

# **Liturgical movements and counter-movements, reorientations and revaluations.**

## **A thematic outline**

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### **Brief positioning of the theme**

It is increasingly becoming clear that a wide variety of developments have landed liturgical practice and studies, each in their own way but undeniably in conjunction, in a fundamentally different situation today from where they were some decades ago. This calls for repositioning in liturgical research, policy, and performance. There is a strong feeling that we are only partially aware of what this new situation entails. Two steps, therefore, would seem to be possible or requisite in this context: an accurate diagnosis of the current situation and a reflection on the reorientations and recontextualizations this would involve.

This provides the overall framework for us to detail some more specific approaches, with a special focus on the liturgical studies agenda:

1. First of all, there is, in a general sense, the current cultural and anthropological context, or, rather, contexts, which are fundamentally different from those contexts that were prevalent during the start, implementation, and stabilization of the Liturgical Movement project. Let's mention some of these movements: the advanced marginalization of church and liturgy, which may to some extent be considered a process of 'churchification', in the sense that liturgy has been forced back within the confines of the remaining churches and has thus withdrawn from the public and semi-public domains; fragmentation; personalization; detraditionalization; the progressive blurring of or interference in traces of ecclesiastical/Christian, general-religious, and secular/profane ritual repertoires; and the continual rise of new rituals, especially in the above-mentioned public and semi-public domains.

2. These late-modern or post-modern developments give rise to a highly diverse range of positionings of religion, church, and liturgy in culture, both at present and in the future. More so than several decades ago, we now have counter-movements: an array of more or less organized counter-movements has been established in the international Christian setting. Liturgy, ritual, devotion, and piety play an important part here. The liturgical innovations of the previous century are very often addressed in a highly explicit fashion, sometimes as a 'reform of the reform'. The overall situation is highly diffuse and

requires further study.<sup>1</sup> Many of these movements share an exclusive orientation in terms of their substance, which may be of a traditional, fundamentalist, charismatic, or evangelical nature, while its design may be inclusive. A significant and qualifying aspect they share is their position vis-à-vis culture, which is often conspicuously negative and confrontational. Especially on this point, the current movements and counter-movements would seem to be suitable candidates for analysis and evaluation. Religion in general and ritual/liturgy in particular *as a cultural praxis* could offer a fruitful perspective for analysis here.<sup>2</sup> How is the cultural environment being addressed? In an open manner, critically, or in a negative and dismissive manner as an unfavourable environment for liturgical performance? It would be interesting here to apply the diachronic, comparative element, so common in liturgical studies, as the counter-movements like to take as their frame of reference certain periods in ecclesiastical and liturgical history, such as the early church and the Middle Ages. Eventually, an analysis of movements and counter-movements will also need to address the identity of Christian ritual and sacrament: the relation between the two-way movement of kata- and anabasis.

In modern liturgical studies, this complex current interplay between movements and counter-movements only ever surfaces in a few international debates focusing on particular authors, declarations, and studies, as in Klaus Gamber's oeuvre,<sup>3</sup> the Oxford Declaration on Liturgy (1996), and the introduction to liturgy by the present Pope.<sup>4</sup>

3. In close connection with points 1 and 2, we then have the changed and changing academic context, where several strands converge:

3.1. The above-mentioned dynamics of movements and counter-movements and its critical assessment from the perspective of religion, ritual, and liturgy as a cultural praxis is increasingly pressing upon us the necessity of reorienting the liturgical studies agenda. This agenda needs to be re-aligned more comprehen-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. POST: 'Over de historische referentie in de rooms-katholieke "Hervorming-van-de-hervormingsbeweging"', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 20 (2004) 73-88.

<sup>2</sup> M. SCHARFE: *Über die Religion* (Köln 2004), esp. the introduction.

<sup>3</sup> J. BALDOVIN: 'Klaus Gamber and the Post-Vatican II Reform of the Roman Liturgy', in *Studia liturgica* 33 (2003) 223-239.

<sup>4</sup> J. RATZINGER: *Der Geist der Liturgie. Eine Einführung* (Freiburg / Basel / Wien 2000?); see for the discussion on this book a.o.: A. HÄUSSLING: 'Der Geist der Liturgie. Zu Joseph Ratzingers gleichnamiger Publikation', in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 43/44,3 (2001/2002) 362-395. It is remarkable that in the Netherlands there was very little attention for Ratzingers book; I can only mention some elements from the international debate in *Tijdschrift voor liturgie*: P.-M. GY: 'Is het boek van kardinaal Ratzinger 'L'Esprit de la liturgie' trouw aan het concilie of ertegen in reactie?', in *Tijdschrift voor liturgie* 86,4 (2002) 258-262. For an overall survey of these authors, declarations, movements etc., see: POST: 'Over de historische referentie'.

sively to encompass this dynamics than has been the case so far.<sup>5</sup> In a general sense, the new contexts for liturgical practice sketched above are marked by four fields of tension, which also go to make up the coordinates of a liturgical studies matrix that is in many respects innovative. This matrix is characterized by its ability to go beyond its own boundaries and by the challenge to relate to new outside perspectives. Briefly, these four coordinates are the following:<sup>6</sup>

- A. The issue of the *transcendence* of the experience, relation, and worship of God. In Scharfe's words: the relation between piety and religion. In other words: the relations between Christian-ecclesiastical, general/basic-religious, and secular-profane traces of ritual.
- B. The definition of *community*: there are strained relations between the classic liturgical-ecclesiastical concept of community and that of the flexible, momentary communities that are currently rising in our culture. How does the liturgical community relate to these?
- C. The issue of ritual *design*: here, too, present-day liturgy is being challenged in poignant ways to achieve reinterpretation and self-transcendence. There is an increasing demand for ritual quality and competence, for new ritual formats, and perhaps for a reconsideration of liturgy as a ritual act and its implications for liturgical performance.
- D. The dimension of liturgical *substance*: liturgy is not an end in itself, though we often appear to forget this. Christian ecclesiastics also expresses its faith in other places and in different ways. Here we encounter tension between introverted liturgy and extraverted missionary and deaconate activity. In a more specific sense, the dominant theme here is the exploration of the public and semi-public domains. How does Christian identity express itself here? How can or should the Christian church venture out into the public and semi-public domains? What is the role of liturgy and ritual in these domains? What domains would be eligible candidates?

3.2. This matrix would then affect the liturgical studies research design, characterized by methodical plurality and close ties with the wide-ranging platform of ritual studies. It would seem that, more so than was the case until recently, the

<sup>5</sup> On these and the following points, see: M. BARNARD: 'Overleven achter steen. Liturgie voorbij de Liturgische Beweging', in *Eredienstvaardig* 20,6 (2004) 214-217; P. PHAN: 'Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age', in K. PECKLERS (ed.): *Liturgy in a Postmodern World* (London / New York 2003) 55-86; K. PECKLERS: *Worship: New Century Theology* (London / New York 2003); G. LUKKEN: *Rituals in Abundance. Critical Reflections on the Place, Form and Identity of Christian Ritual in Our Culture* (Louvain etc. 2005 = *Liturgia condenda* 17).

<sup>6</sup> In 2004 I heard colleague Albert Gerhards (Bonn) discuss these areas of tension at a conference in Erfurt, but in the meantime they have been formulated by several liturgists, such as Lukken, Pecklers, Mitchell, Barnard, and Chauvet, each in their own way.

multi-disciplinary cycle of new questions, new sources, new methods, and new alliances guides modern liturgical studies as a theological enterprise.

3.3. Within this research design, a series of key concepts plays a role. There is every reason now to probe the necessity of revaluations here with painstaking care. It is clear that we cannot simply continue to employ terms and concepts like culture, liturgical inculturation, community, active participation, sacrality, mystagogy, the distinction between inner-, peripheral-, and extra-ecclesiastical, Christian/ecclesiastical, general-religious or basic sacral, secular/profane, rites of passage, et cetera.

3.4. What may help to give us a sense of direction would be a new description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of liturgical and ritual practice, in an explicitly open interrelationship. In addition to the inner-ecclesiastical perspective of the core liturgy, such reorientations and revaluations increasingly appear to be instigated by non-affiliated, peripheral- and extra-ecclesiastical liturgical-ritual practices. It is important, therefore, to undertake projects dealing with these areas, where themes are surfacing that might be exemplary for a wide-ranging liturgical recontextualization. We are thinking of themes such as space, ritual performance, music, gestures, text use handling, handling of the Bible, repetition as a decisive factor or not, the role of the pastor/ritual expert, community, participation, and the like.

3.5. The above-mentioned movements also have direct and indirect consequences for organizational aspects of research. This is even more topical at present because many academic and ecclesiastical settings of the theological enterprise are in motion and are themselves part and parcel of the movements and counter-movements mentioned above. The relatively independent profile of liturgical studies will come under increasing pressure, and, due to the diagnosis of the liturgical and ritual environment concisely sketched above, the field will be facing the challenge of keeping up its pursuit of the open and multi-disciplinary practice of its studies. Promising avenues here might be flexible multi-disciplinary project groups focusing on certain heuristically and strategically chosen themes, established theoretical and historiographical interests, and old and new academic alliances. This last item benefits from a long-standing tradition of historical and philological disciplines, and cultural and social sciences. Another field that continues to be topical is the platform of ritual studies, which is also increasingly profiling itself as the principal partner of liturgical studies in the fields of education and research organization. Both nationally and internationally, liturgical and ritual studies are becoming an increasingly and structurally conjoined name. This platform also engenders new alliances with their own challenges, such as the new cognitive science of religion, which takes a neurobiological approach to ritual.

3.6. Finally, we should bear in mind that the dimension of movements and counter-movements has already explicitly impacted the development of an updated liturgical studies profile for quite some time. The profile outlined above has been on the table for some considerable time: is there still a role and place for an open, academic, multi-disciplinary liturgical studies program as a theological enterprise? If so, how would liturgical and ritual studies need to be positioned on the theological academic curriculum: as an independent and fully-fledged *disciplina principalis*? Or rather as a literary-historical, systematic-theological, or practical-theological sub-enterprise?

### **Sub-themes for the expert meeting**

The outline above suggests the following sub-themes as options for debate in the expert meeting session:

1. The diagnosis of the current liturgical situation: have we truly moved beyond the Liturgical Movement? What are the liturgical perspectives?
2. How should we handle the four above-mentioned areas of tension or coordinates of possible or inevitable 'self-transcendence'?
3. How should we revalue the core concepts mentioned above? We specifically have in mind the concepts of culture and liturgical inculturation.
4. What are the academic research perspectives for liturgical studies? What agenda? Alliances, themes?
5. What liturgical studies profile are we pursuing here?

