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# Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies

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# Praying, Believing and Being Church

## A Ritual–Liturgical Exploration

Hilton Robert Scott

This thesis is the result of a concern over ‘being church’ in a multicultural setting, in accordance with the aphorism: ‘as we pray, so we believe, so we live (together)’. The urban setting of the City of Centurion, in Gauteng Province, Republic of South Africa, displays a diversity of cultures, languages and individuals in relation with one another. South Africans, as a nation, are still learning to live together in unity and inclusivity, some two decades after the birth of democracy in a post-Apartheid context. This context cannot be overlooked, neither can the multicultural context of urban South Africa. The suggested theory for praxis involves the liturgical inculturation process of continual critical-reciprocal interactions between liturgy and culture, with the inclusion of focusing on the concepts of unity and inclusivity. This should then aid the worshippers’ unity and inclusivity in ‘being church’, in living together – with one another in a multicultural setting. This was achieved by taking an interdisciplinary approach, by integrating theories from the fields of Liturgical Studies and Ecclesiological Studies. It was observed that the two fields had similar concerns – including a plethora of theory, concepts and methods. The field of Systematic Ecclesiology has a normative concern over unity and diversity, while the field of Liturgical Studies has a concern over the relationship between culture(s) and liturgical tradition. Both of these concerns are addressed as the research project integrates theoretical approaches from the fields of Systematic Theological Ecclesiology and Liturgical Studies through an interdisciplinary approach.

**Chapter 1** introduces the Latin aphorism as well as the English translation used in the thesis: ‘as we pray, so we believe, so we live (together)’, briefly describing the causal interrelationship between the three concepts and explaining that prayer is a form of communication.\*\* The term ‘communication’ is briefly discussed from different perspectives. Additionally, the introductory chapter explains the research problem and the main research question formed from it: *how does the form and content of prayer impact the ways in which people connect with God and other people?* Before proceeding to Chapter 2, this chapter engages with the context and explanations of the research problem in order to provide understanding of the research aims and questions. The research approach is also introduced,

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\*\* “*Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi*” – Dirkie Smit, “*Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi?* – Oriënterende inleiding tot liturgie en etiek,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 45(3-4): 887-907.

primarily by describing Osmer's four core tasks of practical theological interpretation. By listing similar studies, Chapter 1 reveals why my research project serves as a unique contribution to the field.

**Chapter 2** situates the study academically, in the fields of Practical Theology, Liturgical Studies, Ritual Studies and Systematic Theological Ecclesiology, and geographically in the City of Centurion which is in the same metropolitan as the administrative capital of the Republic of South Africa – Pretoria. Chapter 2 theoretically explores the fields of Practical Theology by discussing its object of inquiry, and Liturgical Studies, as a sub-discipline of Practical Theology, which typically approaches the studies from three broad areas. This chapter also discusses the concept of interdisciplinarity, as this study integrates theories, concepts and methods, as well as the key concepts: qualitative research, liturgy, prayer, liturgical inculturation, ritual, ecclesiology, 'church', the marks of the church and the nature of these marks and unity. As this study was primarily from a Liturgical, or Practical Theological, perspective it was necessary to discuss and describe, in detail, Ecclesiology in Systematic Theology in addition to the terms 'church' and 'unity' from an ecclesiological perspective. The second chapter concludes with thorough explanations of the research methodology, including why a qualitative approach was taken to collecting the empirical data, how it was to be gathered and how it would be analyzed for the interpretative chapters of the thesis.

**Chapter 3** describes the empirical data by means of answering the question 'what is going on?' The empirical research was conducted at three separate congregations through participatory observations and semi-structured interviews at each church over a period of two years — 2015 and 2016. Therefore, the data was categorized by method as well as by congregation. The results of which were categorized themes developed from taking a grounded theory approach. These themes were described and discussed whilst leaving room for interpretation in the proceeding chapters. Firstly, the participant observations were described individually, chronologically and by congregation. This is followed by the descriptions of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, described and discussed in the following categorized themes: 'Quiet time and other daily rituals', 'Extemporaneous prayers', 'Prayer as thanksgiving', 'Prayer as requesting', 'Prayer as healing', 'Prayer as catharsis', 'Prayer as lament', 'Prayer as submission and confession'. The latter parts of Chapter 3 include integrating the appropriate empirical data from the participant observations as well as the interviews for further description.

**Chapter 4** is the first of two chapters that discusses the empirical data by means of interpretation. In this chapter certain episodes, situations and/or contexts are interpreted through the lenses of Ritual Studies, Liturgical Studies and Pastoral Care. The first section of Chapter 4 takes a Ritual-Liturgical approach that focusses on the ritual perspective of the liturgical act of praying — understanding liturgy from the field of Ritual Studies — by discussing the concepts of ritualization and ritual structures of prayer. The proceeding section, a liturgical-ritual approach, considers the observed liturgies as rituals

because of their liturgical formation and discusses ritual from a Liturgical Studies perspective, hence liturgical-ritual. Chapter 4 is concluded by discussing prayer as a psychological and sociological phenomenon through lenses of Pastoral Care, where a working definition of prayer is developed, including that it is a communicative ritual whether verbal or contemplative and has an impact on the person(s) praying and/or being prayed for.

**Chapter 5** continues with interpreting the empirical data, by taking a normative approach which entails learning from good practice and developing insight into ethical norms by using Theological concepts. In this chapter, ecclesiological perspectives were discussed in an interdisciplinary manner focusing on interpreting mainly the concept of *koinonia* with (1) ‘living together’ as well as the other elements of the aphorism; (2) worship (or prayer); and (3) belief and the interrelationships of all three. Thus Chapter 5 discusses communion and being church from an ecclesiological perspective before discussing views on belief and prayer (and worship) and their interrelationships. It is under these subsections that insights are gained into *koinonia* and the creative tensions between unity and diversity, identity and otherness — as well as inclusivity and exclusivity. The second part of Chapter 5 remains theological in its concepts as it involves Liturgical Studies once more, however it involves integrating the concept of ritualization with the concept of liturgical inculturation. This integration aids in building the theory for praxis that is suggested in Chapter 6.

**Chapter 6** revisits what was discussed and described in the previous chapters, followed by an explanation of the South African urban context and the importance of unity, inclusivity and liturgical inculturation in post-Apartheid South Africa. An important finding from this section of the chapter is that one’s culture should be secondary to one’s declarations of faith. Such is the creative tension between the ‘I’ and the ‘we’. It was also found that liturgical inculturation, in the South African context, would aid unity and inclusivity in the worship service as well as the local and faith community. In the second section of Chapter 6, the theory for praxis is described. It is twofold in response to two profound human needs: God and community. Firstly, exclusive connectedness through liturgical inculturation is described where it was found that worshippers’ experiences and encounters of connectedness, impacted through the form and content of prayer in the worship service, should compliment the connectedness experienced and/or encountered in the day-to-day prayer rituals and ‘quiet times’. Secondly, inclusive connectedness through liturgical inculturation is described. Where it is found, from an interdisciplinary approach, that ritualization could aid unity and inclusivity as an element of liturgical inculturation. Another finding, was the emphasis on ‘relevance’ as it was supported that each generation is concerned that worship be relevant to them. Lastly, suggestions for further research are made; examples included considering perspectives from the field of Musicology, including such aspects as the form and function of sounds and music when researching particular liturgical ritual acts.