

Word and Sacrament

Whereas Scripture and Tradition is an instance of opposition, that of Word and Sacrament is perhaps more one of tension. One obvious reason is that while it is possible to say Yes to Scripture and No to Tradition, it is much more difficult to say Yes to one and No to the other in regard to Word and Sacrament. For virtually all Christians recognise, whether they use the language of sacraments or speak of ordinances, that Jesus commanded his followers to baptise and to "Do this [with bread and wine] in memory of me". (Luke 22: 19).

Protestant worship from the Reformation onwards gave a central importance to the Word of God, and thus to the ministry of preaching. The Reformation protest against the condition of the Catholic Church regularly included the complaint of ignorant priests (the call for seminaries to be established for the training of priests was one of the major decisions of the Catholic Counter-Reformation) and the lack of preaching. It was not just that Catholic preaching was bad, but that in many cases it did not exist.

Luther always emphasised Word and Sacrament together. In fact, it was the Lutheran argument against the Anabaptist Enthusiasts, die Schwärmer, that the appointed means of grace are the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments (which for Luther were 3: baptism, Lord's supper and confession). The Enthusiasts were guilty of seeking God in experience apart from the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. This became a major Lutheran argument against the charismatic movement.

Calvin so emphasized the Word that sacrament becomes a function of the Word: "there never is a sacrament without an antecedent promise, the sacrament being added as a kind of appendix, with the view of confirming and sealing the promise" (ICR, IV, XIV, 3). "This is commonly expressed by saying that a sacrament consists of the word and the external sign" (IV, XIV, 4). "As the Lord calls his promises covenants (Gen. vi. 18; ix. 9; xvii. 2), and sacraments signs of the covenants, so something similar may be inferred from human covenants. ... Sacraments, therefore, are exercises which confirm our faith in the word of God; and because we are carnal, they are exhibited under carnal objects, that thus they may train us in accommodation to our sluggish capacity, just as nurses lead children by the hand. And hence Augustine calls a sacrament a *visible word* ..." (IV, XIV, 6). "he spiritually nourishes our faith by means of the sacraments, whose only office is to make his promises visible to our eye, or rather, to be pledges of his promises." (IV, XIV, 12). "Some regard the sacraments as mere signs. This view refuted." (IV, XIV, 13).

There had been no theology of the Word among Catholics, though you can find fine teaching here and there. But the sacraments were not understood in relation to the Word. With Word and sacrament becoming a subject of religious strife, positions tended to narrow. "The thing, therefore, which was frequently done, under the tyranny of the Pope, was not free from great profanation of the mystery, for they deemed it sufficient if the priest muttered the formula of consecration, while the people, without understanding, looked stupidly on. Nay, this was done for the express purpose of preventing any instruction from thereby reaching the people: for all was said in Latin to illiterate hearers." (IV, XIV, 4). Thus, as Protestants focused on the Word, Catholics focused on the sacraments. Whereas Protestants were distinguished by their use of the Bible (in church and home), Catholics came to see Bible-reading as something Protestant and thus dangerous.

This tension thus came to characterise our different patterns of worship. Before the 1960s, Catholic worship was all in Latin, except for the eastern Catholic churches, of which most Catholics were barely conscious. While there was always a "liturgy of the Word", with at least two readings from the Bible, these were not seen as central. They were seen rather as a preliminary to "the real thing", the celebration of the Mass. There are still Catholics who think like this, even though the Catholic Church has officially moved on from this to a less narrow position (one that is more traditional in the sense of the great Tradition).

The Anglican and the Lutheran churches in particular maintained a liturgical pattern, but having their worship in the language of the people, while they gave new importance to the ministry of preaching. They can be seen as the pioneers in a balance between Word and sacrament within liturgical worship. The Lutheran tradition gave rise to a strong tradition of biblically-inspired singing (hymns, chorales – JSBach etc). Methodism was rooted in hymnology (Methodist doctrine found in the hymns of Charles Wesley). Anglican hymns, but esp. from 19th century. Presbyterian/Reformed worship gave a major place to the psalms.

Among almost all Protestant groups, preaching of the Word was central (an exception the Quakers). But the emphases and patterns varied. Preaching based on the Bible may be **instructional**, **ethical**, or **evangelistic** with exposition, application, challenge to conversion. This may lead to focus on particular books or types of biblical literature. The ethical preacher will be drawn to the Wisdom literature. Luther's effort to elicit a faith-response was not followed by most of the Reformers. Models of preacher: the scholar-preacher (who lectures from notes), the actor-preacher (Whitefield); the healing preacher.

The Lutheran tradition became very intellectual in the 17th century and the Anglican very dry, and it was in protest against this that Pietism in the 17th century and the Evangelical movements of the 18th century developed. These were the churches whose less than lively condition in the early 1700s sparked off the Evangelical awakenings. As a result Evangelicals have typically exalted the religion of the heart, and paid little attention to outward expression. While protest against formalism and hypocrisy is found in the Old Testament prophets, it does not seem that this Evangelical focus is truly biblical.

As a result, Evangelical worship was totally centred on the preaching of the Word, which was aimed at changing the heart. With the Pentecostal and charismatic movements has come a new emphasis on the importance of praise, and on the importance of prayer-ministry in the power of the Spirit. This has modified in some way the pattern of most Evangelical services in which the hymns and prayers were preparatory before the "real thing" or the "real event" of the sermon.

Changes in Modern Times

In the last 50 years, there have been really significant changes to the patterns that had reigned between the Reformation and 1900.

The Liturgical Movement and Catholic Worship

What is called in Catholic and some other circles the "liturgical movement" began in the first decade of the 20th century – in Belgium.

This was not only a recall to the Word of God, but also to sacramental celebration. It was a call to make pastoral living liturgy the heart of Catholic life and worship.

Before 1963, Roman Catholic worship was all in Latin, which hardly anybody understood. A major consequence was that efforts to enliven faith and worship were pushed outside the liturgy: into what are often called **devotions**. These devotions often had a highly affective content: love of Jesus, esp his suffering and his childhood, Sacred Heart, love of Mary, seeing Jesus through Mary's eyes, etc. Forms included Stations of the Cross, Sacred Heart devotions, Rosary, Devotion to Reserved Sacrament, Novenas (often related to saints).

I don't see all the devotional developments as bad. But they suffered from severe weaknesses: they relied as much on imagination as on the biblical text, and so they were not grounded in the core of the biblical revelation (resurrection, gift of Holy Spirit, justification by faith, parousia). Often they were only derivatively or indirectly biblical. They thus often had a sentimental character that did not transform lives. They were individualistic.

The liturgical renewal was thoroughly biblical from the start (difficult for Evangelicals to understand who think that liturgy is just empty ritual). Beauduin wanted to remedy the sentimental and individualistic spirit of Catholic devotions by a restoration of a corporate liturgy

that was rooted in the Scriptures and in biblical typology and symbolism. This meant a thorough-going reform of Catholic liturgy: including the following requirements:

- liturgy in the vernacular language
- exposure to the riches of the Bible
- christocentric in Trinitarian framework
- simplification of rites, elimination of artificial symbolism
- participation of the people (no mere spectating)

All these things happened at Vatican Two. But you cannot undo many hundred years of old habits in a few years. The renewal of worship requires the Holy Spirit at work in the people, requires a knowledge of the Bible that takes time to acquire, requires a liberation from old mind-sets and individualistic mentalities.

Theology of Sacraments as Word in Action. We proclaim the Word, and then we enact what we have proclaimed. "The liturgy of the Word is an integral part of sacramental celebrations." (CCC, 1154); "The liturgical word and action are inseparable both insofar as they are signs and instruction and insofar as they accomplish what they signify." (CCC, 1155). "The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form 'one single act of worship'; the Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord." (CCC, 1346). 1347 compares with disciples on road to Emmaus.

There is a close link here between Christology and Ecclesiology, between a Theology of the Incarnation, in which both the words of Jesus and the actions of Jesus are foundational for his ministry.

Liturgical Renewal in Main-Line Protestant Churches

Among Anglicans and Lutherans, Parish Communion. Residential communities. Influence of Taizé.

More frequent celebration of Holy Communion. Understood in more ecclesial way.

The Charismatic Movement

How have the Pentecostal and charismatic movements changed Christian worship? First of all, praise becoming central (presence of God, worship of the Lord first). Second, the Word contextualised. Third, personal ministry time. Overall, worship as inspired by, created by and led by the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostal-charismatic revaluation of the body in worship and ministry. Links with sacramental thinking where an instrumentality of bodily gestures is recognized. David Pawson on baptism: against infant baptism but pro baptismal regeneration. Idea of impartation in the "Toronto blessing".

In historic churches, link CR and liturgical renewal in valuation of bodily gesture and movement. CR posed challenge of how to celebrate structured liturgy in the power of the Spirit, especially the eucharist. Learning how to use the rich texts and rites coming from the past in a flexible way, allowing the Spirit to work, to lead and to bear fruit. Structure and freedom; individual and community.

Inter-action also in healing ministry with anointing of the sick with oil, following Mark 6: 13 ("And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.") and James 5: 14: ("Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him with oil in the name of the Lord.")

Wainwright from Newbigin: "Christian faith has to be re-imagined and lived with new intensity. This is most likely to be carried out by a biblically re-founded and spiritually cleansed Roman

Catholic Church as well as by evangelical and Pentecostal communities which are re-anchored in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church and which strive for a universal orientation.” (OIC, Oct 2003, p. 77).

The Convergence Movement

A trend evident since the 1980s composed of those committed to holding together the evangelical, the charismatic and the liturgical-sacramental. Episcopal Church: Robert Webber (Wheaton College). Evangelical Orthodox Church (1979: Peter Gillquist). Ex-Pentecostals and Ind. Charismatics forming new bodies: Charismatic Episcopal Church (1992, Randolph Adler); Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches (1995 Wayne Boosahda).

Differences made by Jewish Re-Connection

Liturgical renewal on its scholarly side led to new studies showing the huge debt owed to Temple and synagogue in the original framing of Christian worship. Christian worship was liturgical, because Jewish worship was liturgical (feasts in an annual cycle; prescribed actions). The Jewish roots were more preserved in the liturgy than in any other aspect of church life. We see this in the structure of Word and Sacrament, and in the Office of Hours, based on the daily pattern of Jewish worship in the Temple.

Ironically, the Evangelical reaction against liturgy involved a further distancing from Jewish roots. Part of this was a reaction against reading a set service from an official book. But this is a way that liturgy later developed. In its origins, liturgy involved:

Patterns that were God-given; we receive a pattern of worship; we do not just make up our own patterns;

The pattern involves Word and participatory/symbolic action; the people do not just gather on a Feast Day and hear a message, they do something commanded by God.

It is an action of the faith community.

We will see more of this when we come to look at issues concerning the Eucharist: memorial and sacrifice, etc. “Sacred times, fixed by the calendar, mark the times for prayer, even personal prayer, as well as the ritual hours of sacrifice, especially morning and evening. We notice different postures for prayer, standing, with raised hands, kneeling, fully prostrate, sitting or lying down.” (JPSSCB, para. 48, pp. 108 – 09).

Messianic Jews challenged as to how to celebrate the Jewish feasts but making Jesus central.