

Scottish Seeds in Antipodean Soil: The Development of Presbyterian Worship in Aotearoa New Zealand

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The foundations of Presbyterian worship are to be found in the sixteenth-century Scottish and Genevan Reformation, with John Knox and John Calvin as our principal theological and liturgical forebears (despite being somewhat Zwinglian in practice).

Knox's *The Forme of Prayers* or *Book of Common Order* provided the standard of worship in Scotland for over eighty years after the establishment of the Reformation. During this time, there were attempts at revision, driven in part by a desire to see Scottish worship brought into closer conformity with England. A crisis erupted in 1637, however, when King Charles I attempted to enforce the use of a liturgical book prepared at his command by some Scottish bishops under the direction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. The result was instant rejection, and the whole country broke out in revolt.¹

Although the revolt was short-lived, and it was not long before the 1645 Westminster Assembly produced a *Directory for Public Worship* that was accepted by the Scottish Assembly, the revolt against Laud's liturgies had the effect of creating widespread distaste for set liturgies in general. Despite its official endorsement, the *Directory* never found acceptance at a popular level and was largely ignored. The minuteness of detail and sheer length rendered the recommended Order of Worship impractical. If followed in every detail an ordinary service would take over three hours, and much longer if communion was celebrated. But more than that, in seventeenth-century worship in the Church of Scotland there was a "revolt from any kind of required liturgical form in the interest of freedom in worship – with an emphasis on 'free prayer' and the 'freedom of the Spirit'."² A struggle ensued in the higher courts of the Church between those who sought to preserve the older forms of worship and those of Puritan leaning who regarded liturgical form as loss of freedom, and 'protest' and 'dissent' were "the marks of godliness of those who were determined to stand fast in what they believed to be the liberty of the Gospel."³ One by one "the older Scottish practices were discontinued in concession to Puritan pressures, both at the Westminster Assembly and afterwards."⁴ While these changes represented a genuine plea for the liberty of the Spirit, they "were as much influenced by the emerging philosophy of self-determination, a concept of freedom which was interpreted to

¹ Maxwell, *op.cit.*, p.128

² Torrance, J.B., "Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), p.71

³ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.72

mean that we worship God as we please, when we please, and with whom we please, according to one's individual conscience and personal interpretations of Holy Scripture."⁵

For the better part of two hundred years, worship in Scotland was dominated by Puritan patterns of piety and worship. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, however, a spirit of reform emerged, culminating in 1865 with the formation of the Church Service Society, whose declared object was "the study of the liturgies – ancient and modern – of the Christian Church, with a view to the publication of certain forms of prayer for public worship, and services for the administration of the Sacraments, the celebration of marriage, the burial of the dead, etc." The main way of pursuing this was through the publication of a service book, the *Euchologion*, the first edition of which appeared in 1867. It passed through many editions and played a significant role in the reformation of worship in the Scottish Church.

Because the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand was a settler church consisting largely of Scottish migrants, patterns of worship tended to reflect what was going on back in Scotland. So, from the time the first Presbyterian service was held in 1840 through to the early part of the twentieth century there was, as Peter Matheson writes in *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, little sense of liturgy, services were long and dominated by the sermon, and prayers were extempore.⁶ While some ministers possessed a copy of the Church Service Society's *Euchologion*, its use does not appear to have been widespread.

In 1905 the Presbytery of Wanganui brought an overture to the General Assembly requesting the production of a Manual of Devotion, consisting of suitable prayers for "social and family worship." A committee on Church Forms and Liturgy was set up to investigate the possibility. At the 1906 General Assembly the committee reported that "within the last eight years practically all the Presbyterian Churches (English-speaking) have felt the necessity and had done something definite in the direction of preparing and revising Directories of Public Worship and providing stated forms of prayers for various occasions."⁷ The committee noted especially the work being undertaken in Australia on a service book, which was being "compiled with the special circumstances and needs of Australasia in view, and has amongst its contributors some of our own ministers." Either the service book failed to fulfil the hopes of the committee or it was not produced at all, because there is no mention of it in the committee's report to the Assembly the following year (1907). Instead, the committee sought the permission of the Assembly to "test the real feelings of the Church" by way of a Presbytery-based survey on the need for a Directory for Worship. It is not clear what specific steps were taken to effect this decision, but at the 1909 General Assembly it was agreed that "the Assembly approve generally

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁶ Matheson, P., *Presbyterians in Aotearoa 1840-1990*, ed. D. McEldowney, Wellington: PCANZ, 1990, p.34

⁷ *General Assembly Reports*, 1906, Appendix XVI, p.181

of the *Directory for Public Worship*, issued by the Presbyterian Church in England, as an expression of the sense in which the Church interprets the *Westminster Directory for Public Worship*, and send this matter to Presbyteries for consideration and report.”⁸ Nothing came of this. There was no report from the committee in the 1910 Assembly papers. It was simply stated in the Assembly minutes of that year that “in view of the divided state of the returns, it was resolved to take no further action in the matter.”⁹ No elaboration was given. Rather, through this blunt resolution, a five-year effort to introduce a New Zealand Presbyterian aid for public worship was brought to a shuddering halt. This was quite possibly the first case of “death by committee” in the Presbyterian Church in this country!

Nevertheless, it was inevitable that the spirit of reform which began back in Scotland and led in 1928 to the publication of the *Book of Common Order* would reach these shores. In the latter half of the nineteenth century hymns began to be sung alongside psalms. Many churches introduced organs to accompany congregational singing. Some allowed choirs to form. Reform and innovation was slowly taking place in an *ad hoc* manner without compromising the priority that was given to the ministry of the Word.

In 1936, a group of churchmen led by Duncan Hercus formed the Church Service Society,¹⁰ modelling it on its Scottish counterpart. Allan Davidson says of this Society: “Through its annual meeting at Assembly, the distribution of *The Annual* of the Scottish Society, and from 1941 the publication of *The Bulletin of the Church Service Society*, it gave many ministers a sensitivity to liturgical, musical and architectural issues which effected a quiet but profound revolution. Books like W.D. Maxwell’s *An Outline of Christian Worship, its Development and Forms* (1936) and *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland* (1940) helped shape the understanding and practice of worship.”¹¹

The establishment of the Church Service Society coincided with a gradual growth in liturgical awareness around that time. Davidson notes that the General Assembly’s Church Worship and Architecture Committee “produced orders of service, which, although not mandatory, through their wide acceptance gave greater uniformity and propriety to Presbyterian worship. During the war it published a *Layman’s Manual for the Conduct of Divine Worship* as an emergency response to a shortage of ministers.”¹²

From that time onwards, rather than produce a service book of its own, the PCANZ tended to assume the availability of the Church of Scotland’s *Book of Common Order*, and chose to

⁸ General Assembly *Minutes*, 1909, p.46

⁹ General Assembly *Minutes*, 1910, p.49

¹⁰ In 1945, Duncan Hercus wrote a booklet on church architecture called *The Building of Churches*.

¹¹ Davidson, A., *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p.110

¹² *Ibid.*, p.110

supplement this with occasional resources such as baptism, communion, ordination, marriage and funeral liturgies. The one exception to this was the publication of a Maori service book in 1933. This was initiated by the Rev. James Laughton, and was a translation of the Church of Scotland's 1928 *Book of Common Order*. In 1958, the Rev. A.G. Gardiner wrote an Occasional Paper for the Church Service Society called "Looking Towards a New Zealand Service Book" (*Occasional Paper No. 5*), in which he anticipated the day when such a service book would be both desirable and necessary, but nothing came of this. By and large the Presbyterian Church adopted a pragmatic approach to the conduct of public worship, allowing its ministers to pick and choose what was helpful to them within fairly broad parameters.

While some people valued the liberty that this approach allowed, others were frustrated by the lack of cohesion and logic to the order of proceedings in worship. In an article provocatively titled, "Wash-up This Wishy-Washy 'Worship'," ¹³ published in 1950, Harold Turner likened much Presbyterian worship to a "dreary variety concert that just drifts along from one thing to another, all bits and pieces that have got put in to try to make it a good show or to keep it going long enough for people to feel they have their money's worth. But there's no particular point about it; it has no 'grip,' as we say." Turner commended the 1940 *Book of Common Order* to the church for two reasons. Firstly, the order of worship which it followed was catholic – that is to say, it was common across all the major Christian denominations and traditions. Secondly, it enshrined what he regarded as three great movements or happenings: "God calls us to worship Him and learn from Him in scripture and sermon; we respond in the offering of our substance and ourselves, through Christ; and God seals this relationship between Himself and His worshippers by giving to us His divine life in communion, again through Christ. The first and last acts start with God. He actually does more in worship than we do." ¹⁴

That same year (1950), the General Assembly's Committee on Doctrine published *A Manual of Doctrine*, authored by the committee convenor, J.M. (Jack) Bates. ¹⁵ Intended primarily as a tool for "instructing those seeking admission as communicant members within our Church," the *Manual* included a chapter on worship and provided an order of service which it described as

¹³ *The Outlook*, September 13, 1950, pp.44-5

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.45

¹⁵ Bates played an instrumental role in the founding of *The New Zealand Journal of Theology* in 1931. On Bates' contribution to the life and theology of the Presbyterian Church, see Clive Pearson's *The Theological Case of J.M. Bates*, Presbyterian Historical Society Annual Lecture, 1994. The *Manual of Doctrine* represented twenty-three years of theological reflection, and it sold well. Ian Breward "rightly observed that in this book Bates provided a generation with a 'theological consensus.' It brought together the best in contemporary theology and presented it in an easily understandable form a decade before New Zealand was to experience the first shock waves of an open theological pluralism" (Pearson, p.26).

the “norm of worship,”¹⁶ accompanied by a brief commentary. While this provided a basic guide in relation to the structure of a worship service,¹⁷ it fell well short of a liturgical resource.

Eleven years later (1961), the Church Service Society conducted an extensive survey of Presbyterian ministers about their worship practices.¹⁸ 84% of the respondents said they used prayers from the 1940 *Book of Common Order* – 56% occasionally, 26% frequently, 2% always. Most ministers supplemented these prayers with prayers from a wide variety of other sources, James Ferguson’s *Prayers for Common Worship* being among the most popular. The vast majority said they used extempore prayers, most often following the sermon and in dedicating the offering. When it came to Communion, 90% of respondents said they followed the 1940 *Book of Common Order*, but not slavishly. Many ministers adapted it to their own context and purposes. This moved the organizers of the survey to comment: “In some cases where the nature of the modification was indicated the writer seemed quite unaware that he had completely shattered its structure or the theology behind it, let alone the history.”¹⁹ And they concluded: “In reviewing the replies we cannot fail to be struck with a widespread vagueness amongst ministers as to the doctrine of the Sacrament and also as to general liturgical principles.”²⁰

Interestingly, in the same year that the survey was conducted (1961), the Theological Hall’s Professor in Church History, Helmut Rex, delivered a fiery address to the Annual Meeting of the Church Service Society lamenting the state of the Service of the Word in Presbyterian churches. Rex opened his address with these words: “This is a very personal talk. I shall voice my own reactions to the ordinary Sunday service. It is also in some ways an angry talk, because quite frankly I find the Sunday service a bore. As I leave the church I feel frustrated, cheated, and generally bad tempered. I avoid talking to people after church. There is one feeling uppermost in my mind, ‘Let’s have lunch and forget about it!’”²¹ At its most basic, Rex announced that Presbyterian clergy are failing in their most basic task, the task of preaching,²² for which he said, no amount of “liturgical experimentation” can compensate.

¹⁶ Bates, J.M., *A Manual of Doctrine*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1950, p.221

¹⁷ The various components of worship were arranged under three headings: The Approach, The Word, and the Upper Room.

¹⁸ A questionnaire was sent to 475 ministers. 127 replies were received. The results of the survey were published in *The Bulletin*, No.23, October 1962

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15

²¹ Rex, H.H., “The Sunday Service”, *The Bulletin*, No.23, October 1962, p.3

²² Rex’s laments the failure of the sermon to address “modern man,” “man come of age”: “In the Sunday service I am forced to listen to sermons which assume that my condition is not vitally different from that of the Puritans of the seventeenth century. There is no evidence in the sermons which I hear that the preacher takes seriously the fact that I live in a world that is totally and absolutely different from any other world in which men lived prior to the seventeenth century.” (*Ibid.*, p.4)

A further survey by the Church Worship Committee ten years later (1972) revealed that although the B.C.O. still formed the general basis of Presbyterian communion practice, its influence was diminishing – whereas the B.C.O. pattern had been followed by 90% of Ministers in 1962, now it was followed by just 60%.²³

In 1948, and then again in 1956, the founder of the Iona Community in Scotland, George McLeod, visited New Zealand. His 1956 itinerary included an ecumenical youth conference in Palmerston North, attended by over 2,000 people. His visit had a huge impact and gave significant impetus to the ecumenical movement. In the 1960s the spirit of ecumenism gave huge impetus to a decades-long movement towards church union between Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Churches of Christ denominations. Although church union did not eventuate, the movement towards union did involve significant discussions about worship and liturgy. Participants in these discussions came to appreciate what other traditions had to offer, and thinking was sharpened in relation to their own liturgical traditions.²⁴

James Matheson, who was Minister at Knox Church, Dunedin,²⁵ when George McLeod visited New Zealand in 1956, had a significant influence on a generation of divinity students, many of whom worshipped at Knox during their time at the Theological Hall.²⁶ Matheson was a Scot who was himself familiar with the Iona liturgical tradition. He had a real grasp of liturgical form. His prayers were a mix of extempore and considerable use of the *Book of Common Prayer* and *Book of Common Order*, as well as Iona. In some respects he was a bridging figure, with his strong evangelical background, his sympathy for Iona liturgies and his love for the old metrical Psalms.²⁷

Matheson was an advocate for the New Life Movement, which had been launched by the General Assembly in 1949 and was having a significant impact on the growth and revitalization of the Presbyterian Church. The movement had a two-fold emphasis on evangelism and stewardship.²⁸ In an Occasional Paper for the Church Service Society,²⁹ Matheson argued that

²³ *Reports of the General Assembly*, 1972, p.187

²⁴ Cf. J.M. Bates, "Liturgical Reform and Church Union", *Occasional Paper No.1*, Church Service Society, 1953

²⁵ James Matheson was Minister at Knox Church from 1951 to 1960

²⁶ In an address to the Church Service Society in 1982, Alan Quigley acknowledged the influence that the pattern of worship under Matheson's ministry at Knox Church had on him – cf., "Worship, Culture and Mission", *The Bulletin*, No.33, May 1983

²⁷ Matheson also had strong views on liturgy and architecture. He was highly critical of churches, including Knox, that had a high central pulpit and pews arranged in theatre-form. Under his ministry the internal layout of Knox Church was changed. This included bringing the pulpit forward towards the people and moving it off-centre.

²⁸ Davidson, A., *Op cit.*, p.123-4. Davidson writes: "The NLM created a mood of optimism, giving a renewed sense of mission, encouraging lay participation, stimulating youth work and challenging people to consider voluntary or full time service in the Church. ... The NCC invitation to Billy Graham to conduct an evangelistic crusade in 1959 represented the high tide of the NLM."

²⁹ Matheson, J., Church Service Society: *Occasional Paper No. 3.*, 1953

new life and worship are integrally related: “New life must express itself in a reformed order and content of worship. It must portray and also confirm the experience of a real encounter with God, a real unity in His household, and a real concern for others in the name of Jesus.”³⁰

In 1965, the Church Worship Committee, at the request of the New Life Committee, produced *The Layman’s Service Book*³¹ to help non-ordained folk in the conduct of worship. It was intended that the book serve as a supplement to the *Book of Common Order*.

The influence of the Church Service Society peaked in the 1950s and 60s. Thereafter interest began to wane, and shortly after the turn of the millennium the Society had been wound up. In its absence, and following the dissolution of the General Assembly’s worship committee around the same time, there is no forum within the PCANZ for the discussion of liturgical matters.

The charismatic renewal movement of the 1970s and 80s had a significant impact. Its emphasis on personal religious experience and freedom in the Spirit attracted many people who felt that the Presbyterian style of worship was dour, constraining and overly cerebral. This was especially so among youth and young adults. The reaction against what was perceived as the “establishment” church was very similar to that of seventeenth-century Puritanism.

By the end of the 1980s the charismatic influence was strongly represented in many Presbyterian parishes throughout the country.³² This had a flow-on effect in terms of the number of candidates for ordained ministry who came from a charismatic background, where public worship was increasingly given over largely to praise choruses, extempore prayer and the sermon, accompanied by acts of healing and prophetic utterances.

In his reflections upon the charismatic renewal movement in the United Kingdom, theologian Tom Smail says that with the passage of time certain deficiencies in the movement became apparent: “.... we heard ministers and leaders who had been deeply involved in the renewal and its worship over long periods expressing perplexity and dismay that somehow or other the glory had departed from it; that the high praise of God had degenerated into endless repetitive chorus singing that was in danger of becoming a bore and a burden rather than a release and a joy; that the celebration of the saving acts of God had been replaced by pious self-indulgence in religious sentiment for its own sake; that people were sometimes manipulated into a strained and artificial worship that concealed God’s absence more than it responded to his presence; that the thirst for miraculous healings and dramatic prophecies could dull people’s appetite for

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6

³¹ *The Layman’s Service Book*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1965

³² Veitch, J., *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p.172

God's word; that in the midst of the noisy and exuberant striving for the spiritual mountain tops there was little room for silent listening and patient waiting upon God."³³

On a more positive note, Smail says that, at its best, the charismatic movement showed that freedom and liturgy are complementary to each other, not mutually exclusive alternatives: "Liturgy that has no room for the freedom and freshness of a spontaneous spiritual response to God quickly hardens into ritualistic performance that becomes boring and irrelevant to everyone except the conservative minorities who have invested their security in it. On the other hand, worship that despises and rejects all liturgical constraints either degenerates into licentious self-indulgence or, more likely, without realizing what is happening, evolves liturgical forms of its own that can become as strict and as constraining as any it has rejected."³⁴

In 1967, the Life and Work Committee reported to the General Assembly the existence of tensions in the Church, including "a certain measure of tension between what we might call the liturgical school and the evangelical school."³⁵ The Committee reported on a growing "Pentecostal influence" in the Church and provided a summary of its main features, including the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Six years later (1973), the same Committee, under a new convenor, produced a much fuller report on the phenomenon, and then a year later (1974) encouraged the Church to "move beyond defensiveness" and engage constructively with the charismatic movement.³⁶ The extent to which the Church heeded this encouragement is not known, but it is perhaps telling that the bulk of the Committee's report the following year (1975) was devoted to the subject of conflict resolution in congregations!³⁷

A key feature of the charismatic movement was its music. In 1966, the Joint Board of Christian Education of Australia and New Zealand had produced *Songs of Faith*, a selection of hymns and songs that sought to express the Christian faith in a way that was fresh and would resource contemporary worship. Less than two years later (1968), David and Dale Garratt launched *Scripture in Song*, which began with a 45 rpm extended play record and quickly grew into a worldwide musical phenomenon, including a three-volume collation of worship songs, many of which were composed by New Zealanders. Other contemporary song books abounded, including the *New Glory* and *New Harvest* collections of songs, both published by the Joint Board of Christian Education (in 1976 and 1979), *Servant Songs*, compiled by Guy Jansen and Felicia Edgecombe (1987) and *New Journey Songbook* (1991).

³³ Smail, T., "In Spirit and in Truth: Reflections on Charismatic Worship", in *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology*, by T.Smail, A. Walker and N. Wright, London: SPCK, 1995, p.111

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.114

³⁵ *Proceedings of the General Assembly*, 1967, p.32a

³⁶ *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1974, pp.140-3. Interestingly, in their report the committee acknowledge a meeting that had with Tom Smail when he visited New Zealand that year, a meeting which the committee found immensely helpful.

³⁷ *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1975, pp.128-132

While the primary aim of many of these compilations was to provide contemporary congregational music, there also emerged a concern for contextualization, for music that reflected the particularity of our Pacific, Australasian and New Zealand locatedness. In 1982 the popular Australian hymnbook, *With One Voice* was produced with a New Zealand supplement. In 1988 the New Zealand Christian Resource Trust produced *New Zealand Praise*, a collection of New Zealand hymns and songs compiled by David Dell, a graduate of the Theological Hall, Knox College. Four years later (1992), the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust produced *Alleluia Aotearoa*, “a book of hymns and songs for all Churches by New Zealanders for New Zealanders,” featuring many hymns by Shirley Murray, the wife of John Murray, a Presbyterian Minister and Moderator of the PCANZ. A distinctive feature of this volume was the inclusion of hymns in Maori and the languages of the Pacific. It was followed by *Carol our Christmas* (1996) and *Hope is Our Song* (2009).

A significant step towards the provision of liturgical resources in the languages of the Pacific was made with the publication in 1996 of the *Pacific Island Book for Public Worship*, which consisted of a selection of communion, baptism, wedding and funeral liturgies composed by Marie Ropeti-Iupeli³⁸ in Cook Island, Niuean, Samoan, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan languages. In the preface to this volume the author “acknowledges her indebtedness to many sources, known and unknown to her.” The orders of service are not mere translations of existing services or of an existing service book.³⁹

The explosion of contemporary music from the late 1960s reflected the needs and aspirations of an increasingly diverse Church. If the charismatic movement and theological liberalism had one thing in common, it was a reaction against perceived limitations of the traditional worship service imported from the northern hemisphere.

In 1970, under the convenorship of John Murray, the Church Worship and Architecture Committee noted that “a new and very important factor is the coming together of different cultures and traditions in the worship of a number of our congregations, especially with regard to Polynesian, both Maori and Pacific Island, each in their own way, and European traditions. All these differences could prove to be an opportunity to create new and vital forms to bring the people into a wider experience of worship and faith.” The Committee encouraged the Church to embrace diversity, experiment with different forms of worship, and submit new orders of

³⁸ Marie Ropeti-Iupeli served as the School of Ministry’s Pacific Island Cultural Teacher from 1991 to 1996.

³⁹ Personal conversations with several Pacific Island ministers indicate that the book has been generally well received as a supplement to other liturgical resources – for example, Samoan ministers use *la Viia lou suafa*, a service book produced by Malua Theological College in 1975. A Cook Island minister says he uses resources from Scripture Union which are in Cook Island Maori.

service and ideas to the Committee for consideration and distribution to the wider Church through the Church's publications, *Forum* (for Ministers) and *The Outlook* (for congregations).⁴⁰

In 1975, the General Assembly established a Department of Parish Development and Mission, the staffing for which included a person devoted to the task of providing the church with "courses and resources." For the next twenty or so years, the Department produced a fairly eclectic range of preaching notes and liturgical resources, often by collating and distributing resources that it knew to have been helpful in particular situations, and commissioning ministers to write lectionary-based material. These resources proved especially helpful to lay preachers.

When Peter Gardner, who for a while taught Liturgics at the Theological Hall while in parish ministry at Opoho, took over the convenorship of the Church Worship and Architecture Committee in 1976, the focus of the committee's work shifted back towards the provision of forms of service prepared by the committee itself. Two major achievements in this regard were an *Order of Service for the Celebration of Holy Communion* (1978) and an *Alternative Ordinal and Alternative Induction Service* (1982). The committee also produced baptism and confirmation liturgies.

The provision of such formal liturgical resources ceased when the convenorship of the committee changed again in 1983. Under the convenorship of Jim Cunningham, the committee encouraged the Church to establish "schools of liturgy and preaching" around the country which would provide occasions for the sharing of resources which ministers and parish worship committees had found useful.⁴¹ The suggested range of resources went far beyond orders of service. They were to include prayers, poems, readings, sermon outlines, articles and patterns for banners.

The diversities and tensions that were evident in the Church from the late 1960s through to the late 1980s were reflected, and at times intensified in the Theological Hall. There were vigorous discussions and debates within the student body about such matters as clerical vestments, music, and gender issues. The feminist movement challenged many students (women and men) to look at issues of gender, prejudice, and the male-dominated church tradition. Chapel worship in the 1980s was sometimes a rather fraught affair, especially around the flashpoint issues of music and God-language. Divergent theological perspectives and liturgical styles were sources of friction; the conduct of worship by one group of students was not always well received by those of a different theological and liturgical perspective.

⁴⁰ *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1970, p.20

⁴¹ *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1983 p.144

On a more positive note, throughout the 1980s the Theological Hall's worshipping life was enriched through shared weekly chapel services with the ordinands and staff from Holy Cross College. These services would take place on the University campus, usually after a shared lecture on theology, church history or biblical studies.

It is difficult to assess the influence of the former Theological Hall and School of Ministry on the liturgical education of ordinands. For most of the Theological Hall's existence Liturgics was not taught by a specially appointed lecturer with academic qualifications in this area. Rather it was taught within other disciplines by whoever was deemed to be most qualified from within the existing staff at the time. Sometimes it fell within Theology and Doctrine, sometimes within Communication and Practical Theology. Instruction tended to have a practical focus, supplemented by field experience and feedback given by Hall staff on the conduct of worship by ordinands, both in occasional "crit" services in local churches and within the Theological Hall community.⁴² Three-months of "summer supply" in a parish was an accepted part of ministerial training, usually under the supervision of the Minister *in situ*. During term time, many students would undertake "pulpit supply" in parishes in the Dunedin-Otago-Southland area, conducting Sunday worship while a minister was on leave or during a vacancy. As John McKean sums it up, liturgical formation under this model was generally "by osmosis, and do-it-yourself, but effective enough."⁴³

Unfortunately, the lecture notes of those who taught Liturgics in the Theological Hall have not always been deposited in the Archives, so our knowledge of what was actually taught over the years is limited.⁴⁴ However, we do have an example of the practical nature of the instruction in notes taken by a student, Henry Bartlett, in 1947 of Professor John Henderson's lectures on public worship. Henderson was Professor of Systematic Theology from 1944 to 1962.

Henderson wanted his students to "gain a balanced and intelligent idea of public worship,"⁴⁵ and to this end commended to them a small handful of books, including Maxwell's *Outline of Christian Worship*, R.S. Simpson's *Ideas in Corporate Worship*, Evelyn Underhill's *Worship*, and James Ferguson's *Prayers for Common Worship*. Interestingly, he favoured the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* over the Church of Scotland's *Book of Common Order*.⁴⁶ At

⁴² What constituted worship within the Theological Hall community changed over time, but it generally included a mix of daily devotions and fuller communion services (weekly or monthly).

⁴³ Personal email correspondence, 11.10.2010

⁴⁴ The Archives holds lecture notes for William Hewitson, John Dickie, John Henderson, Frank Nichol, Ian Dixon (Theological Hall) and Susan Werstein (School of Ministry). With the exception of Dickie and Henderson, there is little usable material on the subject of liturgics, although it is interesting to note that Dixon's notes include an unpublished book manuscript on worship called *The Liturgical Society*.

⁴⁵ Henry Bartlett, Unpublished *Notes on Homiletics, Liturgics, Pastoral Theology, 1947-49*, p.45

⁴⁶ No reason appears to have been given as to why this was the case.

the same time, Henderson warned his students of the danger of obsession with liturgies,⁴⁷ and encouraged them to craft their own prayers within the generally accepted structure of Christian worship. More important than the building or the liturgy in worship, he said, is the “minister’s heart being overawed with the sense of God’s purpose in Jesus Christ. If we are conscious of that it will give a warmth to all we say and do. Therefore there is a necessity for the preparation of our own hearts and souls rather than the words we use.”⁴⁸

On the subject of extempore prayer, Professor Henderson offered his students the following practical advice:

“Be very careful about extempore prayer. It has dangers in that you go round and round the same circle of ideas and develop a liturgy for yourself – a set phraseology. This is one sound argument for writing our prayers. For the first ten years of our ministry we should write our own prayers and write them in full. ... Though written they should not be read. Read and read them over, get the sequence of them and then put them away; and then pray with them behind you. Not reading has a double advantage. Reading tends to come between us and God and a subtle change takes place in the voice. Also it does not leave one any freedom at all. One ought to feel free to change the prepared prayer if occasion demands it.”⁴⁹

Compared with the 1940 *Book of Common Order*, the order of worship which Henderson recommended to his students was much truncated insofar as it did not presume Communion and it omitted several elements, including a Creed and a prayer for illumination.⁵⁰

If there is a weakness in Henderson’s lecture notes, it is that insufficient attention is given to the theology, history and rationale of Christian worship. His students would have emerged with a strong sense of what to do in the conduct of worship, but not necessarily with a grasp of why they should be doing it.

That criticism could not be levelled at Henderson’s predecessor, Principal John Dickie. Dickie was a man of immense stature in the history of the Presbyterian Church in this country. His magnum opus, *The Organism of Christian Truth: A Modern Positive Dogmatic* has been described by John Roxborough as “putting New Zealand on the theological map.”⁵¹ When the Master of Knox College, William Hewitson, retired in 1927, Dickie was appointed to the inaugural position of Principal of the Theological Hall and assumed responsibility (previously

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.45

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.48-9

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.60-1

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.66f.

⁵¹ John Roxborough, “John Dickie, 1875-1942, Presbyterian Theologian, Professor”, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. III, 1901-1920., ed. Claudia Orange, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996, p.134

that of Hewitson) for the teaching of Principles of Public Worship or “Practical Liturgics”.⁵² This he taught until his death in 1942.⁵³

Dickie’s lecture notes display a deep knowledge of the theology and history of Reformed worship, and his own personal indebtedness to the Church Service Society and Scottish Church Society.⁵⁴ On the nature and purpose of Christian worship, Dickie referred his students to *The Organism of Christian Truth*, where he wrote that “true worship must give expression to genuinely Christian religious conviction; it must be sincere and intelligent; and all things must be done to edification. If we keep these principles before us, the best worship is that which most fully and truly unites us in spirit with each other and with the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, and makes Christ and His Salvation a power in our lives. The purpose of all Christian worship is to attune our souls to the right Christian attitude to God, Truth and Duty.”⁵⁵

Noting the trend for Presbyterian Churches throughout the English-speaking world to produce their own service books, Dickie claimed that there was no need for the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand to do likewise. He advocated making use of the multiplicity and variety of the books already available, expressed doubt about the ability of the Church here to produce anything better, and noted a number of practical difficulties in trying to do so.

Dickie subtitled his lecture notes, “Practical Liturgics.” His knowledge of the history and theology of Christian worship was infused with a concern for the practicalities of conducting worship. He wrote: “Whatever recondite theories we ministers may hold as to the history and the meaning of our order of worship, our people will judge us and it by the same practical standard, and not by our historical knowledge, or the adequacy in a theoretical point of view of our order of worship. The questions they will ask they will for the most part ask subconsciously. But the general purpose of their questioning will be, ‘Does that service taken as a whole adequately fulfil for us the twofold purpose of public worship? Does it give real expression to the attitude of reverential awe, in the presence of the Infinite and Eternal Creator and Lord over all things and all men on the part of us sinful men yet redeemed and forgiven, of gratitude and hope? Does it strengthen and quicken within us that attitude of mingled fear and grateful

⁵² Dickie had held the chair of Systematic Theology and Church History since 1909.

⁵³ The Church is indebted to Ian Fraser, who transformed Dickie’s lecture notes into a neat volume of typescript pages, of which a copy is held in the Presbyterian Archives.

⁵⁴ Dickie J., *Principles and Practice of Public Worship*, unpublished lecture notes, pp.6-11. The Scottish Church Society was formed in 1892. Its general aim was ‘to defend and advance Catholic doctrine as set forth in the Ancient Creeds and embodied in the Standards of the Church of Scotland; and generally to assert Scriptural principles in all matters relating to Church Order and Policy, Christian Work and Spiritual Life, throughout Scotland.’ It saw itself as a kind of non-political theological think-tank, whose doctrinal agenda would be complimentary to the liturgical agenda of the Church Service Society.

⁵⁵ Dickie, J., *The Organism of Christian Truth: A Modern Positive Dogmatic*, London: James Clarke, 1930, p370

adoring love? Does it express what we do feel, and at the same time instruct and prompt us to feel more profoundly?”⁵⁶

Dickie went on to say that “there have been and are so many orders of service in use in our Church, and they have been modified so profoundly by changing circumstances, that no order can claim any exclusive right on the ground either of traditional usage or inherent fitness.” However, “no minister is justified in imposing on his people any order arbitrarily chosen by himself, because he as an individual thinks it better.”⁵⁷

Dickie commended to his students the Order of Service found in the *Book of Common Order*, but suggested that it be abridged and adapted to fit more readily into the New Zealand context – for example, “the Creed is not usually said or sung in our Church” and “it is allowable, though not desirable, to have only one Scripture Reading.”⁵⁸

In many respects, Dickie set the direction for a Presbyterian approach to public worship in this country, which we might sum up in the following terms: *There is a pattern to Christian worship which those who conduct worship are obliged to respect. This pattern, catholic and reformed, is enshrined in reputable service books, at least one of which every minister should possess. These books are to serve as guides and resources, not as liturgical strait jackets. Ministers should draw on a variety of resources, and craft liturgies and prayers to suit both context and occasion, always bearing in mind the overarching purpose of worship and the catholicity of the Church and its worship. Changes to liturgical form must not be made arbitrarily on the whim of the minister. Informed creativity and spontaneity, yes; ill-informed innovation and experimentation, no.*

How closely does the actual history of Presbyterian worship follow the direction set by Dickie?

The efforts of the Church Service Society to raise the bar liturgically, and the concerns expressed by such notable figures as Harold Turner and Helmut Rex in the 1950s and ‘60s, suggest that the pragmatics of worship generally evolved without sufficient attention being paid to the theology and history of worship. This left the Church vulnerable on two counts. First, it was ill-equipped to respond to such phenomena as the charismatic movement in anything other than a reactionary way. Second, when the Church chose to actively embrace diversity, it was ill-equipped to discern the work of the Spirit from the spirit of the age, the liturgical mooring which Dickie had presumed having long disappeared. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that most Ministers today look to the internet before they do a service book. The demise of both the Church Service Society and the Church Worship Committee not only left

⁵⁶ *Op.cit.*, p.23

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25

our Church without a forum for the discussion of liturgical matters; it also indicates a lack of interest in these sorts of discussions. Worshipping in spirit and in truth is equated with what works, or at least with what *appears* to work. Presbyteries organize gatherings for the sharing of worship ideas and resources, solely with that criterion in mind.⁵⁹ Deeper discussions about theology and liturgy are avoided because we do not have the confidence or ability to deal with our differences. Meanwhile everyone does what is right in their own eyes with little accountability or sense of a shared set of convictions about the nature of public worship.

Although the 1995 General Assembly adopted a *Directory for Worship*, which sought to provide standards and norms for conduct of worship in the Presbyterian Church, the vast majority of people, ministers included, are completely unaware that the *Directory* exists. It is certainly not regarded as authoritative at grassroots level; it is seldom, if ever, referred to.

In March 2009, the Bishop of the Christchurch Diocese of the Anglican Church called a meeting to discuss the future of Cooperating Parishes (Anglican and Presbyterian) in the South Canterbury region. At the heart of the Bishop's concerns was a perception that Presbyterian worship services in many of those parishes was no longer observing basic liturgical principles to which the Anglican Church was committed, especially around the sacrament of Holy Communion.

This incident highlighted the fact that it is increasingly difficult to define exactly what it is that characterises a Presbyterian service of worship nowadays. One cannot help but wonder whether the following lament, penned in 1934 by the British poet T.S. Eliot as part of his extended poem, "Choruses From the Rock", describes something of our current situation:

*The endless cycle of idea and action,
endless invention, endless experiment,
brings knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.*

There is a desperate need for a revitalisation of worship in the Presbyterian Church. In my view, if such a revitalisation is to be of enduring significance, it is unlikely to take place independently of a recovery of core liturgical principles that undergird and inform the practice of Christian worship. Our church needs ministers and liturgists committed to this fundamental task.

⁵⁹ For example, I received an invitation from the Dunedin-North Otago Resource Group of the new Southern Presbytery (dated 13 October 2010) to attend a meeting on the 2nd of November 2010 called "Christmas Ministry Ideas That Work". The invitation encouraged people to "come ready to share a Christmas idea that worked well for you," with the promise that participants would "enjoy food, worship and prayer together."