

Liturgy: Work, Catechesis, Life

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All Scriptures cited are from the English Standard Version.

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1 Introduction

To what end and to what extent ought we to be interested in or care about liturgics? Liturgics—the study of liturgics: their history, forms, purposes, and uses—isn't that a topic for white-haired scholars, who enjoy poking around

dusty libraries, reading Elizabethan English? Can anything good come out of liturgics?

Let us correct a false impression about liturgy at the very beginning. If you have ever:

- engaged in a discussion about the propriety of certain kinds of music in certain contexts of worship,
- discussed the length or subject matter of a sermon,
- opined about the length of a worship service,
- wondered about the why the Lord’s Prayer is used, or not used, or where it’s used in the worship service, or,
- indeed, if you have ever discussed any aspect of a worship service,

then you were discussing liturgics, no matter what your tradition, training, background, experience, or denominational affiliation.

There are certainly ways in which one can be obsessed with liturgical minutiae *ad infinitum et ad nauseam*. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate that liturgy is—in the final analysis—worship. It is a pastoral tool, a catechetical tool, a tool for all of life. The goal of liturgy is the care and feeding of souls. It is helpful to think about the æsthetic or historical standards and traditions of liturgy; it is fundamentally more important to know if souls are fed, if truth is preserved and communicated, and if sound biblical worship is accomplished.

A brief explanation of terms is in order. When I use the terms “classical” and “reformed”, I usually mean these things.

1. When I say “classical”, I especially have in mind key pre-reformational liturgies as were used by the Roman (in Anglican history, the Sarum Rite) and Orthodox traditions.
2. When I say “reformed”, I usually mean post-reformational orders of worship whose lineage can be traced back through historical catholic liturgies.
3. All should find their roots in synagogue and Old Testament worship.¹

¹See such resources as *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles (Constitutiones Apostolorum)*, www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.ix.html and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarum_Rite.

2 Liturgy

2.1 Greek origins

The word “liturgy” comes from compounds of the Greek words *laós* (people) and *érgō* (work).² Initially, these words had a secular meaning,

... in Attic, especially the orators, to serve the state at one’s own cost; to assume an office which must be administered at one’s own expense; to discharge a public office at one’s own cost; to render public service to the state.³

2.2 Biblically defined

Temple worship

By transferring the Greek idea of serving the sovereign state to the Jewish and Christian idea of serving a sovereign God, it is easy to understand how the various forms of the word “liturgy”⁴ came to mean the service of temple worship. In biblical usage, the words took on these two senses.

- the service “(1) of a priest: to officiate, minister, perform religious duties”, and,
- “a Christian’s service to God through prayer, teaching, good works, etc.: to serve, minister, worship.”

Here are a few examples of those formal temple worship uses of the originally secular word.

- “And when his time of *service* was ended, [Zechariah] went to his home.”
- “While they were *worshipping* the Lord and fasting ...”

²For quick tips on how to read Greek transliterated words, see the appendix “Greek Transliterations” on p. 22.

³Thayer’s “Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament”, entry **3008**, *leitourgéō*.

⁴The New Testament words are comprised of the verb *leitourgéō*, and the nouns *leitourgía*, *leitourgós*, and *leitourgikós*.

- “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a *minister* in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up . . .”
- “And every priest stands daily at his *service*, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”⁵

Life and lifestyle

Even more importantly, “liturgy” was even more often used in a broader sense than temple worship.

- “Liturgy” is used to describe the obligation of Roman Christians to minister to the material needs of the brethren in Jerusalem.
- Similarly, in a “liturgy” of generosity, the Corinthians committed themselves to serving others.
- Paul praised the Philippians and used the word “liturgy” to refer to the “service of faith” of the Philippians. The “liturgy” of the Philippians is that they have not forsaken God.
- Liturgy is used to refer to Christ’s ministry and service to us. Christ’s service made a better covenant for us. This service required his entire commitment to that ministry, even to the point of giving up his own life.
- Rulers are “liturgists” of God. Having an authority derived from God, it is an authority which should be used to offer “liturgy” to Him.
- Paul describes his apostolic ministry as a “priest of the gospel”. He purposely uses temple language (ministering as a priest, acceptable offering, sanctified) to describe his labor among the Gentiles.⁶

Whether contributions of money, leaders in authority, the ministry of pastors, the faithfulness of a Christian walk, or even the life, death and resurrection

⁵This list is comprised of Luke 1:23, Acts 13:2, Hebrews 8:1–2, and Hebrews 10:11 respectively.

⁶Romans 15:27, 2 Corinthians 9:12, Philippians 2:16–17, Hebrews 8:6, Romans 13:6, and Romans 15:15–16 respectively.

of Jesus himself, the word “liturgy” includes just about every aspect of the believer’s service to God and each other.

This is a fundamental point in our understanding of liturgy. The biblical writers of the New Testament—Paul in particular—purposely create a relationship between a) the formal and carefully prescribed worship of the temple, and, b) worship as a function of the life of the Christian.

The close relationship between the idea of temple worship and one’s service to God is generously sprinkled throughout Scriptures, even when the word “liturgy” does not appear.

- “You are a chosen race, a royal *priesthood*, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession . . . Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”
- “For I am already being poured out as a *drink offering*, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”
- “For we are a *fragrance* (as of incense) of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”⁷

This is neither an accident, nor an innovation. The New Testament authors derived the use of that word and idea from the Old Testament writers. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) uses “liturgy” over 120 times!⁸

The Christian life is to be an all-encompassing service to God, a journey to the true country, of which we are citizens by faith, through Christ’s work for us. It’s a work that demands everything of us, because it required everything of him. For the Christian, the business of life is therefore liturgy in a richer sense than those original authors could have meant or understood the word.

Especially when represented in the microcosm of Lord’s Day worship, the liturgical nature of life is highlighted. Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, confession, the communing of the body with its members and with its master, catechesis, fellowship, preaching, teaching, singing, praying—all of it is God-oriented work. It is true liturgy.

⁷1 Peter 2:9–11, 2 Timothy 4:6–7, 2 Corinthians 2:15 respectively.

⁸See Psalm 101:6, “He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will *minister* to me”, also Psalm 103:21 and Isaiah 61:6.

It's misleading to speak of liturgical and non-liturgical worship services, if we are thinking biblically about what liturgy means and encompasses. There are only ill-considered and well-considered worship services.

3 Catechesis

One way of expressing the wholistic meaning and application of liturgy in the Scriptures is to think of liturgy as catechetical. And catechesis is one of the most important activities and goals there is for the church. Richard Baxter (1615–1691), a non-conformist (Puritan) leader, wrote to pastors that,

The first, and main point, which I have to propound to you, is this, Whether it be not the unquestionable duty of the generality of ministers . . . to set themselves presently to the work of catechizing, and instructing individually, all that are committed to their care, who will be persuaded to submit thereunto?⁹

Let's dig into the suggested relationship between liturgy and catechesis.

3.1 Catechesis Defined

Catechesis/catechism comes from the Greek word *katēchéō*, meaning “to teach orally, to instruct”, as well as “to inform or be informed by word of mouth”.¹⁰ In addition to the use of the specific word *katēchéō*, there is repeated emphasis on teaching, instructing, tutoring, mentoring, discipling, listening, learning, gaining wisdom, and so on, throughout Scripture.

(The confessional statement) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. *(The catechetical responsibility)* And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall

⁹*The Reformed Pastor.*

¹⁰See Thayer, entry 2727. *Katēchéō* occurs only in Luke and Paul in the New Testament in these texts: Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25, 21:21, 24; Romans 2:18; 1 Corinthians 14:19; Galatians 6:6.

bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(The catechetical responsibility) For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, *(The confessional statement)* that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(The catechetical responsibility) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, *(The confessional statement)* that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.¹¹

The church's job is to do the work of instruction, of catechesis. It's in this vein that the apostle Paul instructed Timothy the bishop regarding those who consider themselves teachers, but are unlearned.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.¹²

As an apostle to a bishop regarding presbyters,

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.¹³

George Herbert (1593–1633) commented thusly regarding catechesis.

The Countrey [*sic*] Parson values Catechizing highly: for there being three points of his duty,

1. the one, to infuse a *competent knowledge of salvation* in every one of his Flock;

¹¹Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:16–17 respectively.

¹²1 Timothy 1:3–4.

¹³2 Timothy 2:1–2.

2. the other, to *multiply, and build up this knowledge* to a spiritual Temple;
3. the third, to *inflame this knowledge, to presse, and drive it to practice*, turning it to reformation of life, by pithy and lively exhortations.

Catechizing is the first point, and [without] Catechizing, the other [results enumerated above] cannot be attained.¹⁴

3.2 Catechetical Liturgics

One might say, “Of course good instruction is important. What has this to do with liturgy, however?”

Baxter asks pastors this question.

Those ... who deride all catechisms as unprofitable forms, may better deride themselves for talking and using the form of *their own words*, to make known *their minds* to others. Why may not written words, which are constantly before their eyes, and in their memories, instruct them, as well as the transient words of a preacher?¹⁵

Baxter is not deriding preaching or teaching, but he is emphasizing the value of words “which are constantly before [the congregation’s] eyes, and in their memories”. If that does not encompass written liturgy, one wonders what else might, beside Scripture itself!¹⁶

Furthermore, there are examples from Scripture that strongly suggest the catechetical value of liturgy—or the liturgical value of catechesis?

Set and orderly forms for worship were clearly used in the Old Testament. The Psalms are partially an Old Testament hymn book. Likewise, there were set usages for synagogue worship. We see a hint of this in Luke 4, in which text Jesus is given the scroll with Isaiah’s prophecy to read.

The continuity of ordered worship after the ascension is strongly suggested, if not proven, in Acts 2:42. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching

¹⁴*A Priest To The Temple Or, The Country Parson, His Character, And Rule Of Holy Life*, Chapter XXI. “The Parson Catechizing.” Emphases and outline format mine.

¹⁵Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, Part I, Article I, Section I.

¹⁶I suspect that Baxter, as a Puritan, might not have agreed with this conclusion regarding liturgy. That does not mean, however, that the conclusion is incorrect!

and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and *the prayers*.¹⁷ The new believers in Acts weren't simply praying in some generic sense. They were participating in prayer together, with reference to some set of prayers known to Luke. Might we accurately speculate that he meant the patterns of synagogue worship and the Psalms?

Acts 2 is not the sole reference to liturgical catechesis and catechetical liturgy. In fact, Paul's letters are renowned for how Paul switches back and forth between theological exposition and worship. See, for example, his interpolation of praise at the end of a prayer (also interpolated) in Ephesians 3:20–21; or how Paul gets “lost” in the middle of his discussion about husbands and wives, when talking about the work of Christ.¹⁸

Most interesting for our discussion are two texts we find in 1st and 2nd Timothy, which seem to be poetical, liturgical, and catechetical.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.¹⁹

Similarly,

The saying is trustworthy, for:
If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—²⁰

¹⁷Greek: “... *taīs proseuchaīs*”.

¹⁸Ephesians 5:25b–27. See also Romans 11:36, 1 Timothy 6:15b–16, among others. Nor are such switches between theology and worship solely Paul's domain. See 1 Peter 5:11 and Revelation 1:6, among others.

¹⁹1 Timothy 3:16. This text has a poetic form designated by the consistently repeated aorist verbs and dative nouns.

²⁰2 Timothy 2:11–13. Here the poetic form is signified by the repetition of “if ... then” statements.

One suspects that Paul is either giving liturgical suggestions to Timothy, or quoting well known liturgical settings.

4 Applications & Examples

If liturgy is something that requires everything of us, our bodies and souls, then what implications and applications ought this fact to have? Here, I suggest some practical aspects of liturgy about which to think.

4.1 Applications

Liturgy Must Be Biblical

Liturgy and worship undergird what we believe and do. They are essentially the same the thing. There's even a Latin phrase for this principle: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, which literally means, "the principle/law of what we will pray is the principle/law of what we will believe". Both worship and liturgy must be conducted in a way that pleases God and is good for our souls—which is really to say the same thing. Therefore, it is important to make sure that our liturgy is biblical.

First, it must have biblical *content*. If we are using the reformed liturgies of Cranmer (as St. John's does), or Luther, or Calvin; the content of the liturgy will certainly be biblical. In all of these traditions, we find Bible verses liberally quoted or paraphrased throughout the service. There are provisions for reading of the Scriptures. The church year is used, which is, by its nature, a review of the key elements of Christ's life and ministry, thus requiring a yearly review of redemptive history.

Liturgy must also be biblical in *character*. It is fashionable in our day to ignore aspects of biblical truth which are uncomfortable, or which make outsiders critical of the church. For example, it is customary to hear a great deal about love and comfort and mercy; we may not hear to a similar degree about holiness, judgment, or wrath. Miracles may not be palatable for educated Westerners. The application of biblical standards to life is considered an inappropriate mixture of church and state, a sign of religious fanaticism, or just plain meddling in private matters.

Preaching, which is certainly a part of liturgy, has become anecdotal and shallow. Many of the songs of the modern church are like sugar—sweet, but

without a balanced nutritional value. The liturgical procession of the church year does nothing more than offer a day off from work. Pentecost, Easter, Christmas have nothing to do with Christ.

By carefully picking and choosing which Scriptures one includes—and does *not* include—one can have content from Scripture, but an unbiblical character matching the imbalanced intent of the composer of the liturgy.

While it's beyond the scope of this paper to compare modern liturgical revisions with the older documents, it is known that the 1979 Book of Common Prayer has toned down such elements as confession of so, so as to become nearly no confession at all. Even the 1928 Book of Common Prayer purposely reduced the use of the law in the communion service and deleted the use of the Athanasian Creed altogether. The reading of the law is shortened to such a point that it is nearly unnoticeable—if it is still read. Prayers for the lost and wicked have been removed.²¹

People cannot eat the meat of the word and even the milk has become sour.²²

A liturgy which is biblical in content *and* character does not permit such imbalance. We must return the power and vitality of God's word to our worship, both in church and in the rest of our lives. Congregations need to be taught what the biblical content of the liturgy is and what it means. The basic and universal pattern of sin/grace/faith (about which, see p. 19) should be well understood by worshippers. The use of well-ordered worship should permeate our prayer life and Lord's Day worship should be not only engaging in style, but in content.

It's worth noting that the reformers all reformed worship. The English Cranmer, the French/Swiss Calvin, the German Luther and Bucer, the Bohemian/Czech Hus, the Italian Vermigli—all were concerned with the worship of the people of God. They busied themselves with liturgical compilations, music, catechesis (about which, see pp. 5 and ff.), translations of the Scriptures readable “in a tongue ... understood of the people”,²³ the writing of sermons to be read by ignorant clergy,²⁴ all of which were evidence of the concern which the reformers had for their congregations. Note careful this last sentence: they were concerned for their congregations! Theirs was not a lofty theological exercise

²¹For example, the historiographer of the Episcopal Church at that time refers to the “idea of the ‘anger’ of God” as “pagan”. See *The New American Prayer Book: Its History and Contents* by E. Clowes Chorley, D.D., 1929, in which many such changes are explained and applauded.

²²Hebrew 5:12–13.

²³See Article 24 of the 39.

²⁴Such as the First and Second Books of Elizabethan Homilies, about which see Articles 11 and 35 of the 39.

for churchmen and scholars, but an intended remedy for a perversion of right worship and life.

From the highest royalty, to the lowest of Tyndale's ploughboys, it was the intent of many who risked and sometimes lost their lives to see to it that "the word [of God was] very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it".²⁵

Liturgy Must Be Usable

The church of Christ is now, as it always has been, pressed by varying and competing interests, both from within and without.

In western culture, the church is pressed by modern worship movements, aimed at competing with the other attractions of life. Churches purposely work to entertain as well as, if not better than, television, radio, internet, print media, and other forms of distraction. Then again, the church often is pressed from within by those who seem to think that worship must be painfully old, unattractive, and even unintelligible.

True worship is neither of these things; and yet, it is both! What do I mean?

Worship at its root means declaring the worth of someone or something.²⁶ For the Christian, it is the act of discovering, understanding, and declaring the worth of God in his character and nature. There is no single cultural method, language, or style that either solely or, in all likelihood, even entirely encompasses true worship. This is true, if for no other reason than that the divine nature of the object of our worship exceeds the created worshiper's capacity to comprehend him.

The language of the Elizabethan era cannot ensure pure worship. Nor does emotion-stirring music. In fact, no human instrument can ensure such purity and passion. But note: while human instruments cannot ensure fully faithful worship, they can help.

There are things which are wonderful, stirring, and old. There are things that are wonderful, stirring, and new. For those steeped in "traditional worship" (whatever that may mean and the meaning can widely differ!), new settings, a different environment, silence instead of sound, singing instead of preaching, reciting together instead of listening—many different things can help a worshiper

²⁵Deuteronomy 30:14.

²⁶From the Anglo-Saxon *weorð*, through Old English *weorthscipe*, 'worthiness, acknowledgement of worth', through Middle English *wurðscipe*, 'worship, honor'.

see something about the object of their worship afresh, or even for the first time. Those steeped in modernity often find that the culturally foreign and unfamiliar “look and feel” of the ancient can surprisingly impress on the worshiper a richer, deeper, and more thoughtful form of worship than they had theretofore experienced.

The difficulty (note: I do *not* say “the problem”) is that worship is generally a corporate affair, with people of various traditions, ages, and experiences being brought under one umbrella of ritual. Solemn religious ceremonies (the meaning of “ritual”) are intended to create a context in which the individual becomes a member of a whole body. This goal cannot be accomplished unless the parts are orchestrated, so to speak, into an organic harmonious whole. This cannot be accomplished unless the worshipers are aware of what they are doing and why. And *that* cannot be accomplished, unless the worship is intelligible.

Intelligibility does not mean catering to only one sort of style or culture. It means that whoever it is that participates in worship knows the purpose for which things are done/said/sung/prayed/read/heard. Intelligibility does not even mean *liking* an element of worship. In fact, it may be that an irritating element of worship is for the good of one’s soul.

Intelligible means that it is usable. It is understood, or at least can be understood, by the majority of hearers.²⁷ It is, to use an almost hackneyed word, relevant.

I know that the word “relevant” frightens people. But if we follow the pattern of Jesus, we find that in most contexts, Jesus strove to be relevant, intelligible, understandable, and accessible (which terms are, for me, essentially synonymous in this context). Jesus used parables to communicate. He went to where the people were, both physically, mentally, and spiritually, to preach to them. He spoke gently with the weak, kindly to the ignorant, and sternly to the hypocrite. We need to be just as flexible and accessible.

At the same time, we need to communicate in such a way that we are lifting up those around us, increasing knowledge, and demanding more in worship, not less.

Let us find the best words, the best tunes, and the most singable arrangements for our classical old hymns if we wish to sing them. Let us find the best instrumentalists. Let us do the best preaching. Let us use the best Bible versions. Or let us find the meatiest contemporary music and lyrics, if we wish to use

²⁷In another paper, I argue that the criteria for usable liturgy is that it should be familiar, historical, and accessible.

those. Let us craft worship for as broad a constituency as the congregation is, neither fearing modern, nor dismissing ancient. Let us, in this sense, “become all things to all people, that by all means [we] might save some”.²⁸

Thinking of liturgy as a tool, think of it this way. The more well understood a tool and its intended use are, the more productive its user can be. Liturgy is a tool; it is not the worship itself. But it should be a sophisticated, rich, and usable tool, adaptable in its use for every age and background.

A final comment: pastors and “worship leaders” often find themselves being “instructed” by congregations as to the appropriateness of something in a sermon, piece of music, text, prayer, and other elements. Pastors should always listen to such criticisms, knowing that it’s possible they are offering unusable, irrelevant, unintelligible, and inaccessible worship and need to adapt accordingly. Conversely, pastors should be willing to instruct their congregations that it’s the congregation’s job to be the student, not the teacher. This tension and balance requires great humility, wisdom, patience, insight, and teachability on the part of everyone!

Liturgy Must Be Taught

What does the average person think about liturgy? Perhaps they think of Bach played on an organ in a cathedral, perhaps incense, or of colorful vestments. At worst they think of standing, sitting, or kneeling without warning or explanation. They think of ancient dusty songs and words which taste like a foreign language in their mouths.

“Usability” is not inherent in liturgy—it must be taught and caught. For that reason, the meaning of liturgy should be addressed, as I have tried to do above (pp. 2 and ff.).

Furthermore, defining liturgy as Paul does, worship and liturgy are not confined to Sunday. What happens on Sunday is a summary—a reflection, a microcosm—of the consecration of ourselves which ought to take place during the rest of the week. It is an expression of the macrocosm of our existences, symbolical and sacramental.

All of the classical liturgies are aware that there is life outside the walls of the church. They acknowledge that what we do within the walls of the church prepares us for what is outside. These aspects should be taught, too.

²⁸1 Corinthians 9:22.

A False View of “Worship”

I admit that this last portion is more of a personal irritant than a necessary point. But still . . . it is my paper! So . . .

Denoting singing as “worship”, to the exclusion of the other elements of the service is not merely a misnomer; it’s misleading. When one speaks of something happening in the service before or after “worship”—by which they mean an extended period of music—the question is begged, “What is it that am I doing the rest of the service?” “Worship music”, “worship band”, “worship leader” are all phrases that often imply that music is the entirety of worship.

Words mean something and can imply even more. Denoting music as “worship” in exclusion of the other elements of worship can imply that the emotive content of music is the true essence of the experience of worship and that without such a visceral emotive experience, worship is not taking place. This is demonstrably a false view of worship. Prayer, preaching, and even silence are also worship.

Likewise, calling the congregation the “audience” is misleading. The congregation are the actors. The leaders are the conductors and actors. Only God is the audience.

4.2 Examples

The *Sursum Corda*

After the *Sursum Corda*²⁹ in the Lord’s Supper liturgy of Anglicanism, the liturgist says: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” The congregation responds: “It is just and right so to do.” The liturgist then continues, “It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” Embedded in this antiphonal exchange is a “sermon” from 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

An element like this can be brought to one’s attention in a sermon, through a brief reference after reading a text of Scripture, or simply emphasizing this segment in the liturgy itself.

²⁹Latin, “lift up your hearts”. Most of the headings for various liturgical elements are simply the first words of that element in Latin or Greek.

Congregational Involvement

An obvious though overlooked characteristic of the worship service in all the reformed liturgies is that the congregation must be involved. “Worship” is not merely the occasional audience participation in hymn singing. I have increasingly found that what is called worship is more a spectator sport than a participative experience. Listening to bands, listening to sermons, sitting through most of the service (except the “worship songs”) is largely a passive experience.

From the processional hymn and acclamation to responsive Psalter readings, sung responses to Scripture, the congregational confession of sin, participation in the congregational prayer . . . , the elements of liturgical worship require congregational participation. To this list one may add the changes in body posture (standing, sitting and kneeling) and coming forward to partake of the elements as a reflection of our spiritual posture, showing humility and the corporate and covenantal character of the church, coming together before God to partake of the Supper.

St. John’s is also determined to maximize congregational participation in the conduct of worship itself, so that members participate through the reading of Scripture, leading in musical arrangements, taking up the offering, and other aspects of worship.

The Church Calendar

Just like the seven day cycle at the heart of Old Testament patterns (“six days you shall labor . . . but the seventh is the Sabbath . . .”), the modern calendar recognizes the seven-day week.³⁰ In the same way that humans have carved out a pattern of years, days, months, hours, and so on—some based on lunar cycles, other on solar cycles—so also the liturgical calendar sets out patterns and cycles for us to follow.

One of the common complaints about liturgy is that it’s the same thing in every service. There are repeated parts, the main hooks on which the service is suspended. Together with those main hooks, there are numerous portions which change week by week to fit the pattern of the church calendar. Among those changeable elements (called “propers”) are these.³¹

³⁰Exodus 20:9–10. There are numerous other patterns in Old Testament law dealing with planting and harvest cycles, historical memorials like the Passover, and even a fifty year cycle.

³¹Here, I refer to the Lord’s Supper service of the A.C.N.A., 2013 draft, for my examples.

- Seasonally appropriate Acclamations
- Three variants of the Law
- Two Responses to the reading of the law
- The “Collect” (pronounced *cól-lect*), the seasonally appropriate prayer, summarizing (“collecting together”) the theme of the day
- Up to three lessons (Old Testament, New Testament, Gospel), plus an optional Psalm reading or chant
- The Nicene or Athanasian Creeds
- Congregational involvement in the “Prayers of the people”
- The “Proper Preface” before the *Trisagion* (“Thrice Holy”, beginning “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might ...”)
- Two post-communion prayer alternates
- Various seasonally appropriate Blessings and Dismissals
- At least six locations for varying musical settings (hymns, responses, and chants)

Generally speaking, the church calendar leads God’s people through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, reviewing the salient aspects of his life and ministry, and presenting key theological topics year by year. A liturgically untutored person can easily see the main aspects of the pattern: the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The more observant or better tutored person will see many additional aspects: the circumcision of Christ, his revelation to the Gentiles, the institution of the Lord’s Supper and foot washing, his ascension, Pentecost, and the annunciation to Mary.

The main elements oriented around the life and work of Jesus Christ follow. Note that some dates are *immoveable*, as is the Circumcision of Christ, eight days after the birth of Christ. In these cases, the date is noted. The rest are *movable*, calculated from the date of Easter each year.³²

³²It far exceeds the scope of this paper to discuss the development and calculation of the Christian Calendar. The curious can let me know and I’ll point you to further information.

1. Advent Season
 - a) Sundays before Advent (four)
 - b) Christmas (December 25th)
 - c) Holy Innocent's Day/Slaughter of the Innocents (December 28th)
 - d) Sundays after Christmas (up to two)
 - e) Circumcision (January 1st)
2. Epiphany Season
 - a) Epiphany (January 6th)
 - b) Presentation of Christ / Purification of Virgin Mary (February 2nd)
 - c) Sundays after Epiphany (up to six)
3. Lenten Season
 - a) Pre-lent, the so-called "-gesimas" (i.e., Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, being approximately 70, 60, and 50 days before Easter)
- b) Ash Wednesday
- c) Sundays in Lent (up to five)
- d) Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday, or both
- e) The week prior to Easter, including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday
4. The Annunciation (announcement) of the angel to Mary (March 25th)
5. Easter Season
 - a) Easter Day
 - b) Sundays after Easter (up to five)
6. The Ascension and the Sunday after the Ascension
7. Pentecost
8. Trinity Season
 - a) Trinity Sunday
 - b) The Sundays after Trinity (up to twenty-eight)
9. Transfiguration (August 6th)

There are also dates to recognize great heroes of the faith, *à la* Hebrews 11 (the chapter of the faithful). Depending on tradition, this list can vary widely. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer recognizes these heroes:

- Andrew
- Bartholomew
- Barnabas
- Thomas Cranmer

Sin	Law Confession Absolution	Faith	Creed Sermon Offering
Grace	Lord's Prayer <i>Gloria in excelsis</i> Scripture readings		Lord's Supper

Table 1: Sin, grace, faith pattern of Communion

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| • Richard Hooker | • Mary Magdalen |
| • James the son of Zebedee | • Matthew |
| • James (called “James the less”)
the brother of Jesus | • Paul |
| • John the Apostle | • Peter |
| • John the Baptizer | • Philip |
| • Jude | • Simon the Zealot |
| • Luke | • Stephen |
| • Mark | • Thomas |

Taken altogether, the number of permutations in prayers, hymns, texts of Scripture, preaching possibilities, special musical alternatives, responses, and other elements must be staggering.

The Gospel Is Preached Weekly

Another characteristic of Anglican liturgy is the Sin/Grace/Faith pattern. Not only is this a logical pattern for worship, it is a pattern which one sees repeated in the Scriptures many times. See Psalm 51, for a short example.

Every week, we are led through the basic elements of the gospel itself. We are required to recognize and remember our own sin and our need for God. We are repeatedly assured of his grace and faithfulness to us in providing a

way of escape from his just wrath. And we are consistently instructed in the need to both believe and respond believably to what we know. Thus, in an approximation of a typical Lord's Supper service, we see the cycle in table 1.

5 Conclusion

In biblical worship/liturgy, the issue is not just good order. More importantly, it is pastoral care and direction. It is the combination of 2,000 years of experience in worship and blending the God-ordained and God-sustained traditions and cultures of all Christendom in such a ways that worship neither despises the past nor ignores the present; training and encouraging the church of Christ for the future.

Every Christian “-ism” (e.g., Lutheranism, Puritanism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, ‘Baptist-ism’, Romanism ...) is a tool, crafted in human history, by humans. Most have profitable aspects, but only as they point us to Christ. Otherwise, they are an ill-used tool, like a screw-driver used as a hammer. The results are less than optimal and one could put out one's eye!

The job of the body of Christ is to reap souls, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to call a broken world to wholeness and healing in the worship of the Source of the unimaginable riches of our salvation, preparing them for heaven, and expressing our praise and thanksgiving for the “inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for” us.³³

As Paul wrote, “the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”.³⁴ If we are failing in this task (missing our target, as it were, due to bad aim)—be our liturgy ever so perfect, our music ever so moving—we are no different from the self-righteous workers of unrighteousness who cast out demons in the name of Christ—but were unknown by Him on the day of judgment.³⁵ μή γένοιτο—may it never be!

³³1 Peter 1:4.

³⁴1 Timothy 1:5.

³⁵Matthew 7:22.

Appendices

For Future Study?

Beyond these items, there are many other areas that could command our attention.

- the character of the preaching which takes place must be directive and practical, as well as theologically sound; its relationship to the church year, the consideration of expositional preaching, etc.
- making use of the propers throughout the service, such as including references to them in preaching.
- the care with which the music is chosen and arranged—modern and classical, serious and joyful, appropriate for the theme of the Lord’s Day, etc.
- the “choreography” of the service—coming forward for communion, the use of a common cup, etc.
- rarer elements of worship: incense, anointing with oil, others?
- various smaller and customary elements of worship, such as the use of a congregational “amen” at the end of prayer.
- the use of vestments and colors in adorning the place of worship.
- a “theology of approach” regarding coming to the Lord in worship, such as reflected in Hebrews 12:18–24.
- the relationships between Old and New Covenant worship, such as seeing morning and evening prayer as being similar to the morning and evening sacrifices of the Old Covenant.
- Suggested books: Newbigin (Proper Confidence, Household of God), Anderson and Reese, Schmemmann, Ratzinger, Underhill, Catechesis within the Church? Further exposition on George Herbert’s *The Country Parson*?

- Catechesis from youth onward: children in worship services or children's church? Ongoing adult Christian formation. Youth ministry re-examined. Catechesis as a life-cycle of Christian maturity (neither mere knowledge, nor age, but wisdom).
- Revival as an internal-to-the-church matter, liturgy in the community, covenant relationships in community as discipleship.
- Anglican devotional life; Lancelot Andrewes, morning and evening prayer for the congregation's use at home.
- Catechesis/discipleship as an aspect of equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4)
- Starting with a congregation that has no view of catechesis and discipleship, where does one start? Theory of action. Also consider assimilation of new members into existing process.
- Distinctive discipleship practices and opportunities within Anglicanism.
- Baptism and Catechesis: Ancient and Future practices and thinking.

Die Liste läßt sich ergänzen.

Greek Transliteration

I use very little Greek in this document, since it's intended for the general reader. When I do, I transliterate the words; using Latin letters to represent Greek letters (α = 'a', β = 'b', γ = 'g', δ = 'd', ϵ = 'e', and so on). The majority of the transliterated letters are obvious and can be pronounced as they appear, including syllabic emphasis. However, the following may not be obvious.

- 'ē' = η , pronounced like 'a' in 'hay' pronounced 'k'
- 's' = both the medial σ and final ς ; pronounced as 's'
- 'q' = χ , technically pronounced like 'ch' in 'Bach', but often
- 'ō' = ω , pronounced like 'o' in 'hoe'