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The Twentieth Century Reform of the Liturgy: Outcomes and Prospects

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Introduction

Metanoiete. From the very first word of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Mark reform and renewal have been an essential feature of Christian life and thought – just as they were critical to the message of the prophets of ancient Israel. The preaching of the Gospel presumes at least some openness to change, to acting differently and to thinking about things differently. This process has been repeated over and over again over the centuries. This insight forms the backbone of Gerhard Ladner’s classic work *The Idea of Reform*, where *renovatio* and *reformatio* are constants throughout Christian history.¹ All of the great reform movements in the past twenty centuries have been in response to both changing cultural and societal circumstances (like the adaptation of Christianity north of the Alps) and the failure of Christians individually and communally to live up to the demands of the Gospel. The great reform movements of the sixteenth century which produced what we would call today the Anglican, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches responded to just these factors of change and of failure. *Ecclesia semper reformanda* we say. The Church is always in need of reform.

I am hoping to argue here that reform, renewal and revision have consistently been a liturgical task for the churches as well. I need to add that reform must always be coupled with Tradition. Christian faith and practice require fidelity to the Scripture and how the Scripture has been interpreted and lived throughout history, which is what Tradition means.² This attention to tradition has clearly been a part of the twentieth century liturgical reform undertaken by Lutherans in the United States. How to be faithful to the Scriptures as interpreted by the evangelical renewal of Luther and others and at the same time respond adequately to a fuller historical (and therefore theological) understanding of the Tradition that has lived out fidelity to the Scriptures. Couple that with the question of how to distinguish between adequate and inadequate responses to the Gospel. Tradition cannot be ignored. We always have to take account of how Christians have tried to be faithful to the revelation of God as manifested in the Scriptures. Moreover, Tradition itself includes the constant need for rethinking and re-assessment that constitute reform and renewal. To quote the by-now well-known words of Jaroslav Pelikan: “Tradition is the living faith of the dead. Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”³ Fundamentalism and traditionalism are thoroughly un-traditional.

I want to situate my reflections on the outcomes of the 20th century liturgical reform and our prospects for the future. This is how I propose to proceed. I will very briefly review the late twentieth century liturgical reforms and revisions of a number of churches. Then I will turn to reactions to the reforms of the past fifty years, some assessment of their success and failure, and finally prospects for the future, employing an analogy with curricular reform, specifically in

¹ Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

² Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and Theological Essay*, New York: Macmillan, 1967.

³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, 9.

theological education. In terms of assessment I will have to limit myself to the Roman Catholic experience and hope that my reflections will help Lutherans to better assess liturgical revisions in the U.S. over the past fifty or sixty years.

1. *Modern liturgical reform*⁴

I think it is fair to say that liturgical reform has been a concern of the church as early as the fifties of the first century when St. Paul criticized the Corinthians for their failure to celebrate the Lord's Supper (I Cor 11 - because of their unjust practices) and their need to regulate their assemblies (I Cor 14 – in terms of the unruliness of those speaking in tongues). Recently Gordon Lathrop has also made a persuasive case that the Gospels themselves were written with the reform of liturgical assemblies in mind.⁵

When we think of liturgical reform in the course of church history of course the reforms of the sixteenth century immediately come to mind. While I am not going to deal with the various liturgical reforms in the evangelical, reformed and Anglican Churches, below I will be reflecting on the fate of the Eucharistic Prayer among Lutherans, who for the most part distinguished the *Words of Institution* from prayer in the sixteenth century perhaps since Luther regarded placing the Words of Institution within prayer as contrary to the Gospel promise of forgiveness proclaimed in the Eucharist.

I do, however, want to point out one profound irony in the sixteenth century liturgical reforms. This by way of example that sometimes reforms undertaken for good reasons can have unforeseen consequences. A number of authors have noted that the importation of Christian faith and practice north of the Alps in the sixth century and after led to a rather reified understanding of the value of liturgical acts. For example, prior to this migration of Christianity people would not have asked a question like “how much is a Mass worth?” This process of inculturation (for that is what it was) has been termed “Germanization”.⁶ It led in turn to a rather complex penitential system involving indulgences, which became one of Luther's initial targets. This cumbersome penitential system when combined with a reluctance to participate in holy communion, a reluctance that began to develop as early as the late fourth century, led to the abuse which Luther and others called the “private Mass,” i.e., a celebration of the Eucharist in which only the priest communicates. (This as opposed to what is sometimes called the “solitary Mass” where the priest does not even have a server.)⁷ Luther and others understood that the Lord's Supper was an act of communion,

⁴ An invaluable collection of essays on liturgical reform throughout history can be found in Martin Klöckener and Benedict Kranemann, eds., *Liturgiereformen: Historische Studien zu einmen bleibenden Grundzug des christlichen Gottesdienstes*, 2 vols., = *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 88*, Münster: Aschendorff, 2002.

⁵ Gordon Lathrop, *The Four Gospels on Sunday: The New Testament and the Reform of Christian Worship*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

⁶ See James Russell, *The Germanization of Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁷ See Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, Translated and revised by William Storey and Niels Rasmussen, Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1986, 156-159

which required a number of communicants. In addition, of course, the “private Mass” was a prime example of works righteousness.

The logical consequence of eliminating the private Mass was ceasing to celebrate the Eucharist when there were no other communicants. The most vivid example of this limitation was the refusal by the city council of Geneva of Calvin’s proposal to have a weekly eucharistic celebration. And so gradually (and ironically) celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, became more and more infrequent, even to the point of celebration only four times a year (as Zwingli had already recommended in Zurich). As far as I know (and I am happy to be corrected) there are still a number of churches which celebrate the Eucharist less frequently than every Sunday. So - what was meant to correct an abuse turned out to be an unfortunate (in my estimation at least) departure from the immemorial celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. Some reforms have unintended consequences.

I could give a number of other examples of attempts at liturgical reform, e.g. the Synod of Pistoia in 1786 which proposed radical revisions of the Roman Catholic liturgy in line with the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Many of the synod’s proposals, for example, having only one altar in a church, elimination of many images, and limited use of the vernacular actually found their way into the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.⁸ The main focus of this presentation also forbids me to survey the nineteenth century attempts at liturgical reform and renewal in the Protestant and Anglican churches.

Let’s turn then to the various attempts at liturgical reform and renewal in the late twentieth century. As everyone is aware, the Roman Catholic Church’s Second Vatican Council initiated an earthshaking reform of the liturgy.⁹ I should note that that RC reform did not begin with the Council but rather a decade earlier with the major reform of the Easter Vigil (1953) and the rest of Holy Week (1956) under Pope Pius XII. The story has been told very well any number of times. I need only refer you to the encyclopedic history of Annibale Bugnini (*The Reform of the Liturgy 1928-1975*)¹⁰, Piero Marini’s helpful chronicle (*A Challenging Reform*)¹¹ and Keith Peckler’s *Dynamic Equivalence*, a history of the campaign for vernacular liturgy.¹² The implementation of the reform, under Bugnini’s tutelage and involving dozens of experts in the fields of history, theology and pastoral practice, resulted in the complete vernacularization of the liturgy, reorientation of the presiding minister vis-à-vis the assembly, an extensive and even radical reform of the order of Mass, and a major overhaul of the liturgical year, not to mention

⁸ See, Albert Gerhards, “Die Synode von Pistoia 1786 und ihre Reform des Gottesdienstes,” in Klöckener and Kranemann, *Liturgiereformen I*, 496-510.

⁹ I mean the immediate reform. The first movements toward reform began with Prosper Guéranger and the Monastery of Solesmes in France in the 19th century and then with Pius X’s encouragement of a revival of Gregorian chant in 1903 and the popular movement initiated by Dom Lambert Beauduin of Belgium after World War 1.

¹⁰ Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, ET, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980.

¹¹ Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007.

¹² Keith Pecklers, *Dynamic Equivalence: The Living Language of Christian Worship*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003.

a complete revision of every sacramental liturgy and daily liturgical prayer. In addition, parallel to and sometimes inspired by the Roman Catholic reform, a number of churches revised their own liturgies. As far as I can tell every mainline church produced a new worship book in the wake of Vatican II. On the Roman side one of the more revisions was the production of a three-year Sunday and feast day lectionary which corresponded with Vatican II's desire to provide "richer fare" for the people of God. On the Protestant and Anglican side many churches adopted a lectionary very similar to the Roman one and then in cooperation with the CCT and ELLC eventually introduced the Revised Common Lectionary, which pays more attention to women and to the Old Testament, especially in "Green" time

On the Protestant side there had been attempts at liturgical renewal even prior to Vatican II, for example the liturgy of the newly-founded Church of South India in 1947 and the Lutheran *Service Book and Hymnal of 1958*, not to mention the ill-fated attempt to revise the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* in the 1920's.

No one can doubt, however, that Vatican II greatly inspired significant liturgical changes in Protestant and Anglican Church. For one the Reformation churches reassessed their theology and practice of Eucharist, many of them urging weekly celebration. A number, e.g., the United Methodist Church, the ELCA and the Episcopal Church produced worship books that contained a number of Eucharistic Prayers. This was partially in response to the Roman Catholic Church's adoption of the Roman Missal of 1970 that contained four Eucharistic Prayers, three of them new compositions – although two were roughly based on ancient prayers. The adoption of multiple eucharistic prayers on the Roman side and the acceptance of a eucharistic prayer period among (some) Lutherans is the issue on which I would like to focus. The new Roman practice of having the priest face the people led a number of churches to reassess their own approach to liturgical space.

The revision of the liturgical books had of course been a significant development over the back sixty years or so. As I've just noted the appearance of the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) and the work of Luther Reed marked an important step for American Lutherans who adopted a eucharistic prayer. We can see in that book an ecumenical agenda as an aspect of American Lutheran reform and revision even before the Second Vatican Council. The construction of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* was a further vital step in the cooperation of Lutheran Churches and the eventual formation of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Given rapid developments in culture and in the field of liturgical studies it is not surprising that the ELCA produced another service book, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, in 2006. Similarly, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod published its own *Lutheran Worship* in 1982 and also in 2006 followed up with the *Lutheran Service Book*.

The Roman Catholic has been no less industrious. The full *Roman Missal* (of Paul VI) was promulgated with great rapidity in the wake of Vatican II, appearing in 1970. Within a few years before and after every significant liturgical rite (e.g. infant baptism, 1968) was published. Of course the Catholic situation is complex since the revision of liturgical books involves both publication in Latin and the translation of the liturgical texts in the various vernacular languages. As is well known the strategy of translation itself has become a bone of contention within the Catholic Church. The current official document on translation has adopted a theory that can be called "formal correspondence" in contrast to the previous

document which favored “dynamic equivalence”, the kind of approach that produced *Today’s English Version* of the Bible. Pope Francis has apparently appointed a new commission to review the current translation strategy – so the post-Vatican II liturgical reform is certainly not over. One more comment about the translations. The current RC translation has changed many of the agreed texts like the “Holy, Holy,” the Nicene Creed and the response “and also with you.” This is an extremely unfortunate development and a step backward ecumenically speaking as has been pointed out vigorously by Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson, Gail Ramshaw and others.¹³

I would like to focus now on a specific example: the eucharistic prayer. Around the time of Vatican II it became clear that a number of Roman Catholic theologians and pastors were dissatisfied with the Roman Canon. This eucharistic prayer which reached more or less its final state in the fifth century and certainly had roots in the fourth century (which we know because a version of it was quoted in St. Ambrose’s mystagogical lectures) had been the sole eucharistic prayer in use by the Roman Rite for some fifteen hundred years.¹⁴ Of course, dissatisfaction with the Canon was nothing new. Luther had called it “that mangled and abominable thing gathered from much filth and scum.”¹⁵ All of the Reformers replaced it in one way or another and Luther himself eliminated it completely in the German Mass of 1526. At the time of Vatican II several efforts were made to re-write the Canon, but Pope Paul VI decided that instead of changing it, it should remain as a monument to the Roman Catholic tradition and that several new prayers should be composed.¹⁶ Thus the new missal of 1970 contained four prayers: the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I), Eucharistic Prayer II roughly based on the eucharistic prayer in the Apostolic Tradition, Eucharistic Prayer III, a new composition, and Eucharistic Prayer IV based very roughly on the Egyptian recension of the Anaphora of St. Basil. I say “roughly” for two of them since the post-institution narrative epiclesis was split into a “consecratory epiclesis” that introduced the institution narrative in order to retain the Western understanding of the consecration occurring through Christ’s Words of Institution with an invocation of the Holy Spirit for the purposes of communion after the institution narrative. Six more eucharistic prayers were subsequently added to the collection of approved Roman eucharistic prayers: two for reconciliation, three for Masses with children, and one for Various Needs and Occasions.

The introduction of new eucharistic prayers was considered by many a radical departure from tradition and caused a good amount of pushback. Today both the Traditionalists who espouse the sole use of the pre-Vatican II liturgy and those (somewhat less radical) who belong to what has been called “the Reform of the Reform” reject these

¹³ Paul Bradshaw, “Liturgical Reform and the Unity of Christian Churches,” *Studia Liturgica* 44 (2014), 163-171; Gail Ramshaw, “Yesterday’s Language: The New Words of the Catholic Mass,” *The Christian Century* 128 (2011), 28-30; Maxwell Johnson, “Ecumenism and the Study of Liturgy: What Shall We do Now?” *Liturgical Ministry* 20 (2011), 13-21.

¹⁴ See John Baldovin, in Edward Foley, John Baldovin, Mary Collins and Joanne Pierce, eds., *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 247-254.

¹⁵ Babylonian Captivity of the Church

¹⁶ See Bugnini, *Reform of the Liturgy* 448-450; Cipriano Vagaggini, *The Canon of the Mass and Liturgical Reform*, ET, Staten Island: Alba House, 1967.

multiple prayers in favor of retaining the Roman Canon alone.¹⁷ For them the new prayers constitute a radical and unwarranted break with the “organic development of the Roman Rite.” This phrase has become a favorite of the post-Vatican II liturgy’s critics. They refer specifically to paragraph 23 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy which reads:

23. That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised. This investigation should be theological, historical, and pastoral. Also the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indults conceded to various places. Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.

Many of the critics claim that most of those who voted for the liturgy constitution would not have recognized the subsequent reform undertaken by a commission since what they produced departed so radically from the past. Among these critics, of course, is Joseph Ratzinger who as Pope Benedict XVI greatly liberalized and thereby encouraged those who would use the pre-Vatican liturgy exclusively. For most Roman Catholics, however, it seems that the value of multiple eucharistic prayers goes unquestioned. The vast majority probably only hear prayers II and III which are the briefest. So much for the Roman adoption of multiple prayers.

Among Lutherans, at least in the US where I will confine my comments, the issue has not been so much how many eucharistic prayers to have as whether or not to have a eucharistic prayer at all. I am aware that various evangelical churches have taken different approaches to the eucharistic prayer, given Luther’s own rather expansive attitude toward liturgical reform.¹⁸ The basic issue hinges, of course, on the question of eucharistic sacrifice. Does having a eucharistic prayer inevitably involve some kind of works righteousness whereby we can imagine that we have something of our own to offer back to God – in other words: has *Gottesdienst* has been transformed into primarily what we offer to God rather than what God gives us – the promise of forgiveness of sins, which Luther saw as the heart of the Eucharist, expressed in the words of the Lord?

The discussions leading up to the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (1982) saw vigorous and sharp debate among proponents and opponents of adopting a eucharistic prayer. From what I have been able to survey the best piece opposed to a Lutheran eucharistic prayer was written by Oliver Olson in *The Lutheran Quarterly* in 1974.¹⁹ I say this not because I agree with his arguments, but because I think he

¹⁷ For the critics and their arguments, see John Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008, 47-49, 143-144.

¹⁸ E.g., the various approaches taken in the Swedish Church in the 16th century, see Frank Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997, 409-440.

¹⁹ Oliver Olson, “Contemporary Trends in Liturgy Viewed From the Perspective of Classical Lutheran Theology,” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 26 (1974), 110-157. The literature on this question is voluminous. Two pieces worth noting: Richard Stuckwisch, *Truly Meet Right and Salutory...Or Not? The Revision of the Order of Holy Communion of the*

highlighted the vital theological issues, especially anamnesis, epiclesis and the four-fold shape of the liturgy à la Gregory Dix, that adopting a eucharistic prayer implies. For me this is an extremely important point: *you cannot have significant liturgical reform without inspiring a profound change in spirituality and piety. You cannot have liturgical reform which is unaccompanied by a theological rationale.* Of course the ELCA does have such a rationale in its statement “The Use of the Means of Grace” (1997) as Maxwell Johnson has argued.²⁰

Clearly the Eucharistic Prayers contained in the LBW and ELW reflect the great advances made in the biblical, patristic and liturgical *Ressourcement* of the twentieth century. The Eucharistic Prayers of ELW are also remarkable in that they include an invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis) not only on the communicants but also explicitly on the gifts (at least in prayers, 1, 4 and 11). Understandably Lutherans have not been able to include a prayer of offering in the anamnestic portion of the prayer since that idea carries with it so much of the baggage of Luther’s (and the Confessions’) rejection of what they considered to be the errors of the Roman Canon. One can hope, however, that one day even Lutherans might be able to adopt a formula similar to that of the United Methodists who pray after the Institution Narrative: *And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us...*”

Needless to say from a Roman Catholic perspective I would also hope that the LCMS might one day see fit to allow the option of a full Eucharistic Prayer in addition to the “Prayer of Thanksgiving found in LSB. Although I do regard the re-arrangement of the Lord’s Prayer in the first and second settings of the Divine Service; i.e. after the Prayer of Thanksgiving, as a step in the right direction.

2. Assessment

In addition to religious and specifically liturgical reform there are also a number of other types of reform: tax reform, immigration reform and administrative reform to name a few. I would like to employ curricular reform as an analogy to see whether it can help us to understand the results of the late twentieth century liturgical reform and also help us to look to the future. I will be using the curricular reform with which I am most familiar – the review and reform of a Master of Divinity program in a Catholic Theological school from the 1970’s until the present. From the early 70’s through the late 90’s our MDiv program looked not unlike many others in American seminaries of all sorts. We had a broad series of area requirements and quality control was insured by a comprehensive exam at the end of third year. But times change, students change. The comprehensive exam was abandoned in the late 1990’s. It was replaced by a year-long course in the second year called “Theological Synthesis” which covered

Lutheran Book of Worship *in the Preparation and Development of Lutheran Worship*, PhD. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2002; Gerhard Forde and Robert Jenson, “A ‘Great Thanksgiving’ for Lutherans,” *Response 15* (1975), 49-60.

²⁰ Maxwell Johnson, “What is Normative in Contemporary Lutheran Worship? Word and Sacrament as Non-negotiable,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38 (2011), 245-255.

all of the major topics in systematic theology as well as by an introductory non-credit seminar in first year and a kind of capstone seminar, called “the MDiv Closure” in the last semester.

About ten years later (does this sound familiar?) the comprehensive exam was re-instated and certain fields like Moral Theology and Church History were able to get an extra required course. For the first time a course in liturgical theology was required – at least for ordination candidates. A 3-credit Ministry for Mission seminar was added in the second semester of the first year.

Once again a reform was undertaken with the best of intentions but it was quickly apparent that it fell short. In the first place the ordination candidates were left with no free electives. The lay candidates had only three. The first-year seminar could gain no traction. A further revision has been adopted to go into effect for next year which (to make a long story short) allows for much more flexibility in students’ choice. Only time will tell....

Now let me try to apply my analogy. I am going to apply it to the Roman Catholic reform but in the hopes that Lutherans can make the application for similar reforms in their various churches. Admittedly there are important differences in the reform process for Catholics and other churches and congregations. In the first place, the Roman Catholic reform is by and large monolithic. Liturgies are promulgated for the worldwide Church and only a few adaptations are allowed.²¹ In the second place, experimentation and open dialogue rarely precede Catholic liturgical reforms. It should be noted however that a second generation of liturgical texts, e.g. marriage and ordination rites did benefit from reflection on post-conciliar experience. Third, Roman Catholic liturgical texts are produced in Latin and require translation which is a very different process from American Lutherans writing texts in contemporary English. In addition, Lutherans had the advantage of being able to launch liturgical trial balloons with their *Contemporary Worship* series as well as the *Renewing Worship* series which preceded Evangelical Lutheran Worship. A similar process took place in the Episcopal Church, which is currently embarking on a consultation with regard to a revision of the *1979 Book of Common Prayer*. Admittedly ICEL does send provisional translations to English-speaking bishops, but these are translations of Latin texts. ICEL’s 1998 attempt to provide original opening prayers for Sundays and major feasts in the Missal met with rejection by the Vatican. Lay Catholic response comes only after mandatory texts go into effect. I think it is safe to say that since 2010 that response has been decided mixed with regard to the Roman Missal.

Let me draw a number of conclusions from my analogy to curricular reform. In the first place, just as faculty and administration need to be prepared for curriculum review and need to be able to work from their experience, so clergy need to be ready for liturgical reform. This was clearly not the case in the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic situation.²² The clergy of the 1950’s and 1960’s had not been educated in liturgy beyond the rubrics and canon law. They had little

²¹ The Vatican did issue *Varietates Legitimae: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy*, an instruction of the Congregation for Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 1994, but it was rather restrictive, see <https://adoremus.org/1994/01/26/instruction-inculturation-and-the-roman-liturgy/> (accessed 19 Mayb 2017).

²² For an excellent assessment of the positive results of the reform as well as the agenda for the future, see Kevin Irwin, *What We Have Done, What We Have Failed to Do: Assessing the Liturgical Reform*, New York: Paulist Press, 2014 and much earlier, Aidan Kavanagh, “Liturgical Business: Unfinished and Unbegun,” *Worship* 50 (1976) 354-364.

sense of the deeper meaning of liturgy except for a mainly neo-Scholastic sacramental theology which concentrated on issues like validity and polemics against adversaries (i.e. the Protestants)! It took some time for clergy to be (re)educated and for liturgical centers like Notre Dame and St. John's in Collegeville, MN to start training a generation of liturgists – priests, religious and lay. A similar effort was undertaken in Europe. I should mention that programs like Notre Dame have also trained a generation of Protestant and Anglican liturgical scholars and seminary professors.

Second, curricular reform is closely linked to societal and cultural shifts. Certainly among Catholics the increasing number of candidates for lay ecclesial ministry has reshaped the needs for ministerial education, at least on those theological schools where ordained and lay candidates are trained side by side. So too, societal shifts have significantly affected liturgical reform. The cultural revolution of the late 1960's and the 1970's (at least in North America and much of Europe) set loose an avalanche of liturgical experimentation among Catholics. It was as though a pressure-cooker had blown. Much of the officially sanctioned reform was ignored in favor of creativity. Some anthropologists and sociologists claimed that the Councils desire for rites "distinguished by a noble simplicity;" and that "they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation." (SC 34) was based on a flawed understanding of culture.²³ Other critics noted perceptively that North American culture was not exactly rich soil for liturgical reform and renewal.²⁴

The relation between liturgical reform and contemporary culture is one of the most difficult areas to assess. In this presentation I have not touched the question of the Emergent Church or Liquid Liturgies or Praise and Worship since they are too far afield from what I would consider traditional liturgy.²⁵ I have to confess that I regard these movements not so much as reform as misguided attempts to adapt to culture. This is not to deny that there are no elements in these movements from which those of us who celebrate traditional liturgies can learn.

Curriculums change with time and new generations of students. I think this is true of liturgical forms as well. The social and cultural shifts of the 60's and 70's also affected theology profoundly. For a number of reasons Catholics no longer felt obliged to conform to a kind of blind obedience to church directives, notoriously Pope Paul VI's decision to maintain the ban on artificial birth control in 1968. I would add that we (I mean all of us) have not appreciated Paul Tillich's insightful categorization of the major focus of salvation in three different church epochs: death in the early church, sin and guilt in the medieval church and meaning in the modern world. I think that many of the theological conflicts that we see in our churches today

²³ Victor Turner, "Ritual, Tribal and Catholic," *Worship* 50 (1976), 504-526; David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000; Kieran Fitzpatrick, *Sociology and Liturgy: Ritual Representations of the Holy*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. The literature of the reform's critics is very large. For some of it, see John Baldwin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008.

²⁴ M. Francis Mannion, "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture," *Worship* 62 (1988), 98-123; Mark Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," in E. Bernstein, ed., *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, 27-46.

²⁵ See e.g., Doug Gay, *Remixing the Church: Towards an Emerging Ecclesiology*, London: SCM Press, 2011.

can be traced to a conflict between those who still maintain the more medieval focus on sin and guilt and those who are more focused on meaning and identity.

My third and last category from which those who attempt liturgical reform and renewal can learn from the process of curriculum reform is the area of outcomes and assessment. Concern with outcomes and assessment has become the new orthodoxy in education circles. And rightly so in my opinion since educators should be clear about their objectives and also should be accountable to their constituencies with regard to what they have promised to deliver. No analogy is perfect, but it seems to me that when we embark on liturgical reform, we in the churches should also try to do so responsibly with regard to what it is that we hope to accomplish and how we intend to measure it. In religious life and practice such assessment is rather difficult, especially since quantitative measures, e.g. church attendance, are not necessarily reliable for figuring out whether the reforms have been successful.

If we study Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from this angle it seems to me that we can discern several important hoped-for outcomes.²⁶ In the first place the Council wished to make liturgy central to the life of the Church and to put that on a firm theological basis (SC 1-10). It also wished to promote "full, conscious and active participation" in the liturgy grounding this not in concession from the hierarchy but on the basis of Christian baptism (SC 14). In doing so the Council also promotes a liturgical ecclesiology whereby the liturgy is understood as the primary manifestation of what it means to be church (SC 14, 26-32). I cannot emphasize enough the fact that every liturgy is a manifestation (or to use Alexander Schmemmann's word, "an epiphany") of the Church. The historian Massimo Faggioli has recently pointed this out with great clarity arguing that in important ways the Council lost heart and was not able to follow through the radically new vision of church contained in the liturgy constitution.²⁷ I think this is particularly clear when it comes to the nature of ordained ministry. The documents on the church and on the priesthood were not able to adequately contextualize the ministerial priesthood within the liturgy constitution's profound vision of the common priesthood of the baptized. This remains one of the neuralgic points in the current Catholic "liturgy wars".

Third, as we have seen and perhaps most significant for the ecumenical movement, the Council desired to greatly enhance the liturgy by means of "richer fare" (SC 51, 35) in the reading of Scripture. Finally, in order to give all of the baptized their proper share in the "ownership" of the liturgy, the Council mandated that "[t]he rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation." (SC 34)

I should add here that there are a series of goals articulated most explicitly in the introduction to the LBW and somewhat less explicitly in the introduction to ELW and LW. I find a happy balance in the LBW's emphasis on the Eucharist as the preferred Sunday service paired with the Roman Catholic Church's desire to re-emphasize Scripture in the liturgy.

²⁶ I am being necessarily selective here.

²⁷ Faggioli Reform

Have these desired outcomes been achieved? I would say that for the most part and for most of those who remain church-going Catholics the reforms have been successful. ²⁸ Full, conscious and active participation is taken for granted at least as a desideratum. There has been a marked enrichment of the Scripture in the post-Vatican II lectionary whose content for the most part has been adopted by mainline Christian churches. The liturgical rites have clearly been streamlined and do not require much explanation. With the sad exception of the current Catholic translations we have seen an enormous advance in the reconciliation of the churches in good part because of the liturgical reforms.

But – to be honest - the reform has not been completely successful. In the first place there are always unintended consequences of any major upheaval, ritual or otherwise. Once the liturgy was translated into the people’s language there was an explosion of “experimental” liturgies in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. A well-articulated theology that held the pre-Vatican II liturgy together that stressed the “Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” and “transubstantiation” was not developed in accordance with the new rites – despite the fact that the introductions (like the General Instruction of the Roman Missal at least in its second edition) stressed continuity with tradition RC doctrine.

At the same time the reformed rites came under attack both by those who rejected Vatican II altogether or who judged the revised rites inadequate or unfaithful to the Council’s mandate. Among this latter group was the important German theologian, Joseph Ratzinger.²⁹ This opposition was fueled by Pope John Paul II’s attempt to accommodate the traditionalists after Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre ordained bishops in 1988. A final blow came with the liberalization of the permission to celebrate the old liturgy in Benedict XVI’s *Summorum Pontificum* (2007). In my opinion Benedict’s move was a major setback in the post-Vatican II reform because it encouraged a small but vigorous group of traditionalists to reject the reform at least by their practice and also because it encouraged those who were supporters of the so-called “reform of the reform,” a movement which wishes to re-introduce many of the features of the old liturgy, among them the single eucharistic prayer (in Latin) and to abandon the practice of celebrating the Eucharist *versus populum*.³⁰

I know that there have been a number of efforts to assess the success of various Lutheran revisions.³¹ I wonder, however, if it is not more difficult for Lutherans to engage in the process of assessment, since, unlike Roman Catholics, your books are resources and not texts which must be employed.

Our academic accrediting agencies insist more and more on our developing adequate tools of assessment. It seems to me that all things being equal this is also a very good idea for the church.

²⁸ This is obviously not a series of scientific conclusions. I would however point to a survey and commentary done 25 years after the council by a number of R.C. liturgy centers, Lawrence Madden, ed., *The Awakening Church: 25 Years of Liturgical Renewal*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992.

²⁹ *Spirit of the Liturgy*

³⁰ see John F. Baldwin, “Does the Reform of the Reform Have a Future?” Liam Tracey and Thomas Whelan eds., *Serving Liturgical Renewal*, Dublin: Veritas, 2015, 19-130.

³¹ Carlos Messerli, “Lutheran Book of Worship: Successes and Failures – A Review for Pastors and Musicians,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30:5 (October 2003), 342-348.

3. Prospects

Now for the difficult part. What are the prospects for the future? First, liturgical reform will never end, simply because cultural, society and history are always developing. Needless to say we need to heed Scripture and Tradition recognizing that Tradition is the ever developing lived experience of the church in fidelity to the Scriptures. These questions are, of course, even more pressing when we are dealing with contemporary moral or ethical issues.

I doubt very much that the changes desired by the “reform of the reform” party (much less the hard-core traditionalists) will see the light of day. The rites of the Catholic Church have been very competently (not perfectly) reformed in the past fifty years. They provide an excellent groundwork for living in fidelity to the Gospel.

But they are not enough. Inculturation or cultural adaptation of the liturgy is probably the most pressing issue for the churches today. On the one hand we need to recognize that the liturgy is profoundly affected by contemporary culture even when a deliberate effort at inculturation is not made. Francis Mannion argued this very well in his 1988 essay on “Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture”³² in which he described three cultural realities that profoundly affect the American liturgical experience: the subjectification of reality, the intimization of culture and the politicization of society. On the other hand, just as theology itself must always correspond to the needs of the time and to various cultures, so also our liturgies must be in constant dialogue with culture not in the pursuit of some evasive relevance but precisely in order to be faithful in handing on tradition. “Why is it,” a prominent European liturgical scholar asked me about ten years ago, “that in forty years of reform we have still not succeeded in communicating a vision of the liturgy as a truly communal activity?”

At the same time I am convinced that there is (to use Gordon Lathrop’s word) an “Ordo” which governs Christian worship and that there are features of liturgy which we cannot abandon without abandoning traditional Christian faith altogether. I mean word and sacrament, the centrality of Sunday and the Paschal Triduum, careful attention to the theology and practice of baptism – just to make a start.

That leads me to my final point. It is one thing to revise and reform our liturgies but it is quite another to help our people live into these reforms in their spirituality and piety. The aim of the twentieth century reforms has clearly involved helping Christians of all churches to recognize the profoundly ecclesial and communal dimension of the liturgy as a vital feature of our life in God. This was the vision of many of the greatest leaders of the Liturgical Movement like Lambert Beauduin, Romano Guardini and Virgil Michel. But in many ways that great aim has been thwarted by the poverty of our celebrations, our lack of imagination and by the countervailing forces in our culture which make truly corporate worship difficult. Until we have helped the majority of our fellow Christians to appreciate both that communal dimension and how intimately our liturgy is related to our vision of society and the way we live our life, the major aim of liturgical reform will not have been reached. The final test of any liturgical reform is how it is being lived out in faith, hope and love, individually and communally. As St. Paul says so well in Romans 12:1: *I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to*

³² M. Francis Mannion, “Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture,” *Worship* 62 (1988), 98-123.

present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.(NRSV)

This has always and always does require openness to conversion – *Metanoia*.