# Reading non-Christian Scriptures in Christian Liturgy: A CTBI discussion paper reflecting on the experience of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow

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On 6th January 2017, St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Glasgow celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany. An invitation was extended to some local Muslims, with whom the Cathedral has a long-standing relationship, to read the Qur'anic account of the birth of Jesus; the invitation was accepted and the celebration went ahead. With the exception of the Qur'anic recitation, the service was typical: it involved the proclamation of the gospel, preaching from the Vice Provost, and the celebration of the Eucharist. The recited Qur'anic verses were agreed in advance to be Q19:16-33. The text was printed in the order of service and a young Muslim woman provided the recitation. The recitation, however, continued beyond Q19:33 to include verses traditionally understood to question the divinity of Jesus. When the video of this recitation was posted online, it caused a social media storm with people, firstly in the UK and then the USA, expressing condemnation (and sometimes vitriol) that this event had taken place. Some comments were recordable hate crimes and the police became involved for the safety of both the congregants and the cathedral staff. The focus of the protest was, as the Vice Provost explains, a basic objection

> to the inclusion of any reading from another faith in the context of Christian worship, and charged St Mary's Cathedral with being disrespectful, naïve and causing gross offence to Christians the world over.[1]

Not all responses were negative and St Mary's also received strong messages of support from both organisations and individuals. For example, the Bishop of Wolverhampton, the Rt Revd Clive Gregory, described the work of St Mary's as 'the best type of Christian inter faith engagement – a practically radical hospitality within a doctrinally generous orthodoxy.'[2] Interfaith Glasgow condemned the vitriol in the strongest possible terms whilst also acknowledging that '[t]here is certainly a legitimate theological debate to be had about whether it is appropriate for members of one faith tradition to contribute to worship of another faith.'[3] One individual comment was that 'St Mary's does not do syncretism, it does

[1] Vice Provost, Aide Memoire

[2] Vice Provost, Aide Memoire

[3] The statement is no longer available on the Interfaith Glasgow website, but we have confirmed by means of e-mail correspondence from 23rd January 2017 that the agreed text was as follows: St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow has a proud history of interfaith engagement and we have worked with them over the years to support their efforts to build bridges in Scotland's most religiously diverse city. It is unfortunate, then, that the Cathedral has experienced such a tide of criticism and abuse in the wake of its recent decision to invite a Muslim woman to recite a section of the Quran during the Cathedral's Epiphany service at the beginning of the month. There is certainly a legitimate theological debate to be had about whether it is appropriate for members of one faith tradition to contribute to worship by another faith. However at a time when intolerance and mistrust of the 'other' is rife, the degree of hostility Cathedral officials have experienced has far outstripped the bounds of respectful debate. The Board and staff of Interfaith Glasgow would, therefore, like to publicly express our support for the Very Rev Kelvin Holdsworth and the congregation of St Mary's at this difficult time.
We know them, have worked with them, and are united with them in a common desire to build friendships across faith communities. Given the Islamophobic content of some of the criticisms made, we would also like to reaffirm our solidarity with Muslim community in Glasgow and beyond. We are in no doubt that the interfaith

hospitality.'[4] The immediate fallout from this incident has seen the postponement of an invitation for a Muslim Sheikh to address the General Synod in 2017 and the then Primus, David Chillingworth, attempted to arrange a day consultation with members of the Faith and Order Board and Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths (CRPOF) to discuss the matter further. The Provost and Vice-Provost also noted a rise in attendance at the Cathedral during this period, which was an average of 21% higher for the equivalent Sundays than in 2016 and 50% higher for the Ash Wednesday Eucharist.

This was not the first time that a Christian Church has faced criticism for including Muslim religious practice within an ecclesial setting. Perhaps the most high profile recent example, prior to St Mary's, was the controversy surrounding St John's Church in Waterloo permitting Muslim prayer to take place inside the church in 2015. More specifically, within the Scottish context, there are at least three other examples that are worth noting. In 2016, an Islamic Centre was firebombed and destroyed in Bishopbriggs and the Springfield Cambridge Parish Church (Church of Scotland) offered the Muslim community on-going use of their meeting rooms for Friday prayers until their own Islamic Centre was restored. In 2013, St John's Episcopal Church in Aberdeen allowed Muslims to pray in the Church because their own mosque was too small and people were praying outside on the ground, often in bad weather. In 1991 during a service of repentance at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh for victims of the first Gulf War, the service was stopped after twenty minutes to allow Muslims to pray in the midst of a thousand Christian congregants: the Muslim call to prayer, the Adhan, was made from the Cathedral's pulpit.

Each incident received considerable debate, both respectable and vitriolic, from outwith and within their own communities - St Mary's is therefore simply the most recent example and one that received considerable media attention. The response to this incident raises a number of questions and a major challenge resides in locating the specific nexus of offense. Is the offense specifically aimed at Muslims, as part of wider Islamophobic trends, or does this incident represent a catalyst event for those who feel that 'traditional' Christian values are being compromised by too much multi-cultural inclusivism? Or is the issue offense at the inclusion of the texts of another faith within Christian worship – and specifically, the 'heart' of Christian worship, the Eucharist? The Provost of St Mary's himself contemplated the source of the outcry: 'is it because this is in a cathedral run by a gay man? Is it because the recitation was given by a young woman? Clearly those things are factors as they feature in some of the abuse.'[5] Either way, it appears that a boundary had been transgressed for many of the commenters: the difficulty lies in identifying it.

By including the Scripture of another religious tradition at the heart of Christian worship, this event went *beyond* some more established examples of what has been called 'inter-riting'.[6] This term can be used to refer to acts such as: mutual or unilateral attendance at another

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friendships many here have worked hard to build will endure well beyond the current storm.

[4] Kelvin Holdsworth, 'Keeping the Faith', from *What's in Kelvin's Head? The Weblog of Kelvin Holdsworth, Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow*, 15/01/2017, http://thurible.net/page/8/ [Last accessed 30th May 2017].

[5] Holdsworth, 'Keeping the Faith'.

[6] Marianne Moyaert introduces this term to describe shared ritual activity between different religious believers in Marianne Moyaert and J. Geldhof (eds), *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

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tradition's act of worship (that remains otherwise unaltered); multifaith celebrations in a secular civic context (which might include readings from different religious traditions); multi-faith gatherings where religious communities pray at the same time in the same place, but not together (such as was convened by Pope John Paul II in Assisi in 1986); or Scriptural Reasoning (which has readings from different traditions but is not properly 'liturgical'). That is why we see this as an example of *radical* liturgical hospitality.

In this paper we consider two aspects of the controversy. In the first section, we examine the nature and significance of interreligious ritual from both historical and theoretical perspectives, drawing on liturgical theology and ritual studies. In the second section, we explore the tension between reciprocity and hospitality that emerged in the controversy, drawing on studies in interreligious dialogue. In a concluding section we draw together these two avenues of enquiry to outline the challenges and opportunities of liturgical hospitality.

## The nature and significance of interreligious ritual

Before considering the contemporary British, and more broadly 'Western', context, it is important to situate our discussion in broader perspective. Whilst in the West generally, and specifically in the context of academic inquiry, the emphasis on ritual as a site of inter-religious encounter is perceived as something fairly new, two examples suffice to indicate that interreligious ritual participation might be considered a normal feature of religiously diverse societies. In both examples, however, we see that this takes place against the backdrop of a dominant theological discourse that seeks to preserve a fixed and boundaried religious identity.

The first example comes from early Christianity, in the context of what has been called the parting(s) of the ways between Christianity and Judaism. John Chrysostom's *Homilies Against the Jews* are well known as an early example of vitriolic anti-Judaism at best, anti-Semitism at worst. What is less well known, perhaps, is that it was the persistence of Christian-Jewish inter-riting that occasioned his venomous attacks on the Jewish community. In the first homily Chrysostom explains that he has changed his homiletic plans and is now going to preach against the Jews, because it has come to his attention that members of his Christian community plan on attending the forthcoming liturgical celebrations in the Jewish community that also thrived in 4th Century Antioch.[7] The lines between the Christian and Jewish communities were much less well drawn than Chrysostom would have liked: inter-riting, it seems, was the norm.

The second example comes from the contemporary Indian context.[8] Sathianathan Clarke tells of his experience as a priest in the Church of South India, setting out to visit one of the rural Dalit Christian communities for which he was responsible. Halfway to the village he met the headmaster of the mission school, who explained that the school was closed and was adamant

[7] Peter W. van der Horst, 'Jews and Christians in Antioch at the End of the Fourth Century'. In Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson (eds.), *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (London & NY: T&T Clark, 2000, 2004), p.228

[8] Sathianathan Clarke, 'Hindutva, Religious and Ethnocultural Minorities, and Indian-Christian Theology', *Harvard Theological Review* 95:2 (2002), 197-226, pp.209-210. Also available at: http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2449 [Accessed 21/6/17]

that it wasn't a good day to visit. He persisted, however, and discovered the local Christian community involved in celebrating a festival of the local Dalit goddess. The headteacher was clearly conflicted about this example of inter-riting and believed that the CSI priest would disapprove. Clarke notes, though, that 'the church's effort to estrange Christians from their Dalit religio-cultural roots and their Dalit Hindu neighbours had not been successful when it came to community practice.'[9] Clear boundaries between Christian and Hindu just did not work in this context: religious identities were fluid, this fluidity finding ritual expression.

In both these examples we see an ambiguous and conflicted attitude to inter-riting. On the one hand, it manifests as something quite natural at the level of everyday life in the contexts in which it takes place. On the other hand, it comes into conflict with more fixed and rigid accounts of Christian identity. Just such a conflict is apparent in the context of St Mary's Cathedral, and manifest in part as a debate over reciprocity that we discuss in the next section. There are different ways of thinking through these events and the appropriate responses: reflecting on the nature of religious identity, engaging the theology of religions debate and considering the nature and purpose of dialogue could all have their place. Our approach here, however, is to focus primarily on the nature and practice of liturgy and ritual.

We begin by considering the distinctiveness and significance of interreligious encounter that moves into the sphere of ritual. Evaluating 'cross-ritual participation', Walter Van Herck argues that current perceptions rest on enlightenment presuppositions about the nature of ritual itself.[10] This supposition gives priority to theory over practice and assumes that rituals are the manifest embodiment of belief and creeds. By contrast, Van Herck, while acknowledging that *some* practices do involve theory, argues for 'a second distinction between intelligent and traditional practices'.[11] He describes this distinction in the following terms:

> Building a bridge would be an example of intelligent practice. It would involve a theoretical phase followed by a practical phase [...] Traditional practices, on the other hand, have a totally different structure because they do not result from a prior intellectual investigation. Speaking your mother tongue for example is not the result of linguistic research or design.[12]

Van Herck quotes William Smith's 1889 critique that modernity is 'anachronistic' in approaching ancient religions through the prism of belief.[13] Rather, as Van Herck notes, '[m]ost ancient religions will not even have a "creed" or anything that resembles it. What comes closest to a theoretical component is myth'.[14] From this perspective, then, ritual precedes intellectual understanding. Jeannine Hill Fletcher similarly argues that interfaith has 'historically proceeded in a deductive fashion' in which the priority of belief, normally

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[9] Clarke, 'Hindutva', p.210

[10] Walter Van Herck, 'Enlightened Presuppositions of (Spiritually Motivated) Cross-Ritual Participation'. In Moyaert, M. and Geldhof, J. (eds), *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.62-73.

[11] Ibid., p.64.

[12] Ibid., p.64.

[13] Ibid., p.66.

[14] Ibid., p.66.

one's own, takes precedence.[15] She argues that ritual is more than deductive reasoning and that, when it comes to inter-riting, the uncertainty, wonder, and awe that participants sometimes claim to feel is 'theologically significant […] because too often our certainties erase the mystery of the divine'.[16] She further considers that

> inter-riting promises a significant alternative to inter-textuality insofar as the written word of comparison invites us in through the mind and the intellect, while inter-riting has us comport through our bodies. This bodily dimension brings us in in such a way that our senses precede our comprehension of the event.[17]

Both Van Herck and Fletcher provide important frameworks for theologically reflecting on the Qur'an reading at St Mary's. There is no doubt that belief preceded the invitation for a Muslim contribution, however, the recitation was also at the heart of the well-established liturgy of the Eucharist. This combination reflects Van Herck's typology of intellectual and traditional practice. Additionally, the congregation experienced Qur'anic recitation within the Eucharistic celebration and the Muslim participants experienced the Eucharistic celebration and contributed *tajweed*.[18] Both 'inter-riters' exposed the other to their traditional practice, which neither could fully understand. And, in doing so, both brought each 'in', as Fletcher aptly articulates, 'in such a way that… [their]…senses precede[d]… [their] …comprehension of the event'.[19] In this sense we might note that, although the criticism of the Qur'anic reading in Glasgow focused on the linguistic translated meaning of the recited text, in fact the significance of the event and the experience of participants may well have been more at the level of the kinaesthetic dimension of ritual than the cognitive level of comparative doctrine.

Moyaert observes a marked increase in the desire for shared ritual participation in the United States and Europe and this is perhaps a not unexpected development: '[t]he (r)evolution from monologue to dialogue seems to be continued in the domain of rituality.'[20] She considers inter-riting 'an important facet of taking dialogue to a deeper, more affective, and experiential level.'[21] Helpfully, Moyaert acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the different forms that ritual participation take depending on:

> (1) the context in which it occurs, (2) the intention that undergirds the sharing of ritual, (3) the nature of the ritual performed, and (4) the religious communities involved.[22]

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[15] Jeannine Hill Fletcher,., 'When Practice Precedes Theory: A Study of Interfaith Ritual', *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 20 (2017), 1-7, p.1.

[16] Ibid., p.4.

[17] Ibid., p.5.

[18] *Tajweed* refers to the recitation of the Qur'an in adherence with strict set of rules for pronunciation and elocution that is often considered to replicate the manner in which the Prophet Muhammad recited the Qur'an.

[19] Fletcher, 'When Practice Precedes Theory', p.5.

[20] Marianne Moyaert, 'Introduction: Exploring the Phenomenon of Interreligious Ritual Participation', in Moyaert, M. and Geldhof, J. (eds), *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.11-30, p.11.

[21] Ibid. Cf. 'Ritual sharing holds the promise of gaining access to the beating heart of another religion; it may touch people at a deep emotion level.' Ibid., p.13.

[22] Ibid., p.11.

More generally, she distinguishes between 'ritual sharing that is *responsive* and *outer-facing* and […] ritual participation that is *inner-facing* and follows the pattern of *extending* or *receiving hospitality*.'[23] Responsive and outer-facing ritual sharing entails traditions coming together for prayer, reflection, or celebration in response to shared challenges. Such examples could include a civic event to remember the victims of war/terrorist attacks, or an event to raise awareness about environmental challenges and respect for creation. By contrast, inner-facing ritual participation, which is arguably more applicable to the events at St Mary's, is characterised by Moyaert as follows:

> [A]n understanding that dialogical openness or, if you will, interreligious hospitality, cannot come to full fruition if one is not prepared to receive 'the other' in one's house of worship. A ritual framing of hospitality is thus not secondary to interreligious dialogue but shows precisely that, despite any real differences, including even disagreements and misunderstandings, a choice is being made for interreligious solidarity […] here we are speaking of ordinary rituals in which the 'guest' can participate to a certain degree.[24]

However, Moyaert is forthright about the challenges that such hospitality entails for communities, such as finding the right balance between two different sets of rules (one's own tradition and the tradition of 'the other'), and when the openness and desire to include from the host goes beyond the ability or willingness of the guest to participate – a risk she describes as constituting 'potentially violent inclusion.'[25]

This challenge raises a number of difficulties and leads us back to St Mary's and its inclusion of another religious tradition's text at the heart of Christian worship: the Eucharist. This is particularly the case for the more liturgically oriented forms of Christianity which consider the Eucharist to be where the Church is most fully and clearly the Church. It is, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, the 'summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.'[26] At one level, then, it is understandable that a reading denying the very incarnational theology that underpins the Eucharist should cause offence. Equally, though, it is understandable that Christians engaged in dialogue with local Muslims should want to share at the deepest level. To explore this tension further, we draw on liturgical theology and ritual studies to understand liturgy as a profoundly important locus of inter-religious learning.

Superficially, a case for the 'conservative' nature of liturgy and ritual is perhaps easier to make than a case for openness and change. Liturgical theologians, from the Orthodox Alexander Schmemann to the Baptist Christopher Ellis,[27] have clearly articulated the rich theological resources of worshipping traditions that have evolved and developed over time. They are worthy of respect as carrying the theological identity of the worshipping community.

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[23] Ibid., p.11-12.

[24] Ibid., p.12.

[25] Ibid., p.12.

[26] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10

[27] Alexander Schmemann *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003; Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition*, London: SCM, 2004.

Ritual studies scholars like Catherine Bell note that

> ritual activities generally tend to resist change and often do so more effectively than other forms of social custom. In fact, the ability of ritual to give the impression of being old and unchanging helps to protect it from alterations both frivolous and serious.[28]

Indeed, traditionalism is one of the key characteristics of ritual activity as she describes it.[29] But this is only one part of the story. Without ritual and liturgical change and development none of the rituals we encounter today would have existed. Bell devotes a whole chapter of one of her key texts on ritual to the subject of 'ritual change'.[30] This, then, is the other aspect of the tension, and thinking in both liturgical theology and ritual studies helps us understand the liturgical space as a space of exploration, learning and development. Using similar understandings of the nature of ritual to those articulated by Van Herck and Fletcher noted above, Theodore Jennings, in his discussion of 'ritual knowledge',[31] argues that the way theologians have tended to think about the relationship between knowledge and ritual is the wrong way round. Ritual does not express what we have come to know by other means; rather, it is through ritual that we come to know. This is what Jennings calls the 'generative mode' of ritual knowledge and it takes place over time. The 'pedagogical mode' of ritual knowledge describes the process by which what is learned in the generative mode is then passed on to future generations. It is in the latter mode that ritual becomes traditional, concerned with the preservation and handing down of inherited understandings. This is what is perceived as being under threat in the Qur'anic recitation. But the generative mode of ritual knowledge should not be neglected. For Christian communities in the West, interreligious encounter remains a relatively new phenomenon and the exploration of inter-faith relationships through worship is an opportunity for new understanding, for the development of ritual knowledge.

The possibility of learning and development is also recognised within liturgical theology. Aidan Kavanagh is equally counter-intuitive in his understanding of the relationship between liturgy and theology. Rather than liturgy expressing theology somehow formed elsewhere, theology is born in the encounter with God taking place in worship. His description of this process is quite graphic. He quotes Urban Holmes saying that 'liturgy leads regularly to the edge of chaos, and that from this regular flirt with doom comes a theology different from any other.'[32] This experience, he suggests, leads to deep change in the lives of participants which, in turn, affects subsequent liturgical acts; and observing the change is to 'discover where theology has passed'.[33] Liturgical change, for Kavanagh, is a gradual process over time; but it is not gentle, always relating back to the experience of a chaotic divine encounter. Liturgical growth 'is a function of adjustment to deep change caused in the assembly by its being brought regularly to the brink of chaos in the presence of the living God.'[34] Precisely what Kavanagh means by 'chaos' in this context is not entirely clear; even the briefest acquaintance

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[28] Catherine Bell *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, p.211
[29] Ibid., p.145
[30] Ibid., Chapter 5, pp. 210-252
[31] Theodore W. Jennings 'On Ritual Knowledge', *The Journal of Religion* 62.2, (1982), 111-127
[32] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1984), p.73
[33] Ibid., p.74.
[34] Ibid., p.74

with his *Elements of Rite*[35] makes it apparent that he does not favour chaotic liturgy. His meaning is somewhat elucidated by a subsequent comparison of liturgy to '"primitive" artefacts such as tribal masks, pre-Columbian statues, or aboriginal totems' in which he notes that their designation as primitive means that their manifest sophistication runs along tracks to which we have no access, that we have no intelligibility structures sufficiently developed' to make sense of them. He concludes in typically provocative fashion:

> That it never crosses our minds that a liturgy or an icon should cause us to shiver only shows how we have allowed ourselves to tame the Lion of Judah and put him into a suburban zoo to entertain children.[36]

Whatever Kavanagh himself might make of a Qur'anic reading in a Christian Eucharist, it certainly challenges any attempt to cage and domesticate the divine. It is important to recognise that for both Jennings and Kavanagh, ritual change is something that happens gradually and incrementally over long periods of time and we are not suggesting that they would in any way encourage a liturgical free-for-all in which anything goes. What we are suggesting, though, is that liturgy is not simply a rigid medium for the purveying of pre-formed orthodoxies; the ritual context of liturgical celebration is one in which new orthodoxies might gradually be discovered. If one of the challenges of the church in our day is learning to live creatively with religious diversity, then it is to be expected and encouraged that some of that learning should take place in the context of worship. However desirable this may be, the tension we have described ensures that such explorations will prove controversial, and it is to the controversy surrounding the Epiphany Eucharist in Glasgow that we now return.

## Inter-riting in Glasgow – between reciprocity and hospitality

In the controversy following the Qur'anic recitation in Glasgow, reciprocity emerged as a theme in the debate. It was introduced by Gavin Ashenden who, in a high profile intervention, resigned his role as a Queen's Chaplain in order to be free to protest what had taken place. In a letter to *The Times* he wrote:

> The justification offered that it engages some kind of reciprocity founders on the understandable refusal of Islamic communities to read passages from the Gospel in Muslim prayers announcing the Lordship of Christ. It never happens. Quite apart from the wide distress (some would say blasphemy) caused by denigrating Jesus in Christian worship, apologies may be due to the Christians suffering dreadful persecution at the hands of Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere.[37]

It is not clear where Ashenden finds this reference to reciprocity in the Cathedral's justification for the event. Kelvin Holdsworth does see it in the context of dialogue in which

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[35] Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982)

[36] Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, p.94

[37] The text can be found here: https://ashenden.org/2017/01/17/the-koran-in-the-cathedral-the-times-letters-page/ [Accessed 02/06/17]; the point is repeated in a subsequent blog post: https://www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/Allowing-the-Koran-to-be-read-in-church-is-wrong.-It-s-why-I-ve-resigned-as-Chaplain-to-the-Queen

the Christian understanding of Christ is also proclaimed clearly in the same Cathedral service.[38] It is part of an interfaith encounter, and seen as an example of Christian hospitality. Ashenden's reference to reciprocity may be a reference to Holdsworth's intervention in the controversy centred on St John's Waterloo in 2015. He recounts his own earlier decision to offer use of St Mary's to a local mosque needing temporary accommodation for Friday Prayers (an offer not taken up for logistical reasons). On that occasion, his blog post again emphasises hospitality: 'Every Christian I spoke to about this wanted it to go ahead as part of the basic hospitality that we think is part of our faith.'[39] But it also refers implicitly to reciprocity in historical perspective: 'Every Muslim I spoke to at the time spoke to me about precedents from history when Christians had been offered sanctuary in mosques and protection from Muslim communities whilst they worshipped there.'[40]

Whilst it is possible to contest Ashenden's denial of reciprocity in Muslim-Christian relations by providing examples of Christians speaking about their understanding of incarnation and Trinity at the request of Muslims, the question that concerns us here is the value of 'reciprocity' as a way of thinking about inter-faith relations in this and other contexts.[41] Specifically, how does it relate to a vision of Christian hospitality which is also a prominent feature of the debate? One problem with reciprocity is that it is used in very different ways to mean quite different things, not least by theologians. John Milbank, for example, uses it in two *Modern Theology* articles to describe the embodied relationality of medieval Christendom that is lost in modernity, and to which we should seek to return.[42] Marianne Moyaert uses the term primarily to describe the nature of the inter-faith relationship believed to be engendered by a pluralist theology of religions, of which she is critical.[43] Moyaert makes the helpful distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical reciprocity but primarily talks about the former as a feature of the pluralist understanding of inter-religious hospitality. Amos Yong, on the other hand, uses the term in his discussion of Derrida, in which reciprocity is associated with conditional hospitality 'within an economy of exchange, scarcity, and reciprocity'.[44]

In the specific context of Muslim-Christian relations it is illuminating to note an earlier use of the language of reciprocity. In 1996, the Islam in Europe Committee, jointly organized by the (Protestant) *Conference of European Churches* and (Roman Catholic) *Consilium Conferentiarum Episcopalium Europae* published a document titled *Christian/Muslim Reciprocity: Considerations for the European Churches*.[45] It begins with a definition of reciprocity as 'a

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[38] Holdsworth, 'Keeping the Faith'

[39] Kelvin Holdsworth, 'Welcoming Muslims into Church', *What's in Kelvin's Head? The Weblog of Kelvin Holdsworth, Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow.* http://thurible.net/2015/03/14/welcoming-muslims-into-church/ [Accessed 02/06/17]

[40] Holdsworth, 'Welcoming Muslims'

[41] Indeed, the Vice-Provost of St Mary's has himself explained Christian belief in the incarnation and Trinity to a Muslim congregation at a local mosque at their invitation.

[42] John Milbank 'The Soul of Reciprocity Part One: Reciprocity Refused', *Modern Theology* 17.3, (2001), 335-391 and 'The Soul of Reciprocity Part Two: Reciprocity Granted', *Modern Theology* 17.4, (2001), 485-507

[43] Marianne Moyaert *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality* (Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2011), pp.54, 67, 68, 75, 78, 82, 84 & 145.

[44] Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbour*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), p.140

[45] This and the subsequent documents were originally published in *Encounters: Journal of Intercultural Perspectives* 2:1 (70-75), 2:2 (199-206; both 1996) and 3:1 (1997). They were subsequently published together

relationship based on mutual respect and assistance'[46] and repudiates any interpretation which suggests that if Muslims treat Christians badly, Christians are no longer required to treat Muslims well. The document acknowledges the complexities involved in describing countries as 'Christian' and 'Muslim'. Despite these two qualifications, though, the rest of the document basically highlights the disparity of experience between Muslims in the (Christian) West and Christians in the Muslim world, concluding with an 'initiative of the Spirit':

> Christians are asking Muslims to look again at their own foundation documents to see how they should be understood in a world very different from seventh-century Arabia. […] We make an initiative of the Spirit to Muslims, asking for a reciprocity of heart and mind which will enable us to live together in our one world under God with a common sense of justice and a mutual care for each other's integrity as believers.[47]

Despite the theological language that features in this invitation, there is no theological foundation given for the central concept of reciprocity; and it takes a Muslim response to point this out. Khurran Murad, a former Director General of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, responded to the document in the subsequent edition of *Encounter*. He agrees there is a need to find new ways 'to live together in our one world under God' (a reference to the quotation above), but he does not believe that 'reciprocity' opens up those new ways. He calls it 'a poor, highly ambiguous, fragile and morally unsatisfactory basis for enduring good relations.'[48] It too easily succumbs to the negative interpretations that the original document rightly repudiates; but, more importantly, both Christian and Islamic scriptures enshrine a more radical vision of doing good to the other whether or not it be returned: 'Good and evil can never be equal, so remove evil by doing what is good' (Qur'an 41:34).[49] In urging such a vision as a basis for our relationships Murad observes that the only model of reciprocity the Committee is able to provide is the example of secular states. The rest of his response consists primarily of highlighting some particular problems with reciprocity and addressing particular issues such as conversion. In 1997 the *Islam in Europe Committee* issued a new document called *Beyond Reciprocity Towards Reconciliation - To live with Muslims in Justice, Peace and Love: Some Reflections for Christians*. Whilst they reaffirm what they were trying to convey with 'reciprocity' in the original document they accept the many problems with the concept and instead offer a brief affirmation of the more theologically freighted concept of reconciliation.[50]

What can we conclude from this account? Whilst there are those who use the word in a positive way (Milbank, and to a certain extent Moyaert), it is a concept fraught with problems and ultimately best avoided, particularly in the context of Christian-Muslim encounter. There are far more promising approaches to thinking about this crucial relationship. Picking up the turn to reconciliation in the exchange just discussed, we might draw upon Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* that sets out a vision for overcoming alienation and exclusion that is

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in *Reciprocity and Beyond: A Muslim Response to the European Churches' Document on Islam* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 1997). All references are to this collected edition.

[46] *Reciprocity and Beyond*, p.4

[47] Ibid., p.9

[48] Ibid. p.11

[49] Ibid., p.12

[50] Ibid., p.23-34

deeply rooted in Christian theology and arises from Volf's own experience in situations of conflict. The cross, for Volf, is the ultimate symbol of God's unilateral openness to embrace sinful humanity. Yet, in speaking powerfully of God's refusal 'to be God without humanity',[51] this act of radical hospitality towards the alienated other contains within it the expectation of an asymmetrical reciprocity: God is not indifferent to human response. This is explored in a four act drama of embrace - opening the arms, waiting, embracing, and opening again - indicating that even the radical hospitality of divine embrace cannot be entirely one-sided.

Although we have used the language of 'hospitality' in describing Volf's divine embrace as a model for Christian engagement across boundaries of otherness, it is not a terminology he uses himself. Several theologians have, however, used this as a way of thinking about inter-religious relations,[52] and it is central to the work of Catholic theologian Marianne Moyaert and Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong. Moyaert makes a distinction between 'hermeneutical openness and openness as appreciation',[53] the former concerning the ability to understand another religious tradition, the latter a willingness to discern value in the religious other.[54] The failure of positions within the threefold paradigm (exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism) to provide a basis for the latter is her starting point for developing a theology of inter-religious hospitality in dialogue with Paul Ricoeur and rooted in biblical tradition: 'Hospitality is a biblical virtue. It means welcoming the stranger who comes from elsewhere, i.e. making room for the stranger in one's own place.'[55] A certain understanding of reciprocity is not totally absent in Moyaert's discussion when she notes that the injunction to welcome the stranger is partly grounded in the appeal to Israel's experience as strangers.[56] But the needs of the religious other are not necessarily the basic, physical human needs to which Christian hospitality responds unambiguously; instead, 'the religious other asks to be heard and understood'.[57] She also notes the possibility that 'it is precisely where people expect it the least that God will reveal himself.'[58] Her vision of hermeneutical openness as a form of Christian hospitality steers a careful path between remaining rooted in Christian identity and openness to the religious other, but it is a radical understanding of hospitality that she develops.

Yong develops a pneumatological theology of hospitality in dialogue with Derrida but, again, rooted in biblical interpretation. He argues that 'because Christian hospitality proceeds from the magnanimous hospitality of God, it is founded on the incarnational and Pentecostal logic of abundance rather than that of human economies of exchange and of scarcity.'[59] The starting point for Yong's constructive proposal is Luke-Acts, but his ultimate aim is to

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[51] Miroslav Volf *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p.126

[52] See, for example, Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001)

[53] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, p.47

[54] Ibid., p.48. In the first part of the book, Moyaert's concern is with the soteriologically focused positions in the threefold paradigm and the openness they might encourage.

[55] Ibid., p.262

[56] Ibid., p.263-4

[57] Ibid., p.265

[58] Ibid., p.265

[59] Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*, p.118

articulate 'a Trinitarian theology of many hospitable practices'.[60] In Luke, a hospitable God is manifested in Jesus, with the early church extending this hospitality in the power of the Spirit. One of the crucial points to note from Yong's discussion is how 'the roles of guests and hosts are fluid, continuously reversing.'[61] The Trinitarian shape of hospitality is such that it could never be conceived as just one thing. Whereas the differing conceptions of reciprocity were problematic, diverse practices of hospitality are a strength of this as a way of thinking about dialogue.[62] A key feature of Yong's understanding of hospitality is his concern with actual practices of faith. His interpretation of the 'many tongues' of the Pentecostal outpouring is as an affirmation of the need for different practices in diverse global contexts.[63] Again, this speaks against the notion of reciprocity: it is not just that relationships are asymmetrical, but that they are multiple and complex. What is right in one situation will not be right in another. As with the earlier discussion of inter-riting, then, our analysis here certainly points towards the rich potential of (radical) liturgical hospitality, but is unable to provide definitive answers to particular questions which have to be contextually negotiated. Our concluding section considers a framework for such negotiations.

## Liturgical hospitality – challenge and opportunity

If, as we have argued, hospitality is a better way of thinking theologically about the Qur'anic reading in Glasgow than reciprocity, then, in the light of the earlier discussion of inter-riting, what particular issues attach to the question not just of liturgical hospitality in general, but to this specific example?

In relation to the hospitality / reciprocity debate we note that hospitality should not be conceived as unilateral benevolent paternalism: it involves mutuality because there can be no host without a guest. In this context it should be noted that there are significant "demands" made on Muslims attending a Christian Eucharist in that simply being present, at what was in all other respects a traditional celebration, means encountering doctrinal beliefs about Jesus that run counter to traditional Muslim understanding. Precisely because it is in the context of liturgy and ritual that religious beliefs and identities are most powerfully expressed, this is a context *par excellence* of hospitality towards the other, an act of hospitality that is predicated not on sameness but on difference, and one that can be challenging for both parties. Even so, liturgical hospitality should not be dependent on reciprocity, and Christian communities need to think through their own responses to this question on their own theological terms.

In this paper we have argued that insight from liturgical theology, ritual studies and interreligious dialogue can help to explain both the appropriateness of the exercise in liturgical hospitality at St Mary's and aspects of the controversy that ensued. On the one hand, religious identities and rituals are not rigid and unchanging and this is as true in Christianity as it is in the wider sphere of religious life and practice. As the world we inhabit changes, so aspects of Christian worship evolve to reflect changes in that world. As our response to God

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[60] Ibid., p.101

[61] Ibid., p.105

[62] Other sources for continuing the discussion of hospitality include: George Newlands and Allen Smith, *Hospitable God: The Transformative Dream* (Ashgate, 2010) and Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004)

[63] Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*, p127

and God's revelation in Jesus Christ develops contextually, so liturgical practice responds. It is entirely natural, then, that a good relationship between Christian and Muslim communities in a particular locale should find liturgical expression. Equally, it is part of the nature of liturgy and ritual to be traditional in that they reflect developed understandings of religious and wider cultural identities forged over time and are a means of expressing and communicating those identities and associated theological convictions. It is not surprising, then, that what happens in liturgical events can prove controversial, especially when going to the heart of the theological convictions being celebrated.

There is something distinctive about interreligious encounter in the context of ritual which makes it both important and, potentially, provocative. On the one hand it can be viewed as the natural extension and evolution of interreligious theological dialogue, something following naturally on other forms of engagement. Given the liminal and theologically freighted nature of the worship context, there may be something particularly profound and distinctive about such occasions. But the liturgical setting is also one in which religious identity is experienced and encountered more intensely and this might be a context in which a conflictual politics of identity flares up. Even apart from the theological questions, part of the significance of religious ritual is the sense of entering into something bigger than the individual participant, a liturgical tradition that has been formed and shaped over time.

Furthermore, whilst all liturgy is intrinsically public, this is especially so when performed in a cathedral. A local experiment in liturgical hospitality thus becomes a public theological statement that is capable of national and international debate. This is not for a second to condone or excuse the uninformed and vitriolic attacks directed at St Mary's, but to recognise a legitimate focus for controversy. Ultimately, though, our assessment of this event is that it is not a public liturgical statement of *indifference* to traditional incarnational theology, but rather, an *affirmation* of the radical hospitality and grace that resides at the core of incarnational theology.

Church leaders have a particularly difficult task in this context. We have seen examples of how inter-riting at local level can be at odds with a dominant theological discourse and this perspective should warn church leaders to avoid perpetuating a division been grass roots liturgical exploration of inter-religious friendships and institutional preservation of an apparently fixed orthodox identity on the other. They are charged with a responsibility both for the Christian faith as inherited and for the ongoing development of that received tradition. The nature of their role may sometimes incline them more towards the preservation horn of this dilemma and they may need to find more creative ways to value and celebrate the more open and exploratory dimensions of liturgical and theological hospitality. However, in the context of politicised debates about Christian identity, such experimentation will inevitably prove controversial. In this context of intra-religious conflict, and with a view to maintaining individual church unity, it is worth noting that the call to hospitality we have explored also extends to the intra-denominational discourse on the topic.

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