

Normalising the elevated, or elevating the normal?

A linguistic and theological discussion of the use of language
in the Uniting Church Communion liturgy

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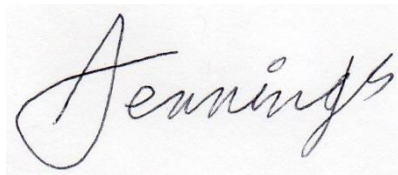
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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennings", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Signed.....

Date: 2 November 2018

Abstract

This study examines the claim made in the preface to *Uniting in Worship 2* (UIW2) that the Service of the Lord's Day, Second Service (SLD2) is written in a lower register than the first service (SLD1). Focussing specifically on the Communion liturgies, this study compares the two liturgy forms from linguistic and theological perspectives, concluding that the term "middle register" as used by the UIW2 preface is misapplied in reference to the Communion Liturgies, and that no such register can accurately be said to be in use in either SLD1 or SLD2.

Acknowledgements

I express my sincere thanks to those who have supported me in the pursuit of this project and in my studies generally; to my wife Kim and to my family, to my supervisor Paul Walton, to the staff and students of Trinity College Queensland and to my brothers and sisters at Toowong Uniting Church.

To God be the glory, in whatever register it is expressed.

Introduction

In 2005 the Uniting Church in Australia, through the Assembly's National Working Group on Worship, released *Uniting in Worship 2 (UIW2)*, which was a revised and updated resource of worship liturgies for use in the Uniting Church in Australia and was designed to take the place of the original *Uniting in Worship (1988)* resource (UIW). The new resources sought, among other goals, to provide liturgical materials that were more accessible in their use of language.

One of the major differences between the original UIW and UIW2 was the development of a set of liturgies in what the editors termed a "middle register". In the preface to UIW2, the editors referred to an approach to Australian English involving three registers which were termed "high," "middle" and "low". It was determined that the traditional liturgies of UIW were of high register and that while this was not bad in and of itself, a liturgy in middle register more connected with everyday experience was desirable.

A middle register version of the liturgy was produced and presented in UIW2 alongside the original high register version. The *Service of the Lord's Day, First Service (SLD1)* was carried over from the original UIW resource with only minor editing. The *Service of the Lord's Day, Second Service (SLD2)* was created for use alongside the original and was designed, according to the writers, to include more middle register forms.

Low register was associated more with conversational, informal language, and is not usually associated with written documents.

It should be noted that a third service (SLD3) was also produced and published online and on CD-ROM. The scope of this study will focus only on the forms printed in the published book. This decision is based on the limited scope of a masters thesis and does not reflect any attitude of rejection of the third service liturgy.

To date there has been no purely linguistic analysis of the UIW2 liturgies. This research will attempt to analyse the new liturgies for Holy Communion services presented in UIW2 from a linguistic perspective and compare the high and middle register forms. Interpretation of the outcomes will seek to gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic theories and mechanics involved in making traditional liturgy “more accessible” to contemporary congregations. A more technical linguistic understanding of the grammatical processes utilised (deliberately or tacitly) in converting a “high register” liturgy in to a “middle register” liturgy, coupled with discussion of the theological impact of this conversion, will contribute to a deeper understanding of the use of register in church liturgy, both in its composition and its delivery.

Through a synthesis of linguistic and theological discussion, this study will argue that the term “middle register” is misapplied when used to describe the Second Communion Liturgy. While this liturgy does indeed use language that distinguishes it from the first service, it will be argued that this constitutes a variation in presentation style, rather than language register. Linguistically, it will be argued the second liturgy retains vocabulary and syntactic structures more consistent with religious contexts than with everyday speech. Theologically, it will be argued that attempts to lower the tone or ceremony of the Communion liturgy are counteracted by the elevating and sanctifying nature of the sacrament itself.

Methodology

The practice of combining linguistic and theological analysis of the same text presents an inherent methodological problem. Linguistics, when performed properly, aims to be a purely descriptive discipline. It describes language forms and expressions as they are, without attempting qualitative assessment. Linguistics looks at what processes are used to convey meaning, without making judgements about what that meaning is. Theological discussion, on the other hand, seeks to find, understand and express qualitative significance in whatever subject is being discussed.

Attempting to run such fundamentally different analyses concurrently would result in a confusing and disjointed argument. For that reason, this study has aimed to keep linguistic and theological analysis separate for the most part, allowing each method of analysis to produce its own results before attempting, finally, to compare them.

Initially a discussion of the definition of register will be presented in order to delimit the terms of reference for the linguistic analysis in particular.

Following this, the first section of analysis will focus on a linguistic comparison of the Communion liturgies of the SLD1 and SLD2 services from UIW2, examining each section of the liturgy sequentially and focussing on whether the SLD2 forms are accurately described as being in middle register as this term is understood. In this section, texts taken from SLD1 will be printed in blue, while texts taken from SLD2 will be printed in green. Consistent with the convention used in UIW2, texts spoken as responses by the congregation will be printed in bold font.

Separately to the linguistic analysis, the theological analysis will discuss the effect that changes in wording and style have on a congregational approach to Communion and the messages conveyed by the celebration of the sacrament.

Finally, the parallel arguments from each set of analyses will be compared and synthesised in the conclusion.

Literature Review

The following review of literature is divided into four broad categories: Discussions of the composition and use of liturgy, liturgical discussions of the language used in liturgy, linguistic texts on the topic of register and interdisciplinary texts approaching linguistics from a liturgical perspective or vice-versa.

Liturgical approaches to the composition and use of liturgy

Gordon-Taylor's chapter on liturgy¹ acknowledges that liturgy is not an easy concept to define, as it both refers to a wide variety of elements and is understood differently in different cultural and ecclesial contexts. Gordon-Taylor quotes Beauduin who defined liturgy as "the worship of God by the Church itself." This understanding of liturgy as the undertaking of the people matches Gordon-Taylor's discussion of the roots of the word in Greek: *leitourgia*, literally meaning the work of the people. Gordon-Taylor also acknowledges that the word has broadly come to refer to denote "the structured body of text and ritual by which the Church as a corporate body offers worship to God."

It is in this sense, primarily, that this work will use the term liturgy, in reference to the structured written texts published in UIW2 and used for conducting services of the Lord's Day and in particular the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, or Communion.

In distinguishing "liturgy" from "worship" as technical terms, Gordon-Taylor quotes Irvine and Bergquist to say that "worship is the more fundamental reality, the response of the whole person towards God in praise, adoration and thanksgiving. The liturgy is a structured set of words and movements that enables worship to happen." In summary, the liturgy is the means by which worship is offered to God.

¹ Gordon-Taylor, B, & Day, J. *The study of liturgy and worship: an Alcuin guide*. Liturgical Press, 2016.

Broadly, an understanding of the structure of Communion liturgy has been influenced by works by Thompson² and more recently by Mazza³.

Bard Thompson's book *Liturgies of the Western Church*⁴ presents exactly what it says on the cover: A historical catalogue of communion liturgies used in the western Church from the post-apostolic age to the Wesleyan Sunday Service liturgy of 1784. In each of his thirteen chapters Thompson presents a historical figure involved in revisions or theorisation on the communion liturgy. Thompson gives some historical context to the theology and practices behind the use of the liturgies and a contextual discussion of the theological understandings underpinning the liturgies' production, publication and use. The historical figures are presented in chronological order, beginning with Justin Martyr in approximately 155 CE.

While there have been any number of revisions made to Eucharistic liturgy over time, especially in the centuries since the Protestant Reformation, the overall nature of the Eucharistic liturgies has persisted with incredible consistency. The arguments and division that have followed in the wake of the Reformation have largely been over what priests should wear and what sort of sermon should be preached and – in the case of the Puritans – whether there should be a written liturgy at all. The Eucharistic formula of a Great Thanksgiving Prayer, a description of the institution of the sacrament, a statement of remembrance of the Lord (anamnesis) and a consecration of the elements (epiclesis) has endured transmission across two millennia and any number of cultural backgrounds and contexts. Even arguments over what kind of supernatural activity, if any, is occurring at the consecration of the elements have not been able to diminish the significance of the Eucharist celebration for the modern church.

It is clear that both UIW and UIW2 draw heavily on some of the liturgies described in this book, especially (for obvious reasons) the liturgies of the Presbyterian and Methodist traditions. In

² Thompson B. *Liturgies of the Western Church*, Martino Publishing, Mansfield, 1961

³ Mazza, E. tr. O'Connell, MJ. *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 1999

⁴ Thompson B. *Liturgies of the Western Church*, Martino Publishing, Mansfield, 1961

considering newer forms of liturgy, an understanding of the rich traditions from which these liturgies come and also how much alteration these forms have already undergone historically is informative. Clinging to a traditional form of language because it has always been that way simply does not hold up under any honest historical scrutiny.

This understanding is supported by Mazza, whose book *The Celebration of the Eucharist*⁵ presents a historical analysis of Christian understandings of the Eucharist and the liturgy used when celebrating it. Originally written in Italian and translated into English by O'Connell, the book begins with a discussion of the Jewish thanksgiving prayers that underpinned the words which Jesus is reported to have used and then traces the forms of prayers and thanksgivings and the philosophical and theological understandings behind them through the early church period, into the Middle Ages, through the Reformation period and up to the Second Vatican Council.

Mazza's diachronic study of the development of the Eucharist liturgy places a great emphasis on the continuity of the elements of the liturgy. While Mazza focusses on and writes from a Catholic perspective, most of his conclusions apply equally to the Uniting Church liturgy. While UIW2 was published in 2005 and even its predecessor UIW was published in 1988, despite the relatively contemporary context of these publications, the communion liturgies contained within them reflect liturgical traditions that date back centuries, in some cases, according to Mazza, to the apostolic age and to the patristic traditions themselves. This topic will be explored in more depth in the research and discussion sections of this work, but a brief summary of the liturgical elements of Communion identified by Mazza is provided here:

- Preface

The preface includes a prayer of thanksgiving and has been a feature of the Eucharist rites in various forms according to Mazza since the earliest times.

- Sanctus (Holy)

⁵ Mazza, E. tr. O'Connell, MJ. *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 1999

According to Mazza the Sanctus section of the Eucharist was adopted into the liturgy much later (sometime in the fifth century) but its words are more ancient, being part of Jewish prayers since long before the time of Christ's earthly ministry.

- Words of Institution

Often taken directly from First Corinthians, this text sets out the purpose and focus of the sacrament.

- Anamnesis (Remembrance)

This text forms a statement of commitment to perform the sacrament and remember Christ, as he commanded.

- Epiclesis

Mazza has some difficulty with this text, but it seems to be basically defined and translated as an invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is asked to bless the communion elements that they may be a blessing for those who partake of the sacrament.

- Intercessions

Prayers that God would, through the observance of the sacrament, bring the Church and the world into greater unity. For Mazza, unity is a vital theme of the sacrament and the significance of this section should not be overlooked.

- Doxology (Praise)

The ceremony ends with the presider declaring the praise of God and the congregation joining in affirming this.

Of course, it is possible to get so caught up in a detailed analysis of the historical and philosophical backgrounds underpinning the Eucharist that one misses the point altogether. As Mazza adds by way of conclusion:

“When all is said and done, the fundamental purpose of any Eucharistic prayer is to be a prayer. When the text succeeds in being this, its functional role is assured.”

More recently, Smith has added perspectives on contemporary understandings of what liturgy is and how it functions in twenty-first century western (i.e. American) culture. His book *Desiring the Kingdom*⁶ presents a model of Christian education and formation that challenges the assumptions underlying education generally, and Christian education specifically. Smith proposes a conceptual model of human orientation towards the world that is experiential and affective, rather than simply intellectual. In this model, the process of developing a Christian lifestyle is much broader than simply learning facts about Christian beliefs. It is about forming habits, practices and routines that are oriented towards Christian goals and at a deeper level making the Kingdom of God the greater good towards which Christian lives are oriented. This model, Smith stresses, is not anti-intellectual, but rather it is more than merely intellectual.

At a basic level this approach makes some sense, certainly from the point of view of a Christian lifestyle. A Christian’s knowledge of and relationship with God must be more than intellectual; it must be experiential. At the intellectual level, God cannot be proven to exist, let alone related to. It is only as people have a revelatory and personal experience of God’s presence that a relationship with God is even possible. So it is only logical that in order to deepen that knowledge and relationship, something more robust than intellectual study will be required.

Smith’s position is well argued. His characterisation of humans as beings that act on precognitive desire or love more than on cognitive reasoning is an uncomfortable but reasonable assertion. His further understanding of sin as a misorientation of that love away from God, rather than as a failure to love at all neatly dismisses the notion that as Christians we have been given some ability to love that wasn’t present before, or is absent in non-Christians.

⁶ Smith, J.K.A, *Desiring the Kingdom*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2009

Overall, Smith's focus on Christian liturgy as formative, habit-forming and life-shaping is helpful, but only if one understands the significance of the liturgy being performed. A people who recite the Creed by rote without understanding its concepts or who show up for Communion every week or month without engaging fully with Christ may form a community that resembles Christianity, perhaps even more than some churches do today, but that community is unlikely to last more than a generation. The Church of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is reaping the consequences of a culture that went through the motions of Christian liturgy without the heart-stirring belief to go with it. The children of that culture will walk away, which is why much of the sense of traditional liturgy has been lost in the contemporary Church in Australia.

Linguistic understandings of register

"Register" is a technical linguistic term. A number of texts have been considered here to build up an understanding of register from a linguistic perspective.

As a linguistics textbook for first year linguistic students at university level, Andrew Radford's text⁷ is a good place to begin building a concept of register from a linguistic perspective. The text contains a brief section on register specifically, in which register is defined as *"the specialised vocabulary common to a particular trade, occupation, topic or activity."*

This definition is simplistic but helpful in identifying that registers tend to be associated with particular environments or contexts. The text gives examples of vocabulary items that are either only found in certain contexts, or else take on meaning in certain contexts that they would not have in general use. One good example given is "nutmeg," which in most contexts refers to a spice used in cooking, but in the context of soccer refers to kicking the ball between an opposing player's legs.

There are, no doubt, numerous examples of vocabulary used by the Church in highly specific ways, but such examples are usually referred to as "jargon" rather than "register". Register refers to the

⁷ Radford, A et.al. *Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, 2009

circumstances and environments in which the use of jargon and other linguistic features is considered appropriate or otherwise.

“In some sense, registers are in-group varieties which lead to accurate and speedy communication of information among those who know and use them, but confuse those who don’t. It is obviously important that a doctor tells your nurse that you have had a coronary infraction or a stress fracture of the left tibia, but what you want to know is that you’ve had a heart attack or broken your leg.”

This description of register is simple and broad. As will be shown, far more sophisticated technical definitions are available, many of which go beyond the scope of linguistic detail needed for this study. However Radford’s definition of vocabulary chosen for a specific context is a helpful beginning point.

Another useful introductory text is Brown and Attardo’s book⁸, which explains the concept of register in more detail than Radford. Brown and Attardo define register as *“a variation of a language, similar to a dialect, but determined by the subject matter, rather than the geographical and social issues.”*

Like Radford, Brown and Attardo make it clear from the outset that register is closely linked with the context in which language is used. However, Brown and Attardo expand their understanding of register beyond occupations and social setting to include contextual features such as:

- Subject matter
- Social roles/situations
- Discursive function

Brown and Attardo further define register as *“a set of choices among linguistic features,”* which is to say, where more than one option is available, register is the tendency to choose one option over another in a given circumstance. The set of features must be recognisable as belonging to a certain context. That is, if a claim is to be made that a register exists for speaking like a rugby commentator, it must be possible to identify rugby commentator speech based on the language used alone. This is

⁸ Brown, S & Attardo, S. *Understanding Language, Structure, Interaction and Variation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2008

an important claim which will be mentioned in the main body of this study when claims regarding registers of the liturgies are tested.

To gain a deeper understanding of a linguistic approach to register, the writings of experts such as Halliday and Biber become important.

Halliday was a prolific writer on the subject of linguistics and on semiotics and communication more generally. *On Language and Linguistics*⁹ is an edited collection of papers by Halliday and is itself the third volume in a set of ten.

Halliday's definitions of register have been touched on in summaries above, however, some additional notes are to be found in his own works:

"What we recognise as register is a clustering of features ... that can be observed to co-occur in a regular fashion. A local resetting of the probabilities of the system."

So, according to Halliday, in a set of language data identified to be within a defined register, certain features (i.e. vocabulary choices, particular sentence structures, idiomatic expressions) will appear with higher frequency than in the general set of language data in the relevant language.

The degree of complexity in studying the field of language variation (of which register forms one small part) can be viewed in considering the following quote from Halliday's writing:

"Any text belongs to some register or other. The different kinds of situation that collectively constitute a culture engender different kinds of text; but if we understand the semiotic properties of a situation we can make predictions about the meanings that are likely to be exchanged, in the same way that the interactants make predictions and in so doing facilitate their own participation. The notions of field, mode and tenor ... provide an initial conceptual framework for characterising the situation and moving from the situation to the text and much current work in systemic theory is directed towards the construction of an adequate model of register and genre, taking into account the context of the situation, the rhetorical structure of the text and the higher-level semiotics that make up the context of culture."

All that serves to emphasise the point that identifying a register of language is about much more than choice of vocabulary or sentence structure. A register is a function of the context in which it

⁹ Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood. *On language and linguistics*. Vol. 3. A&C Black, 2003.

appears, from the individual relationships between communicants to the social setting and even culture in which the interaction takes place.

Ghadessy presents a collection of papers¹⁰ which draw heavily on Halliday's work. For example in the introductory chapter Ghadessy quotes Halliday's definition of register as follows:

"Register variation can in fact be defined as a systematic variation in probabilities; a 'register' is a tendency to select certain combinations of meanings with certain frequencies, and this can be formulated as the probabilities attached to grammatical systems, provided such systems are integrated into an overall system network in a paradigmatic interpretation of the grammar."

This definition implies and requires an understanding of the theories of computational linguistics well beyond the scope of this study; however, a lay translation would be something like: "register is the tendency for a certain environment to produce a different linguistic result than another environment, all other linguistic factors being equal."

De Beaugrande also quotes an explanation of register from Halliday, this time with slightly less opaque terminology:

"Halliday breaks down the 'register' by saying it is 'predicted' or even 'determined' by the categories of field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the institutional setting in which a piece of language occurs, tenor refers to the relationship between participants and mode refers to the channel of communication adopted."

Again, this is a technical way of explaining that the term register implies much more than simply choices of vocabulary or sentence length. It is a function of the environment in which language is being used and the relationship between the speaker and listener(s), or between author and audience.

Tarray also draws on Halliday for her definition of register:

"A register can be defined as the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context."

¹⁰ Ghadessy, M, *Register Analysis*, Pinter Publishers, London, 1993

Tarray summarises thus:

“Register is determined by what is taking place, who is taking part and what part language is playing.”

In this she very closely echoes the Halliday quote given by de Beaugrande above.

While each writer uses different and highly specialised language to describe the concept of a register, it is clear that the writers agree that register must be considered as a function of context, rather than linguistic choices made in isolation.

Biber is another of the modern age’s authorities on the study of register from a linguistic perspective. In 1988 he published a study titled *Variation Across Speech and Writing*¹¹ in which he analysed situational variations in language use across four significantly different languages: English, Nukulaelae Tuvaluan, Korean and Somali. In his follow-up work titled *Dimensions of Register Variation*¹², Biber returned to the data set of his original work and added a new set, enabling a diachronic element to be added to his research. The similarities and differences he observed in the way situational variation worked in the four languages enabled linguists to begin to make predictions about what general principles might underlie variations of register across human languages.

Biber’s operational definition of register is neither overly technical, nor very contentious, but it does have some significance for the way in which the term “register” is used within the context of a study of Communion liturgy:

“Register is used as a cover term for any variety associated with particular situational contexts or purposes. Although register distinctions are defined in non-linguistic terms, there are usually important linguistic differences among registers as well. In many cases, registers are named varieties within a culture, such as novels, letters, editorials, sermons and debates. Registers can be defined at any level of generality: for example, academic prose is a very general register, while methodology sections in psychology articles are a much more highly specified register.”

¹¹ Biber, D. *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.

¹² Biber, D. *Dimensions of Register Variation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995

Teaming up with Finnegan, Biber also produced an edited collection of studies¹³ on the use and variety of register. Most of the studies discuss register and dialect variation at a level of linguistic technicality well beyond what is likely to be relevant for the scope of this study. However, one paper of particular relevance is a paper titled *Register and Social Dialect Variation* in which the authors, Biber and Finnegan, attempt to argue for a systematic analysis and description of the linguistic and non-linguistic features by which registers are defined and distinguished from one another. In particular, based on synchronic and diachronic study of language variation across numerous language and culture groups, Biber and Finnegan are able to assert some general observable patterns. Registers distinguished by factors such as mode (written as opposed to oral), prestige, formality and familiarity correspond very broadly to the general concepts of high register and low register. This tendency operates across phonological, syntactic and lexical variation, suggesting an observable system may be in play.

Biber and Finnegan were able to generalise that higher register forms tended toward use of explicit and elaborated features while lower register forms tended toward features for economy of use. The functional definitions of what is classified as an elaborated feature and what is an economy feature are not straightforward and again are well beyond the scope of this study. However, a broad summary is that higher levels of formality involve or imply a level of detachment or unfamiliarity which necessitates more careful, accurate and elaborated uses of language. By contrast, levels of register used by speakers in familiar or intimate situations or in situations where high levels of specificity are not required are more able to take “shortcuts” with grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, resulting in what is perceived as a “lower” register.

Based on these results, assumptions regarding levels of familiarity and shared knowledge must have an effect on decisions on register of language used in differing Church environments, and this will be discussed further in the main body of this study.

¹³ Biber, D. & Finnegan E. *Socio-linguistic Perspectives on Register*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994

Liturgical use of language

A number of twenty-first century authors have written on the topic of liturgy in the contemporary church and on the use of language therein.

To begin with, Chauvet¹⁴ presents a comprehensive study of the theology and practice behind the celebration of Christian sacraments. Naturally this requires a discussion of the language used. However, Chauvet's use of the term "language" is used to include many extra textual components; for example gestures, use of symbol, space and vocal tone. While all these elements are certainly communicative, this interpretation goes well beyond the scope of the term language as it will be used and understood in this study, which focus on text alone.

In his reflections on the language of liturgy, Chauvet asserts the importance of a balance in what he terms "symbolic separation". That is, an observable distinction between that which is used for liturgical purposes (language, utensils, space, etc) and that which is used for everyday commonplace life. An excess of symbolic separation, writes Chauvet "give rise to hieratic liturgies which little by little cease to speak to participants unless it is only through the nostalgic preservation of the past, with the danger of rendering the worshippers ineffective in the present."

On the other hand, a lack of separation, according to Chauvet, is also dangerous. "By wanting to situate the liturgy too closely in line with life, one trivialises the language, the objects, the gestures and the space of the rite ... the language, claiming to be comprehensible by all and to appropriate the 'truth of life' shared by the group is that of the everyday ... but people do not realise that through lack of sufficient separation from the lifestyle and language of the group the group continues to engage in self-celebration under the cover of Jesus Christ and to impose on 'God' its own ideology. One is squarely on the wrong foot."

¹⁴ Chauvet, LM. *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Liturgical Press, 2001.

While stressing an importance in balancing the amount of symbolic separation, which Chauvet suggests must be negotiated pastorally by the group's leadership, Chauvet also stresses that there must be some connection between the words of the liturgy and the life of the congregation.

"Do not say what you're doing. Do what you are saying."

It is useless, argues Chauvet, to say in the liturgy "we are full of joy" if there is no joy to found in the worship service.

In Chauvet's view a liturgy must employ language that seeks to strike a balance between language that is so opaque as to become meaningless and language that is so mundane as to become worthless. It must express experiences that genuinely reflect the life of the congregation while simultaneously drawing that same congregation to look beyond itself toward God.

The idea of seeking a balance between sacred and mundane is echoed in Earey's writing. Earey's book¹⁵ on various aspects of liturgical worship includes a chapter on language titled "Being intentional about words and music," the first section of which optimistically claims to explain "how words work." The unrealistic title notwithstanding, the section makes valid points regarding the state of flux that language is constantly in. Vocabulary and sentence structures that are appropriate today may well seem archaic in decades, let alone centuries to come.

Earey also suggests that the words of liturgy do not simply convey meaning. They are performative. For example the phrase "Praise the Lord" when expressed in a worship service conveys not only meaning but emotion and also constitutes in itself an act of praise or thanks. In this sense, there are strong links between Earey's work and that of both Chauvet and Smith above.

Earey touches on the question of poetry and metaphor and the constant struggle to find a form of words that everyone is comfortable with. He notes: "Context is everything, and sometimes the search for clarity can undermine both meaning and impact." Like Chauvet, Earey stresses the need

¹⁵ Earey, M. *Liturgical worship*. Church House Publishing, 2018.

for balance between making sure worship is conducted in the vernacular and making sure it does not stray into the colloquial or ordinary.

Helpfully in terms of this piece, Earey includes a section specifically on register. Like the preface to UIW2, Earey describes a scale of register in English from high to low. He also acknowledges that register is not just about vocabulary or sentence structure, it is also about context. He also observes that “high” or “low” or even “middle” may not fully describe the register in use as contexts such as religious, medical, legal or scientific will also affect what sort of language use is appropriate. Earey recognises that descriptors such as “high” and “low” may operate within a religious register context. Like the writers of UIW2, Earey suggests that a low religious register, while possible, would not normally be considered suitable for written liturgy.

Following on from these observations, Earey suggests that, traditionally, worship liturgy has tended to be associated with a higher register of language, and that this is a result of liturgies being (usually) written down, shared by everyone and used more than once.

Clearly the texts most closely related to the present study are those written by Gribben, who co-edited UIW2 and has written on the liturgies of both UIW¹⁶ and UIW2¹⁷.

The original UIW did not contain variations of service liturgies based on register of language as UIW2 purports to do. So the original guide to UIW does not contain any discussion of language per se. Its section on the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper does contain a useful breakdown of the sections of the liturgy and the history and theology behind them. This, in combination with descriptions found in Thompson and Mazza, provides useful background against which to interpret the role each section of the Communion liturgy plays.

Of particular note is Gribben’s explanation of the variations regarding the placement of the Institution of the Sacrament and the practice of moving the Words of Institution from their

¹⁶ Gribben, R. *A Guide to Uniting in Worship*, Uniting Church Press, Melbourne 1990

¹⁷ Gribben, R. *Uniting in Thanksgiving*, Uniting Academic Press, Parkville, 2008

traditional place in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving to the very beginning of the liturgy. Originally the Words of Institution were moved to the top of the liturgy as part of Calvin's practice of providing a scriptural warrant for all aspects of a Christian service. An element of worship for which no scriptural warrant could be found was removed. The Words of Institution, which are taken almost verbatim from First Corinthians, provided the scriptural warrant to justify the practice of the sacrament that was to follow.

Almost no Protestant traditions follow the practice of requiring an overt scriptural warrant for every action anymore, and certainly there is no need to justify the celebration of the Eucharist. Even most Presbyterian churches, from whence the tradition came, no longer require the Words of Institution to be fronted as a warrant, but UIW retains the option.

The second Gribben text considered here is a commentary written specifically on the Great Prayers of Thanksgiving that constitute the Communion liturgies printed in the UIW2 book¹⁸. As a member of the committee that prepared the UIW2 liturgy, Gribben provides valuable insight into the theological and structural thought that underlies the liturgy.

Moreover, Gribben's discussion structure mirrors that of the discussion section of this report: He considers each section of the Communion liturgy in order, discussing the historical and theological features of the section, in a similar way to that employed by Mazza, but with specific reference to the UIW2 liturgy.

Interestingly, Gribben's commentary contains advice not only on the text itself, but also on the practices presiders should undertake when delivering the liturgy. This includes gestures, facial expressions and even posture. To Gribben, the text is important, but it is not important in and of itself. It is important as it takes on a role of communicating the story of Jesus' presence among his people and making that continued presence felt by the congregation. In other words, Gribben

¹⁸ Ibid.

emphasises that the celebration of Communion and the delivering of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving involves far more than simply the words pronounced as part of the ceremony.

The effect that this function has on the way language is used to achieve it and on the sensible ways to describe that language will be discussed further in the body of this study.

Linguistic approaches to liturgy

A small number of academics have produced work considering liturgy from a linguistic perspective. An excellent example is Crystal's work in response to the Catholic liturgical reforms of Vatican II¹⁹.

Crystal describes, from a linguistic point of view, the features of language that he believes liturgists need to be cognizant of when editing or composing new liturgy. Crystal makes reference to register of language, but he uses the term in a way that is closer to the definition used by linguists such as Halliday and Biber than to the concept expressed in UIW2. Crystal defines register as "a kind of language whose forms are characteristic of a definable social situation, regardless of the status of the participants. Thus one finds the register of legal language, liturgical language and so on."

Crystal also defines language variation described as "style" which he defines as "*the degree of formality attached to particular inter-personal social situations, which is reflected by differences in language – for example the kind of language I use while talking to a friend will differ noticeably from that used in addressing a superior in otherwise the same situation.*" Defined this way, the concept of register as it used in UIW2 has more in common with Crystal's definition of style than of register. Crystal might speak of all Uniting Church liturgies being in a liturgical register, with options for high or middle style.

Crystal acknowledges the advantages of both high and middle style. Of high style he writes:

"The more careful our language, the more respected the recipient of it. And to the believer, there will be no definable limit to the care we should take while communicating with a supreme being. The product of this extra care is thus a formally abnormal style which one does not expect to meet in

¹⁹ Crystal, David. "A liturgical language in a linguistic perspective." *New Blackfriars* 46, no. 534 (1964): 148-156

ordinary situations, and which is valuable because its unfamiliarity signals the extra-ordinary purpose of the liturgical situation and demands added concentration.”

However as a counter-balancing argument, he adds:

“But while it is futile to make a liturgical language the same as everyday speech, it is even more futile to go to the other extreme, by adopting style so formally esoteric that it cannot be understood. ‘Learned’ words or constructions which are beyond the comprehension of the majority of users must be replaced at the cost of a loss in stylistic connotation.”

He summarises:

“Thus from the point of view of style, a liturgical language needs to strike a balance between ostentatious intellectualism and a racy colloquialism. It must be both dignified and intelligible.”

Crystal goes on to propose three features that are characteristic of liturgical register as he understands the term:

- Archaisms – both lexical and syntactic
- Formulaic diction – phrases spoken in the same way every time that fossilise over time and cannot be altered
- Specialised vocabulary – words used only in religious contexts (Messiah, sin, atonement etc.) or used in specialised ways in the context of the liturgy (grace, redemption, Lord etc.).

Features which Crystal associates with a formal or high style within this liturgical register are avoidance of contractions, use of older synonyms and – most importantly according to Crystal – structure and length of sentence. High liturgical register is characterised by long sentences of multiple clauses and the liturgy – especially the Catholic liturgy from which perspective Crystal writes – contains many examples of whole prayers made up of single sentences of multiple clauses.

This position contrasts with the preface to UIW2 which associates middle register forms with longer sentences and high register forms with shorter, denser sentences.

Twenty-first century perspectives can be found in the writings of Bradshaw, Day, Bayliss and Fryar. Bradshaw’s *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*²⁰ gives a short but insightful summary of differing perspectives on the use of language in liturgy. In particular, this quote neatly captures the tension between the perceived high register forms of UIW and the newer forms of UIW2:

²⁰ Bradshaw, PF. *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, SCM Press, London, 2002

“Christian communities do not agree whether, taking its cue from the incarnation, liturgical language should closely resemble everyday speech, or whether, hoping to transform the profane by the sacred, liturgical language should be extraordinary speech.”

Bradshaw’s short summary identifies a distinction between those churches with a strong tradition of written liturgy, in which tendencies toward simplification and conformity to the contemporary vernacular have been observed, and those churches with a stronger oral and extempore tradition, in which elaborate and emotive use of language is more highly valued.

Bayliss develops the distinction between the language of the church and the regular language of day-to-day life by presenting his own research into the use of language of in Anglican liturgy in Britain²¹. While his focus is on readability rather than on register, there is much overlap particularly in the notions of using understandable vocabulary and sentence structures that are easy to follow.

Bayliss identifies the readability test algorithms he uses as the SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook) index; the Dale-Chall reading age; and the Flesch Reading Ease score. These algorithms are available online.

Bayliss uses these algorithms to claim that sixty-six per cent of the Anglican liturgy requires an English proficiency and literacy equivalent to a passing grade in GCSE (senior high school qualifications in the British education system). Citing the increasing percentage of the population from a non-English speaking background – not to mention the percentage of people born in England who can’t read or write at a senior high school level – Bayliss suggests a number of strategies to lower the reading level of the liturgy, including using simpler vocabulary, shorter words and shorter sentences.

“The texts for the collects for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity are a good example. The Common Worship collect, produced for the year 2000, has a reading age of 21, and contains a single sentence of 59 words, divided into eight clauses. There are three polysyllabic words, and seven that might be classed as unfamiliar or difficult.

The alternative version, intended to be more accessible and produced for 2004, contains 37 words in a single sentence, and five clauses. It has an improved reading age of 18. This remains very challenging, and outstrips the reading age of a large percentage of our population.”

²¹ Bayliss, G. “Speaking more of the language of the people,” *Church Times*, 22 December 2016

Bayliss acknowledges that a number of difficult vocabulary items are integral to Christianity (e.g. holiness, resurrection, covenant) and cannot really be replaced with simpler synonyms, but strongly advocates for the use of readability formulas when creating or editing liturgy.

Day counters the push for a liturgy more closely linked with everyday life in her chapter on language²². Day points out that set liturgical texts, especially those sections recited by the congregation in unison, are collective speech as opposed to the speech of an individual or even a group of individuals. This, Day asserts, has two identifiable stylistic effects:

- That in syntax, rhythm and vocabulary the text must be easily spoken
- That the meaning conveyed has the potential to be assented by all

“Liturgical texts should preferably use language which can easily be spoken in a physical sense by participants, but they also need to employ language which the participants are able to say because they assent to its contents.”

Day makes an interesting analogy between liturgical language and theatrical language. The texts according to Day “are not intended to replicate ordinary speech in the way that the script of a television soap opera may be; it is a much more stylised speech, one that is neither like ordinary language, nor exactly like written language.” Day places great emphasis on the importance of speakability, which she defines as *“what remains when any barriers to physical speech are removed, such words of five or more syllables, or awkward sequences of consonants and tongue-twisters.”*

Day also discusses the fine balance to be struck between using language that is familiar to certain groups of people while possibly alienating others against using distinctive linguistic forms that will mark the liturgy as distinct and alienate everyone equally.

Finally, as a point of comparison between the use and understanding of register in the UIW2 liturgies and the liturgies of other traditions, consider Fryar’s Eucharist Liturgy for use in the Anglican Church in Australia²³ as an alternative to the prescribed forms in *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA). Like the

²² Gordon-Taylor, B, & Day, J. *The study of liturgy and worship: an Alcuin guide*. Liturgical Press, 2016

²³ Fryar, G. et.al. “An Order for Holy Communion” *The Anglican Church of Australia Liturgy Commission*, 2009

Communion liturgies of SLD2 and SLD3, it is written to provide a liturgy that is “pitched in a ‘lower register’ of language.”

An interesting point of distinction is that, like Crystal above, the writers of the Anglican liturgy associated longer sentences with higher register and sought to lower the register by composing sentences that were “shorter and more direct in structure,” as distinct from the UIW2 approach which associates lower or middle register with longer, more expressive sentence structures.

Summary

The Eucharist, or Communion liturgy, has a historical foundation stretching back far further than the literature considered here. Thomson, Mazza and Smith have shown that the connection between Communion liturgy is much deeper than the words used; they link our congregations with Church practices dating back centuries, right back to Christ and even before his earthly ministry. Yet in our very different contemporary context, these practices are performative and formative. Liturgical writers such as Chauvet, Earey and Gribben have stressed the need for those practices to be performed using language that strikes a balance between that which is so elevated it becomes meaningless and that which is so mundane it becomes worthless.

From a linguistic point of view, writers such as Radford, Brown, Attardo, Halliday and Biber have presented an understanding of linguistic register more complex than choices of vocabulary. A more complex understanding of linguistic register takes into account the context in which language is being used, including the relationships between the communicants.

Finally, interdisciplinary writers such as Crystal, Bayliss and Day present theories of liturgical linguistics that call for an increased understanding of the role that context plays in determining the perceived register of language used in liturgies and the balance between sanctity and intelligibility that is required.

This study, then, will compare two Communion liturgies used in the Uniting Church in Australia to evaluate claims made regarding registers of language used within them, namely the claim that the second liturgy is presented in a “middle register” as distinct from the “high register” forms of the first liturgy.

A Working Definition of Register

Before discussing the use of register in the UIW2 Communion Liturgies, some attention must be given to defining more carefully the term “register.”

The preface to UIW2 does not offer a definition of the concept of a register as such, but rather describes three registers within English by giving examples of the typical use and features of a high register, a middle register and a low register. Implicit in this description is an understanding of register as a choice of vocabulary and sentence structure choices.

As has already been made apparent in the literature review, a linguistic definition of register is more complex, although the choices made by speakers certainly play a significant part in making up a register.

Definitions from such sociolinguistic authorities as Biber and Halliday suggest that register is heavily influenced and perhaps even defined by the context that language is used in, as much as the words and phrases that are chosen. While the definitions that these authors give rely on a level of technical linguistic knowledge beyond the scope of this study, one simple and easily applicable definition given is that register is a function of “field,” “tenor” and “mode.”²⁴ Field is defined as the circumstances in which language is used, tenor as the relationship between the communicators and mode as the medium used for communication. The lexical and syntactic choices made by the communicator are surface level expressions of a more complex socio-linguistic process.

²⁴ Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood. *On language and linguistics*. Vol. 3. A&C Black, 2003.

Clearly this definition will pose some immediate difficulties for comparing the register of language of liturgies contained within the same book. The field of language use is identical for all three services: i.e. a celebration of Communion within the Uniting Church in Australia. While usage of the liturgies may vary from congregation to congregation in terms of tone and style, in the written form in which they are considered here their field is identical. Similarly, the mode of the three liturgical forms cannot be distinguished, except to note that SLD1 and SLD2 are printed in the UIW2 book while SLD3 is available only on the accompanying CD. All are written forms published for liturgical use within the Uniting Church.

It may be possible to argue for some distinction in the category of tenor. While at a concrete level the relationship between a minister and the congregation is the same whichever form of liturgy is used, it may be argued that the use of a middle rather than high register of language implies or at least suggests a different relationship between the minister and the congregation. It could be suggested that a use of a middle register as opposed to a high register may foster or perhaps presuppose a greater level of familiarity and less formality between minister and congregation. Indeed the preface to UIW2 hints at this when it states that the middle register forms “facilitate the connection between the Church’s corporate worship and our service to God in everyday life.” However, this distinction only holds in the abstract. In the regular use of the liturgies in church services the categories of field, tenor and mode will be almost indistinguishable for SLCD1, SLD2 and SLD3.

It should also be noted that for the linguist as much as for the liturgist the terms “high,” “middle” and “low” are entirely arbitrary. It is not possible to define a discrete set of properties that constitute a high register without referring specifically to the context in which language is being used.

As an example of this arbitrariness, consider the contrast between the UIW2 explanation of high register and the equivalent Anglican explanation. UIW2 defines high and middle register thus:

“High register language is dense, and contains a great deal of meaning in a short span; it may even be austere in tone. It may be beautiful while quite simple, but often contains more-elevated images.”

“Middle register ... has longer sentence structures, a wider and warmer range of imagery and gives more time to catch the meaning.”

By contrast, in describing an alternative form of Eucharist liturgy from the Anglican tradition, Bishop Godfrey Fryar reports:

“Its origins lie in requests for a rite which, in comparison with those in APBA, is shorter, more direct in structure, and pitched in a ‘lower register’ of language.”²⁵

So even when considering similar texts used for almost identical purposes in very similar contexts, there is a diversity of opinion on what constitutes a high register. The UIW2 writers associated a middle register with longer sentences, while the Anglican Liturgy Commission understood lower registers as being shorter and more direct.

There is no objective basis, linguistic or otherwise, on which to state that either interpretation is correct. It would therefore be meaningless to contest the characterisations of registers given in the preface to UIW2. If the writers of the UIW2 liturgy understood high register as “dense, containing a great deal of meaning in a short span, austere in tone and containing more-elevated images,” then it would be meaningless to argue whether those properties constituted high register or not. Rather, this study will compare that which is held to be high register against that which is held to be middle register and examine the extent to which the distinctions are observable and meaningful. As Attardo and Browne noted, however arbitrary the labels of registers may be, language in an identified register must be distinguishable from other language for the register to be said to exist at all.²⁶

²⁵ Fryar, G. et.al. “An Order for Holy Communion” *The Anglican Church of Australia Liturgy Commission*, 2009

²⁶ Brown, S & Attardo, S. *Understanding Language, Structure, Interaction and Variation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2008

Linguistic Comparison

Before comparing individual sections of the liturgy for content and structure, some general observations can be made about the use and structure of texts across the two liturgies. The first feature noted is the structure of the writing itself. As liturgies, the texts are presented in “sense lines”. Gribben describes this structure as “one thought per line, as it were.”²⁷ This mode of writing and the effect it has on speaking the words aloud mark the text as liturgical. It is somewhere between theatre, poetry and simple prose. It is designed to make the text easier to read²⁸, which is important since much of the liturgy is designed to be read corporately, either in unison or following along with the presider.

The text is structured to expect, and even to require, spoken response from the congregation. UIW2 employs the common convention of printing in bold type the words to be spoken in unison by the congregation. This is a feature associated strongly with church liturgy and, to the extent that the convention is understood with ease by the congregation, does much mark the text immediately as being written for religious use – that is, in religious register.

Both liturgy forms make use of these conventions, and it can already be seen from the way the text is organised and presented that there is much about the context and environment of the text that suggests the particular circumstance for which the text is presented. These texts are marked as religious texts – a religious register – for corporate reading even before the minister has uttered “The Peace of the Lord be always with you”.

The following analysis will consider the texts from a linguistic point of view; that is, it will consider the text itself and the linguistic features independently of the significance or values they reflect. In particular the analysis will test the claims made in the UIW2 preface that the middle register SLD2 forms will use longer sentences with language more connected with everyday life. The more

²⁷ Gribben, R. *Uniting in Thanksgiving*, Uniting Academic Press, Parkville, 2008

²⁸ Ibid.

subjective claims regarding a wider and warmer array of imagery will be considered in the theological analysis which follows this section.

The Passing of the Peace

The greeting of peace is identical in both liturgies:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.

Clearly no contrast can be made between identical forms. However it interesting to note that the use of the subjunctive “be” has been carried over into the middle register form, despite the use of subjunctive forms declining in English, to the extent that it is usually only found in older fossilised forms such as liturgy and idioms.²⁹

The setting of the table

SLD1 gives only one text for the setting of the table:

Christ our Lord invites to his table
all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another

SLD2 gives two alternate forms, but one is identical to SLD1:

Christ our Lord invites to his table
all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another

²⁹ Brown, S & Attardo, S. *Understanding Language, Structure, Interaction and Variation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2008

Or

This is the joyful feast of Jesus:
bread for beloved children;
a meal for those expecting scraps;
and a banquet for last-minute guests!
Come, your place is at the table.
Here Christ meets you
and calls you God's own.

Clearly no distinction of register can be made between the identical forms but there are some comparisons to be made between the alternate forms. The first form contains four sense lines which comprise one sentence of twenty six words. This one sentence is structure with one main clause and three relative clauses. The structure is complex, but the subordinate clauses are presented on separate sense lines, functioning almost as sentences in their own right due to the written structure.

The second form is longer. It contains seven sense lines in three sentences for a total of 39 words. The first sentence of the second forms matches the structure of the first form: a main clause with three qualifying phrases. These three subordinate phrases are in fact not complete clauses in their own right; they are noun phrases given as examples of the main clause.

The second two sentences are shorter and simpler. The first expresses one idea ("Your place is at the table") while the second presents two simple and related ideas ("Christ meets you and Christ calls you God's own"). Semantically, the alternate form does not add additional information, but presents similar ideas in longer sentences, consistent with the claims of the UIW2 preface.

Prayer of approach

SLD1 and SLD2 both give two alternate forms for the prayer of approach. The SLD1 forms are as follows:

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,
as you were with your disciples,
and make yourself know to us
in the breaking of the bread;
for you live and reign

with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Or

Lord, we come to your table,
trusting in your mercy
and not in any goodness of our own.
We are not worthy
even to gather up the crumbs under your table,
but it is your nature always to have mercy,
and on that we depend.
So feed us with the body and blood
of Jesus Christ, your Son,
that we may for ever live in him
and he in us.

Amen.

The first given form is a complex single sentence of 41 words over seven sense lines. The final three sense lines are similar to forms found in the Anglican liturgy³⁰ and in the Methodist Worship Book³¹.

As a liturgical unit this seven line prayer makes a good example of what the UIW2 preface refers to as high register. This is to be expected in the SLD1 liturgy.

The second SLD1 form is also very similar to Anglican forms and a similar prayer is found in the Anglican liturgy *A Prayer Book for Australia* as the prayer of humble approach, where it is sometimes recited by the congregation, and other times by the leader alone³².

SLD2 also gives two alternate forms. The first SLD2 form is identical to the first SLD1 form.

The second SLD2 form follows:

God of mercy,
look upon us in mercy not in judgement;
draw us from hatred to love;
make the frailty of our praise
a dwelling place for your glory,
in Jesus' name.
Amen

³⁰ The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, Broughton Books, Sydney 1995

³¹ The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, *The Methodist Worship Book*, St. Ives, Peterborough, 1999

³² The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, Broughton Books, Sydney 1995

Like the first form (in both liturgies) this form is a single sentence over several sense lines and multiple clauses. However, each clause is separated by a semicolon and they appear to function more like short sentences in their own right. Structurally speaking this is either one extremely complex sentence, or a series of short simple sentences. As the words are designed to be spoken aloud, it is of no great consequence whether they are read as one sentence or three; the use of sense lines will govern the manner of reading more than the use of punctuation.

The Institution of the Sacrament

The text for this section in SLD1 and SLD2 are identical; no comparison is possible. Most of the text is quoted direct from Scripture, namely 1 Corinthians 11. Discussions of register in Scripture would cross into discussion of alternative translations, which lies beyond the scope of this study.

Hear the words of institution of this sacrament
as recorded by the apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord
what I also delivered to you,
that the Lord Jesus,
on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said:
This is my body which is for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way also the cup
after supper, saying:
This cup is a new covenant in my blood.
do this as often as you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.

And so according to our Saviour's command,
we set this bread and this cup apart
for the holy supper to which he calls us,
and we come to God with our prayers of thanksgiving

Sursum Corda (or dialogue)

Again, this section is identical in both liturgies. No contrast is possible, but once again the use of the fossilised subjunctive forms in SLD2 seems inconsistent with a contemporary middle register.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Thanksgiving for the History of Creation and Salvation

The prayer of thanks for creation and salvation history in SLD1 consists of two sentences, set over three and four sense lines respectively.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours
our Lord and God,
for you alone are worthy.
In time beyond our dreaming
you brought forth life out of darkness,
and in the love of Christ your Son,
you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.

The SLD2 form also consists of two sentences over eight sense lines. Again the first sentence is over three sense lines, while the second is over five short sense lines.

With all we are, we give you glory
Trinity of love, the one Holy God,
sovereign of all time and space.

We bless you for this wide, red land,
For its rugged beauty,
Its changing seasons
For its diverse peoples,
and for all that lives upon this fragile earth.

SLD1's form focusses on direct description of God and God's actions. The final sense line focusses on creation itself, namely man and woman placed at the heart of creation.

SLD2's form focusses more heavily on creation itself, still giving praise to God but emphasising concrete aspects of creation such as lands, seasons and people rather than abstract concepts such as

“praise, glory and honour”. This observation matches the assertion in the UIW2 preface that the middle register forms. However running contrary to this is the observation that the second form contains more terminology that could be described as “religious,” especially where description of God is concerned. Where the SLD1 form refers to God as simply “Lord and God” (possibly reflecting the descriptors “simple” and “austere” given in the preface), SLD2 refers to God as “Trinity of love, the one Holy God, sovereign of all time and space.” This certainly reflects the “wider and warmer range of imagery,” described in the preface, but the use of more religious-specific terminology has the effect of moving the language further away from “everyday life”, rather than closer to it.

Sanctus and Benedictus

Mazza has argued that the Sanctus in some form (possibly without the Benedictus section) has been part of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving since the earliest records, specifically from the Alexandrian and Syrian traditions³³. For that reason it is not surprising that the unison responses of both SLD1 and SLD2 are identical for the Sanctus, though there is a small variation in the Benedictus (blessed is the one...) section. The SLD2 forms of the Benedictus uses a gender neutral noun “the One” in place of the third person singular masculine pronoun “he”. The SLD2 form also removes the copula verb “is,” and substitutes a comma, which results in a syntactically unusual structure lacking a verb in the main clause.

These responses reflect the tradition handed down over centuries and furthermore are often set to music³⁴, necessitating a standard text. However there is a difference in the form of introduction given by the presider.

And so we praise you
with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels
and the whole creation
in the eternal hymn:

³³ Mazza, E. tr. O’Connell, MJ. *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 1999

³⁴ Gribben, R. *A Guide to Uniting in Worship*, Uniting Church Press, Melbourne 1990

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest.**

You have called us to be the Church in this place,
to give voice to every creature under heaven.
We rejoice with all that you have made,
as we join the company of Heaven in their song
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed, the One who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest.**

The SLD1 introduction is very similar to that which comes from the Anglican tradition, via Methodism. It is made up of one sentence over five sense lines. The SLD2 form is less complex, using two sentences over four sense lines to express similar ideas; ie the Church gathering as one unit along with the rest of creation to praise God.

The introduction to the Sanctus and Benedictus is one clear example where the overarching idea of the middle register forms – to communicate the same concepts in more accessible and less dense language – can be seen clearly.

The Continued Prayer of Thanksgiving

At this point the forms used in SLD1 and SLD2 are quite different. In fact the rubrics printed in UIW2 describe these sections differently. The SLD1 form is in three paragraphs described sequentially in the rubrics as honouring the witness given through the Jewish people, thanksgiving for the work of Christ and a recollection of the gift of baptism.

We thank you that you called a covenant people
to be a light to the nations.
Through Moses you taught us to love your law,
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy
you became one with us in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself up for us on the cross.
You make us alive together with him,
that we may rejoice in his presence
and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit
you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table:
for by grace we are saved, through faith.

By contrast the SLD2 form is described in the rubrics as the history of salvation retold.

To Adam and Eve, children of dust,
you gave the world and its wonders,
but we misused your gift of freedom:
we reached out rebel hands to be like you.
We bless you for your mercy,
for you never cease call our restless hearts
until they find their rest in you.

Holy God

We offer our thanks and praise

Again and again,
you raised up men and women to speak your word,
to guide, to challenge and convert.

At the last, Father,
you sent Jesus Christ,
child of your love, God with us.
Born as one of us,
He lived our life and died our death,
offering us, both now and forever,
eternal life with you.

It may be argued that the “The Witness from the Jews, the Work of Christ and the gift of baptism”
are just another way of summing up “The history of salvation”. Nonetheless, the two passages are
communicating different aspects of salvation history, with different emphases.

The SLD1 form communicates its message over five sentences in three stanzas and fourteen sense lines, one hundred and two words.

The SLD2 form contains two also contains three stanzas, punctuated with a call and response between the first and second stanzas . It is slightly longer at one hundred and sixteen words.

Both forms use religious imagery, but the SLD1 form focusses on the long biblical history of the Jewish people culminating in the work of Christ, while SLD2 focusses on humanity, with a greater emphasis on the relationship between God and humanity than between God and history.

In the continuation of the Great Prayer it is the SLD1 form which uses longer sentences and more expansive language, in contrast to the description in the preface which associates these traits with the middle register of SLD2.

Anamnesis

The forms of the anamnesis of SLD1 and SLD2 are quite different. Both flow on directly from the prayers which precede them, although in the SLD1 form it is possible to place the Institution of the Sacrament between the Prayer and the Anamnesis. The SLD1 form of anamnesis is quite short:

With this bread and this cup
we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.

The form spoken by the presider contains two clauses separated by a semicolon, forming one complex idea over three sense lines and 21 words. The response from the congregation is used in many traditions including Anglican³⁵, Methodist³⁶ and more recent versions of the Presbyterian³⁷ liturgies and neatly incorporates past, present and future aspect.

³⁵ The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, Broughton Books, Sydney 1995

The SLD2 form is longer and more complex, and it is possible to make it even more complex by interposing the institution of the sacrament between the response the second stanza if it was not given earlier.

Through him, in him and because of him,
We affirm the Church's faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

And so, in remembrance of all you have done for us,
We take this bread and this cup,
And offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
Made worthy by the perfect offering of Christ
Our great high priest.

This form breaks the presider's words into two stanzas, separated by the congregational response.

The second stanza forms one sentence of five sense lines and thirty nine words.

Epiclesis

In the Epiclesis, once again the SLD1 form is shorter, at three sentences over eleven sense lines plus two sense lines of response, for a total of eighty-six words.

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Make us one with him,
one with each other
and one in ministry in the world,
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.
Through you Son, Jesus Christ,
in your holy Church,
all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty,
now and forever.
**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours forever and ever. Amen.**

³⁶ The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, *The Methodist Worship Book*, St. Ives, Peterborough, 1999

³⁷ Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, *Book of Common Worship*, John Knox Press, Louisville, 1993

The SLD2 form contains three stanzas over fifteen sense lines, with an additional call and response interposed between the first and second stanzas and second response at the end, for a total of one hundred and sixteen words. Each stanza consists of a single, multi-clause sentence.

By your Word and Holy Spirit,
Bless these gifts that we may truly share
Christ's body and blood,
And become, by grace, his body given
For the sake of the world.

Holy God,
we offer our thanks and praise

For through your Spirit
The whole earth makes its prayer
In sighs too deep for words,
Longing for the day of freedom:
For in hope and by faith we were saved.

Accept our thanks and praise, good Father,
Through your Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ,
with whom and in whom,
and by the Spirit who dwells in us,
we worship you in joyful song:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours forever and ever. Amen.**

Consistent with the understanding of register given the UIW2 preface, the SLD2 form is longer, deploying a greater array of religious imagery. It also uses grammatical features which are dropping out of modern use, namely the distinct accusative relativiser "whom".

The Lord's Prayer

The SLD1 liturgy contains the version of the Lord's Prayer approved for use in the Uniting Church by Assembly and which was printed in the original UIW resource. This English translation of The Lord's Prayer was originally prepared by the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) and revised in 1987 by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC).³⁸

Our Father in Heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come,

your will be done

on Earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil

For the kingdom the power and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.

The SLD2 liturgy also lists this form of the Lord's Prayer, but also gives an alternative prayer:

Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker.

Source of all that is and that shall be.

Father and Mother of us all,

Loving God, in whom is heaven.

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by all people of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created things!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us

For you reign in the glory that is love,

now and forever. Amen.

This form of liturgy should not perhaps be rightly referred to as "The Lord's Prayer". While it expresses very similar ideas, it could not in any helpful sense be referred to as a translation of the form found in Scripture (Matthew 6, Luke 11). It could be more accurately described as a

³⁸ Wood, D. *Which Prayer?* Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly, Sydney, 1990

paraphrase, although the UIW2 rubrics do not describe it as such. It is listed as simply an alternative prayer, though in its content it is clearly based on the traditional Lord's Prayer, as will be demonstrated below.

Inasmuch as it is an attempt to take a set text and deliberately expand it into a longer more expansively expressed version of the original text, this alternate form of prayer gives the clearest example of the principles employed by the writers of UIW2 in creating the middle register liturgical forms.

An excellent example is found in the first line, which in the traditional form read "Our Father in heaven." In the alternative form, the equivalent sentence reads "Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker. Source of all that is and that shall be. Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven." The SLD2 form employs a greatly increased use of images and messages to address God in place of the simpler "Our Father." Notably, the alternative form addresses God as both Father and Mother, in line with the UIW2 preface's stated aim of including feminine images for God. The locative phrase "in Heaven" from the traditional form has been replaced with the phrase "in whom is heaven, which places heaven in God rather than God in heaven.

The next four lines are paraphrases of the corresponding four lines of the traditional form, though reordered slightly:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! (Hallowed by your named)
The way of your justice be followed by all people of the world! (your will be done)
Your heavenly will be done by all created things! (on Earth as it is in Heaven)
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth (Your kingdom come)

Interestingly this middle register form retains old fashioned terminology such as "the way of your justice" and "the hallowing of your name," as well as subjunctive clauses not typical in common Australian speech.

The lines of the next stanza correspond to lines of the traditional form, almost one to one, though the traditional line “save us from the time of trial” is broken into two sense lines in the alternate form. And the two traditional sense lines regarding forgiveness of sin are condensed into one.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.	(give us this day our daily bread)
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.	(and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us)
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.	
From trials too great to endure, spare us.	(save us from the time of trial)
From the grip of all that is evil, free us	(and deliver us from evil)
For you reign in the glory that is love,	(for the Kingdom the power and glory are yours)
now and forever. Amen.	(now and forever. Amen)

The alternative to the traditional Lord’s Prayer is a good example of the principle of replacing short, straightforward sentences for more expansive language. While the two prayers communicate roughly the same thing, the traditional form uses eleven sense lines and 67 words, while the alternate form uses fifteen sense lines and one hundred and twenty six words. The extra sense lines are mainly accounted for by the use of four sense lines in the addressing of God, which in the traditional form is expressed with “Our Father”. While this style of expanded prayer certainly matches the preface’s claims of the middle register employing “longer sentences and wider and warmer range of imagery,” but it is not clear whether the resulting forms truly facilitate a connection between the Church’s corporate worship and the our service of God in everyday life.” The expansive language in many ways feels more poetic and elevated than the traditional forms. For example, the second stanza repeatedly fronts the prepositional phrases into the space made vacant by the subjectless imperative structures, a technique which creates rhythm and cadence but which does not resemble forms typically used in common speech or even writing. Furthermore, the middle register form has retained the use of an old word “hallowing”. Rarely used outside the Lord’s Prayer, words such as these are associated closely with a highly religious register.

The Breaking of the Bread

The forms used for the breaking of the bread in SLD1 and SLD2 are different, but of similar length and structure; two sense lines explain the significance of the bread and two sense lines explaining the significance of the cup followed by a commendation of the elements to the congregation. The SLD2 form adds a response from the congregation.

SLD1: The bread we break
is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take
is a sharing in the blood of Christ
The gifts of God for the people of God

SLD2: Christ is the bread of joy
who shares food with sinners.
Christ is the cup of life,
who revives the faint-hearted.
Let us receive what we are;
let us become what we receive.
The body of Christ

Lamb of God

Both SLD1 and SLD2 list two alternative forms for the Lamb of God, or Agnus Dei section. The first SLD1 form is identical to the first SLD2 form, the alternatives are different

SLD1 Jesus Lamb of God
have mercy on us
Jesus, bearer of our sins
have mercy on us
Jesus, redeemer of the world
grant us peace

Or

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace

SLD2 Jesus Lamb of God
have mercy on us
Jesus, bearer of our sins
have mercy on us
Jesus, redeemer of the world
grant us peace

Or

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us.
Jesus, Word made flesh
have mercy on us.
Jesus. Liberator of creation,
grant us peace.

The alternative SLD1 form uses longer sentences than the SLD2 form, but the sentences are repeated. The alternative SLD2 form uses shorter unique sentences, and doesn't actually use the term "Lamb of God."

The Communion

Both SLD1 and SLD2 introduce Communion itself with the same four sense lines. The administration/distribution of the elements is accompanied by slightly different lines amounting to the same thing:

SLD1 Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of Christ given for you

Amen

The blood of Christ, given for you

Amen

SLD2 Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life

Amen

The blood of Christ, keep you in eternal life

Amen

Or

Christ's body broken for you

Amen.

Christ's life poured out for you.

Amen

Thanksgiving after Communion

Both the SLD1 and SLD2 liturgies have two alternative forms for the prayer after Communion. The first form from SLD1 and the second form from SLD2 are of similar length and structure, though the SLD1 form is comprised of one sentence over five sense lines plus an amen, while the SLD2 form is comprised of three shorter sentences over five sense lines, plus an amen.

We thank you Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people
Amen.

Or

Bountiful God,
at this table you graciously feed us
with the bread of life and cup of eternal salvation.
May we who have reached out our hands
to receive this sacrament
be strengthened in your service;
we who have sung your praises
tell of your glory in our lives;
we who have seen the greatness of your love
see you face to face in your kingdom,
and come to worship you with all your saints forever.
Amen.

Blessed be God who calls us together
Praise to God who makes us one people.
Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin.
Praise to God who gives us hope and freedom.
Blessed be God whose word is proclaimed.
Praise to God who is revealed as lover.
Blessed be God who alone has called us.
Therefore we offer all that we are and all we shall become.

Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise.
**Amen. Accept our thanks for all that we are.
Our hands were empty, and you filled them.**

Or

God of grace,
you renew us at your table with the bread of life.
May this food strengthen us in love
and help us to serve you in each other.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord
Amen.

The alternative SLD1 form is longer and employs a repetitive structure to create cadence. The first form of the SLD2 prayer also uses repetition and cadence, but uses a call and response structure. Unusually, it includes responses after the final amen.

Final Linguistic Observations

In general, the claim that the middle register SLD2 would use longer sentences than the SLD1 forms was true in some cases and not in others. The SLD2 forms had a greater tendency to employ congregational responses, but the use of expanded and poetic language in both calls and responses counteracted any sense of connection to the everyday speech of the vernacular.

The best and clearest example of the effort to produce a middle register alternative to the original SLD1 liturgy was seen in the alternative to the Lord's Prayer, the significance of which will be discussed in the next section.

The claim that the SLD2 forms would use language more associated with everyday lives was questionable. Grammatically, the SLD2 liturgy continues to use features such as subjunctive mood, overt case marking on personal relativisers (who vs whom) and poetic devices such as cadence and prepositional phrase fronting all of which indicate a more elevated use of language than that which is used in the everyday vernacular.

It is here that the differences in understanding of what register is and does begin to affect an understanding of what a middle register liturgy would actually do. From a technical linguistic point of view register, as described by Halliday³⁹, Biber⁴⁰ and others, is a set of language choices triggered by certain environments. From this point of view, the choices made by the writers of the SLD2 liturgy may provide more diverse imagery, but they do not alter the context in which the language is used and for which it is written. Both liturgies are inescapably written in a religious register. This is not a value judgement; it is a contextual description. A Communion liturgy cannot fail to be written in a religious register: there is no other context in which a Communion liturgy makes sense.

Viewed from this perspective, it may be argued that the more expressive and diverse metaphors and images used in the SLD2 in fact result in a more affected form of religious register; that by employing more theological expressions by which to address God, for example, the second form actually creates a more exclusively religious form of expression.

³⁹ Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood. *On language and linguistics*. Vol. 3. A&C Black, 2003.

⁴⁰ Biber, D. *Dimensions of Register Variation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995

Theological Discussion

The preceding linguistic comparison of the SLD1 and SLD2 forms analysed the claims of the UIW2 preface that the middle register forms would use shorter sentences and language more connected with everyday life. This section will address the more qualitative claim that the middle register forms use a wider and warmer array of imagery. In so doing, this section will address a number of questions:

- Does a wider array of imagery make worship more expressive, or just more loquacious?
- What social and theological claims are being made when we produce an alternative form to a scriptural text like the Lord's Prayer?
- What is the effect of the greater use of congregational responses found in the SLD2 liturgy?

Given all this, what, if anything, marks the middle register forms as distinct from the high register forms from a theological perspective? The summary of these ideas will argue that despite the differences of linguistic expression, there is actually no such thing as a lower, more accessible Communion liturgy. Communion by its very nature elevates the parts that comprise it, whether those parts are the language used, the sacramental elements themselves or the participants.

A Wider Array of Imagery

There is substantial evidence that the aim of producing a middle register with a wider and warmer array of imagery has been achieved. As a simple example consider only the terms used to address God directly: The SLD1 prayers refer to God as Lord, God or Father and the latter is only found in the Lord's Prayer. By contrast, the SLD2 form includes such addresses of God as Lord, God of Mercy, Trinity of love, the one Holy God, Sovereign of all time and space, (The Thanksgiving for Creation History) Holy God, Father, Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God (The alternative to the Lord's Prayer) and God of Grace, (The Prayer after Communion). Clearly even in this small subset of the liturgy, there is a greater range of expression available in the SLD2 forms.

Do these more creative ways of addressing God create a broader understanding of who or what God is, or does the application of more human labels further distort our understanding of a Being whose very nature is to defy delineation? To use examples not necessarily found in this Communion liturgy, does addressing God as “Merciful Lord” detract from an understanding of God as perfectly just? Does addressing God as Father limit our ability to understand God as both masculine and feminine while being neither? Does addressing God as “Almighty” distort an understanding of God as compassionate, gracious and with great concern for the underprivileged and down-trodden?

Even if the answer to all these questions is no, is it helpful to use addresses for God emphasising one aspect of God when the gathered congregation may be experiencing God in very different ways? Would offering prayers to a God of Justice help to engage a member who has just lost a job as a result of a corporate downsize? Conversely, does addressing a God of Mercy alienate the couple who have just experienced a miscarried pregnancy?

Would it be more helpful to keep specific descriptors out of our liturgy and simply refer to God as God? Day suggests:

“Liturgical texts should preferably use language which can easily be spoken in a physical sense by participants, but they also need to employ language which the participants are able to say because they assent to its contents.”⁴¹

A counter argument is that the terms used to refer to God in the SLD2 liturgy while varied, are absolute. In any and in all circumstances, God can be described as loving. Even in our most harrowing experiences, God can be described as merciful. God is always the pain bearer and always the life-giver, and addressing God as such even when one does not feel it or experience God that way is an act of faith in a God whose ways are not human ways.

The question of gender specific addresses for God is unavoidable. The preface to UIW2 acknowledges the tradition of referring to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and does not seek to

⁴¹ Gordon-Taylor, B, & Day, J. *The study of liturgy and worship: an Alcuin guide*. Liturgical Press, 2016.

discourage this. Jesus addressed God as Father and taught his first disciples to do so⁴². Even after accounting for Jesus' humanity and his immersion in the patriarchal culture of his time, it is problematic for the Church of Jesus Christ to imagine correcting the teachings of Jesus or updating his theology. Nonetheless, the inclusion of feminine titles and images for God alongside their masculine counterparts is a welcome expression of an understanding of God as having created humans male and female in God's image. As a further qualification of this claim, it should be noted that Father and Mother are the only gender-specific terms used to describe the first person of the Trinity, and Son is the only gender-specific term used to describe the second person. It would be a stretch indeed to argue that Jesus Christ should not be referred to in masculine terms, having been incarnated in human form as a man.

An interested example of this is found in the contrast between the SLD1 and SLD2 forms of the Benedictus:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Blessed, the One who comes in the name of the Lord

There is some ambiguity as to who the pronoun "he" refers to in SLD1. If "he who comes in the name of the Lord" refers to Jesus, the masculine pronoun is entirely appropriate. If "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" refers to any who bear Christ's name and Lordship – ie all the Christians gathered for Communion – then the move away from the use of generic masculine in SLD2 (replacing "he" with "the One") results in a more inclusive way to say exactly the same thing. The use of capitalisation for "the One," however, suggests an interpretation that "the One" refers to Christ. This appears inconsistent when considering the manifestation of Christ as a male human being, however when considering the manifestation of Christ in his body the Church (which is the very understanding that Communion celebrates), then a gender inclusive reference begins to make more sense.

⁴² Matthew 6, among other examples

Some writers, such as Earey, have suggested that qualities such as strength, power and might may be viewed as problematic when attributed to God because they are male normative and promote a masculine understanding of God⁴³. From a linguistic perspective, there is nothing in the morphology of such nouns to imply masculinity. From a social point of view, the question of whether such terms are exclusively applicable or normative to men is well beyond the scope of this study. This study will regard terms used in the SLD2 liturgy such as “life-giver,” “love-maker” and “Sovereign of all Time and Space” as equally applicable to masculine and feminine entities, not to mention entities that are both and neither, and leave it at that.

Further examples of the principles in play when expanding liturgical texts into more expressive language will be seen in the section on the alternative form of the Lord’s Prayer.

The final point to be made is to consider the extent to which an expanded arsenal of images and metaphors for God, for the mission of Christ and for the formation of the Church really facilitates, as the UIW2 preface claims, a greater connection to everyday life. Would the average church-goer be more likely, in his or her everyday life, to offer a quick prayer for guidance to “The Sovereign of Time and Space” or simply to “God”? In speaking with friends or colleagues, would one speak of their relationship with the life-giver, pain-bearer and love-maker, or simply of a relationship with “God”? If the answer is simply God, the question remains whether the more expansive imagery of the SLD2 forms expresses the concepts of the SLD1 liturgy in more relatable ways, or simply in more poetic ways.

What social and theological claims are being made when we produce an alternative form to a scriptural text like the Lord’s Prayer?

An interesting feature of the SLD2 liturgy is the inclusion of an alternative to the traditional Lord’s Prayer. While it expresses similar ideas in a similar order to the traditional form, it could not be called a translation of the text in any academically rigorous way. If anything, it is a paraphrase

⁴³ Earey, M. *Liturgical worship*. Church House Publishing, 2018.

(although no claim is made in the UIW2 text that alternative form is another version of the Lord's Prayer) and as such it provides a useful reference point for discussing the effect that altering a text in an attempt to lower the register has on meaning and on the context in which it is used.

The expansive list of addresses for God in the SLD2 form as compared with the simple "Our Father" of the traditional form has already been discussed above, while the interesting choice to use older vocabulary such as "hallowing" and subjunctive mood was discussed in the previous section.

The much higher word count of the SLD2 form was also mentioned previously; however, what was not discussed was the effect that the increased sentence length has on the overall meaning of the clauses.

In fact the expanded sentences add very little to the meaning of the original. The discussion of the alternate prayer in the previous section demonstrated sense line by sense line that the expanded SLD2 form conveys the same meaning, often using similar words, but adding extra phrases to each line, resulting in a much longer text which conveys the same concept. This observation is consistent with the claim in the UIW2 preface that the middle register forms use "longer sentence structures ... giving a little more time to catch the meaning."

As for whether the paraphrased version achieves a greater sense of connection to everyday life, here the process of revising an already extremely familiar text works against the stated aims of the middle register. The traditional form of the Lord's Prayer is very familiar, with many Christians and some non-Christians able to recite it from memory. Re-writing and presenting the ideas of the traditional prayer in an unfamiliar form may spark useful reflection on the meaning of the words being recited, but does little to reinforce a connection with everyday life. In fact it takes familiar forms and makes them unfamiliar.

Smith has argued extensively for the value of repetitive, well known liturgical forms. He suggests that as one recites and repeats the truths of faith and worship, those truths become internalised and

begin to shape the character of the believer. So, while more-developed and expressive forms may stretch a cognitive understanding of God, a simpler more familiar form will penetrate deeper and begin to shape the pre-cognitive and subconscious instincts and attitudes that influence a person's life on a more fundamental level.⁴⁴

So an expanded form such as the SLD2 paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer achieves the preface's stated aims of providing a wider array of images and using longer sentences. It does not appear to use language more connected with everyday life but rather extends and develops the use of religious language already present in SLD1.

What is the effect of the greater use of congregational responses found in the SLD2 liturgy?

The linguistic summary of the previous section noted that the SLD2 Communion liturgy made much greater use of congregational responses. In his commentary on UIW2, Gribben notes:

"The modest interpolations by the people are reminders of the primary purpose of what we are doing: praising and thanking God as a Christian assembly."

Gribben suggests that the use of congregational responses aids the congregation in engaging actively with the liturgy, and is especially appropriate and helpful when conducting Communion with children.⁴⁵ However, Gribben also adds that a good presider should never be delivering the liturgy in such a way as it becomes boring or disengaging in the first place.

A key symbolic attribute of unison responses is the very fact that it requires the congregation to speak in union; as one. One overarching theme of the Communion messages of Christ's salvation for humanity is the way in which humans are now called to live together in unity, no longer acknowledging divisions such as race, sex or background. As Mazza noted:

⁴⁴ Smith, J.K.A., *Desiring the Kingdom*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2009

⁴⁵ Gribben, R. *Uniting in Thanksgiving*, Uniting Academic Press, Parkville, 2008

“The death of Jesus has saving power because it yields the unity of the people. For John to say that Jesus died for our salvation and to say that he died for the sake of unity is to say the same thing in two different ways.”⁴⁶

A congregational response in unison is a tangible, experiential way to express this unity. However it also requires the liturgy to be written in a way that is understandable, meaningful and relevant for all participants. Almost paradoxically, this means that overt connections to the “everyday” life of the congregation run the risk of excluding those whose “everyday” life may be very different from the perceived norm. In a sense, the more abstract or austere the language used, the more universal it is likely to be, although some increased effort may be needed to ensure the text is readily understood by all.

The other attribute of unison responses that affects an understanding of register is what a strange practice unison speaking is. It is peculiar to religious services; there is almost no other context in Australian life when crowds speak in unison. The exceptions include civil events such as citizenship ceremonies and ANZAC day commemorations which have a quasi-religious character to them.

The result is that whatever style of language may be used in composing congregational responses, the very act of expressing unity through unison responses gives the text an overtly religious character, instantly counteracting any attempt to normalise the text to everyday experience.

This is a good thing. Our corporate acts of worship should aim to express exactly this; to put off the old humanity and be raised to a new life in Christ⁴⁷. The overtly religious practice and register used in congregational responses and other liturgy serves to act as a mark of both the distinctiveness of our act of worship and of the unity found in the corporate Body of Christ.

In summary

What effect, then, does the use of wider, warmer array of images and metaphors have on an understanding of the Church’s role as the Body of Christ? As with much of Christian practice and

⁴⁶ Mazza, E. tr. O’Connell, MJ. *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 1999

⁴⁷ This specific wording is taken from Ephesians 4:20-24, but this theme of putting off the old and putting on the new is a recurring theme and underpins much of Paul’s writing in the New Testament

tradition, it all depends on how it is used. Where poetic and diverse images of God expand our thinking and help us consider the nature and character of God in new ways, our worship will be richer and freer. Where an expanding list of labels gives us more and more discrete categories in which to contain a God whose very nature defies compartmentalisation, our worship will be distorted and limited. Where new expression of old prayers removes barriers and allows for fresh engagement, it will be life giving. Where longer sentences and extra clauses add more noise but not more meaning, they will be futile and cumbersome. Where congregational responses express the joy and freedom of Christian unity, they will be delighted celebrations. Where they are obligatory recitations by rote, they will be lifeless traditions.

A balance is required. As David Crystal notes:

*"While it is futile to make a liturgical language the same as everyday speech, it is even more futile to go to the other extreme, by adopting a style so formally esoteric that it cannot be understood ... Thus from the point of view of style (register), a liturgical language needs to strike a balance between ostentatious intellectualism and racy colloquialism. It must be both dignified and intelligible."*⁴⁸

Chauvet also stresses the need for balance in "symbolic separation" between the common matters of everyday life and that which is dedicated for use in sacred practices. Too much separation, argues Chauvet, alienates the congregation, while too little separation trivialises that which much retain its distinctiveness. The balance, Chauvet suggests, can be neatly expressed in this maxim: *"Do not say what you're doing. Do what you are saying"*.⁴⁹

Thankfully, by the grace of God, even if written liturgies become meaningless empty shells, the message that Communion communicates is that God in Christ is revivifying those empty shells and bringing humanity into abundant life in community with him and with each other. As humanity joins with Christ, its lives, words and actions are transformed into the manifestation of the Body of Christ on Earth.

⁴⁸ Crystal, David. "A liturgical language in a linguistic perspective" *New Blackfriars* 46, no. 534 (1964): 148-156

⁴⁹ Chauvet, LM. *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Liturgical Press, 2001.

This is why, theologically, there is no such thing as a middle register Communion service. The nature of Communion is to take what is base and ordinary and transform it into that which is set apart for God; holy. The words spoken as the gathered Body of Christ go from being words printed on a page or a screen to being a moment where “we join choirs of angels, archangels and the whole creation in an eternal hymn.” The simple bread and offered to each other become the representation of Christ’s sacrifice and his presence with the Church. And the congregation, the normal everyday dust of the earth humans, are transformed into the Church, the manifestation of the Body of Christ on Earth.

Communion is a powerful representation of the restorative power of God at work in the world. Whatever kind of language is used to celebrate the sacrament is always to going to become elevated because of the purpose it is being used for.

This should not be interpreted as a criticism of the SLD2 liturgy, but rather as a comment on the concept of a middle register liturgy in the first place. The truths being expressed in the Communion rite cannot be expressed with any theological accuracy without using religious register because it is one of the most sacred aspects of the communal practices of the Christian church. It wouldn’t matter what language one used to express the sentence “The body of Christ, broken for you.” The significance of what is being expressed and the context in which it is said endow the statement with a gravitas that cannot be avoided with attempts to make it more relatable.

This does not mean we should not look for new ways to express the truth of the liturgy. Protestants since the Reformation and Catholics since the reforms of Vatican II have recognised that Christian worship must be conducted in the language of the people, and so as the language of the people changes, so must our liturgical forms.

Conclusion

This study has examined the claim that the SLD2 service in UIW2 is written in a middle register. Focussing specifically on the Communion liturgies, this claim was tested separately from linguistic and theological perspectives.

The linguistic examination concluded that the description of middle register was misapplied. A technical linguistic definition describes register as a function of the context in which language is used. This context is further broken down into the categories of tenor, mode and field. It was found that these categories were similar for both the SLD1 and SLD2 liturgies and that there was no linguistic basis on which to separate them.

The working definition of register given in the UIW2 preface described some linguistic features which the writers associated with middle register. These included longer sentences structures and a greater connection with everyday experiences. A linguistic analysis of the texts of both the SLD1 and SLD2 concluded that even these criteria were applied inconsistently. Despite clear use of a different style of language, the contextual constraint of writing for a Communion service has produced text that is consistent with religious register and distinct from speech used in everyday life.

From a theological perspective, the language used for addressing God and for prayer was considered. It was concluded that attempts at diversifying and expanding language use do not negate the effect of Communion itself, which is to take the mundane and elevate it to the divine. Any attempts at normalising the language are counteracted by the sacred context and the uplifting power of the sacrament itself.

In some ways the parallel conclusions are very similar. Linguistically, attempts to vary sentence structure and choice of vocabulary are insufficient to counteract the effect that context has on language use. Theologically, changes in language and expression are insufficient to counteract the elevative nature of the sacrament. Both studies tend towards the same conclusion: There isn't really

any such thing as a middle register Communion service, because the context and nature of a Communion service generates and perhaps even requires a register all of its own.

This should not be read as a criticism of the SLD2 liturgy itself. The words of this liturgy are every bit as powerful and helpful as the original SLD1 forms, and perform the same function. This study calls into question not the substance of the liturgy, but an understanding and approach to it. Communion is not an old-fashioned rite that needs to be made more normal and accessible. Rather, the Church is composed of a thoroughly normal people in need of elevation to the divine, and the Sacrament of Communion is one means of grace through which God in Jesus Christ is calling the Church in.

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