

# OEN

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## Liturgy as Poetry: Implications of a Definition

by Gail Ramshaw Schmidt

Until the twentieth century, it was relatively easy to distinguish between English prose and English poetry. Prose and poetry were specific literary forms that were distinct from one another. A novel was a novel, a sonnet was a sonnet. Words were arranged into a form, and if one knew the definitions of the form, identification was self-evident. Even the bizarre *Tristram Shandy* is clearly a novel, blank pages, line drawings, nonsensical excursions, and aborted plot notwithstanding. If the words were arranged in a poetic form but so poorly as to defame the word "poetry", we called that "verse"; but verse, as a sub-class of poetry, was not confused with prose. Form was all.

The business of making distinctions is more difficult in this century. Much modern poetry creates its own form, one perhaps unrecognizable to the newcomer. Few poems adhere to classic forms. What makes poetry into poetry these days is not adherence to a form, but rather the degree to which words are used metaphorically rather than discursively. That is to say: Although you arrange directions on how to assemble a bookshelf into blank verse, you

do not have a poem. You have prose with studied line lengths. The intent of the language and the use of the words is narrative, discursive, logical. The words are used primarily--perhaps exclusively--to convey a single unambiguous meaning, with the hopes that even the dullest consumer will correctly assemble the bookshelf.

On the other hand, when words are used primarily metaphorically, we have poetry, regardless of line lengths, rhymes, or beat patterns. Poetry is the tension produced by talking about two things at the same time. The metaphor of poetry implies ambiguity. A careful reader perceives that the assembly instructions are not at all about putting together a bookshelf: They are really about my failed love affair! Prose may employ metaphoric language, figures of speech, to enlighten the sentences, but poetry is in the first place an intense interplay of words which are metaphor for its own sake. Although Faulkner piles words upon words into page-length sentences of growing intensity, he is primarily narrating a plot. So we say that Faulkner writes prose. Compare with James Joyce's opening of *Finnegan's Wake*:



riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from  
swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings  
us by a commodius vicus of recircula-  
tion back to Howth Castle and Environs.

This has more to do with poetry than with  
prose.

Theology is prose. It attempts to reorgan-  
ize an array of thoughts about God into a  
coherent system. It presents logical--or at  
least consistent--definitions for obscure  
human and divine phenomena. Christian theo-  
logy is also exposition of biblical texts,  
discursive discussion toward cogent under-  
standing. Theological writings aim for lu-  
cidity, and while not all theology succeeds,  
the attempt is there, by definition.

I was raised in a tradition that has high  
regard for theology--at least its own theo-  
logy. The Bible is revered and memorized  
especially as it authenticates a certain

Notwithstanding my rearing, I now reckon  
liturgy as poetry. The liturgy is not pri-  
marily a discursive dialogue that outlines  
coherent facts about faith. It is rather a  
sustained metaphor in which language, body,  
movement, music, architecture, and art si-  
multaneously play on biblical, traditional,  
and contemporary images and themes in an  
effort--never totally successful, always  
flawed and partial--to receive God in the  
world. It is not surprising that the stories  
tell of people struck dumb or dead at the  
sight of God. Nor is it surprising that  
theology must continually write and rewrite  
its discursive logic in an attempt to arti-  
culate God. For it cannot be done, humans  
capturing the divine. For this reason Mary  
is such a wonder, for there is a way in  
which, uniquely among humans, she contained  
God. At best we have the liturgy, the at-  
tempt which must by metaphor stand at the  
base of Jacob's ladder as the angels de-  
scend to less us.

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Liturgy is creed. Subjectivism is anathema, since  
feelings tend to overflow their bounds. Poetry is  
feared, since blurred meanings confuse the authority  
of language.

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theological system. Such theological pre-  
cision of course has enormous values.

However, in my tradition, the liturgy as  
well was solely a vehicle for theology. We  
memorized theological hymns of ten stanzas  
that explain meticulously the distinction  
between law and gospel. Rubrics too had  
solely theological purpose. Whether the  
presider faced the wall or the people was  
mandated by definitions of "prayer" and  
"proclamation", that is, action toward God  
or actions toward the people; and of course  
every part of the liturgy could be labeled  
exclusively one or the other. Within such  
concern for theological precision, the  
liturgy is seen as prose, a kind of (usually)  
spoken dialogical sermon in which pastor and  
people share in a weekly recitation of theo-  
logical beliefs. Liturgy is creed. Subjec-  
tivism is anathema, since feelings tend to  
overflow their bounds. Poetry is feared,  
since blurred meanings confuse the authority  
of language.

What do I mean, liturgy is poetry? On the  
simplest level I mean what everybody knows,  
that there is much poetry used in the lity-  
gy. The psalms are poetry, seen since the  
origin of the church as the essential re-  
source for Christian worship. The psalms  
are poetry not primarily because they are  
Hebrew poems with patterns of parallel  
structure and recurring beats, but because  
they are, in Hebrew and in English, sus-  
tained religious metaphors. Patristic  
preaching knew this when it saw in all  
sorts of psalm metaphors an image of Christ,  
God is a rock, a refuge, a king, a shepherd,  
a tower, a song. We are so accustomed to  
some of these metaphors--God as king, for  
example--that we forget that they are just  
that, metaphors. Perhaps the psalms which  
describe human pain as our being attacked  
by wild dogs or being surrounded by hungry  
lions we see more clearly as metaphor.

But the presence of poems within the lity-  
urgy is only one way in which liturgy is

poetry. Liturgical language is itself poetry. The vocabulary and the grammar of worship have at their root the multivalence and ambiguity with which our age seems uneasy. "Lift up your hearts," we have said for 1800 years. Remember in the 1960s when liturgies tried to "contemporize" that line into some one thing that line meant? The metaphor is more than its translation, and it allows for a kind of communication different from that of the classroom teacher calling the children to attention. When we call the church, or God, our nurturing mother; when we call the pope, or God, our Holy Father; when we say we are washed into a family which dines on Christ's body at God's table; we are using metaphoric language. Some of these metaphors--God as Father--are so essential to our communication that they are creedal, determinative of our Christian identity. Others--God as mother--are uncommon and so still retain the metaphoric quality of surprise.

An example of the poetry that is liturgical language is the Exsultet, the Easter Proclamation at the Vigil. Here in the middle of the dark night a single burning candle is lauded as the greatest light the world has ever seen. Rather than talk about Christ and the resurrection, the chant sings of the light and the night. The light is "the splendor of the eternal King", and it shines brilliantly throughout the world enrobing the church in its fire. ("This one candle?" "Well, no, Christ." "Well, why not sing to Christ instead of to the candle?" "Well, because. Besides, it's not *to* the candle.") The candle is an icon before us, becoming other than it is, receiving us other than we are, as the chant transforms words into other than they appear. On this Saturday night the debt of Adam is paid back, Egypt's first-born are slain, Israel crosses the Red Sea, sinners are liberated from prison, hell is harrowed, and earth and heaven are married. The tragedy of Eden is called a "happy fault". In perhaps the most dizzy collage of images, the morning star arises from the grave to find one single candle burning, vanquishing night and itself becoming a beacon of light. Where our recently purchased paschal candle stops and where Christ takes over, it is impossible to say. Meanwhile the deacon is straining her eyes in the dark church to see the words of the chant, words which exult over the spectacular brilliance of the room!--one way to say that Christ gives life out of death.

Not only the language, but also the symbols of our liturgical experience are metaphors. We call the water of baptism, whether three dops or a bathfull, a flood that drowns and a fountain that washes. It is both a womb of birth and the tomb of death. There is in our use of water in baptism the poem's inconsistency, rather than the logical extension found in discursive philosophy. We believe that baptism drowns, like Noah's flood and the Red Sea; yet in these stories God's people, far from drowning by water, escape the wet grave. So also with the meal. This bread and wine is the Last Supper, the meal at Emmaus, the body of Christ, the eschatological banquet, the food shared with Moses and the elders on the mountain of God. We are the body of Christ, sharing in the body of Christ, sharing the body of Christ. It is hardly surprising that our theological explanations of the sacraments are inadequate to the metaphors of the liturgical experience. The community of faith demonstrates through its liturgical life its participation in a reality too complex for discursive description.

The veneration of Mary is another example of the liturgy as poetry. Theological positions about Mary have not fared very well. On the one hand we have her bodily assumption, and on the other hand we have Christians so afraid of her power that they will commemorate any saint but Mary, thank you. Mary is the church's best symbol of grace, of the interaction between God and God's chosen people. The human bears the divine so that the divine can sanctify the human. The maid of Nazareth is the Queen of Heaven is the maid of Nazareth, and, as in all metaphor, it is the ambiguity of the paradox which makes the truth. Neither part is true alone.

But it is not only certain aspects of liturgy which are poetry. Rather it is the rite as a whole which is an extended poem. We need not be surprised when social anthropologists tell us that ritual action is metaphor. We need only read in the domes of eastern churches, "Standing in the temple of his glory, we think we stand in heaven." The liturgy as a whole is a metaphor, a model, if you will, of the reign of God, where God's people assemble around God's face (is it a throne or a table we see?) to praise and to be signed and to feast. Most descriptions of the liturgy--whether as a family meal, a royal court, a tribal



ritual, a classroom, a football game, a cosmic battle, or a concert hall--err in the first place because they are too simplistic. Only when all the paradoxes are juxtaposed--the fast and the feast, the Hebrew synagogue and the marriage supper of the Lamb--can the rite become all it might be. For this reason Job's triumphant Jesus is declaimed on Good Friday.

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### Some Implications of Liturgy as Poetry

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It is easy to see in H. M. Muhlenberg's service order--the German liturgy used by Pennsylvania Lutherans in the eighteenth century--that those Christians thought of liturgy as theological prose. The liturgy is essentially a somewhat ponderous monologue delivered by the pastor. The spaces allowed for theological hymnody constitute the people's only significant contribution. For those Christians among whom the pastor was in large part the professor, the classroom overtones are unmistakable. In the same way, if we agree that liturgy is to be recognized as poetry, our liturgy will demonstrate the implications of this definition. We will now consider only a few of these implications as they touch the ministers, the participants, catechesis, and architecture.

It seems that in Anglo-Saxon times when a chieftan would gather his faithful warriors into his hall for a feast, a scop would chant tales of the heroic past while strumming time on a stringed instrument. Apparently these epic poems were not memorized, but composed anew each telling.

The scop is one image for the presider. The presider also has the outlines of the story, and the pattern of the liturgy is a recurring beat to give the chant its shape. Within that structure the presider works a weekly variation: lessons, sermon, prayers, and the great prayer. (Remember Justin's description of the eucharistic prayer? "The president then prays and gives thanks as well as he is able.") Through these the presider directs the people through the communal participation in the formative stories and actions of the past. The presider, like the scop, is a functioning poet, recreating anew each liturgy the old story of the cross and resurrection and its life in the church.

Other images are more commonly evoked to picture the presider. Some liturgists like best the image of the host graciously serving the meal. Found inside our regular vocabulary are images important to our understanding of the office. A *presider* is one chosen to chair an assembly; a *pastor* is one who shepherds stupid sheep; a *priest* is one authorized by special purity to offer sacrifice to the gods; a *minister* serves, even meekly. The term *celebrant* suggests that the liturgical meal is some kind of party, while the term *preacher* suggests that the liturgical meal is quite beside the point. The word *father* is still a wholesome image, providing of course that its connotation be primarily that of parent, not of male, and that it stand complementary to, not antithetical to, the image of presider as mother.

Besides the ministers are the participants, who join into the action one of several ways. They can be overwhelmed by the experience and so be absorbed into the liturgy quite apart from their own consent. Perhaps this is how small children are grabbed for several minutes at a time by music and movement to pay attention to liturgical action. Perhaps this is how a stunning cathedral liturgy will live in the memory for years. But in general, for St. Mary's Down the Block, this is not a desirable model. A better model than the captivated audience is the participating family, perhaps the Christmas reunion where everyone knows the family rituals and joins in the festivities freely.

Our recognizing liturgy as poetry has direct implications for catechesis. If the faith is about facts, then we line up the children and make them memorize catechetical questions and answers. (Well, it *used* to work!) But if we are dealing with poetry instead of prose, if we want the people incorporated into the liturgical life of the church, then we do not teach answers to questions. We memorize, not answers, but the chants of the ordinary; we explain liturgical action; we enlist people as lectors and assisting ministers; we design studies around the central images of Christian worship; we lead Bible classes on the lectionary; that is, we immerse people into the constituent features of worship so that they, too, become part of the metaphoric exchange.

Those who design and renovate churches must think of the building as in some way a metaphor for the Christian religious gathering. Church architecture as liturgical poetry is a complex phenomenon. Just because the church is called an ark hardly suggests that we have recognized liturgy as poetry if we build our churches to resemble Noah's ark. Rather, the building, its construction materials, and its appointments, to say nothing of the ecclesiastical art inside and out, are part of the poem which is the liturgy.

A good exercise would be an investigation into one's own parish architecture, asking John Ciardi's question, "How does this poem mean?" English teachers ask of the metaphor of a poem, "Is it new, is it true?" That is, is the poem unique rather than imitative, and is it true, rather than inconsequential, petty, false. If we could possibly do otherwise, we would not hang a paper reproduction of da Vinci's Last Supper in our chancels. Nor would we fill up the chancel with plastic palms. There is something completely unambiguous about plastic flowers. They are always perfectly arranged, inexpensive, never wilting, never dying. But the metaphors in worship are always ambiguous, the things of the earth caught up into the things divine. Plastic flowers? rather, to image the cross, a small tree, potted plants, or flowers that both bloom and die. No small part of the liturgy is unambiguous discursive fact. All is part of the dance. As Wilhelm Loehe (of all people!) wrote:

Just as the stars revolve around the sun,  
so does the congregation in its service,

full of loveliness and dignity, revolve around its Lord. In holy, childlike innocence which only a child's innocent heart understands properly, the multitude of redeemed, sanctified children of God dances in worship around the Father and the Lamb, and the Spirit of the Lord of lords guides their steps.

But. But. Perhaps no discussion of the Christian faith and its liturgy can conclude without the But, the Christian rejoinder to all this human talk about poetry and metaphor and real flowers. None of this matters, none of it, unless we know that, indeed, none of it *does* matter, that even the most real flowers are not sufficient offering to God. We in our attempt to understand the liturgy and so perhaps to improve it, with our joyful effort to offer thanksgiving, we with the disciples too hastily flee from the vigil at the foot of the cross. God is in our meager--or magnificent--liturgies only because God was first on the cross, and only when we realize that we can do nothing but kneel at the cross is there any use in talking about kneeling as metaphor or about liturgy as poetry to God. +++

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*A New Yorker with a Ph.D. in contemporary literature and an M.Div., Gail Ramshaw Schmidt speaks and writes on literary and liturgical subjects. This article is reprinted, with permission, from Living Worship, October, 1979, Volume 15, Number 8. Living Worship is published ten times a year by The Liturgical Conference, 810 Rhode Island Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20018. Subscription is \$6.00 per year.*



# ***Indianapolis: The Urban Caucus***

by Henry H. Breul

Some of our members, especially the newer ones, may not know that our full, corporate name is *The Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission*. Over the years there has been some tension on the Council about the "mission" part. So much so that things almost came to blows at Oshkosh in the 60s when the old brochure, *A Parish Program for Liturgy and Mission*, was being prepared. Lots of folks think liturgy is just great so long as it doesn't lead to picket lines, boycotts, or such unpleasantness. However, Dom Gregory Dix pointed out that every time the church has taken the liturgy seriously, it has been forced to look at people seriously. Thus; Fr. Lowder on the London docks, Fr. Huntington outside Wanamaker's, and the wonders of Grace Church, Van Vorst. Liturgy simply cannot stop at the front door of the church, nor is it just a matter of gesture, missals, and chant. Liturgy deals with the whole of the human condition. We forget this at our peril since liturgy that does not enter into action is by its very nature a blasphemy.

It was with this in my head that I decided to be in Indianapolis from January 13th to the 16th for the conference to create the Urban Caucus by merging the Urban Bishops Coalition with the Church and City Conference.

Just about everybody was there. The conference had been planned for 150, but the final attendance was between 400 and 500. This meant standing room only in the cathedral and overcrowded meeting rooms for the small group work which was essential to the design. By far the most attention was

given to revitalization of the city parish as a center for mission. So many people signed up for that section that the subject had to be divided into three subsections, each with four small groups. People met in sacristies, ballrooms, corridors, and on the stage in the undercroft, but the work was done on the final day.

Liturgy per se was not in great evidence during the conference. There were daily Eucharists in the cathedral, but they were the normal services, not held especially for the conference. However, there were personal and group liturgies going on all over the place. The conference took on the aspect of a class reunion as the oldtime liberal coalition gathered. Some people had not seen each other for twenty years. Others had been at every General Convention since Detroit and came together with a handshake and "I knew you would be here." In many minds the question was, "Am I attending the 'last charge of the dying liberal tiger', or is this a new beginning for the Church in the city?" The answer to that will be in the future, but it became clear as the conference progressed that there is a large group of people who perceive the Church's mission to the inner city as a top priority. It would appear that, if the leadership of the newly-formed Caucus can get its act together, there is a great deal of energy ready to be released and channeled. The report and resolutions will be published by *Forward Movement*.

The subjects discussed ranged from peace and the draft through ecology, poverty, politics, and the nature of society's many

Breul (cont.)

problems. One of the most important decisions reached for readers of OPEN was that, in the revitalization of the inner city parish, top priority was given to "good liturgy", that is, liturgy that involves the worshippers significantly. The final wording of all this will not be known until Bishop Robert Spears finishes re-editing all of the papers on strategy.

One bit of symbolism underlined the difference in tone that this conference represented. The monument in the center of Indianapolis dominated every move of the meeting. This enormous, exuberant Beaux-Arts column sat smack in the middle of everybody's movement pattern. If one had not seen it before, it gave a sudden shock. It represents the naive, nationalistic, patriot liberalism of the Teddy Roosevelt era and celebrates everything from the French and Indian Wars to San Juan Hill. Indeed, Teddy Roosevelt can be seen on horseback charging up a hill which turns out to be the back of a shouting, gesturing Boadicea! This, contrasted with the rather somber mood of the meeting and the recognition of the real trouble this country is in, gave a feeling of the incredible changes that have overtaken the American people since the early 1900s. There was no one at the conference who thought that there were any easy ans-

wers or that really any one person could make much difference. Rather, there was a prevailing "hunkered down" feeling that something had to be done to save the church in the city.

As with all conferences these days, another noun was turned into a verb. "Gentrification" has entered the sociological lingo of the nation. It means what black people are perceiving as "whitey"--the "gentry"--reclaiming the inner city; thus, the pejorative term "GENTRIFICATION". There were tensions in the conference as minorities vied for time and attention. More than once a resolution which read "black people" was turned into "minority persons" on the prodding of the Hispanics and Indians present. There seemed to be an unspoken perception among the black leadership that time was running out, in that the Hispanics will be the largest single minority segment in this country in the 1990s.

The conference was conducted at a white-hot pace and with a complicated agenda, so it is still a bit difficult for the participants to judge just what really happened. The one thing sure is that a great many gathered--in most cases at their own expense--to demonstrate their faith that the Church can speak to and deal with the needs of the nation's cities. +++

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## **Starting from Zero**

by Paul Z. Hoornstra

*The following article is excerpted from a long letter written to the Editor, Henry Breul, in response to "From Space to Space Through Fire" (OPEN, December, 1979). The writer, the Rev. Paul Z. Hoornstra, had for 18 years been rector of Grace Church, Madison, Wisconsin, one of the seminal parishes of the upper Midwest, established by Bishop Kemper in the 1850s.*

I read with interest your story about what you did following your fire in 1970 because our own efforts here have been similar, though we started, not from a fire, but from zero, which is a whole lot easier, believe me! There are common lines, but there are "relief-differences", having no

tradition to live up to. Or is that really true? When you collect 25 or 30 Episcopalians who have moved out here from town, you find they have brought with them their own concepts of what the ideal Episcopal church should look like, which Prayer Book to use, etc. In point of fact, there is no

Hoornstra (cont.)

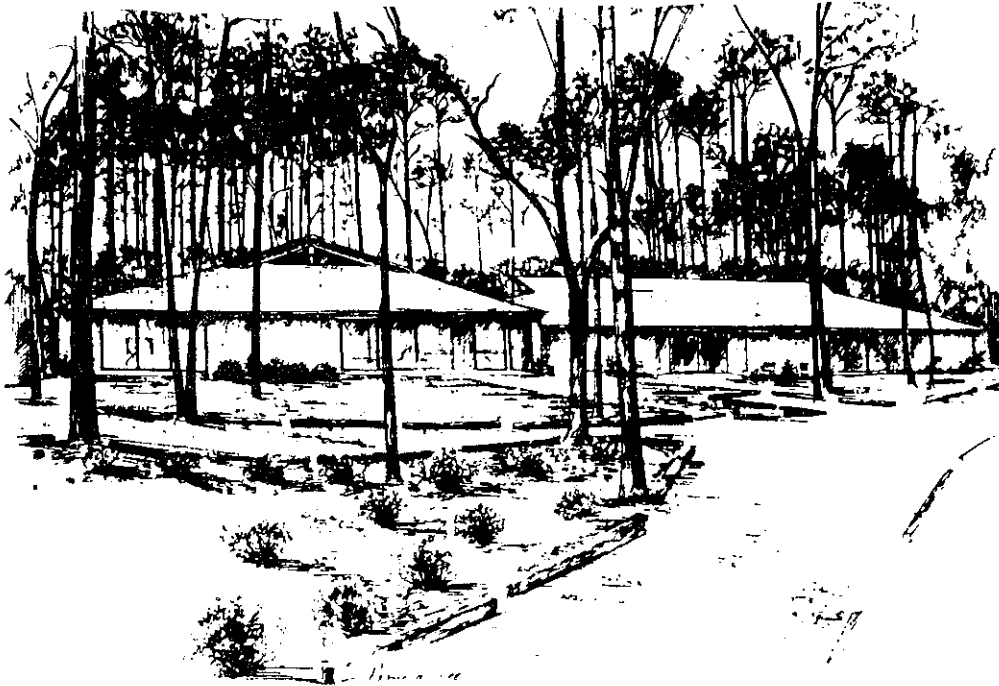
such thing as starting from zero, and that's important to anyone who moves into a mission situation with a commission to "organize and put together an Episcopal church..." in whatever spot assigned to him; in my case Wilmington Island, Georgia.

Wilmington Island is ten miles straight east--out into the Atlantic Ocean--from downtown Savannah. Here we have a newly-developed bedroom community with perhaps 7,000 population at night and with everyone in town all day. In most cases, both husband and wife are employed in the city.

In late 1974, some Episcopalians out here

to a public school cafeteria on Sunday mornings.

Absolutely every item this group owned (chalice, Prayer Books, Bibles, bread, etc.) was stored in the trunks and back seats of our cars all week long. At 8:30 each Sunday morning, the cars pulled up to the cafeteria and disgorged their cargo. Then it was break down the cafeteria tables, stack them, arrange the chairs the way we wanted them, place a table atop four corner blocks of wood for an altar, and drape it with a made-to-measure dropover. Later the same morning we made it into a school cafeteria again, put everything back in



ST. FRANCIS OF THE ISLANDS

talked with each other, and then with the bishop, about forming a congregation, and it was agreed that these few people would try it and see what happened. During the next few months it became obvious that these people knew what the task was and that they wanted to organize a church here. The bishop gave the OK, and about that same day he got a letter from me saying I wanted to do something different. I guess I wanted to find out if I had the guts to start from zero after being at Grace Church, Madison, for almost 18 years. As a result of our conversations and my visits, I came here in mid-August, 1975, lived in a rented house, and had access, through payment of rent,

our cars, and took off until the next Sunday.

After a few months I had found a house to buy and moved in. The first thing I did was to convert the garage into a well-appointed office/study so we'd have space for weekday events such as choir practice, ECWs, EYC meetings, my own office and library. You name it, this is the place they met. I calculated it would take four or five years before we could build anything, so I spent a good chunk of money converting this garage into something quite nice, almost deluxe, thinking I would simply have to live with it for all those



Hoornstra (cont.)

purposes for a goodly length of time. The fact is, even though we have a parish hall much sooner than expected, I'm so comfortable here that I shall not move out of this office as long as this is my place of work. Why move into a very small space in the parish hall which has to be used by Sunday money counters, the local kids calling parents when EYC is over, that sort of multiple use? The point is, I had provided space to work during the week and we had rented space for Sunday morning worship.

Getting land and buildings is a long story, very exciting, but I'll pass over that now except to say that a woman donated three and a half acres of land on the edge of the community just off a major country road; a contract with a school meant we could build two buildings: a parish hall plus the school. We have access to the school at all needed times, so it never stands idle. The parish hall is made available to outside groups, but only when the church finds it convenient; we put ourselves first in that, properly so. So, up went two handsome buildings, cost \$205,000 for both. The school's rental pays all of the school building's portion of the contract. In effect, we get that building free.

Of greater importance to me than getting land given and buildings constructed was the preparation I gave these people months and months prior even to getting the land. In the school cafeteria which we used Sunday mornings, the chairs were, of course, portable. So, in a series of instruction and experience, I had the chairs arranged in various manners so our people could actually experience a variety of furniture arrangements for worship.

First, I had a long, narrow hall arrangement with the altar against the east end. Wow, was that a surprise to all of them! Not even the front row people knew what was going on up front. They felt estranged, each from all the others, because they were boxed into their own little bit of space, could hear only those nearest them, could not see others much, just like in a movie house where you are expected to do your own private thing and not be aware of others in the same building.

Next, I arranged it choir fashion. It was (beautifully) threatening to all of them. They had never looked another Christian in the eye and said "The Peace..." Nor had they ever looked at another Christian while the Gospel was being read or the prayers said. That was a fidgety congregation! Some of them begged me, never do THAT again, please!

I had it sort of in the round, too. That was also a bit threatening, but not overly so.

(Ed. note: In the parish hall, Fr. Hoornstra's final arrangement consists of a center section of seats facing the altar and side sections at a 45° angle, the three sections separated by two aisles. The result is sort of a squared-off semicircle.)

About 75% of our people are younger than 40. Also, about 65% of them have become Episcopalians from some other something since they arrived here. This is to say: I have presented for confirmation (and in many instances baptized) more than 65% of this congregation. So, all those former Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Lutherans, or RCs, don't know anything about the Episcopal Church at all except what they got from my classes and my personal conversations and teachings. Boy, is THAT a joy!

My point in all of this is to make a case, as you have done, for learning first of all what a church would use space for if they had it, then provide the space...and stop this emptiness as a virtue. I hope never to build a "church" building here. We need more room for Sunday worship, but I hope I never get locked into a "church building" where things get done with "propriety", which by way of translation means dead/old/done for liturgy of the past.

If my experience here can help someone, pass them the word. I'll write with them back and forth, get on the phone with them, or whatever, to help them think through whatever they've got to think through. +++

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(Ed. note: Fr. Hoornstra's address is: 108 Talbot Road, Wilmington Island, Savannah, GA 31410.)

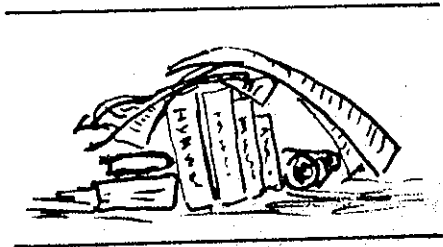
# BOOKS

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reviewed by

Sam Batt Owens

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*Songs for Celebration: Church Hymnal Series IV.* Church Hymnal Corp. New York.

In *Songs for Celebration: Church Hymnal Series IV*, the Church has once again stepped across the line from "sacred" to "secular", stylistically speaking. Since this is a review of an important book and not a discourse in philosophy, the writer will pause only long enough to ask one question: If God is creator of all things, then who in the world among us decided what was to be "sacred" and what was to be "secular"?

*Songs for Celebration* is a well-laid out and carefully edited volume with all the indices one could wish for in order to use the book to best advantage. The Table of Contents is divided into music for the Eucharist: Songs, Chants, and a complete setting of the Ordinary for Rite II of the I.C.E.T. texts by Betty Pulkingham. The Chant section contains only two psalms, number eight, that great hymn of praise of the Creator which is appointed for the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus in all three years as well as with Propers twenty-two, year "B", and psalm fifty-one, the great "miserere" psalm which is appointed for Lent I in year "A" and for Lent V in year "B", and the third chant is the *Magnificat* set to a

neo-psalm tone with an antiphon. The remainder of the volume contains fifty-three hymns in addition to the opening five songs meant for the Eucharist. These fifty-three hymns and folk tunes are fairly well divided into sections labeled Praise, Adoration, Thanksgiving, The Church, Outreach, and Faith.

*Songs for Celebration*, as the preface states, "is published for the purpose of broadening the forms of expression available to (such) communities of praise." The volume is largely the product of the community of praise in the Church of the Redeemer, Houston. The texts--as also stated in the preface--were all reviewed by a theological committee under the guidance of Dr. Charles Price of Virginia Seminary. The music in the volume ranges from the simplest folk-like melodies and harmony to more complex forms that incorporate more sophisticated melodic patterns, harmony, and rhythm. The collection borrows freely from other religious expressions such as the Mormons and Israelis and from our early American heritage, Sacred Harp hymn tunes and 19th century-type "white" gospel hymns--even an 18th century English dance--but there is a curious lack of the American Black expression which is such a vital and important part of our religious folk music heritage. There is one Negro spiritual, *Lord, I Want to be a Christian* represented in the volume. It is true that many of the earlier spirituals deal with "there'll be pie in the sky by and by",

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but even a casual examination of Black religious folk music will reveal an almost countless number of very strong theological statements that are relevant today.

The weakest part of the volume lies in Betty Pulkingham's *Mass for the King of Glory*. Lack of space really prevents giving a completely fair hearing to this setting of the Ordinary, but, to point out a few facts relating to successful music for a congregation's consumption: There is a lack of economy of music material that will make this Mass setting difficult to learn for a large body of people who, for the most part, do not readily read music. This is not to say that music for a congregation must consist of simple-minded repetition, but to compose with a series of rapidly-shifting melodic motifs is "asking for it", as it were, and this is what happens in several movements of this setting. The most successful movements are those that are written in a harmonized version of Mode VII, without movements into other modes, such as her settings of the *Kyrie*, *Preface*, and the *Sanctus*.

The excellent success of *Hymns IV: Songs for Celebration* lies in a great many fine songs and hymns and, although most of the compositions in the volume deserve examination, space requires that only a few can be mentioned. Number H-316 is one of the more familiar Sacred Harp hymn tunes, *Morning Song*, but the simply flowing "delicious" accompaniment by George Mims is worth the price of the volume. Other unusually outstanding hymns that cannot go unmentioned are two by Kathleen Thomerson, numbers H-288 and H-320. Mrs. Thomerson wrote the texts, based on scriptural passages, as well as the music. Several hymn tunes and their harmonizations by Betty Pulkingham, such as numbers H-277 and H-301, are particularly good, and Jimmy Owens (no kin of the reviewer!) has several delightfully fresh melodies, with his setting of "the" doxology, H-281, being a prime example.

Style in *Songs for Celebration* may range from "cowboy ballad" style (H-313) to neo-modal settings, but this is a successful and significant collection of chants, songs, and hymns worthy of notice by the Church and worthy of use for many in the Church who are seeking the means of broadening their forms of musical expression. +++

*Gradual Psalms, Alleluia Verses, and Tracts for Year C.* Church Hymnal Corp. New York.

Certainly one of the most significant restorations of ancient liturgical practices has been the restoring of *psalmody* to its rightful place in the Eucharistic liturgy. The Church Hymnal Corporation has now provided us with the Proper Psalms for year "B", year "C" (the most recent), and for Holy Days, the Common of Saints, and Various Occasions. We can look forward to having the psalmody we need for Eucharistic celebrations before year "A" begins on Advent I next.

While there are many ways of singing psalms: direct psalmody, antiphonal psalmody, and responsorial psalmody, Dr. Crocker and the Standing Commission on Church Music have chosen to present us with volumes of the Propers in responsorial style. This seems to be the wiser course at this time since it involves the congregation quickly in singing psalms but gives the burden of singing most of the psalm to a cantor while the congregation repeats the refrain at specified intervals. Most of this is clearly explained in the introduction of the year "C" Sunday propers and the method is basically this: The cantor sings the refrain, the congregation repeats it after him, the cantor sings a specified number of psalm verses--usually two--then the congregation again sings the refrain. This pattern continues until the end of the appointed psalm or more commonly used portion of psalm. A number of churches in this writer's acquaintance have chosen to sing the refrain each Sunday to the same psalm tone thereby simplifying the process still further.

The Introduction and Guides for Use in the volume are both excellent and to the point. Dr. Crocker's directions are within the grasp of anyone as he explains the form of a psalm tone, the pointing of the text being used, and all relevant matters to insure good singing of these propers. A number of the ancient refrains will be a little tricky to the 20th century Western ear--or should I say American ear--and it will probably be wise to take one of Dr. Crocker's suggestions and play the refrain completely through before having the cantor sing it, followed by the congregation singing it. If an insecurity still exists, play the refrain with the congregation each time in octaves on your key-

Owens (cont.)

board instrument. *Don't* harmonize them since this is completely out of character!

Dr. Crocker's addition to the propers for year "C" is extremely well done, and the Church is indeed fortunate to have men of this background and interest working towards restoring to us a great many of our traditions and treasures that have been lost, some for many centuries. +++



(This next book is reviewed by the editor of OPEN, Henry H. Breul.)

*Paroikia, The House Alongside.* E.G. Buckle, Diocese of Auckland, 1978. The Bishop's House, 322 Cobham Drive, Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand. pp 104.

This booklet contains an account of the struggle of one diocese of the Anglican Church of New Zealand to come to grips with urban sprawl. In the process of finding answers, the groups studying the problem have gained some fascinating insights into the nature of ministry and the limitations of old parochial and diocesan structures.

"When industrial conurbation begins and the parish geographical area is translated into the urban society, the decline of religious society begins and the growth of secularism follows. The fact that the rural parishes of agricultural England were similar in area had more to do with the quality of English soil (and the number of people it could support) than with planting a parish church in the centre of a mile's easy walking radius. Successive Acts of Parliament established new parishes in England's industrial cities of the same area as those in rural England. These made

the grievous mistake of ignoring the numerical ratio of the rural parish, i.e. one priest to 200-300 souls, and created the urban parish which has been a recurring failure since its inception. Unfortunately, English Christianity exported this to the colonies and we continue to perpetuate the mistake.

"The secularism of our urban people could exist today not so much because of the emerging scientific and industrial age as of the retreat by the churches from the closer relationship of one priest to every 200-300 souls. Where only 283 people go to church in a parish of 12,500 souls we are really talking about a 98.3% abandonment by the church of its pastoral and missionary responsibilities."

In order to overcome the problems of the church in new developments, non-stipendiary clergy are being placed in the developments before they grow, thus allowing them to become the catalysts to form the new community. Some experience in this has already taken place, and the booklet contains the reflections of some of the clergy already engaged in this form of ministry. One of the priests reflects:

"...the serving aspect of ministry (which is what the word means anyway) must be dominant. Next is the need to avoid doing too much. It would be possible (and is tempting to a parson) to take all the leadership roles because one can see how they ought to be done, and can do them better. But if this is to be a true community, it must develop its own leadership; in the process of becoming leaders they must be able to make mistakes. It is better for the minister to be there, ready to pick up the pieces if necessary, but being a sort of 'cheer leader' building people up as they grow in their functions. I believe that is a critical aspect of what we mean by redemption."

There are several disappointing omissions in the study, however. There is no mention of the diaconal ministry, and there is a real lack of concern for liturgy as such. Despite these lapses, the study does show the vitality of the Church in New Zealand and offers a great deal of food for thought for the American Church as it struggles to make sense out of its present chaotic view of the whole ministry of the Church. +++

Dear Editor:



The idea of a Letters to the Editor column hadn't occurred to anyone until this one arrived. It would appear that many people had the same question in mind as he did. Henceforth, letters and replies of general interest will be printed. Ed.

Since the Associated Parishes Newsletter does not seem to allow for "letters to the editor", I wanted to respond to something in your article of December entitled "From Space to Space Through Fire"...you refer to some of your older ladies buying kneelers and describe this as "the last gesture of those who wanted to turn the clock back to the past." Was it your intention to convey that this was a gesture of these particular ladies or that a desire to kneel--perhaps accentuated by unfamiliar or untraditional surroundings--is an attempt to turn the clock back?

I have read several articles by those experimenting with Liturgy that suggest a desire to discourage kneeling. During the period of STU, I, myself, encouraged my people to experiment with their "posture" during the Celebration. Believing that the resulting conversations were genuine, I found many had a profound need to kneel during some parts: especially at the Confession, and, for a smaller number, at the

reception of the Sacrament. In no way did I perceive this to be an adumbration of their openness to liturgical change. It struck me that this need came from a far deeper level.

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The ladies were "trying to turn the clock back" in the sense that they were trying to recapture the ambience of the old Gothic church. The kneelers were really quite useless. Indeed, they were too precarious for older people to use. The "gesture" was one of petulance in that we did not recreate the "liturgical bowling alley" with a central aisle and a divided choir between the altar and the people.

As to kneeling, I would feel that the Confession and the penitential offices would be the only appropriate times during public worship. The "privacy" created by the kneeling position seems to me to be inimical to participatory liturgy. Indeed, the canons of Nicaea forbid kneeling during the Great Fifty Days. Needless to say, I don't go about telling people to stand up. Since moving into the Parish Hall, standing for everything has simply become customary, and I, for one, am very happy with it that way.

Editor

