

# Open

*Journal for Associated Parishes for Liturgy & Mission*

SPRING 2013



FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of OPEN has a focus on the inculturation of liturgy, and the subversive power of that great symbol of baptism; water. Matt Johnson contributes with a look at the “gap” created by the continued use of unfamiliar worship forms in an environment of cultural disengagement. It’s a central question for all churches; what does inculturation mean, and what does it look like when it “works”? One foray into this question arose from a gathering for prayer in Toronto in a “Vigil for Planet Earth”, where a number of water-related themes converged. John Hill and Sherman Hesselgrave have offered a reflection on the event and a sketch of the ordo. Finally, to help you prepare for the APLM 2013 Conference: “Stirring the Waters: Reclaiming the Missional, Subversive Character of Baptism” June 27-29, 2013, in Chicago, Darren Marks reflects theologically on the importance of water in biblical and liturgical traditions challenging us to see water as both natural and divinely different.

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## Presidential Ponderings:

*Discover the subversive character of baptism*

by D. Jay Koyle

For decades now, there has been great emphasis placed on the central role of baptism throughout The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC). This fresh focus has shaped the revision of rites - most notably The Book of Common Prayer (1979) in TEC and The Book of Alternative Services (1985) in the ACC - and had notable impact on liturgical renewal overall. It has expanded our formational repertoire to include more than children, confirmands and seminarians. It has widened our perspective to acknowledge that ministry is not the domain of the ordained alone. The visible shifts of understanding and practice in a great number of congregations have been considerable.

Yet, truth be told, despite this heightened concern for baptismal practice and living, we have barely begun to grapple with what a robust baptismal theology really means for the life of the church. Our engagement with baptism remains too domesticated, too wed to the presuppositions and priorities of Christendom. For the most part, the subversive implications of baptism that challenge both the church’s life and that of the society in which we live elude us in daily practice.

It is in response to this situation and with passionate hope for the promising possibilities before today’s church that APLM has stepped up its work over the last decade.

One of the most exciting examples of this is a project we share at present with the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC), this June’s conference in the Chicago area: Stirring the Waters: Reclaiming the Missional, Subversive Character of Baptism.

Stirring the Waters will provide participants with fresh perspectives, timely resources and effective strategies for congregations and denominations. Our aim is to inspire, challenge and equip participants to foster robust baptismal celebration and formation, living and service by the church.

Just as we needed to embrace a renewed emphasis on baptism as the sacrament of identity and belonging, initiation and incorporation during the last half of the previous century, it seems to me that we now need to get caught up in the prophetic and eschatological flow of the Font’s waters, to allow baptism’s subversive currents to contour the church’s missional landscape.

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What about the church needs to be subverted? How can, should or must the church be subversive in our society? How is God subversive? How does the church reflect and participate in the subversive activity of God? How does baptism celebrate, speak to, prompt, ritualize, proclaim, represent, effect such subversion? How is any of this missional?

These are matters to which we cannot respond fully in one brief conference, of course. However, we can be propelled further along the course they suggest. Therefore, *Stirring the Waters* aims to provide conference participants with a fabulous opportunity to tackle questions such as these, not just as a matter of theological theory, but also as they touch upon the rhythms of faithful living.

*Stirring the Waters* will serve as a forum to "try on" practices and gain practical support in translating conference inspiration and insights into "back home" ac-

tion. The implications of the gathering's focus will be considered for preaching, lectionary interpretation and reflection, creation care, ministry with youth and young adults, engagement with the arts, vocational discernment by the baptized, "doing catechumenate" when there are no catechumens, celebration of the Initiation rites, baptismal preparation with parents and sponsors of infant candidates, and facing the contemporary challenge of consumerism.

I am delighted that people like Ruth Meyers, Louis Weil, Ben Stewart, Jeff Lee, John Hill and so many others, whose research and experience offer many fresh insights, will be on hand to lead us in our work together.

I am even more excited that there will be plenty of opportunity for the diversity of participants to interact with one another!

I hope that many of you will join us for this event, beginning with worship and the first plenary session at 3:30 pm on Thursday,

June 27, and ending on Saturday, June 29 at around 3:00 pm. If you cannot be on hand for the whole conference, but will be in the Chicago area, sign up to join with us for a day.

We will be hosted by the *Techny Towers Conference & Retreat Center*, 2001 Waukegan Road, P.O. Box 176, Techny, Illinois 60082, telephone: 847-272-1100. You may wish to visit its website: <http://www.technytowers.org>

To learn more about NAAC: <http://www.catechumenate.org>

For more information about the conference or for a printable brochure, please visit: <http://www.associatedparishes.org>

To register online, visit: <http://www.rsvpbook.com/event.php?456526>



Jay Koyle is President of the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission

# Stirring the Waters

*Reclaiming the Missional, Subversive Character of Baptism*

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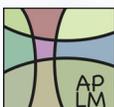
Eileen Crowley, Therese DeLisio, Bernadette Gasslein, Melissa Hartley, John Hill, Jay Koyle, Teresa Lockhart Stricklen, Scott Lybrand, Amy McCreath, Ruth Meyers, Osvaldo Vena, Pam Voves, Louis Weil

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# Tool, not Idol

## *Inculturation and Prayer Book Revision*

by Matthew R. Johnson

### Introduction: The Need for Inculturated Liturgy<sup>1</sup>

A survey in the Church of England entitled *Towards the Conversion of England* concluded that

It is difficult to find any contacts between the liturgical worship of the Church and the minds of a generation to whom all forms of worship, however simple, are unfamiliar . . . there would appear to be a yawning gap between the Church's liturgy and men and women, whether they be in city streets or village lanes.<sup>2</sup>

The problem is all the worse in the United States, which has even

1 My thanks to Juan Oliver for his guidance and feedback on an earlier version of this paper.

2 Donald C. Gray, "Liturgy and Society," in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, op. cit., 135-6.

OPEN is published three times per year by the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission.

Editor: Todd Townshend  
Layout: Pamela Rayment  
APLM President: Jay Koyle

OPEN welcomes unsolicited articles, letters to the editor, book reviews, Real Stories of Good Liturgy, and responses to articles. Featured articles should be kept to less than 4000 words, and other articles are 500-2000 words.

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greater diversity, and I believe it stems from a reluctance to engage with culture. Echoing what I suspect many Episcopalians would argue today, H. W. Spaulding, writing in the 14 May 1881 issue of the *Churchman*, says

If [prayer book revision] means to open gaps for each bishop and minister to consult his own sweet will with respect to doctrine and service, and to let in "the views of the people of this age," then I say, and thousands of people will say it with me, "God in his mercy forbid!"<sup>3</sup>

Attitudes like Spaulding's bear much of the blame for creating the "yawning gap" between the people and liturgy. If the church<sup>4</sup> is serious about its mission "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ,"<sup>5</sup> its leaders and members must be willing to engage with people's cultures using cultures' terms, especially through liturgy that is inculturated. "What inculturation means," Mark MacDonald asserts, "is that worship assimilates the people's language, ritual, and symbolic patterns. In this way they are able to claim and own the liturgical core they received through the apostolic teaching."<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to the implication of statements like Spaulding's, the gospel is not inherently opposed to

3 Lesley A. Northup, "New Resources: Access without Excess," in *Leaps and Boundaries: The Prayer Book in the 21st Century*, ed. Paul V. Marshall and Lesley A. Northup (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1997), 161, quoting H. W. Spaulding, "Enriching the Liturgy," *Churchman* (14 May 1881): 544.

4 I use "church" in this paper to mean the people joined together as the Episcopal church.

5 *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York, NY: Church Publishing Inc., 1979), 855.

6 Mark MacDonald, "Introduction," in *Liturgical Studies 4: The Chant of Life*, ed. Mark L. MacDonald (New York, NY: Church Publishing Inc., 2003), xi, quoting Anscar Chupungco, *Progress and Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1994), 2.

culture, and inculturation does not entail a departure from the gospel. Inculturation is grounded in a gospelly informed incarnational theology. As Timothy Squire observes, an incarnational understanding is not foreign to Anglican liturgy:

A careful historical analysis of Anglican eucharistic theology brings to the surface a doctrine of participation that locates God in the midst of the human condition through the active work of the Trinity and the triune God's incarnate presence in the person of Jesus Christ. God's participation within humanity is intimate, desire-filled, and bodily incarnate; such corporeal ideas are central to a Christian encounter with God.<sup>7</sup>

If God is present in the human condition, God is necessarily present in culture. Liturgy, by embracing culture, aids the church in experiencing and being formed by God's "intimate, desire-filled, and bodily incarnate" presence. Yet not all of culture is congruent with the gospel, and inculturation does not mean accepting culture indiscriminately. George Mathew argues that "True inculturation implies a willingness in worship to listen to culture, to incorporate what is good and to challenge what is alien to the truth of God."<sup>8</sup> To challenge what does not reveal the truth of God, the church has to be able to express the gospel in ways that are meaningful in specific cultural contexts. Leonel Mitchell explains:

*cont'd pg. 4*

7 Timothy Squire, "Participation, Communion, and Desire: Recovering the Language of Intimacy in the Sacrament of the Eucharist," *Liturgy* 20, no 4 (2005): 67-73.

8 George Mathew, "Whose Culture and Why?" in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, ed. Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991), 154.

The world to which we are sent to proclaim Christ is constantly changing, and the gospel needs to be translated into terms the world can understand. This means more than translating the actual language of the proclamation. . . It means translating its thought into forms which our culture can comprehend, so that the original message shines through undistorted.<sup>9</sup>

As is evident in Mitchell's charge, the relationship of gospel, church, and culture is far more complex than dualistic notions of church and gospel versus culture and world. Instead, the relationship experienced through inculturation is somewhat circular: the church is informed by the gospel in culture so it can more effectively communicate the gospel, thereby challenging what is not informed by the gospel and better appreciating what is.

Although inculturation was a focus of Cranmer and other early Anglicans, emphasis on the value of inculturation has declined because the *Book of Common Prayer*<sup>10</sup> has come to be viewed as an unchangeable idol and is hindering inculturated liturgical experimentation and expression. Paradoxically, this same Prayer Book opened the door to inculturation by focusing on the ministry of all the baptized. The best Anglican worship is inculturated, and the church needs to rededicate itself to liturgical revision in light of principles of inculturation. Specifically, I propose three goals where the church should focus its efforts at inculturated liturgical revision:

- increase congregational participation,
- expand diversity of liturgical

9 Leonel L. Mitchell, "Appendix A: Background," in *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (New York, NY: Church Hymnal Corp., 1991), 57, quoting himself from 1975.

10 Here and throughout the paper I am referring to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.

- texts,
- reconstruct worship space.

### Goal 1: Increase Congregational Participation

Regarding participation in the liturgy, Lesley Northup says that women's worship has shown how liturgy can be "a vital, ongoing activity in which participants are also generators, not just passive partakers. It makes no judgment about the value of tradition, but freely incorporates both the traditional and the new."<sup>11</sup> This view is consistent with the church's understanding that in celebrating the eucharist, "all the baptized are celebrants."<sup>12</sup> Although some resist the change brought to liturgy through increased participation, the change is required: "We cannot go back to a clerical ecclesiology; we cannot go back to the suppression of cultural distinctions; . . . In short, we cannot go back."<sup>13</sup> Louis Weil goes on to describe how to facilitate participation:

“We need to see all our particular ministries, whether ordained or not, as diverse expressions of our shared baptismal identity: diverse because the gifts of the Holy Spirit are diverse and complementary. The building up of the body is accomplished through this rich diversity.”<sup>14</sup>”

11 Northup, op. cit., 163.

12 Marion J. Hatchett, "Unfinished Business in Prayer Book Revision," in *Leaps and Boundaries*, op. cit., 20.

13 Louis Weil, "Scope and Focus in Eucharistic Celebration," in *Liturgical Studies 3: A Prayer Book for the 21st Century*, ed. Ruth A. Meyers (New York, NY: Church Publishing Inc., 1996), 44, quoting Paul Gibson, "What is the Future Role of Liturgy in Anglican Unity?" in *Liturgical Inculturation in the Anglican Communion*, 21.

14 *Ibid.*, 47.

Increased congregational participation will both effect inculturated liturgy and stimulate it, thereby building up the body of Christ through the shared liturgical experience of God's self-revelation. The body's growth through rich diversity is essential for the church "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."<sup>15</sup>

### Goal 2: Expand Diversity of Liturgical Texts

Another element of liturgy that requires greater inculturation is liturgical texts. "Anglicanism for over four centuries has been concerned that people pray in their own language"<sup>16</sup>; however, although the language may technically be that of the people, the words and syntax of some parts of the Prayer Book are so elevated as to be nearly foreign. The language of the liturgy must be consistent with how the local assembly communicates outside of the liturgy. Consistent is not to say that the language should be identical to that of culture. "Christian speech" as Gail Ramshaw rightly defines it, "is vernacular with a twist":

The language of faith is a dialogue between our contemporary experience in its vernacular dress and the gospel as written in the Scriptures and repeated in the tradition. We must use common speech to proclaim good news that is outside our common experience. The recasting of liturgical speech or the fine tuning of a eucharistic prayer is a momentous task: one must know the gospel, the tradition, and the contemporary situation, and must hold them together in liturgical language.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Op. cit.

16 Mitchell, "Appendix A: Background," op. cit., 57.

17 Gail Ramshaw, "The Paradox of 'Sacred Speech'," in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. Dwight W. Vogel (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 170.

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Ramshaw summarizes well the task of liturgical revisers—they must strive to compose prayers that are “vernacular with a twist.” John Paul II holds up Cyril and Methodius as examples of how to bring together the tradition and the vernacular:

In order to translate the truths of the Gospel into a new language, they had to make an effort to gain a good grasp of the interior world of those to whom they intended to proclaim the word of God in images and concepts that would sound familiar to them. They realized that an essential condition of the success of their missionary activity was to transpose correctly Biblical notions and Greek theological concepts into a very different context of thought and historical experience.<sup>18</sup>

In order to share the gospel in an inculturated way, Cyril and Methodius grasped the reality that their task was more complex than translating words. They had to find ways to convey in that specific cultural context the underlying concepts of the message they were trying to preach—they had to develop an expression of the Christian gospel using the Slaves' vernacular. To do so, they engaged with the Slaves' “interior world” to explore how the gospel was already present. Today's church should strive for this same balance of tradition and vernacular when revising its rites.

### Goal 3: Reconstruct Worship Space

Inculturating liturgical space must also be a central focus in liturgical revision. To inculturate liturgical space for Anglos in the United States, Juan Oliver notes that liturgical designers must ob-

18 John Paul II, “Co-Patrons of Europe: The Apostles of Slaves, Saints Cyril and Methodius,” from the Encyclical Epistle *Slavorum Apostoli* (June 2, 1985), [http://www.europeanspirit.gr/biblioteca/johnpaulii\\_copatrons.html](http://www.europeanspirit.gr/biblioteca/johnpaulii_copatrons.html) (accessed March 5, 2008).

serve how Americans live outside of liturgy. For example, “how do Americans gather?”<sup>19</sup> For an American liturgical space to speak to Americans, it must facilitate gathering in a way that Americans understand. After summarizing ways in which Americans gather, Oliver says:

Most church buildings cannot accommodate this [American] assembly. In fact, they facilitate the obverse of this picture, preventing human contact, keeping people's creative powers at bay, and separating them from nature while placing the focus of power and authority almost anywhere except upon the people. A fully inculturated place of the church would look and feel less and less like a commercial theater. Instead, it would embody the expectation that people do not simply attend the liturgy: they do it.<sup>20</sup>

Oliver shows a willingness to engage with culture. Even if the texts are more fully inculturated, if the space is not also, then the power of inculturated liturgy is lessened. All of these elements—participation, language, and space—work together.

In addition to a space that facilitates participation, creativity, and human contact, Northup proposes worship space that heightens awareness of and participation with the earth. This idea is consistent with contemporary American culture, which is increasingly conscious of environmental concerns. She says:

One manifestation of this connection with the earth is the use of natural objects as foci for worship. Plants, stones, fruit, sticks, nuts, soil, water: All can be used in liturgies as symbols of divinity, of createdness, of natural necessity and interconnectedness.<sup>21</sup>

19 Juan M.C. Oliver, “Our Place: Inculturating [Anglo] Liturgical Space,” in *Liturgical Studies* 4, op. cit., 116.

20 *Ibid.*, 117.

21 Northup, op. cit., 168.

Incorporating natural objects into the worship space illustrates well the dual benefit of inculturated liturgy: since gossypally congruent environmental issues are currently in this culture's consciousness, they would help the liturgy speak to the people. And these objects would also help transform our culture, whose members are aware of environmental concerns yet still waste ungraspable amounts and do incalculable damage to nature.

### Conclusion: Principles and Process

As we work to develop more inculturated liturgies by increasing participation, revising texts, and restructuring spaces, there are several principles that should be kept in mind. First and perhaps most importantly, as Northup implores, “Loosening up might not be a bad idea.”<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that we should take an “anything goes” approach, but we do need to avoid the all-too-pervasive idea that things have to be done in the liturgy “the way we've always done it.” Northup reminds us that, “experimenting with this [liturgical] bounty need not be threatening.”<sup>23</sup> To facilitate experimentation, the role and use of the *Book of Common Prayer* will have to be reevaluated, which is a scary thought for many Episcopalians. However, with a canonically sanctioned process for liturgical revision and as long as we maintain the traditional *ordo*,<sup>24</sup> we can let go of our fear.

For liturgical experimentation to be fruitful, the church needs to have “a willingness to listen to *the entire Church*.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, local assemblies must be given the freedom to experiment: “It is not the

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22 Northup, op. cit. 173.

23 *Ibid.*, 162.

24 See the writings of Gordon Lathrop, in particular, for a fuller discussion of the *ordo*.

25 J. Neil Alexander, “Embrace the Happy Occasion: Prayer Book Revision in Light of Yesterday's Principles, Today's Questions, and Tomorrow's Possibilities,” in *Leaps and Boundaries*, op. cit., 180.

job of white middle-class liturgists in the Episcopal Church to attempt to decide what kind of liturgy is appropriate for a convent in Tanzania or a country church in Haiti."<sup>26</sup> For liturgy to be inculturated, it must stem from the worshiping community: "If it evolves from the grass-roots level, that [liturgy] will be more genuine and acceptable."<sup>27</sup> The church needs to encourage this grassroots development since "the goals and purposes of liturgical renewal will be served more adequately if local creativity is encouraged and nurtured."<sup>28</sup> To be genuine, this sort of inculturated liturgy cannot come from church structures such as synods and dioceses—it must come from the people.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that some churches, although motivated by the good intention of developing inculturated liturgies, are using liturgies that are not sanctioned by the Episcopal church. This individualistic approach is contrary to Anglican tradition and leads to a congregationalist experience of church. Other congregations are frustrated because they feel trapped between a need for inculturated liturgy and the requirement to use only the Prayer Book and other authorized collections. The Episcopal Church lacks an official process that provides for the local development, implementation, and evaluation of inculturated rites. I suggest that the next General Convention adopt a canon that grants diocesan bishops the authority to appoint several churches within their dioceses to develop and experiment with inculturated liturgies that maintain the *ordo* of the liturgies in the Prayer Book. The experience

26 Leonel L. Mitchell, "Essential Worship," in *Liturgical Studies* 4, op. cit., 44, 45.  
27 Mathew, op. cit., 154.  
28 Clayton L. Morris, "Prayer Book Revision or Liturgical Renewal," in *Liturgical Studies* 3, op. cit., 249.  
29 See Bryan D. Spinks, "The Eucharistic Prayer," in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, op. cit., 100 and Kenneth W. Stevenson, "Anglican Identity: A Chapter of Accidents," in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, op. cit., 194.

of these liturgies could then be evaluated by those parishes, and later, for those liturgies deemed successful, by dioceses and the national church.<sup>30</sup> Eventually, the most successful of these liturgies could be included in a new Prayer Book.

There are two primary considerations when evaluating experimental liturgies for use by the church. First, there must be discussion of whether a liturgy "reflects new life in Christ or whether it reflects unjust social values."<sup>31</sup> If it reflects the "new life in Christ," it will strengthen and nourish faith in God.<sup>32</sup> That faith necessarily involves a striving for justice.<sup>33</sup>

There is an additional question that must be asked about any Anglican liturgy: is it beautiful? Since Anglicanism has traditionally understood beauty as facilitating edification, Bryan Spinks rightly insists that "the language of eucharistic prayers must be evocative."<sup>34</sup> Oliver claims "aesthetic excellence" is an element that is, "or should be, universal"<sup>35</sup> in Anglicanism. Since evocation and edification ideally complement each other, we need not shed our love for beauty; as Alexander says regarding the language of Episcopal liturgy, "I remain convinced that we must not lose our passion for beautifully shaped liturgical texts."<sup>36</sup> Inculturated liturgies, developed in the local assembly and reflected on by parishes/missions then by dioceses and the national church, have the

30 For more on a specific method of how to inculturate liturgy, see Juan M.C. Oliver, "Just Praise: Prayer Book Revision and Hispanic/Latino Anglicanism," in *Liturgical Studies* 3, op. cit., 280-281.

31 Ruth C. Duck, "Expansive Language in the Baptized Community," in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., 290.

32 See "Introduction," in *Supplemental Liturgical Materials*, op. cit., 15.

33 See Oliver, "Just Praise," op. cit., 261 and 272, "Language Shaped and Shaping," op. cit., 137, and William Seth Adams, "Expansive Language: A Matter of Justice," in *Liturgical Studies* 3, op. cit.

34 Spinks, op. cit., 99.

35 Oliver, "Just Praise," op. cit., 278.

36 Alexander, op. cit., 187.

potential to reach new liturgical heights of beauty and to foster faith and justice as non-inculturated liturgies do not.

Inculturating liturgy will result in greater liturgical variety. As Christopher Cocksworth says, "multiformity rather than uniformity is the name of. . . the liturgical game."<sup>37</sup> There is a temptation to strive for uniformity, thinking that it will result in unity. John Paul II notes:

It is understandable that in such a situation differences sometimes came [and come] to be regarded as a threat to still incomplete unity. One can also understand how strongly the temptation was [and is] felt to eliminate such differences, even by using forms of coercion.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, just as Cyril and Methodius avoided the temptation of eliminating differences, we must as well. Our unity ought not be based on using the exact same texts and doing everything in identical ways. Rather, unity begins with Christ. As Anglicans, we experience that unity through shared tradition and history, in a common *ordo*, and in the fellowship of the eucharistic feast.

Some of the church's liturgies fail to effectively promote the gospel of Christ. Contrary to the Anglican tradition of valuing the vernacular, Episcopal liturgies have become too fixed and increasingly less inculturated. The church, in order to pursue its mission "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ,"<sup>39</sup> must facilitate the development of inculturated liturgies, especially eucharistic rites, for

In the whole action of the eucharist, and in and by his sacramental presence given through

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37 Christopher J. Cocksworth, "Eucharistic Theology," in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, op. cit., 49.

38 John Paul II, op. cit., 3, my additions in brackets.

39 *The Book of Common Prayer*, op. cit.

# Water: through Ecological, Orthodox, and Aboriginal Eyes

submitted by John W. B. Hill and Sherman Hesselgrave

On January 16, more than a hundred Christians gathered in Toronto for a 'Vigil for Planet Earth'. Originally planned by a group of Anglicans concerned about the climate crisis descending on us, it drew in many others, both catholic and protestant. One of Canada's most important voices on the impact of climate change, Alanna Mitchell (author of *Sea Sick: the Global Ocean in Crisis*), was invited to make the address. But the primary goal was to pray together about the crisis.

However, a number of water-related factors began to converge during the planning of this liturgy: the liturgical season (the Sunday before marked The Baptism of the Lord); the concerns of First Nations people for water pollution and other environmental violations (expressed in the growing 'Idlenomore' movement and its planned 'day of action' for the same day); and an emerging practice amongst aboriginal Anglicans of celebrating the Great Blessing of the Waters, inspired by the Orthodox Feast of the Theophany (the Baptism of the Lord), as a way of reclaiming water's sacred role in creation.

The site of the vigil was the Church of the Holy Trinity at the heart of the city, one of the oldest, capable of collegiate seating. The event was advertized as "lament, thanksgiving, and prophetic action." Anglican, United Church of Canada, and aboriginal traditions were drawn on. An 'ordo' emerged that looked very traditional – word and sacrament – but with some notable shifts. The intercessions were replaced by biblical

expressions of lament punctuated by the Ojibway lullaby, *Wei, wei, wei* and prayers of penitence; and the 'sacrament' was both cosmological and christological (rather than ecclesiological) – a thanksgiving over water (with the font in the midst of the people) followed by congregational drinking of the water (i.e., although it was neither baptism nor eucharistic sharing, it was evocative of both and yet open to all). The National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Mark MacDonald, officiated. The ordo was as follows:

GATHERING: ritual smudging while people assembled; apostolic greeting; welcome and setting of the context; Shirley Erena Murray's hymn ("*Touch the Earth Lightly*"); and Prayer in the Four Directions.

WORD: Revelation 22: 1 - 5; the Dakota hymn ("*Many and Great*"), with an additional verse about the creation of water from the seven days of Creation setting from *Sorrento Morning Prayer* by Sherman Hesselgrave, accompanied by African drum and piano; Luke 3: 3, 7 - 9, 15 - 17, 21 - 22; the address; reflections by the bishop; the Lament; and sharing The Peace.

WATER: the Helleman and Minkoff hymn ("*O Healing River*"), sung as a call and response, without accompaniment; a Thanksgiving Over Water, from the *Book of Alternative Services*, augmented with themes from the Orthodox rite, including the Orthodox ritual of baptizing a small 'blessing cross'; the invitation (Rev. 22:17b), and then the distribution of the blessed water from chalices, during which all sang Marilyn Haskel's setting of Carl Daw's paraphrase of *Vidi Aquam* ("*I Beheld a Stream of Water*").

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bread and wine, the crucified and risen Lord, according to his promise, offers himself to his people. When this offering is met by faith, a lifegiving encounter results.<sup>40</sup>

Christ calls us to that "lifegiving encounter," and it is that encounter that is necessary for the church to fulfill its goal of restoring unity, which begins with mission:

The liturgy rightly constructed, forms the people of God, enabling and equipping them for their mission of evangelism and social justice in their culture and society.<sup>41</sup>

Because of the gifts of the

Spirit and the Lord's incarnate presence, Christ is never absent. Inculturated liturgies will help members of the church live more fully into their baptismal identity by seeking and serving "Christ in all persons,"<sup>42</sup> thereby encountering Christ's presence and being strengthened through that encounter. At the same time, inculturated liturgies will also strengthen the expression of the gospel in and to culture, helping to remove barriers that prevent the world from experiencing its unity in Christ.

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40 Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Statement on the Eucharist," in *The Final Report* (London: CTS/SPCK, 1982), paras. 3 and 8, as quoted by Cocksworth, op. cit., 53.

41 Mathew, op. cit., 154.

42 *The Book of Common Prayer*, op. cit., 305.

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SENDING: information about possible acts of advocacy and protest, and instructions for using some of the blessed water in reclaiming any threatened body of water; the Jim Strathdee hymn,

*"When pain of the world surrounds us with darkness and despair, when searching just confounds us with false hopes everywhere, when lives are starved for meaning and destiny is bare, we are called to follow Jesus and let God's healing flow through us;"*

a sending prayer; and dismissal.

While refreshments were served, people came again to the water to fill small bottles to take with them. The suggested prayer for use when pouring the water into a river, lake, or ocean was, "O healing river, send down your waters."

The text of the prayer of Thanksgiving over Water was as follows:

### *Prayer of Thanksgiving over Water*

"The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

"Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

"We give you thanks, almighty God and Father, for by the gift of water you nourish, sustain and renew all living things.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever.**

"We give you thanks that through the waters of the Red Sea, you led your people out of slavery to freedom in the promised land.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever.**

"We give you thanks for sending your Son Jesus. For us he was baptized by John in the River Jordan, repenting for the sin of the world and restoring to water its healing work in all creation. For us he was anointed as Christ by your Holy Spirit that he might liberate the world from all the forces of evil. For us he suffered the baptism of his own death and resurrection, setting us free from the bondage of sin and death, and sharing with us his own ministry of new creation.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever.**

"We give you thanks for your Holy Spirit who teaches us and leads us into all truth, filling us with his gifts so that we might proclaim the gospel to all nations and serve you as a royal priesthood and faithful stewards of all that you have made.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever.**

"Now sanctify this water (here the blessing cross is plunged three times into the water) that your servants who have been washed and made one with Christ in his death and resurrection may here be renewed in the power of his Spirit and may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

"We give you praise and honour and worship through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.  
**Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen."**

## Theologizing with a Hammer: A Theology of Water

*A Biblical Theology of Water, and of Nature*

by Darren C. Marks

Even the most cursory read of the Bible, or of liturgical traditions in both Judaism and Christianity, reveals an emphasis placed on the importance of water. Derived from cultures that were near equatorial, often desert or prone to drought, water is understood as the essential aspect of human life, and life itself and as such, its centrality is not lost in the Biblical accounts. Likewise, many liturgical rites have water as an aspect within, usually associated with cleansing, purity or renewal. Again, the logic is quite simple—water cleans, refreshes, vivifies and is mercurial in essence over against the stasis of solids.

Especially for those who do not live near the sea or on a floodplain, the idea of water is changed and tamed by the simple act of turning on a tap. Water may be reduced to what it seems in its simplest liturgical application—the renewing, spirit-like essence of life, and whether baptism, ritual washing, or the *Simchat Beit HaShoeivah* of Sukkot for Jews, water is a life-giving, transitional form that promises new growth. Above all, it may now be understood as a commodity we control and expect to behave accordingly, seeing it as quite tame coming out of the tap, pitcher, or in a barrel.

However, like wind (or nature itself), water for the Ancient Near Eastern mind of the Bible brings about the idea of transition, erasure and even perhaps the complete destruction of something

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to be replaced with potential. Of course, this all is contradictory as how can water be essential to life and permanence but also hostile to it? *Genesis* opens with this exact thought – G-d hovers above the chaotic deep and creates order in the midst of the then lifeless deep waters. Likewise, Eden has a river, presumably the same one which swells to extinguish life in the Flood narratives. And so the binary continues – water as essential to life and water as something threatening.

*The 'everyday' event of baptism, for example, is stretched to something more wonderful, more awestruck, when we eschew our simple controlled and safe understanding of water.*

Theologically speaking, it is difficult to read water as our modern mind associates it – namely, as something controlled, easily accessed and tame. Instead, reading the biblical accounts, water is completely something else. It is the threatening deep, the elusive other, whose absence means hardship. Water was often an instrument of divine punishment and something that was not at our beck and call. Like its other natural analog – wind – it erodes permanence, attacks the solid world of nature, and is, at least in its Biblical format, NOT merely nature (it precedes it in *Genesis*). In a pre-scientific world, before understanding the water cycle learnt in grade-school science, water stands as elemental – as something extra-human and therefore beyond human control. Humans cultivate the land, bred animals, but water belongs to itself and while used, remains other.

Of course, this simple fact (and perhaps the reason water actually

functions liturgically) is because, like G-d, it has its own being-ness pre-creation and within creation so that it can remove this transitory world for the real world of G-d's beingness. Like G-d, water required humans to do something to make it appear – whether dig wells, protect an oasis, pray to a river or to G-d for rain, and above all to respect it. Like G-d, water can bring new life out of destruction. Like G-d, water brings death. In short, it is divine or quasi-divine. More simply, it is not the human natural experience. But in a world, wherein we turn on the tap, does

water mean this binary or is it simply another thing that we control, use or husband? In our liturgical application, is ritual washing or baptism merely a means that we control for the purpose of ordering G-d to appear, or to make people appear clean? And what of the sayings of Jesus – that he is the living waters? That he walks on water? That he alters water to wine? Is water merely safe?

Most of our thinking on water comes from our thinking on nature, and in particular a peculiar construction of nature as something still oriented for human purposes. In fact, a quick view of the theological work done on water finds most of the conversation focussed on the ethics of water use and, primarily, scarcity of water and its conservation and not its intrinsic theological meaning.

In short, the Biblical narrative reveals that humans are in nature but also that nature is something beyond us, and greater. In terms of water, it is both natural and divinely different. Nature is not something outside of humans, we are nature and what happens

in nature will indeed happen to us. But there is more. An implication for theology is, I would argue, that water cannot be used in an idolatrous way. We do violence to the symbol of water if we refuse to treat nature as something in its own right into which humans are but one, albeit significant, cog and instead treat it as something special for humans.

Some deep thinking could be done on a simple observed fact – that the Biblical awareness of nature, indicates that Nature is both 'us' and 'not us'. It is wild, terrible, and often the source of divine wrath, blessing, and difference. Water is the chaos of the deep, instrument of wrath, the life of the Earth, the beginning of new birth, the erasing on permanence, and ultimately different from us although we are terribly dependent on it. When we reduce our liturgical or theological or even moral understanding to a simple trope, even the most positive, we are in fact doing a metaphysical violence to one of the most profound theological statements of the Abrahamic tradition. This is the mystery of living in something much larger than our own constructs, ecclesiological or even cosmological, in which space is given for something greater to appear, to work and to humble. The 'everyday' event of baptism, for example, is stretched to something more wonderful, more awestruck, when we eschew our simple controlled and safe understanding of water. It is not something we merely 'turn on', something that we understand, but it is something more.

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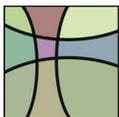
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