The Juxtaposition of Ritual Worlds
Maintaining Relationship in Anglican Indigenous Christian Funerals

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Abstract

The juxtaposition and maintenance of inherited and indigenous rituals suggests there is something in each of those sources which are felt necessary to retain as both create and express identity and faith at the heart of the ritual processes. Counter to many conversations in liturgy which advocate for full inculturation as the goal, I suggest that acculturation, rather than inculturation, may be, for certain cultures and liturgies, the preferred ritual pattern, a ritual technique to continue two identities in the midst of diversity, especially in Christian communities who live in the ongoing reality of the move from colonialism to postcolonialism. To argue this assumption first requires a conversation between incarnationally-based inculturation and the newer conversation partners of hybridity and syncretism, placing that conversation in the context of colonial and postcolonial realities before turning to an example of acculturated funeral rituals amongst the Swampy Cree of Manitoba, Canada.

Keywords

Canadian indigenous, funerals, liturgical inculturation, ritual hybridity, Anglican Church of Canada

Introduction

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of IRiLiS an international and ecumenical gathering of scholars in ritual studies addressed the multifaceted topic of ritual techniques, dancing with the questions of “how can rituals be fruitfully explored as cultural techniques: how do rituals work, what do rituals do, how do they achieve this, and what do they make possible?” This contribution looks at ritual techniques drawn from two different cultures, a “settler”² church imported and imposed on indigenous

1) IRiLiS description of the event presented in the invitation to participate, email of January 6, 2022.
2) “Settler” is a fairly common term used to describe Europeans who immigrated to Canada from a number of different countries and who brought different expressions of Christianity. See Lorenzo Veracini, Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

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people in Canada and its adaptations amongst indigenous Canadians, here particularly the Swampy Cree people of Manitoba.3 In the emerging rituals viewed at the intersection of these cultural patterns, several worldviews co-exist: the English-Canadian Anglican tradition brought to Canada (primarily in the 18th and 19th centuries), the adoption of Christianity expressed in Anglican forms by many indigenous Canadians, and the adaptations made to those Anglican forms so that elements of cultural importance to the Swampy Cree could be maintained.

This essay focuses on the rituals surrounding death as occasions when ritual techniques are maintained or developed in proximity to one another, and countering the trajectory of what academic liturgical inculturation has proposed as both normative and theologically proleptic. Preceding the case study itself is a rehearsal of the dynamism of local theologies intersecting with liturgical inculturation studies, set within the context of colonialism and postcolonialism as conversation partners for the application of ritual techniques. Finally, it needs to be said that this is written by an outsider to the indigenous people of Manitoba and Ontario, with gratitude for the generosity of many who invited me in and taught me something of the way of prayer and liturgy by indigenous Anglican Christians.4

1 The centrality of the incarnation in ecclesiological and ritual inculturation

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. (I Corinthians 12:14-20).

Diversity in the body of Christ, the Church, is not an option, but rather an essential element. Without it, we are not a body, either in the contributions of what each individual or community brings to the common good, or in the very functioning of being as St. Paul articulated centuries earlier. But essential diversity within and between communities of faith has not always been expressed or shaped in inherited ritual and liturgical forms brought to people who were the focus of missionary activities. The term ‘inculturation’ itself has been interpreted in a number of different ways through centuries of ecclesial

3) The Swampy Cree (Mushkego) are a large group within the Cree Nation, these observations are primarily from the Opaskwayak, Misipawistik and Chemawawn bands in Northcentral Manitoba.
4) The Rt. Rev. William Cliff, bishop of Brandon, MB, the Ven. Rosalyn Kantlaht’ant Elm, Archdeacon in the Diocese of Huron, the Rev. Lydia Constant, the Rev. Flora Young, the Rev. Michael Charltrand, Sr. Joy Ruddock, priests of the diocese of Brandon MB; and many baptized members of the diocese of Brandon.
engagement and is much broader than liturgical and ritual practices.\(^5\) The fundamental Christian focus of inculturation is how to proclaim Christ and the gospel to people who speak different languages (hence questions of translation are issues of inculturation), and how to incarnate the words, images, and doctrines so that they have some local referent for the cultures and peoples being evangelized. In some places and times, it was assumed that the Mediterranean and subsequently European cultural assumptions remained unintelligible to those outside ‘established’ Christianity and that other words and images needed to be used. But there is also a long history of assuming that particular European cultures were synonymous with Christianity and that conversion was always to both a defined set of cultural patterns and practices as well as to the teachings of Christianity. This assumption, operating throughout most of the second millennium of the common era, also carried with it an understanding that other cultures, peoples, and religions were in error and inferior to the Christian-culture fusion of colonial powers.\(^6\)

The spectrum of liturgical inculturation within the broader field of religious inculturation in Christianity is also rooted in the theology of the incarnation, the Word made flesh, God become human. The implications of this incarnational foundation are manifold, but two primary theological implications dominate. The first is the human-divine exchange, present in so many early church theologians, in which the incarnation is ultimately soteriological. These authors include Irenaeus of Lyon, Justin Martyr of Rome; Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine of Hippo, but perhaps most famously summarized in the shorthand of St. Athanasius (c. 296-373):

> For He was made man that we might be made God; and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and He endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.\(^7\)

The second implication of the incarnation impacting liturgical inculturation is sacramentality, an expansive view of reality at the center of which is an understanding that the Triune God

> is the Creator of everything that is, continues to interact with all of creation, is present in that interaction in many ways, chose, in their second person, to become one in flesh with humanity and

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\(^5\) “Inculturation is different from a mere external adaptation, as it signifies an interior transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration into Christianity and the rooting of Christianity in various human cultures.” Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (On the 20\(^{th}\) Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Second Vatican Council) D.4.

\(^6\) For more recent analysis concerning North America, see Mark Charles & Soong-Chan Rah, Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 2019).

immersed in all creation, is desirous of an ongoing relationship with humanity and creation, inspires and enables that relationship through their third person in particular, and is, above all, love – love for us.8

This belief that God is continuously engaging with creation and desires relationship at the heart of sacramentality is foundational to liturgical inculturation as linguistic, ritual, spatial, temporal, and material patterns are a primary way to respond to God’s desire for engagement and relationship, the matter and form of human-divine encounter. These elements of text, music, space, attire, and ministerial roles are called on to express the existing or aspirational presence of people belonging to particular cultures or to give voice to a group of worshiping Christians for whom the inherited liturgy is a product and expression of a different culture. In this second category, ‘inherited’ can mean both freely adopted or imposed, often in a colonial context, and the growing academic analyses of how various peoples adopt, adapt, assimilate, and reject that colonial Christianity is itself a central conversation of liturgical inculturation.9 But, in spite of these conversations developing awareness of essential diversity, there is still a bias towards a ‘homogenized’ ritual pattern which maintained an illusion of unity in uniformity as ‘normative.’

2 Liturgical inculturation to postcolonial liturgical theology

There has never been a time when inculturation of the gospel and liturgy has not been a part of Christian history.10 A primary shift in the study of liturgical history is specifically the move from assuming that the earliest theological and liturgical expressions of the gospel were unified and only moved toward diversity through so-called heretical interpretations, to understanding diversity in interpretation and liturgical practice as present from the beginning of Christianity.11 In spite of this, the contemporary conversation on liturgical inculturation did not begin in earnest until the 1970s. One of the pioneers of liturgical inculturation was Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, whose work throughout his years of teaching in Rome and in the Philippines provides a synthesis of much of the scholarship throughout the 1960s

9) Vatican II was a watershed moment in defining the essential role of inculturation theologically rooted in the incarnation: “It was the incarnation of Christ, carried on by the church as Christ’s body located in myriad human cultures, that serves as the basis for both the identity and the diversity of the liturgy as the church’s self-expression.” Sacrosanctum Concilium, 37-40.
to 1980s. Chupungco was constantly refining and developing his work until his death in 2013, seen particularly in his three central works on culture and liturgy.

One of the helpful distillations of Chupungco’s work was his articulation of the differences between adaptation, acculturation, and inculturation, which he summarized in *Liturgical Inculturation* (1992). ‘Adaptation’ was found in a number of Roman Catholic reflections on the liturgy regarding changes to the official rites (in this case, the Roman Rite) resulting in both temporary and long-term changes brought in from local culture, leading to an adaptation of the existing liturgical form and official texts. The result was a slightly changed version of the universal and approved rites. ‘Acculturation’ was a very different process of inculturation, which Chupungco said “may be described as the conjunction of three leading factors: juxtaposition, which is merely external; the dynamic of interaction; and the absence of mutual assimilation.” In the same book, Chupungco introduces his shorthand formula for acculturation: $A + B = AB$, where $A$ = the liturgy and $B$ = the culture. These two remain proximate but “unassimilated cultural expressions.” The third process of bringing culture and liturgy together, ‘inculturation,’ was for Chupungco not only an integration of the official liturgy and the culture in which it was immersed, but a dynamic process in which both were changed. “The essential elements of inculturation, namely the process of reciprocal assimilation between Christianity and culture [resulted in the] interior transformation of culture on the one hand and the rooting of Christianity in culture on the other.” Chupungco’s shorthand formula for inculturation was $A + B = C$ in which $A$ was no longer simply $A$ and $B$ was no longer simply $B$, both liturgy and culture were changed by the encounter.

These three approaches were already a synthesis of earlier work on how liturgy and culture influenced each other, from which Chupungco understood inculturation as the desired and ultimate outcome; a series of mutual impacts of liturgy on the immediate cultural context as well as authentic cultural expressions giving the liturgy a new voice. For Chupungco and many other inculturation theorists, this final step represented “a deeper level of integration between the local culture and the liturgy.” But since this understanding of liturgical inculturation was widely embraced and taught in


14) *Liturgical Inculturation*, 27.

15) Ibid.

16) Ibid., 29.


liturgical studies, the social science tools used to study liturgy and culture have shifted, often at accelerated speed, as greater interdisciplinarity and newer voices have joined the academic conversation. Above all, however, is the question of what is the liturgy? (and here the scholars of the 1980s and even 1990s were assuming ‘traditional’ written liturgies which had little room for variation). The newer scholarship began to stress the reality that the liturgy itself (or liturgy without the definitive article) was itself a cultural construct, rather than something other than the cultures in which it moved. New approaches were necessary to continue to talk about the multicultural reality that was liturgy, and the cultures which continued to influence and expand the shape and meaning of many liturgies.

One important shift is toward “postcolonial liturgical theology,” which critiques both the view of a monolithic construct of liturgy, as well as its alignment with ecclesial institutional control and power. Michael N. Jagessar and Stephen Burns opened up an international, ecumenical, and multicultural conversation in their 2011 collection of essays:

From a postcolonial perspective, there is much to critique in the study of liturgy and the celebration of Christian worship… the crucial point for us relates to the challenge of handling and negotiating the weight that tradition carries in the construction of what passes as acceptable worship…\(^{19}\)

Cláudio Carvalhaes picks up from where multiple decades of conversations on popular religiosity versus official liturgy began and moves the conversation to a seamless garment of ritual and sacramental offerings in what he calls ‘traditioning other forms of theological-liturgical life… recreating a world where the sacred and what matters in life are perceived differently.’\(^{20}\) The new liturgiology is as much a matter of culture as it is of liturgical reform, but culture can mean so much more than ethnicity, race, and language. Consumer culture, queer culture, and multiple other identities contribute to the appearance of new formats of church, what Carvalhaes calls the “liturgical turn” in which unnoticed cultural forces change our experiences and understandings: “uncontrolled, messy, informed by unthinkable sources, and nowadays deeply marked by the effects of economic neoliberal system in full force.”\(^{21}\) The engagement of liturgical inculturation with colonialism, postcolonialism and decolonialism joined to the insight that liturgy is a multicultural reality with perhaps a core (a code?, an ordo?) in the midst of constant reform has called for new contextual understandings to articulate how liturgy is done, lived, put on like a garment, and shared in particular communities of Christian faith. This leads us to insights gained from conversation partners in hybridity and syncretism as new ways to reflect on changed identities and practice.

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21) Ibid., 6.
3 Inculturation, hybridity and syncretism

Where has the focus of liturgical inculturation developed in more recent decades? In many ways, it still sits between two opposing assumptions. On the one hand “Christianity is inevitably, and in its essence, always clothed in a cultural expression,”while at the same time, Robert Schreiter wrote in addressing inculturation in general, it is still taken for granted by many “that the theology of the Western [European] churches was supra-regional and was, precisely in its Western form, universal and therefore directly accessible for persons from other cultures.” Schreiter’s valuable contributions were many, but his articulation of the “great Christian tradition” existing in “a series of ‘local theologies’” has been helpful in analyzing local liturgical practices both unique and universal, especially in developing liturgical theologies.

Increasingly, however, for indigenous in Canada and elsewhere, inculturation also entails hybridity, both as a process and a product. As a process or a method of inculturation, hybridization can be defined as ‘dynamic equivalence’ (meaning replacing an element from the inherited tradition with one from the local culture with the understanding of an ‘equal meaning or value’).

Hybridization allows “metaphorical parallels” between “the indigenous and the settler tradition in their symbolic form.” Paula Elizabeth Holmes asks, with regard to the Canadian situation, ‘what were the options?’ Indigenous Christians could opt for the imported settler (European) Christianity, “in which all traces of ‘nativeness’ were submerged and all elements of native spirituality eradicated,” or they could hang onto their enculturated “pagan and superstitious anti-Christianity (as seen from the perspective of the colonizers.)” Instead, hybridization becomes “a kind of borderland, a zone of intersection where diverse histories and cultures meet.”

What is emerging in the language of hybridity as borrowed from the social sciences and brought into dialogue with liturgical and theological inculturation, is that “hybridity...refers to a... process of distillation and recombination of diverse elements to form a new yet recognizable tradition...without the pejorative implication of distortion.”

There are many faithful theologians who would disagree, who see this acculturation in liturgical conversations and hybridity in broader conversations as skating too close to syncretism. For many

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23) Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, ix.
24) Ibid.
28) Ibid., 160.
this approach potentially transgresses the limits “both theological and cultural” and results in “syn-
cretism, a reality which implies excess and/or overreach both in quantity and quality of synthesis.”

When is Christian no longer Christian? But, in more recent conversations, syncretism is presented as
not only authentic, but as an inevitable part of life between neighboring religions as well as those who
live between cultures, the “borderlands” of hybridity.

Jonathan Tan, as an Asian Christian who knows a world in which his larger indigenous culture is
not Christian, writes that where a religious tradition (or traditions) is immersed and inseparable from
the culture, to inculturate Christianity is to also inculturate Christianity into the dominate religious ex-
pression. Both he and Michael Amaladoss wonder if what we are talking about is religious identity or
religious belonging.

I should also make clear at the very beginning that I am speaking of double religious identity and
not double religious belonging. Identity is something personal. Belongingness involves a commu-
nity or institution to which a person belongs. A community may excommunicate a person. I want to
distance myself from such a focus on the institution and concentrate rather on the individual and
his or her experience. Of course, one cannot cut off an individual from a community. Humans are
social beings. But an individual’s link to a community takes various forms and can be more or less
close.

Indeed, Amaladoss and Tan both talk about the lived reality of these intertwined identities, by asking

How do we determine religious identity? Pieris analyzes religious structure in terms of three levels:
the core or foundational or primordial experience that is at the origins of a religion; the collective
memory that stores up that experience in texts, symbols, rituals, and beliefs which help to evoke
and relive that experience; and the interpretation of that experience in philosophical and theologi-
cal terms. To these I would add the institutionalization that is evolved to protect and transmit the
collective memory, including the official interpretation. People attracted to a religion may use as-
pects of collective memory to reach out to the primordial experience while distancing themselves
from the institutional framework.

Applying this to the different world of indigenous Christians in Canada, we might ask whether the cul-
ture of Cree people (or other nations, tribes, and clans) is woven together so closely with aspects of an
indigenous spirituality that separating them is not just a movement against syncretism, but is actually

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29) Ibid., 170.
31) Ibid. The authors draw on Aloysius Pieris, Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism
an undoing of religious identity, the identity of indigenous as Christians and indigenous?

In many ways this has been an important and ongoing conversation in wider Canadian Anglicanism as the movement towards an autonomous indigenous Anglican church has taken shape in three stages. The Covenant of 1994, the subsequent document titled “Our Way of Life” (2013), and finally in “The Sacred Circle” (2022), now combined into a single online document under the title “The Sacred Circle.”

*Our Way of Life* is a document outlining the fundamentals of the Indigenous Anglican church. We have always been spiritual, living under a Creator, and we continue to live into how we walk with Christ through expression in this document, Our Way of Life. It summarizes our holy journey to re-experience Christ as our ancestors did in the early days of Christianity in North America when our traditional beliefs, culture and spirituality and economic systems were strong and many of our ancestors initially welcomed Christ into their lives in that context. This document is a manifestation of our own journey to decolonize euro-centric Anglicanism so that we can live out our beliefs on our own cultural and linguistic terms and move forward more confidently on our journey of healing, reconciliation and justice.\(^{32}\)

These documents try to get at exactly what so much of the writing on liturgical inculturation, hybridity and religious identity have been approaching for the past fifty years. How shall we continue to be Christian, in this case Anglican Christians, and indigenous, and Canadian? With regard to liturgy, the “Sacred Circle” writing exemplifies the hybridity discussed above.

Those who live in a Sacred Circle of Gospel Based Discipleship, will find themselves, as Jesus himself said, drawn to worship the Great Mystery in Spirit and in Truth. First, like the ancestors they offer prayers in Morning and Evening. As Jesus is lifted-up by them, he draws others and they flower into a community that give thanks to God in the ceremony Jesus asked us to offer until he comes again: The Lord’s Supper, the Holy Communion, the Holy Eucharist, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Sacred Feast.\(^{33}\)

Additionally, the “Sacred Circle” talks about the centrality of prayer with an explanation of the roots in the inherited “settler Anglicanism” of the Church of England.

Our Elders used the Book of Common Prayer within the traditional languages and patterns of their life. It is a partner and a guide to every moment of our lives, including and especially our life on the Land and Waters. Together with the hymnals in their many languages, the Book of Common Prayer


\(^{33}\) Ibid., 15.
was part of their shield, their companion, and an aid to resist the darkest forces and moments of colonisation. It is the same kind of guide to us today.\textsuperscript{34}

These documents, and the gatherings and rituals linked to them, continue to take root in many communities in spite of ongoing discoveries of tragedies in the settler-indigenous relationships as well as leadership crises within the Indigenous Anglican communities. But these manifestations of acculturation and hybridity, especially in the concerns expressed in \textit{Our Way of Life} and \textit{The Sacred Circle}, call to mind one other conversation which links to incarnation, inculturation, hybridity, and syncretism, that of the reality of colonialism and the hybridity of postcolonialism in the lives of indigenous Anglicans.

4 The implications of colonialism and postcolonialism

There are many academic approaches to colonialism but a thread running through many is the sense that “the invaders set out to remake the native inhabitants into images of themselves.” The reality from the invader’s perspective, however, is that it is always an incomplete image, primarily because of the biases of the settlers who do not believe that natives are capable of a ‘complete imitation.’\textsuperscript{35} This “gap” between the original settler subject and the “recognizable Other... almost the same, but not quite”, is a necessary gap for “the colonizers to maintain authority over their subjects.”\textsuperscript{36} While not all would agree with Homi Bhabha’s application of mimicry, he offers a valuable insight in that he draws from mimicry (which for him is “a form of resemblance”) and this colonialist desire for creating an ‘image’ of one’s cultural mores a reversal, in which those who are colonized, claim some element or trace that is “not repressed but repealed as something different, a mutation, a hybrid.”\textsuperscript{37} Here hybridity represents “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects,” which is, in the end, a threat to colonial identity, reversing the effects of the “colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition.”\textsuperscript{38}

The point here of this engagement of colonialism with hybridity is that religion itself can function as a subversive counter to the colonial enterprise. Once it is shared, and claimed, the very reality of inclusivity and equality (no matter how distorted) can be turned around and used against the colonizers. This reality is inherently the case in Christianity, with scripture and liturgy translated into indigenous

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Page 21.
\textsuperscript{35} Ken Derry, “Blood on the Wall: Christianity, Colonialism, and Mimetic Conflict in Margaret Atwood’s \textit{Cat’s Eye}” \textit{Religion and Literature} 48 (2016): 94.
\textsuperscript{37} Derry, page 95, citing Homi Bhabha, “Of Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817”.
\textsuperscript{38} Derry, page 95, citing Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry,” 129, “Signs Taken,” 162.
languages giving insight into the inclusive love of all through Christ as well as the preferential option for the poor.

Paul Chung writes that this is a crucial task for Christianity in the reality of life lived between colonialism and postcolonial awareness, “an aftermath infiltrated into the life of the world, generated by the previous dominion of colonialism.” In a parallel to the repudiation of the modernist metanarrative, Chung insists that the tendency toward the single “supra-regional” has to be replaced with diversity for the sake of true Christianity.

In the integrative metaphor of creation and reconciliation, it is important to take into account a proleptic theology in ‘provolutionary’ character, which seeks to embody God’s will for the consummate future proleptically in the present.

The eschatological dimension of this work of postcolonial theology is about reconciliation, naming what has been, asking forgiveness, and working toward reparations toward our “consummate future.” The latter includes the need to unearth “the marginalized narratives of those victimized in the aftermath of colonialism,” as well as recognizing and correcting representation in positions of authority, scholarship, politics, ritual, and language. This work of deconstructing is also a work of decentralizing; “the new Christian geography is polycentric.”

What Chung contributes through his wide-ranging work is a helpful foundation from which to understand the important work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission documents in Canada which provided part of the foundation of Our Way of Life and The Sacred Circle, the indigenous Anglican documents described above. His articulation is particularly helpful to this analysis of ritual technique in what he calls the “archeological-anamnetic necessity”, a re-calling of stories and rituals which produce a transformation from simple things by “decentering the centered narrative and knowledge-power system and critically analyzing economic material formation.”

40) Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, ix.
41) Chung, Postcolonial Public Theology, 4.
42) Ibid., 5.
43) Ibid., 6.
45) Chung, Postcolonial Public Theology, 8.
Like the proverbial iceberg, the simplicity of Swampy Cree funerals and their acculturated hybridity has much unseen beneath the surface, and in analysis invites one to draw on theology, inculturation, hybridity and postcolonialism, among other academic theories.

5 Anglican indigenous funeral practices

Many First Nations’ people in Canada are Anglican, and their faithfulness is remarkable in light of the frequent lack of attention given to supporting and listening to indigenous Anglicans, as well as the horrific abuses of the residential schools administered by the church.46 There is, in addition, an interesting tension among many indigenous Anglicans between a preference for ‘older’ official liturgies (found in the 1962 BCP) and the reality of the colonialism associated with these prayerbooks (both the 1962 BCP and before that the 1918 BCP). Part of this tension is described by indigenous Anglican priest, the Ven. Rosalyn Kantlaht’ant Elm as related to a pride in being associated with the English monarchy through various royal treaties and arrangements, and using the prayerbooks linked to those historical con-

Figure 1.
Swampy Cree Anglican Funerals.

46) The residential schools were government authorized schools which removed indigenous children from their families, destroying indigenous culture and language, as well as being responsible for horrific and widespread personal abuses. See the work of the TRC mentioned above in footnote 33.
nections, not unlike the description in *The Sacred Circle*. There is also a very practical reason for the preference of the 1918 BCP among the Swampy Cree of Northern Manitoba in that it was the prayer book translated into Cree. Newer rites, however, are increasingly preferred by English-speaking Cree Anglicans in the younger generations who are unable to read (and often speak) using Cree languages.

Regardless of which approved prayerbook is used (1962 or 1985), liturgies often defined as rites of passage (baptism, marriage, ordination, and funerals) use the ‘acculturation’ pattern, juxtaposing elements of the indigenous culture and the culture of older English prayerbooks, rather than integrating the English Anglican ritual and their own spirituality into a new inculturated ‘third form’ of liturgy.

If we turn to the primary pattern of Swampy Cree funerals we find at first glance a fairly straightforward example of what Chupungco called acculturation, in which the two ‘cultures’, the inherited liturgy and Swampy Cree cultural priorities, remain proximate but “unassimilated cultural expressions.”

“The Order for the Burial of the Dead” from the 1962 BCP is a fairly simple liturgy:

- A procession to the church (the stated preference) with scripture sentences
- A psalm
- The reading of I Corinthians 15:20-58
- The Apostles’ Creed
- Prayers
- At the grave, additional prayers, and the committal during which “the earth shall be cast upon the body by some standing by…”
- The rite concludes with a prayer acknowledging the “space” of time, in human understanding, between individual death and “the Resurrection in the last day” and that the deceased will rest in Christ until the end of time.

In the other official liturgical book of the Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Alternative Services* (hereafter: BAS), there are not only many options for scripture readings and prayer texts, but a much more complex variety of ritual structures, most of which find their origins in the first eight centuries of Christian liturgy, rather than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Perhaps the very complex-

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47) From an address at the Webinar “Towards a Common Prayer”, February 19, 2021, Huron University College’s Faculty of Theology.
50) Ibid., 603.
52) See Lizette Larson-Miller, “I am resurrection and I am life, says the Lord: scripture shaping funerals or cultural funerals shaping scripture?” in *Lively Oracles of God: Perspectives on the Bible and Liturgy*, eds B. Nichols & M. Jeanes."Alcuin Club Collections 97" (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2022), 132-149, for a history of
ity of the latter means that the simplicity of the 1962 Burial Rite is the more common liturgy, but it is already expanded even before considering the addition of the indigenous vigil rite which precedes the burial office.

The 1962 funeral still presumes that this is an “Office of Burial,” in other words, not a eucharistic liturgy but a service of word and prayer in two parts, at the church and then at the grave. But this simpler outline is expanded to include a eucharistic celebration whenever possible, requiring the presence of the priest (in communities that do not always have a resident pastor.) The 1985 BAS has the expectation of a eucharistic liturgy as the fundamental context of the funeral built into the rite, but even here, the elements are shifted to accommodate the acculturated pattern of the indigenous wake or vigil, a eucharistic celebration, followed by the office of burial and then the committal. If the gathered community is Cree-speaking, there may be a substitution of the 1918 Book of Common Prayer (hereafter: BCP) to allow both the vigil rituals and the office of burial to be held in the Cree language, or, more commonly, the addition of hymns from the Cree translation interspersed with the English-language vigil and burial service.

The ritual sequence begins with rituals of solidarity important to the Swampy Cree culture, many of which are about extending the time of the funeral so that the community can be present with the family of the loved one who has died. The wake (or vigil) is generally observed for two nights prior to the funeral. If possible, a corner of the parish hall is set up with the open coffin, chairs for family members to the left side, and chairs for others to the right. The time of grieving includes touching the body, prayers, and hymn singing – all of which is about prayer to God and solidarity with and support of the family, while not leaving the newly deceased alone. On the second night the priest, having been present for the duration of the wake, celebrates holy communion in the presence of the body, with an altar set up at the foot of the coffin for this purpose. The morning of the funeral, all gather again around the open coffin, and when the elders announce that it is time, all bid farewell and the coffin is closed with the knowledge that the deceased will not be seen in this way again. The rituals surrounding death move to the church proper for the liturgy described above (either from the BCP or the BAS).

The burial rituals are led by the clergy and the elders, both of whom introduce elements of traditional Cree spirituality (the maintenance of presence with the deceased who ‘remain’ close at hand in the first few days after death) and Christian theology. This is particularly evident in the importance of this liturgical shift from burial to funeral.

53) Some of the prayer options, along with the scriptures and rubrics were translated into Western Cree, see http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Cree/p274.htm. Accessed September 29, 2022.


55) These rituals are not published in academic or pastoral writings. Information and descriptions come from various Cree elders, my own observations, and clarifications from the Bishop of Brandon, The Rt. Revd. William Cliff, (May 31, 2021).
continuing to be connected to and learning from the spirit of the one who has died as an expression of the wisdom and presence of ancestors juxtaposed with the Christian communion of saints and the bond between the living and the dead. This is emphasized in stories told and at the grave, the eventual creation of a ‘boundary’ around the grave, demarcating the ‘spiritual space’ from the larger area and the place where the continuing wisdom of the deceased can be visited and engaged.

Are these practices acculturation, hybridity, or syncretism? The faithful Christians with whom I met and learned from would probably not use any of those words. I would use both acculturation and hybridity in the sense used above in this paper, recalling “hybridity... refers to a... process of distillation and recombination of diverse elements to form a new yet recognizable tradition... without the pejorative implication of distortion.”

The Cree funeral pattern allows both the inherited funeral rites (whether 1962 BCP or the 1985 BAS) and the Cree elements which, although remaining sequential, to form a single and expected ‘tradition’ of a three day event. In-between the Cree vigil and the Anglican burial office, however, there is the interesting addition of a eucharistic celebration which ritually bridges the Cree and the Anglican in ways reminiscent of Paul Chung’s work on wnial public theology. Writing without reference to this particular situation, Chung described his approach of archeological decolonization as “uneartthing the past materials, religious classics, wisdom and life of people left marginalized and voiceless by Western tradition and history.”

Here, the intuitive insight into a deep Christian theological understanding that the eucharist, communion, is the central ritual expression of union with Christ, is inserted into the funeral liturgy which primarily used a structure omitting the eucharist.

The 1962 BCP in Canada was published and became obligatory immediately before Vatican II and its impact on the renewal of liturgy ecumenically. The continuation of the 1662 Burial Office, with no eucharistic context, was part of a long and drawn-out compromise in Anglicanism (and here, particularly in the Church of England) between reformed Protestantism and the more catholic Anglicanism also present in the British Isles. That tension came with the Church of England to Canada and was particularly central in Canadian Anglican national conversations between 1952 and 1962 as the Anglican Church of Canada prepared its new prayerbook (and ably covered by William R. Blott). What appears in the Cree funeral patterns, however, is this “new voice” in the “polycentric Christian geography” taking what is inherited and, in a sense, making it better – a more authentic interpretation of colonial inheritance and a move away from earlier scholarship which treated “the” liturgy as something other than culturally shaped. The multicultural liturgy, imposed by settler missionaries with its bias against

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56) Holmes, “We are Native Catholics,” 160.
57) Chung, Postcolonial Public Theology, 93.
praying for the dead, becomes something new in the hybridity of Cree culture and Anglican liturgical cultures, using the ancient sacrament of the eucharist to give expression to the ongoing link with the dead as well as bridge what would otherwise be a type of acculturation between two distinct ritual events. But there are other pressures on Christian Cree liturgical patterns also.

There is a tension between these acculturated or hybridized patterns (in funerals and other ritual gatherings) and some of the ritual practices and objects of the more traditional Cree spirituality (here the term “traditional,” is used to refer to non-Christian, pre-Christian, pre-colonialist). Advocates and practitioners of traditional spirituality often call for a return to ancient spiritual practices and beliefs which predate “settler” intrusions, but have increasingly become not only ‘non-Christian’ but ‘anti-Christian.” This conversation, internal to indigenous circles, leads to some resistance among Cree and other indigenous Christians in incorporating (acculturating) more of the “traditional” practices into Christian liturgies, especially in light of the recent and ongoing renewal of pain and anger associated with the deaths of children at the residential schools against Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Canada. In spite of these understandable internal tensions, there appears to be in the last few years more willingness to adapt the spatial arrangements of churches (from pews in straight lines to the indigenous circle gathering) as well as creating places of honor with indigenous design for new bishops at ordinations and consecrations.

The ritual technique of acculturation remains the starting place for an inherited cultural pattern from settler missionaries set side-by-side with rituals giving expression to Swampy Cree priorities at the death of a loved one. But the ritual practices do not simply remain side-by-side, in their juxtaposition they impact the reception of the BCP elements and the Cree elements to create a new expression embracing both Christian ritual and being Cree, a hybridization of embrace, rejection and new ritual

60) See Jennie Wastersicoot, Tapwetamowin (PhD Diss, University of Manitoba, 2015).
expressions. As mentioned above, “this engagement of colonialism with hybridity is that religion itself can function as a subversive counter to the colonial enterprise. Once it is shared, and claimed, the very reality of inclusivity and equality (no matter how distorted) can be turned around and used against the colonizers.”

The hybridity of postcolonial liturgical theology finds support even in the linguistic construction of compound words in Cree translating concepts from English or other colonial languages into compound words which make sense for indigenous speakers. The words themselves juxtapose individual words to shape something important but not indigenous to the landscape of the Cree world, such as the common Cree words for an Anglican (or English) priest: Akenasêwemakimow (makimow = prayer boss) and for the Bishop: Che-makimow (the big prayer boss). The construction by juxtaposing words and concepts to form a new title is a linguistic hybridization, not unlike the evolving liturgical acculturations-become-hybridizations. As Canadians, both settlers and indigenous, grow into the realities of a postcolonial Christianity, more ritual techniques will undoubtedly emerge to give expression to a common faith incarnate in multiple liturgies, cultures, and geographies.

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