Worship in a Network Culture
Explorations on Ritual and Liturgical Competence

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1. Introduction: a book and a jubilee

The occasion for this contribution is the presentation of a new book that offers a topical introduction to liturgical studies – topical not only in the sense of up-to-date with respect to the academic state of the art but also and especially in the sense of an exploration of the current context of the dynamic network society.[1] The book is the result of an international project in which South African and Dutch liturgists collaborated. It was a team effort. In addition to the presentation of a series of concrete cases, both inside and outside the church, the current position of Christian worship is explored through a set of well-known concepts from the field of ritual studies: liminality, bricolage / particularity, language / silence, image / sound, embodiment / performance, play / function, and time / space. The study concludes with a theological review. The book, written by Marcel Barnard, Johan Cilliers, and Cas Wepener, was presented at a short seminar on 24 June 2014, and this contribution is an adaptation of the introduction that was given there.

I would like to link the publication of the book to a jubilee. It was fifty years ago that the most quoted letter in the field of liturgical studies was posted. On April 1, 1964, Romano Guardini, who had been ill for some time, sent a public letter to Johannes Wagner, the chair of the German liturgists' meeting at the annual Liturgical Conference held in Mainz.[2] This letter has been called the *Mainzer Brief* (Mainz letter). The incentive for this letter was exactly the same as the mission of the book of Barnard, Cilliers and Wepener: *How does Christian*

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[1] M. BARNARD, J. CILLIERS & C. WEPENER: *Worship in a network culture. Liturgical ritual studies. Fields and methods, concepts and metaphors* (= Liturgia condenda 28) (Leuven, etc. 2014). The first part of this contribution on the Mainz letter by Guardini appears in a slightly different version as an article in *Tijdschrift voor liturgie* (2014) entitled: 'De dynamiek van cultus en cultuur als liturgisch milieu. Guardini's vraag naar *Kult-* en *Liturgiefähigkeit* in perspectief'.

[2] R. GUARDINI: 'Der Kultakt und die gegenwärtige Aufgabe der liturgischen Bildung', in *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 14 (1964) 101-106. Cf. *Herder Korrespondenz Spezial: Wie heute Gott feiern? Liturgie im 21. Jahrhundert* (April 2013), containing in particular: P. POST: 'Vergebliche Erneuerung: Liturgische Bewegungen in den Niederlanden' 53-56; B. JEGGLE-MERZ: 'Den heutigen Menschen im Blick. Wie Kirche liturgiefähig wird' 5-9. Cf. the English version of the letter: 'A letter', in *Herder Correspondence, Special Issue* (1964) 24-26; this English translation can be found at www.ecclesiadei.nl/docs/guardini.html. (accessed June 2014).

ritual acquire a place in contemporary culture? Fifty years ago, Guardini expressed his concerns regarding the human *Kult- und Liturgiefähigkeit* in a world in which industry and technology have emerged so strongly.

A few phrases from Guardini's letter are constantly quoted, particularly that central issue that people like to see over against the euphoria that arose after the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy that had been issued just prior to it:[3]

> Would it not be better to admit that man in this industrial and scientific age, with its new sociological structure, is no longer capable of a liturgical act?

I will use this letter as the starting point for my reflections on current ritual and liturgical competence. I found that it offers me a good perspective for comparison. Starting with this letter, I would like to work my way towards the South African / Dutch book project, keeping the basic quest for *Kult- und Liturgiefähigkeit.* Let us begin by taking another look at the letter.

2. The perspective of the Mainz letter

A close reading of the letter reveals that the general context is not the Vatican Council as such. Rather, the letter is concerned with the liturgical act (*Kultakt*), which is called 'ritual' in *Worship in the network culture.* Next to matters of texts and rituals, Guardini is mostly concerned with what he calls 'the problem of the cult act' (*die Frage des Kult Aktes*) or, more specifically, the liturgical act (*des liturgischen Aktes*).[4] What is involved here is a rediscovery of the cultic or ritual basis of liturgy. Allow me to quote a key passage in the letter:[5]

> The question is whether the wonderful opportunities now open to the liturgy will achieve their full realization; whether we shall be satisfied with just removing anomalies, taking new situations into account, giving better instruction on the meaning of ceremonies and liturgical vessels or whether we shall re-learn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes.
> The question will, of course, arise whether our present liturgy contains parts which cannot mean much to modern man.

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[3] GUARDINI: 'A letter' 26. (*Sollte man sich nicht zu der Einsicht durchdringen, der Mensch des industriellen Zeitalters, der Technik und der durch sie bedingten soziologischen Strukturen sei zum liturgischen Akt einfach nicht mehr fähig?* IDEM: 'Der Kultakt' 106.)

[4] GUARDINI: 'Der Kultakt' 106.

[5] GUARDINI: 'A letter' 24. (*Worum es also geht, ist die Frage, ob die so wunderbar geöffnete liturgische Möglichkeit auch zu wirklichem Vollzug wird. Ob sie sich damit erschöpft, Verbildungen zu beseitigen, neuen Situationen zu genügen, bessere Unterweisung zu geben, was Vorgänge und Dinge bedeuten – oder ob ein vergessenes Tun wiedergelernt und verlorene Haltungen neu gewonnen werden. Dabei wird sich natürlich auch die Frage erheben, ob die geltende Liturgie Bestandteile enthält, die vom heutigen Menschen nicht mehr echt realisiert werden können.* IDEM: 'Der Kultakt' 102.)

This is the source of the English motto 'Relearn a forgotten way of doing things', which, if I am correct, was first used by Nathan Mitchell in 1999.[6]

Guardini works out this program with examples, thereby emphasizing that a liturgical 'act' is a matter of 'doing'. He then mentions the procession, the offering, the fact that looking / witnessing / seeing in a ritual is more than observing; in a 'true' ritual observing means doing, participating, experiencing. Guardini states that this fundamental attitude is jeopardized by the modern context with its cinemas, radio, television, the tourist's approach. Are we still able to truly see?[7] In the ritual 'act' the symbol comes to life, this 'act' requires practice.

The letter ends with a series of open questions whose basic orientation is the issue of whether it is possible for that discovery and practice of the basic patterns of ritual and liturgy to still exist in the contemporary period. It concludes with the oft repeated question: Is not what we call the liturgical 'act' so closely associated with certain historical contexts – late antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the baroque period that we should perhaps give it up altogether:[8]

> Would it not be better to admit that man in this industrial and scientific age, with its new sociological structure, is no longer capable of a liturgical act? And instead of talking of renewal ought we not to consider how best to celebrate the sacred mysteries so that modern man can grasp their meaning through his own approach to truth?

The actual final tone of the letter is not entirely pessimistic but sees hopeful signs with respect to both mind and body, where senses are appreciated, with 'real' seeing and doing, 'real' music, where being together is not just sitting together but also solidarity.

In my view, the letter is not really cryptic. We could call it a sample of 'ritual criticism'[9] as well as an exponent of what we have come to call the 'ritual turn.'[10] Guardini both argues for the ability of people to perform a ritual act – which is how I translate *Kultakt* – and poses critical questions about this. Litur-

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[6] Cf. N.D. MITCHELL: *Liturgy and the social sciences* (Collegeville 1999) 8.

[7] GUARDINI: 'Der Kultakt' 103f.

[8] GUARDINI: 'A letter' 26. (*Sollte man sich nicht zu der Einsicht durchdringen, der Mensch des industriellen Zeitalters, der Technik und der durch sie bedingten soziologischen Strukturen sei zum liturgischen Akt einfach nicht mehr fähig? Und sollte man, statt von Erneuerung zu reden, nicht lieber überlegen, in welcher Weise die heiligen Geheimnisse zu feiern seien, damit dieser heutige mensch mit seiner Wahrheit in ihnen stehen könne?* IDEM: 'Der Kultakt' 106.)

[9] Vgl. P. POST: '*Ritual criticism*. Een actuele verkenning van kritische reflectie ten aanzien van ritueel, met bijzondere aandacht voor e-ritueel en *cyberpilgrimage*', in *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek / Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 29 (2013) 173-199.

[10] B. KRANEMANN: 'Theologie nach dem Ritual Turn. Perspektiven der Liturgiewissenschaft', in J. GRUBER (Hrsg.): *Theologie im Cultural Turn. Erkenntnistheologische Erkundungen in einem veränderten Paradigma* (= Salzburger interdisziplinäre Diskurse 4) (Bern etc. 2013) 151-173.

gy is a form of performing ritual acts; it exists by the grace of that basic quality. Guardini makes *Liturgiefähigkeit* an extension of *Kultfähigkeit*.

The question that Guardini poses with regard to the competence of cultic acts has three dimensions or intended contexts. There is the anthropological dimension of ritual as a human act. And there is the cultural dimension of society and culture. And then there is the interaction or amalgamation of those two.

Guardini's assessment with regard to the interaction of cult and culture is not optimistic, especially because of the nature of the cultural environment in his time. We should keep in mind that we are not only talking about the social context of the time, the 1960s, but also about a personal context. At that time, Guardini had been ill for some time.[11] He would die in 1968, and, in 1961, when he was chosen to be a member of the liturgical preparatory committee of Vatican ii he was already ill and could not be present at the Council.

3. 'Cult'

I suspect that Guardini invokes a certain context by this term, most likely unconsciously because he follows a certain vocabulary tradition, an especially German discourse. It is a term that we encounter particularly in German and French studies. There is a strong phenomenological sound to the term that has to date been continued chiefly in Germany. We see it less often in English contexts, perhaps in studies of Geertz or Douglas, who speak of the 'cult of death'. Speaking of mystery cults dominates, through which 'cult' also became commonplace in theological circles in the explorations of new approaches in the theology of the sacraments (Casel, Vagaginni). We see this in French as well. Durkheim uses *culte* as a basic category for ritual (negative and positive cult, in Book iii of his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* of 1912, a use that became widespread via the English editions of 1915 and 1968).[12] And *culte chrétien* (Vogel) can be seen in the field of liturgical history.[13] I also refer to authors such as Van der Leeuw, Heiler, Van Baaren, and Widengren, as well as Eliade. For them, cult is always a general category of ritual acts as well as an indication of actual repertoires such as family cult, temple cult, home cult, sacrificial cult, and ruler cult. As we stated earlier, this line is continued to date in German studies. The standard work by Belting, *Bild und Kult*, can be consulted here.[14]

[11] Cf. H.-B. GERL: *Romano Guardini 1885-1968. Leben und Werk* (Mainz 1985); M. MARSCHALL: *In Wahrheit beten. Romano Guardini – Denker liturgischer Erneuerung* (= Pietas Liturgica Studia 4) (St. Ottilien 1986).

[12] E. DURKHEIM: *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris 1968, orig. 1912); E. DURKHEIM: *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London 1915, 5th edition 1964).

[13] C. VOGEL: *Introduction aux sources de l'histoire du culte chrétien au moyen âge* (Spoleto [1966]).

[14] H. BELTING: *Bild und Kult* (München 1990).

The study by Vagaggini on liturgical theology, which became known in the German edition of 1959,[15] can be linked directly to the Mainzer letter. Here the term 'cult' (*Kult*) was very explicitly introduced and given a solid foundation. 'Cult' is the fundamental, formal, external material dimension of ritual. It is from this point of view that the Christian cult is discussed, and then the sacraments. This is entirely consistent with Guardini's use.

This line is continued but then greatly enriched by modern anthropological insights, discussed in liturgical handbooks such as the *Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft*, volume 3, where Sequeira deals with the *Gestalt des Gottedienstes* and speaks of the fundamental cultic expression.[16] In that context, he actually uses the term *Kultakt* as a fundamental form of cultic expression.[17]

In conclusion, I will note that Guardini's discussion on *Kultakt* fits in entirely with the whole of his works: the exact same gist can be found with the same examples of 'doing' (*Tun*) and 'looking' (*Schauen*) in his *Von heiligen Zeichen* from 1926.[18]

4. The perspective of the 1960s and 1970s

I will now broaden the perspective somewhat and look at the 1960s and 1970s. At that time Guardini's critical demand for ritual competence of modern humans appears to have found a broader echo. I will cite some of those voices that can also be heard in the book of Barnard, Cilliers, and Wepener.

There is, of course, Mönnich.[19] In 1966 this Lutheran liturgist and cultural studies scholar from Amsterdam published his work *Antiliturgica*, a little book that caused quite a stir, especially because of its tone and style. It is an exercise in playing with ambivalences, but the main theme is the continual gauging of opportunities to graft ritual and liturgy on to modern culture. In Mönnich, the interaction of fundamental lines of Christianity and modern culture is more prominent than just anthropological basic categories and dimensions (although ample attention is paid to play, masks, ritual roles). What opportunities do modern artistic expression, modern theatre, avant garde music offer? Which dimensions are supra or transcultural, which countercultural, or cross-cultural or completely contextual?

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[15] C. VAGAGINNI: *Theologie der Liturgie* (Einsiedeln 1959) 52-58, 58-62, 97-102.

[16] A.R. SEQUEIRA: 'Gottesdienst als menschliche Ausdruckshandlung', in R. BERGER et al.: *Gestalt des Gottesdienstes. Sprachliche und nichtsprachliche Ausdrucksformen* (= Gottesdienst der Kirche. Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft 3) (Regensburg 1987) 7-39, p. 13-17.

[17] SEQUEIRA: 'Gottesdienst als menschliche Ausdruckshandlung' 15.

[18] R. GUARDINI: *Von heiligen Zeichen* (Mainz 1926).

[19] C.W. MÖNNICH: *Antiliturgica. Enkele aantekeningen bij de viering van de kerkelijke feesten* (Amsterdam 1966); cf. E. POSTMA: *Dilettant, nar, pelgrim. De positie van C.W. Mönnich in cultuur en theologie* (Delft 2008) 329-332. Cf. C.W. MÖNNICH: *Pelgrimage. Ontmoetingen met de cultuur* (Baarn 1953).

Another very influential example of that time is Harvey Cox's famous *The Secular City*, which appeared a year earlier (1965).[20] In this bestseller, Cox stated that religion would assume a completely different role in culture, secularization would advance, and (institutional, traditional) religion would be marginalized. But at the same time he saw opportunities for religion and Christianity here. God could be just as present in secular contexts as in religious ones. In a beautiful essay in 1990 Cox looked back at his book.[21] And indeed, religion, including its Christian forms, appeared to be tougher than expected, but he stands by his fundamental thesis of the ambivalent interaction of Christianity and culture. In the essay he states that he wrote the book immediately after a stay in Berlin and that Bonhoeffer was very influential at the time. I believe this to be very important in understanding the tone of those years and places. Bonhoeffer articulated the post-religious era, the looming impossibility of giving religion a place in society and culture, in an impressive way. Here was the call for a new form of protection, a *disciplina arcani*. The culture was too threatening, and the cult had to be protected and concealed. Reference was made here to what the Early Church did in the fourth and fifth centuries.[22] Bonhoeffer wanted to preserve a place for authentic Christianity in what he saw as an emerging radically non-Christian world, he believed this required a *lieu secret*. The Christian faith could survive only if it was concealed from a totally non-Christian, profane context. The context here was of course the Interbellum and Nazism.

It is interesting to see how that *disciplina arcani* subsequently reappears in the context of practical exponents of modern culture such as new technologies like radio and television. Whereas Guardini averred that it was the cinema that denied modern people the gift to truly see, in the same way the emergence of new media is a threat to ritual and liturgy for many.

Around the period from 1950 to 1960, the increasingly present modern media, especially television, caused theologians like Karl Rahner and Guardini to argue once again for a form of *disciplina arcani*. The mysterious nature of the liturgy requires protection from the public open culture of modern media.[23]

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[20] H. COX: *The secular city: Secularization and urbanization in theological perspective* (New York 1965).

[21] H. COX: 'The secular city 25 years later', in *The Christian century* 107 (1990) 1025-1029.

[22] There is a long list of literature on this practice. I will suffice with a reference to G. STROUMSA: *Hidden wisdom. Esoteric traditions and the roots of Christian mysticism* (= Numen Book Series Studies in the History of Religions 70) (Leiden 2005) esp. 30-45 with basic literature in note 9, p. 30.

[23] For *disciplina arcani* in relation to new media see M. GERTLER: *Unterwegs zu einer Fernsehgemeinde. Erfahrung von Kirche durch Gottesdienstübertragungen* (Köln 1998) esp. 'Die Arkandisziplin', p. 120-125; B. GILLES: *Durch das Auge der Kamera. Eine liturgie-theologische Untersuchung zur Übertragung von Gottesdiensten im Fernsehen* (Münster 2000); especially St. BÖNTERT: *Gottesdienste im Internet. Perspektiven eines Dialogs zwischen Internet und Liturgie* (Stuttgart 2005); A. DRAGULA: 'Nous faut-il une nouvelle 'discipline de l'arcane'? Perspective polonaise', in *Théologiques* 16/1 (2008) 163-177.

Thirty years later, the then famous Johann Baptist Metz again repeated that plea, but now against the background of theories on reproduction and authenticity, original and copy, like those developed (Walter Benjamin![24]) with regard to art in particular (visual arts, the stage, photography). *Christliche Kulterfahrung* (the Christian cult experience) – we need to pay attention to the terminology here – needs protection because otherwise, authenticity and tradition would be lost in a context of reproduction.[25]

I am very appreciative of the fact that Barnard, Cilliers and Wepener disregard the temptation to protect and retreat that we see once again in certain conservative Reformed and Catholic circles, particularly where the network society is concerned. Those tendencies are cited via, for example, what the authors call *resistance identities*, but programmatically bypassed.[26]

A reference by a compatriot of mine dates back to the exact time of the letter. It is a poem by Huub Oosterhuis written circa 1965, in the context of the peak of the liturgical renewal movement in the Netherlands and shortly after his ordination. I have referred to it several times to indicate that one of the great pioneers of liturgical renewal hesitated about, questioned, and doubted the project, the contextualization and meaning of the liturgical acts, and had questions about *Kult- und Liturgiefähigkeit*.[27] I recited it most recently at the Societas Liturgica conference in Würzburg (August 2013). It is current because at this time ritual studies are paying a remarkable amount of attention to the success and failure of ritual, to its authenticity and inauthenticity.

Wenend wil ik uitleggen	Weeping, I want to explain
wat ik zo dikwijls doe:	What I so often do:
brood breken en vreemde	break bread and say strange
dingen daarbij zeggen.	things while doing so.
Hoe hartstochtelijk hoop ik	How passionately I hope
dat het ergens op slaat.	That it means something.
Dat men in die vergulde geheimen	That people understand their own lot
zijn eigen lot verstaat.	in those gilded mysteries.

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via www.erudit.org/revue/theologi/2008/v16/n1/019189ar.html [accessed May 2013].

[24] Cf. the classic text: W. BENJAMIN: 'L'oeuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée', in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 5 (1936) 40-68.

[25] J.B. METZ: 'Was ist mit der Gottesrede geschehen? Überlegungen zur Kirche in der Welt der Massenmedien', in *Herder Korrespondenz* 9 (1991) 418-422; IDEM: 'Kirchliche Kommunikationskultur. Überlegungen zur Kirche in die Welt der Massenmedien', in *Communicatio socialis* 24 (1991) 247-258.

[26] BARNARD, CILLERS & WEPENER: *Worhsip in the network culture* 13.

[27] P. POST: *Liturgische bewegingen. Thema's, trends en perspectieven in tien jaar liturgiestudie. Een literatuurverkenning 1995-2005* (Zoetermeer 2006) 127f.; H. OOSTERHUIS: *Hand op mijn hoofd* (Utrecht 1965) 18; IDEM: *Herschreven gedichten* (Bilthoven 1973²) 75.

Zo bijvoorbeeld dat brood leven	Like, for example, that bread means life
dat leven dood beduidt.	That life means death.
Maar wat ik ook zeg, dat oeroud	But whatever I say, that ancient
evangelie komt er niet uit.	Gospel does not emerge.

We will take another step and look at the 1970s. There, too, we see an important trace of a critical look at *Liturgiefähigkeit*, at culture as the context for liturgy. We all know about the opposition to liturgical renewal that arose because of the revised liturgical scripts and scenarios after Vatican II. Here as well we see the striking line of fundamental anthropological categories for ritual together with a sampling of the surrounding culture. There is a range of possibilities that are often underestimated because attention tends to be directed only at the contra-movement represented by such prominent figures as Victor Turner and Mary Douglas or, in the Netherlands, Frits van der Meer.[28] One can read about how this line has been transformed into the current Reform of the Reform Movement in Baldovin's overview of the critique on liturgical renewal: *Reforming the Liturgy*.[29]

But there was definitely more going on at mind. The interest in popular religious culture and the emergence of critical theology in Latin America (liberation theology as the common denominator) show a similar critical reflection on cult and culture in their own way. Feast and festival, play, dangerous play – all emerge as fundamental concepts for grafting fundamental lines of cult on to the culture. This often takes the form of contra-movement. It is interesting to view that line from the 1960s to the present in the life and work of one author, as we can in Cox,[30] whom we already mentioned as well as in Niek Schuman's autobiography.[31]

5. The current perspective

And now we arrive at the present. Where are we after fifty years? This is what *Worship in the network culture* explores – tentatively and gropingly – but it also sets a standard and evaluates it critically.

With others, I have argued repeatedly that the tragedy of Guardini and those sympathetic to his views lay in the fact that the quest for *Kult / Liturgiefähigkeit*

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[28] See P. POST: 'Over de historische referentie in de rooms-katholieke "Hervormings-van-de-hervormingsbeweging"', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 20 (2004) 73-88; IDEM: 'Dealing with the past in the Roman Catholic liturgical "Reform of the Reform Movement"', in *Questions liturgiques Studies in liturgy* 87/4 (2006) 264-279.

[29] J. BALDOVIN: *Reforming the liturgy. A response to the critics* (Collegeville 2008).

[30] H. COX: *Feast of fools. A theological essay on festivity and fantasy* (Cambridge, MA 1965); IDEM: *Religion in the secular city* (New York 1984); in Dutch: *Religie in de stad van de mens* (Baarn 1984).

[31] N. SCHUMAN: *Mijn jaren van geloven* (Zoetermeer 2012).

was actually linked to a previous period, while the new network society had already begun to emerge in the long years of the 1960s.[32] Whereas the quest for *Kultfähigkeit* was still central and primary in Guardini's letter, now, in my opinion, it is the quest for *Liturgiefähigkeit* that is central. The question is: How do we prevent the same tragic misunderstanding from occurring, and how does liturgy find its place and identity on the humus of the current ritual dynamics of the network culture?

I think that the tone can and may be different now from that in Guardini's letter of fifty years ago. As the book *Worship in the network culture* demonstrates, ritual is an accepted perspective of liturgical acting, on both practical and reflective levels. After the crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, a huge momentum can be seen ever since the 1980s in terms of rituality; the platform of ritual studies arose as well, and since the turn of the millennium we have entered the phase of large multidisciplinary thematic clusters in which ritual and ritual studies are present at numerous spots and where there is a basis for innovative research. I will mention here only cultural memory studies, urban studies, the cognitive science of religion, material culture studies, migration studies, as well as studies on cyber culture.

6. Ambivalences

I would like to close with two contemporary gauges that indicate in particular that, in addition to ambitions to graft liturgy on to contemporary culture, there are also ambivalences. Remarkably and strikingly, I encountered those ambivalences in Vonne van der Meer's latest novel *Het smalle pad van de liefde* – a book in which religion, in its Roman Catholic variant, and ritual / liturgy play a key role.[33] A central role is given to two families who are friends and do much together, including vacations. At the start of the novel, a young boy from one of the families is killed in a bizarre accident on the beach: while the father is surfing during a storm, the child's pram is thrown against the basalt blocks with the child in it. The family moves to France; the other family comes to visit them on vacation with the children, and the husband in the one family sleeps with the wife in the other. The mother of the child who died seeks comfort in her faith,

[32] Vgl. POST: 'Vergebliche Erneuerung'; IDEM: 'Na de lange jaren zestig. Liturgiewetenschap en *ritual studies*. Opkomst, typering en actuele uitwerking van een relatie', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 22 (2006) 89-111; IDEM: 'Met het gezicht naar de cultuur: Liturgiewetenschap als studie van ritueel en cultuur', in L. VAN TONGEREN & P. POST (red.): *Voorbij de liturgiewetenschap. Over het profiel van liturgische en rituele studies* (= Netherlands studies in ritual and liturgy 12) (Groningen / Tilburg 2011) 37-61; M. BARNARD & P. POST: 'Nogmaals: de Liturgische Beweging voorbij. Enkele kritische kanttekeningen bij de historiografie van het zogenoemde tijdvak van de Liturgische Beweging', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 24 (2008) 7-22.
[33] V. VAN DER MEER: *Het smalle pad van de liefde* (Amsterdam 2013).

and a friendly nun teaches her about the Catholic faith. Guardini is central here. And then comes a key scene in the book. On her own initiative, Dédé, the sister of the boy who was killed, Björn, builds a chapel for him in the garden by the pool. The consecration is described as follows:[34]

> At the agreed time, they gathered by the pool. Not a word had been said about dress code, but no one was dressed in work clothes, bathing trunks, or bathing suit with a towel around their hips. Everyone had put on festive clothing. They had to wait for a moment. Dédé and Merel were busy with a dust pan and brush, because some blades of grass had blown into the chapel.
> (…)
> In the middle, on a block of wood, was a small altar, made of the same type of stone as the chapel. On it stood a cast-iron cross that Dédé had found at a jumble sale, with candles in candlesticks on each side. At the last moment, Merel placed a small glass vase on the corner of the altar.
> 'And now, Dédé?' Françoise asked as they stood in a half circle around the chapel. 'Are you going to say a few words?'
> Dédé stepped forward, struck a match and lit the candles. Whether her hand shook or the wicks were somewhat damp, it took a while before they caught flame. Then she nodded at Merel, who placed a few branches of pink and purple vetches in the vase. Only after Merel had returned to her spot in the circle did Dédé turn around. 'Let's start,' she said, and she looked shyly at the onlookers.
> (…)
> 'And now I want to say something to Björn. I just don't know what.'
> All remained quiet. [And now for the key passage:]
> 'I want to pray for him or something…. Only, I don't know what.' (…) She longed for what none of the adults could give her: sacred words, ancient words in which people had sought refuge for ages when they wanted to remember their dead. If Nounou [the nun, PP] had been there, she could have recited the Lord's Prayer or some other prayer.

After a moment of silence, Floris, the father, moves forward and starts reciting, then singing Eric Clapton's 'If I saw you in heaven'.
In essence, this scene is about the (im)possibility of modern people finding appropriate ritual forms of expression. There is a reference to the power of forgotten traditional forms – in this case, Roman Catholic liturgy. But what is interesting is that the passage also indicates how forms of *Kult* are applied by the children almost naturally, creating a sacred place, holy ground, performing basic ritual acts such as building a chapel, an altar, lighting candles, and placing flowers. Even the song that – 'in an emergency' – replaces the Lord's Prayer has been played for years at funerals and cremations. Thus, there is definitely *Kultfähigkeit*.

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[34] VAN DER MEER: *Het smalle pad van de liefde* 110-114.

7. Affinity space

In conclusion, a last observation. This is also my critical note with regard to the book that is the occasion for this contribution. The book calls the contemporary context 'network culture.' An important characteristic of that network society is that that culture is determined to a large degree by a combination of 'online' and 'offline'. Following radio and TV, ritual is now included in a context where new forms of communication introduce a whole new dynamics. It is remarkable how little attention is paid to e-rituals or cyber rituals in ritual and liturgical studies. At the last international Societas Liturgia conference in Würzburg (August 2013) there were 112 papers, but only one addressed cyber ritual / cyber liturgy explicitly (Teresa Berger, Yale). And Grimes' recently published grand synthesis of ritual studies, *The craft of ritual studies,* pays very little attention to cyber ritual.[35] The *Worship in the network culture* book project does not really elaborate on that cyber ritual dimension either. It has only a few online references,[36] whereas there are many good things on digital or cyber religion.[37]

   This cyber dimension poses important questions for the ritual presentation. New, but sometimes also old, fundamental questions posed about ritual presentation: questions about the sensory function, about physicality, about virtuality and reality, about distance and involvement, about individuals and community, about private and public nature, and about authenticity and authority.

   I suspect that there completely different and new perspectives may come into view. Allow me to give an example. What happens to liturgy, to Christian community, when we connect it with affinity space? The concept of affinity space has been worked out in detail by James Paul Gee, developed in the

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[35] R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) 82.

[36] BARNARD, CILLERS & WEPENER: *Worship in the network culture* 20-22, 312f.

[37] For e-religion, cf. the online bibliography: http://digitalreligion.tamu.edu/biblio. Heidi Campbell is by far the most productive and most quoted author on cyber religion. She edited the recent volume: H. CAMPBELL (ed.): *Digital religion. Understanding religious practice in new media worlds* (Abingdon 2013). A great deal of literature is of a missionary and/or church-building nature. Valuable studies that also have liturgy in mind are: S. BÖNTERT: *Gottesdienste im Internet: Perspektiven eines Dialogs zwischen Internet und Liturgie* (Stuttgart 2005); S. INNASIMUTHU: *The sacred in cyberspace. The impact of computer network communication on pastoral care* (Marburg 2009); C.A. CASEY: *Virtual ritual, real enactment. An examination of the conditions for online religious ritual as enacted symbol* (New York 2007); IDEM: 'Virtual ritual, real faith. The revirtualisation of religious ritual in cyberspace,'in *Online – Journal of religions on the Internet* 2/1 (2006) 73-90; S. JACOBS: 'Virtually sacred. The performance of ssynchronous cyber-rituals in online spaces', in *Journal of computer-mediated communication* 12/3 (2007),
via http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue3/jacobs.html (accessed January 2013); N. MICZEK: 'Online rituals in virtual worlds. Christian online services between dynamics and stability', in *Online – Heidelberg journal of religions on the internet* 3/1 (2008) 144-173. In preparation: P. POST & S. VAN DER BEEK: *Pilgrimage in a network society. Offline and online explorations in ritual criticism and sacred place.*

framework of a critique on the current school system.[38] Key terms are 'affinity spaces' or 'connectivity spaces.' Gee posits that in many settings such as school, politics, university, church/religion, we concentrate too much on 'community', on what exactly a community is and what it is not. This is supplemented by the discussion of notions of 'belongingness' and 'membership' and boundaries. We are constantly busy with labelling groups. Gee suggests that we start not with groups but with 'spaces' where all kinds of people interact. They can be 'real' and 'virtual spaces' or a combination of both: '…creating spaces wherein diverse sorts of people can interact is a leitmotif of the modern World'.[39] More specifically, he looks at a particular type of space, the 'affinity space' and elaborates on that specific space from the perspective of the current dynamics of online and offline. He therefore distinguishes the 'content' that is generated ('generator'), the interaction in the space ('interaction'), and the access to the space ('portals'). In the end, he describes eleven characteristics or qualities that together determine the definition of an 'affinity space'. I will briefly list seven of them:[40]

> common endeavour, not race, class, gender etc.;
> newbies and masters and everyone else share common space;
> content organization is transformed by interactional organization;
> all kinds of knowledge are honoured;
> many different forms and routes to participation;
> lots of different routes to status;
> leadership is porous, leaders are resources.

I will not discuss these characteristics here in detail but simply indicate that we are now surrounded by such affinity spaces that define our interaction in groups. One can think of companies that set similar spaces around their products at meetings, chat boxes, newsletters, or many action groups, or fans of movies, games, television series, and heroes. This includes memorial sites such as the digital memorial site for the Jewish Holocaust victims in the Netherlands and, last but not least, pilgrimage sites.[41]

What happens if we extend this line of thinking to liturgical communities, if we view them as places of shared passion and go on from there to community, rather than the other way around?

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[38] J.P. GEE: *Situated language and learning. A critique of traditional schooling* (New York, NY 2004) esp. Chapter 6, p. 70-81.

[39] GEE: *Situated language and learning* 71.

[40] GEE: *Situated language and learning* 77-79.

[41] www.joodsmonument.nl