussion of 'inclusive' language, there are clear resonances with this functional linguistic approach. Perham agrees that it is possible for a language to mean one thing grammatically, and function differently in use: it does not matter that 'man' might be intended to be used inclusively, because in context it can be taken to be exclusive. He also feels that exclusive language might be exclusive in reality, not simply in the way it is perceived. Though he feels this point to be of a different category, it actually relates to the same area of linguistics. Perham argues that it is possible for a gender specific word to function in such a way as to create the dominance of one gender. Linguists recognise that

in many cases it is function which is primary, and that the strictly grammatical sense of a word or phrase is therefore irrelevant in practice.⁶

Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial

Michael Perham also refers to the language of liturgy in his 1984 book Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial.⁷ Writing after the introduction of the ASB he assumes that 'there is a freedom to compose words for worship',⁸ and so seeks to offer some guidelines for writing new liturgy, using the ASB as an example and guide. Again, he does not refer to any academic studies of the language of worship, and his writing seeks to make only practical points. As with his other work, though it is not clear whether it is based on more specialist thinking, it is possible to relate his method of study to specific areas of linguistic study.

Perham makes five points about the language of liturgy. First, it should convey 'the truth as we perceive it'.⁹ For Perham, this is a question about doctrine. He believes that, because it is often repeated, the language of liturgy influences the hearer more than the sermon or the lessons. His second point is that the language of liturgy should express 'what is really in our heart', so that 'we say what we most want to say'.¹⁰ The other points are about intelligibility, beauty, and action. Language should be understandable, but not conversational, because it is formal language designed to be recited in public. It will require technical theological concepts, because every group has its own terms 'understood by the initiated', but these should be used sparingly. Similarly, the language should have style and rhythm, though beauty should not smooth out the challenge contained in the words. None of these are linguistic points in themselves, but the debate about archaisms, and how theological concepts function for 'the average believer' is a continuing one in linguistic circles.

Comment

Perham's first point about doctrine is clearly important, in that it relates to questions of meaning, intention on the part of the writers, and reception on behalf of the users. However, the illustration he gives, that of the 'Thou - You' controversy, confuses the issue. He is right in saying that it is not a question of one form being right and another wrong, and that the use of one or the other will define the way in which we think about God, but the doctrine question is surely about truth, and therefore about right and wrong. Using 'thou' may make a statement about a view of God, but this view (as he puts it, that God is separate and 'above') is still justifiable in doctrinal terms, and therefore still (partially) true. This illustration is of greater relevance to the way different styles of language function in different worshipping contexts: it is of only marginal relevance to the question of doctrine.

The illustration would apply to his second point much more clearly, since his main thrust is that some ancient services have views of God which we might not now share. The 1662 marriage service is the case in point, because its 'assumptions' about marriage are no longer widely accepted, and though its language may be beautiful, we might not be able to assent to their meaning. 'We do the Church a disservice when we allow people to believe that the meaning of words does not in the end matter too much'.¹¹ This is a practical point, which assumes that people are happy to allow ancient words to function because they are the accepted language of worship, when their meaning might be far removed from their intended use. However, he fails to tackle the varied levels upon which liturgical language functions, in that the semantics of liturgical language is complex, and users might take the words to mean something which on the lexical level they do not. Nevertheless, his highlighting of meaning raises an important issue.

It is Perham's final point, about the relationship between words and action which has more of a technical feel to it. Perham believes that when the words imply an

action, that action should be carried out. People should draw near when invited to 'Draw near with faith'; they should go out, when told, and they should be welcomed by 'The Lord be with you', not by an informal welcome followed by the then meaningless use of the liturgical phrase. This in fact relates to the 'phatic' use of liturgical language, but also assumes a correlation between what is said and what should be done which is not always as clear as it may seem. In confession we may not be 'truly sorry' at exactly the point in the service we are supposed to be, but the inclusion of the Confession in a service of worship indicates the need for such sentiments, and our willingness to be reminded of them. Similarly, it is hard to imagine people lifting up their hearts (which is one of the possible meanings of the phrase), yet 'Lift up your hearts' can function within the opening dialogue of the eucharistic prayer as an injunction to be ready for what is to come, and to direct our thoughts and wills towards God.

In general Perham's simple categories are too vague for serious study, but raise many of the issues covered in greater detail below. The overall point to be made is that the language of liturgy is not now an artefact of the past to be studied and nuanced for the present, but a flexible and changeable phenomenon, related to the needs, assumptions and beliefs of the age in a more direct way than old language reinterpreted for a new context could ever be. As such, questions of meaning and function become of increasing importance, and in this Perham is at the heart of the study of liturgical language.

The Renewal of Common Prayer

Michael Perham is also the editor of a set of essays by the Liturgical Commission called The Renewal of Common Prayer,¹² and the joint author of the essay dealing with the language of liturgy (amongst other things) called 'Image, Memory and Text'. Within a discussion of common prayer and the 'layered legacy' of the Book of Common Prayer in the initial section of the essay is the point that modern and ancient texts both have their function in worship, and that a 'deep pattern' is required which will allow different texts to have their place.

The next section does refer specifically to language, and covers much ground in two paragraphs. Using the word 'text' as a refrain, the essay argues that liturgical texts need to 'address the questions of where the liturgy is going', the 'socio-political context' from which its elements have come, inculturation, and appropriate images of God within the context in which the liturgy will function. Texts also 'imply' the building and the participants, and contain rubrics which condition the action which will take place.¹³ The tension between beauty and intelligibility is then mentioned but not elaborated, except to say that accessibility is not an overriding concern: 'it can be argued that the language of worship can never be totally contemporary since it is concerned with the spiritual and the eternal.'¹⁴

The essay ends by asking for a 'quiet' process of adding the best of the new to the old, and by warning the church not to allow liturgy to fossilise again. Overall the points made are simple: that too much was thrown away in reform, that the past has value of itself, and that change should now allow old and new to co-exist, with the new learning from the old.

Comment

The writing in the language section is so compressed that few would recognise some of the areas of study obliquely referred to, particularly perhaps the notion of 'implicature' drawn from the philosophy of language. This concept explores how a text assumes, or more accurately, carries with it certain implications which it requires in order to function correctly. In this case a liturgical text carries with it the implicature that it will be used in a liturgical setting by active worshippers, and this is the source of the comment that the text implies the 'text(ure)' of the building and the text(ure) of the participants.¹⁵

The point about liturgical language having a spiritual rather than contemporary reference seems to rely on a perception that if something is old and unchanging it automatically speaks of eternal things, whereas something which changes

regularly cannot. There is no linguistic justification for this remark, and it could be taken to stand in contrast to the sentence with which the section begins: here the job of the liturgical text is to clothe the 'movement' godwards represented by the movement of the Son to the Father. What can be agreed is that the task given to the text in constituting the story of faith and the power of events of the past is a profound one, and one which exerts a significant pressure on the style and content of the liturgy.

The essay is on surer ground when it looks at the inevitability of new liturgical language having a reference more in the past than the future. This is partly because any liturgical text should be capable of repetition, and partly because even new texts will draw on 'older phrases and images'. It could be argued that repetition of itself does not force a text to 'belong to the past', but the continuation of the argument makes a strong point about the function of the liturgical text in allowing the church to remember, used in its technical liturgical sense here.

Linguistic areas are therefore discernible in this essay, and include the relation of past texts to the present, the function of archaisms, the necessity of using ancient material, and the difficulty of enabling finite words to speak of the infinite. Here again function rather than meaning is highlighted, but most of these points are made only fleetingly, and it is hard to believe that they relate directly to academic discussions of the same area.

Geoffrey Wainwright: The Study of Liturgy

Though slightly removed from the contributions of the studies referred to above, Geoffrey Wainwright's essay 'The Language of Worship' in The Study of Liturgy¹⁶ is of relevance here because it refers openly to many of the areas of contemporary study of language, and the essay is to be found in a text book on liturgy for liturgists. It was written originally for the 1978 edition, and remains

largely unchanged in the later revision.¹⁷ Wainwright relates twentieth century developments in language study to the language of worship and in one paragraph notes the contributions of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Ricoeur, Malinowski, Levi-Strauss, McLuhan, Saussure and Chomsky. However, the advice for the reader is to become acquainted with 'these secular disciplines' in order to 'understand the functions of language in worship'.¹⁸

Wainwright does give three examples of how these disciplines might work in practice. From the anthropological and linguistic field (and in Levi-Strauss the two are brought together) he talks of the notion of language and community, so that 'language is not to be understood apart from the community which uses it'.¹⁹ From the linguistic field comes the notion of a 'universe of discourse', where 'a shared world of beliefs, ideas and experiences...enables words and phrases to convey intended meaning between speaker and hearer',²⁰ and from the philosophy of language comes Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games': not only do we have shared concepts and words, we must know the rules by which those concepts are verbalised, and the point and boundaries of the game. Wainwright also mentions 'linguistic register', which is in action at the 'phenomenologically observable level'.²¹

The rest of the essay is devoted to a study of the language of worship under four headings. In one of these he talks about 'sub registers' of the language of worship, and these are defined by means of the different functions language is called upon to perform in liturgy. In his 'social, cultural and pastoral' section Wainwright posits a number of 'bi-polar tensions' which have to be maintained: between traditional and contemporary; sacral and secular; plural and common; inclusive and particular; fixed and free; and written and spoken.²² These are clearly tensions on the language of worship, but are treated in too shallow a way to be related to specific areas of study.

Comment

The implication of the example about language and community is that a study of the language of worship cannot function without an understanding of the community which is formed by that language, and equally that a study of language will lead to a greater self-understanding of the community. It might be possible to argue that at the root of this thought is Saussure's ground-breaking assertion that language use depends upon convention, and the study which derives from this which looks at how differing conventions are found in differing communities, but the connection is not clear.

Wainwright is on good linguistic ground in referring to functions of language, but his classification is not overly specific, and there are other functions which are not mentioned at all (such as the capacity of a certain type of language to define its users as a particular community of people who believe certain things). Similarly, the concept of 'performative utterances', first coined by the philosopher J.L. Austin is obliquely referred to with regard to confession and the statement of belief, but not elaborated. It is also hard to see how 'expectation', though clearly a part of worship, is a definable sub register which is empirically observable, beyond the subject matter of particular utterances. The area it could relate to is that of the language game, where the language of hope is designed to be understood in a particular eschatological way, but this is not an observable function of the same type as some of his other examples.

In his discussion of 'bi-polar tensions' the general area in question is again that of function, and in the 'sacral and secular' section, for example,²³ this goes beyond the need for a 'specialised vocabulary'. As Wainwright points out, because 'the awe-inspiring God is a partner in the conversation', language needs to function in a way which acknowledges this. What he does not elaborate on are the possible methods used: his hint to look at the debate between 'thou' and 'you' raises the question as to whether established archaisms invariably serve within the register to 'heighten' the feel, but he is unable to follow this through.

What Wainwright does in this essay is to establish that contemporary theories of language do have a relevance to the language of worship. Though he does not spell this out, the influence is to be seen on the composition of new liturgy, and on the study of existing texts: he seems to assume that the language of liturgy will constantly change, and that secular language disciplines will be of key importance in understanding and facilitating this change. Like many essays of this type, though, the practical application is vague, and based largely in general observation of liturgy, rather than application of external models in the way that philosophers and linguists would expect.

General Comment

There are very few studies written by liturgists on their understanding of the language of worship. Those referred to are representative, in that they obviously breathe the air of contemporary language theory, but do not apply it, or even refer to it directly. Where these essays are helpful is that they draw attention to the variety of tasks given to the language of worship, the importance of function, and the difficulty of clarifying meaning when words are used in worship. Too often though the discussion degenerates into point scoring about beauty and tradition, and it is therefore appropriate to look at how language specialists approach the language of worship. In this way the air being breathed by liturgists might be more clearly available as a subject for study.

Linguistic Approaches to the Language of Worship

When linguistics experts write on the language of worship they are in the main descriptive rather than prescriptive, but in their description they do influence the principles used in further liturgical creation. The present study will concentrate on the work of Professor David Crystal, who has written on the language of worship for much of the period during which the Liturgical Commission has been in existence. As a Roman Catholic, some of his detailed linguistic analysis of liturgical texts concentrates on the Roman Mass, but he does look at the Book of

Common Prayer and the ASB, and given the close relationship between the modern development of liturgies in the two churches, the results of his studies are applicable to the liturgies of the Church of England.

Investigating English Style

This book, published in 1969²⁴ is a general introduction to the study of what Crystal and his co-author Davy refer to as 'stylistics'. Three chapters of theory are followed by the 'practical analysis' of examples of English in particular contexts. These include the language of conversation, newspaper reporting, unscripted commentary, legal documents, and religion (which is actually the language of worship). Their belief is that it does not need to be proved that 'any use of language displays certain linguistic features which allow it to be identified with one or more extra-linguistic contexts'²⁵ (where 'extra-linguistic context' means 'everything non-linguistic which exists at the time of using.....linguistic features'²⁶).

Though Crystal and Davy assert that their study is an operational rather than a definitive one, they do go on to talk about how language functions in context, and as will be seen in the analysis of the language of religion, particular linguistic features (such as the use of 'thou') are placed alongside the purpose of other features, which, though indistinguishable linguistically from language in other contexts, are quite clearly part of the language of worship because of the purpose they perform.

Another key feature of Investigating English Style is that Crystal and Davy go on to discuss the area of semantics, with particular relevance to the study of the language of worship. Semantics is concerned with meaning, but for Crystal and Davy 'semantics.....studies the linguistic meaning of a text over and above the meaning of the lexical items taken singly'.²⁷ There are other levels of understanding within the text, even without considering the extra-linguistic context. In the language of worship the language of the everyday gains new meaning because of its context.

It is for this reason that in their third chapter, 'Stylistic Analysis', Crystal and Davy elaborate on the notion of 'register' and the description of types of language use. They question for instance the 'hidden assumption....that there is a one-for-one correlation between linguistic features and a situation, or that the language can be predicted from the situation and the situation from the language with equal certainty'.²⁸ In other words, any example of language use, though apparently distinctive, is actually much more complex in its range of linguistic features and in their use. This is even true of the language of religion, which in 1969 was one of the clearest examples of a variety of language.

As a result of this, they define two terms of particular usefulness in the study of the language of religion: 'province' and 'modality'. Province refers to 'the features of language which identify an utterance with those variables in an extra-linguistic context which are defined with reference to the kind of occupation or professional activity being engaged in'.²⁹ They are features which would be present regardless of the participants, and relate to the nature of the task being undertaken. Crystal and Davy regard public worship as a clear example of province: certain features may clearly be expected to be present.

Modality describes 'those linguistic features correlatable with the specific purpose of an utterance which has led the user to adopt one set of features rather than another'.³⁰ This goes beyond province because even within a province a choice can exist, not dependent on the role of the language user. Liturgical English might be part of a very restricted province, but even here the purpose of each utterance relates to the form which it takes, and choices are possible. An obvious example would be the difference between an ascription of praise to God by a congregation, and an invitation to confession. In the practical analysis of the language of religion which follows this point is not clearly drawn out (save to highlight the fact that some texts are spoken by one person, and some by the whole congregation), but in the light of future developments of the study of this form of language the distinction between province and modality is a key one.

In the practical analysis of the language of religion Crystal and Davy examine graphological, grammatical, lexical and semantic fields, and certain findings are of interest. A central graphological feature is the division of the text into 'clearly demarcated graphic units'. This is to encourage 'speakability' and 'mass fluency'³¹. Grammatical features are extremely distinctive. Sentence structure is 'quite remarkable', full of relative and dependent clauses, though, as in the case of the collect, the underlying structure is 'quite simple'³². There is also 'a regular deviation from the expected order of elements within sentence and clause structure', along the lines of the AV, but nowhere near as marked in new liturgy (though still present). The overall impression is that as regards expected structure, liturgical English breaks many of the rules in order to achieve its effect.

In the lexical field there are numerous archaisms, theological terms, and focal points to which lexical items refer. Dependence on a fundamental concept, they assert, is always explicit in religious English. Amongst other points about vocabulary is the fact that there are 'collocational idiosyncrasies'³³ in the language of religion. What they mean by this is that certain words are regularly found in relation to each other (such as 'body' and 'blood'). What differentiates religious English is that the expected collocability is often reversed, such that the word death collocates with precious, a unique usage. It can only do this because of a theological perspective, and this allows a greater range of such relationships than other varieties of English.

Semantically, all texts are united by their use of 'God' as a 'semantic cornerstone'³⁴, by their abnormal use of the postmodified vocative as a way of saying things about God rather than isolating a particular feature of the God-concept, and the mnemonic purpose of summaries of aspects of the faith. Crystal and Davy also point out that religious texts are in whole or in part based on a translation, which they see as 'a restricting pressure on usage'³⁵, as is the need for such texts to be sanctioned by Church authorities. They conclude that the language of religion is indeed a distinctive variety of English, and they see new liturgies as sharing characteristics of older texts, though the features are less defined.

Comment

Within the detailed study of the language of religion Crystal and Davy make a number of points which are relevant to the discussion of how language performs a variety of functions at the same time. In their analysis of lexical terms they show that vocabulary in worship can be shown to work on two levels. For theological terms such as 'incarnate' or 'salvation' there is a 'technical status' and a 'general pragmatic status', in the way they are used by the average believer. From this they make the assertion that religious language is capable of being interpreted on two 'largely independent planes', and say that 'this inherent "duality" is a distinctive feature of the character of religious theological vocabulary'³⁶.

Crystal and Davy were writing during the great debates about technical terms in liturgy, such as 'sacrifice' and 'memorial'. Their distinction between a technical theological meaning for words, and a general pragmatic meaning of the words in use is of particular relevance to these debates, in that while the arguments were mainly technical and theological, it is more than likely that technical nuances were missed by those who allowed the language to function on the general pragmatic level. Crystal and Davy talk of 'the average believer', interpreting terms in 'an immediate, albeit imprecise way',³⁷ and though this is not to say that the technical debate is not important, little attention seems to have been paid to how the language would function for the average believer.

Another point about vocabulary made by Crystal and Davy is that religious English uses items of vocabulary which are neither archaic, nor directly theological, but which typify religious utterance; they could conceivably be used in other forms of English, but are most at home in the language of worship. The feature of these items (such as 'exalt' and 'adore') is that 'they are words which, in a sense, mean what one wants them to mean'³⁸. 'Adore' might have a particular denotational meaning, but is used by worshippers in a variety of ways. Crystal and Davy say this:

in religious English a very high proportion of the words involved are quite unspecific, and would be empirically observable as being used with very great differences from one person to another.³⁹

This is a vital point in the study of religious language, giving academic linguistic confirmation to what was being realised by those writing new liturgy in this period: people do not always mean the same thing when they use the same words, even in such a distinctive variety of English as the language of public worship. Control of meaning by those framing new liturgy is therefore impossible. There are echoes here of the 'fruitful ambiguity' espoused by Frost in the 1970s, but the essential difference is that Crystal and Davy here believe the terms themselves to function on at least two levels, where for Frost it is the use of the terms alongside other terms within poetic structures which leads to ambiguity. The point about collocational idiosyncrasies is also relevant here, and is where Frost could gain linguistic backing for fruitful ambiguity: unexpected collocations both depend on and enhance theological understanding.

When allied to their point about liturgical terms which only function in an imprecise way, there is a strong linguistic argument against the idea that liturgical language can be controlled by those who wish to impose a specific interpretation upon it, and for those who recognise that there is an inevitable multi-valency about liturgical and religious terms. However, this only backs up the case against Frost, and the writers of Series Two, who sought to impose a controlled multi-valency on liturgical language: the 'average believer' has the freedom to go beyond boundaries of interpretation, however fixed or flexible those boundaries might be. In Crystal and Davy's opinion, variety of interpretation is an inherent part of liturgical language, and in this sense can only be observed, not controlled.

Liturgical Language in Sociolinguistic Perspective

Much of the distinctive nature of the language of religion for Crystal and Davy is observable lexically and grammatically, as well as semantically. The type of words used, and their structures, could almost by themselves mark out a text as

being from that particular variety. Twenty years further on, the texts in use had made increasing use of some of the features pointed to in their initial study. There is less use of archaic terms, and less use of grammatical idiosyncrasies. Therefore, when Crystal looks at liturgical language in the early 1990s, there is a much greater concentration on the function of utterances, and their meaning, rather than on lexical and grammatical issues. In his 1990 essay 'Liturgical Language in Sociolinguistic Perspective' in Language and the Worship of the Church,⁴⁰ Crystal looks at these changes in some detail, and gives a sociolinguistic framework for the study of the language of liturgy.

In his introduction Crystal asserts that 'there has been something of a revolution in the field of linguistic study'.⁴¹ Up to this point, all study of language had concentrated upon formal description of language. From the 1960s onwards, however, concentration upon formal grammar disappeared, and 'was replaced by the investigation of the way language was used in the various contexts of daily life'.⁴² The primary question for the study of linguistics then became 'what kind of people use what kind of language on what kind of occasion?', and it was generally recognised that language 'was not a monolithic homogeneous entity used identically by all, but was dynamic, flexible and diverse'.⁴³

Crystal believes that a similar change in perspective is required in the study of liturgical language. Following the great changes of the 1960s a commonly held perception was that liturgical language had now lost its 'distinctiveness', and Crystal says that 'from a narrow, formal linguistic point of view' this was true. Few of the features which were described in Investigating English Style now remain, save for vocative constructions, religious vocabulary and theological subject matter.⁴⁴ However, this does not prove that the language of contemporary liturgy is not distinctive, only that formally there is little difference between liturgy and other language forms. If, as Crystal says, the 'traditional focus on forms' is replaced by 'a focus on functions', or, to put it another way, the linguistic is replaced by the sociolinguistic, 'the liturgical setting provides a number of highly

distinctive features, for which there is no parallel elsewhere in linguistic behaviour.⁴⁵

Crystal defines 'sociolinguistics' as 'that branch of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and society'.⁴⁶ In taking this 'functional' approach to language use, Crystal defines eight main types of language function: informative, identifying, expressive, performative, historical, aesthetic, heuristic, and social. He regards these categories as common to most sociolinguistic approaches, though he makes the obvious point that no classification is exhaustive, and interpretation of each category is often a matter of definition. Complex language use is complex for the very reason that it operates at several functional levels at the same time, and an over-zealous classification can therefore be over-confident about the function of a piece of language which might operate in a number of more subtle ways.

Crystal finds at least five of the eight main functions of language in the contemporary Roman Mass, 'with a sixth (the aesthetic) extremely relevant'.⁴⁷ It is precisely this 'functional diversity' which makes liturgical language so distinctive. Similarly, there is a far greater variety of 'speech activity' than in other forms of language: unison,⁴⁸ various kinds of monologue, and dialogue.⁴⁹ Another distinctive feature, according to Crystal, is that of the relationship between 'verbal and non-verbal activity'. 'Certain utterances are said (or listened to) while standing, sitting, kneeling, with arms outstretched, holding certain objects, and so on.'⁵⁰ He also draws attention to the positive use of silence, and 'the importance of the time frame within which liturgical language takes place.'⁵¹

Comment

However, it is in the area of the functional classification of liturgical language that Crystal has points which repay further examination, particularly those which refer to language change. Crystal looks at changes in form and in function, and says that 'liturgical language is inevitably affected by all of these changes.'⁵² A formal

change might be represented by the change in the use of the word 'thou', or the change in meaning of the word 'prevent'. A functional change is illustrated by Crystal by the whole debate around 'exclusive' language, where formally there may be no difference in altering 'all men' to 'everyone', but functionally, in certain settings, it makes all the difference in the world.

Crystal's point is that change in the language of worship is all too often debated solely in terms of the informative level and the historical level (together with a less specific debate on the aesthetic level). In strict terms liturgy is not informative, because informative language communicates ideas new or unfamiliar to others. However, much of the language of liturgy functions on an informative level, in that the ideas conveyed are held to be of vital importance, even if they are conveyed in the same form every week. At this level, any change in the language of liturgy can be seen as a threat to meaning: the wrong information could be given, and the liturgy would therefore be devalued. The same applies to the historical level, where language is used to 'summarise the past and preserve it'.⁵³ Liturgy is rarely used as record keeping, but it undeniably looks back to find its place in the tradition of the church, and as Crystal puts it, seeks 'a diachronic frame of reference for the interpretation of synchronic events'.⁵⁴ Again, any change in meaning changes the position of the liturgy within the historical frame, and the relation of a new text to what has gone before is therefore of prime importance.

Concentration on single functions of language fails to recognise how liturgical language functions in many ways rather than few. Crystal shows how language with an informative purpose can also function phatically: as language being used for its own sake within a context but not for information.⁵⁵ Such language might then have as a primary function the identification of the person or congregation within the worship event, and the identification of the event as one of a particular kind of worship. Changing the language such that it functions well in terms of information might destroy the identity of the worship event.

The example Crystal takes is that of 'thy' in the Lord's Prayer. Where people might happily replace 'thy' with 'your' in many other liturgical contexts, even the knowledge that 'thy' means 'your' will not make the prayer perform the identifying function it has performed up until now. In informative terms, nothing has changed. In historical terms, the prayer still stands as the central prayer of the church, and new versions may be more faithful to the original.⁵⁶ However, its function as the prayer which identifies for the believer their faith and their place within the church is inevitably transformed, and liturgical change must take account of this function also. Thus Crystal says that when considering any kind of change to the language of liturgy, all factors affecting a personal choice should be taken into account. These will include issues of meaning (and also aesthetics), but will also include 'age, regional background,and temperament, as well as the linguistic context in which it appears.'⁵⁷

It would seem that in the process of liturgical revision, participants in the debates concentrate on one of the functions of liturgical language only. Academic debates centre on the informative function, and the safeguarding of perceived meaning, as well as the historicity of any text. Popular debates focus on aesthetics, and the 'average worshipper' might associate an existing text (both words and the book containing them) with their identity as christians. This functional analysis of language helps to explain why many of the debates about new liturgy involve arguments which may be deeply held by one side but are not recognisable to the other side as a valid area for debate. What one person might take to be an attack on the doctrinal foundations of the anglican eucharist (on the informative level) might be functioning for another simply as a useful historical reference. Another may see a phrase as functioning on an identifying level, such that to use it marks out the user as belonging to a particular wing of the church, and therefore believing in certain things.

Crystal argues that functional analysis is now the primary mode for the study of liturgical language, in that it does not regard surface-level differences of language as the be-all and end-all of study. In comparing Anglican and Roman Catholic

liturgies, it is quite possible to find a great number of differences which can be regarded as points of substance when identified in informative or historical terms. However, Crystal seeks to show that, though the surface may be different, the structure and function of the elements of the two liturgies are remarkably similar, and suggests that this might point the way forward in ecumenical debate. He says that 'it may be ... possible to show an underlying unity beneath the superficial diversity of different liturgical traditions'. Having referred to the 'disputes over points of detail' during the debates of the 1960s, he states that 'the level of sounds, words and sentence patterns should no longer be seen as the only level at which issues of language should be debated.'⁵⁸

These points have immediate relevance to the Church of England in its move towards a directory style of worship whilst seeking to retain the idea of 'common prayer' by using the notion of 'family likeness'.⁵⁹ Crystal believes that, apart from certain highly specialised grammatical forms, in formal linguistic terms the language of much modern liturgy is not distinguishable from other language varieties. What does distinguish it is the use to which it is put, its context, the actions associated with it, and its function in allowing individuals to use it in such a way as to identify themselves with the community of faith, and for it to identify that community as those who use those language forms.

This concentration on the function of the elements of liturgy allows Crystal to show the uniting factors in the liturgies of different denominations, but is equally applicable to the situation envisaged by Patterns: where an overall prescribed structure with compulsory elements makes use of different texts. Given the correct structures, it is at least possible, and probably more than likely that the function of the texts will be the same, and quite recognisably liturgical. Crystal indirectly makes the point that there are only a very few texts which perform an informative, identifying or other function in one linguistic form only (such that 'thy' might be replaced in all prayers but one for most people), and it is entirely possible and appropriate in the Patterns scheme of things to include such texts in amongst more contemporary material.

Crystal's purpose in this essay is to show that the concentration on the surface structure of liturgical language which so dominated the early years of liturgical change is now of little relevance to the study of the language of worship, and is indeed of dubious value. Those who feared for the death of the language of liturgy in a sea of contemporary usage can be assured that with a wider perspective the language of liturgy is just as distinctive, whilst creating less barriers to a world in which language changes continually:

major functional choices and contrasts in the language have been preserved and remain as distinctive as ever. In addition, there has been no change in the reliance on prosody as a means of signalling the special nature of the occasion and the shared purpose of the participants. Unison speech, and the special intonation, rhythm and tone of voice adopted by individual speakers, combine to act as the main linguistic features that formally distinguish liturgical from other kinds of speech event.⁶⁰

Two final areas of thought arise from Crystal's essay. The first is that the language of worship will remain distinctive whatever texts are used, and that change will not inevitably lead to decay: there will always be recognisable worship if structures are followed as the Church of England suggests, because the context of worship enables language to function in different ways.

The second is that those charged with the responsibility to change the language of worship should have regard to all the functions of the language of liturgy, not simply the informative or historical. The current debate on Common Prayer has already widened the discussion, but an eye to how liturgical language performs an identifying function, and to the performativity of liturgical language (an area not covered in detail by Crystal, but examined below) might help in the introduction of new liturgy, and in framing the debate upon it. Debates on the meaning of certain phrases, and upon how Patterns style worship should retain a doctrinal base, can therefore take place within a wider frame which allows liturgical language to perform all its functions, without having some removed out of sheer ignorance. The restoration of imagery and concentration on the richness of language after what was perceived by many to be the sterile language of Series

Two show the importance of the aesthetic function, which was removed not deliberately, but in an over-emphasis on other functions. The ground is now laid for responsible use of change.

Language Theory and Worship: The work of A.C. Thiselton

In the preceding paragraphs it has been seen that both liturgists and linguists have come to regard language as a complex phenomenon where the function of utterances is equally as important as their perceived meaning. The writings of A.C. Thiselton bear witness to this thinking, and in what follows his work will be used to look at the influence of these new understandings upon the study of the language of liturgy.⁶¹ Thiselton's major books are The Two Horizons and New Horizons in Hermeneutics. Each work is a detailed examination of the written word as it relates to its reader. He has 'a positive, even passionate, conviction that hermeneutics represents a fundamental, unavoidable and fruitful discipline'.⁶² His approach depends on Wittgenstein's assertion that it is impossible to stand outside language, and thus he studies the nature of language in great detail. On the basis of this he examines different hermeneutical methods, within an overall frame determined by christian theology and the givenness of the biblical text. There is a tension at work throughout the whole of his writing, because the theories he uses could be used as well to deny the basis of christian faith as to uphold it. Even though he applies some radical theories to biblical literature, this is done within orthodox christianity rather than outside it: he believes that though language is functional, in a religious context it does have an external reference. He is able to do this despite the fact that many of the theories he uses would take a denial of an external reference as their undisputed starting point. In New Horizons in Hermeneutics ten hermeneutical methods are applied to the area of pastoral theology, showing how each has its application in certain circumstances.

Thiselton is wary of creating a world view from a linguistic method alone, and constantly works with the tension of depending upon theories and philosophies of language which potentially attack the basis of meaning in general and doctrine in

particular, whilst maintaining the unshakeable belief that hermeneutical theory is of benefit to theology and philosophy. He depends on the theories of Saussure and Wittgenstein, but particularly in the case of Saussure, would not want to press the theory too far. Nevertheless, his writing depends upon certain assumptions about language to which he refers in The Two Horizons and New Horizons, but which are found in more detail elsewhere. Here we will follow Thiselton's own advice⁶³ and start with an essay called 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation'⁶⁴. In this he points out some false assumptions in traditional views of language. He categorises them thus:

1. that the word, rather than the sentence or speech act constitutes the basic unit of meaning to be investigated;
2. that questions about etymology somehow relate to the real or 'basic' meaning of a word;
3. that language has a relation to the world which is other than conventional, and that its rules may be prescriptive rather than merely descriptive;
4. that logical and grammatical structure are basically similar...;
5. that meaning always turns on the relation between a word and the object to which it refers;
6. that the basic kind of language-use to be investigated (other than words themselves) is the declarative proposition or statement;
7. that language is an externalisation.....of inner concepts or ideas.⁶⁵

It is not too difficult to see that many aspects of the debate about the language of worship are grounded in these assumptions. He shows them to be false by examining the linguistic study of Saussure, and the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein.

Saussure and Linguistics

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 - 1913) is generally described as 'the father of modern linguistics'.⁶⁶ Thiselton gathers Saussure's thought under four headings, each of which is founded upon the notion of 'the arbitrary nature of the sign'. Thiselton points out that this was not a concept which Saussure invented, but that Saussure was unique in making it 'the very first principle of language study'.⁶⁷ Jonathan Culler expresses the concept in simple terms: 'there is no natural or inevitable link between the signifier and the signified.'⁶⁸

The first heading is the contrast between synchronic and diachronic linguistics. Synchronic linguistics looks at a 'language state', examining the relations of linguistic units at a particular point in time without reference to history or etymology. Diachronic linguistics traces the historical evolution of language, and has now come to be seen as dependent on synchronic linguistics, which is given priority in linguistic studies.⁶⁹ Thiselton quotes Saussure's example of a game of chess, where an understanding of the state of a game does not depend on a knowledge of how the players arrived at it.

The second heading is 'the structural approach to language'. Language is a self contained system of signs. Signifieds are therefore 'members of a system and are defined by their relations to the other members of that system.'⁷⁰ Words only have what Saussure calls valeur in relation to other words to which they relate. Valeur is a term with a broader sense than 'meaning': Thiselton also uses the words 'force' and 'validity' for it. A word gains meaning from the words with which it is in linear relationship (within the grammatical construction), and from the words with which it could be replaced in an utterance: a word therefore has syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, both of which contribute to its meaning or valeur.

The third heading relates to 'conventionality in language'. Language is governed by conventions rather than absolutes, and because words are not lone carriers of

meaning, but find their place in a structure, it is difficult and probably misguided to make assumptions about the 'thought' of a people from words contained in its language. The example he gives, following Barr, is that it is impossible to say that the Hebrews were concrete in their thinking because there were so few abstract nouns. The conventions that governed their use are lost to us, and it is impossible to determine how vocabulary relates to concepts and ways of thinking simply by examining word usage.

Finally Thiselton discusses the distinction between langue and parole. Langue is the 'sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals' whereas parole is 'the executive side of speaking...an individual act'.⁷¹ Langue allows parole to happen, and parole is the only language available for study for the linguist. Culler says that langue is the system, and parole the speech made possible by the system. Langue is agreed by the speech community, and 'in the act of parole the speaker selects and combines elements of the linguistic system and gives these forms a concrete, phonic and psychological manifestation, as sounds and meanings.'⁷²

Comment

Clearly each of these areas has countless applications to the study of language, and it is worth making some brief applications to the language of worship. With regard to the arbitrary nature of the sign, Jonathan Culler says that this calls into question those established theories of meaning which depend on words articulating established concepts. 'Language is not a nomenclature, and therefore its signifieds are not pre-existing concepts but changeable and contingent concepts which vary from one state of a language to another.'⁷³ If words do not express pre-existent meanings, then the idea of meaning as often espoused in debates about the language of worship is called into question. For instance, a nuanced debate about the nature of the eucharist amongst theologians might make use of certain terms agreed by the participants. However, it cannot be assumed that those words or phrases automatically carry that meaning with them when they are used in the context of the liturgy. The language of worship, though obviously in a living

relationship with theology, is actually a different form of language, and its terms, though using the same words, must be taken on their own merits.

Thiselton, following Saussure, argues that words only find valeur in relation to other words, and that therefore the idea that they carry meaning independent of context must be called into question. Though it is clearly true (as Thiselton notes) that there is a sense in which words have a 'hard core of meaning which is relatively stable and can only be modified by the context within certain limits',⁷⁴ many biblical scholars go too far in assigning meanings to words which bear no relation to the synchronic structure in which they are to be found.⁷⁵ The basic point to be made here is that words cannot be expected to carry meaning into differing contexts.⁷⁶ Thiselton applauds R. H. Robins when he says that 'words have meaning by virtue of their employment in sentences.....and...the meaning of a sentence is not to be thought of as a sort of summation of the meanings of its component words taken individually.'⁷⁷

Similarly, with reference to concepts, Culler says that 'languages do not simply name existing categories, they articulate their own'.⁷⁸ Thus each piece of writing or grouping of words must be taken on its own merits, synchronically. By its very nature the language of worship employed by an historic church rooted in the events of history has a significant reference in the past. However it cannot be assumed that this reference is obvious to those who have no knowledge of the history, nor can it be assumed that everyone will receive an intended use of a word, because words do not carry their etymology or their past usage openly. Words in worship cannot be completely controlled, their meaning is not always obvious from their past usage or their component parts, nor can it be assumed they will automatically point to a particular concept, even if that concept is agreed in other forms of language use. The basis of study has therefore to be the particular form of the language of worship, in relationship with (but not defined by) the language of faith and the language of theology.

Here the tension between method and world view becomes evident. It is clearly possible to take this method and make it an ideology, and Thiselton goes on to suggest that this is a mistake. In The Two Horizons the same problem is explored in relation to referentiality, since there is obviously some referential function in words. There may be an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified, and this may destroy a purely referential theory of meaning, but 'we do not intend to reject this theory as a way of answering certain specific questions about particular meanings.' Rather, 'it cannot be accepted as an all-embracing theory of meaning.'⁷⁹ Though it would be tempting to attack a description of language using solely the Saussurian concept of conventionality and arbitrary relationship, this is too simplistic, as the careful discussion in The Two Horizons shows. Nevertheless, an understanding of Saussure is vital if contemporary approaches to language are to be understood. The key point is that of inter-relationship. Words do not carry meaning on their own.

Wittgenstein

The other area discussed by Thiselton in 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation' is the linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. This follows logically from Saussure because Wittgenstein looks at language in context, and the rules of the game which govern its use. However, the relationship between a Saussurian understanding of the conventions of language use and Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy is much more complex than this logical progression might suggest.⁸⁰ At this stage it might safely be said that there is a complementarity between the two theories, but they are not dependent upon each other.

Thiselton's major work on Wittgenstein is found in The Two Horizons, and he applies most of his conclusions (in an abbreviated form) to the language of liturgy in Language, Liturgy and Meaning. The key notion here is that of 'function'. The later Wittgenstein looks on words as 'tools' which function in a variety of ways depending on use, and much of the Philosophical Investigations is therefore

concerned with an exploration of the 'particular surroundings or environments' of words. 'Only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning.'⁸¹

From this basic point comes the heart of what Thiselton sees as important in Wittgenstein: the idea of the 'language game'. Language functions within contexts with rules agreed by the users. When the rules of the game change, the meaning of the words changes too, because the concepts have changed. This occurs even when the vocabulary remains the same. Meaning depends on the linguistic context, the social context, the conventions adopted by the speakers, and the extra linguistic context in its widest sense. Language games do not remain fixed temporally, neither are they fixed within their context. Rather there is a multiplicity of language games, for there is a huge variety of uses to which language may be put. As Thiselton shows, there has to be some sense in which words have meaning, but Wittgenstein is keen to reject 'the view that ostensive definition is the basis of language and understanding'.⁸² Rather 'training' is the key, by which he means an understanding of how the game works, not the meaning of words or concepts in themselves. The basic point is that language has meaning only in use.

Thiselton applies Wittgenstein's insights to various areas of biblical interpretation and christian theology⁸³, and clearly there is much in Wittgenstein which can be applied to the language of worship. Liturgy is obviously a highly specialised form of language game, with its own grammar and conventions. Thiselton aims to make some of these applications in his short but seminal study Language, Liturgy and Meaning, so this chapter will conclude with an examination of the way Thiselton applies linguistic and philosophical theory of language to the language of worship.

Language Liturgy and Meaning

Thiselton's initial point is the familiar one that in any linguistic study, the crucial issue is that of setting, not vocabulary. Liturgy provides a special setting in which words familiar from other contexts function in unfamiliar ways. Thus he says that

to understand the function of the words 'redeem' or 'save' in religious settings demands knowledge of the setting, and of the paradigms with which the user is working, not simply a re-labelling of the words in question. Liturgy provides 'a tradition of language use and behaviour within which certain linguistic 'rules', or regularities or structures, can be discerned. In Wittgenstein's words, "One learns the game by watching how others play."⁸⁴

The key point here, reinforced by examples from field semantics and hermeneutical philosophy, is that 'the problem of communication cannot be solved in terms of vocabulary alone, in terms of the recognition of individual words.'⁸⁵ As with vocabulary, so with grammar. Just as vocabulary is no guide to meaning, so grammar alone can be misleading. A single statement ('this is poison') can mean many things, and two phrases with the same surface grammar ('the doctor's house; the doctor's arrival') can actually derive from two completely different 'depth grammars'⁸⁶. Knowledge of the extra-linguistic setting is vital. Liturgical language is distinguished by its variety of functions, often contained within the same phrase. Thus the question is not one of meaning, but of use in context. As an illustration, Thiselton shows that 'he ascended into heaven', though having a resemblance to a physical ascent, certainly goes beyond that referential meaning to function as a doctrinal statement, an acclamation, an exclamation, a proclamation, and a commitment. As he puts it:

the surface grammar of the verb 'ascended', then, is no guide to its actual range of functions in liturgy. Its meaning is not simply that of flat statement, but is best understood as a complex nexus of overlapping language-uses.⁸⁷

Two related areas of thought converge here. The first, on the surface level, is the Saussurian point that a word or phrase only gains meaning from its linguistic or extra linguistic context. This includes the conventions of language agreed by the users, and the joint understanding of the rules of the game. Here the second area of thought begins, and complications arise. Thiselton regularly notes that there has to be some agreed form of meaning, otherwise all language becomes private, and



no communication is possible. This is the substance of his discussion of public and private language in The Two Horizons,⁸⁸ and in his examination of postmodernism and deconstruction in New Horizons in Hermeneutics.⁸⁹ Is there a way in which meaning can be agreed? Can there be a public criteria of meaning?⁹⁰

The problem of meaning.

Thiselton never really gets beyond a description of the dilemma, and occasionally seems to place great store now in one side, now in the other. At one point shared meaning seems possible, at another it does not. His favoured illustration is Wittgenstein's discussion of fixed points and cross bearings. A word or phrase may have a 'usual' meaning, but placed with another word or phrase, even in a familiar setting, the fixed meaning becomes associated with other cross references, and new meanings or functions emerge. Thiselton argues that there are limits to meaning. A range of analogies, of fixed points and cross references allows unwanted meanings to be excluded, whilst allowing unexpected meanings to 'mark out semantic areas which would otherwise lie beyond the edges of our conceptual map'.⁹¹

Overall meaning depends on the paradigms and customs of the community. As Thiselton puts it, 'all modern linguists and philosophers agree that intelligible and effective language depends on regularities, rules, or conventions which are accepted by a community'.⁹² Shared understanding of convention, paradigm and rule is the extra linguistic setting which forms the ground of the language game. Wittgenstein sees a public criteria of meaning as being necessary, otherwise language and reality become equated with each other within a world view, and ultimately no meaning can be found at all. There are similar arguments put forward by specialists in linguistics: in a nuanced discussion Cotterell and Turner's book Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation looks at how sense is in some way attached to words by convention.⁹³

Comment

However, complications continue to arise for the language of worship when this discussion is taken further, and at certain points the possibility of shared meaning seems more remote. While he rightly points to the multiplicity of functions of liturgical language he does not say that because of this it is entirely possible for individual worshippers to be using the language in individual ways; that even in a context where the extra-linguistic setting is clear, one worshipper may be exclaiming 'he ascended into heaven', where another is making a proclamation, and others are committing themselves to Christ the King. He also does not elaborate on how it is possible for the individual worshipper to be doing all these things at the same time, as the variety of language functions would indicate that they might. It is hard to relate this to the discussion of fixed points and cross bearings: when language is performing various functions, is it possible for there to be a public criteria of meaning, or does this operate only in general terms for a language game, not specifically with words and phrases?

On other occasions he makes claims for the possibility of certainty. In his discussion of symbol, metaphor and myth he comes close to saying that meaning can be prescribed, that symbols can be so circumscribed that their use is clearly controlled, and that there must be language about God which is discursive and cognitive. Thiselton is skilled at applying particular methods in particular contexts, particularly in regard to biblical interpretation. However, it is hard to see how these theories of language, once let loose, will function only in prescribed terms, particularly in a liturgical context. What is to stop a worshipper going beyond the boundaries Thiselton wants to impose?

A solution may be found in his work on narrative and biblical paradigms later in Language Liturgy and Meaning. Primarily, the christian is placed within a story of God's dealings with human beings, and the recounting of the whole story is vital if christians are to express the faith by which they have been grasped, as well as their grasp of the faith.⁹⁴ Thiselton makes the plea that the biblical narrative

be seen as the frame of reference of the christian community, so that in specific terms 'the great events of Biblical history and Biblical narrative constitute a paradigm for the meanings of many words'.⁹⁵ Public meaning can be sought around shared stories, and shared understanding of actual events, whose facts can be agreed. Presumably these shared stories would count as a 'fixed point', and their function in the community, along with other stories and texts would happen with other 'cross bearings'.

What is clear on the other side is that the meaning which might be intended by liturgists, particularly the meaning attached to key words and phrases, cannot be prescribed or controlled. It is possible to agree with Thiselton that biblical paradigms and stories, along with a consciousness of the tradition of the church might provide general boundaries for understanding, but his discussion of language games, symbol, metaphor and myth sure shows that within these boundaries all sorts of understandings might take place. A simple point here is that the multiplicity of functions of liturgical language is such that in any case cognitive meaning is not the primary issue with many well used phrases. Thus meaning cannot be prescribed as tightly as some might like, but neither is it as impossible a dream as some others might argue.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that detailed examinations of the language of worship concentrate on the function of words in the context of worship rather than their meaning. This is in contrast to debates about liturgy, which most often centre upon what words will mean to people if included in the rite. Liturgists writing about language hesitantly move towards this thinking, but it is left to specialists in linguistics and the philosophy of language to spell out the issues involved. Crystal shows that contemporary liturgy is now defined not by its specialised vocabulary, but by its specialised functions, and even in 1969 pointed out how difficult it was to define the meaning and function of a word in the liturgy without taking into account all the extra-linguistic factors involved.

Thiselton's foundational point is that vocabulary and grammar function conventionally, within particular language games, with defined settings, and with no transferable ultimate meaning. Though it might be possible in general terms to outline a framework of shared understanding, the key is that language functions in a variety of ways, many of them uncontrollable in the last analysis. When constructing liturgies attention needs to be given to the way language will work, as well as what is intended. Setting is as vital as vocabulary, function is as vital as grammar, the involvement of the individual and the community in the first person is paramount. Thiselton amply demonstrates here that language is complicated, and though he himself occasionally seems to say that it can be controlled, he makes a strong case against those who believe that what they write will be understood as they intend it to be.

Within a defined context, and with all the nuances demanded by hermeneutical and linguistic study, Thiselton believes that even methods which call meaning into question can be used to shed light on ultimate meaning: belief and response to God. He acknowledges that because Saussure demonstrates language to be arbitrary, and because Wittgenstein show meaning to be dependent upon context, it is entirely possible for language to become useless and meaningless outside its own narrow confines, especially where religion is concerned. However, rather like Ian Ramsey's use of the methods of logical positivism against itself, Thiselton shows that using Saussure and Wittgenstein does not inevitably lead to some of the conclusions reached by other theorists. It is possible to be sceptical about the referential nature of language, and still hold to the belief that language means something. One of the areas of language study which is most fruitful in this regard is that of performative theory, and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. M. Perham, (ed), Towards Liturgy 2000, 1989.
2. '...we can draw the conclusion that the least contentious material in the ASB has been that which is quite new, and the most unacceptable has been the redrafting of familiar traditional texts'. p. 70
3. Ibid., p. 70
4. Ibid., p. 73
5. Ibid., p. 78. The general point is discussed carefully by A.C. Thiselton in and appendix to the 1986 edition of Language, Liturgy and Meaning, 1986 (2nd edn). Thiselton shows that in certain cases drawing attention to the feminine by using inclusive language awkwardly can over-emphasise feminist concerns 'at moments when....this is not necessarily appropriate'. However, his analysis shows Perham's point to be sound.
6. Thiselton notes how 'semantic considerations lead on to sociological ones', and how different grammatical usages can illustrate what society thinks. Ibid, p. 33.
7. Perham, M., Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial, 1984. There are three pages on the language of liturgy within a chapter called 'Word and Action'.
8. Ibid., p. 22.
9. Ibid., p. 22 (his italics).
10. Ibid., p. 22.
11. Ibid., p. 23.
12. M. Perham, (ed), The Renewal of Common Prayer, 1993.
13. Ibid., p. 33.
14. Ibid., p. 34.
15. Ibid., p. 33. For a discussion of the concept of implicature as it relates to liturgy see Martin Warner, 'Philosophy, Implicature and Liturgy' in D. Jasper, and R.C.D. Jasper, Language and the Worship of the Church, 1990, pp. 147 - 173.
16. G. Wainwright, 'The Language of Worship' in C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, and P. Bradshaw, The Study of Liturgy, 2nd Edn, 1992.

17. There is a new section on inclusive language, the odd phrase added, and a revised bibliography.
18. Ibid., p. 520.
19. Ibid., p. 520.
20. Ibid., p. 520.
21. Ibid., p. 520.
22. Ibid., pp. 525-6.
23. Ibid., p. 471.
24. D. Crystal, and D. Davy, Investigating English Style, 1969.
25. Ibid., p. 11 (their italics).
26. Ibid., p. 11.
27. Ibid., p. 19.
28. Ibid., p. 62.
29. Ibid., p. 71.
30. Ibid., p. 74.
31. Ibid., pp. 157-8.
32. Ibid., p. 159.
33. Ibid., p. 169.
34. Ibid., p. 170.
35. Ibid., p. 170.
36. Ibid., p. 167.
37. Ibid., p. 167.
38. Ibid., p. 168.
39. Ibid., p. 168.
40. D. Crystal, 'Liturgical Language in Sociolinguistic Perspective' in Language and the Worship of the Church, op. cit.
41. Ibid., p. 120.

42. Ibid., p. 120 (his italics).
43. Ibid., p. 121.
44. Ibid., p. 123.
45. Ibid., p. 124.
46. Ibid., p. 121.
47. Ibid., p. 136. There is a table of his results on pp. 128-9, and analysis of each function on pp. 127-135.
48. Crystal regards this in itself as 'a highly distinctive linguistic activity'. Ibid., p. 137.
49. The monologues are by priest and lay reader, the dialogues between priest and people, lay reader and people, priest and individual, individual and individual, individual and God. Ibid., p. 136.
50. He goes so far as to say that "only liturgy requires a ritual pattern of participation using complementary verbal and non-verbal behaviour which (a) persists over an extended period, and (b) involves such a wide range of body-movements and orientations". Ibid., p. 136.
51. This is in particular relation to the choice of readings and prayers which depends on the year, the part of the year, and indeed which day of the year it is. "No other domain imposes such temporal constraints on its utterances". Ibid., p. 137 - 8.
52. Ibid., p. 139.
53. Ibid., p. 125.
54. Ibid., p. 133.
55. A. C. Thiselton, in Language, Liturgy and Meaning, op. cit., discusses Malinowski's notion of "phatic communion" and relates it to liturgy. In phatic communion, "ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" (quoting Malinowski, p. 14). Thiselton would appear to warn against the phatic use of language in liturgy, but though the intention of liturgy might be to make a point, an oft repeated prayer might be used by the faithful in a phatic way, and liturgists need to be aware of that too. Crystal seems to hint here that even the phatic use of liturgy has its usefulness ("Liturgical Language...." p. 130)
56. For a treatment of many of these issues see C.O. Buchanan, The Lord's Prayer in the Church of England, 1994.
57. Crystal, op. cit., p. 144.

58. Ibid., p. 145.
59. Expounded, for example in Patterns for Worship, 1989, p. 5.
60. Crystal, op.cit., p. 138.
61. Thiselton himself has applied some insights to the language of worship in Language, Liturgy and Meaning, op. cit.
62. A.C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics, 1992, p. 63.
63. In New Horizons in Hermeneutics, op. cit. p. 86.
64. A.C. Thiselton, 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation' in I.H. Marshall, (ed), New Testament Interpretation, 1977, pp. 75 - 104.
65. Ibid., p. 76 (his italics).
66. So Jonathan Culler in Saussure, 1976, p. 7, and A.C. Thiselton, The Two Horizons, 1980, p. 119, where he is called 'the founder of modern linguistics'. In New Horizons in Hermeneutics, op.cit., p. 83, he attributes this remark to John Lyons.
67. 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation', op.cit., p. 85, quoting Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, E.T., 1960, p. 68.
68. J. Culler, op. cit., p. 19.
69. Thiselton quotes David Crystal: 'a synchronic description is the prerequisite for a proper diachronic study'. The Two Horizons, op. cit., quoting D. Crystal, Linguistics, Language and Religion, 1965, p. 58.
70. Culler, op. cit., p. 24.
71. Thiselton, op. cit., pp. 88 - 89, quoting Saussure, op. cit., pp. 9 and 13 - 14.
72. Culler, op. cit., p. 30.
73. Ibid., p. 23.
74. Ibid., p. 84, quoting S. Ullmann, Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning, 1962. Cottrell and Turner discuss the problem of the 'sense' of words in some detail in their chapters on 'The Use and Abuse of Word Studies in Theology' and 'The Grammar of Words: Lexical Semantics', op. cit., pp. 106 - 187.
75. See for example his discussion of 'illegitimate totality transfer', where all the possible meanings of a word in any context are read into each context in which the word is found. Thiselton, op. cit., p. 84. Cottrell and Turner feel he goes too far here (op. cit., p. 122-123).

76. Though as Cotterell and Turner point out in a nuanced discussion, sense does become attached to words, whether this is lexical sense, concept sense or discourse sense. *op. cit.*, pp. 139 - 175.
77. Thiselton, *op. cit.*, p. 85 (quoting R.H. Robins, General Linguistics, 1964, p. 22).
78. Culler, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
79. Thiselton, The Two Horizons, *op. cit.*, p. 121 (his italics).
80. This is explored in more depth in parts The Two Horizons. See especially pp. 374 - 375, and the notes on 'Wittgenstein and Structuralism', pp. 428 - 431.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 373 and 374.
82. The Two Horizons, *op. cit.*, p. 377.
83. particularly the notions of 'seeing as' and 'grammaticalness'. See 'The Use of Philosophical Categories...' pp. 96 - 98, and The Two Horizons, pp. 407 - 427, on seeing as, and pp 386 - 427 on grammar.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 4, quoting L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, sections 19 and 23.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
86. This derives from Chomsky's work on transformational generative grammar. Thiselton acknowledges this, but does not elaborate.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
88. *op. cit.*, pp. 379 - 385.
89. *op. cit.* See the Introduction, p. 21, and chapter three, pp 80 - 141, especially pp. 124 - 132.
90. A phrase which recurs in certain parts of New Horizons. See for example page 126.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
93. P. Cottrell and M. Turner, Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation, 1989. See particularly the chapters on 'The use and abuse of Word Studies in Theology' and 'The Grammar of Words: Lexical Semantics', pp. 106 - 187.

94. This is a point made by J.L. Houlden in his essay 'Liturgy and her Companions: A Theological Appraisal' in R.C.D. Jasper, The Eucharist Today, Studies on Series 3, 1974, p. 169.
95. Ibid., p. 32.

Chapter 4

Performative Theory and the Language of Worship.

The developing theme of this study is that much of the debate about liturgies in the Church of England starts from the wrong place. In learned journals and in Synod there is detailed discussion about the meaning of words, and the doctrine they are therefore supposed to carry with them. The liturgical text must therefore bear a weight of interpretation which, it has been argued, by its very nature it cannot sustain. Even the attempt by the Commission in the 1970s to produce words intentionally capable of various interpretations (in the name of 'fruitful ambiguity') fails to take this point seriously. Contemporary theories of language use, as pointed out in chapter three, were already showing that language functioned in far more complex ways than could be determined by discussions of meaning alone.

In this chapter further theories of language use will be cited to show that determining the meaning and function (and therefore the 'doctrine') of a liturgical text is even more complex than determining the meaning and function of a text designed only to be read by a single person as a private activity. In the previous chapter the work of linguists such as Crystal and other specialists such as Thiselton was used to show that the function and use of language should be a key part of the study of liturgical language. Semantics, the study of meaning, has a role, but only within the wider context of the study of the roles which liturgical language is asked to play.

In this chapter it will be argued, as a development of the idea of the function of language, that the performative aspect of the language of liturgy should be a foundation of liturgical study. The work of J.L Austin will be cited to show that not only do words gain meaning as they are used, but also that they perform certain functions: in Austin's terms people do things with words. In order to arrive at the meaning of a word or phrase questions must be asked as to the role such

an utterance is playing in its context, and this cannot be deduced simply from the presumed semantic definition of the individual words involved. In the previous chapter Crystal's sociolinguistic analysis introduced this area of study, showing that certain parts of the language of liturgy had a purely performative function¹. Here Austin's assertion that all language is in some way performative will be examined, in order to show that the performative aspects of the liturgy cannot be restricted simply to clear performative acts such as blessing or absolving.

If all language in use has performative force, then deducing meaning and function will require an analysis of the specific force of utterances within the overall performative context of the language of the rite. It will therefore be important to determine the nature of the performative force of language for a given community, given the shared use of conventions which performative language requires. Liturgical writers using performative theory use it to show that liturgical language goes beyond the narrowly performative and becomes sacramental, in that it performs functions for worshippers which are not confined to certain conventions alone. A conclusion to the chapter will discuss some of the issues raised by the sacramental nature of liturgical language.

Performative Utterances

The basis of all study of performative utterances is the work of J.L Austin, particularly his influential book How to do things with Words². This work has been developed, initially by John Searle into a detailed theory of 'speech act utterances', with many resulting classifications of language.³ Austin begins with the premise that language is used to do certain things, and from this shows that many statements have a specific purpose: they actually perform an action, or require a reaction from a respondent. Even statements which seem simply to be stating a fact actually carry with them an understanding that the enunciation of this fact should change something, or alter a state of affairs. We noted this above with the identifying function of some phatic usages. As Joseph Schaller puts it:

'the "reporting of facts" always is attended by other features which have to do with a certain purposefulness'.⁴

The basic terms for different utterances used by Austin are now an essential part of speech act theory. A 'constative utterance' is what Austin calls a 'statement of fact'. In theory it should be possible to describe such a statement as being either 'true' or 'false'. A 'performative' (or 'performative utterance') 'indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action - it is not normally thought of as saying something.'⁵ Austin himself looked at many 'explicit' performatives in some detail, such as the naming of a ship, or making marriage vows. In these cases the meaning is only to be found in the action performed by the utterances.

Because a performative has to work to be of any use, such an utterance cannot be defined as being simply 'true' or 'false', and therefore definitions as to their function become more complex. If a performative functions well, Austin says it is 'happy', if it does not function well, it is 'unhappy'. Certain conditions must be satisfied for a performative to be happy. An accepted conventional procedure must exist which has a certain conventional effect, the persons and circumstances must be appropriate for the procedure to take place, the procedure must be executed correctly and completely, required thoughts feelings and actions must be present, and required subsequent behaviour should ensue.⁶ It will be seen that a performative utterance is therefore a process in which more than one person takes part, and the utterance thus becomes a speech act, which must satisfy these various criteria. It is possible to utter certain words (like 'I name this ship') whose surface meaning is clear but which do not perform the function to which they point. Because they are uttered at the wrong time, or by the wrong person, without the required breaking of the bottle, or where no ship is present they become 'meaningless'.

Austin's aim in How to do Things with Words is to assemble a list of performative verbs. Though he is not able to do this in the terms he initially sets himself, he does come up with five 'classes' of performative utterance, and the application of

these to various activities in liturgy is simple. Exercitives express a 'decision that something is to be so, ... an award, as opposed to an assessment'⁷. Proclamation and baptism are clear examples here. Commissives (like 'promise' and 'vow') 'commit you to doing something'⁸. Behabitives (like thanks, curse and praise) express an attitude or a reaction to something. The other categories: verdictives and expositives have less direct application to the formal language of liturgy, though expositives which serve to enable the speaker to explain the force of an utterance are certainly of use in explaining actions subsequently.

Though Austin was able to define clear examples of performative utterances, he found it more difficult to find a 'pure' constative utterance. In the end he concluded that there was no clear distinction between constative and performative language, because all utterances were in some way performative. Constatives may state a fact, but the way in which the fact is stated brings with it a performative aspect. He therefore widened the terms of his enquiry, talking of the locutionary force and illocutionary force of an utterance. All statements say something, and this is their locutionary force. Their 'illocutionary force' the thing which such a statement might accomplish, even though it is not obviously performative. (They may also have 'perlocutionary force': the effect intended on the hearer.)

Austin says that illocutionary force is about 'performance of an act in saying something as opposed to performance of an act of saying something'.⁹ The statement 'it is raining' looks like a constative, but its illocutionary force might be '(I assert that) it is raining', and its perlocutionary force might be 'it is raining (therefore you have raised your umbrella)'. Definition of illocutionary and perlocutionary force therefore depends on the nature of the speech act in question, and it will be seen that this area of language study is clearly part of the study of pragmatics: 'the relationship of linguistic signs to their users'. The force of the utterance depends on the circumstances. Austin says this:

once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech-situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act.¹⁰

This too has resonances with the language of liturgy. Clearly, in a community context with a defined liturgy, the conventions which allow that liturgy to be performative will need to be understood and examined. This can be seen in the special case of what Austin calls 'explicit performatives', where the obvious nature of the performative utterance makes the conventions as to its use plain. Even here, however, misunderstandings can occur. A.C. Thiselton refers to his early work on 'the supposed power of words' to show that generations of Biblical interpreters believed that the force of blessings in the Old Testament was such that these blessings had their own power, inherent in the words. He shows that this was not the case, but rather that the power in these utterances was conventional, and the blessings only remained because there was no convention for their being revoked. It is possible to divorce after a marriage, but there is no convention which allows a priest to 'unbaptise' someone.¹¹ As Thiselton puts it:

In this sense it is not the physical act of uttering a warning, or a pardon, or the baptism formula that actually 'does' anything, but the status of the pronouncement within the whole framework of pre-supposition, status, authority, and propriety on which the utterance depends for its performative force.¹²

Even an 'explicit performative' in the liturgy, which depends on its own specific conventions for its 'felicitous' use, actually functions within a wider set of conventions, attitudes, and understandings, such that it is not possible exactly to define the force (Austin does not use the word 'meaning' here) of each utterance. Even where all the conventions are nominally in place, such as a duly ordained priest giving the absolution at the correct point in a service, the presence in the congregation of worshippers from another denomination might mean that for them the words were not performative, because their view of the priesthood was of a different nature.

It is clear from this that a simple definition of a performative utterance in the liturgy is not possible, since the presuppositions and agreed conventions within which the performative functions must be deduced first. If this is true of

utterances which are easily seen as performatives, it will also be the case with utterances where illocutionary force needs to be defined. The performative aspect of all liturgical language and its relationship to agreed conventions needs to be studied before individual statements can be scrutinised. In Austin's words:

The total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating.¹³

Comment

At this point it is possible to make some general points about the influence of Austin's work on the study of the language of liturgy. Simply put, performative theory is obviously a counter to those who feel that certain statements in the liturgy 'mean' something independently of their context. Statements within the eucharistic prayer are often studied in isolation, divorced from their linguistic and extra-linguistic context. To that end, in Austin's terms, they are often treated as constative utterances, whereas the differing interpretations of them reveal that they have to be treated as statements which function in a much more complex way, with both illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Much debate occurs around questions as to whether such phrases are true or false. Austin's work shows that truth and falsehood, whilst playing a part in the understanding of language, are by no means the be all and end all of the process of interpretation.

Also, whilst some notice is taken of the function such phrases will perform, assumptions are made as to the understanding users of those utterances will have, which often bear little relation to the way they will function in context. Taken with the conditions required for performatives to be 'happy', noted above, it can be seen that deciding what is going on in a prayer which is deemed to 'consecrate' bread and wine will not depend solely on the narrow semantic meaning of the words uttered by the priest. The conventional procedure understood by the congregation will have to be examined, and it may be that several such

understandings are present even in the same congregation. Thus it will be difficult to determine what is happening linguistically in such a prayer, even when interpretations of the words involved seem clearly understood.

The wider question is the one of the performative nature of all liturgical language. Austin's concept of the speech act, related to Wittgenstein's language game is such that all the influences, conventions, attitudes and variables of each situation must be taken into account before the nature of utterances can be discussed. Illocutionary force (what the speaker is doing with their words) and perlocutionary force (what the words are doing to the speakers) depend not on characteristics within the utterances, but upon the context (in its widest sense) in which the utterance takes place. All liturgical language is performative, not simply those utterances which proclaim themselves to be so. As such, utterances which might be taken to be constative could be performative in ways not imagined by their originators.

Three Applications of Performative Theory to the Language of Worship.

Jean Ladriere

One of the key liturgical responses to, and developments of, Austin's work is that of Jean Ladriere, in his Concilium essay 'The Performativity of Liturgical Language', published in 1973¹⁴. He begins with this question: 'What is the characteristic illocutionary power of sentences in liturgical language?'. This is important to him because, as he puts it, 'the illocutionary indicator shows what kind of operation relates to the content expressed by the proposition'.¹⁵ He says that it might be possible to isolate individual statements, and define the illocutionary force of each one. However, he also shows that diverse and specific constituents actually join together to form a whole, which is more than the sum of its constituent parts. The illocutionary force of an utterance may change in a particular context. Thus he widens his question to ask about the performativity of liturgical language in general. In a key sentence he says that 'every effort must be

made to conceive liturgical language as a whole, or as the general context within which such sentences function'.¹⁶ It is not enough to look at individual sentences or utterances. First the way in which liturgical language works must be studied and defined. In Austin's terms, liturgical language has an established conventional procedure, and only when this is elucidated can the function of specific terms be defined.

Ladriere believes that liturgical language as a whole has a 'threefold performativity': 'existential induction', 'institution', and 'presentification'. In taking part in liturgy the speaker places him or herself in a particular place and submits to certain operations of language. The user of liturgical language makes a concrete act in relation to others (and/or God), and thus takes part in a 'dialogic relationship'. This is what Ladriere refers to as existential induction. We might make this clearer by saying that liturgical language defines its users as people in a faith and belief relationship with God, as expressed in the speech acts undertaken. The language has an effect on the user, and is therefore 'perlocutionary'. Ladriere expresses it thus:

By 'existential induction' is meant an operation by means of which an expressive form awakens in the person using it a certain affective disposition which opens up existence to a specific field of reality'.¹⁷

For Ladriere, this induction is into an institution. The person using the language does not simply welcome what that language suggests, but is also formed into a community, where 'the participants meet in a kind of objective space determined by their speech acts'. These acts obey 'very exact rules', and it is here that a link can be seen with Wittgenstein's idea of language games. Liturgical language 'makes present a certain reality. It is that reality, accomplished in and by the liturgy, which establishes the community'.¹⁸ Here lies the clear basis of the study of liturgical language within the conventions which define an institution.¹⁹

This aspect of the performativity of liturgical language is developed in his third area, that of presentification. 'This language makes present for the participants,

not as a spectacle, but as a reality whose efficacy they take into their very own life, that about which it speaks, and which it effects in diverse ways'. By repetition, by declaration, and by sacrament, liturgical language actualises the reality of the mystery of Christ. The nature of this making present is interesting: Ladriere expresses it in specifically eschatological terms. 'It is ultimately its registration in an eschatological perspective which allows it its characteristic performativity'.²⁰ In the end the performativity of liturgical language is related in almost every way to the self involving nature of faith, and from that to the manifestation of the Word of God.

In so far as in and by faith we become participants in the mystery of the incarnation, our speech acts, in the liturgy, become the present mainstay of the manifestation of the Word. The basis of the performativity of liturgical language is the very mystery of this manifestation, which it celebrates and brings to pass.²¹

It can be seen from this that Ladriere believes that liturgical language is not simply performative at certain times, when the words assume certain things are being done. Using language in a liturgy is in itself performative, placing the user(s) in a relationship with each other and with God, in an institution which is formed by speech acts which work with strict conventions, in such a way as to make the reality of God in Christ present, such that words are in relationship with the Word. Liturgical language is 'endowed with its own operativity in order to become operative for the community established by the liturgy'.²² Language does not simply express faith, but makes faith sacramentally present: it is living relationship with the faith which it embodies. Liturgical language becomes performative because of faith, shared by a community, and in this way the reality of God is made present. 'In the celebration it is the Word to which faith allows access that becomes present and operative in our own words'.²³

Catherine Pickstock

In a recent but somewhat impenetrable essay, Catherine Pickstock makes similar points about the overall performativity of liturgical language²⁴. She asserts that secular language aims at textualisation, and constative truth, but that this freezes language and ends up meaning nothing. Sacred language is performative, such that 'substantive action and verbal articulation are simultaneous. It is this continuity between word and deed which makes liturgical language eventful.'²⁵ She believes that liturgical language cannot be interpreted in terms of meaning alone, but that 'the absence of codified meaning is the presence of all meanings, a construction beyond the confines of the given.'²⁶

In a point made by other writers on this subject she says that 'the language of liturgy produces rather than depicts' and demands assent and active participation. Any attempt to define the language of liturgy in terms of meaning alone is therefore misconceived at best. She believes that in the 'sacred polis' 'definition must be abandoned', because 'the liturgical text is unlike any other text in that it can pass unimpeded to its referent'.²⁷ In her terms, reminiscent of Ladriere, the divine Logos explains himself by means of the text: the text in use enables encounter with its referent. 'Christ abolishes in himself the chasm between sign and referent, utterance and text'.²⁸

Comment

Pickstock's points stem particularly from a sacramental view of the presence of God in the action of the language of the liturgy, which echoes that of Ladriere. Even where concentration is given to the conventions of the community in its use of liturgical language, it can be seen that the relationship of the belief of individuals, and the doctrine of a community, to the words of the liturgy, is therefore much more complex than a definition which would see certain words as the expression of certain doctrines. Clearly there will be certain beliefs, perhaps best expressed as paradigms, which are held by the community or the individual,

and which the liturgy seeks to embody. The point is that the nature of the conventions involved in liturgical language cannot be seen solely in the words used. The words of liturgy function in a believing context, and act as the embodiment of faith, performing more functions for the community than the expression of previously held doctrinal statements alone. Some utterances function as assents, or agreements, or commitments to certain beliefs or actions, but even these function within a wider context defined by the conventions of that particular community.

To take two small examples from within the Eucharistic Prayers of the ASB. In the phrase 'Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven', worshippers are encouraged to join in with the worship of heaven as described in the book of Revelation chapters four and five. Commentaries on the Book of Common Prayer refer to the 'company of heaven' being 'the various orders of the celestial hierarchy, the thrones, dominions, principalities, &c.'²⁹, and clearly this is in mind given the scriptural allusions and the text of the Sanctus itself. However, it is possible in certain church contexts where there is a strongly developed doctrine of the immediate presence of the saints and those who have recently died in the worship of heaven to equate 'company' with these figures, and not with the accompanying angels found in Revelation. The phrase 'all the company of heaven' will therefore have a different performative function in such a context than it would in a context where no such concentration is placed on a doctrine of exactly what happens after death. No such explicit reference to who is in heaven need be made in the text of the Eucharistic Prayer for a church with a developed doctrine of life after death to use these words in a way which fits in with their conventions and beliefs: it is the context in which the speech act takes place which determines the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of such a statement.³⁰

The same is true of the 'Benedictus qui venit,' which has had a much more chequered history as different doctrines of the church have been brought to bear on its wording and position. Objections were raised in the reformation period to

the perception that this phrase looked towards the real presence of Christ in the sacraments, and its optional status in the ASB is testimony to the continued belief that this is what the words signify (for good or ill, depending upon the theological position being taken). However, performative language theory shows that these words do not function causally, such that they inevitably signify the coming real presence of Christ and can do no other because of the power inherent within them. Rather, such a performative force depends on the conventions and beliefs of the community using the words. It can be argued (and has certainly been found to be true anecdotally from members of the three congregations which I have served) that this interpretation is only obvious to people when specific teaching (either for or against) is given, together with wider teaching on the nature of the eucharist. Again it is the context in which the words are used (and that is the community, rather than the linguistic context alone) which determines what the illocutionary force of the utterance will be.

Performatives and Ritual: Joseph Schaller

Joseph Schaller develops elements of this thinking in an essay called 'Performative Language Theory: An Exercise in the Analysis of Ritual'. His key point, borne out by what has been said above, is that 'performative theory marks an important alternative to approaches which stress the function of language as communicating information.'³¹ Ritual is defined by the fact that for the participants it conveys little or no information as such, but is there to allow participation. In performative theory 'a state of affairs is established in communicating'.³² He highlights Ladriere's notion of 'existential understanding', noting that the use of liturgical texts both changes and depends on 'conventional understandings, rules and norms'. He relates this to the Roman Catholic rite of anointing and pastoral care of the sick. In an interesting development of Austin's definition of performatives as being 'happy' or 'unhappy', depending on whether they work or not, Schaller says that in some ways the doctrine of the sick contained in this rite is less important than making sure that the rites 'present a "truthful" picture of the sick person's status

in the community' and therefore to include them within the body of Christ from which they are spatially separated.³³

Schaller shows that it is important to have a clear view of the function of ritual within the everyday life of the worshipper, as well as an idea of the function of ritual specifically within worship. Language will only function performatively in this context if it is recognisable; that is, if it successfully relates the world of the worshippers to the new reality spoken of by Ladriere. Schaller thus makes the point already noted by Thiselton and Ladriere, but takes it one stage further. 'Obviously we cannot be concerned about texts in isolation, but must attend to the entire liturgical ensemble of rites and people, both at the time of the celebration and in the broader community.'³⁴

Schaller is also clear that analysis of ceremonial communication needs to be very sophisticated and complex. 'This is because social ceremony relies on a complex system of related meanings, many of which remain implicit but which are essential for social functioning'.³⁵ Words only function well because everything in the context is in place, and discovering those assumptions cannot be done solely from the words involved. One of the important developments of this thinking for Schaller is that 'language functions not only to communicate facts about society, but, in a very vital manner, to preserve a certain cohesiveness within society by fostering relationships among individuals and reinforcing important social roles and values.'³⁶ He therefore points to the complex relationship between the community formed by the language used, the faith, beliefs and conventions embodied and proclaimed in that language, and the assumptions and conventions which are unspoken, yet determinative of the function of the language of liturgy in context.

As an example, Schaller looks at the text in the rite of anointing which gives instruction about the church's understanding of the sacrament. Schaller shows that whereas it could be argued that this is communication of information, and the

impressing of 'facts' upon the users of the rite, in fact such instruction is performative.

The statement and restatement of certain themes, along with the opportunity for the participants to give verbal assent to what is being proclaimed, reinforce the meaning of the activity taking place and allow the participants, in assuming prescribed roles, to understand the meaning of the rite from a stance of active involvement.³⁷

The instruction element of rites is not simply the communication of doctrine, but the process of putting the rite in context. This is exactly the function of the preface in the ASB Marriage Rite, which declares that 'This is the way of life' about to be undertaken. It sets what is to come in context, and performs the function of establishing the role of the minister, the congregation and the bride and groom in the rite which is to follow.

This simple example serves to illustrate what for Schaller is his basic point. The study of human communication should

transcend the content of utterances and point to the realm of meaning which unfolds in the process of using language Because liturgy represents a uniquely social intersection of many verbal and nonverbal forms of communication, any form of analysis which is limited to the textual content of rites will be found wanting.³⁸

Performatives and the Community

There are many nuances and developments of this area of pragmatics, too detailed to go into here. However, the point has been made that some language is clearly performative, and relies on accepted conventions to make it so. As a development of this, philosophers of language show that all language is performative when it is part of a speech act, in that even constative statements carry with them illocutionary forces such as assertion, affirmation, and proclamation. To be used correctly these statements need to function within conventions which are agreed and within a context which is understood and agreed. This area of language study

concentrates on language in use; and on that which it brings into being by its use. The application of this to liturgy shows that liturgical language is very specialised in the way that as a whole it acts to bring a community into being, and also to be the embodiment of the faith and action of the participants. It clearly relates to sacramental theology, as Ladriere shows. The essential point is that the meaning and function of utterances in a rite cannot be seen solely in terms of their propositional content. How the utterance functions within the overall ritual framework, and within the community involved, will be a vital aspect of interpretation.

Related to this is the notice which liturgists and grammarians need to take to the performative aspects of language. Not only must liturgists be familiar with the complex nature of performatives, they must also aim to mark explicit performatives clearly, and also make sure that they perform acts which are in line with the practice and doctrine of the community. Clearly this relates to doctrine, in that if a community cannot in all conscience do what is perceived to be required by a form of words, such a performative will fail in its criteria of usefulness. The language does not relate to what the community believes. However, deciding what such a community does 'actually do' is also a complex thing, and it might, as ever with liturgy, be more simple to analyse what the community is doing with extant texts than to predict what it might do with texts as yet unwritten. Perhaps here is a linguistic justification for the doctrine of 'reception', where if something is used but shown not to work, it can in all good conscience be allowed to drop. It is a difficult task indeed to write a text for a community as yet undefined. Thiselton says that 'when performative language is employed, it must be adapted closely to the theology of the community which is asked to use it'³⁹, but gives few clues as to how this might be done.

Stanley Fish and Interpretive Communities

Fish's work is introduced here because, as we have seen from Ladriere, the study of performatives is clearly bound up with the nature of the community which uses

performative language. Language can only be performative because the conventions for its use are shared. To that extent Fish is useful, because he points to the relationship between the community and its language use, especially the principles of use and interpretation which are 'taken as read' by separate worshipping groups. In his work deriving from Austin and Searle, and applying their findings to literary theory, Stanley Fish makes much of the notion of the 'interpretive community'. Facts are not obvious within texts, waiting to be uncovered by the process of interpretation. Rather they are produced when a certain process of interpretation is undertaken. For him a text does not exist independently of a reader. Rather, principles are to be found in the process of reading: the text and what it contains is a definition of the community which approaches it. In his essay on Coriolanus using speech act theory he goes so far as to say that institutions are no more than 'the temporary effects of speech act agreements'.⁴⁰ For him the nature of the community which undertakes these agreements is that which holds to the facts which the community itself produces within the speech acts they use. 'All facts are institutional'.⁴¹

However, there are many dangers and many things which are not covered by this approach. If the community is all, and its practices are those which create facts and products, it is difficult to see how the texts themselves might influence those communities and indeed change them. It is also hard to see how such communities would converse with other communities. Everything is contained within the interchange, whilst worshippers would want to point to the transforming power of the liturgy. If that power were simply the product of the community's own self understanding, then all would be deceived. It is hard to see in Fish's scheme (and admittedly he was not talking about theology or worship) where an agreed body of doctrine would come from, or how a heresy would be spotted. Nevertheless, the key point is that the relationship of text and community is complex, and certainly not as clear cut as some would hold. Fish simply does not allow anything extralinguistic into the equation.⁴²

Comment

There is a complex relationship at work here, between the community and that which defines it. Fish sees that relationship as being complex but internal. The worshipping community would want to give an external reference to the relationship. One might characterize the issue here as being that of the relationship between doctrine and practice. The complexity of this encounter can also be seen in Thiselton's discussion in New Horizons in Hermeneutics of Searle's development of Austin, particularly in the field of the language of promise⁴³. Thiselton details Searle's distinction between promise and assertion, where promise attempts to make the world fit the word, and assertion attempts to make the word fit the world. He applies this distinction to the language of Old Testament promise, and Pauline language about the work of Christ. Some language declares what God has done (world to word), some attempts to grasp a promise which is not yet fulfilled (word to world). As he shows, some utterances perform both roles: Jesus is Lord commits us to becoming servants of Christ (word to world), but also declares what God has made Christ (world to word).

This is of interest here because the performative aspect of the language of liturgy is simultaneously that of assertion and promise. The sacramental making present of God in the liturgy spoken of by Ladriere and Pickstock declares God's action to the community (world to word), but also commits the community to fulfilling the promise and becoming the people of God (word to world). The encounter, as exemplified in the person of Christ, is from God to humanity and from humanity to God: Christ is both God's gift to humanity, and the offering of humanity to God. The performative function of the language of the liturgy is to make this encounter present in action, and though some aspects of individual utterances may in themselves be either promise or assertion (a Creed, to use Searle's terminology, asserts, an absolution, strictly, promises⁴⁴), these utterances function in a wider frame where the encounter cannot be so strictly delineated. Certain utterances only gain credibility by their presence within an institutional frame: For a person to know their sins are forgiven through Christ, certain beliefs and practices have

to be in evidence first. The overall frame is one where promise and assertion are inextricably intertwined, and definition of exact meaning is all the more difficult to arrive at.

New Horizons in Hermeneutics is not specifically about the language of worship, but the position at which Thiselton arrives is remarkably similar in the terms he uses. He is at pains to point out that Fish's argument is circular and inadequate, and keen to show that the study of performatives in a religious context takes the philosophical issues onto deeper levels. In a religious context performative language is self involving, but the sum of the speech act is greater than the combined intentions and beliefs of the participants. His discussion of the work of Evans shows that for self involving language to function properly, it must be based on truth claims which are external to the speech act itself. This becomes a recurring theme: 'often ... speech acts embody a propositional content' (p. 294); speech acts of praise in the Psalms 'entail extra-linguistic pledges or attitudes, or other "backing".' (p. 598). Performatives are not simply conventions, they are interwoven with truth claims and assertions which form part of the linguistic and extra linguistic context. These truth claims are functions of the text which challenge the community from without: in many ways they are trans-contextual.

The complex web of relationships here is perhaps too great to untangle. Thiselton has a go at expressing the paradox at least. Some statements (here he is thinking about the power of the Cross) do not depend solely upon the beliefs of the community about those statements: they have an authority which comes from behind the text. But they will not be read in a self involving way by people who do not recognise them; whose 'horizons and life-worlds' include different beliefs with a different 'hermeneutical agenda'.⁴⁵ In other words, truth claims and statements about God (or from God) will only be heard clearly within a context of belief, but those claims do not depend on the believers for their authority. A believing community, engaging with language about God, expressing praise to God, asking for forgiveness from God, and hearing about God, does not therefore make God in its own image: the language used allows that which is outside the

community to be made powerfully present, within the institutions and conventions of that community. Performative language is self involving but dependent on factors beyond the self: God becomes embodied in the action of the community.

Performatives and Sacramentality

Here then is a way into a discussion about the presence of God sacramentally in the language of the liturgy. The point has been made above that 'explicit performatives' have a clear function within liturgy, but that performative theory cannot be restricted to this area of use alone, as Crystal, Thiselton and others would seem to suggest. Austin asserts that all language is in some way performative. However, as he puts it, there is no pure performative and no pure constative, rather 'more general families of speech acts', where truth and falsehood or the 'happiness' or 'unhappiness' of utterances exist on a continuum, with no clear dividing line. Austin ends up saying that at each point, the decision as to whether an utterance is a locution (i.e. is more or less constative), or has illocutionary force (i.e. is more or less performative) has to be taken by the users of the utterances themselves. If all language is thus performative, then the specialised language use represented by liturgy clearly needs to be studied with this in mind.

Following Austin, Ladriere, Schaller and Pickstock assert that liturgical language is of itself performative, placing the user in an existential situation, within an institution, where God dwells in the language used. Liturgical language is thus regarded as being sacramental: by its use and in its use it points to something greater than itself, whose life and power is revealed in its being carried out, and is in living relationship to the external form being used. Again, it is relatively easy to point to specific examples of this: a blessing functions to bestow the presence and power of God on a congregation or person; an absolution pronounces and perhaps delivers forgiveness and puts the absolved into a new eschatological relationship with God.

In the standard definition of the sacramental action of a priest it is stated that the particular frame of mind or spiritual state of the priest at the time such a blessing or absolution is given, or when the eucharist is celebrated, cannot affect the nature of the sacrament performed, if all the other circumstances are correctly in place. Thus just because the minister is daydreaming while giving the absolution does not mean that the congregation are not forgiven. Austin's initial explanation of performative theory is put in near identical terms: he says that intention or seriousness behind a performative utterance are not the criteria by which such an utterance should be judged. So a groom, having spoken vows correctly, at the right time and in the right place to the right person cannot say that because he did not mean it he was not therefore properly married. There are wider forces at work in such utterances than can be reduced to what the individual thought they were doing at the time.

This therefore gives a performative justification to what is a truism within sacramental theology, but which is also more widely applicable liturgically. Others have pointed out that worshippers uttering words of praise, or repentance, or declaration need not mean them sincerely at the time in order for them to function as such⁴⁶ (though clearly, as Austin shows in his discussion of apologies, the absence of sincerity might lead us to believe that the utterance was made in bad faith, or was insincere). You do not have to have your sins at the forefront of your mind in order to make an act of repentance, neither do you have to experience the relief of being pardoned in order to be absolved (illocutionary and perlocutionary force both being relevant here).

The fact that the sacramental example is explicated by the performative insight and is then applicable to specific actions of the whole liturgical community reveals that the sacramental aspect of liturgical language is much wider than language concerned with specific sacramental actions. It is interesting in this regard that, when Austin explains that a gap between inner sincerity and outward verbal form does not invalidate the form of itself, he uses the language of sacramental theology. He says:

we are apt to have a feeling that [utterances] being serious consists in their being uttered as (merely) the outward and visible sign, for convenience or other record or for information, of an inward and spiritual act.⁴⁷

In the specific terms of Austin's argument, this is clearly the case: a linguistic act functions because of the conventions which exist for its use, regardless of sincerity or seriousness. The outward signs are important, put in their proper place, and it is not necessarily the case that they express the inward and spiritual act.

However, this could lead to too simple a separation between intention and expression. Austin goes on to say that certain performatives require subsequent behaviour to validate the utterance (such as actions following a promise), and that some performatives are 'designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings'.⁴⁸ Though he does not develop this argument, it is a vital one for our current study, not in its specific sense of individual worshippers and their relationship to their utterances, but the sacramental nature of liturgical language overall. What relationship does what is inward and spiritual have with what is outward and visible? Liturgical language is performative because it does something, but against Fish it is important to say that in worship what is made present is not the outward form of the wishes of the community. Something outside the community is also present. The words to which Austin alludes actually speak of an 'inward and spiritual grace': the presence of something from outside which transforms the perceptions of the community and the nature of the outward and visible signs themselves.

What happens when a community worships is that words of praise, repentance, commitment, declaration and assertion are made in such a context that, even if the worshippers are not consciously making an inward and spiritual act, something inward and spiritual actually takes place. Because the focus of the community is not on itself, but on what is external to the community, the speech acts are such that the illocutionary force is wider and deeper than can be extricated from the utterances themselves. This is obvious in terms of praise and adoration, and also with regard to prayers of repentance and intercession, but also works for credal

statements. In the saying of a creed, or affirmation of faith, a community is not passing on information about God, but declaring that it is the community bound together by the making of those assertions, those speech acts. 'The Creed is not the statement of a collection of individuals all standing up and saying that each happens to believe in the same set of unrelated statements. It sets forth the faith of the Church'.⁴⁹

Liturgical language is not there simply to express what the worshippers want to express at the time. It allows worshippers to perform acts, which are regarded as important even if the emotion or commitment which might underlie the utterances are not exactly present. The acts are held to be important by the community, perhaps because they are enjoined by normative texts, or recommended by experience or tradition. At every point the worshipper is directed away from the self, to the community, to the tradition, to the scriptures, and within all of this, to the object of worship, to God. A sacrament relates worshippers to the reality of the events of the gospel through faith, even as these events are proclaimed in the liturgy and in the proclamation of the word.⁵⁰ The words used are an outward sign which are indwelt by the God for whom no words are sufficient. God is present in the actions performed by the words, not simply specifically in clear utterances such as the absolution, but in the action of uttering words in a worshipping context. Liturgical language gains illocutionary force and has perlocutionary effects because of a complex relationship of the community to its texts and practices. Liturgical language breaks Fish's circle of community to text to community, and finds God in the words it uses, not as a unit of meaning, but as an inward reality within an outward form which of itself could not contain him. The language of liturgy is therefore performative upon the community, as well as within the community.

It is therefore pertinent to ask whether it is specific linguistic acts which consecrate or absolve, or whether the presence of such acts within the whole liturgy means that it is the whole liturgy which is consecratory. We have already seen that if the priest's mind wanders during a prayer, the prayer is still valid.

Presumably the same is true of the congregation, because the fact that the words are spoken makes the rite valid, even if it might be more significant if all were paying attention. Many present will have heard the words before, so attention is not the only factor. The act is greater than the sum of the individuals taking part, and presumably greater than the sum of the word used. During the eucharistic prayer some people's minds may be on the hymn just sung, or on a prayer spoken earlier in the service. Others may stay with one phrase of the prayer, and not hear the rest. The fact that they are there within the whole rite means that they are still proper communicants. Similarly, realisation of forgiveness may only come after the reception of bread and wine, but this does not invalidate the absolution: it is the interaction of texts and participants, together with use of the scriptures and tradition, which makes the rite a sacrament.⁵¹

What follows from this is that the performative power, the sacramental nature, of the liturgy and the words within it is not to be found within certain utterances alone, but within the whole rite, and within the self involvement and self understanding of the community which performs the rite. The words may speak of one thing, and have a doctrinal history, but performed within a rite for a community something else may emerge completely unintended by the framers of the liturgy. This underpins the belief of the church that the whole of the eucharistic prayer is consecratory, not simply the words of institution, but leads on to a wider thought that the whole of the rite, and the hymns and actions of the worshippers are also consecratory, in allowing the eucharistic prayer to have its proper place in the liturgy.⁵² It also relates to Austin's conditions for happy performatives referred to above, which involve appropriate ensuing action by the users of the utterance, or at least the intention of doing so. Insofar as human intentions are relevant, a rite may not be truly sacramental because it does not enable the participants to act in a way commensurate with the words used, or that they know what is required and simply refuse to do it.

Sacral Language and Intelligibility

It might be possible to argue from what has gone before that if the community is aware of what it is doing during the liturgy, the specific nature of the language used need not be intelligible of itself to every member of the congregation. After all, many a wedding couple have plighted their troth to each other, not understood the meaning of the words, but still fulfilled all the conditions for happy performatives: the relevant phrase being used in the right place by the right people, with the correct intentions. This therefore calls into question the debate about intelligibility which drove much liturgical revision from the 1950s and onwards. Indeed, early writing on liturgical language made this very point: as long as the congregation is taught well about what is happening, the words themselves need not be intelligible. As a further justification it was shown that ancient language had come to perform a sacral function, and contemporary speech was deemed to be so secular that it could not be performative in the way that existing rites could.

This argument does have its limitations though. In its own version of liturgical revision, the Roman Catholic church has faced this question in a specific form. Latin clearly had a sacral and numinous character, and was performative and sacramental in a specialised sense. The community 'understood' the use of Latin in the Mass, and conventions existed as to its use. With the correct teaching and understanding of the Mass, it was possible to justify the use of Latin, even though intelligent participation was hard to envisage. With pressure to include the vernacular, Rome aimed to keep Latin for the most 'sacred' part of the liturgy, but allowed the vernacular for other parts of the service.⁵³ The fact that this did not succeed and that Latin was removed from the liturgy completely shows that more is at stake in the performativity of liturgical language than a form which the community is told it should use, because it has been taught certain things which are not automatically obvious from the words themselves. Some form of living relationship with the words themselves is important, even though they will function conventionally.

In a specialist service such as a marriage, the couple and congregation have a clear idea of what they are to do, and what they want the service to do for them. Thus, it is possible to say that whatever words are used, intelligible or not, the service 'works'. Even here, though, it might be argued that some connection between words used and actions undertaken is desirable: the couple need to recognise something in the words they use. To apply this to christian worship in general, the sacramental nature of language is surely to be found beyond a shared understanding of the conventions in use: the language has to connect with the life of the worshippers, and therefore be recognisable to them in some form. This goes beyond the strictly performative, and even beyond wider speech-act theory, in that language which is intelligible on a semantic level is put to use in the liturgy in such a way that worshippers as individuals bound up into a community bring different understandings into play, and an encounter with the Word takes place in a way which transforms the 'everyday' whilst keeping it in place. This encounter would be impossible if the language had to be explained first.

This is not to say that language used in liturgy should not have its own register, nor that 'religious' language cannot function to influence the language of the everyday, such that the relationship is two way. But just as bread and wine in Communion should have some relationship with that used at ordinary meals, so the language of worship needs to be in living relationship with the language used by worshippers outside the worshipping context. In this way intelligibility serves the sacramental nature of language, rather than cheapening or devaluing religious speech. It opens up the ways in which the language of worship is performative, enabling the living God to dwell in that which would otherwise be strictly conventional alone.

Conclusion

What is clear is that performative theory sees language as something which does something, and that liturgy is a special example of a speech act. There are 'explicit performatives' in liturgy, whose conditions of use need clearly to be understood

by those who frame them and those who use them, but the wider point is that all liturgical language is performative. To use words in the context of worship is to actualise a community, defined as that which chooses to use those words, and is to do certain things in relation to the God who is beyond that community and yet contained within its expression. The sacramental nature of that encounter is such that no one part of the liturgy can be said to be specifically sacramental: all words make the Word plain, and therefore the whole nature of the rite needs to be carefully considered, even if certain prayers or phrases make the sacramental nature of the whole of the rite particularly plain, just as explicit performatives make the illocutions in all utterances plain.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. In his short paragraph on performatives in 'Liturgical language in Sociolinguistic Perspective' Crystal acknowledges that 'other realities' come into being through the language of liturgy, beyond the 'purely performative' acts of absolution, consecration, and blessing. However, 'these effects are less certain, being dependent on the volition of the participants...' (p. 132). This is exactly the point: liturgical language is performative in varying ways, and this makes exact meaning more difficult to define.
2. J.L Austin, How to do Things with Words, 1962; 2nd Edn, 1975.
3. The key work here is Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language, 1969. Thiselton has discussed the similarities and differences of Austin and Searle, together with other treatments, such as that of Recanati. See New Horizons in Hermeneutics, 1992, pp 283 ff.
4. Joseph J. Schaller, 'Performative Language Theory: An Analysis of Ritual', in Worship, Sept 1988 (Vol 62: 5), pp 415 - 432.
5. Austin, op. cit., p. 6.
6. Ibid., pp. 14 - 15.
7. Ibid., p. 155. In a discussion in New Horizons in Hermeneutics, p. 284, Thiselton notes that where Austin (and Evans) use the term 'exercitive', Searle, Recanati, Levinson and Leech use the term 'directive'. Though there are nuances of meaning at stake, for the purposes of this study it is the general point about performatives functioning within conventions which is the key one, and this lies at the basis of all speech act theory.
8. Austin, op. cit., p. 151.
9. Ibid., pp. 99 - 100.
10. Ibid., p. 139.
11. The detail of this thought is found in Thiselton's article 'The supposed power of words in the Biblical Writings', Journal of Theological Studies, 25, (1974), pp 283 - 299. He includes the basic points of this discussion within his treatment of Austin and Searle in New Horizons in Hermeneutics, pp 292 - 293. Here he says that it is 'institutional features in Israel's life which set the stage for effective speech acts'. (p. 293, his italics)
12. A.C. Thiselton, Language, Liturgy and Meaning, 1986, p. 19.
13. Austin, op. cit., p. 148.

14. Jean Ladriere, 'The Performativity of Liturgical Language', Concilium 9, 1973, pp. 50 - 62.
15. Ibid., p. 54.
16. Ibid., p. 55.
17. Ladriere, op. cit., p. 56.
18. Ladriere, op. cit., p. 59.
19. In the section of New Horizons in Hermeneutics referred to above, A.C. Thiselton applies this thinking to blessings in Israel, and says that the power of such utterances 'related to institutional features in Israel's life which set the stage for effective speech acts.' (p. 293)
20. Ibid., p. 61.
21. Ibid., p. 62.
22. Ibid., p. 60.
23. Ibid., p. 62.
24. 'Liturgy and Language: The Sacred Polis', in Liturgy in Dialogue, ed. P. Bradshaw and B. Spinks, 1993, pp. 115 - 137.
25. Ibid., p. 127.
26. Ibid., p. 128.
27. Ibid., p. 136.
28. Ibid., p. 137.
29. E. Daniel, The Prayer-Book: Its History, Language and Contents, no date given, p. 321.
30. In this regard it is interesting to note that one of the Eucharistic Prayers under discussion by General Synod at present contains the phrase 'saints and angels' at this point, thus making explicit what might otherwise be hidden in the text.
31. Joseph J. Schaller, op. cit., p. 416.
32. Ibid., p. 416.
33. Ibid., p. 417.
34. Ibid., p. 417. My italics.

35. Ibid., p. 419.
36. Ibid., p. 419.
37. Ibid., p. 422. I have difficulties with his use of the word 'meaning', and might prefer the word function, or use.
38. Ibid., p. 432.
39. Thiselton, op. cit., p. 21.
40. Stanley Fish, 'How to do things with Austin and Searle', in Is There a Text in This Class, 1980, p. 215.
41. Ibid., p. 198.
42. There is a detailed discussion of Fish, particularly in relation to meaning and doctrine, in New Horizons in Hermeneutics, op. cit., pp. 535 - 550.
43. Ibid., pp. 294 ff.
44. It should be noted that this is a very strict uses of the terms coined by Searle. Clearly what an absolution or Creed does within a worshipping community is complex, as the argument in the rest of the paragraph shows.
45. A.C. Thiselton, New Horizons, op. cit., p. 616.
46. i.e. they do not have to describe the make up of your emotions as you speak them. See Thiselton, Language liturgy and Meaning pp 17 - 18.
47. Austin, op. cit., p. 9 (my italics).
48. Austin, op. cit., p. 15.
49. Michael Perry, Sharing in One Bread, 1980, p. 34.
50. So R.S Wallace, 'Sacrament', in the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 1985.
51. Related to this, it is worth noting that since Dix (but following ancient usage) it is a commonplace in liturgical thinking that it is the whole of the eucharistic prayer which is consecratory, not simply the words of institution.
52. See, for example, Christopher Cocksworth, 'Eucharistic Theology', in The Identity of Anglican Worship: 'Anglican liturgy has always related the Communion to the rest of the sacramental action and has not tried to isolate it as a separate rite within the Eucharist.' p.55

53. Mark Elvins, in Towards a People's Liturgy, 1994, documents the rise of the vernacular in a church where since the Council of Trent 'common' language was a sign of people in dispute with the official teaching of the Holy See. See particularly pp. 36 - 43.

Chapter 5

Issues Raised by Contemporary Theories of Language for the Language of Worship.

The influence of theories of language on the language of worship

We saw in the first two chapters that in the period from 1955 to the present the Church of England has undergone massive liturgical change. From being the case that, officially at least, worship was tied to the Book of Common Prayer (with permission allowed for other worship provision once its requirements had been met¹), the Church of England now has a multiplicity of rites, a large number of officially produced (and approved) resource books, and an authorised service which is not a text but a set of rubrics. Even the texts A Service of the Word has control over (confessions, absolutions and affirmations of faith) exhibit a dizzying variety of options. It is the contention of this study that the factors which have led to this situation are not simply those which relate specifically to questions about better worship, framed in a narrow liturgical sense. Though the debates have been almost exclusively about liturgical and worship matters, it has been argued that they have been fuelled by a reaction and response to changing attitudes to the nature of language in general. These attitudes, expressed in certain theories of language, not only influence the expression of worship but raise further issues which will be sketched out here.

The movement in the understanding of the way language functions in worship is instructive in this regard. We saw in chapter one that, though language itself was not a prime force in enabling liturgical change, the questions which were raised in the early years of our period did provoke discussion about the language of the liturgy. The Liturgical Commission began with a concern about sacral language and intelligibility, focusing on the meaning of words and sentences. It was recognised that some words had changed their meanings, and that the language of the Book of Common Prayer was some way away from contemporary usages.

Though initially this was not seen as entirely bad, it was clear that any new services should contain language which was intelligible, and able to be used without too much initial education by worshippers. The area of intelligibility soon developed into questions about meaning, with the beginnings of a discussion about context, and a recognition that meaning happened in a context where words were spoken, responded to, and used by people in a variety of ways. It was seen that although certain words had perhaps changed meaning or become unintelligible, they still had a function, and therefore meant something to some worshippers, even if this meaning was not able to be demonstrated semantically.

In the 1960s and 1970s this thinking developed into a deliberate policy of allowing the language of liturgy to be many layered. Series Two enshrined the idea of deliberate ambiguity in places where there was doctrinal difference, and Frost's work on Series Three aimed to make this doctrinal necessity into a liturgical virtue. Though some formulations were clearly included to allow previously held views to be expressed in language which could be used to express the opposite view, Frost also championed intentional multi-valency, to allow the richness sought by worshippers to be found in new texts. Even here the debate was held within the boundaries of a discussion of meaning, but the underlying intentions were clearly related to the use of liturgy in context, and the needs of religious language to include all worshippers with their differing needs and backgrounds. The focus of the debate about liturgical language thus moved away from intelligibility and meaning to how these words were going to be used, and what they did in worship.

This has been the key feature of developments in Anglican liturgy in the 1980s and beyond. Though there is still a concentration in certain discussions upon narrow semantic questions (and this will always be so where eucharistic prayers are concerned), Kinsley's isolation of the needs of the 'audience' in 1980² set the scene for fifteen years of incredible change. In 1980 it might have been possible to argue that the ASB was a symbol of fixity, and that the words it contained were normative, applicable in every context. The production of all the directory material since has shown that seeds of flexibility also found within the ASB were

much more the truth of the matter. There has been official recognition that the needs of worshipping communities in the Church of England can now only be met by a diversity of provision, with very few (if any) core texts. Current debates about which prayers might be included in a so-called 'knapsack'³, and about having a common 'core'⁴, serve to reveal the underlying trend away from fixity to diversity, with all the complications it entails for doctrine and practice. Patterns for Worship talks of communities being bound together by shared stories, which is a long way from pointing to a liturgical text to find the beliefs of the Church of England.

In some ways it is illustrative of this development that it is being increasingly shown that such developments were prefigured in the way worshippers actually used the Book of Common Prayer. Debates in the 1960s and 1970s about the nature of offering, the presence of Christ in the sacrament, and eucharistic sacrifice revealed that differing interpretations and practices had each been expressed in the same words, with appeal to the meaning of those same words, such that it was seen that the words meant different things in different churches. Appeals to the 'sacral' nature of Book of Common Prayer language showed that archaic formulations were used by people in different ways: just because everyone used the same words did not mean that they all did the same things with them (nor that the words did the same things to them). It is a measure of the current state of the debate about language that the former usage of the Book of Common Prayer is now being discussed in these terms. Similarly, there is now a recognition that to find the defining nature of the Church of England one should look at how it worships, with the words used being a vital but not the only factor.

Most writing on this general development in the liturgy of the Church of England has concentrated on the liturgical precedents for change, opportunities for the broadening and deepening of the worship of congregations, and the questions of what sort of words should be used. The drift towards flexibility and variety seems to have been generally accepted as a 'sign of the times' (except for those who dislike the times), and there is little serious discussion of the underlying reasons

for this. It is the belief of this study that though much of what has happened does enable the Church of England to benefit from a liturgical situation enjoyed by the early church, much of the impetus towards this has been provided by changing views on the nature of language in general, within the overall philosophical change so presciently noted by Basil Naylor⁵ as eventually contributing to the climate of popular thought.

We saw in chapters three and four that from Saussure onwards the study of language moved away from formalism into detailed discussions about the nature of meaning. Words were now seen as conveying meaning only within context, because there was no formal relationship between the signifier (the collection of letters making up the word) and the signified. Saussure's basic work paved the way for many thinkers to discuss the nature of meaning, and to look carefully at the function of words within their linguistic context. This led to a recognition that the extra-linguistic context was just as important, and that utterances which contained the same words meant different things depending upon their context. The move has been away from general description towards analysis of the particular, away from prescriptive grammar to descriptive linguistics, away from fixity to diversity.

However, even Saussure felt that there was a reservoir of words and constructions (langue) from which actual utterances (parole) were made. His methods were initially used by structuralists to look for defining structures in language and society, and thus changed thinking about the specifics of meaning, but reinforced the notion that language does point to something beyond itself. In more recent years Saussure's method has been used to 'deconstruct' the world view and epistemology which believes in an accepted structure, insisting that precisely because language is a series of arbitrary signs, no underlying langue can be recovered. For much of our period the philosophical air has been full of postmodernism and poststructuralism with its general attack on 'logocentrism' and scepticism about the grand narrative and a viable external reference point.

Other language specialists have highlighted the use of language as it functions between people. J.L. Austin looked at how language was used actually to do things, dependent on context, and that the meaning of words was therefore dependent on the shared understandings of the participants in the speech act. Ludwig Wittgenstein began his Philosophical Investigations with an attack on Augustine's view that language was learnt by realising which objects were referred to by which words. Language was much more complex, and words only gained meaning within certain contexts, obeying certain rules understood and agreed by the participants. Linguistics specialists now examine language in context, rather than general rules, and in their description show how words can have different status and meanings according to particular use. It is now axiomatic that diachronic study can only happen in relation to proper synchronic study: what a word or phrase meant will not always tell you how that word functions now. The air is now full of various 'fallacies': the intentional, the referential, the genetic, and others. All combine together to show that the meaning and function of word cannot be taken for granted any more.

This is not to say that everybody who examines the nature of language inevitably reaches these conclusions; only that fixity of meaning is called into question, and that language is regarded as a complex phenomenon, which cannot be controlled as was once thought. Liturgical questions about language have been asked within this general climate. Debates about how to make the liturgy intelligible have occurred as the philosophical world has been faced with deconstruction and an attack on the grand narrative. Debates about the meaning of a word in the liturgy have come to see that meaning is not a question which can be asked in isolation of function and context. The diversity of rites now on offer is a result not only of a desire to give a broad worship provision but also of the prevailing sense that meaning will not be found in one text, but in a variety of expressions which are used within communities. Words are now seen as the place where meaning is to be found, and where an external reference point is encountered, but the exact nature of that encounter is much less available for description than once it was.

Issues raised by contemporary theories of language for the language of worship

The study of language in these terms has obviously had an influence on the writing of new liturgy, and also raises issues which have been hinted at but not been explicitly discussed by those responsible for this process in the Church of England. One of these is the debate about referentiality, and how the language of worship points to God. We have seen that one of the developments of Saussure's thought has been a general scepticism about referentiality, and the possibility of ever apprehending a 'centre' for language. This is obviously a key question, because religious language is above all referential, centred upon a doctrine and experience of the God who is beyond language. Church of England provision is now incredibly diverse and varied, in response to the recognition that meaning is not to be found in a restricted number of texts, and strict control is only placed on certain texts (confession, absolution, creeds, and eucharistic prayers). Even with these, the principle has been accepted that these should exhibit their own variety. So, one of the 'affirmations of faith' now authorised in A Service of the Word speaks only of Jesus' death and resurrection, another includes his life as the pre-existent Logos, and another concentrates on the incarnation. All three concentrate on Jesus alone, with occasional references to the Father, and no mention of the Spirit.⁶

Presumably the justification for this is that each Creed speaks of some of the truth of God who cannot be compassed, and thus this fits in with pluriformity and diversity. Previous creeds aimed to contain a broad description of the belief of the church: these look at the particular, with no reference in themselves to the broader basis of belief. They do so in response to the understanding that no one text can refer completely to God, but that many texts can combine in a worshipping context and over time allowing an encounter with God to take place. The issue here is a central one for the language of worship in its current context. Notice has been taken of current philosophical and cultural trends, some of which would seek to eliminate any external reference in language. The language of

worship while working within these trends also aims to proclaim its external referent, and perhaps needs to look at how it is able to do this with integrity.

One solution which might bear fruit is to develop Thiselton's thesis (derived from Austin and Evans) about the self involving nature of religious language.⁷ Where some theories of language would deny any referentiality to language at all, it is possible in Thiselton's terms to show that some language, in order to function at all, requires an external reference. People will simply not be able to use the language of worship if there is no truth to it for them: language may be functional, but one of the functions of the language of worship is to point to a reference point beyond itself. The issue for those working with the language of worship is that religious language depends on a reference point outside the linguistic community, but that it cannot be used in a way which relates the user to God outside this believing framework. Liturgical language depends on certainty in a contemporary climate which distrusts and deconstructs such certainty, and so cannot automatically be understood as referring to God in a way which the non-believer will recognise.

Those writing and using the language of worship will therefore want to recognise with contemporary language theory that language is not automatically referential, with a propositional content understood by all, but will not want to take this theory to its extreme and say that no such referentiality is possible. It has been shown in chapters three and four that communities of faith and belief can make language performative, such that the language of faith and worship can work. Referentiality can therefore be seen as a function of religious language, and the opportunity given to expressions of faith which are recognisable to the community using those words. Words will not work in and of themselves: that much is clear. But words will work when used by a community which recognises them, and is able to use them to do tasks which they want to do. This holds even when the task required is inexpressible, since the business of worship is to express mystery. God will not be contained in the words, but the words will contain God. The tension here is that highlighted by our previous discussion of Fish, in that it is quite

possible to argue that the words work because the community wants them to, not because of any external reference which is intrinsic to them, but Thiselton's treatment does provide a way forward whilst still valuing the performative theory which leads to that conclusion.

The point here for framers of liturgy is to provide texts and resources which will allow worshipping communities to do something which they recognise and want to do, and that will mean taking even more notice of the context of worship than has been the case in the past. Clearly these texts will have been written and provided with the intention that they are used within a certain understanding of God and the church, and for a certain purpose. Here too the tension revealed in certain theories of language plays a part. There can ultimately be no control over how language works in these contexts, and neither can it be assumed that worshippers will do what they are intended to do. But that does not mean that texts cannot have an intention. Thiselton talks of texts being 'directed': a knowledge of context and general purpose will give a direction to the way people then use it. This is not incompatible with contemporary theory, as Thiselton shows, but requires careful working and practice. The movement cannot be one way: congregations cannot be guaranteed to receive what is intended, but they will perceive the direction of a service if it is composed in line with their needs and experience.

It is possible to relate this issue to the old tag of lex orandi lex credendi: where perhaps the *lex credendi*, the content of belief, has driven the *lex orandi*, the performance of belief, in these days the *lex orandi*, how people pray and worship, is providing the context for the *lex credendi* to be encountered. This leads to the next issue, that of performativity, community, and truth. Recent liturgical revision has taken the fact that liturgy is performed by a community of worshippers very seriously. Clearly no worship text has been written purely for its beauty or propriety as a written text alone, but often the discussion about the use of prayers or texts has revolved solely about the question of how the text will sound when

spoken. Works such as Lent, Holy Week, Easter consciously sought to imagine and engage with the communities which would put the texts into action.

Language theory shows that this aspect of the functioning of liturgical language is of especial importance. Our discussion of performativity in chapter four showed that, in relation to the discussion of referentiality above, utterances will only be useful when they take place within a context where the conventions and understandings as to their use are in place. In this sense the language of worship does not create the community: it serves the community, which brings all the other contextual elements to bear which will allow the language to do something. Neither does the community create the language, but in using it the community is challenged and recreated by that to which the language is allowed to point.

The discussion also showed that it was the whole service, all of liturgical language, which was performative. This accords with liturgical developments (or happy rediscoveries) which indicate that the whole of the eucharistic prayer is that which consecrates, not simply the words of institution, and we wondered whether this should not be extended, such that the whole of the rite, word and sacrament, might not be consecratory - at least as far as the worshipper is concerned - because of the performative nature of the language of the rite as a whole, in relationship with non-linguistic factors also. This does raise questions as to the place of doctrine, and the function of particular words and phrases deemed to be theologically sensitive, and what performative action they have in the context of the rite.

Language theory would seem to indicate that in practical terms specific words and phrases do not have the significant weight in relation to other parts of the service that theologians would seem to give them. Rather, in practice, it is the whole theological thrust of the congregation, with its basic beliefs and practical outworkings, which will define in which way certain phrases are then performative. In some ways the deliberate ambiguity of current eucharistic prayers relies upon this fact: communities (or individual worshippers within a community)

will allow the language to be performative in their own way. Because language is subject to 'free play', and cannot be controlled, specific understandings cannot be guaranteed. So when David Glover sets out to describe the doctrine of each of the eucharistic prayers in the ASB⁸ he finds that even phrases which he feels are unambiguous can be interpreted in different ways as long as certain understandings and conventions are present.

This says three things. One is that no piece of liturgical writing can be unambiguous, because language cannot be controlled that tightly. The second is that the community, with its shared understandings and conventions becomes the place where the language of liturgy is interpreted and put into action. The third is that it is possible within general boundaries and knowledge of all that has formed the worshipping community to create words and texts which can be interpreted and used by that community towards a purpose which is agreed. Agreement and meaning is possible, but only in general terms. Perhaps then Christopher Cocksworth in his discussion of eucharistic doctrine is on safer ground when he talks of communities not unified by specific doctrines found in specific texts, but on 'unitive categories....which form a significant core of doctrinal content'.⁹ Only occasionally are these categories revealed in a common language; rather they are points around which people gather and on which different understandings can be based while doctrinal integrity is preserved.

The issue here is one of truth and doctrine in worship. It is now impossible to create a form of words around which everyone will agree and which they will use in the same way. Even when churches are using the same form of service, usages and understandings may still vary. Contemporary theories of language have long recognised this, but have also been at pains to point out that in practice shared understanding is possible. Wittgenstein talked of fixed points and cross bearings, and it seems clear now that the Church of England is being asked to unite around a way of worshipping which contains certain fixed points of agreement, certain things to which prayers refer, rather than a single form of words which everyone can say. The conventions of worship and the content of services are now crucial,

because it is recognised that language cannot create doctrine, only express it. If current trends continue, and the replacement for the ASB in the year 2000 sanctions even greater variety, there will be no common text in general use, but rather a family of usages. Words will therefore point to unitive categories, either generally, like the persons of the Trinity, or specifically, to bread and wine, and to the death of Christ remembered in them. Those are fixed points. The cross bearings will be understandings and conventions used by each worshipper and community: out of these will come new understandings, and challenge to the community as a whole. This can happen with doctrinal integrity, given an understanding of liturgical language. Though the boundary between freedom and control is a difficult one, there is no need to fear loss of control through a diversity of texts and practices if fixed points are in place.

In this way of looking at the issue, words become sacramental. In themselves they remain as words, and do not automatically point beyond themselves. In the worshipping context they gain usefulness and meaning because of what they do, and in that they become vehicles for an encounter with God. One of the uniting aspects of eucharistic debate is the way of looking at bread and wine which sees them as the means of God's grace in the sacrament: the material is intrinsic to the gift, but the material in itself is bread and wine only. So the words of the liturgy can be sacramental, not possessing power of themselves, but in the context of being the means by which people and God meet with each other. And this encounter does not depend on the faith of the individual worshipper at each turn, but upon the performative nature of worship as a whole.

The final issue is that of common structures. This is an extension of the performativity debate outline above. The question is how it is possible to indicate how particular words may function if either the text is a new one, or the deeper point is accepted that even familiar words and constructions will not always be taken in the way they are intended. One of the fixed points here is now that of using a common structure. Patterns for Worship takes this as its raison d'être: with a variety of texts available, their directedness will be seen in the way they are

used. Certain elements are provided as fixed points, not only for the outworking of christian doctrine, but also its anglican outworking. The texts used may vary (as they always have done in certain points of the liturgy, such as the collect, or readings), but the place they are given indicates their use within the whole rite.

This allows for theological diversity, breadth of expression, and variety of practice. It also allows churches which have been divided on the issue of doctrine as expressed in texts to become united on the fixed points which are included in all their services, and sanguine about the practical outworking of those differences, as David Crystal points out in his sociolinguistic study. This allows the possibility, freely taken up by the Church of England, of including a variety of texts which do not presume to say everything that has to be said doctrinally, but within an overall structure can play their part. If this is not to descend, as it might, into meaningless free-play of usages where one community does not recognise or value another (which is Thiselton's nightmare about Fish's work¹⁰) then the common structures must be recognised and affirmed, and common ways of thinking and communication must be established, so that pluriformity is an expression of the diversity of God, not a denial of anything beyond the self understanding of the church. Common structures, fixed points, and the acceptance that worship is about God, will enable the church to grapple with contemporary thinking about language, and use this to express belief and encounter God in the world he has given us.

Conclusion

Contemporary theories of language have influenced the liturgy of the Church of England in countless ways, not all of them healthy. We are now at a point where diversity of provision is such that it is not possible to be truly clear about where certainty and truth reside, in simple terms. Current thinking has shown us that this was probably never possible, even with a uniform liturgical provision (if such there was). Now diversity is in the open, and the Church of England proceeds with a debate on common prayer and the nature of Anglicanism. It is possible to take

current thinking about language and give up all hope, because the possibility of meaning and communication seems so remote. Would it not have been better to keep a language that everyone knew was sacred and distinctive, rather than slide down the slippery slope into the denial of objective truth and external reference?

It has been shown in this study that the language of liturgy remains distinctive because its purpose and action is distinctive. The use to which words are put defines them, not any meaning which they carry in themselves. The fact that language is functional and performative shows that it is possible to have words which have as their function a reference to God, because without it they would be meaningless. This recognises that such a function demands a context where such a use is viable, but we now see that all language works in context, and making a claim that there is no external reference in language requires language to perform the same function as that which it denies.

The language of worship will continue to wrestle with its purpose, intention, and reference. It will do this in a context which now calls all these things into question. It is up to those working in this area to continue to show that the language of worship as it is put to use can function within these debates, and also point beyond words themselves, to the one who is called the Word made flesh.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. The so called 'third service'. See Bryan Spinks, 'Not So Common Prayer: The Third Service', in The Renewal of Common Prayer, 1993, pp 55 - 67.
2. in the essay on language in The Alternative Service Book 1980: A Commentary by the Liturgical Commission, p. 163.
3. So named by Alan Wilkinson in a Church Times article asking for a collection of prayers which we could recommend that everyone knew by heart.
4. See Michael Vasey, 'Promoting a Common Core' in The Renewal of Common Prayer, op. cit., pp 81 - 100.
5. Why Prayer Book Revision at All?, 1964, p. 38.
6. A Service of the Word and Affirmations of Faith, 1994, affirmations 3, 5 and 6.
7. See New Horizons in Hermeneutics, 1992, chapter 15, esp. pp 598 ff.
8. 'Liturgy and Doctrine' in Liturgy in Dialogue, 1993, pp. 50 - 67.
9. C. Cocksworth, 'Eucharistic Theology', in The Identity of Anglican Worship, 1991.
10. See New Horizons in Hermeneutics, pp. 534 - 550.

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