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# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY

*Volume 7 Number 1 May 1999*

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## Editorial

**T**here are both home-grown and exotic contributions in this issue. Nathan Nettleton takes us searching in liturgy and theology for “the God who blesses” while Jo Dirks gives us an account of the response to major vandalism at St Francis’ Church in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. Both authors were at the time they wrote pastors of congregations in Melbourne: Nathan Nettleton is Pastor of South Yarra Community Baptist Church and Jo Dirks was Pastor of St Francis’ Church.

The statement by the Australian Anglican/Roman Catholic Conversation on “The Saints and Christian Prayer” was previously published as a separate leaflet. I thought that inclusion in AJL would bring it to the attention of more readers. I am grateful to the Co-Chairmen, Bishop Powers and Bishop Stewart, for permission to reprint the statement.

From across the Pacific comes Professor Chryssavgis’ insights into the theology of preaching from an Orthodox viewpoint and Professor Baldovin’s report on recent work of the [Roman Catholic] International Commission on English in the Liturgy and his response to the 1997 International Anglican Liturgical Consultation.

The issue is not only a mix of home-grown and exotic, it is also pretty ecumenical, both in content and in the provenance of its contributors. The Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic traditions are all represented in the writers of this issue.

This eclectic mix is what AJL is all about and, in a way, is characteristic of liturgy. When writing about it, however, we would probably express it as “Tradition, traditions, and contemporary enculturation as formative factors in liturgical theory and praxis”!

Strathmore Vicarage  
Easter 1999

RWH

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## Searching for “the God who Blesses” in liturgy and theology

A critical evaluation of a “theology from liturgy”  
in light of calls to recover the blessing tradition  
as a paradigm for theology

*Nathan Nettleton*

**I**n a number of works, most notably *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*,<sup>1</sup> Claus Westermann calls us to see the quiet, continual action of blessing the creation as God’s primary concern and activity, and to see acts of deliverance within this broader context. He argues that to view the historical acts of deliverance as God’s primary concern is a distortion of the Biblical message and the Christian vision. On the basis of this, he exposes the way western theology has been dominated by a “fall/redemption paradigm” and urges us to recover a “creation/blessing paradigm”.

Geoffrey Wainwright’s book, *Doxology – The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*,<sup>2</sup> is the first major systematic theology written from the perspective of Christian worship. Wainwright identifies liturgy as a major transmitter of doctrine and so seeks to allow it full voice in the writing of a systematic theology and to subject it to scrutiny in light of theology. My intention here is to use Wainwright’s resultant theology as an example of the way theology draws on liturgy, and to investigate what impact the blessing motifs in liturgical material have on the resulting theology.

This essay will begin with an overview of Westermann’s thesis in order to clarify the questions to be asked of *Doxology*, before moving to a systematic exploration of them. My purpose is two-fold. First, I want to see whether the understanding of God that Wainwright finds emerging from the liturgies is predominantly blessing oriented or redemption oriented, or whether it does justice to both streams of theology. I must acknowledge that I have approached *Doxology* suspecting that I would find insufficient attention to God’s activity of blessing, and therefore reinforcing the over-emphasis on redemption, because I imagine it

would have attracted more controversy if it had broken from the dominant paradigm. My second aim then, assuming this initial thesis proves correct, is to determine whether Wainwright has done justice to his liturgical sources or whether he arrived at his understanding of God because he read the liturgies through the lens of one perspective. Westermann's work, which was inspired by liturgical questions, argues that there are strong blessing traditions in many elements of our worship and so I want to establish whether Wainwright interprets them differently but fairly, or whether he just passes over them without noticing their challenge.

Ultimately this line of questioning asks whether or not Wainwright's venture has succeeded. Writing a systematic theology sourced from liturgical materials requires the ability to be conscious of one's prior assumptions in order to guard against the tendency to read theology into the sources. If Wainwright is overlooking significant elements in his sources without explicit justification, then we must ask whether he has actually illuminated the theology that emerges from our liturgies or merely shown which aspects support conventional theological views.

### **Westermann's challenge**

Westermann's works have focussed on the Hebrew Scriptures and his assertion that we should distinguish between God's activities of deliverance and blessing arises from this work.

He argues that an "uncritical and imprecise" use of the word "salvation" has obscured the distinction between God's acts of salvation and the state of wellbeing that results from having been saved.<sup>3</sup> He urges us to reclaim the distinction:

Blessing is a work of God which is different from saving insofar as it is not experienced as the latter in individual events or in a sequence of events. It is a quiet, continuous, flowing and unnoticed working of God which cannot be captured in moments or dates. Blessing is realized in a gradual process, as in the process of growing, maturing, and fading.<sup>4</sup>

He demonstrates that each has its own distinct semantic domain. The language of deliverance includes words like lostness, deliverance, redemption, judgment and forgiveness – primarily things that can be expressed in momentary events. The language of blessing includes words like presence, remaining, peace, growth, prosperity, wholeness and welfare,<sup>5</sup> implying continuing time frames.



Westermann traces the development of the concept of blessing through the Hebrew and New Testament scriptures, beginning with the oldest concept of blessing seen in the magical acts of primitive nature religions. The first major biblical transformation of the concept occurs when it is incorporated into the history of the God of the Exodus. Westermann demonstrates that the Yahwist account of history has done this by combining blessing with promise. The prehistoric concept is adopted and fundamentally transformed to give it a future historical dimension, becoming something God promises to bestow in the future.<sup>6</sup> Thus the rites of blessing are stripped of magical connotations and any rite of blessing comes to be understood as an expression of God's blessing.<sup>7</sup> Historically, this link appears to have been inspired by what was perhaps Israel's most difficult internal theological dispute – the relation of faith in the one Yahweh to the various fertility gods of Canaanite religion.<sup>8</sup> After the predominance of the language of deliverance in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, the book of Deuteronomy takes up the language of blessing for settled life, but clearly links it with promise by making God's blessing conditional on obedience:

If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. (Deuteronomy 7.12-13, NRSV.)

The second great transformation came in the writings of the New Testament as the concept of blessing is combined with the work of Christ. Essentially blessing is displaced as a significant focus of God's activity by the saving action of God in Christ, but the concept is not abandoned. The "blessing of Yahweh" acquires a more definite association with the state of having been redeemed and becomes the "blessing of Christ" mentioned by Paul in Romans 15:29. The basic understanding of blessing, both in the acts of bestowing blessing and the experience of being blessed, is retained in places such as the blessings bestowed by Jesus, the blessings bestowed by the disciples, the description of the consummation of salvation, and the "blessing of Christ" "which is effective in strengthening the churches and making them grow."<sup>9</sup>

The major change in the understanding of blessing in the New Testament relates to its limits. Westermann shows that the radical new understanding was that “as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, death is no longer the limit of God’s work of blessing, and consequently blessing shares in the hidden nature of God’s work in the cross of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Disasters, while never blessings in themselves, are not necessarily the absence of blessing either and can even be something through which God advances the work of bringing blessing. After tracing the biblical development of the concept, Westermann devotes the final section of *Blessing* to a discussion of the function and significance of blessing in worship and the rituals of the church. These, he states, “must stand in a recognizable relation to what the Bible says about God’s blessing and about blessing as an institution.”<sup>11</sup> He identifies various liturgical elements that carry the blessing perspectives and these will be picked up in the questions asked of *Doxology* shortly.

Since Westermann wrote, the specific study of blessing in the Bible has shifted in focus from the benefits conveyed, to the subject-object relationship stated in blessing.<sup>12</sup> This shift of focus does not render invalid Westermann’s findings about the content of blessing, but it shows that he has not exhausted the subject. It is apparent that there is still a need for detailed investigation of the numerous words associated with the semantic domain of blessing and that new perspectives on the subject are likely to emerge as this is done.<sup>13</sup>

### **The questions to be asked of *Doxology***

Geoffrey Wainwright argues that there has been insufficient recognition of the extent to which doctrine and worship are interdependent, and that public worship is a primary location for the transmission and reception of the Christian vision. He sees it as essential that systematic theologians draw on the worship of the Christian community as a source,<sup>14</sup> and his goal with *Doxology* was to write a theology using those traditions as the *predominant* source.

Given the importance of governing paradigms for theological thinking, any new systematic theology can expect some scrutiny in light of the questions Westermann has raised. This is especially the case for theology written from the perspective of worship since Westermann’s *Blessing* was inspired by liturgical questions. The following sections of this essay will each focus on a key feature of the liturgies or of *Doxology*, with the aim of determining what influence blessing oriented elements in the

liturgy have had on Wainwright's formulation of Christian theology, and clarifying whether this reflects faithfulness to his liturgical source material or submission to a presupposed paradigm.

Before tackling these questions, I should comment on the structure of *Doxology* and the implication of that structure for my task. The structure of the book is both creative and illuminating. It is divided into three sections which Wainwright calls Substantial Matters, Traditional Means and Contextual Questions. My task will focus mainly on the first section where Wainwright presents his "account of the substance of Christianity,"<sup>15</sup> because as such it is what is under scrutiny. The second section, *Traditional Means*, examines the nature and operation of the means by which the Christian vision is transmitted. The final section, *Contextual Questions*, focusses attention on the "questions posed by the Christian and human context in which the vision is expressed."<sup>16</sup> Most pertinent here will be the chapter on liturgical revision because it will be here that Wainwright may allow theology to critique any imbalance in liturgy's presentation of God.

### **Greetings and benedictions**

It is startling to find that a theology sourced from the practice of worship never draws on the opening greetings or closing blessings found in most liturgies. Westermann identified these as the most obvious points at which blessing is mediated in the church's worship. They make clear that it is God's blessing that is imparted and they function as the "bridge that joins what happens in worship to what takes place outside."<sup>17</sup> If they have influenced the understanding of God that Wainwright is presenting, he has neglected to inform us. Their absence suggests a failure to recognize the challenge their presence poses to the fall/redemption paradigm. Perhaps this should not surprise us. These blessings are so familiar that they are easily passed over as mere book-ends that hold the content bearers in place on the bookshelf of worship!

### **The blessings in the sacramental liturgies**

Turning to look for consideration of the blessings that are included in most eucharistic and baptismal liturgies and in the church's other official rites, the search becomes more promising. Wainwright notes the inclusion in the Roman Missal's eucharistic prayer of stanzas blessing God for the provision of the elements and observes that they portray God as using the material creation to convey "to us not only our natural

life but also the enhanced life of salvation in his kingdom.”<sup>18</sup> However, the main point he draws from them is their acknowledgement of the combining of human work with nature in the provision of the sacramental elements. He describes human beings as mediating between God and creation – “administering the earth as the means of divine blessing” on behalf of God and returning gratitude to God on behalf of creation.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, he doesn’t further explicate the content of this blessing or the nature or scope of God’s activity within the natural world.

Wainwright notes that most eucharistic prayers describe God’s gifts to humanity as including both creation and redemption and that our response is thanksgiving for both.<sup>20</sup> He sees the bread and wine as the present concretion of both gifts, but so far as describing the purpose or implications of creation as gift, he doesn’t add to his aforementioned comment about administering the earth.

The only other mention of blessing in a eucharistic context comes when Wainwright describes a role of the Holy Spirit in communion as ensuring that the communicants “receive the blessings of salvation.”<sup>21</sup> Once again this concept is not unpacked at all. In the same place he describes human salvation as consisting of “divinely initiated communion between God and humanity”<sup>22</sup> and there is no indication that he sees the “blessings of salvation” as being anything extra beyond that. He certainly surrounds the phrase with words from the semantic domain of deliverance.

When it comes to other sacraments or official rites of the church, *Doxology* is again devoid of specific references to blessings. Even in discussing baptism there is no mention of ritual blessing, let alone discussion of the meaning of such blessings, despite the fact that in most traditions baptism is usually accompanied by a distinct bestowal of blessing or a prayer invoking God’s blessing. Surely such a prevalent practice must contribute to a theology that is shaped by our worship. The failure to acknowledge it suggests a failure to recognize its significance.

Other official rites, notably confirmation and marriage, usually include an act of bestowing or invoking blessing, but again Wainwright is silent. He comes close in describing the Western Catholic tradition’s usual view of confirmation as “a strength-giving unction of the Spirit.”<sup>23</sup>

Strengthening would fit within the content of God's blessing activity, but Wainwright doesn't explore it.

The only other rite discussed using any blessing oriented concepts is unction of the sick. Healing of the sick is perhaps the area where ideas of blessing and deliverance most clearly overlap, since one is seeking deliverance from the direct impediment to continued blessing. Wainwright notes the practices of anointing and laying on of hands associated with this rite but draws no inference from them.<sup>24</sup> What he does do is show that it possible to see "all healing, whatever the human instrumentality, as a sign of the divine kingdom, evidence of God at work to achieve his salvific intention for humanity."<sup>25</sup> This observation could yield some content to God's quiet nurturing work within the world, but Wainwright doesn't pursue it. The occasional acknowledgement of such activity doesn't dispel the impression that it has no significant place in his thinking about God.

### **Prayers of petition for blessing**

Images of God as the provider of earthly blessing often emerge in intercessory prayers, and so it is appropriate to examine how these prayers shape Wainwright's view of the theology that emerges from our worship.

Apart from rites of prayer for the sick, *Doxology* only explores intercession as a human attitude in worship rather than for its implications about God. It does, however, identify the reason such prayers are offered as the perception that in a given situation "the divine will for well-being of the creatures is suffering frustration."<sup>26</sup> This recognizes that worshippers consider the "well-being of the creatures" to be of significant concern to God, and yet this is not explored for the understanding of God that emerges from their worship.

*Doxology* also discusses prayer in looking at Christ's role as a mediator in worship. This section focusses most of its attention on Christ's mediation of our prayers to God, but it mentions several times that he also figures in the liturgies as "the mediator of divine blessings to humanity" both in the past and on a continuing basis.<sup>27</sup> Once again the description of these blessings goes no further than identifying the sacraments and salvation.

### **Hymns of blessing**

Westermann identified hymns as frequent conveyors of images of blessing. *Doxology* examines the way hymns function to transmit the faith but contains little analysis of their content, despite identifying them as having a flexibility that enables them to promulgate new visions of faith more rapidly than creeds.<sup>28</sup> As with a number of liturgical elements, Wainwright's narrow focus on what they say about classical questions (e.g. the divinity of the Holy Spirit)<sup>29</sup> is disappointing and he neglects to explore what they might offer that is responsive to contemporary concerns. Nowhere does he attempt to explore the implications of the rich imagery contained in the hymns of God's involvement in earthly blessings.

### **The liturgical cycles as an indicator of blessing**

Westermann argues that even though worship often reflects a one-dimensional redemption perspective, the cyclic nature of the church seasons and the regular rhythm from Sunday to Sunday correspond to, and thereby communicate God's rhythmic activity in bestowing blessing on creation.<sup>30</sup> Most of the liturgical seasons had their origins in pre-Christian festivals celebrating seasonal or agricultural cycles and therefore can be seen to be based on God's bestowal of blessing. It is, therefore, appropriate to ask whether Wainwright sees a message in these cycles and if so, what it contributes to his theological formulation. Wainwright acknowledges the nomadic or agricultural basis behind the festivals of Israel, but sees their significance primarily in the historicizing that transformed them into "commemorations of Yahweh's mighty deeds."<sup>31</sup> He sees this as providing a sense of hope that the future will provide a new step of deliverance rather than just endless repetitions. While this is legitimate, he neglects to look the other way. Meaning lies not only in the changes but also in the raw materials. What is added to our understanding of God by the nature of the original festivals that came to be associated with the redemptive acts of God? Wainwright does, however, attribute ritual significance to the cycles, suggesting that the ritual "rehearsal of the original creative event is needed for the continuance of well-being,"<sup>32</sup> but surprisingly he then goes on to interpret this in redemptive terms. In a cyclical view of time, he says, "salvation is by way of a perpetual recovery of the 'good beginning', a perennial reassertion of the fixed pattern."

Although Wainwright has not uncovered the depositions of blessing traditions in the seasons, he deserves applause for imputing meaning to the cycles at all. Many prominent essays on the topic go no further than seeing in the calendar a balanced presentation of "all aspects of the mystery of salvation."<sup>33</sup>

### ***Doxology's* depiction of God**

My questions so far have all dealt with Wainwright's use of liturgical elements, so I need to determine whether there are other aspects in his presentation that convey a greater understanding of God's activity of blessing. Any influence of blessing motifs may become more apparent in his depiction of God than in his treatment of the liturgy.

Wainwright emphasizes the immanence of God and stresses that "the mighty Creator also provides and cares for his creatures with a parent's love."<sup>34</sup> In the first clear acknowledgement of a distinction between acts of deliverance and blessing, he speaks of our thanksgiving typically reciting "the mighty acts of God on behalf of humanity and his benefits bestowed on us,"<sup>35</sup> and even uses as his example a line from the general thanksgiving in the *Book of Common Prayer* thanking God "for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life." Unfortunately though, while the acts of redemption are a constant focus, acts of blessing are only occasionally acknowledged and seldom discussed.

The anthropology expressed in *Doxology* again contains but does not develop ideas drawing from blessing traditions. Wainwright recognizes the importance of work and the way it enables people to become co-creators with God,<sup>36</sup> but he seems somewhat fearful of our creative potential, warning of the danger of it inspiring human self-worship<sup>37</sup> without really expounding its dignity and value. Westermann asserts that human existence is meaningful only in relation to living-space, provision of food, work or community, and that any theological description of people without regard to these relations, and only in relation to God is not appropriate to people as God's creatures.<sup>38</sup> *Doxology*, though not entirely guilty, is vulnerable to this accusation.

The view of salvation in *Doxology* is difficult to piece together. Wainwright describes human salvation as "part of the definitive purpose of God that will reach completion in the final kingdom,"<sup>39</sup> and although he makes occasional reference to visions of a new heaven and a new earth or peace among the animals,<sup>40</sup> he doesn't specify what the definitive purpose of God includes. He defines God's intention for

humanity as salvation<sup>41</sup> and then defines human salvation as personal communion with God.<sup>42</sup> This doesn't sound like much more than a spiritual matter, although he does distinguish between immediate and ultimate salvation<sup>43</sup> but without defining those differences. Elsewhere he speaks of *growth* into communion with God, which doesn't sound like immediate deliverance, and this growth is described as sometimes utilizing the non-human creation.<sup>44</sup> He describes events of healing as evidence of God's salvific intention being accomplished<sup>45</sup> but he also talks of "the enhanced life of salvation"<sup>46</sup> which is clearly a state rather than an event. He even blurs the distinction between sanctification and salvation by describing any act of self-giving love as evidence that "redemption is happening" and "salvation is being tasted." Salvation, he says, "is precisely growth into that self-giving which is also God's character and which is exercised in communion between God and humanity and among human beings."<sup>47</sup>

This mix of images and definitions conveys a multifaceted understanding of salvation. Some images suggest a momentary event, others suggest a developing condition. Some draw on the language of blessing, others on the language of deliverance. At some points he explicitly acknowledges the different components of salvation, which would satisfy Westermann's call for a recognition of its distinct aspects, but there is no sign of the greater precision in usage of the word that he sought. Although Wainwright speaks of communion with God, love between people, and perhaps healing from sickness, there is little indication as to how the biblical components of the blessed life – fertility, prosperity, safety, health, etc. – relate to salvation. There is certainly no evidence that Wainwright sees redemption as a remedial response from God rather than God's primary purpose.

Having surveyed *Doxology* by theme rather than source, it still seems that God's activities in blessing, although acknowledged, are incidental to Wainwright's theology rather than integral to his defining perspective. While *Doxology* does not have the negative feel of a stereotypic fall/redemption perspective, it hasn't moved far from it.

### ***Doxology* on the future of worship**

So far I have concluded that blessing traditions have had little impact on the essential shape of Wainwright's theological presentation. However, he could seek to defend himself on the grounds of faithfulness to his source material. Although he has ignored some of the blessing



deposits and made insufficient use of others, I do recognize that they are vastly outnumbered by the redemption oriented elements in most liturgical traditions. Wainwright could argue that there is not enough of them to justify a radical change of paradigm.

That brings us to our final question. Since *Doxology* is intended to be a theology of worship as well as from worship<sup>48</sup> and argues that theologians are as duty bound to contribute to the worship of the church as they are to draw from it,<sup>49</sup> I need to see how Wainwright allows theology to critique the inherited traditions of worship. Does he call for revisions that would respond to the concerns that Westermann raises? The short answer would seem to be "No."

Wainwright describes the intention of liturgical revision as the expression and kindling of a renewed vision of God<sup>50</sup> but he mostly offers observations on revisions that are already happening rather than suggestions for future projects. His most enthusiastic commendation is for moves that emphasize God's immanence in worship. This could be developed to include a greater awareness of God's activity in the rhythms of natural life, as is seen in his quoting of Irenaeus' view that the "flourishing of human life (and) the well being of humanity" are God's glory,<sup>51</sup> but Wainwright doesn't advocate any strong push in that direction. He commends conservatism in liturgical revision,<sup>52</sup> while endorsing unofficial experimentation as a testing ground for renewed images and experiences.<sup>53</sup>

He argues that the prayer 'Thy kingdom come' must govern all intercessory prayer and that it is therefore a task of liturgical revision to promote informed prayer for the concrete establishment of the kingdom values of "justice, peace, health, freedom and life."<sup>54</sup> Although this is the most blessing-oriented list in the book, it is not sufficiently central to his revisionist agenda to see him as espousing a new paradigm.

## Conclusions

*Doxology* is an important contribution to the contemporary studies of systematic theology and liturgical practice. Wainwright intended to forge stronger bonds between the two disciplines and he has persuasively shown how each should draw on and inform the other. Both fields will be enriched if they respond to his call to undertake their tasks in dialogue with each other. The most disappointing aspect of the book, even in terms of the parameters it sets for itself, is its concentration on the classical questions such as the divinity of Christ, the nature of the

Trinity, and the role of the Spirit as mediator. Many liturgies were shaped by those controversies and so inevitably confirm the resulting orthodoxies. *Doxology* would have been far more intriguing if it had explored the major liturgies for contributions to today's fiercely contested debates. Liberation theology, feminist theology, process theology, and numerous other contentious issues are mentioned in the book, but the liturgies are never explored for insights that might bring new light to them.

The questions I have put can be seen as a case in point. Westermann raised major questions which deserve a response, but Wainwright offers no response to their challenge. It seems strange that despite Westermann's eminence, his thesis has not become a more prominent critical question in mainstream theology. It does, however, raise legitimate questions and unfortunately I have to conclude that *Doxology* is found wanting when evaluated in light of this call for a greater use of blessing perspectives in theology.

First, there is no evidence that Wainwright is conscious of the extent to which the fall/redemption paradigm has shaped mainstream theological thinking. To have recognized it and made an informed choice for it would be acceptable, but to be unconsciously governed by it puts one in danger of misreading the sources.

Second, in seeking to explore the theology of the liturgies, Wainwright is almost oblivious to the rites of blessing within them and therefore makes little use of them in formulating his theology. Given their prevalence, this suggests that he has operated with a governing perspective that obscured their significance. Even his treatment of prayers thanking God for blessings received did not explore the implications of their earthly focus for our understanding of God. This is surprising given the inference in his treatment of intercessions that the flow of earthly blessings is prominent among the concerns of worshippers. Surely this necessitates a thorough treatment of God's activity in bestowing such blessings in any theology based on the practice of worship.

Third, although Wainwright acknowledges God's activities in bringing blessing to all creation, this appears peripheral to his view of God, and references to it are consistently left undeveloped. Again this suggests the unconscious editorial influence of a redemption-oriented paradigm

and a lack of awareness of the calls for a more blessing-oriented approach.

Finally, when Wainwright turns around and allows theology to critique the liturgies, his proposals do not suggest that he perceives a need for a greater integration of the people's worship and their experience of God's activity in the natural cycles and daily concerns of life. His only clearly blessing-oriented proposal involves intercessory prayer which is already one of the most blessing-focussed liturgical elements.

In conclusion then, *Doxology* is disappointing in its unquestioning acquiescence to the fall/redemption perspective. The liturgical source materials, although often shaped by that perspective themselves, contain enough acts and images of blessing that, if Wainwright had given them attention in proportion to their prevalence, he may have produced a very different formulation of the Christian vision. *Doxology* is a commendable theological accomplishment, but I believe that its failure to explore the liturgies from the perspective of contemporary theological questions will mean that its lasting contributions will be confined to its methodological insights. If *Doxology* can be accepted as representative of the way systematic theology draws on liturgy, and its positive reception by the critics suggests that it can, then it demonstrates that the recognition of liturgy as a major source for theology will not in itself challenge dominant paradigms or open up significant new territory.

#### NOTES

- 1 Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, translated by Keith Crim, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978. hereafter referred to as *Blessing*.
- 2 Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology – The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, London: Epworth Press, 1980. hereafter referred to as *Doxology*.
- 3 *Blessing*, p.2-3.
- 4 Claus Westermann, *What does the Old Testament say about God?*, London: SPCK, 1979, p.44.
- 5 Westermann, *The Old Testament and Jesus Christ*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968, p.44. and *Blessing*, p.89.
- 6 *Blessing*, p.65.
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- 11 *Blessing*, p.103.
- 12 Kent Harold Richards, "Bless/Blessing." *Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol.1.*,  
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- 13 *ibid.* p.755.
- 14 *Doxology*, p.1-3 & 9
- 15 *ibid.*
- 16 *Doxology*, p.5.
- 17 *Blessing*, p.106.
- 18 *Doxology*, p.24-25
- 19 *ibid.*
- 20 *Doxology*, p.78.
- 21 *Doxology*, p.105.
- 22 *ibid.*
- 23 *Doxology*, p.74.
- 24 *Doxology*, p.76.
- 25 *Doxology*, p.77.
- <sup>26</sup> *Doxology*, p.40.
- 27 *Doxology*, p.64 & 65.
- 28 *Doxology*, p.214.
- 29 *Doxology*, p.102.
- 30 *Blessing*, p.108-112.
- 31 *Doxology*, 120.
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- 34 *Doxology*, p.22.
- 35 *Doxology*, p.39.
- 36 *Doxology*, p.26.
- 37 *Doxology*, p.35.
- 38 *What does the Old Testament say about God?*, *op.cit.*, p.42
- 39 *Doxology*, p.108.
- 40 *Doxology*, p.24
- 41 *Doxology*, p.22.
- 42 *Doxology*, p.100.
- 43 *Doxology*, p.41.

- 44 *Doxology*, p.22.
- 45 *Doxology*, p.77.
- 46 *Doxology*, p.25.
- 47 *Doxology*, p.69
- 48 *Doxology*, preface.
- 49 *Doxology*, p.3.
- 50 *Doxology*, p.354.
- 51 *Doxology*, p.352.
- 52 *Doxology*, p.344.
- 53 *Doxology*, p.344-345.
- 54 *Doxology*, p.355.



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# Out of Chaos

*Jo Dirks*

**I**conography and sculpture have a long history in the Christian tradition. The Catacombs underneath imperial Rome were the burial places of the martyrs. Depicted on the tombs would be images of the cross or scenes from the Bible such as Jesus changing water into wine. Early Christian tombs were given a reference centred on the person of Christ; eg the good shepherd. In Christian iconography of the 4th century Christ is depicted with a nimbus or halo. By the fifth century, saints also were shown with the nimbus. The mandorla (aureole) was a diamond shaped aura used of Christ and Mary. Much later Rembrandt used luminescence around the figure of Christ. Curiously science claims to have discovered that each person has an aura or Kirlian field which is there even if not visible to the naked eye. But away from art and speculation to theology. The theological key is that the saints are united with God, enjoying that communion with God known as the beatific vision. The Apostles' Creed speaks of the communion of saints. The Catholic tradition would extend this to include the church militant, expectant and triumphant.

The use of images was not without conflict. The Eastern Church was riven with the iconoclast controversy of the seventh and eighth centuries. Politics played a major part with patriarchs and emperors on opposing sides. The Eastern Churches emerged from this controversy with a strong devotion to the icon or image of Christ and the Saints. The Western Church escaped this turmoil until the Reformation which was marked by a rejection of images among reformed churches. However in 16th century Japan the test of whether one was a Catholic was the readiness to walk or trample on the "tread pictures", "Fumi-e" in Japanese, usually of the Crucifixion or the Madonna.

Within the Catholic tradition, distinction is made between "latreia", worship and adoration of God and "dulia" honour and reverence shown to the saints. This pattern emerged in Carolingian times. It became common to represent the saint with an accompanying and identifying symbol or instrument of martyrdom, such as a scroll or a book; St Peter is shown with a key or St Paul with a sword and St Andrew with a diagonal cross. "Whatever the predominant theological approach of any period, it is always reflected in the handling of the

sculptures. The influence may be said to be two-way, for if current theology affected the style of the sculptures, the images in turn served to create a new image of God and his saints for succeeding generations"<sup>1</sup>. We can see this clearly in how St Francis of Assisi was presented before the Reformation with warmth, charm and joy (Giottoesque) and after the Reformation as emaciated, wan and drained of joy and accompanied by a skull.

My own personal introduction to Christian imagery was the prayer cards of Matthias Grünewald which my mother had and the film of Joan of Arc which I saw as an 8 year old, with the unforgettable image of Joan burnt at the stake and a processional crucifix thrust through the smoke for her to kiss. In what follows there is a selective rather than a comprehensive recording of architectural and artistic detail. The focus is primarily on the work that was vandalised.

### **1. The inheritance**

The legacy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of construction and improvements at St Francis' Church [Lonsdale Street, Melbourne] began with the Gothic revivalist design by Samuel Jackson (1841-45). This was followed by the splendid Gothic Ladye Chapel which was added in 1857 by local architects George and Schneider. Two of Pugin's pupils, Le Gould and Souter did the wall paintings. Our Lady Help of Christians statue was sculpted in marble by Signor Palla and dedicated in 1907.

The pictorial and visual focus of the church interior was dominated by the classical marble altar of Italian design and installed in 1878. Prior to the current Church Renovations the cupola had been removed for safety reasons. One benefit has been a far better view than hitherto of the Crucifixion painting. This painting above the classical altar is by Juan de Las Roelas. Mary, John and Magdalen stand around the cross of Jesus. The Stations of the Cross, copies of a continental set by a Belgian artist, were installed in 1899. The statues of St Joseph and St Peter Julian Eymard stood on the side altars in the western and eastern transepts. Also located in the western transept were the statues of St Anthony and the Christ Child, and temporarily relocated from the Ladye Chapel, on account of the renovations in progress, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and the Angel Statue.

## **2. The vandalism**

On the night of 31 May 1996, several months after the commencement of the restoration of St Francis', severe vandalism occurred after the church had been closed for the night. The damage was discovered at 2.00am. The scene was one of severe damage throughout the church. Marble elements on the rear high altar damaged, the statues of Our Lady, St Joseph, St Anthony, St Peter Julian and the Angel were all severely damaged. Collection boxes throughout the church were forced open and emptied. Five stations of the Cross near the Ladye Chapel were slashed. The figures of Madonna and Child in the Ladye Chapel were beheaded. In the front porch, both marble holy water fonts were damaged. The terra cotta statue of St Francis, high up in its niche, was the only statue not damaged in the vandal attack of 1996. The niches had been built in 1855.

## **3. The public response**

An unbelievable public response of support came in. The media themselves, press, radio and television all wanted interviews, photographs and footage. Telephone calls and letters came in from all over Australia. Support came in, not only from the Catholic population but from the other Christian Churches as well. Noteworthy were messages of support from the Jewish Community. Even the BBC wanted an interview live from England. Various private art restorers volunteered their services. Security companies offered to help.

## **4. Searching for solutions**

In the meantime, the St Francis' Church Enhancement Committee, set up to provide liturgical and allied aesthetical direction, had to consider the question as to what could and should be restored. That this was not an easy undertaking, is, perhaps, the understatement of the year. The easiest option would have been to replace the destroyed statues with other similar statues, statues which we had in our possession. The feeling was that if such statues were introduced it would virtually make it impossible to make any other changes. The constant public perception was to ask when are all the statues coming back? Eventually it was decided to repair the marble statue of Mother and Child in the Ladye Chapel and the various marble elements in the church that had been damaged.

Various sculptors were considered including Peter Schipperheyn, Tom Carson and Leopoldine Mimovich. An Angel sketch was actually done



by Peter Schipperheyn. However for various reasons of cost, devotional suitability and artistic excellence, none of these sculptors was commissioned. The Angel was eventually given to Andrew Patience who did a splendid work of restoration. Our Lady Help of Christians was then repaired by Andrew Thorn.

### **5. The final outcome**

Tom Bass was first secured to do a fresh work of St Peter Julian. This was not without difficulty, as he lives and works in Sydney. He worked from actual photographs of the Founder of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. He admitted he was captivated by the story of Auguste Rodin's connection with Peter Julian Eymard. As a young man, Auguste Rodin was the first to sculpt Father Eymard, a bust of the head of Father Eymard. This was out of gratitude after the founder had helped him overcome the anguished and sudden loss of Rodin's sister Maria from peritonitis in 1862. Maria had been a novice with the Sisters of Christian Doctrine. Rodin did the work whilst himself a Blessed Sacrament novice in the order from 1863-64. Father Eymard recognised his talent and after five months encouraged him to resume his place in the world. While Tom Bass is 81, his eye and hand are still undimmed. The work, six feet tall, speaks for itself. Tom Bass himself made the comment that good had come out of the vandalism. Indeed it had. We are presently having a small colour postcard commissioned which features the Tom Bass statue.

Finally, Pauline Clayton, in January this year, was commissioned to complete a new work of St Joseph and the Christ Child and another of St Anthony. At first there was uncertainty about the location of these two statues. It had been envisaged that the statue of St Peter Julian would be in the centre of the western transept. Accordingly the feeling was to limit these works to bas relief. Admittedly this was partly motivated by the desire to limit expenses. However, when the placement of the St Peter Julian was changed to a position closer to the Mass altar, to the delight of Tom Bass, the way was open for St Joseph and St Anthony to be represented as full size statues in their own right.

The statue of St Joseph, foster father of our Lord, features the Saint with the young boy Jesus being instructed in the traditions of his people. The sculptor took great pains to consult with a Jewish rabbi so that the figure would be accurate with details pertaining to the prayer shawl and the representation of the Torah. The statue of St Anthony of Padua

depicts the Saint in his dual role as teacher and friend of the poor. This is shown by the saint holding both the book of the scriptures and a loaf of bread.

Both sculptures are life size and are constructed in bronze. The statues are now ready. The Pauline Clayton statues will be veiled on arrival and left veiled for one week. There will be a paraliturgy of unveiling, blessing and dedication. We are intending to invite the major donor of the statues to this unveiling and members of the Jewish community. We are also planning a "Meet the sculptor" session in the Pastoral Centre, so as to create an interface between sculptor and the public. The statues replace those destroyed in the vandalism that occurred in 1996. Again we hope that these works of art will stimulate prayerfulness and devotion. The statues are to be located in the eastern transept of St Francis' Church. We hope to arrange a trinitarian configuration of these statues.

## **6. Future plans**

A more long range plan involves a new organ. When this occurs, the original niche, which parallels the niche occupied by St Francis of Assisi, is pencilled in for a statue of Blessed Mary MacKillop who has strong connections with St Francis'. Her father was a Trustee of St Francis' Church. Her parents were married at St Francis'. Mary was baptised, made her first communion and was confirmed at St Francis' Church.

## **NOTE**

1. H. D. Molesworth, *European Sculpture: From Romanesque to Rodin*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1965, p. 13.

# Breaking the Word of God Liturgical and spiritual insights into the theology of Preaching\*

*John Chryssavgis*

## **(i) Another World**

**I**t would hardly be an overstatement for me to say that the definitive mark of Orthodox preaching within the liturgical context is its traditional character. In the Orthodox Church, forms and gestures have been meticulously and continuously preserved, without any major change, for centuries. Yet the attachment to **tradition** does not imply immobilism or stagnation. It signifies a timeless re-enactment and recognition, not so much of the Word as once heard in the past, but of the Word as a presence celebrated and confessed in mystery.

The very architecture of the Orthodox church projects this truth. The altar, for instance, is designed as the focus of attention, in fact the goal of initiation; it does not share – and certainly never yields – its prominence with the lectern. What is imposing is not the intricacy of the pulpit, but the majesty of the dome from whose summit an image of Christ the Almighty looks down on the worshipping and listening community. All around, there are icons [the Word in image and colour] of prophets, apostles, and angels, enfolding the congregation within a pictorial “communion of saints”. The entire icon-screen is surmounted by a cross, bearing a painted image of the crucified Lord – the starting-point and ending-point of all our Christian preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 2.2).

In fact, it has been quite possible through the centuries, and remains so today, to go to an Orthodox church and not even hear a sermon. Not that they are not preached, but they are not the centre of focus or priority. In the fourth century, a law passed by the Emperor Theodosius – proclaiming that it is sacrilegious for a bishop to preach inaccurately or not at all – suggests that the high standards in this respect of St John Chrysostom during the same epoch were fairly general. But they did not long survive him. A seventh-century Council – in Trullo, 692 – lays it down that bishops should preach every Sunday, an indication that this was not in fact being done. Certainly any search through the sources of the period will reveal that there is no body of sermons comparable to

Chrysostom's from the sixth or seventh centuries in Constantinople. It is from this time that there begins to appear a series of homiletical anthologies, with itinerant preachers also becoming a more common phenomenon in Orthodox lands from the sixteenth century. From the late nineteenth century, the subject of "Homiletics" as "Ecclesiastical Rhetoric" was introduced into the academic program in university schools of theology.

However, rather than dealing here with the overall history or particular representatives of Orthodox preaching, and instead of outlining the major sources or contemporary issues of Orthodox sermons, I have chosen to indicate some of the underlying spiritual dimensions of preaching. This may serve as the background for an appreciation of the significant role of the sermon within Orthodox theology and spirituality. For, undoubtedly, the Word of God is of central importance: the Book of the Gospels is held, raised, honoured, taken in procession (a liturgical movement that symbolises the Word's appearance in the world), and even venerated by the entire congregation prior to every Sunday liturgy. It may even be held over a person in hope of healing. This is no magical gesture or act of superstition. It is a manifestation of the central significance of the Word. It is no accident that the Orthodox liturgical cycle of readings and sermons begins on Easter Sunday, at the Midnight Vigil, with the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word" (1.1).

### **(ii) An Act of Liturgy**

There is a prayer that is recited before – and in preparation for – each celebration of the Divine Eucharist in the Orthodox Church. This prayer dignifies the Orthodox understanding of the role of preaching; it also justifies my presence among you this afternoon. I am not a Professor of Homiletics, but I am an ordained minister who proclaims the Word [and teaches Preaching at a theological school]. The prayer is based on the Johannine conviction that "God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son" (John 3.6). "And the Word became flesh" (John 1.14). And so the prayer extends this image: O God, our God, you sent your heavenly bread, the food of the whole world, to bless us, bless also these offerings....

For centuries, Orthodox Christians have believed that they come together in worship not just to hear the Word, not just to speak the Word, but in a holistic sense to embrace the Word, "knowing, or rather being known by" the Word (cf. Gal. 4.9): to smell the Word, to enjoy the

Word, to feel the Word, to eat the Word. In a word, to consume the Word. In the Orthodox Church, we pray with our minds, and our eyes, and our ears, and our smell, and our hearing.

The first point, then, that I wish to underline in regard to preaching in the Orthodox Church is the **liturgical dimension**. I am not referring to a theological, actually merely technical, distinction between "liturgy of the Word" and "liturgy of the Sacrament". I mean that preaching is the communication of "a Word that was made flesh", "a Word that became bread", "for the life of the world" (cf. John 1.14, 6.35 and 51). It is an act, or a process whereby nourishment is taken up by living organisms, assimilated by them and turned into blood, life and strength. And, consequently, it means passing on the joy and proclaiming the miracle through the very fact of being brought to life, an experience we apprehend in a way that defies doubt or discussion or debate. This means that the word of preaching is not conveyed artificially, or attractively, or academically. It is conveyed whole, full of life, through the generations, which make it their personal word, a new possession, a miracle, a wealth which increases as it is given away. Always new, and always the same. Because it is a food that is broken and shared; a drink that is poured out and offered in abundance. And so preaching is more than just talk about the Word; it is giving it. And for the same reason, it is never separated from feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty. Otherwise it is indigestible, inhumanly hard; and "what parent gives a stone to its child when it asks for bread?" (Matt. 7.9).

Words which are not flesh and blood mean nothing. This is why, at the Last Supper, the Lord summarised the mystery of his preaching by saying: "Take, eat my body...", "Drink of this all of you, this is my blood" (Matt. 26.26-8).

### **(iii) A Word from Silence**

The element of liturgical mystery leads me to the second point that I wish to raise, namely the **mystical dimension** which is borne out in the priority of silence in Orthodox worship. The Word, we believe, is first of all heard, and not spoken. John the Divine would speak of "revelation" (Rev. 1.1). "Blessed are those who hear..." (Rev. 1.3). "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet..." (Rev. 1.10). And in the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch spoke of a "word that springs forth from silence".

Actually, "revelation" is a better word than "silence". If you were to enter an Orthodox Church in Greece, or Serbia, or Russia, you would have a different experience from the silence with which you are familiar in your own churches. You would quite literally hear loud voices. One of the greatest preachers of the early Church, St John Chrysostom, once explained: Here in Church, there is great disturbance and confusion, and it is as bad as a tavern. There is too much laughing and chattering.

In fact, the New Testament readings to this day are preceded by a call for silence. We know that Chrysostom's sermons were often interrupted by applause. So perhaps it took some time to achieve the silence that I am speaking about here. To the outsider, it may well appear like that. But Orthodox Christians do not come to Church to pray in silence; they know very well that "true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4.45). Nor do they come to hear the Word of God; they are aware that the entire universe is an eloquent expression of this Word, a "cosmic liturgy" as Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century described the world. Nor finally do they come to partake of a sacrament; in the first centuries, even that could be done at home.

Rather, Orthodox Christians come to church because there is an epiphany, a celebration, in which everything makes sense. That is why it is more accurate to speak of "revelation". Something "happens" there, and we need to "be still, in order to know" (Ps. 45.11). We need, even through our sermons, to leave room free, and not stifle the room with our words. Everything is tested in the mystery of silence. Isaac the Syrian, a mystic, again of the seventh century, wrote: "Words are an instrument of the present age; silence is a mystery of the age to come." It is not, ultimately, a matter of finding what to say, but of how to be silent, how to hear the Spirit speaking in our silence or in our speech. This in turn means that there is an **ascetic element** to preaching. In accordance with Orthodox tradition, the school of the desert is a discipline of renunciation. There we learn to surrender our prejudices and predications, our conceptions and even our convictions. We are prepared to leave behind our narrow images of God and our flabby words about God. In silence, we begin to grow. Orthodox iconography presents John the Divine with his fingers over his lips. And John Chrysostom could readily appreciate that the "hesychasts" (lit. those steeped in silence) were his superiors in preaching the Word, overwhelmed as they were with the sound and action of the Spirit.

This is the “apophatic” element of preaching, the “via negativa” of the homily. Just as the icon reveals that which is invisible (Col. 1.15), and holiness reveals that which is incomprehensible, the sermon should endeavour to reveal that which is inexpressible, ineffable, inconceivable. This is why, in the Orthodox tradition, even the readings are sung; there is no distinction between sound and song, no separation between sacred and profound. Nothing simply is; everything points.

And the sermon is not just a sermon; it needs to be part of a mystery that is celebrated, until “the Word makes his home with us” (John 14.23), “until Christ Himself is formed within us” (Gal. 4.19).

*\* Based on a paper delivered during a symposium held at Harvard Divinity School, and entitled “Secure Enough to Risk Justice”, 26 October – 2 November, 1997.*

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# The Saints and Christian Prayer

## *An Agreed Statement from the Australian Anglican-Roman Catholic Conversation, November 1997*

### Introduction

**W**hat is a saint? How does a person become one? Will an Australian soon be officially recognised as a saint? These were some of the questions raised in 1995 when Pope John Paul II visited Australia for the ceremony to mark the beatification of Mary MacKillop. The celebration caught the imagination of many Australians, and it provided the stimulus for this paper on prayer and the saints, prepared by and for Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

AustARC is a group of Australian Anglicans and Roman Catholics, appointed by our two Churches. Our membership includes bishops, theologians, teachers and parish clergy. Our role is to listen and to talk to one another, in the service of continuing growth in faith and fellowship between our two churches. We also draw on the work of ARCIC, the Anglican Roman Catholic International Consultation, whose members are our colleagues in ecumenical conversation at the international level. AustARC offers this statement on "The Saints and Christian Prayer" to help Australian Roman Catholics and Anglicans at all levels of the Churches join in the conversation.

For many centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has had an official process for deciding whether a particular Christian may be described as a saint. When enquires establish that a person has shown outstanding holiness, the process begins in which beatification and canonisation are the final steps. Saints are included in the church's calendar, and are honoured in the church's devotion.

The Anglican Church has no official process for declaring people to be saints. Many people mentioned in the New Testament, and many more whose reputation for holiness was established before the Reformation of the sixteenth century, are called "saints" by Anglicans. Men and women who lived more recently, including some Australians, are remembered in the Anglican church's calendar, and are described as "holy men and women".



The authorised prayers of both Anglicans and Roman Catholics include many references to the saints. Yet the role of the saints in Christian faith, life, and worship has often been controversial since the days of the Reformation. In this paper is an attempt to talk about the saints and Christian prayer in ways that will help us find our common ground, rather than going over old divisions.

After the text of the agreed statement, we offer you some questions for reflection and discussion. We hope that both the statement and the questions will help groups of Christians from our two traditions to understand ourselves and each other better.

*Pat Power*

*John Stewart*

## The Agreed Statement

### **The whole Church praises God**

At the heart of Christian worship is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the risen Jesus draws us into communion with God and with each other. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, the church on earth joins its prayers with the church in heaven. In the words of the eucharistic prayer, leading up to the "Holy, holy, holy," we direct our praises to God with angels and saints, apostles and prophets, holy men and women of every age.

### **The saints of the Church**

In this paper, the word, "saints," is used in three senses: for the living disciples of Jesus Christ; for all the faithful departed; and for those among the faithful departed whose lives have been of particular encouragement to Christians in subsequent generations.

"Saints" is used in the New Testament as a designation for and address to the community of Christ's disciples. Men and women, made holy by God's call, heard and heeded the apostles' exhortation to deep faith, strong hope, and generous love as they followed Jesus Christ in this mortal life. As the first generation of disciples died, the faithful continued to include among the saints those who had fallen asleep in Christ.

Christians in subsequent generations have often needed to be reminded that holiness is a calling to be lived out on this side of the grave, and that

the saints are not merely the members of the community who have died in the faith of Christ. In the present discussion, we affirm the unity in Christ of the saints, living and departed. And we want to show how that unity may be expressed in faith and prayer.

The faithful departed were mortals like ourselves, finite creatures of God's own making. They were redeemed as we are, by death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now these saints participate in the eternal life he promised to all who believe in him. Their lives showed, as we pray that ours may also show, the fruits of the Spirit who strengthened them for the mission with which the Risen Christ entrusted his friends. We recognise that death has not separated them from the love of God in Jesus Christ, but rather that they have come to the place which he prepared for them in his Father's house.

### **The saints testify to the grace of God in human lives**

These saints lived heroic lives of faith, hope and love.

Some received and used the Spirit's gifts in such large measure that the world was perceptibly changed for the better by their lives, and, in the case of the martyrs, by their deaths. Their call to discipleship found them in or led them to highly visible roles in the world at large, and to those roles they brought the passion for justice, truth, and love which the Spirit had implanted in them. Their names may still be held in honour centuries after their deaths. They bear witness to us that God moves in human history, and that no earthly task is too big for the Spirit's gifts at work in us.

Some saints spent their lives in less dramatic circumstances, or were called to renounce positions of worldly power for the sake of the gospel. Although their names may not be so well remembered, nor their stories so often told, these saints, too, glorified God in their generations. They bear witness to us that God still touches individual human hearts, and that no human life is too obscure to show forth the self-giving love of Christ.

All the saints, great and small, famous and hidden, named and unnamed, owe their holiness to the grace of Jesus Christ and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When we call the saints to mind, and join our prayer with theirs, we are in awe, not of them, but of God, who can do such mighty works in us mortals.

### **The saints inspire us to praise God**

We praise God for the saints. We thank God for giving us in them such an eloquent testimony to the possibility of true discipleship in every place and time and culture. Because of them, we celebrate the diversity of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

### **The saints inspire us to serve God**

The importance of the saints extends beyond the initial impact of their earthly lives, dramatic or obscure as those lives may have been. We tell the stories of their lives and deaths, and we know they participate in our praise of God. We thank God for what the saints did, but we may also thank God for what they still do. For Christians today, the saints provide role models for discipleship, examples of holiness, patterns of prayer, visions of hope. In these ways the saints continue to make an impact in later generations. They also remind us of another dimension, a heavenly dimension, to our prayer.

One of the things we therefore treasure about the saints is the power of their stories. The Christian imagination flourishes through story-telling. The earliest disciples rehearsed the stories of the evolution of their own discipleship in order to call others to follow Jesus Christ. Even today, telling the stories of those who have died, as well as hearing the testimony of those who are still living, elicits faith and leads to sacrificial service. Acknowledging the blessedness of those who have died still helps to spark the longing for that blessedness among the living.

### **Jesus Christ in Christian prayer**

Anglicans and Roman Catholics together recognise Jesus Christ as our unique mediator, our intercessor, advocate, and guide. The New Testament, and particularly the 17th chapter of John's gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews, presents Christ interceding with the Father for his brothers and sisters. This image of Christ as intercessor is much used in both traditions. It underpins the abiding formula of prayer "through" the Son. Prayer to Christ as God is also used in both traditions; "Christ have mercy" is an example of such prayer. The principles of direct access in prayer to God through Christ, and of Christ's own divine authority to receive and answer prayer, are thus firmly established in both traditions. In this context, we may approach the matter of any address to the saints in prayer. The invocation of the saints in prayer must not detract from the authority and accessibility of Christ for the

faithful when we pray. It must not endanger, but must express the adequacy of Christ's work.

### **The saints as patrons and partners**

Many Anglicans and Roman Catholic buildings, schools, hospitals and communities are dedicated in the name of a patron saint. Such a dedication indicates a delight in partnership with those who have gone before us. It does not indicate a reliance on official patronage. We may need to moderate some inherited understandings of patronage. For example, in the patronage system of various cultures, access to the goodwill of an overlord can be obtained only through the good graces of a patron. By extension, Christians have sometimes appealed to the saints as necessary agents of patronage, and have thus failed to recognise the reality of their own direct relationship to God. Both Roman Catholics and Anglicans affirm that Christ is the unique mediator, and patron saints continue to enrich the identity of Christian communities, encouraging us in mission by their examples of discipleship.

### **The saints join us in prayer**

There are different approaches to the matter of our prayer to the saints, and the saints' prayer for us.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike direct personal and liturgical prayer to God, through Christ, in the Spirit. Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike also obey the biblical injunctions to pray for one another and for the world.

Many Roman Catholics and some Anglicans ask the saints, as well as their earthly neighbours, to pray for them. These requests for prayer may be made in personal devotion and in the prayers of the liturgy. In personal prayer, we may remember any of the faithful departed who have inspired us. A petition like "Saint N, pray for us" is liturgically possible for Roman Catholics, though it is not found in official Anglican liturgical texts in Australia. Some Anglicans decline to invoke the saints, lest they obscure the uniqueness of Christ's work. Those who do use such petitions seek to evoke the communion of the whole church, and the solidarity of all the faithful, living and departed.

### **Prayer builds solidarity and communion**

"The prayers of all the saints" (Revelation 8.3-5), and the saints' communion in Christ with us, remind us to keep praying. For Roman Catholics and those Anglicans who invoke the saints in prayer, this

solidarity in Christ provides the theological context for such invocation. When such Christians draw to the saints' attention the needs of the living, asking them to pray for us, they are making a statement about solidarity among Christian people. We find courage to approach the source of all grace in company with others. We insist on the truth of the Church as communion, and correct the deprived notion of the Church as an assembly of individuals. The saints are our friends, our older brothers and sisters in Christ. They are willing to share with us the strength of their trust in the Lamb of God. Their desire for us is the same union with Christ that they themselves enjoy.

### **Prayer as invocation**

Some may address the saints in prayer by direct invocation: "Saint Francis and Saint Clare, the Holy Spirit has joined us in one communion: pray for us."

### **Prayer as conversation**

Some may find more helpful a kind of informal and imaginative conversation, seeking the saints' guidance and encouragement for the pilgrim church: "Saint Francis and Saint Clare, give us the benefit of your experience; how shall we love God and care for God's creation, here and now?"

### **Prayer as evocation**

Others may prefer to shape the invocation of God by remembering the stories of the saints: "Holy God, remember how you gave Saint Clare and Saint Francis a love for the poor: help us, now, to embrace Christ in the least of our brothers and sisters."

### **Prayer in a communion of praise**

Both our traditions will thus celebrate the evidence of divine grace in the lives of the saints, and our solidarity in Christ. Some will be especially anxious to avoid obscuring Christ's saving work by prayer to the saints. Some will be especially concerned to enable Christ's saving work to be gloriously proclaimed by prayer to the saints. Together we will continue to praise God in joyful communion with the saints.

## **Questions for reflection and discussion**

1. How important are the saints, or particular saints, to you? How did you learn about them, and why are they important to you?
2. In the Creed, we say that we believe in "the communion of saints". What do you understand by this phrase?
3. How would you argue the case for, and the case against, invoking the saints (ie asking them to pray for us)?
4. How does your tradition safeguard the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's role in God's dealings with us?
5. How does your tradition highlight the solidarity in Christ of all Christians, both the living and those who have died in faith?
6. The statement talks about three ways of acknowledging the saints in our prayer: invocation, conversation, and evocation. With which of these are you most comfortable, and why?
7. There are many matters on which Anglicans and Roman Catholics differ in the ways we express our faith and practice. How serious do you think are the differences between us in the matter of the saints?
8. What difference has this statement made to your own understanding of the role of the saints in Christian prayer?
9. If you are discussing the statement in a group, see if the group can come up with a prayer that refers to a saint or saints, and that all of you are happy to pray, and to which you can all say "Amen".

## News & Information

### *A report to the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation 1997 A Roman Catholic's response*

#### **I. Current status of liturgical reform in the Roman Catholic Church**

##### **A. Eucharist**

i There will be a 3rd edition of the Roman Missal – but changes will not be extensive – according to the wishes of the Pope.

ii International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Sacramentary: The voting on all eight segments of the ICEL sacramentary, which will be eventually published in 2 volumes is complete. Each national episcopal conference must put the book(s) together with their own adaptations (e.g. the 'Anglican' placement of the Peace in the USA) and national calendars and then send them to Rome. ICEL does not submit material to Rome – only the national conferences may do so.

The major innovations in the ICEL Sacramentary are:

a. a set of original opening prayers for each Sunday of the three-year cycle.

b. pastoral introductions to the Order of Mass and the various seasons. [Already printed in 1997 LTP Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons.] The Lord's Prayer remains in most of the conferences in 'Rite One' language.

iii The new sacramentary will also contain a eucharistic prayer which was approved within the last two years – Prayer for Special Occasions (the English translation of the so-called Prayer of the Swiss Synod, which had already been translated into German, Italian, and Spanish, from the original Fench).

iv Lectionary. The National conference of Catholic Bishops (USA) in June 1995 voted to accept the Roman revision of its version of the Revised New American Bible lectionary. It is considerably less inclusive than the proposal that had been submitted in 1991. Roman authorities are attempting to remove the Canadian RC Lectionary, which is a

version of the NRSV. The Sunday Lectionary has been published in the USA.

### **B. Instruction on Translation**

Since 1969 the Roman Church has employed a very forward-looking document entitled 'comme le prévoit' for its directives on translation – a document which allowed for dynamic equivalence. It appears that a new document on translation will be published sometime in the future – probably more restrictive in tone.

### **C. Liturgy of the Hours**

i The new ICEL Psalter has been a publishing success. Its publisher (LTP) has reported combined sales of 55,000 for the 4-week cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer, Psalter, Canticles, and a book containing a very abbreviated version of Morning and Evening Prayer entitled *Proclaim Praise*. Unfortunately the imprimatur on this psalter was rescinded by the US Catholic Bishops' Conference in August, 1998.

ii A consultation document is being prepared for Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer in the parochial context. It will very likely contain the series of Original Text prayers that ICEL has already prepared.

### **D. Initiation**

ICEL's current major project is a revision of the rites of initiation for children. Many of the texts have already been translated and original texts are in various stages of preparation. The major question has been the shape of the book, especially with regard to the presentation of the 'correct' order of the rites: baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, without prejudice to the more frequently used: baptism, first eucharist, and confirmation.

The major contribution of the revision will be the provision of staged rites of infant initiation, with a number of optional preparatory rites, e.g. the blessing of parents awaiting the birth of a child. These rites will be prepared both for the liturgical assembly and domestic settings. Great attention is also being given to the variety of situations (e.g. single parents) that present themselves.

### **E. Other rites**

Work continues on the revision of Marriage Rites and re-translation of the Rites of Ordination (from the 1990 2nd Roman editio typica). England and Wales have submitted their own versions of the marriage rites to Rome and have yet to receive confirmation.



## **F. Other Mixed Commissions**

I should mention that Archbishop David Pilarczyk has stepped down as Chairman of ICEL after a 10 year term and Bishop Maurice Taylor (Scotland) has been elected in his place.

i The Commission Internationale Francophone pour la Traduction de le Liturgie (CIFTL) is preparing an official French hymnbook.

ii The Internationale Arbeits Gemeinschaft (IAG) like ICEL is preparing a completely new translation of the Sacramentary for the Millennium. They are considering moving the Peace (and possibly the Penitential Rite) to a position following the Intercessions and before the Presentation of the Gifts.

IAG is also discussing major revisions in the rites of Holy Week, e.g. On Palm Sunday the Liturgy of the Word will consist only of the Palm Sunday theme – the Passion will be suppressed. On Good Friday there will be no service of Holy Communion and the Veneration of the Cross will take place after the Homily and before the Solemn Prayers. At the Easter Vigil an all-night vigil is to be preferred and the Gloria in Excelsis will be moved to the ‘Cranmerian’ position after communion.

IAG is also preparing an ICEL-like celebration of baptism in stages.

## **II Some reflections on the Conference**

First, let me say how difficult a topic ordination is. This past Spring I team-taught a course on ministry and it was one of the most difficult I have ever taught – fraught with tension and great unhappiness.

In the RC Church, as you well know, women and married men may not be ordained. Some of the main theological reasons associated with this prohibition have to do with a cultic understanding of the eucharist vis a vis the episcopate and presbyterate (the word sacerdos applies equally to both). Especially with regard to the question of the ordination of women, the issue turns on the phrase ‘in persona Christi’, which relates directly to a sacramental understanding of the capacity of the person to represent Christ. Part of the problem is that ‘official’ Rome is moving more toward a very traditional ‘take’ on Vatican II – e.g. in emphasising the ‘ontological difference’ of the ordained.

Now to several comments about the task you have undertaken this week. I have seven.

1. A remarkable amount of work on a reasonably good document has been done in five days time. Given the pressure of work and the lack of

library resources, I think this is to the credit of the membership of the conference.

2. Several years ago David Power mentioned at a conference at the Catholic University of America on the Eucharist, that the Roman Church has never adequately responded to the challenge posed by the Reformation of the 16th century with regard to the nature of ministry. I think he is correct – although the emphasis on preaching in the Document on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) was a welcome advance in Vatican II. In other words, you still have a challenge to more evangelical forms of ministry to present to Roman Catholics.

3. The strongest aspect of all three sections of your document is the ringing affirmation of a baptismal ecclesiology. This ecclesiology is an essential aspect of a renewed sacramental theology and renewed liturgy, as the RC experience of the adult catechumenate over the past 20 years or so has shown. I also think that everyone here can recognise the profound influence that Faith and Order's *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* has had on us.

4. I would be remiss as a Roman Catholic were I not to mention that the progressive stance you have taken with regard to the historic episcopate is problematic in terms of the RC magisterium. E.g. it runs in conflict with *Lumen Gentium's* affirmation of episcopacy as *de jure divino*. In addition I must recall to you that the official RC response to BEM (in vol 6 of *The Churches Respond to BEM*) makes it quite clear that it does not consider much to be resolved in terms of the nature of ministry if the nature of ecclesial authority is not addressed. Hence the purpose at the very least of acknowledging the question of the Petrine ministry.

5. One of the most positive approaches you have taken in the conference and its document is the recognition of ordination as a process that ultimately depends on God. This affirmation can be very helpful to other churches as well. Informally, I often say to students and ordinands: 'If you're not a deacon when you walk down that aisle, you won't be when you walk back up.'

6. The diaconate – you still have a number of issues to resolve with regard to the diaconate. In my opinion the foremost issue is the question of direct ordination to the presbyterate. In my own church I see very little hope of establishing the diaconate as a proper and important ministry in the church without removing it as a stepping-

stone to presbyteral ordination. Of course, were this recommendation to be taken we wouldn't have people pretending to be liturgical deacons. 7. I made some remarks yesterday about boldness, parrhesia in Pauline terms. It is relatively easy to make that kind of comment as an outsider, someone with the advantage of a bit of perspective. I can make it because I see the problem in my own church as well. Whenever we begin to deal with the question of ministry we quickly lose sight of its evangelical purpose and begin to worry about more domestic matters – or even in ecumenical terms – with matters mainly ecclesiastical. In post-modern cultures it is no easy thing to find the balance between respect for traditions and cultures and proclaiming the gospel boldly, but try we must, lest we simply tidy things up as the Titanic goes down.

Might I conclude by thanking you heartily for your welcome this week? I had to remind myself continually that I was an outsider so much have you treated me as one of your own. I deeply appreciate that welcome, especially since I have a long-standing respect and affection for the Anglican tradition, its spirituality and its worship – not to mention for so many of you as friends. But no matter how affectionate, I do hope I have been of some use to you not only as a brother but also as an outsider.

*John F. Baldwin SJ*

### *AAL on-line*

What do you enjoy most about AAL conferences? Experiencing a new environment for study and worship? Input from invited experts? Learning about new resources? Catching up with Academy members from around Australia and beyond?

Many of these joys can be continued or replicated in the cyber-world by means of involvement on an Internet discussion list ... and now we can offer you AAL-L, the AAL conference you can access between conferences! So far our discussions have ranged from the merits of techno-funk and Gregorian chant as adjuncts to corporate public worship, to the relative benefits of 'infant' and 'believers' baptism.

Here is our statement of purpose:

AAL-L is an electronic discussion list established by the Australian Academy of Liturgy to foster dissemination of news and information

and to facilitate amicable discussion relating to all aspects of liturgy and worship in Australia and New Zealand. While discussion is unmoderated, applications for list membership are subject to approval by the AAL executive.

If you'd like to subscribe, please contact one of the 'listowners', Paul Walton <pw Walton@ucaqld.com.au> or Inari Thiel <inari@me.gu.edu.au> or simply send email to <major-domo@ucaqld.com.au> with a blank subject line and the message 'subscribe aal-l <your email address>' (without the inverted commas) in the body.

*Inari Thiel*

## Studies in Liturgy

### *5. The Certificate in Pastoral Liturgy an outline*

The Certificate in Pastoral Liturgy is about to unleash its first graduates on the Catholic community in the greater Sydney basin. The course is a collaborative effort, run through the Catholic Institute of Sydney in conjunction with the Liturgical Commissions of the Archdiocese of Sydney, the Diocese of Parramatta, and the Diocese of Broken Bay.

This piece is simply to flag an article that is to appear in the next issue of AJL. That article is an attempt to make available to readers the rationale, shape, and strategies that constitute the course. From the very outset all those who guided the course from first awakenings to practical implementation were keen on one thing in particular. There was an immediate consensus that whatever we developed be made available as widely as possible, copied, adapted to local situations. While proud authors, we do not wish to be exclusive owners. In return, we would welcome any feedback that you may have, especially around changes you found helpful.

The forthcoming article will be in two parts. In Part One, the Background, we will cover the team approach taken, the adult learning strategies, the level of academic achievement, scheduling. This will also cover the rationale for the certificate. Part Two will contain an overview of the individual units, their content, timetable, required reading, and

assessment tasks. Questions of enrolment, entry points, cross credit, qualifications for staff, and costs will also be discussed.

If you would like any further information more quickly, please contact Gerard Moore at The Catholic Institute of Sydney, 98 Albert Road, Strathfield 2135 (02 9752 9515) or gmoore@cis.catholic.edu.au.

Australian Academy of Liturgy  
**Conference**

*Tuesday 18 – Friday 21 January 2000*

**Out of the Depths**

*Religious Ritual in Public Life*

University of Tasmania  
Hobart

*Included in the programme is the  
Guildford Young Memorial Address by  
an international speaker.*

**PLAN TO BE THERE**

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