LWF

STUDIES

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:
UNITY IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Edited by S. Anita Stauffer

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The problem of how the Gospel relates to various cultures is one which has acquired special importance as we approach the end of the twentieth century. We have learned to respect the rich diversity of cultural expression around the globe, while understanding that the Gospel can only be fully comprehended and accepted once it has taken root in any given culture. Thus it is for good reason that this topic has gained increasing importance across the ecumenical spectrum. The World Council of Churches' program on Gospel and culture has been taken up by numerous churches worldwide. The Lutheran World Federation, also, is challenged by these questions in several of its activities, and some years ago launched a study program which deals with one particular aspect of this complex of questions, namely worship and culture. From the outset, close cooperation was established between this study and the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order as well as its study on Gospel and culture. The various contributions contained in this publication analyze some of the connections between worship and culture, and worship and ecumenism.

The study on worship and culture is lodged in the Department for Theology and Studies. Under the highly competent leadership of the Rev. S. Anita Stauffer it was designed to involve several stages. The first global phase was documented in the publication *Worship and Culture in Dialogue,* which has been extraordinarily well received in international as well as ecumenical circles. The book (which is also available in complete French and Spanish translations, as well as a partial translation in German) is used as a textbook in theological schools on five continents, and not only by Lutherans. The second step, a regional research and study phase, was planned at a the study's international consultation in Hong Kong, and some of the results of the research, presented at a January 1996 consultation in Nairobi, are contained in the present publication.

It is intended that this book will serve as a principal resource for the fourth phase of the study, to be carried out at the regional and sub-regional levels.

As well, it is offered as a further LWF contribution to ecumenical literature on this topic.

The study team which has faithfully accompanied this process has shown a most remarkable loyalty to this study. Their work, as well as the immense contributions of the two major resource persons, is highly appreciated. Without their help, and the support of the member churches and related agencies which provided the necessary financing, it would not have been possible to reach this point. We are immensely grateful to all those who have contributed to this undertaking.

Viggo Mortensen
Director
Department for Theology and Studies

WORSHIP:
ECUMENICAL CORE AND
CULTURAL CONTEXT[1]

S. Anita Stauffer

To deal with the relationships between worship and culture is at once to deal with the heart of the Christian life, and with a deeply complex subject. It affects people's primary Christian experience, their spirituality, and it can therefore be very controversial. It is a subject on which everyone has an opinion and many emotions.

The topic of *worship* and culture includes church music and church architecture and art, as well as preaching and liturgy. Its foundations are in the overall relationship between Gospel and culture, but it also relates to a wide variety of particular disciplines — among them biblical studies, theology, cultural anthropology, church history, liturgics, homiletics, ritual studies, topistics[2], ethnomusicology, aesthetic philosophy and theology, and architecture and art. Although an enormous body of literature has already been published[3] on the matter, in most congregations all over the world, either local culture is ignored in worship, or it has been reflected in shallow and unexamined ways.

It is on the basis of this situation that the Lutheran World Federation initiated a long-term interdisciplinary study of the relationships between Christian worship and the diverse cultures of the world. An ongoing study team was formed—of about 25 people from five continents, with Anglican,

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[1] An earlier, and quite different, form of this article appeared as "Culture and Christian Worship in Intersection," in *International Review of Mission*, LXXXIV:332/333 (January/April 1995), 65-76.

[2] Topistics is "the holistic study of places" and human experience in those places; E. Victor Walter, "The Places of Experience," in *The Philosophical Forum*, XII:2 (Winter 1980-1981), 163.

[3] For a select listing, see the bibliography in this volume.

Roman Catholic, and Methodist participant-observers. Two eminent scholars were enlisted to serve as resource persons: Gordon W. Lathrop, professor of liturgy at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, USA; and Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, director of both the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy in the Philippines, and the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. The ecumenical involvement was deemed vital from the beginning, for the subject itself is ecumenical in fundamental ways.

The team met first in October 1993 in Cartigny, Switzerland, for an exploration of some of the biblical and historical foundations of the topic, particularly with regard to Baptism and Eucharist in the New Testament era, the early Church, and the Lutheran Reformation. Concentrated attention was given to how worship (liturgy, music, and architectural setting) in the early Church was contextualized in the Jewish and Hellenistic milieux. In March of 1994, the study team gathered again, in Hong Kong, to explore contemporary issues and questions, including discussions of case studies from all over the world. The differing dynamics of monocultural, bicultural, and multicultural societies were considered, as were such realities as cultural evolution and cultural diffusion. The major papers and reports from both of these consultations appeared in the previous LWF Studies volume, *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*[4].

From mid-1994 through the end of 1995, the study was in a regional phase, during which regional study teams identified and explored the particular issues related to worship and culture in their parts of the world, using different methodologies and involving a wide variety of laity, pastors, bishops, professors, musicians, and artists and architects. The regional teams were encouraged to do their research ecumenically to the greatest possible extent, although in the end it must be admitted that this did not happen.

Among the questions listed for the regional teams to explore were the following:

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[4]   Edited by S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, Department for Theology and Studies, 1994). There are also editions in German (*Gottesdienst und Kultur im Dialog*), French (*Culte et culture en dialogue*), and Spanish (*Dialogo entre Culto y Cultura*). Quotations in this paper are from the English edition, hence *WCD*.

General Areas for Inquiry

1. What is the cultural situation in a given region/subregion of (a) the population as a whole, and (b) the Lutheran church(es)? To what extent is the situation homogeneous and monocultural, hetero-geneous, indigenous, immigrant, and so forth? What are the cultural values and patterns?[5]

2. What cultural patterns might be brought into Christian worship? Why?

3. In what regards should Christian worship in this region/subregion be counter-cultural? Why? In what sense should worship (a) contradict the culture, or (b) re-interpret the culture?

4. What resistance is there to (a) contextualization, and (b) the counter-cultural? Why?

5. What are the questions regarding the liturgical core (Cartigny Statement 3.7)[6] to be explored in this region?

6. Are there currently efforts toward contextualization of liturgy, music, and church architecture/art in the member churches of the given region? What help is needed in those efforts?

Specific Issues for Inquiry

1. Eucharistic prayers
2. Church year calendar and liturgical colors
3. Hymn texts and music
4. Choral and instrumental music for worship
5. Church architecture, art, and furnishings[7]
6. Eucharistic vessels and vestments
7. Lectionary
8. Baptism
9. Healing rites

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[5] Regarding cultural values and patterns, see Anscar Chupungco, "Liturgy and the Components of Culture," *WCD*, 153-165.

[6] *WCD*, 133.

[7] See Stauffer, "Contemporary Questions on Church Architecture and Culture," *WCD*, 167-181.

10. Linguistic style of liturgical texts
11. Participation of the congregation in worship; and the sharing of liturgical leadership through the use of lay ministers (lectors, intercessors, etc.)
12. Patterns of reverence, and of hospitality/community
13. Preaching
14. Confession and absolution

The regions were at liberty to explore these issues as it seemed most appropriate in the given place, as well as to consider other questions and issues. Regional and subregional research conferences were held in Africa, Canada, the Nordic region, eastern Europe, central Europe, Papua New Guinea, and the United States. In Brazil, graduate students of one study team member were trained in both anthropology and worship to conduct field research. Seminary students were also involved in the research in Papua New Guinea. Elsewhere in Asia, study team members conducted their research largely through individual interviews. The Spanish translation of the Cartigny Statement was the focus of an ecumenical conference in Latin America. Substance of the study has been used by the liturgical commission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

In 1996 the international study team met in Nairobi (1) to analyse and synthesize the findings of the regional research, (2) to consider methodologies for contextualizing the Eucharist, (3) to explore the counter-cultural nature of the Eucharist, and (4) to plan a variety of ways to implement the learnings of the study thus far, as each region and LWF member church decides is helpful. The papers, report, and statement of the Nairobi consultation are contained in the present volume.

As a way of making a connection between *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* and the present volume, it is possible to consider several basic statements related to some of the intersections between culture and Christian worship.

1. There is an ecumenical core of Christian worship.

Most briefly, the core consists of assembly around Word, Baptism, and Eucharist. People come together, assemble, gather around Jesus Christ, to

hear the Word proclaimed, and to receive God's gracious sacramental gifts of Baptism and Eucharist. Christian worship is a corporate event, in the sense of the Church being the body or *corpus* of Christ. Christianity is not a private, individualistic religion; unlike in a religion such as Hinduism, Christian worship does not consist essentially of individual cultic acts. We assemble together for God's gifts of Word and Sacrament, and our response of prayer and praise.

Lutherans usually describe this core in the phraseology of the Augsburg Confession, article 7: the Church "is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."[8] However, this core is shared across confessional and cultural lines, and it endures from one generation to another. There is the witness of teaching that leads to Baptism in water and in the Triune Name, and the assembly of the baptized around Christ present in proclaimed Word and the shared thanksgiving meal. The ecumenical consensus on this core, these liturgical shapes or patterns, was made clear in the 1982 WCC Faith and Order Paper 111, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*[9], and more recently by the Ditchingham Report in Faith and Order Paper 171.[10] This core is further explored in the chapters by Gordon Lathrop in the present volume. Ironically, the regional research discovered that the liturgical core is simply ignored in some Lutheran churches around the world, either out of ignorance of it, or because of influence from charismatics, for example.

As the LWF Worship and Culture Study has progressed (and "in conversation" with recent WCC Faith and Order work in worship) it has become ever more clear that the subject has significant ecumenical trajectories. Further work, particularly that done locally and regionally, in contextualization should be ecumenical; there are particularly rich possibilities in many areas of the world for Anglican-Lutheran cooperation,

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[8] English translation in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959, 32.

[9] Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

[10] "Report of the Consultation," in Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds., *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1995).

and one hopes that Roman Catholic-Lutheran cooperation can grow. These are the two Christian World Communions in the "Western church" with whom the liturgical core is most deeply and most fully shared.

2. Christian worship has always interacted with culture.

From apostolic times, Christians have examined and critiqued the cultures in which they lived, making decisions about which cultural elements can be adopted and adapted, transformed and reinterpreted, for their worship. It is and has always been a necessary task in evangelization—in New Testament times, in the patristic era, in the Reformation, and ever since.[11] Worship is a human activity, and it is thus inevitably and inherently related to culture. As Anscar Chupungco has put it, "The core of the liturgy is a supracultural reality which the Church received through apostolic preaching and preserves intact in every time and place. What inculturation means is that worship assimilates the people's language, ritual, and symbolic patterns. In this way the people are able to claim and own the liturgical core...."[12] Liturgical contextualization and Christian evangelization have always gone hand-in-hand, as still they do today.

It is equally true that questions of the ways in which worship is counter-cultural (see #4, below) are also crucial to evangelization and to church renewal. Thus, sometimes the interaction between worship and culture has been a conscious rejection by the Church of an element of culture. In church architectural history, for example, it is significant that, in the third and fourth centuries, when special places for Christian worship began to be constructed, pagan temples were rejected as the model. There has always been an effort by the Christian Church to contextualize its worship life, but also to avoid syncretism—that is, to avoid those cultural elements which would contradict or undermine the Gospel, or to confuse the people regarding Christian identity.

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[11] For detailed attention to the contextualization of Baptism and Eucharist in history, see *WCD*, Part II.

[12] "Baptism in the Early Church and its Cultural Settings," *WCD*, 40.

3. Cultures are to be respected but also critiqued.

It is all too common in attempts at liturgical contextualization for cultures to be dealt with in a shallow way, even (perhaps inadvertently) to be played with. It is not enough simply to take elements from a culture and insert them into Christian worship without understanding what those elements mean in their own cultural context. There is a need to explore a given culture in depth before elements from it are imported into worship. There is a need to understand, for example, the cultural meanings of an African tribal king's hut before it is used as the model for a Christian church, or the Buddhist meanings of a pagoda before using it as a Christian baptismal font. There is a need to understand the dynamics of the entertainment culture before using a theatre or an opera house as the model for a worship space. One of the leading proponents of contextualization in Africa says that "syncretism occurs when enthusiastic missionaries conduct a superficial adaptation in ignorance of the true meaning of cultural symbols."[13] Superficial adoption of cultural elements is no less a problem in today's consumer and entertainment culture in North America[14] than it is in the developing world. Sometimes it will be decided, after thorough anthropological and theological exploration, that some cultural elements are appropriately adapted for liturgical use; sometimes not. If the verdict is positive, usually it calls for adaptation rather than mere adoption, for it is often the case that cultural elements need critique, transformation, and reorientation for such use. They must be able to serve the Gospel, to be oriented toward Christ present in Word and Sacrament.

Chupungco has articulated this balance of respect and critique: "...while we assume that not everything cultural can be assimilated by the liturgy and that what is assimilated must undergo a strict critical evaluation, we should keep in mind that culture is not something we play around with or, worse, impose upon in the name of liturgical inculturation."[15] On the other hand,

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[13] Aylward Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 33. Note that the present author, like Shorter, uses the word *syncretism* in the negative sense.

[14] And (perhaps, so far, still to a lesser extent) in northern Europe. See *The Consumer Society as an Ethical Challenge*, Report for the Norwegian Bishops' Conference 1992 (Oslo: Church of Norway Information Service, 1992).

[15] "Liturgy and the Components of Culture," *WCD*, 154.

he adds, "Christian liturgy welcomes the values, cultural patterns...of peoples and races, so long as they can be vehicles of Christ's message."[16] In a sense he explores this balance further in the present volume as he considers criteria for contextualization methodologies.

The relationship between worship and culture is always a two-way interaction; both the liturgy and the culture are challenged, and both are changed. The 1994 Vatican instruction on inculturation of the Roman liturgy says it well: "The liturgy, like the Gospel, must respect cultures, but at the same time invite them to purify and sanctify themselves."[17] The paradigm for contextualization is not just the incarnation, but also the paschal mystery—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—and our own transforming baptismal participation in it (Romans 6:3-5). As well, there is a crucial pneumatological element; as Georg Kretschmar has pointed out, faith taking shape in various cultures is "the gift and work of the Holy Spirit."[18]

4. Christian worship relates to culture in at least three ways: worship is transcultural, contextual, and counter-cultural.

First, worship is transcultural. The resurrected Christ himself transcends cultural lines, of course, and our worship of Christ is thus inherently transcultural. The basic pattern of Word and eucharistic meal, Baptism in water in the Triune Name, and use of the ecumenical creeds[19] and the Our Father—these all witness to the nature of the Church as a worldwide

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[16] *Ibid.*, 165.

[17] Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation: Fourth Instruction for the Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy* (Nos. 37-40), section 19. (Vatican City, 1994.) The English text also appears in *Origins*, 23:43 (April 14, 1994).

[18] Kretschmar, "The Early Church and Hellenistic Culture," in *International Review of Mission*, LXXXIV:332/333 (January/April 1995), 44.

[19] The introduction to *Confessing the One Faith*, Faith and Order Paper No. 153 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991) implicitly affirms the transcultural nature of the Nicene Creed: "churches which belong to different Christian traditions and live in diverse cultural, social, political and religious contexts, need to reappropriate their common basis in the apostolic faith so that they may confess their faith together. In so doing, they will give common witness to the saving purposes of the Triune God for all humanity and all creation" (Section 5). For more on creeds and culture, see Kretschmar, 33-46.

communio. The important Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,* can be considered a consensus statement of transcultural as well as ecumenical commonalities. The Nairobi Statement, in the present volume, summarizes the transcultural nature of worship in section 2.

Second, worship is (or should be) contextual. The term inculturation as often been used for this, although there has been no agreement in its definition. I prefer the terms contextualization and localization, because they are broader than the term inculturation. In church architecture, for example, contextualization is concerned with topography, climate, and indigenous building materials, as well as culture.

The meaning of contextualization is obvious: it is the use or echo of local cultural and natural elements in worship and the space in which it occurs. It is making the bridge between worship and local context, so that worship can be meaningful to the people in their everyday lives. It is the process toward enabling a church building in China or central Africa to look like it has architectural roots in those places rather than in Europe or the United States. It is encouraging congregations in Latin America or South Africa to sing at least some hymns from their own cultures. It is the the preparation and use of eucharistic prayers which rehearse salvation history not only with biblical images, but also with local terms and images to which the people can relate. The Anglican Province of Kenya, for example, has made a start on this in the preface of the eucharistic prayer in their 1989 rite:

> It is right and our delight to give you thanks and praise, great Father, living God, supreme over the world, Creator, Provider, Saviour and Giver. From a wandering nomad you created your family; for a burdened people you raised up a leader; for a confused nation you chose a king; for a rebellious crowd you sent your prophets. In these last days you have sent us your Son, your perfect image, bringing your kingdom, revealing your will, dying, rising, reigning, remaking your people for yourself. Through him you have poured out your Holy Spirit, filling us with light and life. Therefore with angels, archangels, faithful ancestors and all in heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, forever praising you and saying: Holy, holy, holy...."[20]

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[20] *A Kenyan Service of Holy Communion* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1989), 27-28.

This text echoes both the Bible and the Kenyan situation. Using imagery locally comprehensible, it makes clear that what the congregation is giving thanks for are the mighty acts of God, and it is an appropriate liturgical adaptation and reinterpretation of African respect for their ancestors.[21] Both core and culture are taken seriously.

Another example is the following section of a eucharistic prayer, giving thanks for Christ and for creation, from the Roman Catholic liturgy in Zaire, an early effort at contextualization:

> Holy Father, we praise you through your Son Jesus, our mediator.
> He is your Word, the Word that gives us life.
> Through him you created the heaven and the earth;
> Through him you created our great river, the Zaire;
> Through him you created our forests, our rivers, our lakes;
> Through him you created the animals who live in our forests
>   and the fish who live in our rivers.
> Through him you have created the things we can see,
>   and also the things we do not see.[22]

So, too, with the Anglican Province of New Zealand, which includes the islands of Polynesia. In a eucharistic liturgy approved in 1989, a canticle of praise in the opening section contains this section of thanksgiving for creation, following a thanksgiving for Christ:

> So now we offer our thanks
> for the beauty of these islands;
> for the wild places and the busy,
> for the mountains, the coast and the sea.[23]

Proclamation of the Word—preaching—is also a vital area for relating to culture. What are the images, the customs, the stories in a culture which

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[21] For commentary on linking to the ancestors in the context of African eucharistic prayers, see Elochuwu Uzukwu, "Inculturation and the Liturgy (Eucharist)," in Rosino Gibellini, ed., *Paths of African Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1994), especially 105-108.

[22] "The Zaire Rite for the Mass," *African Ecclesial Review*, 17:4 (July 1975), 246.

[23] *A New Zealand Prayer Book* (Auckland: William Collins Publishers), 477.

can help the Word come alive? For example, Aylward Shorter has described preaching in Africa in the form of a "Kimbu choric story, with a refrain to be sung at different points by the congregation."[24] It might also be asked to what extent a lectionary should relate to a given cultural context, or, by contrast, to what extent a lectionary should be a more global element of worship; this, of course is also an important ecumenical question.

Contextualization needs to occur with church music and church architecture as well. In church music, Mark Bangert has described Balinese music accompanied by gamelans, and a musical setting of the liturgy in east Africa using the typical African call/response pattern.[25] Hymnody, too, needs to reflect to some degree the local context, both musically and textually. A good early example of such hymnic contextualization is "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime," the earliest Canadian carol in existence,[26] written by a Jesuit missionary to the indigenous Huron people in the seventeenth century:

> 'Twas in the moon of wintertime when all the birds had fled,
> That God, the Lord of all the earth, sent angel choirs instead.
> Before their light the stars grew dim, and wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:
> Jesus, your king is born!....[27]

In the southern hemisphere, where Christmas occurs in the summer, different imagery is needed. Consider this hymn text from New Zealand:

> Carol our Christmas, an upside down Christmas;
> snow is not falling and trees are not bare.
> Carol the summer, and welcome the Christ Child,
> warm in our sunshine and sweetness of air.

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[24] *Evangelization and Culture* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 129-130. See also Shorter's "Form and Content in the African Sermon: An Experiment," *African Ecclesial Review*, 11:3 (1969), 263-279.

[25] See "Dynamics of Liturgy and World Musics: A Methodology for Evaluation," in *WCD*, 183-203.

[26] Marilyn Kay Stulken, *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 175.

[27] Hymn 42, stanza 1; *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis and Philadelphia: Augsburg Publishing House and LCA Board of Publication, 1978).

> Sing of the gold and the green and the sparkle,
> water and river and lure of the beach.
> Sing in the happiness of open spaces,
> sing a Nativity summer can reach![28]

In church architecture,[29] one could cite the exemplary St. Mary's Anglican Church, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong,[30] which uses a number of traditional Chinese artistic motifs on both the exterior and interior; the new Lutheran Theological Seminary in the New Territories, Hong Kong;[31] and the new baptismal font in an African-American parish in Chicago (St. Benedict the African Roman Catholic Church), which is in the form of a natural body of water, reflecting the traditional African respect for the earth. The font is a round pool, resembling a pond, approximately eight meters across and more than one meter deep.[32]

In all three areas of liturgy, music, and the visual environment for worship, however, one could also cite shallow and inappropriate examples of "contextualization." (If Bonhoeffer could write of "cheap grace," perhaps we could add the term "cheap contextualization.") Clearly there is a need for intensive work by all the churches, so that contextualization can be done in an ever deeper way, respecting both culture and Christian faith.

Methodologies for contextualization, especially those of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation, are explored by Anscar Chupungco in his chapter in this volume, and they are summarized in the Nairobi Statement, 3.3. and 3.4.; criteria are suggested in 3.6.

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[28] Stanzas 1-2 of hymn 143, *Sound the Bamboo*, hymnal of the Christian Conference of Asia; text by Shirley Murphy (Manila: Christian Conference of Asia and the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, 1990).

[29] See *WCD*, 167-181. For an introduction to Asian church architecture, see Masao Takenaka, *The Place Where God Dwells* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, and Kyoto: Asian Christian Art Association, 1995).

[30] For photos, see Takenaka, pp. 62-63.

[31] For photos, see Takenaka, pp. 64-65.

[32] For photos, plan, and description, see S. Anita Stauffer, *On Baptismal Fonts* (Bramcote, Notts., England: Grove Books, 1994), chapter 4.

Third, Christian worship is *counter-cultural*. Perhaps the traditional Lutheran term *simul justus et peccator* could describe cultures as well as people. From the critique of culture sometimes comes the conclusion that Christian worship must contradict the culture, must sometimes say "no" to it.[33] Sometimes the values, patterns, or root paradigms of a culture contradict the Gospel to the extent that they cannot be reoriented and adapted for worship. In my own culture of North America, for example, the narcissism and overwhelming consumerism are contradictory to the fabric of Christian faith and worship. Worship is inherently both corporate and participatory; it cannot, therefore, be planned primarily for consumption or entertainment. Or in India, for a different type of example, societal rejection of the Dalit people as untouchable is antithetical to the Gospel, and simply cannot be a part of Christian worship. The reported practice[34] of some upper-caste people refusing to commune if they cannot do so before Dalits in their congregations is a scandal. The Eucharist is counter-cultural, a paradigm for an alternative way of life in which there is food for all and for all alike; it is a meal in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female (Galatians 3:26-28)—and neither Dalit nor Brahmin. We are all baptized into the one Lord and one body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:27-29). The counter-cultural is explored in Gordon Lathrop's first chapter in the present volume, and a summary of the study team's conclusions at present are in the Nairobi Statement, section 4.

5. Work at the intersections of worship and culture can never end.

Even before the seven-year LWF Study on Worship and Culture was proposed and approved, it was clear that such a study could never be the final word. The issues are too complex and controverted, and the cultures of the world are ever-changing and evolving. Furthermore, the work necessary in churches around the world cannot be done quickly, if it is to be deep and pastoral. Additional scholarship and education are necessary both in liturgy/music/architecture and in cultural anthropology, as the basis

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[33] Regarding the need to say both "yes" and "no" to culture, see Gordon W. Lathrop's chapters in *WCD*, especially "A Contemporary Lutheran Approach to Worship and Culture: Sorting Out the Critical Principles," 137-151.

[34] "Discriminations Against Dalit Christians in Tamil Nadu," published in 9 August 1992, at the Institute of Development, Education, Action, and Studies Centre, Madurai, India; reported in *SAR News*, 19-25 September 1992.

then for local teaching and local contextualization. Such teaching and such change require much local study and nearly infinite pastoral patience as well as leadership.   As well, the Christian faith must take root in every new generation, and thus contextualization is a never-ending task of evangelization and Christian formation.

While considerable regional research was accomplished in Phase II of this study, it is clear that additional research is necessary. The needs differ by region; in some regions further research regarding contextualization of the liturgy *per se* is needed, while in other regions more work is necessary regarding church music and/or church architecture and art. In all regions, the contextualization of preaching still must be addressed; especially for Lutherans, who value so highly the proclamation of the Word, preaching cannot be ignored in contextualization efforts. In many regions, the question of the relationship between nature's seasons and the church year as well as liturgy itself needs to be explored. This is particularly true in the southern hemisphere, but one might also raise the question in the Nordic churches, for example, about the impact on worship of the extreme seasonal differences between light and darkness. Around the world, further attention is also needed regarding several basic questions, including: What is beauty in a given cultural context, and how does it relate to a sense of the Holy?[35] What are the cultural manifestations in a given place of gathering into a community, of offering hospitality to strangers, and of expressing reverence in the presence of the transcendent God? As with liturgical renewal itself, careful reflection and experimentation in contextualization are necessary, followed by evaluation and further revision.

Considerable work on the contextualization of the Eucharist was done at the Nairobi consultation, but some additional international work on this subject is also still necessary (on particular topics such as preaching,

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[35] Unfortunately this question is very rarely discussed in literature about contextualization. For three examinations by western writers, see James A. Martin, Jr., *Beauty and Holiness: The Dialogue between Aesthetics and Religion* (Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press, 1990); Richard Harries, *Art and the Beauty of God: A Christian Understanding* (London: Mowbray, 1993); and John D. Witvliet, "Toward a Liturgical Aesthetic: An Interdisciplinary Review of Aesthetic Theory," in *Liturgy Digest* (University of Notre Dame, USA), 3:1 (1996), especially 50-61. For an introductory Asian approach, see Takenaka, 17-20.

offertory, eucharistic prayer, spatial environment, and hymns and other music). Study of the localization of the church year, Baptism, daily prayer, and occasional services (including the important topic of healing rites) and rites of passage has not yet even begun.[36] Not all of this can or will be accomplished by the LWF Worship and Culture Study, but it is hoped that at least starting points can be established, and that the consciousness of the member churches, and perhaps even ecumenical partners, on these topics will be raised.

Conclusion

Christians can neither ignore culture, nor reject it. But we see it in relative terms; human culture can never be an absolute to which our highest allegiance is given. Liturgical contextualization is not a luxury for the Church; it must be done in and by local churches all over the world. However, the danger in it is not only syncretism, but also cultural captivity. And cultural captivity of any kind is idolatry, because God alone is the Holy One. This is what Kosuke Koyama meant when he wrote that the Gospel

> cannot be completely adjusted, indigenised, contextualised, accommodated, adapted, re-symbolized, acculturated, inculturated and incarnated to culture. The Gospel displays its authentic power in its refusal to be completely indigenised.... A perfect indigenisation is an idolatry of culture.[37]

We must be intentional about liturgical contextualization or localization— but, simultaneously, we must also strive for balance between the particular and the universal; between the contextual, the counter-cultural, and the transcultural. "Behold, I am making all things new," says the Lord (Revelation

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[36] It should be noted, however, that study team member Mark Luttio has made a significant beginning with regard to the contextualization of funerals in Japan; see his case study in this volume. Also, the liturgical commission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic has done bold new work on contextualizing certain rites of passage; see the section on Africa in the Report on Regional Research in this volume.

[37] "The Tradition and Indigenisation," *Asia Journal of Theology, 7:1 (April 1993), 7.*

21:5; NEB). Christ transcends and transforms all things human, including ourselves and our cultures. Interaction between worship and culture influences both. In the final analysis, we are called not to conform to the world, but to be transformed ourselves (Romans 12:2), and, in turn, to help transform the world. All of creation, including all earthly cultures, need this redemption, this transformation.

Lutheran World Federation, 1996

NAIROBI STATEMENT
ON WORSHIP AND CULTURE:
CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This statement is from the third international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996. The members of the Study Team represent five continents of the world and have worked together with enthusiasm for three years thus far. The initial consultation, in October 1993 in Cartigny, Switzerland, focused on the biblical and historical foundations of the relationship between Christian worship and culture, and resulted in the "Cartigny Statement on Worship and Culture: Biblical and Historical Foundations." (This Nairobi Statement builds upon the Cartigny Statement; in no sense does it replace it.) The second consultation, in March 1994 in Hong Kong, explored contemporary issues and questions of the relationships between the world's cultures and Christian liturgy, church music, and church architecture and art. The papers of the first two consultations were published as *Worship and Culture in Dialogue.*[1] In 1994-1995, the Study Team conducted regional research, and prepared reports on that research. Phase IV of the Study commenced in Nairobi and will continue with seminars and other means to implement the learnings of the study, as LWF member churches decide is helpful. The Study Team considers this project to be essential to the renewal and mission of the Church around the world.[2]

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[1] Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994. Also published are complete translations in French and Spanish, and a partial translation in German. The Nairobi papers are published in the present volume.

[2] Parallel to the LWF Worship and Culture Study has been work by the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, on the relationship between worship and church unity. A part of that work has necessarily examined contextual questions, as well as questions of the essential shape or *ordo* of Christian worship. Work of the two projects has been mutually informative. See Faith and Order's Ditchingham Report, reprinted in Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds., *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* Faith and Order Paper No. 171 (Geneva: WCC, 1995); and "Concerning Celebrations of the Eucharist in Ecumenical Contexts: A Proposal from a Group Meeting at Bossey," in *Ecumenical Review,* 47:3 (July 1995), 387-391.

1. Introduction

1.1. Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. In worship we celebrate together God's gracious gifts of creation and salvation, and are strengthened to live in response to God's grace. Worship always involves actions, not merely words. To consider worship is to consider music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching.

1.2. The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures.

1.3. Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is *transcultural*, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is *contextual*, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is *counter-cultural*, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is *cross-cultural*, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles which can be identified.

2. Worship as Transcultural

2.1. The resurrected Christ whom we worship, and through whom by the power of the Holy Spirit we know the grace of the Triune God, transcends and indeed is beyond all cultures. In the mystery of his resurrection is the source of the transcultural nature of Christian worship. Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of Christ's death and resurrection, were given by God for all the world. There is one Bible, translated into many tongues, and biblical preaching of Christ's death and resurrection has been sent into all the world. The fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is shared across cultures: the people gather, the Word of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the Church and the world, the eucharistic meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world for mission. The great narratives of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the transcultural times of the church's year: especially Lent/Easter/Pentecost, and, to a

lesser extent, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany. The ways in which the shapes of the Sunday Eucharist and the church year are expressed vary by culture, but their meanings and fundamental structure are shared around the globe. There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Eucharist.

2.2.   Several specific elements of Christian liturgy are also transcultural, e.g., readings from the Bible (although of course the translations vary), the ecumenical creeds and the Our Father, and Baptism in water in the Triune Name.

2.3.   The use of this shared core liturgical structure and these shared liturgical elements in local congregational worship — as well as the shared act of people assembling together, and the shared provision of diverse leadership in that assembly (although the space for the assembly and the manner of the leadership vary) — are expressions of Christian unity across time, space, culture, and confession. The recovery in each congregation of the clear centrality of these transcultural and ecumenical elements renews the sense of this Christian unity and gives all churches a solid basis for authentic contextualization.

3. Worship as Contextual

3.1.   Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world. In the mystery of his incarnation are the model and the mandate for the contextualization of Christian worship. God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world. A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the values of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Contextualization is a necessary task for the Church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.

3.2.   Among the various methods of contextualization, that of dynamic equivalence is particularly useful. It involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings

and actions of worship to be "encoded" and re-expressed in the language of local culture.

3.3.   In applying the method of dynamic equivalence, the following procedure may be followed. First, the liturgical *ordo* (basic shape) should be examined with regard to its theology, history, basic elements, and cultural backgrounds. Second, those elements of the *ordo* that can be subjected to dynamic equivalence without prejudice to their meaning should be determined. Third, those components of culture that are able to re-express the Gospel and the liturgical *ordo* in an adequate manner should be studied. Fourth, the spiritual and pastoral benefits our people will derive from the changes should be considered.

3.4.   Local churches might also consider the method of creative assimilation. This consists of adding pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical *ordo* in order to enrich its original core. The baptismal *ordo* of "washing with water and the Word", for example, was gradually elaborated by the assimilation of such cultural practices as the giving of white vestments and lighted candles to the neophytes of ancient mystery religions.[3] Unlike dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation enriches the liturgical *ordo* — not by culturally re-expressing its elements, but by adding to it new elements from local culture.

3.5.   In contextualization the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected.

3.6.   An important criterion for dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation is that sound or accepted liturgical traditions are preserved in order to keep unity with the universal Church's tradition of worship, while progress inspired by pastoral needs is encouraged. On the side of culture, it is understood that not everything can be integrated with Christian worship, but only those elements that are connatural to (that is, of the same nature as) the liturgical *ordo*. Elements borrowed from local culture should always undergo critique and purification, which can be achieved through the use of biblical typology.

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[3] *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, 39-56.

4. Worship as Counter-cultural

4.1.   Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it (Romans 12:2). In the mystery of his passage from death to eternal life is the model for transformation, and thus for the counter-cultural nature of Christian worship. Some components of every culture in the world are sinful, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the values of the Gospel. From the perspective of the Gospel, they need critique and transformation. Contextualization of Christian faith and worship necessarily involves challenging of all types of oppression and social injustice wherever they exist in earthly cultures.

4.2.   It also involves the transformation of cultural patterns which idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity, or which give central place to the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor. The tools of the counter-cultural in Christian worship may also include the deliberate maintenance or recovery of patterns of action which differ intentionally from prevailing cultural models. These patterns may arise from a recovered sense of Christian history, or from the wisdom of other cultures.

5. Worship as Cross-cultural

5.1.   Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God. By virtue of Baptism, there is one Church; and one means of living in faithful response to Baptism is to manifest ever more deeply the unity of the Church. The sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers helps enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the *communio* of the Church. This sharing can be ecumenical as well as cross-cultural, as a witness to the unity of the Church and the oneness of Baptism. Cross-cultural sharing is possible for every church, but is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches.

5.2.   Care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures,   and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world. The criteria for contextualization (above, sections 3.5 and 3.6) should be observed.

6. Challenge to the Churches

6.1.   We call on all member churches of the Lutheran World Federation to undertake more efforts related to the transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural, and cross-cultural nature of Christian worship. We call on all member churches to recover the centrality of Baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper — the principal transcultural elements of Christian worship and the signs of Christian unity — as the strong center of all congregational life and mission, and as the authentic basis for contextualization. We call on all churches to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments, and art and architecture for Christian worship — so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local culture. We call those churches now carrying out missionary efforts to encourage such contextual awareness among themselves and also among the partners and recipients of their ministries. We call on all member churches to give serious attention to the transcultural nature of worship and the possibilities for cross-cultural sharing. And we call on all churches to consider the training and ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament, because each local community has the right to receive weekly the means of grace.

6.2.   We call on the Lutheran World Federation to make an intentional and substantial effort to provide scholarships for persons from the developing world to study worship, church music, and church architecture, toward the eventual goal that enhanced theological training in their churches can be led by local teachers.

6.3.   Further, we call on the Lutheran World Federation to continue its efforts related to worship and culture into the next millennium. The tasks are not quickly accomplished; the work calls for ongoing depth-level research and pastoral encouragement. The Worship and Culture Study, begun in 1992 and continuing in and past the 1997 LWF Assembly, is a significant and important beginning, but the task calls for unending efforts. Giving priority to this task is essential for evangelization of the world.

REPORT OF REGIONAL RESEARCH

Marcus P. B. Felde

Participants in the Lutheran World Federation's Study of Worship and Culture entered the regional phase (1994-1996) with the task of identifying and exploring particular issues related to worship and culture in their various regions. Equipped with the results of earlier phases of the project, they engaged many other people (laity, pastors, bishops, theologians, teachers, architects, artists, and musicians) in a wide variety of investigations that probed present practices and analyzed cultural connections in many of the settings in which Lutheran Christians worship around the world.

This report cannot present the full breadth or depth of the work undertaken in any one region. We can only display a small sample of the findings reported to the consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996, and point out some of the challenges that face the churches.

Note: Passages in quotation marks are for the most part excerpts from the unpublished reports shared with other participants at Nairobi. Also, reports from India and Latin America (other than Brazil) were not submitted and thus could not be included here.

Africa

From meetings held in Africa under the auspices of this study, there emerged a shared sense that there is much to be done if Christian worship is to be made at home in Africa. Even in areas where everybody is "churched," people often lead a double life. The things that happen in public worship often do not seem to connect with people's existential realities as well as traditional rituals did.

African leaders discussing these issues were reported to be "stunned by similarities in problem areas." Although aware of limited attempts at contextualization within some of the churches (for example, hymnody in Tanzania), they felt there was far to go. "Worship in Africa is European in style," Louis Sibiya reports. "For a long time in our church [in South Africa] Harvest Sunday was held in September simply because this is autumn and harvest time in Europe." Worship must be contexutalized, taking into account the realities of the local community, if it is to avoid being "an artistic performance isolated from reality."

Contextualizing worship in Africa, though, will be a difficult task. This is partly because it is not possible to separate cleanly what is African from the European influences that have helped to shape contemporary African culture. Nor is it always desirable. The fact is, present African culture has resulted from the impact of many external forces. For example, "the influence of pop and jazz music has become part of the African culture."

What is required is that Africans themselves 1) "sort out their values and beliefs"; 2) gain expertise in the areas of worship, culture, architecture and art, and music; 3) raise the awareness of their churches about the need for contextualization; and 4) develop liturgies that "introduce fundamental adaptations responsive to the African situation."[1] Several such "fundamental adaptations" were under consideration in studies shared by African participants.

Music, it is felt, "needs immediate attention." Singing is a form of expression that is not beyond the reach of any congregation. Because traditional African music was often considered primitive and barbaric by Christians in the past, it was often excluded from worship. Consequently, there is a serious need to rescue this tradition from oblivion and use it as a source for new streams of liturgical music and hymnody.

The gestures and symbols of present day worship services are often devoid of meaning for most Africans. This is an area of great potential, since African culture is full of meaningful symbolism. Roman Catholics and the Zionist

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[1] The phrase was taken from Uzukwu E. Elochukwu's *Inculturation and the Liturgy of the Eucharist* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994).

churches have both made better connection with local meanings in this area. Some African Lutherans, for example, continue to use the severe and "antisymbolic" black gown of their European forebears in preference to the alb, stole, and chasuble, which find more resonances in local feelings about color and other symbolism.

Baptismal rites could be enriched in several ways. For example, Baptism should take place during the normal service, rather than privately. This would respect not only Christian tradition but local understandings about how to do something so important. Local traditional materials should be used, "e.g., calabash, wooden or skin containers." Candidates should dress in white. Exorcism and the signing of the cross on the forehead and the chest are encouraged. "Where sprinkling is opted for, more water should be used. Immersion was preferred, though."

A revision of confirmation rites might profitably look at parallel rituals of initiation. Just as confirmation is not a sacrament in its own right but an affirmation of Baptism, so the Nigerian ritual of *Mba* for young men coming into adulthood also looks back to the ritual of *kilba,* the receiving of a newborn child. Without interfering with the expression of Christian faith in confirmation rites, it may be possible to reinforce that expression through the use of local cultural elements.

Regarding the Eucharist, a Swahili proverb was quoted to the effect that one "who eats alone is a witch." Local thinking thus concurs with Christian tradition, and it was therefore suggested that "even where a sick person is given Holy Communion, people around (church members) should be encouraged to partake." The use of local and traditional vessels was encouraged. The question of the substitution of local food and drink for the bread and wine was undecided, with in-depth ecumenical research and study necessary on this issue.

The need was expressed for liturgies of healing, exorcism, and house blessing.

Marriage and funeral rites also received attention. Lutheran rites do not address some local concerns within the areas of marriage and death—for example, the fertility of a couple. It is necessary for us to understand local hopes and fears, if the Word of God is to speak within the ritual context to

the hearts of those taking part. A recent example of attempted inculturation was mentioned: Among the Gbaya Lutherans of the Central African Republic, it has been common practice to call a local diviner to perform a purification ritual for the widow/er of someone who had died. In a recently developed liturgy, the Baptism of the widow/er is recalled and invoked instead, as her/his true cleansing. This liturgy will take into account local beliefs while offering the Christian Gospel as the way to conquer fear.

A few other aspects of the study in the Central African Republic deserve to be mentioned. Following the initiative of Markus Roser and with the assistance of the LWF, a liturgical center was established, "to produce new liturgies according to the need of the church." In addition to the liturgy for the purification of a widow/er just mentioned, it has developed another occasional service which addresses the traditional belief that a person may be polluted by finding a dead body or being involved in an accident where other people die, or through killing another person or a taboo animal. The Gbaya call this pollution *simbo*.

A new liturgy was devised that integrates symbolic elements of the traditional *simbo* cleansing ritual while at the same time confronting the culture and bringing the people to Christ the source and giver of life. "Christ is the new focus and center of this liturgy. The structural elements are integrated but their orientation and their content has totally changed."

In another area, architecture, analysis of cultural patterns in many contexts led to the conclusion that it would be better to build round church buildings. The rectangular architecture dictated by the most common roofing material—sheet iron—"has fostered a hierarchical thinking and behavior which was not developed in this originally egalitarian society." In contrast, "the daily meal is usually taken in a circle," people dance in a circle, family or public meetings are held in a circle, and traditional Gbaya houses are circular.

Asia

The region of Asia, extending from the Middle East to Australia and Korea, contains by far the most extreme cultural diversity of any of the regions of LWF. Studies were done independently in four places—Japan, Hong Kong

(with some attention to Taiwan), Papua New Guinea, and India—and the present report is a digest of three of those.

Hong Kong

"Hong Kong's present cultural situation is heterogeneous," Mabel Wu reports. "The influences of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism on the culture, values, and patterns of life are on the decline. Taking over from them are the influences of mass media, secularism, and materialism."

In this challenging setting, little has been done over the years to adapt the worship practices of Lutheran churches. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong has recently published a new service book with a revised liturgy and more hymns that make use of indigenous music. But for the most part, even when Chinese music is promoted and encouraged, it is "not necessarily used in worship." "None of the Lutheran congregations [responding to Wu's survey] either in Hong Kong or Taiwan use Chinese musical instruments in worship, but all think that it is a good idea." There are two Lutheran church buildings in Hong Kong that are Chinese in their exterior architecture, but all the others are either in a Western style or in high-rise buildings. "None of the churches use Chinese art, furnishings, eucharistic vessels or vestments."

Resistance to contextualization comes from 1) people who "don't understand the meaning of worship," 2) "those who are used to Western tradition," 3) "those who afraid to change," and 4) "those who think cultural elements might contaminate the Christian faith."

Sometimes it is impossible to avoid the cultural question. For example, in 1996 Ash Wednesday fell on the second day of the Chinese New Year, a day of joyful celebration. Maundy Thursday fell on another Chinese festival. Every congregation is forced to face the question of whether adjusting their worship schedule would mean capitulation to the culture.

Also, the extremely high value of property prevents most congregations from erecting their own distinctive edifice. Most are forced to adapt to cramped quarters that do not seem very "church-like," and there is no sense either of reverence or of community. In these circumstances, how will Christian architecture develop?

Japan

It is interesting to note that in Japan, as in Hong Kong and Africa, it may not always be easy to define what is "Japanese." For example, "Western hymns have become so much a part of Japanese culture (since 1868) with the melodies even being taught in the public school system, that they are not perceived to be imports from another tradition." On the other hand, "[t]he traditional music of Japan...is no longer a part of the living culture of Japan."

Nevertheless, there can be no question that there is a serious need for the church in Japan to consider the question of the contextualization of its worship practices. At the moment, Mark Luttio reports, "the Japanese church's use of ritual is markedly impoverished"—in a country which is culturally and religiously rich in ritual.

A few notes from the research into present practice: Average attendance at worship is 20-30, and of these, 10-20% will be non-Christian. The Eucharist is celebrated once a month by most congregations, with 14% having it weekly. About 20% use "real" bread instead of wafers. Most use individual cups. Most church buildings are "designed by Japanese architects, using traditional Japanese materials." "Most have traditional Japanese straw-mat sitting rooms." "All place the altar in center, with pulpit to the side." "Most have lay readers." "Most use alb and stole, a few use only suit and tie." "Most bow, many place hands together (some prefer to clasp the hands together), most [pastors] use the sign of the cross and raise hands, a few kneel."

Christianity is perceived as running contrary to Japanese culture in some very important ways, including its custom of weekly worship. Most Japanese understand religion as having a function only "at specific points in life's passages." Also, the Christian teaching about leaving one's home and family members is scandalous in a country where the value of family is extremely high. Because of the strength of some Japanese values and the cultural patterns linked to these values, the continuing task of contextualization will be difficult.

Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, as in Japan, the poverty of the church's regular worship practices stands in sharp contrast with the richness of the symbolic environment. Most of the liturgies and hymns that are used by Lutherans are translated and abridged versions of liturgies and hymns from the early missionaries' home countries. Researchers—in particular, students at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae—looked at consequences in three different areas: the Eucharist, Baptism, and church music.

Communion is available infrequently, partly because it must be celebrated by an ordained pastor and there are too few. Perhaps complacency about this stems from a distorted sense of what the Eucharist means.

In addition to biblical and confessional resources for recharging the Eucharist with meaning, there are also rich resources in the cultures of Papua New Guinea for heightening people's awareness of the significance of this meal *over against* other meals. People of Karkar Island ate coconut in memory of the original giver of coconut. People of Menyamya eat a kind of ginger as a token of reconciliation with a murderer. Chimbus seal peace with a stalk of sugar cane. These all could learn to see the Eucharist in terms of its similarity to *and* difference from those other ritual meals.

The Lutheran church admits to a crisis in the understanding of Baptism, usually explained as a disagreement between Lutherans and the sects, who wrongly think the Bible insists on immersion and adult ("believers'") Baptism. However, many Lutheran members are "giving up" and being re-baptized.

Baptism has local cultural analogues, and the memory of these is still active in the community's memory even if in many cases the practice has ceased. It is possible that a misunderstanding of Baptism has arisen through an assimilation of Christian Baptism to traditional forms of initiation. In this case, a better understanding of local initiation could help the church clarify the unique graciousness of God in Holy Baptism.

Several musical options are being exercised in the church today, each with its peculiar strengths and weaknesses. The task of developing a healthy indigenous hymnody is hindered by a failure to resolve the question of

collective identity. Music that is indigenous to one local people is not as accessible to other Papua New Guineans as is Western music. The solving of this puzzle is a major challenge facing Papua New Guinea Lutherans.

Europe

For purposes of this study, Europe was divided into three subregions—Central, Eastern, and Northern. More than in most of the other regions, the study received the official attention and participation of the churches. Representatives of the churches met within the subregions to discuss the issues, and at the end the European members of the international study team met to agree on a report that merged elements from the regional reports.

The question of cultural identity is made acute in the meeting of different cultures. European nations are more conscious of this now than before. Germany, for example, has received a large number of immigrants and has also seen an increase in the number of Asian or American-type religious movements. Sweden has also had a large number of immigrants, but a country like Iceland is almost 100% native-born. In Norway, Sweden, and Finland, there is a small number of indigenous Sami people in the north, who have a distinctive culture.[2]

But cultural differences are not only ethnic; society is also divided along urban/rural lines, by age, education or class, between singles and families, men and women, etc. In a period termed post-modern, "there is considerable uncertainty and lack of clarity." "Traditional values have changed radically." "The very sense of community has often been lost." These concerns are felt even in the most homogeneous of European countries.

The situation may be analyzed usefully by a typology of "high context" and "low context" cultures. "The cultures of the Nordic countries are all typical 'low context cultures,' characterized by fragmentation and specialization. In such cultures it is not necessary to know the full context in order to be able to understand single events. Personal relations in low context cultures

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[2] See the report on the Sami people in *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 213-215.

tend to be unstable, and relationships in general are often of a professional or specialized nature. Innovation and creativity are highly esteemed in low context cultures, whereas high context cultures value stability and faithfulness to tradition.

"In high context cultures, the most important events take place 'below the surface' and are comprehensible only for those who have been brought up within this culture from an early age. Low context cultures are more easily accessible to foreigners and consequently more able to exert an influence on immigrants. Low context cultures do however include high context situations, in which it is necessary to follow the unspoken rules in order not to make a fool of oneself.

"Church services are typical high context situations."

The churches of Europe have traditionally been custodians of liturgy, art, architecture, and music which are "high context" and therefore may not seem welcoming to the outsider. It is a challenge for the church to demand high artistic and intellectual content from artists, architects, and musicians without disqualifying and excluding those who do not belong to the privileged classes of society.

"Further discussion is required on the place afforded the cultural values and expressions of minority groups, and also of the role of the values and cultural traditions of the broad majority of people who are not able to share the cultural ideals of the intellectual elite."

The German churches have tried, by drafting a new order of service, "to find a way for groups and whole congregations to stay together as one worshiping community. The draft leaves the shape of the service open and only stipulates the main four structural elements of opening and prayer, readings and confession, holy communion, and blessing and dismissal." And yet, at the end, the question was posed whether it might not have been better to aim for an "authentic" liturgy with a certain character rather than "averaging" liturgies in order to obtain a common one.

The researchers note that in Germany and in the Nordic countries, attendance at Sunday services is usually extremely low. However, when the liturgy contains explicit connection to civil society or to the community (e.g.,

through national commemorations or personal rites of passage) attendance is much higher. In the Eastern countries there is a resistance to connecting worship with anything national, because of the earlier history of resisting communist exploitation of the church.

Regarding music: "The Central European churches report that from the middle of the 18th century, art became a kind of religious substitute (*Ersatzreligion*). The same could be said about church music. These churches now have an urgent task to bear witness, within the culture of their society, to the unique majesty of God and to show worship as the joyful play of the children of God. To pay homage to God does not exclude the enjoyment of art and culture. At the same time, these churches are aware of the need to keep a distance and to offer appropriate criticism while participating in the culture of art and music. The aim of such use of art should always be to give a clearer and deeper expression of the Gospel."

In different ways, the European churches are working through the issue of what kind of music and hymns to use. The organ is firmly ensconced in the tradition, but in some places there is no one to play it. Guitar is in some places the instrument of choice. New music is also a choice; Norway, Sweden, and Finland have seen a revival of church music over the last decades.

On the other hand, church buildings are not as easy to change as church music. The issue of architecture is a very difficult one in Europe. Because church buildings are claimed as part of the national heritage even apart from their use by congregations, the church may find itself in the peculiar position of continuing in unsuitable buildings for reasons quite unliturgical. Given the rapid changes in society, one generation's choice of church building may become the burden of the next generation. In the 1950's and 1960's many multi-purpose buildings were built. But the younger generation today expresses a longing for "a clearly recognizable sacred space."

Latin America

Brazil was the setting for the single most intensive study of the regional phase. Several graduate students of the Lutheran seminary in São Leopoldo,

under the coordination of Nelson Kirst, investigated the relationship between worship and culture within a traditional Lutheran congregation using the methodology of qualitative social research. (Research was conducted in two congregations, but only one was reported on in Nairobi.) The pastor and members of the congregation cooperated fully, allowing the students to observe their worship services and interview individuals at length.

The intention was to discover "what the people said their culture was," and how worship plays its role therein. Focused interviews followed flexible guidelines, aiming to elicit a candid insider's view. The interviews, which covered many aspects of life and not only worship, were analyzed in great detail. In addition, several worship services were videotaped, transcribed, and analyzed. In all, nearly three thousand hours of work were devoted to the study.

The congregation was chosen because it is rather typical of the largely immigrant Brazilian church, but its identity was concealed in the report.

In analyzing what the people had to say about all aspects of life, the Brazilian subregional study team came to understand that people seem to use ten complex and interlacing "cultural components" to "interpret and manage their lives." "They are, in order of importance: social bonds, supply of basic necessities, family bonds, work, leisure, passages, education, religion, community spirit, society and world." (Notice the low ranking of religion.)

Underlying all of these is the "cultural proto-component" of "zeal for life—one's own and that of the immediate family." The logic of this proto-component gives coherence to their culture. Zeal for life "is the only component that has connections with each and every one of the other components. Its presence is not sporadic, but total, unrestricted and absolute. There is no single thought or action that escapes this proto-motivation."

The researchers found when interviewing people about life in general that religion "occupies a well-defined, although not a very outstanding, position within the culture of the people." When addressing the issue of religion directly, they found a "surprisingly homogeneous" picture of a religious system which emphasizes "the nearness and the intimacy of God, the

connection with real life, the biblical-doctrinal message, and, to a much lesser degree, the sentiment of fellowship/belonging/identity."

Analysis of the sermons and prayers of the pastor, however, revealed a working theology which is quite a startling contrast with the religious system articulated by the people. For example, the people themselves draw a strong connection between their belief in God and the supply of basic necessities for life. However, any mention of those basic necessities (e.g., clothing, money, possessions) is almost totally absent from the pastor's sermons and prayers. Again, the people value the cultural components of leisure, education, and community spirit, but these were entirely absent from the pastor's words. Furthermore, the people seem to have very different ideas from the pastor on such important topics as who God is, what God does, what God expects of people, ethical behavior, and so on.

"Already in the first stages [of the study], the research team became more and more sincerely shocked as they advanced in their analysis of the religious system by which the people operated. How could longtime, faithful and dedicated Evangelical members not mention the most fundamental elements of the Christian and Lutheran faith? How could they make only a less-than-tangential reference to Jesus Christ . . . since we had asked them about "the most important truths of your religion"? The explanation for this phenomenon became evident as we discovered the powerful connection that exists between the cultural system and the religious system."

"The people are only able to grasp, elaborate and articulate those contents that a) fit into their religious and cultural system, thus serving their zeal for life; b) have to do directly with their life; and c) are not too abstract for them to be assimilated, given their intellectual condition (which excludes theorization and theological constructions)."

They concluded that the people understand worship services in a somewhat different way from the pastor. While he may believe he is communicating ideas, they are busily transforming the worship service "of the Word" into a "service of action." Although the video cameras seemed to report that the congregation were passive recipients, the people believed themselves to be the chief actors in the service: seeking intimacy with God, seeking

forgiveness, etc. "The worship service is a channel for the search for and the cultivation of the nearness and intimacy of God—at the same time fearful, enigmatic and friendly—that has to do with the limits of life and with its daily tensions. The people do not attend worship services to understand God, but to live God." The interviews indicated, moreover, that people "have a very precise and honest notion that, as persons, they have nothing at all to offer to God." They are not indulging magical or reciprocal exchange ideas, despite the prevalence of these in the Brazilian context.

The researchers concluded: "We need to learn from the people that worship is a life experience and not a class, that it is more an issue of life and death than of doctrine, more a matter of guts and heart, than of the head." And, "We must take into consideration with full radicality that, if we do not seek people there, where they are, in the struggle of their zeal for life, either we will have our theological proposals meticulously transformed by them, or we will find ourselves talking to ourselves, because they will seek in other places that which serves their cultural proto-component."

In the discussion of this research, it was concluded that while the proto-cultural element of "zeal for life" is a summary of the deep intention of genuine local culture, and thus study of it is preliminary to our task, it is only generally religious—not Christian—and has in it the risk of selfishness (zeal for *my* life, zeal for *my family's* life, zeal for *my tribe's* life, etc.) unless it meets such elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as *metanoia, diakonia*, transformation, and the reign of God. It has been the growing belief of the study team that those very elements are mediated by the irreducible core of the liturgy: Word and sacrament, yielding faith and mission. The burning question for each local place is how the basic culture is put in critical, transforming dialogue with Jesus Christ present in Word and sacrament.

North America

Canada

"Multiculturalism" is the official policy of Canada. People of many different ethnic heritages are encouraged to maintain their identities. Canadian Lutheran congregations are mainly the products of immigration—not only from northern Europe but also from China, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

These have tended to preserve their cultural patterns "as a convenient enclave." Perhaps two thirds of the congregations have a "distinct ethnic flavor." This accounts for a "preservationist" attitude towards the dynamic of worship and culture.

The past decade has seen a "major struggle," however, as the younger generations seem more concerned with becoming a part of mainstream Canadian society than with preserving their parents' ethnic heritage. A "universal North American culture" is in evidence across the country.

Eric Dyck reports that some parishes which have lost their ethnic identification because of demographic shift told him they have adapted by emphasizing hospitality and being, in their words, "community churches." However, most Canadian Lutheran congregations "struggle with preserving ethnic heritage and inculturating. Numerous times, the underlying questions were the ones of inculturation: when to assimilate from the culture, when to reject elements, and when to decide 'it doesn't matter!' These questions, however, were never absent even from the most ethnically defined congregations, e.g. Chinese parishes. The historic experience of the maritime parishes, Canada's oldest Lutheran congregations, informs the newest Chinese or native mission: transition from ethnic enclave to adoption of mainline cultural patterns and the new struggle to determine what must be counter-cultural."

Congregational singing was identified as "one of the strongest counter-cultural elements," both as a distinctive practice and also in the style of music, which contrasts sharply with the music prevalent in society. (One person was asked "How does the music you hear in Church relate to the music you hear every day?" He responded: "We don't *want* it to.") Interviews also revealed the importance to people of the architecture that makes church buildings different from other buildings. Baptism was seen as a practice that does not seem to reflect anything from the cultural context. Even the gathering for worship was perceived mainly in terms of its difference from other gatherings. And it seemed appropriate to those interviewed that the Communion meal should be so unlike other meals or banquets.

Against this perceived and accepted sharp differentiation of worship from culture, one person responded: "The extreme isolation of worship from its

cultural base leaves worship with nowhere to turn for regeneration and renewal. It simply becomes a dead ritual, adrift in a foreign culture."

United States

The North American study team together developed a questionnaire for use in its interviews. This questionnaire asked for people's opinions about the meaning within local culture but outside of worship of the various sorts of things that take place in our worship. It also asked the related question of where Christians see analogies in their local culture to the various aspects of their worship. The question was also asked, whether and how their worship *needs* to be counter-cultural.

In the United States, this questionnaire saw use in a variety of contexts, sometimes in conjunction with the documents from this project published as *Worship and Culture in Dialogue.* Parishioners, pastors, seminary professors, church musicians, seminarians, youth, and bishops had opportunities to learn about the study and to discuss its issues.

The researchers received two conflicting sorts of responses. Some people of the church were quick to decry popular culture and its influence on worship. Others felt the church should pay more attention to youth and to disaffected members, in order to keep attendance up.

A second finding was an increasing mood of "tribalism, racism, or nationalism." On the other hand, there is also an increasing interest in cross-cultural or multi-cultural possibilities for worship, "looking over the fence" at what people of other cultures are doing, for example, musically. They concluded that while American Lutherans are "born into a primary culture," for example German-American, the secondary, national culture is becoming more and more dominant, defined by entertainment, the media, capitalism, etc. "This culture begs for recognition in worship."

In connection with the study, church historian Martin Marty spoke to synod worship leaders in 1994 on "Christian Worship and Popular Culture." He developed the thesis that in relating worship to culture it is good to use a dialectical approach, both affirming "the world, peoples, beauty, intrinsic values, and achievements," and also at the same time seeing the world as

"sinful, abandoned, blighted, finite, contingent, transient, and not naturally compatible with the Gospel initiatives."

For example, there is a tension between the self-centeredness that characterizes American society and many of its institutions, and the hunger for community expressed by those same people. But Christian worship should not simplistically resolve the tension in favor of community. The regional study team report their conclusions from this: "Individuals are called through Baptism into a community, but are provided with a new identity, a new sense of self, summarized in naming. Sacramental actions again show the way: confession and forgiveness is meant to personalize the Gospel, but reconciliation is also reconciliation with the community. Individual worth comes via total commitment to the group, where diverse ministries are held up and where tasks are done via investment in the common good."

Marty pointed out that North American culture treats human beings as economic objects; encourages disposability; promotes self-centeredness; is sensation-centered and exteriorized; has a fetish for the new; seeks sometimes to homogenize culture but sometimes to exploit the segmentation of society; to value opinion over objective truth; and to reject discipline and devalue faithfulness. On the other hand, correlative hungers are expressed in many ways, in opposition to society's tendencies.

Christian worship stands in a paradoxical relationship to all society's values. We may welcome their qualified expression in worship without being overcome by them.

Conclusion

The regional studies of the LWF Worship and Culture Study have raised many issues that will not be resolved easily. In the process, so it was reported, many people around the world have been "surprised" (Brazil) by what they have learned, and "stunned" (Africa) by how much they share with each other, not just in what they have learned but in the challenges they now face. Raising the "culture" question in the context of worship studies has enriched those studies, and has made clearer than before how high the stakes are as we seek to know how best to worship our Lord.

As the report of the church in Iceland says: "Culture is part of God's creation, and even though it is marked by sin, it is essentially good. Christianity and culture will therefore always be in dialogue, and will mutually affect each other. So too should worship, as a liturgical and practical expression of the Christian faith and culture. The church must always be on the alert to refer both worship and culture back to their common origin—God the creator. *Authentic* culture and *genuine* worship will always reflect the will of God."

WORSHIP:
LOCAL YET UNIVERSAL

Gordon W. Lathrop

The task of the Worship and Culture Study of the Lutheran World Federation is a modest but immensely important one: to assist our churches in their continuing work of *localizing worship,*[1] in their calling to see the great patterns of Christian liturgy "celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of each local place."[2]

This localizing work, of course, is not new. We have seen already that it has belonged to the Church in all times and places, that it must rightly follow from the mission of God in the world and from the Gospel of the Incarnate One. There is nothing more traditional in the church's worship life.[3] But we have also seen, in our regional research during 1994-5, that this localizing work is especially urgent in our times, lest the Gospel not be heard and celebrated in each local place, lest the wisdom of minority and suppressed cultures be forgotten and unwelcomed in the Christian assembly, lest the cultural presuppositions already present in our liturgical life remain unrecognized and untransformed, lest God's work in creation be dishonored.

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[1]   Cartigny Statement 2.1. S. Anita Stauffer, ed., *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 130-131. This book is hereafter cited as *WCD*.

[2]   "A Letter on Koinonia in Worship, August 26, 1994," from the Ditchingham Consultation, convoked by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The full text of the relevant passage reads: "And we have been finding, to our joy and astonishment, that we share together, as our common inheritance, the deepest gifts of worship: the gospel of Jesus Christ, the great patterns of Christian gathering in the truth of that gospel, the call to see those patterns celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of each local place, and the conviction that this celebration sends us in a mission of love and the search for justice in the world." The text is found in Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* Faith and Order Paper 171 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1995), 3.

[3]   See *WCD*, 18.

And we have seen in our further reflections that such localizing work is only possible when it is paired with other dynamics: the sorting out and accenting of the *transcultural* "core" in Christian worship; the resistance to and transformation of phenomena which are inimical to the Gospel in local life— thus, the *counter-cultural*; and the local openness toward elements of the *cross-cultural* as signs of our Christian unity in worship across the whole world.[4]

In what follows, this chapter will review some of the principles already discovered and discussed in this study, in order to try to articulate more carefully a few of the tools needed for the ongoing and urgent work of localization, or contextualization.

Our assistance in this work will be just that: *assistance.* We cannot do the worship in each local place. We certainly cannot reform it in each place. And we are by no means the only ones interested in localization. But we can ask questions. We can provide resources. We can plant ideas like seeds. We can continue to associate others with this work. We can let the worship of the places where we lead serve as models. We can visit, providing in our persons a link between local congregations. We can keep learning: we can model in ourselves a deep respect for the life-preserving and life-enhancing characteristics of local cultures and, at the same time, a continued growth in the knowledge of the rich Christian tradition. And we can stay in touch with each other, letting this international conversation be one modest means whereby worship that is *localized* also remains recognizably worship that is *catholic* or universal, one modest evidence that the call to localization is itself one of the deepest gifts of catholic[5] worship.

The Local and the Universal

Our work will be an expression of this essential tension in all Christian worship. Of course, the Church catholic is always *local*; it has no other

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[4] See already the Cartigny Statement 3.2-5. *WCD* 132-133.

[5] This paper is using the term "catholic Church" in the same sense as do the conclusions to the Augsburg Confession in its Latin text: this is that universal Christian church which confesses the orthodox faith in Jesus Christ and the Trinity, as it has been known throughout Christian history and in the whole inhabited world. That there *is* such a Church is itself an article of faith.

existence. The church is not a centralized, universal, faceless society. It is always a local gathering of people with their leaders, around the Scriptures and the sacraments, knowing Christ risen and *here*. It is always the Church catholic "dwelling in this place,"[6] for "wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church."[7] The church is none other than that local assembly where "the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."[8]

But the catholic Church is not "merely" local. That is, it is not only a reflection of local attitudes and local reality. The communion of this local assembly with the other assemblies around Christ in other places is enabled by certain concrete means, certain "instruments" of communion in Christ. Indeed, these means are needed for this local assembly to be "church" at all, for people to know that this assembly is in communion with all the churches of Christ, in every time and every place, and that what it celebrates is a Gospel which has universal significance, albeit expressed in local terms and ways. Theologians have variously catalogued these instruments of communion, but we can list some here that have widespread recognition and that do affect our worship: the central presence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen; the use of the scriptures of Old and New Testaments; Baptism and the formation of all the baptized in the faith of the triune God; the holy Eucharist of Christ's gift; and a recognized ministry serving the assembly around these central things. Each of these things, while done locally, active locally, expresses at the same time a linkage between this assembly and the other worshiping assemblies in time and space. Indeed, these very things are always *at the center* of the "catholic Church dwelling in this place."

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[6] See already *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, inscription: "The church of God which dwells *[paroikousa]* in Smyrna, to the church of God which dwells in Philomelium and to all the dwellings *[paroikiais]* of the holy catholic church in every place." Something like the same accent on the local in the context of the universal, indeed as the place for the encounter with the universal may be seen in the address of the first letter of Paul to Corinth: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" 1 Corinthians 1:2.

[7] Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyrnaeans* 8:2.

[8] Augsburg Confession 7. See *WCD,* 139.

At the center *in this place.* For that is the other pole of Christian liturgy. Even in the central matters, the Gospel takes on a local form. The people are from here. The leadership is for here. The language of the Word is the local language. The water of Baptism is local water. Even the food of the Eucharist is either local or locally recognizable and is shared in the local "economy"[9] of a meal.[10] Indeed, the transcultural gifts of water, Word and meal may be a parable of our task. It is astounding that these things—always *local* gifts in their actual origin, yet always *universal* in human resonance and recognition—have been made into the bearers of the central Christian meanings and, by the promise of God and the power of the Spirit, of the very presence of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, if "contextualization" or "inculturation" are ways of stating the central task with which this study team has been concerned, another term to say what we mean is *localization.* "Culture," too, is not a universal abstraction.[11] At least one way of understanding the meaning of that term is to take it as the symbolic and social means which a group of people reinforce among themselves and pass on to their children as *the wisdom necessary to live in a locality.* Culture is the orientation necessary to survive and thrive in a place, the linguistic and symbolic but also the practical tools necessary for a human community to interact with the land and create a local order of meaning. Culture and geography go together. Culture involves human beings in some kind of relationship—healthy or un-healthy—to the local (or the regional) earth, its weather and water and its other forms of life[12] (including its other forms of *human* life: sometimes, as in New Testament times,

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9   An "economy" is, of course, a "household arrangement." The word was originally used to indicate the way in which goods were distributed in the very local reality of an *oikos,* a house. Since the Christian liturgy distributes food, it inevitably engages us in thinking about the ways in which all goods (and especially food) are shared.

10   It remains a widespread question in Christian liturgical discussion whether the food of the Eucharist is part of the *catholic* linkage of the assembly (thus, wheat bread and grape wine) or part of the *local* celebration of the catholic pattern of Eucharist (thus, local staple food and festive drink, especially in poor areas where the importing of foreign wine and bread is very difficult).

11   See *also WCD,* 17 and 153-166.

12   *Cf.* Wendell Berry, "The Work of Local Culture," in *What are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point, 1990), 166: 'The only true and effective `operator's manual for spaceship earth' is not a book that any human will ever write; it is the hundreds of thousands of local cultures."

cultures are complex layerings of different ways that groups of people live on the land). And the interpenetration of cultures is closely related—for good or for ill—to the interpenetration of eco-systems and the possibility of living together on the earth.

Then the localization of the liturgy will place the local event of assembly around Word and sacrament in dialogue with this local wisdom. It will set the "politics" of Baptism in dialogue with local politics; the story of the scriptural Word, its judgement and its forgiveness, in dialogue with local memory; the "economy" of the Eucharist in dialogue with local economy[13]. The liturgy must do this of course, in order to be locally understood. But it must also do so since this belongs to the gift of God and the nature of the Church catholic, since Christian worship has engaged in this dialogue from the beginning,[14] and since Christians believe that God's creative power is involved both in the nature to which local culture responds and in the human response itself. The wisdom about life and the earth as it is found in Jesus Christ has from the beginning been placed in critical dialogue with local wisdoms, beginning at least with the very language of preaching and the very formation of Christian Baptism and the Christian eucharistic meal.

That dialogue between local culture and the transcultural content of the Christian faith has sometimes been a way through which the local presence of the witness to God and God's good world have been welcomed into that "city" which is "coming down" in each place, which is already gathering around the Lamb.[15] But, on the other hand, "nothing unclean may enter there." That dialogue has also involved the transformation, re-orientation, inversion and rejection of elements of local culture.[16] It must be clear, however, that the purpose of such transformation ought never be (as, we

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[13] In this use of "politics" and "economy," see Samuel Torvend, "How does the liturgy serve the life of the world?", *Open Questions in Worship*, Vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996). Baptism identifies an individual within a group. Indeed, it gives one's true identity in Christ, within the economy of God's own people, setting the reality of the City of God and Christian belonging to that City amidst the realities of the cities of the world. Eucharist gives away food, and on, in, and under that food, it gives and proclaims the mercy of God in Christ. These realities are "political" and "economic."

[14] See *WCD* 17-37, 67-82.

[15] Revelation 21:2,22-27; see also *WCD* 67-68.

[16] For example, see *WCD* 73-81, 145-147.

say with sorrow, it has sometimes been) the suppression of a local culture in favor of another, dominant, colonizing one, nor in favor of a centralized rejection of local wisdom. Rather, from the point of view of Christian faith, such transformation must be for the sake of the locality itself coming most truly to expression by being gathered around the One who creates each place in goodness and saves each place in mercy. Christians believe that we are restored to faith and thanksgiving to the Creator—restored to being *creatures*—through Jesus Christ, and that thereby the "made order" of our cultures is given its fitting and holy place *within* the "given order" of creation.[17]

Indeed, the local character of the church catholic may be one important contribution to the maintenance of local culture in a time of centralization and global mass marketing techniques. In "the age of networks,"[18] in communications, information, commerce and the arts, local cultures are themselves threatened, sometimes only remaining as a nostalgia for a simpler time, or, more positively, as treasured fragments of local skills and local meanings. The local church can aid that treasuring. At the same time, the universal or catholic character of the local church will offer another vision of human connectedness in a critical dialogue with the new international "culture" of consumerism and communication.

For the localizing task, then—for the continuous work of forming a liturgy that is both fully catholic and fully local—some tools are needed. These tools will include concrete means to keep asking the local Christian assembly whether its worship life does indeed clearly receive and welcome the local wisdom. They will also include the means to ask whether that worship represents the central and transforming faith in Jesus Christ. Among the most important of these concrete tools are (1) the *ordo* (or basic pattern or shape) of Christian worship, (2) the positive method of finding materials for that *ordo* in a local culture, especially the method of *dynamic equivalence,* and (3) the critical inquiry about local culture which may lead to the *counter-cultural.* Anscar Chupungco, in his chapters in this volume, will reflect on the second of these. I will turn briefly to the first and the last.

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[17] "The made order must seek the given order, and find its place in it." Wendell Berry, "Healing," in *What are People For?,* 12.

[18] Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995).

The *Ordo* of Christian Worship

From the beginning in this study, we have been aware that there is a "core" of Christian worship which is transcultural. In the Cartigny Statement, we said:

> An examination of the tradition, from the Biblical witness, the early Church, and the Lutheran Reformation, reveals the core of Christian worship to be Word, Baptism and Eucharist. The pattern, or *ordo*, of entry into the community is teaching and baptismal bath. The pattern of the weekly gathering of the community on the Lord's Day is the celebration centered around the Word and eucharistic meal.[19]

Our comments were part of a wider international and ecumenical interest in exploring the shared "shape of the liturgy" as a means of communion between the churches and as an immensely important key to contextualization. For example, the 1994 Ditchingham Consultation, on the theme "Towards Koinonia in Worship," sponsored by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, issued a statement which included the following paragraphs:

> 4.   The pattern of this gathering and sending has come to all the churches as a common and shared inheritance. That received pattern resides in the basic outlines of what may be called the *ordo* of Christian worship, i.e. the undergirding structure which is to be perceived in the ordering and scheduling of the most primary elements of Christian worship. This *ordo*, which is always marked by pairing and by mutually re-interpretive juxtapositions, roots in word and sacrament held together. It is scripture readings and preaching together, yielding intercessions; and, with these, it is *eucharistia* [thanksgiving] and eating and drinking together, yielding a collection for the poor and mission in the world. It is formation in faith and baptizing in water together, leading to participation in the life of the community. It is ministers and people, enacting these things, together. It is prayers through the days of the week and the

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[19] Cartigny Statement 3.7. *WCD* 133.

Sunday assembly seen together; it is observances through the year and the annual common celebration of the *Pascha* together. Such is the inheritance of all the churches, founded in the New Testament, locally practiced today, and attested to in the ancient sources of both the Christian East and the Christian West.

5. This pattern of Christian worship, however, is to be spoken of as a gift of God, not as a demand nor as a tool for power over others. Liturgy is deeply malformed, even destroyed, when it occurs by compulsion—either by civil law, by the decisions of governments to impose ritual practice on all people, or by the forceful manipulation of ritual leaders who show little love for the people they are called to serve. At the heart of the worship of Christians stands the crucified Christ, who is one with the little and abused ones of the world. Liturgy done in his name cannot abuse. It must be renewed, rather, by love and invitation and the teaching of its sources and meaning. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself," says Jesus (John 12:32). The liturgy must *draw* with Christ, not compel.

6. Furthermore, this pattern is to be celebrated as a most profound connection between faith and life, between Gospel and creation, between Christ and culture, not as an act of unconnected ritualism nor anxious legalism. Every culture has some form of significant communal assembly, the use of water, speech which is accessible but strongly symbolic, and festive meals. These universal gifts of life, found in every place, have been received as the materials of Christian worship from the beginning. Because of this, we are invited to understand the Christian assembly for worship as a foretaste of the reconciliation of all creation and as a new way to see all the world.

7. But the patterns of Word and table, of catechetical formation and baptism, of Sunday and the week, of *Pascha* [Christ's passover from death to resurrection] and the year, and of assembly and ministry around these things—the principal pairs of Christian liturgy—do give us a basis for a mutually encouraging conversation between the churches. Churches may rightly ask each other about the local inculturation of this *ordo*. They may call each other toward

a maturation in the use of this pattern or a renewed clarification of its central characteristics or, even, toward a conversion to its use. Stated in their simplest form, these things are the "rule of prayer" in the churches, and we need them for our own faith and life and for a clear witness to Christ in the world. And we need each other to learn anew of the richness of these things. Churches may learn from each other as they seek for local renewal. One community has treasured preaching, another singing, another silence in the word, another sacramental formation, another the presence of Christ in the transfigured human person and in the witnesses of the faith who surround the assembly, another worship as solidarity with the poor. As churches seek to recover the great pairs of the *ordo,* they will be helped by remembering together with other Christians the particular charisms with which each community has unfolded the patterns of Christian worship, and by a mutual encouragement for each church to explore the particular gifts which it brings to enrich our *koinonia* in worship.

8.   This pattern or *ordo* of Christian worship belongs most properly to each local church, that is, to "all in each place." All the Christians in a given place, gathered in assembly around these great gifts of Christ, are the whole catholic Church dwelling in this place.[20]

By this account, by the proposal of the "Ditchingham *ordo,*" our sense, expressed in the Cartigny Statement, that the "pattern" of our worship connected us and was a tool for the localization task, was right. "Churches may rightly ask each other about the local inculturation of this *ordo*." Indeed, as we have discussed earlier in the LWF study, this may be the first of our tasks:

By God's great mercy, these central things are also richly accessible in new cultural situations: they are stories, a water-bath, a meal. As long as the central patterns of their use and the critical character of their transformation in Christ are maintained, they may indeed be done in new ways, appropriate to new cultural situations. The scriptures will be read in whatever local vernacular is appropriate

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[20] "Report of the Consultation," *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* 6-7.

for foundational stories. Baptism will be exercised in such a way that the local community can recognize that this great washing matters profoundly, is overwhelmingly gracious and is inextricably bound to Christian preaching and teaching about God. The eucharistic meal will be shared in ways that connect to local meal practice, especially when that practice is festive and richly hospitable. In any case, the central things will be done strongly and clearly.

The recovery of the centrality of these things in all of our churches will be exactly the recovery of that center which will enable and encourage the healthy use of cultural gifts in our worshiping assemblies. The first agenda item for a renewed Lutheran interest in worship accessible to local culture will be renewed scriptural knowledge and strong biblical preaching, new clarity about baptismal teaching and baptismal practice, and the establishment of the Lord's Supper as the principal service in all our churches every Sunday. Then there will be a reliable place, a center filled with Christ's gift rather than, say, western nineteenth-century cultural fragments or the untransformed apotheosis of anyone's own present society, around which all of our cultural gifts may be gathered. . . .

The cultural symbols—music, ceremony, environmental arrangement, gestures, vestments, arts—will come to Christian purpose most clearly as they serve the flow of those very simple ancient patterns of Baptism and Eucharist which belong to their origin. We teach; we bathe; we welcome to the table. We gather; we read and interpret the scriptures; we pray for all the world; we set the table, also taking a collection for the poor; we give thanks and eat and drink; we are sent in mission. These things may be done slowly or rapidly. They may be done in received ancient patterns or in rich local elaborations or in some combination of the two. But it is these things which the Christian assembly does and which will form the clearest framework for the juxtaposition of cultural materials to the gift of Christ.[21]

We may rightly discover that other matters of Christian worship also have their core elements, classically and meaningfully arranged in a pattern or

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[21] *WCD* 141-142, 147-148; see also *WCD* 82.

ordo that we share. Daily prayer, for example, has been prayer at the marking moments of the sun's journey (evening, night, dawn and noon) following the pattern of psalmody and then intercessions; or psalmody, Scripture, and then intercessions (preceded, in the evening, by thanksgiving for the light of Christ). The burial of the dead has often involved a "station" at the home of the person who has died, then a "station" at the church and a "station" at the place of burial or deposit of the body or the ashes, with Scripture and prayers at each station, and, at the church, possibly the Eucharist. These elements, too, may be used diversely, in widely differing cultural ways.

But it is primarily the *ordo* of the Sunday assembly with which we are concerned here. Baptism and the Eucharist are the major identifying marks of the Church[22] and are the major foci for an authentic contextualization which remains authentically universal. People who are engaged in such localizing work will be especially helped by conversation with persons from other churches about the deepest structure of these shared gifts from God. We all will be helped by seeing the deep structure of this order behind and underneath whatever is the inherited "order of worship" we practice in our regional churches. And we all will be helped by growing and accurate knowledge of the history of the liturgies of Baptism and Eucharist as it has developed in the many different places of the Church. Such a history would be especially helpful if more studies could be undertaken to inquire about the social settings and the cultural transformations which have already taken place in the historical worship life of the churches.

But the *ordo* which will help us is not a bare shell, not the simple idea of gathering, story-telling, meal-sharing and departing. Rather, it is communal gathering in strong baptismal identity and dignity, in communion with the triune God. It is the Scriptures being read so that God's presence in the crucified and risen Christ is known, so that God's judgement and God's forgiveness are available to transform local memory. It is thanksgiving to God in and through Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Spirit, it is receiving Christ's very body and blood. It is the sending of the church into God's beloved world in a mission of witness, justice and love. *This* pattern

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[22] Augsburg Confession 7.

is the one which unites and the one which begs to be "celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of each local place."[23]

The Counter-cultural in Christian Worship

From the beginning of this study we have also been aware of the necessity of attention to the counter-cultural character of the assembly for Christian liturgy. At Cartigny we said:

> The Church throughout its history, by its faithful proclamation of the Gospel, has challenged the status quo and the social injustices of the day (for example, Christ and his disciples sharing meals with the socially unaccepted people of their day). In the same way, the churches in every generation and in every context must ask what in their worship can/should be counter-cultural, challenging the culture in which it exists and ultimately facilitating its transformation.[24]

And the WCC Ditchingham consultation made a similar assertion:

> It should . . . be acknowledged that some cultural components have been infected by sin, and hence need critique. Critique presupposes both correction and transformation of those cultural components which are integrated into Christian worship. Critique can sometimes involve a break with such cultural elements as are diametrically opposed to the gospel. Critique can also mean that Christian worship has a counter-cultural dimension.[25]

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[23] In what followed in our work in 1996 in Nairobi, as a way to reflect on the tools needed for localization and better prepare ourselves for the task of assistance, we engaged together in identifying the critical. central shape of the Eucharist. Then we discussed the ways in which that shape is already a richly local phenomenon in our churches and about the ways in which it could be more so. We discussed local, particular models, making use of the methods of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation. We identified only some possible, illustrative models. We also asked how such models could be enriched by cross-cultural borrowings and how they must be marked by the counter-cultural, by refusal or critical transformation of cultural elements which do not accord with the Gospel of Christ.

[24] Cartigny Statement 3.4. *WCD* 133.

[25] Ditchingham Report 41. *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* 15.

Both the LWF Worship and Culture Study and the WCC Faith and Order work have therefore spoken of a Christian liturgical welcome and critique to culture, of reception and resistance, of the *yes* and the *no*. For example, concerning the origins of the Eucharist and, thereby, the idea of the *broken symbol:*

> For central texts of the New Testament, then, the Eucharist is one of the *broken symbols* of the Christian faith. It is made out of received cultural material, still full of the power to hold the human experience of the world into such meaning as that culture conceives— but that material is also criticized, reoriented, sifted, seen as insufficient and equivocal.
>
> Faithful Christian meal practice *received* current cultural symbolism. The Hellenistic meal enacted a community, ordered that community in rank and meaning, ritualized some contact with the gods, used wine to establish relaxation and, in some circles, conversation about values. The Hellenistic Jewish meal transformed that symbolic/cultural tradition to serve biblical faith. The community was seen to be Israel before God, and this sense came to expression in meal prayers. The washing before the meal was thus a rite of ritual purification before entering a holy place. Bread came to ritual importance. Idolatry was resisted. Thus, the libation to the gods became the thanksgiving and beseeching addressed to Israel's God over the cup after the meal. The whole meal practice proposed eschatological meaning in a troubled time. Christians, too, used the *deipnon* [the Hellenistic meal] and the *symposion* [the post-meal drinking], found this gathering to be a regular center of order and meaning, used bread and wine and ran the risk of rather too much wine, prayed at table, resisted idolatry, and, with the Jews, believed that their meals had something to do with the last day of God.
>
> But faithful Christian meal practice also *resisted* the cultural power of the banquet, in both its Greek and its Hellenistic Jewish forms. At their best, at least according to the counsel of Paul and Mark, Christian meals sought to enact openness and grace and to resist cultic concepts of purity. Early Christians did this, if in nothing else, by becoming a community of men and women at table and by taking a collection for the hungry and by understanding that the cup was

"for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). They did this even though the evangelical ideal of the open-air meal and the streaming thousands was not possible, and the unity of rich and poor at table may not have been frequently realized. They nonetheless built a critique of the closed meal-society into their tradition: the bread and cup were for "the many." They accentuated the bread and wine while giving the rest of the food away. If they used a dining-room, to begin with, for their meals, this dining room needed an open door, like the modern Jewish Passover. Faithful use of the meal, finally, "exploded" out of the dining room into the courtyard and then into the basilica. They did all this by proposing that the eschaton is Jesus Christ crucified. Thus, they filled their meal prayers with reference to him, through whom alone they could stand before Israel's God. Because of this christocentric meaning, the Eucharist came to be juxtaposed to the Scriptures read as of the crucified and risen Christ, and to be linked especially to Sunday. . . .

Word, bath and meal in Jesus' name are not dispensable in new situations. They do need to be done in new ways. In the case of the meal, however, fidelity in practice will include the general use of the pattern already found in Luke-Acts, thanksgiving prayers centered in Jesus Christ, the connection to Sunday, openness and the accent on grace, the critique of purity and insiderhood, the use of staple food and festive drink, and the connection to concern for the poor. New cultural material brought to this communal action will also undergo welcome and critique for the sake of the Gospel.[26]

But then *what* cultural characteristics are to be resisted or radically transformed? And what is the method of transformation?

It is probably not possible to make, out of context, an abstract list of cultural matters which require resistance and critique. But if culture involves the symbolic tools whereby a society survives on the land, we can identify some of the characteristics which will be problematic for Christian faith and thus for Christian worship. If social roles, perhaps originally adopted for the sake of work-specialization on the land, are absolutized and made

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[26] *WCD* 80-81, 82. See also *WCD* 68, 142ff.

the basis of an unjust distribution of the food and products of a culture, Christian faith will rightfully recoil. There ought be no place for such absolutized status-structures in the Christian assembly for worship. A similar thing can be said if dignity is denied people because they come from the numbers of those whom one culture formerly conquered or enslaved, or if lower place is accorded to people on the basis of their sex or age or lack of caste status. Exactly here the "politics" of Baptism—the very polity of the city of God—and the economy of the Eucharist—the food-distribution of Jesus, given to and for all people—will critically engage the local practice and the local status system.

But this politics and economy will also challenge every culture which idolizes the free individual self, at the expense of a wider humanity; or which protects and idealizes only the local group or caste or tribe, at the cost of openness to others; or which give central place to the acquisition and holding of wealth, at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor. Religious cultures which make the purity of the insiders or power of the adept into the central themes will need to be critiqued, as will those cultural systems in which human identity is disconnected from the earth itself, as if the human being floated free of responsibility for the care of the earth. Cultural conceptions of hierarchy, of purity, of tribal or sexual identity, of self-realization cannot be ignored by Christian liturgy. But neither can they be left untouched. The methods of transformation are complex. In fact, at their best, they will resemble what happened to the Hellenistic-Jewish meal in the formation of the Eucharist[27] and what happened, in our reconstruction, to the eschatological washing rites of late Judaism in the formation of Baptism.[28] Some matters from cultural origin—like (to give examples we have previously discussed from the origins of Eucharist and Baptism) the shape and kind of food or food-vessels[29] or the use of a water cistern[30]—may be exactly the same in Christian use, demonstrating the immense importance of the locality of the celebration and the use of strong symbols. Furthermore, the symbolic field-of-meaning itself—like the

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[27] *WCD* 67-82.

[28] *WCD* 23-38.

[29] See *WCD*, 97-102.

[30] See *WCD*, 57-65.

hope that shared eating and water-washing will lead to life and good, even life with God on God's coming day—may be roughly the same in Christian use. But some matters—like great quantities of food and drink being consumed or the devotee washing himself—will be intentionally inverted or re-oriented: a little food is consumed in the Christian Eucharist and great quantities are given away—this is a foretaste of God's feast; the baptized do not purify themselves but are washed by a baptizer, in company with the church—this is an action of God's grace, not of "works." The trans-valuing of meaning may involve the use of materials from another culture— like the basilica made the house for a meal or the patterns of the mystery rites adapted to the process of Baptism—now juxtaposed to the original but re-oriented symbolic material. This re-orienting will take place especially by placing the meaning of Jesus Christ and of the Scriptures at the heart of the cultural practice and its field of reference—as Jesus placed himself at the heart of the eucharistic meal and of Baptism. And because of this re-orienting of meaning, some matters—like drunkenness and the male-only participants—will simply not be admitted, no matter that they are someone's local culture.

Let it be said clearly: it is not the Lord's Supper we celebrate—or it is the Lord's Supper celebrated in such a way as to make us sick or to kill us— if it is celebrated for men only, for women only, for one tribe or nationality only, for those with caste-status only, for the wealthy only. It is simply no defense to say: "But this is my culture." Such cultural elements are wrong and are to be rejected. This is the meaning, for us, of 1 Corinthians 11:20-21, a meaning that is of very great importance for the counter-cultural and transformative power of the liturgy.

Such a transformation, known throughout the scriptures and not only in the origin of Baptism and Eucharist, can be called a *breaking of symbols*.[31] In such a "breaking," the symbol is accorded great respect, with sympathetic insight into its wisdom and its meaning in the relationship of peoples to the earth and to their hopes for life. Indeed, the terms of the symbol and its power to evoke our sense of meaning are maintained, but its attempt at

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[31] *Cf.* Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957), 52-54. See also Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 27-31, and *WCD* 34.

coherent and powerful meaning in itself is seen as insufficient and equivocal. The symbol *means* for us because of the grace and presence of Jesus Christ, because of its juxtaposition to the promises of God in the Scriptures.

In the task of liturgical localization, hundreds of such transformations and trans-valuations go on. They will be small and large. Sometimes local cultural matters will be left relatively untouched (e.g., to use a seemingly minor example, the clothing and colors people wear). In other situations, local symbols will be significantly transformed by the juxtaposition of the scriptural Word (e.g., the teaching about the meaning of clothing, using Isaiah 61:10 to describe what God is doing with our lives in the world, signified by our baptismal "putting on Christ"[32]). In other situations, local symbols may be re-oriented by the intentional liturgical use of practices that are *not* ordinary, drawn from elsewhere in the church or in church history but adapted to the local community (for examples, the actual clothing given the newly baptized or the leaders in the assembly, which may be the ancient white garments and the traditional Mediterranean festal and court clothing, or may be some adaptation of these). But in other situations, elements of local practice will need to be largely rejected (if for example, certain colors or clothing may only be used to indicate wealth or rank or caste or self-realization, to the rejection of others: Western clergy need seriously to reconsider their liturgical use of academic garb or their wearing of signs of civil rank in light of this critique).

This process of sifting and trans-valuing will take place most clearly if it can be centered around the strong presence of the Scripture, Baptism and Eucharist in the heart of a participating congregation as the way the people are gathered around Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and present. It will take place most clearly if it uses the *ordo* which unites us, exactly at the same time that it asks how that *ordo* is to be done in the local context. Then the central scriptural word will be available to give new meaning and new orientation to cultural symbols. Then the central sacramental presence of God's grace in Christ will be available to be juxtaposed to the cultural symbols which are now required to refer outside of themselves.[33] Then the ancient

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[32] Galatians 3:27.

[33] *WCD* 147-151.

biblical process of reinterpretation, which we have seen so clearly in the origins of Christian Baptism and Eucharist[34], can continue to be enacted in new situations.

But who decides what local cultural elements are to be rejected or transformed? There is only a "messy" answer, not a neat, authoritarian one. The *church* does. That is, the local church, in the faithful life in the Gospel, perceives how much God loves this place and how the local cultures bear witness to God. But it also perceives, in its struggle and fidelity and mutual conversation over generations, how much this local place is in need of being saved, what cultural elements require re-orientation and what requires rejection. And every local church also needs the mutual conversation with other local churches, calling it to aspects of the Gospel, aspects of local wisdom and aspects of the local need which it may have forgotten or ignored or under-valued.

For example, my own church (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) needs help to call us to see the danger we are in if we let the *ordo* disappear in the name of being "culturally relevant," as is the temptation of the so-called "church growth movement" but also of many other movements for individual or group identity in the church. At the same time, we need continually to discover ways that the practical, democratic, individualist and nearly gnostic cultural characteristics of many North Americans can be respected as a lively way to live in the world, can encounter the transformative values of the Gospel, can be broken and still saved, and can be put in dialogue with the story, the politics and the economy of God.[35]

For our work the dynamic of the counter-cultural is immensely important. "Do not be conformed to this world," writes Paul, "but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Romans 12:2). Christians believe that God and God's grace, known in Jesus Christ, indeed transform a place to be truly the created place that it is in God's love. For Christians, this is the very grace proclaimed and given in those means of grace which unite all the churches of every place. The dynamic of the counter-cultural, in this

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[34] See *WCD, passim.*

[35] These are, of course, the Gospel story of Jesus Christ and, because of him, the "politics" of Baptism and the "economy" of the Eucharist. See above, footnotes 9 and 13.

sense, is a tool for a liturgy which is authentically local and authentically catholic at once.

Conclusion: The Catholic Faith, Locally Confessed

We may put this all in another way. The tools we need for the authentic localizing of the Christian liturgy are, first of all, the basic doctrines of the Christian faith which unites us. The doctrines of God, creation, sin, justification, the ministry of the means of grace and the church all bear directly on our task.[36] These are at the heart of the Augsburg Confession. When taken seriously, they yield an agenda for our work, the *catholic* faith which must always be coming to *local* liturgical expression.

One might put it this way: We are not God, nor are our cultures. But God is turned toward us, by the Spirit empowering local communities to know Jesus Christ in faith and so to come into the very liberating communion of the life of the Holy Trinity. This God has created all things good: each place, in connection with all other places, is held in the hands of the life-giving God. The cultures of each place, the ways people live in the earth, also show the signs of God's good creation: food and drink; naming, language and music; sexuality and child-rearing; work, tools and exchange; rest, thought, festivity and the arts; even our religious hopes and their expressions are all great goods.

But humankind and all the earth are also marked by sin, by a turning away from God and from life. The greatest of goods have at times been fully turned to evil purpose, to the working of death and sorrow and hurt, to ignorance, enslavement and war. Human beings, collectively and individually—also in their cultures and in each place—are responsible. Jesus Christ alone is our salvation. But he has come among our sin and death and need. He has borne it in himself, in his death and in his resurrection. He has used our very flesh and the stuff of our cultural life in the created earth—our words, our food and drink, our religious hopes—to utterly new purpose: to restore creation even more wonderfully; to give us himself and so draw us into communion with God; to give us forgiveness and life together, more than

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[36] The order of these doctrines is, of course, the order of the Augsburg Confession.

our own work and our own cultures could ever do. By the power of the Spirit working through the biblical words and the baptismal bath and eucharistic meal of Christ's gift, we are brought to faith in him. It is through faith in Christ alone, not through our own works or cultures, that we are saved.

Yet in each beloved, created place, God is raising up communities of faith, gathered around the central story of Christ and around his risen and local presence in Word and bath and meal, to be the church in this place, enacting the universal means of grace in a local way. There, as in a workshop, as in a foretaste of the feast to come, the elements of our cultures are being both welcomed and transformed to do their original work: to be *creation* and the work of *creatures,* to be the ways we live peacefully together in the land and to be witnesses of God's intention for all the earth.

THE SHAPE OF THE LITURGY: A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTEXTUALIZATION[1]

Gordon W. Lathrop

One of the principal findings of the regional research of the LWF Worship and Culture Study was the importance of the "shape" or essential structure of the liturgy.   When any local church goes to work on local contextualization, it has to ask what, exactly, it is that is to be contextualized. Most deeply, of course, the answer is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But Lutherans believe that the Gospel comes to the Church through certain concrete means: the Word of God and the sacraments in the Sunday assembly of Christians. And these concrete means have a real history and a concrete, received, ecumenically recognized shape. Lutherans have no official, international "Lutheran" liturgy—what the Roman Catholics call an *editio typica*. But Lutherans have received the great history of Christian worship as their own, rejoicing in recent evidence of an ecumenical consensus about the most basic patterns of Christian worship, and recognizing that this history and these patterns have been already influenced by many cultures. We need this shape as a framework for our own contextualizing work. Without such a framework, we might be "contextualizing" only ourselves and our own ideas—swallowing our own tail, as it were. However, with such a shape, diverse, contextualized local churches can find a rich connection with each other. It is this "shape" which helps us to ask about local equivalents, local meanings, local transformations, and, sometimes, resistance to local cultural wrongs.

What follows here is a concise exploration of the nature of this shape or order or structure, especially as it is to be recognized in the Sunday event

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[1]   This chapter first appeared, in a somewhat different form, as "On the Practical Use of the 'Shape of the Liturgy,'" in *Parish Practice Notebook*, 45 (Summer 1995), 6-7.

of Holy Communion or the Eucharist, together with some questions which might serve local contextualizing efforts. The goal is to make knowledge of the shape of Christian worship (or, as it has come to be called both ecumenically and by the LWF study team, "the *ordo* of the liturgy") into a practical, useful tool for contextualization.

An Event with a Shape

But let us begin at the beginning. Liturgy is an event with a shape. It is more than a text. It is the flow of a communal action which expresses its meanings in gestures and concrete signs as well as in words. Indeed, the meanings of the liturgy come to expression by the continual juxtapositions of words with sign-actions.

The old Lutheran definition of the Church actually carries within itself an implied "shape" for Christian liturgy. The Augsburg Confession defines the church as "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (Article 7). But such a definition is not only a dogmatic assertion. Behind it hover ages of concrete experience as Christians have gathered in assemblies where the Word has been actually read and preached and the holy supper actually celebrated. Within this definition is also found a practical proposal for all of our local worship.

In fact, such a shape can be traced to the earliest clear descriptions of Christian worship. Justin's second-century account of the Christian Sunday meeting describes an event which moves from gathering, Scripture reading, preaching and intercessions ("Word") to giving thanks at table, communion and the sending of help to the poor and sick ("meal").[2] Indeed, this pattern is the very one which is implied for the communities which originally read Luke's Gospel. It is found in the report of the Sunday preaching and the "breaking of bread" both at Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32) and at Troas (Acts 20:7-11). Word and meal, by this understanding, are what we do on Sunday because they are the means of our encounter with the very presence of the crucified, risen Christ.

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[2] See the translation of Justin's text and an account of its meaning in Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 45-48.

Furthermore, the very Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession which proposes this "shape of the liturgy" to Lutheran congregations also presents Lutherans with a kind of *Magna Carta* of contextualization or localization:

> For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies of human institution should be observed uniformly in all places.[3]

Word and sacrament set out in richly diverse ceremonial ways, ways which we newly understand to be marked by local cultures—such is the image of unity amid diversity alive in the LWF study of worship and culture. And, since the Gospel is to be preached "purely" and the sacraments administered in accordance with that Gospel, there is also a critical edge here. Cultural matters may need to undergo transformation or even resistance as they come into the Christian assembly. The open table of the Lukan tradition[4] and the food given to the poor from Justin's Sunday Eucharist[5] bear witness to the same culture-critical edge alive already in the earliest tradition.

Such a "shape" and such an application of the shape to liturgical contextualization are not only found in the earliest sources and in the Lutheran Confessions. They appear as well in late twentieth-century of liturgical history. Recent Lutheran publications have joined the twentieth century scholarly interest in finding the "shape of the liturgy," but they have done so by placing accent on "Word and sacrament" as the core characteristic of that shape.[6] The *Erneuerte Agende* of the Evangelical Church in Germany is based on a such conception of "shape."[7] Both it and the new worship

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[3] Emended from Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 32.

[4] See Arthur A Just, Jr., *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993).

[5] See *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology,* 143-155.

[6] See Gordon Lathrop, *What are the essentials of Christian worship? (Open Questions in Worship,* vol. 1; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994). For the origin of the idea of "shape," see Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury, 1983).

[7] *Erneuerte Agende* (Hannover: 1990), 32, 42.

supplement, *With One Voice,* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, define the shape of the liturgy quite simply as

> Gathering
> Word
> Meal
> Sending[8]

In doing so, they join Luke and Justin and the Augsburg Confession in making available to congregations the strongest schema in which to understand and organize actual parish worship. Indeed, the ELCA book uses this very shape to organize its presentation of liturgical material, especially using its "Setting 6"[9] to set out a richly varied, multi-cultural version of a "chorale service" of the Holy Communion, intended for the current cultural situation of North American Lutherans.

Ecumenical Consensus

There has also been considerable recent ecumenical attention to the "shape of the liturgy" as an *ordo* of texts and actions.[10] A document currently under discussion in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, as it deals with the ongoing experience of the "Lima Liturgy" in many local places, includes the description of the characteristics of "an ecumenical celebration of the Eucharist." This description, this "proposal from Bossey," is intended to function as a kind of renewed and continued "Lima Liturgy," now set before the churches as a shape or *ordo*:[11]

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[8] *With One Voice: A Lutheran Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 8-9.

[9] *Ibid.,* 42-45.

[10] The 15th International Congress of Societas Liturgica was held in Dublin on August 14-19, 1995, on the theme "The Future Shape of the Liturgy." The papers have been published in *La Maison-Dieu,* 204 (1995:4) and in *Studia Liturgica,* 26:1 (1996).

[11] "Concerning Celebrations of the Eucharist in Ecumenical Contexts: a Proposal from a Group Meeting at Bossey," in *Ecumenical Review,* 47:3 (July 1995), 387-391.

1. A celebration of the Eucharist in an ecumenical context includes a clear service of the Word and a clear service of the table.

2. The service of the Word in such a Eucharist includes two clear components: *Scripture reading* from the Old and the New Testaments, and *proclamation* of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as the source and ground of our life in God's grace. Readings and preaching together should then lead the assembly to a response to the word in intercessions for the need of the world and for the unity of the church, confession of the faith, and song.

3. The service of the table in such a Eucharist includes two clear components: a *thanksgiving* at table, and the communal *eating and drinking* of the bread and cup of the thanksgiving, the holy gifts of Jesus Christ's living and active presence. Thanksgiving and communion together should then lead the assembly to mission.

4. The entire event of such a Eucharist should be musical, with the great structure of the assembly's action unfolded in the culturally diverse song and movement of the churches of the world.

5. The celebration of such a Eucharist involves a participating assembly and many liturgical ministries. Its unity is best served by one person presiding, in order to serve the unity and flow of the whole liturgy and to draw forth the gifts present in the assembly.

6. In planning such a celebration of the Eucharist, consideration should be given to holding the celebration on a Sunday or other Christian festival as a sign of the mystery of the resurrection that unites us.

7. The gathering [for such a Word-meal service] may include various actions, but it should draw the assembly, bearing in itself the need and longings of the world and the reality of each local place, into the grace and mercy of God.

8. The dismissal [from such a service] may include various actions, but it should send the assembly to serve in love and to bear witness to the freedom of life in Christ, and to the justice, peace and integrity of creation willed by God.

9. Participation in the proclaimed Word and the prayers of the assembly *is* participation in Christ. It is also Christ who, in the power of the Spirit, invites all to eat and drink his holy gift.

10. The extensive options listed here ought not obscure the simple order proposed: this liturgy could be celebrated with great simplicity or with extensive local experiment toward an emerging pattern of the future.

11. As a liturgy is prepared according to these proposals, texts for the principal parts of the Eucharist may best be chosen from prayers which have been accorded a wide ecumenical reception.

This discussion of "shape" can then be summarized as follows:[12]

> *Gathering* of the assembly into the grace, love and *koinonia* of the Triune God
> *to hear the Word:*
>> *Reading* of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
>> *Proclaiming* Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the ground of our hope
>>> (and confessing and singing our faith)
>> and so
>> *Interceding* for all in need and for unity
>>> (sharing the peace to seal our prayers and prepare
>>> for the table and collecting for all in need)
> *and keep the meal:*
>> *Giving thanks* over bread and cup
>> *Eating and drinking* the holy gifts of Christ's presence
>> and so (collecting for all in need and)
> *Being sent* in mission in the world.

It follows that this very ecumenical pattern or shape or *ordo*, a pattern also recognizable from the deepest Lutheran sources, gives us, at one time, a ground for cross-cultural unity between diverse local churches and a schema for asking about the contextualization methodology of dynamic equivalence and further localization in each place. It also gives us a schema for inquiry about resistance to cultural elements which do not belong in the Christian

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[12] *Cf.* "Concerning Celebrations of the Eucharist in Ecumenical Contexts," 388.

assembly, except by transformation and "breaking."[13] Congregations should learn and know this shape, know its confessional and biblical roots, its core intention to show forth the crucified and risen Christ. Then worship planners will find this shape of remarkable, practical use as it is musically and ceremonially enacted anew in each local place.

Questions for Contextualizing the Shape

Contextual use of the shape of the liturgy may be assisted by this set of questions:

1. *On gathering and being sent:*

How does our congregation gather in the grace, love and *koinonia* of the Triune God (2 Corinthians 13:13)? Is Baptism remembered? How? Are strangers welcome? Is the space of our gathering hospitable and yet also reverently focussed on the central matters of the gathering, the places of word and sacrament?[14] Does our architecture reflect the land, the local place and the culture in which the celebration takes place? Yet are the themes of that culture transformed, in our architecture and in our gathering, by the values of the Gospel of Christ? What roles do confession and forgiveness, processions, singing, the traditional *Kyrie* and *Gloria in Excelsis*, and the collect or prayer of entrance have in the gathering? How do these express the entire community gathering around God's Word and sacraments? What roles do post-communion prayer, singing, blessing, words of dismissal, the sending of communion to the absent or food to the hungry have in the sending? How do these express the mission of the entire community? Has the local cultural manner of assembling and leave-taking been considered for dynamic equivalents to the historic features of Christian liturgical gathering and sending? How long should gathering and sending take? Why? Who leads these events? Why? Are there matters from our local cultures which

[13] See, in this volume, "Worship: Local Yet Universal."

[14] See S. Anita Stauffer, "Contemporary Questions on Church Architecture and Culture," in Stauffer, ed., *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 167-181.

should be resisted in our practice of gathering and sending (e.g., greater honor accorded to people of wealth or status, too great a focus on charismatic individuals, too rigid or too relaxed a style, too individualistic or too faceless a manner in groups)? How do the needs and longings of the world and the reality of the local place, as these are before God, come to expression in these liturgical movements?

2. *On hearing the Word:*

How does our congregation hear the Word in Scripture and preaching? Is a lectionary used, connecting this assembly to the other churches ecumenically and/or locally? Is there always more than one reading? Does the sermon proclaim the crucified, risen and present Jesus Christ, on the basis of these readings? Is the place of the reading and preaching able to be recognized as a central and important place in the local cultural context? Is the book of the readings a book of dignity and significance? Does the congregational song—and the other arts of the assembly—bring the readings of the day to further expression? If there is a choir, does the choir act as the "rehearsed voices of the congregation," leading the congregation in its song around the Word? What roles do psalmody, the traditional Alleluia verses or sequence hymns and the ecumenical creeds play in the service of the Word? Does reading and preaching lead to intercessions? Are these really prayers for the world and for the unity of the Church? Are the intercessions "sealed" with the kiss of peace? Is there one presider and many ministers—readers, singers and leaders of prayer—in this service of the Word? Does the preacher have too great a role in this assembly? Too little? Is a strongly symbolic but richly accessible form of the local language and linguistic style used for reading and preaching? Have local cultural patterns been considered for dynamic equivalents to the non-central historic features of the Christian liturgical Word-service (e.g., the manner of reading and preaching, the place of the reading and preaching, the form of the book, the character of the music, the roles of leadership, the vestments, the manner of intercessions, the kiss of peace)? Are there matters from our local cultures which should be resisted in our practice of the service of the Word? Does the "word from ourselves"

replace the Word of God? Does our practice of the service of the Word obscure the central matters of an *assembly* of the baptized, gathered around the judgement and mercy of God in *Scripture* and *preaching, praying* and *song?*

3. *On keeping the meal:*

How does our congregation gather around the meal of Christ? Is this supper held every Sunday, as the principal service of our congregation? Does it include thanksgiving as well as eating and drinking? Does it include a collection for those in need? Is there a single presider and many ministers—singers, table servers and ministers of communion—in this service of the meal? Does the thanksgiving include the historic dialogue, praise to God for creation and redemption, the words of Christ at the supper, *anamnesis, epiclesis,* intercessions or commemorations and a great Amen? Might appropriate local dynamic equivalents be considered for this historic flow of the prayer of thanksgiving? Does the thanksgiving involve response and participation by the whole assembly? Is it proclaimed with love and dignity, as a central event in the assembly? What food is used? Why? What vessels are used? Why? How do food and vessels relate to this local culture? How do they express the gift of Jesus Christ and the unity of his body? Are they, or do they need to be, counter-cultural or culture-transforming? Is the sharing of the food done with love and reverence, in a manner respectful of the gift of Christ and of the baptismal dignity of each communicant? What role do such historic matters as the presentation of the gifts, the setting of the table, the place of communion and the procession of communicants or the singing of communion hymns play in our service of the meal? Have local cultural patterns been considered for dynamic equivalents to these non-central historic features of the Christian liturgical meal? Are there matters from our cultures which should be resisted in our practice of the service of the table (e.g., conceptions of purity or of exclusive table-fellowship)? Does our practice of the service of the meal obscure the central matters of *thanksgiving* and *eating and drinking* and remembering the *need of the world?* Does the entire service show forth Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, for the life of the world?

TWO METHODS OF LITURGICAL INCULTURATION

Anscar J. Chupungco

The inculturation of Christian worship is a subject that requires a sound working definition of both culture and liturgy, as well as the parameter of relationship that should exist between them. But in order to make that definition work concretely, methods are necessary. This paper proposes two, though obviously there can be several others. These are creative assimilation and dynamic equivalence.

It might be useful, before we engage in an analysis of these methods, to review briefly the definition of liturgical inculturation.[1] It is a process whereby pertinent elements of a local culture are integrated into the worship of a local church. Integration means that culture influences the way prayer texts are composed and proclaimed, ritual actions are performed, and the message expressed in art forms. Integration can also mean that local rites, symbols, and festivals, after due critique and Christian reinterpretation, become part of the liturgical worship of a local church.

One result of inculturation is that the liturgical texts, symbols, gestures, and feasts evoke something from the people's history, traditions, cultural patterns, and artistic genius. We might say that the power of the liturgy to evoke local culture is a sign that inculturation has taken place.

The immediate aim of inculturation is to create a form of worship which is culturally suited to the local people, so that they can claim it as their own. Its ultimate aim, on the other hand, is active and intelligent participation in worship, which springs from the people's conviction of faith. Inculturation properly understood and rightly executed should lead the assembly to a more

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[1] For a fuller explanation of inculturation and related terms, see Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 13-36.

profound appreciation of Christ's mystery made present in the celebration by the dynamic mediation of cultural signs and symbols. Inculturation, in other words, should aim to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ who reveals himself in the people's language, rites, arts, and symbols. If inculturation does not do this, it remains a futile exercise.

Historical models of inculturation are not lacking. And they are always useful references, especially in the area of Baptism, Eucharist, architecture, and music.[2] But it is necessary to know how to handle them. One aspect of this question is learning to identify the cultural components that are present in Christian worship and to explain how and when they got there. The history of the liturgy teaches us that Christian worship, whose origin dates from the time of Christ and the apostles, has in the course of the centuries integrated the culture of Greeks and Romans, of the Franco-Germanics, and of the people of the late middle ages in Europe. With such models history challenges us, as it were, to imitate the good things our ancestors in the faith accomplished, while avoiding the errors that seem inevitably to mark any human enterprise.

This brings us to the next step. How do we go about inculturating Christian worship? The question is one of methodology. Correct method is the key to correct inculturation. An examination of historical and contemporary models of inculturation shows that there are several methods one could possibly use. Two of these are what we might call creative assimilation and dynamic equivalence. In many ways these methods interlap.

The Method of Creative Assimilation

During the age of patristic creativity, especially in the time of writers like Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Ambrose, inculturation often came about through the integration of pertinent rites, symbols, and linguistic expressions,

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[2] See different articles on these topics by Gordon Lathrop, Anscar Chupungco, and Anita Stauffer in *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, LWF Studies (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994); hence *WCD*.

religious or otherwise, into the liturgy. Examples are anointing at Baptism, the giving of the cup of milk and honey, and the footwashing of neophytes. We should include the type of ritual language Christian writers had introduced into the liturgy.[3]

These rites had been commonly practiced by Greeks and Romans during the first four centuries. Some of them belonged to household rites, others to religious acts like the mystery rites. But by the method of creative assimilation they became part of Christian worship. They elaborated the core of the liturgical rite; they developed the shape of the liturgy. For example, the rite of Baptism developed from the apostolic "washing in water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26) to a full liturgical celebration which included, after the fourth century, a prebaptismal anointing, act of renunciation toward the west and profession of faith toward the east, blessing of baptismal water, and postbaptismal rites like footwashing, anointing with chrism, clothing in white robes, and giving a lighted candle.

It is useful to mention here that those who applied the method of creative assimilation often made recourse to biblical typology. This means that cultural elements, such as the people's rites, symbols, and institutions are reinterpreted in the context of biblical personages and events. We can recall the ancient Roman practice of feeding the newly born infant with milk and honey, which could have been the origin of a similar rite for initiates of some mystery religions. The author of the third-century *Apostolic Tradition* reinterpreted this practice in the light of God's promise to lead the chosen people into a land flowing with milk and honey. When creatively assimilated into the rite of communion, the cup of milk and honey assured the Church's new-born sons and daughters or neophytes that by passing through the waters of Baptism, they had crossed over to the new land of promise.

This method offers a wide range of possibilities and hence a wild range as well. One can easily abuse the method. With little effort one can discover similarities between the liturgical rites and those of one's own culture, between liturgical symbolism and the local system of symbols, between liturgical language and the ritual language of a people. Encouraged by

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[3] See Anscar Chupungco, "Baptism in the Early Church and its Cultural Settings," *WCD*, 39-56.

similarities, one might even make use of biblical types in an attempt to incorporate such cultural elements into the history of salvation.

But certain questions must be asked. First, supposing the newly added cultural elements possess what one can call "connaturalness" with the Christian liturgy, have they duly undergone the process of doctrinal purification? Similarity is not always a gauge of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Second, are the biblical types used appropriate? It is possible that violence is done to the biblical text in order to accommodate culture. The opposite is violence as well. Third, do the local elements enhance the theological understanding of the Christian rite? It can happen that they divert attention from the Christian rite by overly evoking their cultural provenance or, worse, by sending a wholly different message. Fourth, do they harmonize with the other elements of the rite, and are they sufficiently integrated with them? Perhaps they are no more than useless decorative appendices or cultural tokens with little or no role to play in the unfolding of the rite. And fifth, we need to ask a question too easily forgotten by people who engage in projects of inculturation: do people accept them as an authentic contribution of their culture to the enrichment of Christian worship?

The method of creative assimilation can be a useful reference when one intends to develop or expand the shape of a given ritual for use in a local church. Certain parts of the eucharistic celebration, such as the rite of gathering and the preaching of the Word, can be developed by appropriate rites borrowed from the local culture after due process of purification.[4] The rite of Baptism can also be enriched by suitable rites of initiation which are found in people's traditions.[5] The rite of marriage is another instance where ritual and linguistic elaboration can be made on the basis of local marriage rites.[6] Likewise the institution of new liturgical feasts inspired by traditional and contemporary festivals can be an area where the method of creative assimilation may prove to be useful.[7] Through this method the liturgical year is able to imbue with the mystery of Christ the various

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[4] Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future. The Process and Methods of Inculturation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 56-101.

[5] *Ibid.*, 125-139.

[6] R. Serrano, *Towards a Cultural Adaptation of the Rite of Marriage* (Rome 1987).

[7] Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year* (New York: Pueblo 1981).

seasons of the year, traditional feasts, cycle of human work, and political systems of nations.

The method of creative assimilation is ideal in those instances where the liturgical rite is too austere or sober, if not impoverished. In the liturgy people need to see, feel, touch, taste, act. Sometimes their culture drives them to want to be impressed by the solemnity of a rite, to experience a dramatic effect that they can relish for a long period of time. Creative assimilation can bring these things about by enriching the liturgical rite with people's own rites. In other instances, however, where there is a fully developed liturgical rite, this method carries the danger of overloading the rite with secondary and peripheral elements or of courting repetitiousness. In such cases the method of dynamic equivalence is the right option. But there can also be instances when both methods can fruitfully be used hand in hand.

The Method of Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence differs from the first method. While creative assimilation starts with what culture can offer and hence what can be added to Christian liturgy, dynamic equivalence starts with what exists in Christian liturgy and how culture can further develop its *ordo* or shape. Dynamic equivalence, in other words, is a type of translation. It reexpresses the liturgical *ordo* in the living language, rites, and symbols of a local community. Concretely, dynamic equivalence consists of replacing elements of the liturgical *ordo* with something that has an equal meaning or value in the culture of the people, and hence can suitably transmit the message intended by the *ordo*. Because dynamic equivalence draws its elements from people's culture and traditions, the liturgy is able to evoke life experiences and paint vivid images rooted in the people's history, traditions, and values.

At this juncture it might be useful to develop some of the aspects of the concept of dynamic equivalence. In his book *Christianity in Culture,* Charles Kraft describes the elements which make up the concept of dynamic equivalence. Although his book deals directly with biblical translation, it sheds light on the method of dynamic equivalence for liturgy. First, according to Kraft, each language has its own genius and special character. Second, to communicate effectively in another language one must respect

this uniqueness of any given language and work in terms of it. He informs us that attempts to "remake" languages to conform to other languages have been monumentally unsuccessful. Third, to preserve the content of the message the form must be changed.

In the liturgy we speak of "content" to refer to the meaning intended by the text or rite. "Form," on the other hand, refers to the outward shape made up of words, gestures, and sometimes material things, whereby the content is expressed. The *ordo* is the content and form combined. Kraft notes that different languages express quite similar concepts in very different ways and that no concepts are expressed in exactly the same ways. He concludes with a firm conviction that "the faithful translator, in attempting to convey an equivalent message in terms of the genius of the receptor language, must alter the form in which the message was expressed in the original language."[8] We should note at this point that Kraft's affirmation regarding the necessity to alter the form of the biblical message does *not* apply to some forms of the liturgy. To convey the message of Baptism in terms of the genius of the receptor culture, we must not alter the original baptismal form of washing in water with invocation of the holy Trinity. One should, however, allow the possibility of reexpressing the Trinitarian formula and the manner of washing (immersion, infusion, sprinkling) in ways that are congenial to the local culture.

The components of culture, such as rites, symbols, gestures, and the arts, have their own genius and special character. Hence it is necessary to respect their uniqueness and work in terms of it. We cannot overstress that each culture has its own identity and laws and that these need to be taken into serious consideration. We should not deal with culture in a frivolous way. Furthermore, following the thinking of Kraft, we may say that certain components of culture have a universal dimension, that is, they are transcultural. Though different in their outward shape because of their provenance or *sitz-im-leben*, some cultural components express concepts similar to the concepts articulated in the liturgy. The method of dynamic equivalence works on the premise that there are cultural elements which

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[8] Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture. A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-cultural Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 272-73; see entire chapters 13-15, 261-312.

possess connaturality with the Christian liturgy. Though outwardly different, they are able to transmit the content of the liturgical *ordo*.

The opposite of dynamic equivalence is formal correspondence. It is called "formal," because it remains on the level of form or shape or external appearance. It does not take into consideration the cultural patterns, history, and life experience of the local church. In the area of language, formal correspondence tends to be no more than a literal, word-for-word or phrase-by-phrase, translation to the point of ignoring the linguistic characteristics of the audience. Thus, while it may appear "faithful" to the original, it fails to communicate the message effectively. According to Kraft, formal correspondence "aims to be faithful to the original documents". But he explains that this "faithfulness" to the original language centers almost exclusively on the literal transference of the original into the corresponding receptor language.[9]

Examples of formal correspondence in the liturgy are those translations that try to account for every word found in the original Greek or Latin formulary. According to proponents of formal equivalence, no word, even if it is merely a rhetorical device peculiar to the Latin oration like the word *quaesumus*, may be dropped in the receptor language.

Some formal translations are no more than mere transliterations, as for example, mystery for *mysterion* and sacrament for *sacramentum*. Such transliterations, though they are doctrinally safe, do not enrich the assembly's understanding of what the liturgy is talking about. Others are literal equivalents which do not take into account the socio-cultural or religious context of the receptor languages. For example, "in memory of" as a translation of *anamnesis* does not consider the receptor's use of the phrase "in memory of" in connection with tombstones. Hence to speak of the Eucharist as an *ordo* "in memory" of Jesus can create in some cultural contexts the image of the dead more than of the risen.

Not only the liturgical *ordo* but also the cultural components need to be examined. In this connection let us review briefly the components of

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[9] *Ibid.*, 265.

culture.[10] These are values, patterns, and institutions. They are the cultural components which enter effectively into dialogue with the liturgy. Dynamic equivalence deals not only with the liturgical *ordo* but also with the components of culture, in order to lead them to dialogue with each other.

Values are those principles that influence and give direction to the life and activities of a community. They are formative of the community's attitude or behavior toward social, religious, political, and ethical realities. Examples of values which have a special bearing on the liturgical *ordo* are hospitality, family ties or community spirit, and leadership.

The liturgy has also its set of values. These are parallel to human values, although they are obviously seen in a Christian perspective. Thus the liturgical *ordo* necessarily includes such values as hospitality, community spirit, and leadership. Indeed without these three values our liturgical celebrations lose their ecclesial dimension. The method of dynamic equivalence looks for parallel expressions of human values which can suitably restate the liturgical values.

Institutions, on the other hand, are society's traditional practices which celebrate significant phases of human life from birth to death, from one season to another, from one socio-political event to another. Liturgical calendar feasts and such rites as initiation, marriage, and funerals are equivalent to cultural institutions. As one can easily perceive, there is much that the method of dynamic equivalence can pursue in the area of institutions.

Cultural patterns refer to the typical way members of a society form concepts and express themselves in language, rituals, and art forms. We can thus identify thought, language, ritual, and art patterns. These are at the root of social and racial identities. At this point it is useful to remember that cultural patterns give external shape to values and institutions. Hospitality is expressed in language, rituals, and art forms; festivals are celebrated according to some defined ritual patterns of the community.

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[10] Anscar Chupungco, "Liturgy and the Components of Culture," *WCD*, 153-166.

The liturgy too, in its western form, has cultural patterns, inherited from ancient Judaism, ancient Rome and Greece, and medieval Europe. The method of dynamic equivalence, after a study of these patterns, examines the possibility of reexpressing them in the cultural patterns of the local church.

Application and Challenges

To help our reflection let us focus on the eucharistic *ordo*. Let us consider those moments in the *ordo* where values, patterns, and institutions appear prominently.

In the rite of gathering, for example, we are able to identify the values of hospitality and community spirit. Hospitality is expressed by the openness with which visitors and strangers are welcomed by community leaders to the eucharistic table. The Sunday ministers of hospitality welcome back members of the parish community and lead them to their seats. In the usage of the Roman Church the purpose of the rite of gathering, also called entrance rite, "is that the faithful coming together take on the form of a community".[11] The entrance song, which accompanies the procession of the ministers to the sanctuary [the area around the altar], is also intended to enhance the community spirit. Singing together in assembly creates this bond. Indeed, the entire celebration should be a musical liturgy.[12] Other traditional elements like the *Kyrie, Gloria,* and collect foster the spirit of worship as a community act.

The challenges of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation are many. In some communities there might be a need to bring to greater consciousness some of the elements of the eucharistic gathering. Who welcomes whom to the celebration? How is hospitality made to interplay with leadership and ministeriality? What role does the procession of ministers play at this point? Does the entrance song create community spirit? Is the seating

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[11] *General Instruction on the Roman Missal,* Chapter 2, no. 21 (Rome: Vatican City 1975), 32.

[12] Roman musical tradition for the Eucharist consisted of singing the liturgical texts; it meant singing the liturgy more than singing hymns, for example, in the liturgy. Today the option exists of singing entrance, offertory, and communion hymns in place of the assigned liturgical text.

arrangement indicative of equality and mutual respect among members of the assembly? As one writer has impressively put it, "a special welcome is to be given to the poor, even if the bishop has to surrender his chair and sit on the floor."[13] Is the rite of gathering confined to words and songs, or are gestures and material things also used to signify the meaning of eucharistic gathering? What impact does the traditional greeting, "The Lord be with you," have on the assembly's perception of Christ's presence among his people?

In the traditional eucharistic *ordo* the structure of the liturgy of the Word consists of biblical readings, psalmody and alleluia, homily, and intercessions. As a unit they appear as a dialogue between God who proclaims the Word and the community which listens and responds to the Word. The liturgy of the Word can be described as the Word of God proclaimed in the readings, explained by the homily, and responded to in the recitation of the Creed and in the intercessory prayers. In this part of the *ordo* the community leader occupies the presider's chair and breaks the word of God through the ministry of preaching. The assembly listens as the word of God is proclaimed and explained, and thereafter utters or sings words of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. For the Word of God is addressed to the assembly as a community, and the response which the assembly makes through supplications is the prayer of every person in the gathered community for every person in the human community of the world.

Here again the methods of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation present challenges to local churches. Some liturgical assemblies will need a more solemn, perhaps even dramatic, presentation of the book of Scriptures. It should be noted that the Roman tradition has no special introduction to the liturgy of the Word; this begins quite abruptly with the first reading. There are cultural groups which feel uneasy about this system. Another challenge is the formation of readers who will combine the nature and qualities of liturgical reading with the cultural pattern of public proclamation with attention to voice pitch, rhythmic cadence, and public presence. The posture of the assembly during the readings has also a cultural significance which should not be ignored. Liturgical tradition tells the assembly to sit at the readings, except at the Gospel when the assembly stands to listen in

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[13] Robert Cabié, "The Eucharist", *The Church at Prayer* II (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), 39.

silent respect. However, in some cultures the posture of standing while someone of authority is speaking is considered disrespectful, an indication of boredom or of an eagerness to take leave.

The presider too is challenged to preach on the basis of the Word that has been proclaimed. To do otherwise can be as culturally shocking as ignoring an official message addressed to the assembly. In the middle ages, when the sermon had lost any relation to the reading, pulpits were built in the center of the church, thus aggravating the problem between the homily and the proclaimed Word of God. The idea of having a homiletic book independent of the lectionary disrupts the flow of liturgical dialogue between God and the assembly.

The intercessions should likewise be inspired by the Word proclaimed and explained. If the concept of dialogue is taken seriously, the intercessions as the assembly's response cannot entirely ignore the proclaimed Word. Unrelated intercessions bring to mind the image of two deaf people trying to engage in a conversation. The challenge also includes the formulation of intercessions, using the local community's language pattern. Lastly, it might be useful to note that a traditional posture during the intercessions is standing, perhaps a reference to the priestly character of the assembly, to the *Ecclesia orans*. In some cultural situations, however, kneeling might express more convincingly an aspect of the intercessions, namely humble petition.

The two methods of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation challenge us as well in the area of liturgical space and furnishings.[14] For example, the lectern and the eucharistic table should symbolize the unity between the Word and Christ's body. This will be more clearly manifested if the material and decoration (which are hopefully of local inspiration) of the lectern are identical with those of the eucharistic table. There is indeed one table: the table of God's Word and Christ's sacrament. Furthermore, where should these furnishings, together with the chairs of the presider and ministers, be located in relation to the assembly? What cultural pattern is followed by the community in the use of space? Does it correspond to the

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[14] C. Valenziano, *Architetti di chiese* (Palermo 1995), 167-266; S. Anita Stauffer, "Inculturation and Church Architecture," *Studia Liturgica,* 20:1 (1990), 70-80, and "Contemporary Questions on Church Architecture and Culture," *WCD*, 167-181.

special feature of liturgical space which expresses simultaneously both community spirit and leadership?

Local culture can contribute much to make the liturgy of the Word a living experience of God's presence in the assembly through the word proclaimed, explained, and responded to. The methods of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation, properly applied, can help the assembly to focus attention on the Word through patterns and institutions with which everyone is familiar. There will be no need to get to the Word of God through cultural patterns that are foreign to the community.

The meal of thanksgiving, also called liturgy of the Eucharist, has a plan whose essential elements can be traced from a report of Justin Martyr (+ 165 A.D.).[15] Bread and wine (mixed with water) were presented to the presider, who recited a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving over these elements; at the end the people shouted out "Amen" to express assent to the prayer made in their name. The eucharistic elements were then distributed to the assembly and to those who could not be present. Justin mentions that collection is made for widows and orphans and for the sustenance of the guests of the community. In the Roman liturgy revised by Vatican II these various elements are represented by the preparation of the gifts, the eucharistic prayer, and communion.

The various elements of the eucharistic liturgy project the values of community spirit, leadership, and hospitality. In the ancient *ordo* observed in Rome and North Africa, bread and wine were offered by the community for the community's communion. What was superfluous, and we can presume that there was much, was distributed to the needy members of the Church. The Eucharist became an occasion to be generous to the poor; communion became like a token meal, in order to have enough to give to the hungry. We can, to some extent, understand the stern words addressed by Cyprian of Carthage to a wealthy woman who Sunday after Sunday came to church bringing no gifts for the community yet "dared to eat," he said, "the bread offered by the poor." The Eucharist urges the rich and the poor

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[15] Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, c. 65 and 67, L. Pautigny, ed. (Paris 1904); partial English translation in W. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1970), 57.

alike to share their possessions with the members of the community. It is through this generous sharing of goods that the community spirit is fostered.

The challenge here is to find appropriate rites to present the gifts to the community. What are the words exchanged at this moment between the offerer and the receiver? What gestures are involved? At what time of the celebration is the presentation of the gifts most appropriate: at the rite of gathering or at this part of the celebration? What type of gifts, other than the accepted tradition of bread and wine, can be brought to the community for its needs and the needs of the poor?

In the recitation of the eucharistic prayer, the role of the presider as leader has been evident from as far back as the second century. Witnesses are Justin Martyr in the second half of the second century and Hippolytus of Rome in the third century.[16] It is worthy of note that this long and solemn prayer was recited by "the one who presides," the *proëstòs*, in the name of the assembly. That is why Justin remarks that the assembly shouted out its "Amen" to signify that it consented to what the presider had prayed in every one's name. We can say that during the eucharistic prayer the values of leadership and community interplay. In the liturgical thinking of the third- and fourth-century Christian writers, the two fundamental roles of the presider at the Eucharist consisted of the homily and the eucharistic prayer. In the tradition of the Roman Church the collect, prayer over the gifts, and prayer after communion are also called presidential prayers.

The challenge regarding the eucharistic prayer is its composition, which not only involves integral parts (dialogue, preface, narration of the institution, prayer of *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*, intercessions for the Church and the world, and final doxology), but also local language and use of images.[17] Language is not only a compendium of words and phrases; it is above all a mirror of the people's thinking and values. That is why liturgical language, especially for this central prayer of the Eucharist, should assimilate the linguistic qualities of the assembly: noble and beautiful, but accessible; prayerful and uplifting, but rhetorical use of what is proper to the local language like

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[16] *Ibid.*; see also Hippolytus, *Traditio Apostolica* 9, B. Botte, ed. (Münster 1989), 28.

[17] For the Roman tradition, see E. Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite* (New York: Pueblo, 1986).

idioms, proverbs, and maxims.[18] Failure to use the literary qualities of the local language produces prosaic prayers, failing to impress on the hearers anything memorable, anything that can accompany them through life.

Another challenge is the manner of pronouncing the eucharistic prayer and the rites that should accompany it. How are solemn orations proclaimed by a leader in a given culture, and what are the traditional gestures or postures assumed by the assembly to express the attitude of reverence and communion with the leader: bowed heads, hands lifted up, standing, kneeling?

The rite of communion has much to say about community spirit. The common recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the sign of Peace, if done at this moment, are some of the more significant expressions of community spirit. Originally, as we find in Justin Martyr, the sign of peace was placed after the intercessions, thus acquiring in the writings of Tertullian the name of *sigillum orationis* or seal of prayer. Pope Gregory I transferred it at this point as a *sigillum communionis* or sign of communion.

The central and eloquent symbol of community is, of course, the New Testament "breaking of bread" whereby the Eucharist is called in Acts 2:42. The one bread must be broken, like the body of Christ "broken" violently on the cross, in order to be shared. For there is no sharing, unless there is a breaking; and there is no Eucharist, unless there is a sharing. Likewise the communal cup mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 suggests unity among the members of the assembly. The principle of a communal cup would make us believe that before the age of the basilicas the size of the cup was determined by the size of the community.[19] The later practice of pre-broken bread might have come about as a practical solution to the large number of communicants or, what seems a more likely explanation, as a consequence of the use of thin wafers called hosts. At the seventh-century papal Mass recorded by *Roman Ordo I,* a "main cup" was used, thus

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[18] Paul De Clerck, "Le language liturgique: sa nécessité et ses traites spécifiques," *Questions liturgiques,* 73:1-2 (1992), 15-34; see also A. Echiegu, *Translating the Collects of the "Sollemnitates Domini" of the "Missale Romanum" of Paul VI in the Language of the African* (Münster 1984).

[19] See Edward Foley, *From Age to Age: How Christians Celebrated the Eucharist* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

implying that there were other cups, probably for the communion of the assembly.[20] These practical solutions should not make us forget the basic value of community spirit expressed by the one bread that is broken and the one cup that is shared.

The methods of dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation present cultural challenges in connection with communion. For example, the appropriate manner of giving the sign of Peace is a question that torments both ecclesiastical authorities and liturgists alike, and probably it will take several more years before a suitable cultural sign can satisfy each member of a local community. There is also a need to study the ritual pattern of sharing food and drink in community. Who offers them? How are they presented to the people, what words are used by the one who offers and what response is given by the one who receives? What gestures accompany the reception of food and drink? At this point it is important to note that the eucharistic communion does not tolerate cultural patterns where a distinction is made between races, sexes, and social positions. To affirm the nature of Christian service, it might even be helpful if the leader receives communion last. In some cultures, in fact, parents eat after feeding the children and hosts eat after ministering to their guests.

The values of leadership and community spirit surface again at the concluding rite, sometimes strangely called "rite of dismissal". The presider, in the capacity of community leader, invokes God's blessing on the assembly before sending them off. Something of the parents' action of blessing their children as these leave the house seems to be evoked by this gesture. The practice of some presiders to bid farewell to the assembly at the door of the church heightens this sense of family.

It has become fashionable nowadays to stress the aspect of mission on the basis of the words *Ite, missa est*. Although such connection does not enjoy etymological and historical support, one cannot deny that the dynamism of the Eucharist is such that it compels the assembly to be preachers and doers of the Word and sharers of Christ's gift of himself.

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[20] *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen âge*, vol. 2, ed. M. Andrieu (Louvain 1971), 104.

The challenge presented by dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation is to examine the local pattern for ending a gathering. Do people say, politely and in so many words, "go" at the end of a meeting or a visit, or do they normally say "come back soon"? But words at this point can be deceiving. In some cultures it is possible to say "you go now, while I stay here" to mean "I am sorry to see you go." What gestures are performed by people as they take leave of each other, even if for a short period of time?

Methodological Steps

The final phase of work on inculturation involves some methodological steps. The first requires that we examine closely the liturgical *ordo*: its history and theology, structure, fundamental elements, and cultural background. It is obvious that we should not institute modifications or alterations on any system unless we are thoroughly informed of its nature and component parts. Furthermore we need to determine how the liturgical *ordo* expresses cultural values, patterns, and institutions, or in other words, an analysis of the cultural patterns used by the *ordo*. Although we can ultimately trace our liturgical origins to the Jewish tradition, we have to accept the fact that in the west the Christian liturgy has been ulteriorly influenced by Roman cultural patterns. And even after other European cultural patterns, like the Franco-Germanic, had modified the Western liturgy, the style of its formulary and its ritual traits continued to retain Roman cultural characteristics: sober, concise, direct, and practical. In other words, our eucharistic *ordo* has, by and large, still shaped by the Roman cultural patterns, even if medieval Europe has added its own contributions and the Reformation amended it.

Having defined the *ordo*, we come to the second step. We need to determine which of its elements may or should be reexpressed in the culture of the people, without prejudice to its original meaning or intention. Like any structure, the liturgy possesses elements that are not subject to change: food and drink for the Eucharist (tradition speaks of bread that is broken and cup of wine that is shared), water for Baptism (tradition speaks of natural water, while giving preference to flowing water), and so on. This goes hand in hand with the study of one's own culture. We, each in one's own cultural ambit, need to enter into a process of introspection in order to define the cultural patterns at play in such values as hospitality, community spirit, and

leadership. What images arise in our minds when we speak of these values? What are the words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and maxims with which we associate them? Are we able to identify the rites, symbols, and institutions with which our society signifies these values?[21] In short, we need to study those components of culture that possess a connaturality with the liturgical *ordo* and are able to reexpress it adequately.

The third step consists of comparing the patterns of the liturgical *ordo* with the cultural patterns of a local community. This step aims to establish the similarities and differences that exist between the two patterns. Does a particular linguistic expression, for example, convey the same sense as the liturgical *anamnesis* or *epiclesis*? Does a local ritual gesture correspond to the liturgical handlaying? Does orange color or technicolor say the same thing as the liturgical white? Does the practice that the host eats last express the same value as its opposite in the traditional rite of communion? And the questions can be as numerous as the elements of celebration. If we are able to establish such similarities and differences, we can begin to apply the method of dynamic equivalence by replacing parts of the liturgy with equivalent cultural components.

In the process we shall need to remember the cautions concerning doctrinal and moral critique that leads to purification. Certain cultural "values" like polygamy and abortion of female offspring, to give extreme examples, are diametrically opposed to Christian values and can in no way influence the liturgical *ordo*.

On the other hand, we might in some instances make recourse to biblical types in order to ensure that the cultural equivalents are suitably integrated into the Christian *ordo*. Or in other words, that they are assumed into the history of salvation.

Lastly, we should not lose sight of the pastoral and spiritual benefits our people should derive from the changes. The old adage *sacramenta sunt propter homines*, sacraments are for the good of the people, should be the ultimate aim of inculturation.

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[21] Anscar Chupungco, "Liturgy and the Components of Culture," *WCD*, 153-166.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed two methods of liturgical inculturation, namely, creative assimilation and dynamic equivalence. Both can be useful, depending upon the local situation. Creative assimilation starts from what there is in culture, while dynamic equivalence from what there is in liturgy. Creative assimilation tends to introduce new elements, while dynamic equivalence, which is a type of translation, confines itself to transmitting the content of a liturgical rite in a new cultural pattern. One thing to remember is that these two methods can overlap and need each other for a fuller effect.

This exposition has many loose ends. The method of dynamic equivalence can be quite complicated and requires much effort, when taken seriously. For some churches the basic questions still revolve around the concept of a liturgical *ordo*, which is in a fluid state because of the lack of a typical edition. For others the problem is how to define their own cultural patterns. It is to be hoped that by engaging in the work of inculturation local churches will uncover the riches of a common liturgical tradition and effectively and faithfully transmit such riches to every generation.

CASE STUDY: LUTHERAN FUNERALS IN JAPANESE CONTEXT[1]

Mark D. Luttio

The ritual surrounding the event of death, that is to say funerary rites, are no doubt as ancient as civilization itself.[2] The distinguished historian Arnold Toynbee states that "The oldest, most numerous and most imposing relics of our ancestors are funerary."[3] What is certain is that all cultures throughout history have understood death as an exigent moment in life's passage, and as such have at least tacitly prescribed ways in which to ritualize the transition. As the social-anthropologist Margaret Mead concludes, "I know of no people for whom the fact of death is not critical, and who have no ritual by which to deal with it."[4] It can safely be said, then, that the funeral rite is a universally observed "rite of passage," something which is enacted and experienced around the globe in virtually every culture.

In the case of Japan, which might well be described as one of the most traditional societies in the twentieth century, the felicitous observance of the funeral rite is a matter of profound importance. Chizuo Shibata is quick to point out that funerals and the "care of the dead" is one of the most important dimensions of Japanese culture, having a long history and place

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[1] This article first appeared as "The Passage of Death in the Japanese Context: In Pursuit of an Inculturated Lutheran Funeral Rite" in *Japan Christian Review*, 62 (1996).

[2] For example, the recent discovery of fossil pollen in Neanderthal graves, in present day Northern Iraq, is suggestive of the fact that Homo Sapiens had perhaps established a ritual of offering flowers to the dead as far back as 40,000 years ago. See David Cohen, ed., *The Circle of Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 230.

[3] Arnold Toynbee et al., *Man's Concern with Death* (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 59-60.

[4] Margaret Mead, "Ritual in Social Crisis," *Roots of Ritual*, ed. James Shaughnessy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 89-90.

of honor within that society.[5] It might be said that the greatest and most visceral concern for Japanese is making sure that there is someone to take responsibility for carrying out the appropriate funerary rites at the time of their passing. Thus, the event of death becomes an occasion where the greatest of care is taken by all in order to ensure the felicitous observance of the rituals involved in the funeral process. Coming to terms with this fact, and finding ways to account for the concerns of Japanese culture, vis-a-vis the celebration of the funeral rite, has been a perennial issue with which the church in Japan has had to grapple.

My own awareness of the centrality of the ritual surrounding the event of death among the Japanese and the subsequent ramifications which this had concerning the question of celebrating Lutheran liturgy in the context of Japanese culture comes as a result of an experience as a guest presider in a Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) parish at feast of All Saints' 1985. Much to my surprise, at the completion of the morning service, the wife of the Japanese pastor (for whom I was filling in) informed me that it was now time to proceed to the *nookotsudo* (columbarium) located on the roof of the church, and conduct the annual memorial rite for the dead. I had not even been aware that such a rite existed in the Lutheran Church.

Walking into the small dark columbarium I could see the rows of shelves along the sides of the room which housed the urns containing the cremated ashes and bones of the deceased. After proceeding through the order of service without any major *faux pas*, I noticed at the end of the liturgy that some of the church members came and stood before certain particular urns, pressed their hands together with fingers pointing at a forty-five degree angle and bowed profoundly.

It was clear that these parishioners, as they made their way from one urn to another, were paying their annual respect to the dead, not unlike what normally takes place in Japanese culture in front of the family grave at the vernal and autumnal equinox. Here I was witnessing the relentless march

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[5] "Problematic Areas of the Christian Funeral in Japanese Society," Lecture, Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary, Tokyo, Japan, 15 February 1993. For a brief historical account of funerary custom in pre-modern Japan see, H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), 25, 41.

of a sacred ritual exceedingly dear to the Japanese, an observance that was bound to take place, for some, with or without the assistance of the church's liturgy. Clearly, mortuary custom, with its concomitant household ancestor cult, is one of the most important issues with which the church in Japan must come to terms, if Christianity hopes to take root in Japanese soil.[6] In short, a successfully inculturated funeral rite is an imperative task for any Christain Church located in the Japanese context.[7]

This case study, then, will examine the newly "inculturated"[8] 1993 Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) funeral rite set against the backdrop of mortuary custom in contemporary Japanese culture, and attempt to analyze and assess how the Lutheran Church in Japan has pursued the issue of inculturating the celebration of Christian death, vis-a-vis Japanese cultural expectations.[9]

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[6] The Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan touches on this issue in its statment that "One of the reasons Christianity is not more generally accepted may be that to the Japanese religious consciousness, with its orientation toward family and household religion and with its almost instinctive inclination to affirm an essential continuity between the divine and the human, as opposed to a religion of individual choice and commitment, Christianity simply seems utterly alien." See *Japanese Religion: A Survey by the Agency for Cultural Affairs,* trans. Yoshiya Abe and David Reid (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1972), 25.

[7] The theological imperative for inculturation arises out of the event of the Incarnation itself. As Anscar Chupungco puts it, "If the Word of God became a Jew, the Church in the various countries of the world must become native to each of them." *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 87.

[8] In using the term "inculturation" I mean precisely "the integration of the Christian experience of the local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orientates and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only in the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal." A.R. Crollius, "What is New about Inculturation? A Concept and its Implications," *Gregorianum,* 59 (1979), 735.

[9] Although space does not permit an examination of the early JELC funeral rites (published in 1897, 1925, 1949, 1952 and 1968) there is evidence of an uneasiness with the disparity between Lutheran liturgical practice and Japanese funerary custom throughout the Lutheran Church's 100-year history in Japan. For a thorough treatment of the subject see, Mark D. Luttio, "Lutheran Liturgy In The Japanese Context: The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church Funeral Rite (1893-1993)," Unpublished Dissertation, The University of Notre Dame, 1995.

The Meaning of Mortuary Rites in Contemporary Japanese Culture[10]

It is my contention that the meaning of the funeral rite in Japanese culture is to be understood not so much in its ability to function as a "rite of passage" which carries the bereaved through transition, though it serves this purpose as well, but rather as a constitutive ritual concerning the very foundation upon which Japanese society is built, namely, the identity of the "household" (*ie*).[11] To put it another way, mortuary rites in Japanese culture are not simply concerned with negotiating the fact of death itself, but are integrally connected to the continuation of the household and the lineage of ancestors, something which can only be sustained through the process of celebrating the obligatory linear and cyclical mortuary rites.[12] It is ultimately through this ritual process of observing the obligatory funerary rites and the concomitant ancestor cult that the "household identity," to which the dead and the living belong together, is nurtured and maintained. As Masami Ishii explains: "In the concept of *ie* are included not only existing family members but also the spirits of the deceased of the lineage. The worship of the dead was regarded, therefore, as an important task for the continuation of *ie* (family)."[13]

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[10] The following composite analysis focuses on Buddhist funerary practice, since this is by far the predominant means of ritualizing death in Japanese culture. Current statistics indicate 94% of all funerals are Buddhist, 2% are Shinto, another 2% are Christian, and 2% are "other."

[11] The classic work on "rites de passage" theory is Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1960). The three stages involved in every rite of passage are: Separation, Transition, and Incorporation. In Japanese funerary custom, the first stage lasts from Death to Cremation (usually on the second or third day), the second stage until deposition of the Ashes into the Grave (usually on the forty-ninth day), and the third stage for as long as thirty-three years until the soul has joined the ranks of the ancestors at the *Tomuraiage*.

[12] The cyclical rites are those rites which occur yearly (at the vernal and autumnal equinox *higan*, and at the summer festival of *obon*). The linear rites are those rites which occur at specific points after a person's death, culminating on the thirty-third year when the deceased is said to join the ranks of the ancestors. See Robert J. Smith, *Ancestor Worship In Contemporary Japan* (Stanford University Press), 1974.

[13] Masami Ishii, "Some Problems in the Relationship Between Japanese Culture and Christianity," *Northeast Asia Journal of Theology*, 22/23 (March/September 1979), 51.

It should not come as a surprise then to discover that, according to a recently compiled survey, nearly 90% of the Japanese population regularly perform *hakamaeri* (visit the family or ancestral grave) to report important events which have transpired in their lives. As Robert Smith concludes his discussion on "caring for the dead" in Japanese culture: "Death does not . . . sever the ties between the deceased and the members of his household. A person can expect that in the normal course of things his spirit will continue to share in the life of his immediate kinsmen.... "[14] This phenomenon of "caring for the dead" is understood as a means for sustaining the warm human relationships of this world into the next, and in so doing, keeping the family, as well as the community, intact. Conversely then, as Herman Ooms reports, "People who are thought of as not venerating their ancestors, are believed to have broken with the community."[15]

In short, an examination of the funeral process in Japan reveals the fact that at the core of Japanese culture lies an understanding that the members of the *ie,* even after the event of death, go on living together in an inextricable relationship of interdependence —a concept which Japanese scholars have called *shisha seija kyozon* (the living and the dead living together).[16] It is ultimately this concept of "the household of the living and the dead," that both undergirds and requires the long and complex funerary customs of Japanese culture.

Structural elements which are integral to the Japanese funeral process, and which ultimately have bearing on the meaning of the rite, should be noted as follows (especially since these, as will be noted below, play a significant role in the changes made to the Japanese Lutheran funeral rite): The *indoo* (instructions) given by the priest to the deceased for a successful journey into the afterlife, the *jukai* (giving of commandments), and the *okyo* (reading

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[14] Smith, *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan,* 114.

[15] Herman Ooms, "The Religion of the Household," *Contemporary Religions In Japan* 8 (1967), 267.

[16] See Mineyo Hashimoto's, *Ukiyo no Shiso* [The Idea of the Other World], (1975). Hashimoto argues that Japan must be understood as a culture which "embraces death," as opposed to its "denial" or "defiance." According to Hashimoto, this "embracing of death" happens in Japan precisely because the living and the dead are understood actually to exist together, in an ongoing interdependent relationship.

of the "Buddhist Sutra"). The *shoko* (burning/offering of incense, which normally includes the act of bowing and praying) and *choji* (the funeral oration/eulogy). The *shoko* invariably includes *rei* (bowing) and *gassho* (praying). These ingredients directly honor the deceased (in the act of each individual offering incense), as well as bind the family/clan together (in the communal act of eating and drinking together in the presence of the deceased). In these acts, the household structure and identity is reaffirmed and sustained.

In the final analysis, it must be concluded that mortuary rites in contemporary Japanese culture are not so much a way to "dispose" of the deceased, as they are a way to "transpose" the deceased, from a living member of the household to an ancestral member. Thus, it is in caring for the dead (as witnessed especially in the offering of incense, flowers, and food, in the direct address of the deceased, and in the caring for the ashes, mortuary tablet, and grave), even as the dead "care" for the living, that the interdependent relationships of the household are sustained and nurtured through the complex and protracted death-ritualization process.

The 1993 Japanese Lutheran Funeral Rite

It might well be argued that the new 1993 Japanese Lutheran funeral rite offers for the first time in the history of Lutheranism in Japan an inculturated practice of Christian funerary celebration. Ultimately it attempts without hesitation or apology to provide a fuller, more complete funeral liturgy which fits the particular needs of the Japanese context, not simply translating an existing "burial rite" from the Lutheran church in the United States as in the past.[17] The new rite is unabashedly Japanese.

As the preceding segment reveals, funerals in Japan are a very serious matter. Without the ability to trust that the funeral process will be observed felicitously, Japanese are unlikely to embrace Christianity. Isamu Kinoshita (a Lutheran parishioner and director of a large funeral establishment in

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[17] The earlier publications of Japanese Lutheran funeral rites, in 1897, 1925, 1949, 1952, and 1968, were all (with partial exception in the 1968 rite) direct translations of Lutheran liturgies from North America.

Kurume, Japan) explains the problem in the following way: "Japanese feel uneasiness with Christianity's handling of the matter of after-death, and the elderly who pray in Christian facilities while alive, return to Buddhism when they die."[18]

Kinoshita is not necessarily stating here that Christians are converting back to Buddhism at the time of death, but rather, because of Christianity's handling of matters relating to the "after-death process" (an uneasiness which many Japanese feel towards Christianity), at the time of death many simply rely on the Buddhist way of handling things; these involve, in particular, the cyclical and linear rites which follow the funeral. As Kinoshita states, "...the problem (with the Christian funeral) is the weakness of what follows after the funeral."[19] In other words, the problem with the Christian funeral gaining acceptance within Japan lies in the fact that it does not adequately provide for, or take care of, the expectation within Japanese society for the proper "after care" of the deceased.

A related issue which the church faces in Japan, in addition to the question of "what" is done in the funeral process, is the matter of "for whom" the funeral is done—an issue which arises out of a concern for one's household and the preservation of the *ie*. The question is often posed, in reference to the unbaptized members of the household, "what can be done for those who die outside of the faith?" The fact is many Japanese Christians actually find themselves wanting to be able to have a Christian funeral for their family or relatives, even if they are unbaptized.[20] Could the JELC theologically justify a liturgical practice where the celebration of a non-baptized person's funeral would be allowed, even encouraged? The handling of this problem was to become one of the hallmarks of the new rite.

The new JELC funeral rite responded to this issue by taking an almost self-conscious stance toward those who were not a part of the church; taking these persons into account and ritually including them in the funeral process. Nowhere is this made more clear than in the radical policy shift that it adopts

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[18] Isamu Kinoshita, ["From the Perspective of the Practical Affairs of Funerals"], unpublished manuscript, 1993, 17-18 [translation mine].

[19] Kinoshita, 17.

[20] Seigoro Ushimaru, interview , Tokyo, Japan, 1 October 1993.

concerning the use of the funeral rite for the unbaptized. In the prefatory rubrics of the new rite it unequivocally states, "even for those who are not believers, if it is desired, it is possible to do this [the funeral]."[21] The question that must be posed is how this stance was justified by the JELC.

In the midst of preparations for the publication of the new 1993 funeral rite, the argument was made by Teichi Maeda (former president of the JELC and one of the chief architects of the 1993 rite) that "the question of burying a non-Christian isn't so much a matter of the deceased's faith as it is a matter of the faith of us who bury."[22] Thus, when the new rite was published, the practice of using the funeral rite for the unbaptized was justified by simply changing the traditional statement that "the Burial of the Dead is provided for the burial of those who depart this life in the Christian faith," to "The funeral rite manifests the way to inter in faith a person who has died."[23] In other words, a theological shift is made from understanding faith as a requisite condition on the part of the deceased for Christian burial, to understanding Christian burial as an act of faith on the part of those doing the burying. In short, it is a shift in focus from the faith of the deceased in order to inter to the act of interring in faith the deceased.

Another dramatic change to the new funeral rite was the fact that for the first time the JELC included nearly all of the traditional Japanese rites in the funeral process, placing them together in correct chronological order and in one location in its liturgy book, effectively accounting for the multiple-step and protracted nature of funerals in Japan. This can readily be observed in the following comparative chart between the Buddhist rite, the first JELC funeral rite of 1897, and the new 1993 rite:

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[21] [The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church], [The Funeral Rite and Marriage], (Tokyo: JELC Shuppan Bu, 1993), 102.

[22] Interview, Tokyo, Japan, 30 September 1993.

[23] "Order For The Burial of the Dead," *The Service Book and Hymnal* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1958), 253; also, [The Funeral Rite and Marriage], 102.

Buddhist Rite	1897 JELC Rite	1993 JELC Rite
At Death (*rinju*)		Prayer At Death
Pillow Sutra Rite		
Coffin Ritual		Coffin Prayer
Vigil		Vigil-Memorial Rite
Funeral & Farewell	Funeral	Funeral '
– *indo*		– *soso no kotobo*
– *choji*		– *choji*
– *shoko*		– *kenko/kenka*
Departure of Coffin		Departure of Coffin
Cremation Rite		Cremation Rite
– gathering of bones		– gathering of bones
Purification Ritual		
Welcoming the Bones		Prayer after Cremation
Seventh-Day Rite		Seventh-Day Rite
Bones Into Grave Rite	Burial	Bones Into Grave
[49th day]	[same day as funeral]	[50th day]
Death Anniversaries		Death Memorials
[1,3,7,13,17,23,27,33]		[1 wk, 1mth, 50th
		day;1,3,7,12,30,40 yr.]
Cyclical Rites:		Cyclical Rites:
– *omairi*		– [All Saints' & Easter]
(daily homage)		
– *higan* (9/23, 3/21)		
– *oshogatsu* (1/1-3)		
– *obon* (8/13-15)		

As this chart demonstrates, the new 1993 rite "fills-in" nearly all of the missing parts to the traditional Japanese funeral process. Several significant new elements are included in the JELC rite. Three, in particular, are noted as follows:

1) The inclusion of the *soso no kotoba* (funeral send-off words). It is a point in the liturgy where the assembly is invited to stand, in order that the liturgical unit to follow is understood as a central element in the funeral rite. Maeda explains the meaning of this liturgical segment: "It is a declaration that we have hope in Christ's resurrection and can thus commit/return the remains to God."[24] In fact, this *soso no kotoba* corresponds

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[24] Interview, Tokyo, Japan, 30 September 1993. Until the 1993 rite, Maeda argues, there was no one single climax to the funeral, and thus its purpose was unclear.

to yet another key element in the Buddhist rite—the *indo* (a critical juncture in the funeral rite when words of counsel are spoken to the deceased by the priest in order to guide him/her to the afterlife).[25]

2)   The seriousness with which the JELC wished to account for and accommodate the protracted nature of the Japanese funeral process is seen in the greater care given to what happens liturgically after the funeral, specifically, in the whole cremation process (from the departure of the coffin from the church to the arrival at home with the urn), and the complete memorial cycle (including interring the bones in the grave) with specific recommended dates for keeping the memorial rites. One of the new rites added to the 1993 liturgy is the *kasogo no inori* (prayer after cremation). Its significance is that while this ritual has always been an important part of bringing to a close the initial 2-3 day Japanese funeral process (as the urn is brought home or to the church for safe-keeping until interment), until 1993 the JELC had never had a specific rite to observe this crucial ritual. Ishii captures the sense of its importance when he states:

> Not only is the *kasogo no inori* important for establishing
> ongoing pastoral care with the family, but it is also important
> on a practical level — for helping the family to establish a
> place and way for keeping the urn [i.e., with a home-altar]
> during the period leading up to interment.[26]

The memorial rites are significant in that the JELC included in the rubrics (for the first time) specific recommendations for when to keep them; not surprisingly, they occur at approximately the same time as in the Buddhist cycle. In particular proximity of an important Buddhist ritual is the 50th-day rite; in the Buddhist tradition it is on the 49th day that the ashes of the deceased are placed in the grave and given a special memorial rite. Although the 1993 rite does not specifically state that it is on the 50th day that the ashes should be interred, it does mention the 50th day as one of the days

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[25] Ishii concurs, as he writes: "Words of committal is first [time to be] included. The people who attended at the seminar, Christians and non-Christians alike, said soon, in their reaction, 'Oh, you adopted a kind of *indoh!*' It sounds so, and our intention was so." Personal correspondance, 8 May 1993.

[26] [The Theological Meaning of the Christian Funeral Liturgy], 19 February 1993.

for performing the memorial rite; the implication is that this would be the appropriate/common time at which to perform the *nokotsu no inori*.[27]

3) The importance of the change in allowing for greater flexibility, specifically in terms of local ritual customs. The new rite specifically states that "local customs concerning interment, providing that these are not opposed to the teachings of Scripture, may be considered."[28] Needless to say, this gives much latitude for local discretion in choosing what will, or will not, be allowed. Two ritual acts which are specifically included into the funeral rite for the first time, at least on an official level, are the *choji* (funeral oration) and the *kenko* (incense offering). Both of these, as the above has indicated, have been the subject of debate in the JELC throughout much of its history. With the publication of the 1993 rite, as a concession to a Japanese culture which understands these acts as an essential part of the funeral process, they were finally officially included—albeit with certain caveats: 1) The *choji* is recommended for use at the vigil (but also allowed at the funeral), however, in either case the rubrics warn that it should be "done in a way that makes clear the fact that its meaning is one of condolence and comfort directed toward the bereaved family."[29] The implication is clear: the *choji* is to be allowed, but it is not to be done in the Buddhist manner of directly addressing the deceased for the purpose of offering praise. 2) The *kenko* is inserted into the rite (for the first time) at the point where the *kenka* (flower offering) had been occurring officially since the time of the 1968 rite; with the new rite, however, a choice is given between either employing the *kenka* or the *kenko*. This ritual act corresponds to the Buddhist *shoko* (incense burning); however, the term *kenko* was chosen, as as opposed to the term *shoko*, as a way to distinguish the act from what occurs in the Buddhist rite. Seeing the need for caution, lest there be any confusion as to its meaning or association with the Buddhist ritual, the JELC inserted into the rubrics of the 1993 funeral the provision that the participants who offer incense ("as a sign of prayer") are to do so "while in silent meditation praying, 'God our Father, into your hands I commend this one who has died.'"[30] Although the ritual gestures which accompany this act

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[27] [The Funeral Rite and Marriage], 126.

[28] *Ibid.*, 102.

[29] *Ibid.*, 103.

[30] *Ibid.*, 118.

are never directly specified—bowing and doing *gassho* (pressing one's palms together in prayer) being the most common gestures at the Buddhist funeral—most Christians will bow but keep their hands down by their side (i.e., will not engage in *gassho*) precisely as a way to distinguish what they are doing from the Buddhist ritual.[31]

An Assessment

What should clearly be evident, after having examined the Lutheran funeral rite in Japan, is that even though a common religious liturgical thread may be visibly present, Lutheran funerals in Japan are nonetheless significantly different from their place of origin, the United States. This process of "inculturation" is ultimately inevitable because, as the late Edward Kilmartin explained, the liturgy of the church is always the "culturally conditioned expression of the corporate life of faith."[32] In short, the Lutheran funeral rite must be different in Japan than its place of beginnings, the United States, because it is "culturally conditioned" by its Japanese context.

The question here is, what can be said about the new 1993 JELC funeral rite? What assessment can be made? To this end, areas of acclaim, ambiguity, and disappointment are briefly identified in the new 1993 rite as follows:

First, the JELC rite may be said to accord well with Luther's theology of death; namely, that in our encounter with death, God completes what is promised in Baptism—the old self drowned and the new risen in Christ to eternal life (even as Christ died and rose from the grave). Ishii concurs with this understanding when he writes concerning the meaning of new JELC funeral rite: "The content [of the new rite] is the affirmation of Baptism and the anticipation (or, hope) of the resurrection."[33]

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[31] Ishii, interview, Tokyo, Japan, 25 September 1993.

[32] *Culture and the Praying Church: The Particular Liturgy of the Individual Church.* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1990), 49.

[33] [The Christian Funeral and Its Liturgy] (Tokyo: AVACO, 1994), 91.

The funeral is also understood in Lutheran theology as a way to entrust or commend the deceased into God's care. Here too, the JELC rite, at least as it is explained, accords well with this understanding: "The meaning of the funeral rite: Those who are left behind, with a faith that entrusts everything into the hands of a God of love, inter the dead, and honor their memory."[34] This act of entrusting is most clearly exhibited at the *soso no kotoba* (funeral send-off words) which comes near the end of the funeral rite and is understood to be the most important part of the funeral.

Other areas in the new rite, which indicate a positive step toward relating to the Japanese cultural context, are the inclusion of additional liturgical texts and practices to accommodate the various steps involved in the ritual funeral process in Japan, and the inclusion of ritual elements into the funeral rite which correspond to the Japanese cultural practice of offering. As noted above, in the Buddhist funeral rite this offering takes place primarily in the *shoko* (including *rei* and *gassho*), and the *choji*. Both these elements—strong and vibrant symbols of Japanese funerary culture—are now "officially" included in the JELC funeral rite. Whether these, and other customs flexibly allowed to be expressed in the funeral rite, do in fact function to engender the Gospel, or whether in the end they subvert the Gospel, can only be judged over time.

The new JELC funeral rite is not without its areas of ambiguity, however. This especially occurs at the point of allowing for the funeral of the unbaptized. This permission to celebrate the funeral rite for the unbaptized (without appreciable difference from those baptized) must be understood primarily as a response to the dilemma of not wishing to be perceived as undermining the fabric by which Japanese culture is knit together. Thus, regardless of the spiritual status of the deceased, the JELC argues that those without faith are able to be buried in the faith of the church.

The problem with this is the ambiguity of its meaning, both on the theological and the cultural levels. On the level of theology it is ambiguous in its reference to death as a completion of what is begun in Baptism. In ignoring the baptismal faith of the deceased (as well as baptismal language and

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[34] M. Ishii, and C. Shibata, "Rutaaha no Soogi," [The Lutheran Funeral], *Sogi: The Magazine for Funeral Service*, 3 (May 1993), 44.

baptismal symbols) it quite possibly subverts the central point of Christian burial—dying in Christ as a completion of the baptismal covenant. This certainly is not in accord with Luther's baptismal spirituality. While the practice of interring the unbaptized is explained by stating that it is really done "for the benefit of the bereaved and not the deceased," in the end, it simply serves to obscure the core theological meaning of the celebration of death.

This theological justification also has the unfortunate effect of causing ambiguity on the cultural level as well. By stating that the funeral rite is really for the benefit of the bereaved, the idea of the funeral as a ritual for the deceased is completely lost. Hajime Himonya summarizes this cultural ambiguity well when he states:

> The worst part of the Christian funeral is that...in ignoring the deceased it ultimately ignores the living. After all, the way we treat the corpse says a lot about what we think of life. ...We must take into account the deceased. We may not be able to "save" the deceased, but we certainly can "take care" of them, showing them honor and respect, and entrusting them to God's care.[35]

Second, there is ambiguity at the point of the "after-care" rituals. For example, there is no clear directive for the handling of the urn or the use of a home-altar. While the new JELC rite is to be commended for its inclusion of specific rites for use after the initial funeral stage has been completed, it is ambiguous in terms of how these are to be used and what exactly it entails.

Third is the tendency toward using the funeral rite as an opportunity for evangelism, at the expense of pastoral care; ultimately creating ambiguity surrounding the purpose of the funeral celebration. While this was especially a problem in the early years of the work of the Lutheran church in Japan (primarily because of the overriding concern for evangelism), it still presents a dilemma. The temptation for many Lutheran pastors working in Japan, Japanese and expatriate alike, is to focus on those who are in church for

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[35] Interview, Tokyo, Japan, 1 October 1993.

the first time rather than on the bereaved family and the deceased. This is especially true of the funeral sermon, which invariably becomes an evangelistic message on the tenets of the Christian faith. While the intentions may be honorable, and certainly the presence of a preponderant number of "first-timers" must be accounted for, the problem is that when the church uses the funeral as an evangelism service, the ability for "passage" to take place is lost. The bereaved and the deceased are not given the opportunity to properly journey through the stages of transition. In short, the need for pastoral care is neglected.

Fourth, is the ambiguity in the use of North American Lutheran liturgical material in the JELC funeral rite. Some argue that this serves to obscure the Japanese Lutheran church's unique "cultural" identity. Others argue that it connects them with the universal tradition of the church. To be sure, for many Japanese Christians, "the 'imported' pieces are a badge of Christian identity and a bond with Christians elsewhere."[36] These same people also argue that if North American Lutherans freely "take" their liturgy from the West then there is no reason that Japanese Lutherans should not feel free to do the same. Others, however, argue that the church has failed to grow in Japan precisely because it is too "Western." As Shinji Kanai trenchantly argues:

> Japanese Christians are trying too hard to achieve a universal brand of Christianity — and of course, universal means Western. Priests and pastors here are too keen to turn their followers into Western-style Christians. As a result, the believers even though they are Japanese, end up floating about on the surface of Japanese society.[37]

In the end, one is left with a sense of "cultural" ambiguity. Are the Japanese Christians, as a result of their liturgical choices "floating about on the surface of Japanese society?" Or, over time, is it possible for this liturgical

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[36] Eugene L. Brand, "Response to the Berakah Award: Ecumenism and the Liturgy," *Worship*, 58:4 (July 1984), 309. Brand argues that these "western" rites should be a "point of departure" rather than a "point of reference," 311.

[37] "Christians must 'Japanize,'" *The Japan Times* (Tokyo), 22 December 1992, 16.

material to become a part of the Japanese ethos such that it is imbued with a "Japanese" cultural identity?[38]

Suggestions

Although the 1993 JELC rite has made significant strides toward inculturating the Lutheran funeral in the Japanese context, there are, nonetheless, areas which one would have to assess as "disappointing." First, the issue concerning the use of baptismal language and symbol has already been noted above. Given the Lutheran theological understanding of death and the purpose of its celebration, it seems that there is much more that can and should be considered for use in the funeral rite. It may be that the reason for this absence is due, at least in part, to the fact that with the possibility for celebrating the funeral rite for those who are unbaptized, out of sensitivity to these situations, baptismal reference and imagery is omitted. The best solution for rectifying this problem may be simply to produce two distinct rites, the one for those baptized and the other for special circumstances (including for those unbaptized). In this way, it would be possible to employ with lavish abandon reference to Baptism and baptismal imagery. For example: the use of Romans 6:3-5 which connects so well the imagery of death and Baptism (currently not found in the JELC rite), the Apostles' Creed (the traditional baptismal creed of the early Church), the use of the paschal candle (the symbol of Christ's resurrection), a funeral pall (as a symbol of one's baptismal garment) to cover the casket or urn, the sprinkling with water (recalling the deceased's Baptism), and the use of white vestments and paraments (which bespeak baptismal new life, as well as ritual purity in Japanese culture). In short, as a result of the concern for allowing the use of this rite for the non-baptized, the full significance of interring those who have died in Christ (including the full use of baptismal imagery) is never adequately observed.

Second is the matter of addressing the deceased. There are prayers in the new rite where the deceased is mentioned by name, as in the prayers of commendation; however, these are more declarative in nature rather than

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[38] This is, after all, the way in which much of the so-called "Western Rite tradition" came into being, assimilating various cultural elements over time. Perhaps the question then is, How long does it take before it can be claimed as one's own?

petitionary. In other words, there seems to be a decided reticence on the part of the JELC to refer to or pray for the deceased. When there is reference it is done only with great caution, avoiding any semblance of directly addressing the deceased. However, a theological distinction can and should be made between praying "for" the deceased and praying "to" the deceased. It is clear that the Lutheran Confessions indicate that including such prayers are permissible, e.g., "We know that the ancients spoke of prayer for the dead. We do not forbid this...."[39] Thus, including such prayers in the Japanese Lutheran funeral rite should not be a problem theoretically. Not to do so means the church is put in a position where, inspite of the cultural expectations of the Japanese funeral process, it is unable to fully account for the deceased.

Third is the matter of celebrating the Eucharist at the funeral. To structure the service in the church around the Mass but then only celebrate the ante-communion (the Liturgy of the Word) causes liturgical ambiguity. Either the funeral should be celebrated as a Eucharist, or it should be structured in a different way, such as in the form of a Divine Office. Of course, the celebration of the Eucharist should be preferred. This, after all, has a long history in the Church, starting with the early Church practice of celebrating the Eucharist at the funeral and at the anniversary of those "fallen asleep."[40] While the reticence to do so on the part of the JELC is certainly understandable (stemming out of a concern for the fact that the overwhelming majority of those present at funerals are non-Christian and therefore "marginalized" in their not being able to commune), the celebration of the Eucharist is simply too important to be ignored. One solution may be to wait until the following "Lord's Day" when the normal gathering of the faithful takes place, and together with the cremated ashes of the deceased (ceremonially placed near the altar), and then to celebrate the Eucharist as a sign of the communion of saints.

Fourth is the matter of the cult of ancestors and the linear and cyclical memorial rites. While there are several aspects to this issue which the

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[39] "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 267.

[40] For example, the "Didascalia Apostolorum" (c. 250) states, "Come together even in the cemeteries...and offer an acceptable Eucharist...on the departures of them that sleep." R. H. Connolly, ed., *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), 257.

JELC has handled successfully in the new funeral rite, there are, nonetheless, some aspects which require further attention. According to one survey of Japanese Christians, when asked, "Where are your ancestors?" only 3% answered "in heaven," while 61% answered "near by."[41] In another survey, over 75% reported that they "daily think of the dead."[42] Clearly, even for Japanese Christians, the world is understood and experienced in terms of "the living and the dead living together," resulting in a closeness to their ancestors which is not adequately being accounted for in the church. The 1993 JELC rite does make an attempt to account for this, to an extent, with the inclusion of the new prayer after cremation and the linear memorial rites, with suggested dates for use. However, there is certainly much more that can and should be done, without it turning into superstitious or idolatrous worship. Some Japanese theologians have argued, for example, that "the idea of 'the communion of saints' should be fully exploited as a symbol of the unity we have and experience, through the act of worship, between those who have departed and those still living."[43] This might take the form of a part of the Daily Office (such as Morning or Evening Prayer) which could be prayed as a family in front of the Christian home-altar (housing the bones or memorial tablets). At the very least there should be directives made for greater use of a cyclical (on-going) pattern of remembering the deceased of the parish at particular celebrations of the Eucharist during the seasons of the liturgical calendar.

In the final analysis what is certain is that the church in Japan must continue to grapple with these and other related issues concerning the funeral rite and the care of the dead, as it seeks to enflesh the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the context of Japanese culture; it is not necessarily too difficult a task, as Shibata concludes, "There are many areas concerning the funeral rite in Japan that are *adiaphora* and thus we can do them!"[44]

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[41] David L. Doerner, "Comparative Analysis of Life after Death in Folk Shinto and Christianity," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies,* 4 (1977), 158.

[42] David Reid, "Christians and Their Ancestors," *New Wine,* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), 132.

[43] Shibata, interview, Tokyo, Japan, 30 September 1993.

[44] *Ibid., Adiaphora* is a Greek word meaning "things indifferent." It is commonly used in the corpus of Lutheran confessional documents to refer to elements in Christian theology or practice which are "not essential to salvation"; thus, their use or not is simply left up to local discretion.

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