

4. Spiritual Foundation: Contemplative Pragmatics

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I write as an Anglican theologian who has learnt much from Catholic moral theology. In particular, my membership of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) since 2011 has brought me into contact with much Catholic theology. My approach to moral theology is deeply historical and philosophical. Therefore, my contribution to this collection of essays is one that uses a synthesis of Anglican historical theology, moral philosophy, and systematic theology. Only after that does it move to the church today, and it is then, from this historical and dogmatic perspective, that I wish to argue for four intellectual positions on moral discernment, both individual and corporate.

Corporate Moral Discernment as Contemplative, Doxological, Cultural, and Affective

First, Anglican theology has seen cognition not merely as discursive intellectual inquiry but rather as participation in the divine Logos, which has been called contemplation or Reason.¹ This means that one must distinguish between analytic and discursive knowledge, which is the proper domain of science, and the intuitive knowledge proper to life with others, to the appreciation of value and aesthetics, and most fundamentally to a relationship with God.

¹ Edmund Newey, "The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor," *Modern Theology* 18, no. 1 (2002): 4.

Secondly, this theological activity is not only cognitive but also doxological, where knowledge is deeply related to the practice of worship.² In turn, worship is more than an experiential state because, in worship, the movement of God meets the dynamism of the acting person. Moral judgment is equally doxological, and the relationship of moral discernment and liturgical action has been called by Timothy Sedgwick (no relation), who is a lay theologian in The Episcopal Church of the United States (part of the worldwide Anglican Communion), a “sacramental ethic.” The integral, and threefold, relationship between contemplative knowledge, doxology, and ethics means that worship (which also is integrally embedded in its culture) is properly regarded as the transformation of the self that leads into moral action and is therefore one of the fundamentals of intercultural ethics. Such an understanding stands alongside the theological and anthropological foundations of ethics and is always interwoven with an understanding of intercultural ethics. Worship is therefore always the “spiritual foundation” of a “contemplative pragmatics” (the title given to my chapter) in ethical discernment.

Thirdly, Anglican theology has drawn attention to the centrality of culture in our life before God and often has begun its theological inquiry from this premise.³ Language is always embedded in social relations and interactions, and pragmatics is the study of how context contributes to meaning. Pragmatics includes both speech acts, non-verbal communication, and symbols, with a particular understanding of what is communicated both through referential uses of language and performative utterances (with the speaker’s authority for making performative statements being fundamental) and also of what can be communicated in a culture without being explicitly expressed. The divine Spirit or Logos can then be brought to conscious expression through cultural and symbolic actions, often dramatic, that communicate the deepest emotional longings of an individual or community.

² Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge* (Longman and Todd, 1979).

³ Frederick D. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Rivington, 1842).

Another, and fourth, way of framing this argument is to use the concept of “political affection.”⁴ Affections, or emotions (to use the contemporary description for affections), show that moral judgments are not purely cognitive, and they are also integrally related to a place, person, or event (in this case worship) that create an affective state in the moral agent, whether a community or individual. The lay English Anglican moral theologian Joshua Hordern claims that affections are cognitively directed and intentional, helping us recognize value in an object, since affections are ordered around beliefs and are events that evoke an intellectual judgment, and not simply a non-evaluative emotional response. Affections begin in inter-personal and social communication, last over a long period of time, and for a Christian, establish a foundation between the political, eschatological, and the affectionate. Crucially, affections occur in a single place, such as a community, family, or church, and above all take place in worship.

Hordern defends a principled conservatism, which recognizes the value of tradition, place, and memory in cognition and moral judgment, opposing the theorist Jürgen Habermas on this point.⁵ Affections of praise and hope expressed in worship, especially worship that has a fixed form and is part of an ecclesial tradition, can and do create a moral commitment to action among the individuals participating in it and also embody for the ecclesial community their commitment to moral discernment and action, which spills over into the public realm. They are therefore affections that are personal, social, and political. Hordern writes about the significance of worship in Israel as a community of faith, and says that

The feasts are institutions which prevent the loss of affective, political wisdom. At the feast of tithes, rejoicing is to take place in ways which awaken Israel to moral self-consciousness . . . the festive joy is arranged so as to awaken the people to the neediness of the poor in the light of the

⁴ Joshua Hordern, *Political Affections: Civic Participation and Moral Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵ Hordern, *Political Affections*, 213.

goodness of the land and the goodness of the One who gave it. Far from being a conclusion, festive joy initiates moral thought and action.⁶

Coleridge as a Theologian Exemplifying these Intellectual Traits

Let me turn for a moment to a historical example of this argument. One of those who developed the argument sketched out above was the philosopher and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who died in 1834.⁷ In Coleridge's thought, the nature of the intellect is both analytic and discursive, as in scientific inquiry, but also intuitive and contemplative, where imagination gives way to contemplation as the understanding of relationships, value, and the activity of God. Coleridge, however went further and saw such understanding or contemplation as energized by, and expressive of, the divine Spirit in human thought, or what Coleridge called the "Reason." Coleridge was fascinated with ideas. Although a person can contemplate an external object, one cannot contemplate an idea in this same way. Instead, the person must create in their mind (by the process of intuition) the idea which they wish to contemplate as a living subject.

Contemplation for Coleridge is therefore far from the discursive, analytic understanding of intellectual argument or technical skill and is more properly seen as an "inward beholding," a grasping of the spiritual nature of reality.⁸ He cited the Anglican theologian Richard Hooker in this

⁶ Hordern, *Political Affections*, 150–151.

⁷ Peter Cheyne, *Coleridge's Contemplative Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2020); see chapter 6 on Coleridge in Peter Sedgwick, *The Development of Anglican Moral Theology 1680–1950* (Brill, 2024), 160–188.

⁸ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 9: *Aids to Reflection*, ed. J. B. Beer (Routledge; Princeton University Press, 1993), 223–224; Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

respect as justification of his argument.⁹ Reflection for Coleridge was a discursive, mediating, and analytic function of the understanding, whereas *contemplation* was the fixed, immediate, and intuitive act of the Reason. So when Coleridge refers to *contemplation*, this term is for him synonymous with *Reason*, which in a manner harking back to patristic thought is understood as the human access to the divine Logos, the divine power in creation, or the second person of the Trinity, since Coleridge's thought became increasingly Trinitarian as he refined his argument.¹⁰ Contemplation, or contemplative, in this chapter therefore refers to thought derived from the imagination, which intuits the presence of God (or the divine Logos) in both creation and human life, including the public realm. Such a way of knowing is both resourced by worship and feeds back into prayer and corporate liturgy.

Such an argument may seem highly intellectual and elitist. However, Coleridge believed that the culture of each society was created and nourished by individuals who construct symbols that embody the meaning of that culture.¹¹ Creation is open ended, unfinished, and not to be known simply by discursive inquiry, but rather has value given to it by the processes of human interpretation and participation that are continually evolving as “meaning making,” either through the arts (music, drama, painting, and sculpture), through rational argument (theology, philosophy, and aesthetics), or through narrative and literature, which bring into meaning what Coleridge called Ideas—formative, divine powers, which are the divine energy that orders the moral and physical cosmos.¹²

⁹ Coleridge, *The Collected Works*, vol. 9: 292; Richard Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, where Hooker writes of “intuitive beholding.” Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, vol. 1, ed. G. Edelen (Belknap Press, 1977), 179.

¹⁰ Coleridge, *The Collected Works*, vol. 9: 169, 174.

¹¹ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 10: *On the Constitution of the Church and the State*, ed. J. Colmer (Routledge and Kegan Paul; Princeton University Press, 1976).

¹² Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life* (Eerdmans, 2019), 179.

There is then an irreducibly cultural dimension to all communication, both between individuals and societies, which is why the focus in this collection of essays on “intercultural ethics” constitutes an important contemplative action by individuals or groups, who can discern the possibility of a new way of living. There is thus the option of social innovation by creating a new cultural expression, which may well lead to new insights into God’s activity. Coleridge struck a careful balance between the need to preserve traditional culture and the necessity of change and new development within culture. He used the terms “permanence” and “progression,” and believed that custom could embody reason.

Moral Discernment in Contemporary Anglicanism

In terms of making moral judgments, discernment begins from this theological standpoint by envisioning first in the imagination, and then through contemplation, what it means to live together, and this may provide an awareness both of history (past ways of living together) and the possibility of new forms of social and personal life, or in other words a new cultural expression of human relationships. This is clearly central to the current, polarized debates within the Anglican Communion, both on sexuality and on the possibility of creating a society free of any of the stereotypes that have historically marred our common life (racism, sexism, and much else), while remaining faithful to Christ.¹³ The way of reasoning theologically that I have described is criticized by its opponents for insufficient attention to scripture and the past tradition. However, this theological method will in fact always, and of necessity, turn (after its initial reading of culture and history) to scripture, tradition, philosophy, and past credal affirmations, but the starting points are instead forms of prudential judgments and the exercise of practical reason, which can be

¹³ Abby Day, *Contemporary Issues in the Worldwide Anglican Communion: Powers and Pieties* (Routledge, 2015), chapters 5 and 6.

called *phronesis*.¹⁴ The debates inside Anglicanism in recent decades often turn on the validity (or lack thereof) of this starting point, especially on sexuality.¹⁵ There are many who deny that this is an acceptable way of discerning moral judgments.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Coleridge's influence is found in many nineteenth century theologians (F.D. Maurice would be one) and contemporary theologians (Anglicans such as Dan Hardy and John Milbank, as well as the Reformed theologian Colin Gunton).¹⁷

Luke Bretherton, another lay English Anglican theologian working at the University of Oxford, summarizes this position well. He writes:

Echoing Coleridge, APT [Anglican Political Thought] does not posit a nature/culture binary. Rather, in contrast to natural-law approaches to moral and political theology, it recognizes that a specific cultural-historical form of life is the beginning point and primary focus for political reflection. Thus, for example, Desmond Tutu's homiletic reflections on South Africa are informed by the need to evaluate a particular context within its cultural-historical situation as well as in relation to its conformity to Christ. Instead of focusing on nature, which tends to de-historicize and mystify what is contingent and fallen, APT's focus on culture and history recognizes that contingency, and thence revisability, is a constitutive feature of all forms of life.¹⁸

¹⁴ Jeremy Worthen, "Mapping Communion and Disagreement Ecclesiologically," in *When Churches in Communion Disagree*, ed. R. Heaney, C. Wells and P. Whalon (Living Church Books, 2022), 84.

¹⁵ Mark Vasey-Saunders, *Defusing the Sexuality Debate: The Anglican Evangelical Culture War* (SCM Press, 2023); Charlie Bell, *Queer Holiness: The Gift of LGBTQI People to the Church* (Longman and Todd, 2022).

¹⁶ The many writings of Martin Davie and Ephraim Radner demonstrate this clearly. See, for example, Martin Davie, *With God's Approval? A Theological Exploration of Blessing Same-Sex Couples, in Dialogue with Walter Moberly and Isabelle Hamley* (Dictum Press, 2023) and Ephraim Radner, *The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church* (William B. Eerdmans, 2006).

¹⁷ Philip Aherne, *The Coleridge Legacy: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Intellectual Legacy in Britain and America 1834–1934* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹⁸ Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 180.

Coleridge's justification for beginning theology with a consideration of social life, past and present, and so with the necessity of culture, is echoed by the Anglican theologian Dan Hardy, who died in 2007, when he writes:

The *Bible* is a vast history of layers of God's engagement with people through the transformation of the meanings and activities of their social life; the *Church* is a complex of people in very different historical situations who find the meaning of their social life and activity by reference to God; *beliefs* testify to God's purposes as found in the social meaning and agencies in events throughout history; and even *certainly* is a social process of finding and enacting truth in the meaning of life, not 'sudden' and 'complete'.¹⁹

This demonstrates that reflecting on intercultural ethics can draw on a long tradition of Anglican thought stemming from Coleridge that is highly influential and engages fully with the cultural reality that is present as one begins to discern what is the appropriate ethical decision to make in a situation.

The Dynamic Creativity of God's Action in Worship as Determinative for Moral Judgment

Worship is formative for human beings because of the creativity found in God's indwelling in Christ and the gift of the Spirit that reorders all of creation, including the self as dynamic, an identifiable source of action in its own right.²⁰ Human beings act for an end, and the ultimate end is the fullest development and exercise of one's active powers. This can be understood as the perfection of one's life, or happiness. Worship is often seen as a highly conventional, undemanding activity in which Christians

¹⁹ Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church* (SCM Press, 2001), 253, italics original.

²⁰ Daniel W. Hardy, "The Foundation of Cognition and Ethics in Worship," in *Worship and Ethics: Lutherans and Anglicans in Dialogue*, ed. by O. Bayer and A. Suggate (Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 131.

continue ancient beliefs and practices, suitably modernized, where much importance is placed on achieving a balance of music, words, and ritual expressions. Liturgical theology does not help this much because it employs textual history to understand why particular rites have developed and how they might be reformed. An alternative approach argues that liturgy shapes human experience and behavior and therefore presents theology as the expression of such experience.²¹ This however sees the critical test for liturgy as bringing about a good experience for the participant. The result of this is seen in many contemporary liturgies where the celebrant occupies a role akin to an entertainer or rock star, adjusting the “worship-experience” to suit the demands of the “audience.”²² This makes worship, in an ironic way, deeply confessional and churchy, ignoring the presence and activity of God in the public realm where ethics delivers its judgments. Equally it is hard to criticize worship if it is experientially satisfying, which suggests varieties of experience and behavior are of equal worth.

Something more must be offered than an undemanding repetition of traditional worship, liturgical scholarship, or an appeal to experience. Instead, theology must seek to understand the movement of God towards persons and to see worship as the response of human beings to that movement in a way that proclaims the presence of God both in the past and present. It also effects a change in human beings as they respond to the energy of God which fulfills all that makes us human. The foundation of ethics and cognition in worship is based on the character of God, such that the energy of God changes and fulfils human relationships according to the nature of God’s own being. It is central to my argument that the person is not an unchanging essence but is a dynamic, active agent. The movement of God towards the acting person means that there are two dynamisms, the

²¹ Hardy, “The Foundation,” 118–120.

²² After the September 2023 conference at which these papers were presented, I attended a student mass with other conference participants at the Votivkirche in Vienna, close to the university department of theology. The mass was well attended by students, but the celebrant performed as if he were leading a rock band.

movement of God and the movement of the human beings whom God created (and still nourishes with God's presence).²³

Dan Hardy takes the quotation from Julian of Norwich "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well," and applies the phrase "well-being" to God's glory, which denotes harmony, being "benign" and "right," and he continues that this is "a feature which is recognized by those who are themselves 'right'."²⁴ Thus, Hardy sees God's nature as "the true character of well-being."²⁵ Hardy argues that God's well-being occurs within relationality, which itself is dynamic, moving from the love that is the true nature of God's character to the fullest expression of that love in relationality. The Trinitarian God practices divine activity as communicative activity with another, where the Spirit stirs the other to the fullness of relationship in an "energy event,"²⁶ and enacts what may be called an "ideal social community"²⁷ as we are drawn into a new "ontological recognition and reorientation"²⁸ through the activity of worship that opens human beings up and energizes them, conferring freedom and responsibility to show how God moves to all humanity, thus partaking in God's glory. Worship is a "bright mystery" that is active and redemptive, as "the stirring of God by the Holy Spirit to be himself by being with humankind in Jesus Christ."²⁹

Again, Hardy plunges back into the importance of culture and ways of living, rather than remaining in a church context.³⁰ The redemption of humanity occurs when the instinctive yearning of human beings for fullness of life is met in worship by each person and is mediated through social and personal life. This is not an abstraction because it is mediated through forms of social life. Faith is a bright mystery and worship has

²³ Hardy, "The Foundation," 131.

²⁴ Hardy, "The Foundation," 137.

²⁵ Hardy, "The Foundation," 141.

²⁶ Hardy, "The Foundation," 145.

²⁷ Hardy, "The Foundation," 146.

²⁸ Hardy, "The Foundation," 147.

²⁹ Hardy, "The Foundation," 135.

³⁰ Hardy, "The Foundation," 139.

ethical content, where humanity is reoriented to well-being, which is akin to glory.³¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholic theology saw the person as having an immutable essence, with definite laws as to how human nature would and should act, which the magisterium would prescribe for the faithful. This was replaced in the 1960s by a far more responsive understanding of what it means to be a person. As the theologian Josef Fuchs, SJ, wrote in *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality*, the “dynamic and evolutionary understanding of human existence” had as its task “to shape mankind and the world into an always more ‘human’ world and a more ‘human’ humanity.”³² Fuchs argued that an appeal to moral norms as embodying “objective and universal, eternal divine law”³³ was open to misunderstanding, because although there were of course unchangeable and eternal moral norms, such as the need to act justly, there were also many changeable principles, which were determined by the mutability of a person, their world and their knowledge.³⁴ The danger was that all moral norms were seen as unchanging, since the person was an essence whose nature was fixed and timeless.

Sacramental Ethics

A similar interpretation to Fuchs’s understanding of the person as an agent whose nature was to respond to the challenges of their life is offered by Timothy Sedgwick in his book *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life*,³⁵ which draws significantly on H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Responsible Self*.³⁶ Sedgwick does not simply present a view of the

³¹ Hardy, “The Foundation,” 137.

³² Josef Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality* (Georgetown University Press, 1983), 42; I have kept the original spelling of mankind.

³³ Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility*, 208. He is drawing on *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 3.

³⁴ Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility*, 208–210.

³⁵ Timothy Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life* (Fortress Press, 2008), 11, 34.

³⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (Harper and Row, 1963).

person as active and not confined to a fixed essence of human nature but also uses phenomenology, drawing both on anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz. What is important is the transition from “being acted upon to accepting and opening oneself [which] results in the formation of a person and his or her world.”³⁷ It is worship which enacts this movement by symbolically expressing the meaning of life, and draws individuals into relationship with God, challenging attitudes, and beliefs that “distance individuals from reality.”³⁸

Sedgwick sees worship as having a paschal identity that enables in turn a paschal way of life. Paschal denotes both suffering and passage—passage from death to acceptance of and reconciliation with our life in this world. The task of Christian ethics is to describe this paschal way of life, which is being a community of love and service.³⁹ The paschal liturgy has the three dimensions of *kerygma* (proclamation), *koinonia* (fellowship or community), and *diakonia* (servanthood), which are all inter-related. “Worship has power only as it celebrates a way of life which for Christians is paschal in character.”⁴⁰ Sedgwick argues that the “giftedness of life is experienced in worship in the celebration of the paschal mystery with its movement from offering in response to God to the sense of grace to the embrace of creation.”⁴¹ What matters is the renewal of worship and the life of the community, which must be held together, for Christian ethical reflection in itself cut off from worship cannot bring about such a renewal. Sedgwick argues that an integration of the broader vision of the Christian life with the values found in relationships, such as the search for mutuality, generativity, and pleasure, is essential to meet the challenges within Anglicanism today. The values must “express and deepen this paschal

³⁷ Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 43.

³⁸ Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 44.

³⁹ Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 46–47.

⁴⁰ Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 106–107.

⁴¹ Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 65.

movement as they specify how we live out the paschal mystery in the personal relations of daily life.”⁴²

Others have also expressed the centrality of worship to moral discernment. Bretherton writes that a new vision may emerge from “the reception and performance of Scripture in public prayer—in this case the Lord’s Prayer—in relation to a contested political issue.”⁴³ Prayer enacts a reorientation of the self beyond the ties of “kinship, place and polity”⁴⁴ to those in need of political help, such as refugees. “In the Lord’s Prayer, the church as a body hears and performs the world as a place that is open to the transformative love of God and neighbour.”⁴⁵ In this vision, where humility is inculcated and the unity of the church across time and space is demonstrated in the recitation of this devotional activity, prayer is “a preparation for public life.”⁴⁶

Rowan Williams advances a similar argument. In his address in Rome in October 2012 to the Synod of Bishops, the then Archbishop of Canterbury said:

Contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom—freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to

⁴² Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics*, 74.

⁴³ Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 143.

⁴⁴ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 144.

⁴⁵ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 145.

⁴⁶ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 144.

live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.⁴⁷

History and Culture

I have argued that there is a long tradition in Anglican theology of recognizing the importance of culture and equally of the centrality of worship in having an intrinsic relationship to moral discernment. It is time to pull these arguments together. Worship today is increasingly seen by theologians and anthropologists as culturally embedded. Over the twentieth century, sacramental theology developed from a concern with what was canonically valid to a view of liturgy as both deeply embedded in culture and as expressing, sustaining, and challenging the identity of the participants. Cultural awareness and sensitivity became integrally related to theological anthropology, with the cultural history (and often suffering) of the society being present in the liturgy. At the same time the liturgy reflected a belief that active participation of the laity was essential. Within the liturgy, whether sacramental or not, there was the meeting of divine grace and human action, as expressed by Hardy in the section above. Sacramental efficacy was related to the expression of Christian cultural identity in moral life, both for individuals and communities. Moral choices can also become part of worship. As long ago as 1957 the Anglican Communion argued in a report for the Lambeth that the decision about using contraception in a marriage could be made part of the offering of their marriage to the glory of God “a one-flesh unity in a worship which can be not only reasonable . . . but holy as well.”⁴⁸ Here an ethical decision becomes part of worship.

⁴⁷ Rowan Williams, “Archbishop’s Address to the Synod of Bishops in Rome,” October 10, 2014, www.rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2645/archbishops-address-to-the-synod-of-bishops-in-rome.html.

⁴⁸ “Appendix 1: An Assessment and Theological Consideration of the Facts upon which the report is based,” in *The Family in Contemporary Society: The Report of a Group Convened at the Behest of the Archbishop of Canterbury, with Appended Reports from the USA, Canada, and India* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1958), 149.

There are two examples I can give as a demonstration of the integration of worship, culture, and moral discernment. First, I remember a visit of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) to St. Augustine's (Anglican) Church, Umlazi in South Africa in May 2014. Umlazi is a large and very deprived township outside Durban. The intercessions in the Eucharist were by Steve Biko's sister (Steve Biko was a Black activist murdered by the South African government in 1977) and used the language of the Old Testament prophets to denounce the corruption of President Jacob Zuma's administration. Equally notable the music of the Eucharist used Zulu drumming and chanting throughout. The service lasted over three hours, had well over a thousand present, was led by the bishop (himself under house arrest during the apartheid era), and powerfully expressed the longing for freedom of the congregation in the hope of the Christian gospel.

Secondly, in my wife's parish of Ely, Cardiff, which again is a deprived estate in South Wales, there was a powerful example of how liturgy could express the need for reconciliation and forgiveness. In October 2012, a schizophrenic person, who had stopped his medication and believed his wife was being unfaithful to him, drove a van around the estate running people over, thereby killing a mother who flung herself in front of her children to save their lives, while also seriously wounding a dozen more. The Church of the Resurrection held a packed service two days later attended by leaders of the community, where the sermon by the parish priest, Canon Jan Gould, was on the wounds of grief, and how Christ could transform these into healing and forgiveness, as his risen body would always bear the wounds of his crucifixion.⁴⁹ In an interview after the sermon she said, "We're here really to give the community a chance to just come together, to stand shoulder to shoulder in our shock and in our grief,

⁴⁹ As the media reported at the time, Canon Jan Gould "urged those who were crammed into the church on Sunday to respond with love to the tragedy rather than revenge. 'This must surely be perhaps the deepest grief we have shared as a community,' but 'let love be our last word,' Ms Gould said." See "Cardiff Prays for Lorry Victims," *Church Times*, October 26, 2012, www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2012/26-october/news/uk/cardiff-prays-for-lorry-victims.

and just try to encourage one another to support one another.”⁵⁰ Only by forgiving rather than harboring revenge and anger, the community could go forward.

This was worship embodied in a very particular working-class culture, with the specific aim of preventing a desire for revenge against the person who was later convicted of manslaughter for his crime. Worship and forgiveness were related Christologically by reflection on the risen Lord, present both in that gathered congregation (which felt raw with the reality of seeing relatives and friends endure life-changing injuries and in one case a self-sacrificial death) and in the community itself. In this case, the warmth of a close-knit community—renowned for its care for its members and greatly regarded by clergy and congregation for its supportive and cohesive way of life in spite of great deprivation—had to be challenged by the liturgy so that a barely suppressed social passion did not become destructive and seek vengeance.

This is in fact an inversion of the quotation below from Casarella on culture and sacramental worship, where “learning from the popular wisdom in a culture” is necessary but insufficient. The demand of the Gospel for reconciliation recognizes the strength of “popular wisdom” but goes beyond it since cohesion can become the vehicle for revenge at a time of great trauma.

The dialogue of cultures lies at the center of a proper inculturation of the liturgy, and the process of inculturation will thus bring to light the genius of a particular culture as a living, organic member of the Catholic communion of faith. The question arises with respect to the production, translation, and catechetical transmission of any particular liturgical text or event. Inculturation is also part of the process of learning from the popular wisdom in a culture so that the liturgy in that culture reflects

⁵⁰ ITV news, “Hundreds Gather to Mourn Cardiff’s Hit-and-Run Victims,” October 21, 2012, www.itv.com/news/2012-10-21/hundreds-gather-to-mourn-cardiffs-hit-and-run-victims.

that wisdom and guides the people of God to Christ by means of that wisdom.⁵¹

Other liturgies written for this church concerned the large number of suicides during the Covid pandemic and healing after the 2023 riots in the community.⁵²

Two concluding reflections should be made. First, there has been a recognition that liturgy and gender are closely related. Beginning with the work of Mary Collins, liturgy and gender have become a central issue in much feminist and indigenous theology.⁵³ Alison Jasper refers to those women who have “designed liturgies featuring language that spoke about God in relation to the material elements that support life and bodily flourishing, or evoked a Cosmic God whose incarnation is observed in the non-human and planetary, and in our vulnerable world as much as in the historical particularity of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁵⁴ Bridget Nichols makes a related point when addressing the creativity of the Anglican liturgies in New Zealand and Brazil and the impact that women and culture have on the texts. Discussing the Brazilian prayerbook, she writes:

A new approach to language for the Divine can be seen in changes to the collects for Christmas, the Sundays after Christmas, and the Epiphany. Here God is addressed as ‘Maternal Father’, ‘Source of Life’, ‘Loving God’, ‘Marvellous/ Wonderful God’, ‘Light of the nations’. Some new compositions take up urgent social issues—a prayer for courage to

⁵¹ Peter J. Casarella, “Catholic Sacramental Theology in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. H. Boersma and M. Levering (Oxford University Press, 2015), 417–432.

⁵² Peter Sedgwick, “Ely Riots Show Young People’s Need for Hope,” *Church Times*, June 13, 2024, www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/2-june/comment/opinion/ely-riots-show-young-people-s-need-for-hope; Max Evans, “Coronavirus: Vicar’s Story of Shock and Grief in Cardiff Parish,” *BBC*, August 16, 2020, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-53734503.

⁵³ Mary Collins, *Women at Prayer* (Paulist Press, 1987); Kimberly Hope Belcher, “Sacramental and Liturgical Theology 1900–2000,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. H. Boersma and M. Levering (Oxford University Press, 2015), 750–766, doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566273.013.49.

⁵⁴ Alison Jasper, “Exploring Liturgy and Gender,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 21, no. 2 (2021): 77, doi.org/10.1080/1474225X.2022.2018244.

struggle on behalf of minorities ('Triumphant justice / who blows upon all the nations'); a prayer for women who suffer violence, abuse and harassment ('God of maternal love, breath of justice'); a prayer for the preservation of the natural world ('Breath of life, who has conceived in your womb all created order').⁵⁵

A second reflection is, however, more cautious. Bruce Morrill notes that contemporary culture makes the practice of liturgy very difficult due to consumerism, a culture of entertainment, and personal-use technology, which means that traditional patterns of rhythm and associated ritual activities are disassociated from the individual and their search for fulfillment. This was recognized by Timothy Sedgwick in the 1980s when he wrote *Sacramental Ethics*, but the culture has become far more atomized since then. Virtual reality and commodified ritual make the practice of liturgy in a face-to-face community a challenge to any church.⁵⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for the centrality of, and interconnection of, worship, moral discernment, and an understanding of reason that is not analytic and instrumental but contemplative and infused with the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. I have further argued that there is a long tradition in Anglican theology that exemplifies this. Contemporary examples would be Dan Hardy and Tim Sedgwick on liturgy and ethics; Luke Bretherton on the political nature of worship, drawing on his long engagement in grassroots organizing as well as his academic work; and the writing, addresses, and sermons of Rowan Williams. These are of course Western intellectuals, and this strand of the

⁵⁵ Bridget Nichols, "Gender and Liturgy: Their Conversation within the Anglican Communion," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 21, no. 2 (2021): 83, doi.org/10.1080/1474225X.2021.1960110.

⁵⁶ Bruce T. Morrill, "Embodiment and Liturgy," in *St. Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. B. N. Wolfe (St. Andrews, 2024), www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/EmbodimentandLiturgy.

Anglican tradition needs to be placed firmly in dialogue with emerging voices, e.g., from Maori culture, Brazil, and South Africa. As a Western historian of Anglican theology, I am aware that this chapter lays far more emphasis on the past tradition rather than contemporary, indigenous examples of where Anglican liturgy and moral discernment are now. However, the theoretical justification of contemplative pragmatism serves as a foundation for the relationship of liturgy and moral discernment in culturally specific contexts, and the two examples given are powerful ones.



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