tural, and cross-cultural nature of Christian worship. We call on all member churches to recover the centrality of baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Supper — the principal transcultural elements of Christian worship and the signs of Christian unity — as the strong center of all congregational life and mission and as the authentic basis for contextualization. We call on all churches to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments, and art and architecture for Christian worship, so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local culture. We call on those churches now carrying out missionary efforts to encourage such contextual awareness among themselves and also among the partners and recipients of their ministries. We call on all member churches to give serious attention to the transcultural nature of worship and the possibilities for cross-cultural sharing. And we call on all churches to consider the training and ordination of ministers of word and sacrament, because each local community has the right to receive weekly the means of grace.

6.2. We call on the Lutheran World Federation to make an intentional and substantial effort to provide scholarships for persons from the developing world to study worship, church music, and church architecture toward the eventual goal of enhanced theological training being led by local teachers in their churches.

6.3. Further, we call on the Lutheran World Federation to continue its efforts related to worship and culture into the next millennium. The tasks are not quickly accomplished; the work calls for ongoing depth-level research and pastoral encouragement. The Worship and Culture Study, begun in 1992 and continuing during and past the 1997 LWF Assembly, is a significant and important beginning, but the task calls for unending efforts. Giving priority to this task is essential for the evangelization of the world.

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A Fragile Future for the Ordo?

Stephen Burns

There is no such thing as “theology”; there is only contextual theology.

Distillations

The Nairobi Statement suggests that contextual dimensions of worship are grounded in and modeled on the mystery of Christ’s incarnation: thus recognition that “Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world” means that “God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world” (3.1). As the statement’s contextual focus is allied to the doctrine of the incarnation, so the statement centers on the doctrine of resurrection with respect to its transcultural category. It conceives the “source” of the transcultural dimensions of Christian worship to be in the mystery of Christ’s resurrection (2.1), identifying the “principal transcultural elements” of worship as “baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Supper” (6.1). What makes them transcultural is that “Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of Christ’s death and resurrection, were given by God for all the world. There is one Bible, translated into many tongues, and biblical preaching of Christ’s death and resurrection has been sent into all the world” (2.1).

This focus on Scripture and sacraments accounts for the Nairobi State-

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ment's interest in the notion of "the ordo," the so-called fundamental pattern or "shared core liturgical structure" (2.3) of eucharistic worship, which the statement promotes (at 3.3; cf. 2.1). Like the statement itself, this ordo is "greatly influenced" by Gordon W. Lathrop, one of the members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) team working on Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity and its companion volumes, as well as on the Ditchingham Report of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the WCC’s Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts. In the WCC’s work, that ordo is said to be:

GATHERING of the assembly into the grace, love, and koinonia of the triune God

WORD-SERVICE
Reading the Old and New Testament scriptures
Proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the ground of our hope (and confessing and singing our faith)
and so interceding for all in need and for unity (sharing the peace to seal our prayers and prepare for the table)

TABLE-SERVICE
Giving thanks over bread and cup
Eating and drinking the holy gifts of Christ’s presence (collecting for all in need)
and so

BEING SENT (DISMISSAL) into mission in the world.

At the center of the ordo are, of course, word and table, elements that are in some sense transcultural, according to the Nairobi Statement. This ordo is a considerable development of the WCC’s earlier document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM), “the most important multilateral document on


worship of our age,” which spoke of the eucharistic liturgy as “essentially a single whole” but one that “consist[s] historically of the following elements in varying sequence and of diverse importance.”

BEM simply listed those elements as

- hymns of praise;
- act of repentance;
- declaration of pardon;
- proclamation of the Word of God, in various forms;
- confession of faith (creed);
- intercession for the whole church and for the world;
- preparation of the bread and wine;
- thanksgiving to the Father for the marvels of creation, redemption, and sanctification (deriving from the Jewish tradition of the berakah);
- the words of Christ’s institution of the sacrament according to the New Testament tradition;
- the anamnesis, or memorial, of the great acts of redemption, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, which brought the Church into being;
- the invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiklesis) on the community, and the elements of bread and wine (either before the words of institution or after the memorial, or both; or some other reference to the Holy Spirit which adequately expresses the “epikletic” character of the Eucharist);
- consecration of the faithful to God;
- reference to the communion of saints;
- prayer for the return of the Lord and the definitive manifestation of his kingdom;
- the amen of the whole community;
- the Lord’s Prayer;
- sign of reconciliation and peace;
- the breaking of the bread;
- eating and drinking in communion with Christ and with each member of the church;
- final act of praise;
- blessing and sending.

The ordo brings them to much greater coherence.

The following reflections consider aspects of the ordo with respect to the Nairobi Statement’s own categories of the transcultural and the contextual, and relate both to a number of recent theological studies. In particular, I explore intersections between the Nairobi Statement’s concerns and the ordo: first, academic debate; then, growing conversation about the emerging church; and, most importantly, subalterns speaking for themselves.

The Growing Strength — and Fragility — of the Ordo

In the first place, however, it should be noted that the efforts of the LWF and the WCC to promote the eucharistic ordo have been rewarded insofar as the ordo has been widely adopted across a very wide spectrum of Christian traditions and has clearly shaped a diverse spread of contemporary ritual books. The ordo is now echoed in all kinds of liturgical resources across many Christian traditions. It shapes the structure of rites and is narrated in compelling ways, such as in the Church of England’s framing statement for its Common Worship materials: “The journey through the liturgy has a clear structure with signposts for those less familiar with the way. It moves from the gathering of the community through the Liturgy of the Word to an opportunity of transformation, sacramental or non-sacramental, after which those present are sent out to put their faith into practice.” The contemporary embrace of the ordo includes numerous traditions that had previously patterned their liturgical life in other ways, including both those in old-line traditions in the West and the heirs of more recent missionary legacy.

At the same time, though, we must acknowledge that the ordo has been, by some — and from a range of perspectives — ignored, questioned, suspected, and rejected, which may signal a fragile future for the ordo, at least in some traditions. This is to say that the ordo’s coherent pattern of Christian assembly is by no means always to be found. Note, for example, remarks made by Alistair McRae, a former president of the Uniting Church of Australia, speaking in his outgoing address as he passed on his office:


I have wondered on occasions if we are in danger of losing connection with the catholicity and apostolicity of the church in our gatherings. Some of the markers of continuity with the church in time and space have practically disappeared in some places and the local and the contemporary seem the only note. The broad horizons of Christianity have closed in. I have been at baptisms where some alternative to the Apostles’ Creed has been used. Why not use a contemporary creed and one that links us with the church catholic across time? I have been at celebrations of Holy Communion that are scarcely recognisable in terms of the meal at the heart of Christian life for 2000 years. Friends, we have only got two official sacraments in our church, let’s not mess with them. Is it so hard to keep them aligned with the church ecumenical and historical, and contextual and contemporary? That’s what we do every time we preach from ancient scriptural texts.

Set this alongside comments by Steven Croft, an English Anglican bishop — and notable in terms of the ground these reflections go on to traverse, the English Church’s archbishops’ missioner — writing about the Church of England:

It is becoming quite common to experience main Sunday services in Anglican churches where the Lord’s prayer is not used; where there is no time of intercession for the needs of the world; where there is no formal structured confession and absolution; where the only words spoken by the congregation are in the songs or the Amen; where the reading of the scriptures is brief and perfunctory; where the mood and tone are set by the celebratory worship and by the upbeat style of worship leaders and there is little space for the minor key; where, when a set liturgy is used for baptism, confirmation, or even the Eucharist, it feels [like] an unfamiliar intrusion into the normal worship style.

Neither Croft nor McRae refer specifically to an ordo, and they do not necessarily reveal that the ordo was not in place in the scenarios they describe, though minimal Scripture readings, somehow oddly discontinuous commun
nion practices, the absence of intercession, and concern about apostolicity and catholicity might seem to give the clue. Perhaps, one might wonder, if these church leaders had framed their reflections through the interpretative categories of the Nairobi Statement, they might have added sharpness and specificity to their concerns. In any case, they both refer to ecclesial traditions whose central authorities clearly advocate the ecumenical ordo as the WCC has commended it, holding flexible patterns of worship within what the Uniting Church of Australia calls “standards” and “norms” for liturgical expression. At the very least, their testimony gives pause to any sanguine notions of widespread reception of the ordo.

No doubt there are many different reasons for the situations Croft and McRae relate, but it is fair to assume that it involves critique, reserve, or opposition to the ordo, as well as sheer ignorance of it. The linking of the ordo to talk of the category of the transcultural may well be at the heart of at least some people’s unease with it, and this is — notably — an unease that, since working on the LWF’s project, Gordon Lathrop has expended considerable energy attending to.

Weighing the Academic Debate

The ordo is indeed a construct, though it is at least to some extent constructed from ancient sources, Justin Martyr’s 1 Apology (67 CE) being key. Turning to ancient sources has had its attractions in ecumenical conversation, at least for navigating toward a center away from Reformation-era roadblocks. But turns to ancient sources are problematic for reasons of their own, which have been highlighted in liturgical studies in the period contemporaneous with the LWF’s work on culture, especially by Paul F. Bradshaw. Bradshaw’s work on liturgical history has pressed the point that the search for the origins of Christian worship is more akin to searching for faint dots on a blank page than it is like finding straight lines of development that can easily be joined up. In this light, Justin’s witness is just one such dot, more or less dim, quite possibly disconnected from other dots representing impressions — if not necessarily actual practice — from elsewhere in other early churches.

12. See the Uniting Church in Australia, Uniting in Worship 2 (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2005), pp. 8-9.

Therefore, some suspicion of how much continuity should be admitted between Justin’s description and any actual lived experience of liturgy in Justin’s community, let alone other communities, may be apt.

This point, in turn, unfolds the implication that advocates of liturgical uniformity in any age may simply have forgotten (or may be ignorant of) the sheer diversity of the early churches. This point can be brought to bear on the transcultural category, and on the ordo, via Bradshaw’s scolding of liturgical scholars who have trusted in what Bradshaw has called “imagined archetypes” of the early church. Notably, however, Bradshaw specifically distances Lathrop from those scholars as taking “a rather different and more minimalist stance than do other liturgical theologians with regard to the ‘deep structures’ that liturgy is supposed to possess.” Perhaps because it tends more to the theological — as opposed to historical — construction, Bradshaw deems Lathrop’s conviction “a little too neat and tidy, a little over-systematized to fit the full facts of history, yet [offering] a promising avenue for future exploration.”

Lathrop’s own response to Bradshaw’s position involves acknowledgment of Bradshaw’s “cautions about evidence and too easy harmonization” while also “assert[ing] that there is a core Christian pattern which, in its largest outline, can be explored in early sources,” a sensibility that evidently influences the ordo.

The communities whose practice Croft and McRae speak of may or may not know of this debate, or the reasons these interlocuters give for their convictions about early Christian “dots,” whatever their weight and visibility, and “outlines” — large or small. But the question of how their practice might be educated by such debates remains an important one for church leaders to find ways of representing if the ordo is not to be lost to arguments that are less reflective.

A couple of ancillary points may be brought up here. First, it is interesting that Bradshaw’s last-published work prior to his retirement was a reflection on the diversity of worship in the contemporary Church of England, his own ecclesial communion and the body about which Croft also speaks. In that piece Bradshaw appeals for greater resemblance in English Anglican worship, so as to enable “Christians of different theological persuasions” to “recognize one another as members of the same Church.” While not arguing

“for a return to a rigid uniformity of practice,” he does wish to recognize the great importance of some sort of liturgical bond to a church, and especially to an Anglican Church with all its other varieties, something that has been rather overlooked in a generation when individuality, freedom, and creativity have become the watchwords.16

This is a fascinating last word, at least of sorts, given the work for which he has justifiably become so well known — with its strong insistence on diversity. For, as Ruth Meyers says, Bradshaw’s work challenges contemporary churches “to recognize the plurality of early Christian liturgical practice and so to be open to the possibility of a greater diversity of contemporary practice.”17 In his latest writing, Bradshaw is neither making an appeal to a particular ordo nor stating a transcultural conviction; nor should he be read as renouncing his strident advocacy of the early churches’ plurality. But he is clearly not arguing for unbridled contemporary diversity. At the same time, it is notable that he does not mention, or expound on, or evaluate what the Church of England, through its Liturgical Commission — of which he has been a longtime member — has identified as marking the “common core” of its contemporary rites gathered together as Common Worship:

• a recognizable structure for worship;
• an emphasis on reading the word and on using psalms;
• liturgical words repeated by the congregation, some of which, like the creed, would be known by heart;
• using a collect, the Lord’s prayer, and some responsive forms of prayer;
• a recognition of the centrality of the Eucharist;
• a concern for form, dignity, and economy of words;
• . . . a willingness to use forms and prayers that can be used across a broad spectrum of Christian belief.18


Of course, such a common core is not the ordo. But Bradshaw’s appeal for resonance is related neither to transcultural nor what might arguably be categorized as more contextual, tradition-specific but shared, considerations. One might well wonder what kind of structures, deep or otherwise, he would now recommend for generating the “shared liturgical experience” he seeks for ecclesial formation.19

Second, Bradshaw’s former student Maxwell Johnson makes a further fascinating reference point with respect to approaching the transcultural category. Johnson is an avid editor and compiler of texts for liturgical study (many with Bradshaw); his recent collection Sacraments and Liturgy is an update of James F. White’s Documents of Christian Worship.20 It includes, along with its chapter on “modern theological theology,” an extract from Gordon Lathrop as well as from Bradshaw, and another from the Nairobi Statement. In that regard it may be the kind of resource that communities Croft and McRae describe could use to map out some theological positions between which to locate their own practice. At the same time, Johnson’s book generates some problems of its own, for while Johnson’s sourcebook — a contender for a major curriculum resource in liturgical studies — claims to be “extensive,” it is extensive in some ways and not in others. It is not just that women’s perspectives are minimal in Johnson’s historical trajectories, with the absence of Teresa Berger’s Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History as just one kind of study that should rightly invite some suspicion of the history that is collated in Johnson’s sourcebook.21 It is also that, when Johnson makes suggestions of further reading, citing dozens of studies, studies by contemporary women are markedly missing: all but a very paltry few are the works of men. This is a problem that has plagued not just liturgical studies but Christian theology at large, but the fact that Johnson’s mainstream is a “mainstream” also reveals that a similar critique could be developed concerning other issues of diversity that are a growing part of contemporary liturgical studies.22 Johnson’s book shows that one does not
need to invoke notions like the transcultural to be exposed to a welter of critiques that cluster around the descriptor “postmodern.”

Postmodern questions are key to making an assessment of the Nairobi Statement’s transcultural convictions. It is notable, therefore, that Gordon Lathrop, as a key member of LWF also engaged in the WCC’s liturgical work, has engaged deeply with a range of possible postmodern critique of the ordo. In an essay at the end of the festschrift for him, entitled “Bath, Word, Prayer, Table . . .?” Lathrop is acutely alert to the challenge of postmodern perspectives to any proposed ecumenical shape of worship. He names suspicion of “liturgical imperialism” and of “unwarranted ‘meta-narrative’” (p. 219) as causes of suspicion. He asks: “How does ordo avoid becoming ideology?” (p. 219). And he echoes the Ditchingham Report’s insistence that “compulsion in worship always distorts the thing it seeks to reform” (p. 220). Lathrop suggests that, in the face of postmodern challenges,

an open meeting around a multivalent pool, around an interesting set of words and around an inviting supper is not, in the first place, designed to compel. Healthy liturgy, focused on strong central signs and not on individual personal decisions, makes a way of ever deeper significance available to its participants, but it also lets those participants be free. (p. 221)

In a piece entitled “Ordo and Coyote,” Lathrop goes further. He identifies pool, word and supper — “certain classic things” — as “the most likely candidates to create space for ‘holding’ us, our losses and our dreams, and, from that place of holding, to propose to us both re-readings of the world and consequent actions for justice.” The ordo is “the scheduling of that space,” but its order is in a certain way crooked, indirect, a way that makes it also able to be open.24

Lathrop expounds this in some resistance to the recognition that “every structure . . . is constituted and maintained through acts of exclusion” (p. 33)25, and he does so by means of reflecting on the role of the symbol of the coyote in Navajo culture, and related figures — those perceived as tricksters, unbalancers, boundary-crossers, even sneaks and fools — in other cultures.26 In liturgical contexts, he suggests, Coyote represents “instances of ceremonial breaking, instances of the ritual order unable to contain the whole world of experience, lest it become false order and prison” (pp. 36-37).

You have encountered Coyote when, in your most beautiful liturgical moment, your voice broke, you lost your place, the wrong sermon really was before you on the ambo, as you feared. Or your community has encountered Coyote when that homeless man who is frequently on the street outside of the building, actually came inside, sort of joining in the singing, speaking an odd petition in the prayers, presenting himself for communion, none of it in the way you ordinarily do these things. (p. 37)

Most importantly, Lathrop identifies Coyote with the figure of Jesus, particularly in the depictions of the royal parable of Matthew 25.

At best, the center of a Christian meeting can be continually eccentric, the one at the center of the meeting, encountered in word and sacrament, being the one who identifies with the wretched, the disordered, the wound, the unincluded and the poor, who shares all still-hidden trauma, outside of this meeting . . . (p. 38).

The ordo, as Lathrop comes to expound it, is “a focused, ordered meeting, with disorder and away-from here at its heart,” “those left out as part of its essential character,” an always open order (p. 38).

It is clear in these elaborations on the ordo that Lathrop is invested in much more than historical reconstruction, that his moves are essentially theological. Indeed, the ordo, for him, is a way of “critical and re-orienting

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80, no. 3 (2006): 194-213. Hereafter, page references to this essay appear in parentheses within the text.

25. Lathrop, citing Mark C. Taylor.

association with Jesus” (p. 39), even “the enacted doctrine of the Trinity” (p. 38) and “received from the tradition as if from God” (p. 32). Such statements are admittedly a jump from — but not necessarily incommensurate with — Paul Bradshaw’s “acknowledgment that liturgy is as much a human artifact as a divine creation.” For Bradshaw seems to concede that there may be a “divine contribution” (p. 185), albeit while wishing to destabilize inherited notions of what might constitute that divine aspect. But as I have already noted, he neither appeals to it in his desired latter restoration of shared forms for the Church of England, nor aligns himself with a Luthernpian theological turn.

Yet, while much of Bradshaw’s work might serve postmodern suspicion, the lynchpin of postmodern negotiation of the ordo might well rest on the capacity or appetite to explore the construct with careful attention to Lathrop’s commendation of it. For in his “Ordo and Coyote” piece, Lathrop commends the transcultural aspects of the ordo not necessarily as divine gift, but as if so given. This rather subtle, somewhat muted, shift may be given more or less weight, but for some it may prove crucial to their being convinced that what ordo is not “designed to compel.” At least some of those who have rejected the ordo — those who might be regarded as conscientious objectors to its vulnerability to unwarranted metanarrative — might be asked to weigh for themselves the arguments Lathrop advances.

Joining the Emerging Conversation

Perhaps, however, some of those who downplay the ordo — in fact, perhaps, the lion’s share of what both McRae and Croft think they see in their respective churches — embody less ideologically conscious questioning of postmodern culture, and may be for one reason or another theologially embedded or missionally savvy about it. In any case, a variety of liturgical expressions may be sheltered in such cultural engagement, though most are likely to take a dim view of any “one-size-fits-all” approach to worship. Of course, it can be flatly declared that an embrace of the ordo means no such thing. The ordo is compatible with and commendable to, for example, the kind of emerging church perspectives that continue to receive powerful advocacy, not least from ecclesial leaders, Anglican bishops Mary Gray-Reeves and Michael Perham being some recent examples. It is thus important that reflections on the ordo attempt to engage the many groups who consider themselves part of the emerging church.

In the British context at least, one of the first people to write about the liturgical dynamics of so-called emergent worship was Doug Gay. Using the term “alternative worship” (as has been common in the UK), he and colleagues wrote about what happens in the emerging church as a selective kind of reception of liturgical tradition. Indeed, they asserted that, given that communities practicing this kind of worship tended to come from the kind of low-church Protestant background in which written liturgical forms, congregational responses and intentional ritual gestures were often eschewed, this involved a “revival of interest in the worship traditions of the church.” Gay and others likened the selective reception of such things to the kind of “sampling” techniques used by musicians playing electronic instruments, in which “a slice of music is extracted from its original setting” and “inserted into a new musical context, where it combines with other elements to form a new whole.” What may have sometimes or often been absent in such early experiment was “reflect[ion] on the principles that might guide such techniques,” whereas principles shaped around the Nairobi Statement’s categories of the transcultural and contextual, and around the ordo (especially perceived as allied with the coyote and always open), might have been very helpful. However, in a later work, Remixed the Church, Gay not only provides some complementary images — “catholic tradition is to be approached as a kind of massive dressing-up box, a huge CD collection, a sprawling image bank, a compendium of stage directions, a liturgical lending library” — he also begins to sketch out a series of techniques (what he calls auditing, retrieval, unbounding, supplementing, and remixing) that may all play a role in an emerging ecclesiology.

In Remixed the Church, while Gay oddly and without explanation drops

the word *ordo* into his proposals (without making any link to the WCC’s or LWF’s work), he writes articulately about “critical and partial reception of ‘catholic’ tradition” (p. 38), crediting the Iona and Taize communities as “among the most important bridging and mediating influences within the UK” (pp. 37–38), between aspects of what he calls “catholic” liturgical tradition and those from “low church traditions”: Baptists, Brethren, Congregationalists, independent evangelicals, Pentecostal denominations, and independent Pentecostal churches, new “charismatic” churches and networks, as well as many conservative and charismatic evangelical congregations within Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, to whom catholic traditions such as written liturgies, congregational responses, and forms of intentional ritual, were “deeply alien” (p. 37). Through Taize, Iona, and other experiences, low-church Protestants have come to find “portals” into the catholic tradition, he suggests, and so they have come to pick up interest in the church year, ritual action, images and icons, set prayers, and — significantly for a discussion of *ordo* — “classic shapes” (p. 40). Of particular interest is his suggestion that “a renewed appreciation of and attentiveness to liturgical traditions among emerging groups is often rooted in what I would term a ‘wisdom’ perspective, rather than a ‘mandate’ perspective” (p. 40), albeit in their wisdom, “without fully understanding the liturgical codes and conventions within which these ‘old tricks’ were previously embedded” (p. 41). Specifically, Gay calls for “gracious conversation with those who are discovering the riches of ‘their’ tradition from the ‘high church side of the equation’” (p. 41).

The *ordo* is much more inclusive than notions of high or low church, but Gay’s call for others’ engagement with emerging communities is one that advocates of the *ordo* can and should take up, to encourage and educate and, no less, to learn. Indeed, the emerging church constituency has a major capacity to reverse what might otherwise be a fragile future for the *ordo*, as well as perhaps having most to gain from serious engagement with notions of the *ordo* and the categories of the transcultural and contextual in all their obvious resonance with missional concerns. And the gain may be greatest with respect to those parts of the “worldwide phenomenon” of the emerging church that form what Steven Croft describes as the “international movement” of “fresh expressions of church.”

This movement, unfolding from the British Anglican report *Mission-Shaped Church*, quickly became not only international but also ecumenical. It has gone on to define a fresh expression of church as being “established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.” Interestingly, though, fresh expressions of church are further defined as coming into being “through principles of listening, service, contextual mission and making disciples,” and as having potential to become “a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.”

There is much even in this threefold definition to resonate with Lathrop’s notion of the *ordo*, not only as something that makes for “association with Jesus” but also the Nairobi Statement’s intersecting assertions about transcultural and contextual dimensions of worship. Just as with many circles of emerging church, there may be, with respect to fresh expressions of church, a great possibility for what Doug Gay calls “gracious conversation.” Note Steven Croft’s call for clarity that fresh expressions are not to be confused with charismatic evangelicalism, to which his comments cited at the opening of this essay were directed: “The movement to form fresh expressions of Church is not in my observation, un-liturgical. In some ways it is by instinct and intention a profoundly liturgical movement. It recognizes the need to contextualize liturgy and match it closely to the needs of the emerging community.”

Notably, he goes on to add: “[B]ut in any case that principle is at the


34. Croft, “Searching for Simplicity,” p. 162. At the same time, it is salutary to recall that the Anglican-Methodist document giving rise to fresh expressions, *Mission-Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), draws a clear line between the emerging church and fresh expressions of church — or at least between fresh expressions and notions of “emergent”/“alternative worship.” *Mission-Shaped Church* identifies a series of problems with alternative worship: “Because it is significantly populated by people departing from existing church, [it] contains a strong desire to be different and is among the most vocal in its repudiation of existing church. The firmness of this posture means it is less clear about its own self-identity beyond what it is not…” (p. 44). It links this view to a criticism of alternative worship for “lack of ongoing engagement with mission — either social involvement or evangelism.” *Mission-Shaped Church* reckons that alternative worship “tends to act more as a safety net for those falling out of existing church,” while “finding it difficult to act as a fishing net for those still outside the church” (p. 45). Such a view of worship in emerging churches needs to be revised.

heart of Common Worship, a perspective that Bradshaw seems to have become less sympathetic toward. And while there may not always be the same depth of openness in charismatic evangelical circles (though this should not be simply assumed), clarification of the ordo may have a strong role in helping groups within old-line churches that have rejected complex versions of liturgical provision for “thrusting and pruning and reducing what is there to allow the shape and character of our liturgy to be seen more clearly and understood more deeply.”

Listening to Subaltern Voices

But I believe that there is a need for other kinds of gracious conversation. We might perceive the need for that if we connect these strands from the preceding reflections: with LWF, Gordon Lathrop locates Scripture within the transcultural category; Doug Gay names “the church year” as something that “emergers” have (re)discovered; and because the catholic tradition ties calendar and lectionary, the transcultural and contextual cannot always be disentangled — at least if we take a broad view. While Scripture may perhaps, in some complicated way, be deemed to be sometimes above culture, lectionary disciplines are another matter, and these are firmly embedded in seasonal and climatic patterns of some parts of the world and tenuously connected to other parts. In the so-called global South, for example, Easter is not in spring; Lent may not be an experience of lengthening days — in fact, the opposite; and Advent may not be a time of darkness and shadows but the height of summer. These disjunctions may or may not be trivial, depending on where one is located, nor may they be entirely unwelcome. Therefore, in the intensity of an Australian summer, for example, a snow-covered Christmas card “may just be a plea for relief.” But because calendar and lectionary mediate the Scripture, which is central to “association with Jesus,” we may not consider the disjunction inconsequential.

What Gay calls “catholic liturgical tradition” is allied to certain kinds of Northern experience. And it is allied not only to particular natural cycles but also to cultural values, such that transmuting — perhaps settling into — cultures to which it is transported is no simple thing, not least because such “settlement” can be as much the result of destructive invasion as it is of missionary benevolence. In any case, these two are themselves deeply entangled. A lectionary-related example emerges from Jione Havea’s consideration of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) from the perspective of his native Tongan culture. He suspects that, “if the RCL had tellers — as opposed to preachers and readers — in mind, the selection of biblical passages would be different.” He calls this an “over-sight,” and he charges that the RCL cannot have the same impact at all geographical sites during any given Christian season.” But he also names its being “dislocating in its patriarchal and pro-Israelite orientations” (p. 120), a dynamic he coins as “over-sights.” Likewise, he suggests, the RCL may not encourage critique of offensive behaviors in native cultures that uncritically reflect bias in biblical narratives about Israel and the church. To counter such proclivities, Havea wishes to turn to a notion of a “commoners’ lectionary” that can expose the RCL selection of texts favoring “dominant people and their mainline ways” (p. 122). Havea calls this “over sights,” which make room for the clash of seasons at different locations (p. 123), are biased in the interests of local commoners, and require supplementation of Scripture with other ancient texts, local instructions, and popular narratives (p. 124). Only in such ways could a lectionary be genuinely “sited,” Havea says.

The force of Havea’s comments may be more readily felt by close reference to his notion of “contextuality,” or what he calls the “cons of contextuality.” In a separate essay he challenges the “growing claim” that the center of gravity of Christianity has shifted to the global South:

There surely has been a demographic shift, for the majority of Christians now live in South America, Asia, and Africa, but the political gravity is still located in the North. . . . We in the South have numbers but they, you, in the North have power and means. . . . It does not really matter that the Bible is in the hands of Africans, and of Asians and Islanders, and so forth, if they are to interpret it according to the teachings of white men.

In particular, he insists that far too much the North still determines "how we contextualize." 41 Furthermore, Havea contends that he is suspicious when he hears "essentialist people doing the contextual talk" because the context for them is just a shelter for their essences. 42 In Havea's view, contextual theologies need to be much more clearly in the interest of the church before they are contextual enough. His articulations cast shadows on easy notions of the transcultural — as if to suggest that there is no such thing.

Havea's critique is more striking and more complex than I have space to try to represent, but perhaps what I have sketched of it already conveys the point that reserve about the transcultural category and how it is manifest in the notion of the ordo can arise from serious concern about how power flows from missionary legacies that alienate some while leaving some others — in Havea's categories, "preachers and readers" and their cultures — more secure. The postcolonial question ("Can the subaltern speak?"

43) is one that is yet to be adequately addressed with respect to the LWF project, for all that the conversation unfolding from that project has become increasingly sensitive and open to a range of postmodern challenges. Alongside various kinds of "gracious conversation" there may also need to be, in fact, more space made for what postcolonial theorists call "contrapuntality," 44 or — perhaps more accessibly expressed — something like what the feminist theologian Letty Russell calls "talking back to the tradition." 45 Until that happens, and

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it heard where political power is still located in the North, I am not sure that we can know about the future of the ordo.

Conclusion: Knowing Our Place

In this chapter I have suggested three avenues for further reflection on the Nairobi Statement and its alliance with the ordo. Postmodern questions need to be negotiated with a Lathropian "as if," or by other means. Emerging church circles have much to offer to conversation about the missional merits of the ordo, from which they and others with them stand to gain. And subaltern voices need to be welcomed to unsettle any essentializing projections about how the transcultural and contextual may intersect. How central are word and table? And how do emerging and subaltern voices find "a place at the table" of discussion of the Nairobi Statement's categories and concerns? Each of these avenues is challenging, but all are worth pursuing and, to borrow from Australian Indigenous literature, each for its own reasons:

How deprived we would have been
if we had been willing
to let things stay as they were.
We would have survived
but not as whole people.
We would never have known our place. 46

42. Havea, "Contextuality," p. 44.
43. This question is the title of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous article, in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 271-313.
44. For further discussion, see Jagessar and Burns, Postcolonial Perspectives, pp. 76-79, 83, passim.
46. Sally Morgan, My Place (Freemantle, Western Australia: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1987).