

Ritual Repetition

Creating Safe Havens for Sufferers or Boring Experiences?

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1. Introduction

According to Catherine Pickstock, the ritual world creates stability in the midst of the “chaotic quotidian” because it is stylized, repetitious, and performative.¹ Liturgy creates another world – Pickstock calls this a ‘polis’ – to which the worshipper can flee, away from the chaotic quotidian. This seems particularly important in times of distress, as these times are often chaotic. Research shows that for suffering people the repetitive character of liturgy is one of the reasons why liturgy can be a safe haven for them.² In this article we focus on this repetitive character of liturgy.

The universal need for safety is testified to from a range of perspectives. For example, psychologists of religion have tested attachment theory in relation to the view of God as a safe haven or a secure base.³ Such research sheds light on people’s need for security and the positive effects a stable spirituality has on a number of life issues. Research on the level of integration of faith and learning in faith-based schools shows that integration only happens if teachers are able to create a safe environment.⁴ More to the point of this article, scholars in ritual studies suggest that the prefixed character of liturgy and ritual helps people to gain a sense of security.⁵ Moreover, liturgical scholars Debra and Ron Rienstra

¹ C. PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’, in P. BRADSHAW & B. SPINKS (eds.): *Liturgy in Dialogue* (London 1993) 116, 123 ff.

² A.L. VAN OMMEN. *Suffering in worship: Anglican liturgy in relation to stories of suffering people* (London) [forthcoming].

³ R. BECK: ‘God as a secure base: attachment to God and theological exploration’, in *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 34/2 (2006) 125-32; K.R. BYRD & A. BOE: ‘The correspondence between attachment dimensions and prayer in college students’, in *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11/1 (2001) 9-24; P.J. JANKOWSKI & S.J. SANDAGE: ‘Attachment to God and humility: indirect effect and conditional effects models’, in *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 42/1 (2014) 70-82.

⁴ M. SHERR, G. HUFF & M. CURRAN: ‘Student perceptions of salient indicators of integration of faith and learning (IFL): the Christian vocation model’, in *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 16/1 (2007) 15-33.

⁵ G. LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance: critical reflections on the place, form and identity of Christian ritual in our culture* (Leuven / Dudley 2005) 54-73; P. POST: ‘Ritualiteit: begrippen en dimensies’, in M. BARNARD and P. POST (eds.): *Ritueel bestek: antropologische kernwoorden van de liturgie* (Zoetermeer 2001) 33-41.

point to the need for repetition in liturgy and mention that repetition gives a “sense of comfort and security.”⁶

However, this way of experiencing and looking at ritual contrasts with the experience of repetitious liturgy as “boring and irrelevant.”⁷ In their book about ritual and narrative, Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley suggest that such an experience of the liturgy is caused by a disconnection between the liturgical performance and the stories of the participants, that is to say their daily lives.⁸ This view is similar to that of ritual scholar Gerard Lukken, who pleads for an ‘inductive liturgy’ (we will return to this term later) which starts with the “small stories” of the participants.⁹

The present article analyses the tension between these two views on liturgy. It contributes to the discussion by reviewing reasons for the two contrasting types of experience as put forward by Pickstock on the one hand, and by Anderson and Foley, and Lukken on the other hand. Is the consequence of repetition boredom or safety? It is important in a discussion like this not to remain at a level divorced from reality, but to listen carefully to those people who have called the liturgy a safe haven when their lives were falling apart. Therefore, empirical input will be given on the basis of eight interviews that were part of a larger research project that asked whether and how liturgy addresses, and connects to, people who suffer from major negative life experiences – in other words, how liturgy addresses and connects to suffering. The respondents all came from an Anglican background (Church of England) or were attending Anglican churches and were highly appreciative of it. The respondents all lived in the diocese in Europe, more particularly, in the archdeaconry of North-West Europe,¹⁰ although some stories happened at other places. The participants in the research were all participants in worship who have had a major negative experience in life. The four churches of the research sample reflected a diversity of worship styles.

This article addresses the tension between the liturgy as another world and the need to address the fragmented stories of the participants in worship from both a ritual/liturgical-theological and an empirical point of view. The article argues that, by attending to the stories of people in relation to the content of the litur-

⁶ D. RIENSTRA & R. RIENSTRA: *Worship words: discipling language for faithful ministry* (Grand Rapids 2009) 79.

⁷ H. ANDERSON & E. FOLEY: *Mighty stories, dangerous rituals: weaving together the human and divine* (San Francisco 1998) 42; compare D.A. HOGUE: *Remembering the future, imagining the past: story, ritual, and the human brain* (Eugene, OR 2003) 116; J.M. KEMPER & S.P. WALTER: ‘Eucharistic prayer’, in *Liturgical Ministry* 4 (1995) 120-26; B.T. MORRILL: *Divine worship and human healing: liturgical theology at the margins of life and death* (Collegetown 2009) 102-109; RIENSTRA & RIENSTRA: *Worship words* 77.

⁸ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty Stories* 149 ff.; compare MORRILL: *Divine worship and human healing* 107-108.

⁹ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 333 ff.

¹⁰ Geographically this corresponds to the Benelux.

gy, the two seemingly contrasting views on liturgy do not have to be mutually exclusive. In particular, the concept of inductive liturgy (Lukken) might help in bridging the two ways of experience.

The first sections of this article present the views of Pickstock, Anderson and Foley, and Lukken respectively. Based on these views, we will approach the analysis of the interviews with two specific questions in mind. By paying close attention to the stories of suffering people, we will see how their experiences relate to the views of the above-named authors. Before moving to the conclusion, the different points of view will be related to each other and discussed.

2. Pickstock's sacred polis in the chaotic quotidian

In a chaotic world, Catherine Pickstock views ritual as a sacred polis.¹¹ In 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis', she states that liturgy's "rituals are a declaration against indeterminacy."¹² In this article she shows how (ritual) language is important in providing security in an unstable world. The language used in the sacred polis is very different from the language used in the 'chaotic quotidian'. Pickstock contrasts these two languages and shows how liturgical language is a means to "reaffirm creation" over against "the vast and undefined space of the chaotic quotidian."¹³ Pickstock values the language of the quotidian very negatively in comparison to liturgical language and even concludes that quotidian language is not able to touch reality.¹⁴

How is ritual language different from language in the chaotic quotidian, and how can it reclaim creation and order in the midst of a chaotic world? First of all, it should be noted that religion often uses language away from the colloquial, sometimes even by using a foreign language altogether (such as Latin in the Roman Mass). Secondly, liturgy happens in a space and time which is marked-off and it follows a predetermined and formalized order.¹⁵ Apart from that, liturgical language itself, and all ritual language for that matter, includes three specific features: it is stylized, it is performed, and it is repetitious.¹⁶ These "are

¹¹ Pickstock seems to borrow her metaphor from reading and discussing Plato's work. She uses the metaphor throughout her *After writing*, in which some of the themes of the article we discuss here recur. See C. PICKSTOCK: *After writing: on the liturgical consummation of philosophy* (= Challenges in Contemporary Theology) (Oxford 1998).

¹² PICKSTOCK: 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis' 115.

¹³ PICKSTOCK: 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis' 114.

¹⁴ PICKSTOCK: 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis' 123.

¹⁵ PICKSTOCK: 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis' 123-124.

¹⁶ It is illuminating to read another article by Pickstock, titled 'The Confession,' in conjunction with the article we discuss here. Whereas the latter is quite technical and does not provide many examples (which would have been helpful), in 'The Confession' Pickstock applies some of the literary features in her comparison of the confession in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* and in the 1980 *Alternative Service Book*. She complains

three ways in which the language of the sacred polis achieves its renewal of creation, offering temporary perfection in the midst of chaos.”¹⁷ We will briefly discuss these three features.

First, stylization points to the predetermined character of the liturgy, including the use of particular language. The liturgy is not the place for individual, uncontrolled catharsis of emotions. The intentions and feelings of individuals are subordinate to the “common telos of the polis.”¹⁸ The priority of the communal renders the liturgical polis stable. Moreover, the “message of the liturgy is regarded as immutable.”¹⁹ It is handed down from one enactment to the following, from one generation to the following, from one era to the next, being virtually unchanged.

Second, the liturgy is performed. The use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ help to form the community. By uttering them, community is created, and draws the participants into it. “The common teleological beliefs and the closed arena ratified by the attendance of the participants and defined by their speech acts enable the sacred polis to achieve a cohesive certainty unknown in the vast and undefined space of the quotidian.”²⁰

The third feature of liturgical language is repetition. This might sound strange, since Pickstock, in her discussion of repetition in the quotidian mode (in which repetition is also characteristic), is very negative about that feature. Yet there is a difference between the two modes. In quotidian language difference is to be obscured, but in liturgical language it is celebrated. Repetition includes recursive structures of the liturgy. One aspect of repetition is remembrance. This is not just a recollection of the past, it is also a creative moment. The past is made present. “The event is not reproduced as a memory but as itself, an event.”²¹ One is reminded of the Eucharist here. But not only does the memory/event make the past present, it also prefigures the future.²² By hypotactic²³ repetition the present moment, with all its chaos and confusion, is taken up into a per-

that liturgical revisions do not take into account the specific features of liturgical language which sets such language apart for the ritual. C. PICKSTOCK: ‘The confession’, in *Theology* 99/793 (1997) 25-35.

¹⁷ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 124.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 125.

²⁰ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 127.

²¹ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 134.

²² Compare D.N. POWER: *The Eucharistic mystery: revitalizing the tradition* (New York 1992) 304 ff.; HOGUE: *Remembering* 135.

²³ ‘Hypotactic’ and ‘paratactic’ are grammatical terms that both have to do with repetition. Hypotactic refers to “elements embedded in a hierarchy of prototypic, figural relations on a vertical plane,” making use of coordinated or subordinated clauses, whereas paratactic refers to “successively juxtaposed independent elements on a linear plane,” with no use of conjunctions and therefore the clauses are not coordinated or subordinated. PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 132.

spective which includes past and future, “as a fulfilment of the past and as an eschatological invocation which provokes its accomplishment.”²⁴ Whereas both quotidian and liturgical language seek to “harness the present,” liturgical language does not do so “by annihilating the past, but rather by vivifying it, and by setting the present in the context of eternity.”²⁵ Here Pickstock reaches an answer to the chaotic quotidian:

The cumulative effect of such recursive present moments is to suspend the ravages of mundane time and to establish a vertical plane where each event points simultaneously behind and in front of itself, filling each moment of history with meaning and purpose.²⁶

Thus, in this sacred hour of the liturgy, the chaos of life at the moment is transformed and set into the perspective of eternity.

3. Inductive and adequate liturgy: Lukken, and Anderson and Foley

Having reviewed Pickstock’s ideas about the language in the sacred polis, we now turn to the (seemingly) contrasting views of Anderson and Foley, and of Lukken.

3.1. Anderson and Foley

Whereas Pickstock endorses the specific language of ritual, including repetition, Anderson and Foley seem to hold a contrary position. According to these latter authors, the problem with many ritual or liturgical celebrations is that they tell the divine story without connecting it to the human stories of the participants. Often the entertainment culture is referred to as the main reason for the lack of connection. Yet that is not the only reason according to Anderson and Foley, and shaping the worship services in an entertainment format, as some churches do, is not without problems and is not the only answer to the problem. Anderson and Foley suggest that the root problem is different. “It may be that a basic difficulty with Sunday Eucharist is not that it is poor theatre but that it is poor human storytelling and inadequate divine storytelling.”²⁷

The authors continue with unpacking the idea that in Jesus, God has come into the human story, he has become part of the everyday, the quotidian. This is seen in the many gospel stories in which Jesus deals with ordinary people, often

²⁴ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 135.

²⁵ PICKSTOCK: ‘Liturgy and language: the sacred polis’ 136.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 152.

those at the margins of the society – when he breaks bread, shares a meal, listens to the stories of the people. Sharing the lives of ordinary people, Jesus becomes God’s revelation in their lives. Anderson and Foley refer to Karl Rahner’s concept of ‘liturgy of the world,’ which means the “continuous self-communication of God through all of human history.”²⁸ Grace is not only given in holy sacraments or church services, but it is outpoured in all parts of life. This becomes clear in Jesus’ life, in which stories and rituals become one, and in how he deals with people. Anderson and Foley note that

the human story is primary in this ministry in that it is the first order of business at the table. The human story is heard first; only then is the divine narrative invoked. So was it at the beginning, and so it must be now if the Lord’s Supper is to be the sustaining ritual that the Christian tradition reveals it to be.²⁹

Thus, in connecting the stories of God and people, Jesus did not preach some generic divine story, but first listened to the particularities of the stories of the people.

When the human story is not carefully attended to, weekly liturgical meetings run the risk of leaning too heavily on the mythic aspect of the liturgy: everything will be all right, if not now, then certainly at some point in the future.³⁰

Espousing the everyday as potentially sacramental challenges us to admit and correct the mythic tendencies of Sunday worship... [M]ythical worship without the balancing dimensions of parable is dangerous. It could strand us in a religious reality where we flounder hopelessly without a shared understanding of the world in which we live. For that reason, the myth of Sunday requires the parable of Monday; the proclamation of the divine story requires its integration with real human stories; and the public display of Sunday services demands attention to the cares of everyday life if it is to be a transforming ritual moment.³¹

Moreover, Anderson and Foley stress the importance of what they call ‘authentic inclusivity’, which means that in (Christian) rituals the stories of all people are heard.³² They suggest three changes in attitude in order to achieve this goal. Firstly, leaders of worship need to “admit and embrace” the liturgy of the

²⁸ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 158.

²⁹ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 159.

³⁰ Anderson and Foley base their understanding of ‘myth’ and ‘parable’ upon John Dominic Crossan’s *The dark interval*. Myth, in Anderson and Foley’s book, refers to the possibility of reconciling contrast and paradox (XI). Parable is about contradiction. Throughout the book the authors contend that both myth and parable are needed in ritual and storytelling (compare J.D. CROSSAN: *The dark interval: towards a theology of story* (Farmington 1994)).

³¹ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 161.

³² ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 162.

world.³³ The divine-human encounter can happen anywhere at any time, and is not confined to the worship gathering. Secondly, the worship gathering needs to be a place where the official public liturgy and the liturgy of the world meet. That means that people are not objects of worship, but subjects. Thirdly, divine revelation does not only come in rituals that we “instinctively employ,” for example marriage or death, but in daily life: “in the bathing rituals between mother and child, the sexual intimacy of marital partners, and in the ordinary meals that punctuate our existence.”³⁴ Anderson and Foley list several instances in the liturgy where the divine and human stories may intersect: music, prayers of the people, hymns, architecture, and ritual. The sermon has the most potential.³⁵

In the previous paragraph we saw that Catherine Pickstock sets up a sharp distinction between the (language of the) ‘chaotic quotidian’ and the (language of the) ‘sacred polis.’ In the chaos of daily life, we need ritual to diminish the effects of the turmoil of this life. Moreover, Pickstock is very negative about the features of language in, what she calls, the chaotic quotidian, thereby again stressing the distinction between the two different worlds of daily life and liturgy. Anderson and Foley, however, seem to make a contrary movement. Stylization, performance, and repetition, the features of language in the liturgy, may well serve to tell an outstanding divine story, but such a liturgical performance is in danger of “poor human storytelling.”³⁶ What is needed in weekly worship services is the connection with the chaotic quotidian, that is, with the peculiarities of the chaotic stories of the participants. Through the liturgy of the world, God disperses divine grace into and through these chaotic stories.

3.2. Lukken

Gerard Lukken’s ideas are similar to those of Anderson and Foley. For example, Lukken’s discussion of the relation between rite and myth is quite similar to Anderson and Foley’s notions of ritual and story.³⁷ But even more important for the present discussion, is that Lukken devotes a whole chapter to the importance of an ‘inductive and adequate liturgy,’ starting with “the importance of small things and small stories.”³⁸

Lukken does not, as Anderson and Foley do, start with the problem of declining numbers in church attendance (although he does discuss this problem in relation to ‘adequate liturgy’ later in the chapter), but with the search for meaning and the failure of so-called grand narratives. The diminishing of grand narratives does not mean that narrative has disappeared altogether.

³³ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 162.

³⁴ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 163.

³⁵ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 163-164.

³⁶ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 152.

³⁷ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 51 ff.

³⁸ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 333-358.

Quite on the contrary: when the great stories, in their arrogance, dominated everything, countless little stories could not be heard. But the millions of small stories that form the fabric of everyday life now have their chance... They are small stories, generally open-ended, a constant search for meaning, repeated over and over again. The search for meaning always begins with the here and now, in ordinary life, with love and pain.³⁹

If liturgy wants to connect to these ordinary life stories, it needs to start with them.

Taking the small things and small stories as starting point of the liturgy results in what Lukken calls 'inductive liturgy.' This contrasts with 'deductive liturgy.' A deductive liturgy is a generic liturgy, suitable for every instance in a certain framework. Lukken gives the example of the Latin funeral service that was beautiful and powerful, and that could be used for every funeral service. Transcendence, in deductive liturgies, comes from above; it is "a sort of trans-*de*-scendence."⁴⁰ Inductive liturgy, on the other hand, starts with the here and now, the particular, and then moves to the general. A funeral liturgy in this mode

begins where people are, and not from the other side. It begins with *these* people, who are confronted with *this* death... From the particular [the pastor] moves to the general, from here to the other side. The transcendence is gradually discovered and revealed, as it were, from the here and now.⁴¹

The movement of transcendence in this mode is bottom-up, one of 'trans-*a*-scendence.' It is important to note for our discussion that Lukken immediately incorporates the element of repetition in his views on inductive liturgy. Even when liturgy starts with the here and now, it repeats what it has done before. The difference with repetition in the deductive mode is that when inductive liturgy repeats, it does so in fresh and renewed ways. It "is less literal, it happens in a freer and more creative manner."⁴² Patterns and structures of liturgy may remain the same, but inductive liturgy has a different starting place, i.e. the small stories of the participants in worship.

4. Chaos in life and the safety of the liturgy

How do the experiences of participants in worship relate to the views of the authors discussed above? We will now listen to some voices from participants in liturgy who suffered in their lives. Because several of them referred to both

³⁹ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 335-336.

⁴⁰ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 338.

⁴¹ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 338-339.

⁴² LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 339.

the repetitive nature of the liturgy and to the safety of the liturgy, it is relevant to listen to these voices. First of all, we will briefly introduce the method of the interviews and then we will summarize two stories. After that, we will draw conclusions pertaining to the topic of the present article.

4.1. The interviews

Based on the discussion above, we will use the following two questions to examine the stories concerned:

- 1) When the respondents referred to liturgy as a safe place, what made the liturgy a safe place? Of special interest, of course, is whether the liturgy included the features of liturgical language as described by Pickstock.
- 2) Did the respondents feel that the liturgy connected to them in their story of suffering? If yes, what made the connection? Of special interest here is the notion of inductive liturgy and how liturgy did or did not connect to the stories of the participants.

Before presenting the results of the analysis of the interviews we will briefly discuss the methodology used. In the interview, the respondents were invited first to think about their story as if they were writing a book. They wrote down the chapter headings of the book, the time at which it happened, and keywords. Then they told their story, without the interviewer interrupting. After that, the respondents were asked two main questions: 1) During the time of your story, how did you experience church and 2) During that time, how did you experience the liturgy/worship services? They were also asked whether they felt that the liturgy connected to them in their situation. Of the twenty-two respondents (from four different churches), at least eight indicated that they experienced the liturgy as a safe place. Note that the interviewer did not ask for this, they all mentioned it spontaneously, although not always in exactly these words.⁴³ All eight respondents who talked about the liturgy as a safe place were women.

4.2. The stories

Space constraints permit a summary of only one story. However, this story of Abigail is quite typical for the experience of liturgy of the eight respondents included in the analysis here.⁴⁴ In the remainder of this article I will include

⁴³ For the present article we included only these eight interviews. About four other interviews showed that these participants perhaps felt safe in the worship service, but they are not included for analysis in order not to speculate. Two respondents experienced liturgy as unsafe and a third one experienced the liturgy as unsafe in two churches, but in two other churches as safe. The other interviews did not contradict the analysis of these eight. In these other interviews liturgy as a safe place was simply no topic, and are therefore not included in the present article.

⁴⁴ All names of respondents are fictitious.

quotes from other stories as well, to show that the argument is based on all these interviews.

Abigail is a woman of about sixty. In the early years of her marriage, she discovered that she could not have children. She went through IVF, but all attempts failed and she had several miscarriages. A couple of years later she got pregnant without any medical intervention. Despite one church service that was a healing experience for her, Abigail had some negative experiences with the church in other countries where she had lived, and also with community life. After many years of not attending church, she slowly started attending worship services again. But at first she attended only services in which the Eucharist was celebrated, “because there was much more safety in the communion service.⁴⁵ It was, it was, it was regulated. Whereas the freer service, euhm, it wasn’t quite sure what would happen.”⁴⁶ Apart from the pre-ordered liturgy of the Eucharist, another factor was important for Abigail, which made the liturgy a safe place. The community she saw there on Sundays seemed to be a group of stable people who had their lives more or less together. This was important for Abigail, because many years before she had been part of a community that provided care for people who had all kinds of problems. The people in the church she now slowly started attending were more stable, and this made it a “very secure place” for her.⁴⁷ Abigail goes on to say what she finds important in church services. For our discussion it is interesting to see that, although she likes ritual and that she “would go for bells and smells,” she does not like the Roman Catholic services she has been to. The reason for this is that in those services she did not think there was any connection between the priest up front and the people in the pews. “Being passive within the service... just doesn’t make sense. Being out there and part of what’s happening, and getting involved in it, is essential. There has to be a link.”⁴⁸

4.3. Conclusions from the stories

Several conclusions can be drawn from Abigail’s story and the other interviews.

- The respondents taken into account here are nearly unanimous in the reason why the liturgy is a safe place: it is because liturgy is pre-ordered, it follows a fixed pattern, and therefore is predictable. Note the importance of the ritual aspects of liturgy. These give people who suffer a sense of continuity, stability, and security when life is falling apart. Only one respondent did not refer to the pattern of the liturgy.

⁴⁵ In the Anglican tradition Eucharist and Holy Communion (or just Communion) are used interchangeably.

⁴⁶ Interview with Abigail: 124. Numbers refer to the paragraphs of the interview transcript in Atlas.ti, the program that was used for analysis of the interviews.

⁴⁷ Interview with Abigail: 124.

⁴⁸ Interview with Abigail: 136.

- Related to the above is the fact that the liturgy does not only provide a structure, and therefore stability, in itself. The liturgy is always there, celebrated every week again (or even more often), which provides a sense of security and stability too.
- Some of the respondents do not only relate the feeling of safety to the liturgy, but to church in general, which comprises prayer meetings, home groups, community, and other things.
- There seems to be a tension between liturgy connecting to everyday life on the one hand, and liturgy being a break away from ‘toxic’ situations (Katrina’s term). However, in several stories it is exactly the contrast between the chaos of daily life and the security of the liturgy which is the point of connection between the two.
- The previous point makes clear that the safety of the liturgy is not only a generic category as such, something unrelated to the circumstances people are in. The safety of the liturgy has also to do with the particular situations people live in. For example, when life is confusing because of ethical dilemmas and people giving advice that does not feel right, the liturgy is safe because it has a sense of objectivity in it. Liturgy does not depend on how one feels about something (the story of Hannah). Or, in situations when you have to be on your guard all the time because people act and react unpredictably, liturgy is a safe haven because there people act predictably and you know what to expect in the next hour or so (the story of Diana).
- People feel a connection between liturgy and their lives at diverse points in the liturgy: music, hymns, readings, sermons, and prayers are mentioned by the respondents.⁴⁹ But it also has to do with involvement in the liturgy, and with the fact that liturgy is not (just) for the people who have it all together. And for some it has to do with the wording of liturgical elements, like the Lord’s Prayer in modern language.

5. Discussion

Two seemingly contrasting views on liturgy and ritual led us to the discussion in this article. On the one hand, Catherine Pickstock argues that the stylised, performative, and repetitious nature of liturgical language makes liturgy a safe place in the midst of the chaotic quotidian. On the other hand, Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, and Gerard Lukken stress the importance of daily life, including its chaos, as the starting point for liturgy. In addition to these sources from the literature, we drew conclusions from eight stories of people whose lives are, or were, falling apart and who indicated that they experienced liturgy as a safe and comforting place. In the present section we will bring together the voices from these three angles (Pickstock; Lukken, and Anderson and Foley;

⁴⁹ In other interviews even more elements of the liturgy were mentioned.

the interviews) and ask to which extent they contrast each other, or whether a synthesis is possible. First of all, we will take up the questions we posed in relation to the stories of suffering people. After that, the views of the authors we discussed will be compared.

For the purposes of this article, we listened to the stories and interviews with two questions in mind: 1) When the respondents referred to liturgy as a safe place, what made the liturgy a safe place, and do we see Pickstock's features of sacred language appearing in the answers? and 2) Did the respondents feel that the liturgy connected to them in their story of suffering (compare Lukken, and Anderson and Foley)? We are now in a position to answer these questions.

Pickstock argues that language in liturgy is characterized by three elements: stylization, performativity, and repetition. Especially the elements of stylization and repetition are mentioned by the participants. Stylization refers to a specific semantic and syntactic field, in which there is "no provision for the indeterminacies of irony, retraction, or deception."⁵⁰ Often the stories of suffering people are infused by these kind of 'indeterminacies'. The liturgical celebration is one hour in the week where no place is provided for those things, and so that hour is a relief, a comfort, a safe haven. Also, the sacred polis is stable because its message and structure is the same every time, another element of stylization. Related to this is the feature of repetition. As we saw, except for one participant, it is the predictable pattern of the liturgy which makes it a safe place.⁵¹ The repetition of the liturgical pattern over time creates a 'sacred temporal order'. The respondents did not use these words, but the idea is certainly present in the interviews. Paratactic repetition in liturgy intensifies meaning, Pickstock says, over against paratactic repetition in daily language which diminishes meaning. Indeed, the liturgical celebration is a very meaningful event to the participants. Hypotactic repetition includes taking up the present into an eschatological figuration of the future and by making past events present. As we said, this reminds us primarily of the Eucharist (often the word 'anamnesis' is used for this concept). Although it is hard to say from the interviews to what extent the Eucharist relates specifically to their life stories, many participants refer to the Eucharist as the most important experience in the liturgy and as a moment of being close to God.⁵² This relates to a feature of performativity in liturgy. The identification between word and deed make performative language eventful. Again, the interviewees did not use words like 'performative', but they did experience the liturgy and what happens in the liturgical ritual as eventful.⁵³

⁵⁰ PICKSTOCK: 'Liturgy and language: the sacred polis' 124.

⁵¹ Only Diana did not refer to the fixed pattern explicitly. For her, it is 'everything' together which makes church a safe place for her. This might of course include the pre-described order of the liturgy.

⁵² This is not only true for the participants whose stories we heard in this article, but also for the other participants in the research sample.

⁵³ It should be noted that most of these eight participants were familiar with the Anglican worship pattern before they went through their period of suffering. This does not

The answer to the second question is generally affirmative. Liturgy does connect to the life of the participants in several ways. Liturgy is experienced as comforting and healing. However, the answers given do not reflect the concept of inductive liturgy as proposed by Lukken, and none of the respondents said that the liturgy included the particularities of their stories (Anderson and Foley). At the same time, in the conclusions from the stories we noted the complex relationship between liturgy and life. Sometimes the liturgical celebrations connect to the lives of the participants in being exactly the opposite. Katrina speaks about the liturgy as a 'break-away' from her 'toxic' living situation. For some it is the contrast that makes the liturgy a safe place: a stable message versus doubts and confusion (Abigail); not being tossed back and forth by feelings versus a sense of objectivity (something Pickstock mentions under 'stylization') (Hannah); an hour where things are predictable versus an anxious life in which people are capricious and fickle (Betty). For people who have to deal with such life circumstances, the connection with the liturgy does not need to be made by the priest referring to such situations. Just having the pre-ordered pattern, the fixed texts, and a stable message provides a safe haven for them. The connection with their particular story is made by the participants themselves, for example when a Bible reading speaks to them, when a hymn touches them, or when they connect to something said in the sermon. Thus the connection between liturgy and the stories of suffering is certainly there, but rather implicit than explicit, and made by the participants themselves rather than by those presiding at the liturgy.

The question this raises is whether the concept of inductive liturgy is unnecessary, and whether it is unnecessary for the liturgical presider to listen carefully to the stories of the participants and relate the liturgy to them. The answer is not a straightforward 'yes' or 'no.' The important issue is that of connection. As Abigail said: "Being passive within the service... just doesn't make sense." The interviews do not reveal that connection is made by an inductive concept of the liturgy, nor do the respondents say the liturgies referred particularly to their story. The liturgies are not necessarily 'trans-a-scendent' (compare Lukken). However, the connection between liturgy and life is certainly there, but rather implicit. The connection is made by the worshippers themselves. As some said, especially in times of distress, words or songs can take on new meaning. In Betty's words: "When you are hurting every word comes out and means something."⁵⁴ But this is not necessarily inductive liturgy. It might happen in a deductive liturgy as well. As we saw above, it is sometimes the contrast with the chaos of life which, paradoxically, makes for the connection between liturgy and life. The important thing to note is that a connection is made. Still, the answer to the question is not to say that the concept of inductive liturgy is unnecessary. The liturgy places much responsibility on the shoulders of the partic-

need to influence the conclusions, however, as the story of Katrina, who was not familiar with this pattern, shows.

⁵⁴ Interview with Betty: 264.

ipants, because the connection is implicit and to be made by the participants themselves. In narrative terms, it requires from the participants a high level of narrative competence. An inductive liturgy helps the participants more explicitly to connect.

At this point it is helpful to listen to the deviating stories.⁵⁵ For one respondent, Matt, it was exactly the repetitious, highly stylized pattern of the liturgy that put him off. The way in which the liturgy was performed took the heart out of what it was trying to say (see also the criticism on some churches by Abigail). For another respondent it was the community that made her feel unsafe because she felt betrayed by the community. For yet another respondent it was a particular ethical topic that made him feel judged by the community and therefore unsafe. These latter respondents are less relevant for the topic of the structure of the liturgy as major contributing factor to feelings of safety in worship. The first respondent underlines Foley's and Anderson's criticism on worship. For Matt the world of the liturgy in its highly stylized form did not connect to him anymore.

5.1. Conflicting perspectives?

Having discussed the issues that came up from the interviews, we now return to the voices of Pickstock, Lukken, and Anderson and Foley. The overview of their perspectives on ritual and liturgy leads to seemingly contrasting views on the matter under discussion. However, the contrast does not mean that their views are mutually exclusive. A more helpful stance is to view them as compatible, but with contrasting emphases.

Firstly, the concept of liturgy of the world seems to be in contrast with Pickstock's negative view of the mess of daily life. The liturgy of the world means that God chooses to reveal himself through the life and ministry of Jesus, a life and ministry that is characterized by identifying with human stories that fit the label of 'chaotic quotidian' very well. However, the contrast between the concept of liturgy of the world and Pickstock's view is particularly with the negative assessment of what, according to Pickstock, language in everyday life becomes. The question is whether all language in the quotidian relies upon constatives, textualization, and repetition – or might transformation of language take place when grace is dispersed here as well (compare the concept liturgy of the world)? Note that the features of quotidian language find their way into liturgical language too. Liturgy also makes use of texts, there is performativity, and repetition is an important feature of language in the sacred polis. Here repetition is meaningful, not eschewing difference, but building upon it. Where it is paratactic, it is purposeful. Moreover, repetition in liturgical language includes hypotaxis, thereby setting things in the perspective of eternity. Whereas performance in the daily quotidian is viewed with suspicion and reluctance, in

⁵⁵ These stories are not included in the eight interviews on which the argument of the article is based, exactly because they are deviant.

the liturgy word and deed become one. With regard to texts, indeed liturgy makes use of them, but in combination with the spoken word, rendering the event present. It is the way language is used, within a marked-off space, which makes it sacred rather than secular.⁵⁶ There is no reason why the stories of the chaotic quotidian cannot find a place in the liturgy and be transformed there and woven into the divine story.

Secondly, the careful attention to the quotidian and maybe chaotic stories of people seems to work better in a church tradition where the liturgy provides more room for spontaneous intervention and where the liturgy focuses less on pre-given texts. It is remarkable, therefore, that none of the authors pleading for inductive liturgy come from such a background. On the contrary, Edward Foley and Gerard Lukken are Roman Catholic, and Herbert Anderson is Lutheran – liturgical traditions that are characterized (at least when they are at their best) by the language of Pickstock's sacred polis. Lukken makes clear that pre-ordered liturgy does not oppose inductive liturgy: "Even when one sticks with the official order of service, there is still plenty of room for inductive elements."⁵⁷ Also Anderson and Foley argue that the element of repetition gives ritual its therapeutic value. "The repetition of ritual also helps create a sense of continuity in our lives by linking the past to the present and the present to the future. In the midst of life's discontinuities, rituals become a dependable source of security and comfort."⁵⁸ These quotes show that the stylized and repetitious nature of the liturgy and starting with the stories of the participants are not mutually exclusive. As we said above, the major issue is whether the participants are enabled to make the connection with their chaotic quotidian life. Stylization and repetition only become problematic when the divine story is told at the expense of or without connecting to the human story (or the invitation to connect one's story to the divine story).

One obvious place for making the liturgy inductive is the sermon. In fact, Anderson and Foley point to the sermon as the place with much potential to connect with daily life. Another important place is the opening of the service (Lukken gives some impressive examples of opening texts that were written for specific occasions). Furthermore, one can think of certain songs and hymns to which the participants can easily relate, the prayers of the people, or intercessions. Not to be overlooked are the non-verbal elements in liturgy. For exam-

⁵⁶ From a narrative point of view, this is what storytelling does. Storytellers take the listeners with them into another world by the opening sentence or abstract, and bring them back to their world in the closing sentences. A.K. DANIEL: *Storytelling across the primary curriculum* (Abingdon 2012). For an introduction to a narrative approach to liturgy see L. VAN OMMEN: 'A narrative understanding of Anglican liturgy in times of suffering: the narrative approach of Ruard Ganzevoort applied to common worship', in *Questions Liturgiques / Studies in Liturgy* 1-2 (2015) 64-81.

⁵⁷ LUKKEN: *Rituals in abundance* 342.

⁵⁸ ANDERSON & FOLEY: *Mighty stories* 49.

ple, in a funeral service it could be a picture of the deceased person on the coffin, flowers that she liked, et cetera.⁵⁹

5.2. Reconciling safety and boredom

Having argued that the views of the various authors are compatible with each other, we now return to the problem we signaled at the beginning of the article. For some people, a repetitious and stylized liturgy provides safety, whereas for others these features of liturgy put them off. If the views of the authors are compatible, is it possible to reconcile these two groups of participants with each other? The theological and psychological clues lie in the reason people come to church. A point in case is Katrina's story. In her childhood she went to church because her parents wanted her to. But now that she is going through difficult times, she wants to be part of the worship service even if the church she attends now is more structured than the church of her parents.

There is definitely something in the liturgy that, that is very beautiful. And I thought, growing up, that having the same, the exact same structure and a lot of the same words in every church service would get anonymous and boring, but I found it to be actually quite comforting.⁶⁰

If suffering people needed just any pattern or structure, they could just as well watch their favorite television program daily. And if other people wanted just any social activity, they could just go to their sports club every Sunday. Yet all these people choose to come to church. While many reasons are thinkable, at the deepest level it must have to do with the human need for meaning in life. Rituals include the stories of each participant and relate them to a grander narrative. But in order to do so, liturgy ought not to remain at a generic, deductive level. In order to include the stories of the people and relate those to the divine story, liturgy needs to take into account the small, human stories. An inductive liturgy is likely to have the best chances for doing so.

To sum up, it is important to see that inductive liturgy, starting with the here and now, or in Pickstock's words, with the daily quotidian, does not necessarily oppose a pre-ordered liturgy which makes use of certain fixed texts. A tension remains, but all liturgy is in need of connecting to the stories of the people, and according to Lukken all liturgy should begin there. All liturgy is capable of mak-

⁵⁹ Most of Lukken's examples come from 'occasional services.' Indeed, it seems easier to connect to specific symbols or stories when the service is put into a specific context, for example funerals, weddings, ordination, commissioning. However, Anderson and Foley emphasise that the connection with human stories is important in the weekly Sunday celebrations as well. As a matter of fact, that is the basic point they want to drive home in the chapter we discuss in the present article.

⁶⁰ Interview with Katrina: 109.

ing this connection, whether in the sermon, the words of welcome at the beginning of the service, the prayers, or otherwise.

6. Conclusion

For some, the liturgy is a safe place. For others, the liturgy is a boring event, a box to tick on the list of duties to fulfil in the religious life. Interestingly, all of these people point to the same reason for their experience: the patterned, stylized, repetitious nature of the liturgy. In this article we have discussed Pickstock's view, who argues that it is the distance of the sacred polis with its specific use of language which is the reason why it can be a safe place in the midst of the chaotic quotidian. The strength of her position is that she points to the transformative capacity of liturgy to direct the stories of people to a vision of hope. Next we reviewed Anderson and Foley's vision for liturgical celebrations with regard to the experience of those who find liturgy boring. Liturgies become comforting and healing when they relate to the chaotic stories of people whose lives are falling apart. This view of liturgy is very similar to Lukken's, who argues that liturgy should be inductive, that is starting with the small stories and the small things. Because these different perspectives on liturgy seem to contrast with each other, we listened then to some 'small stories' of people who experienced chaos to the point of suffering. They confirmed Pickstock's view by pointing primarily to the fixed pattern of the liturgy and the fact that it is always there as the main reason why they experienced the liturgy as a safe place. They seemed less confirming of the views of Anderson and Foley, and Lukken. However, the discussion in the previous section showed that the author's views are not mutually exclusive and are rather to be seen as complementary. The primary concern is that a connection takes place, and it is the task of the liturgy/liturgist to enable the weaving together of the divine and human stories.

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