

Time for Change: *Kairòs* and the Liturgical Shaping of Public Time

A paper for Westcott House Public Theology Seminars by
James Walters

In this paper, I want to argue that an important and largely neglected dimension of the mission of the Church is the shaping of the character of time. Since this is a theological college, we might quote words from the hymn by the Jesuit, James Quinn:

Priests of the world, Christ sends us forth
This world of time to consecrate,
This world of sin by grace to heal,
Christ's world in Christ to re-create.¹

You probably haven't thought of your vocation very much in terms of being sent out to consecrate time, because the Church very rarely thinks in these terms now. So that's the first area I want to explore: very fundamentally, **why does time matter** in relation to both theology and as we look beyond the Church to wider public life? There I'm going to be drawing on the writings of Alexandre Koyève who was a philosopher teaching in Paris in the 1930s and also Antonio Negri who is an Italian Marxist still alive today. This section is going to introduce the notion of *kairòs* as essentially a *character of time* shaped to bring about change. The second section will look briefly at **what has happened to the character of time in the world in which we live today**, from the point of view of political change. I'm going to draw there on the work of Jean Baudrillard who was a disillusioned Marxist philosopher, who died in Paris last year. He had a very pessimistic and cynical view of what is going on in our political culture, partially linked to two kinds of distortion in time which I will describe very briefly. The next two sections then move us on to looking at **how the Church rehabilitates time** in response to these two distortions and those will loosely take the form of **liturgical practice** and **eschatology and advent**, although the two are very much connected. And, in case everything I say sounds very abstract and theoretical, I'm going to end with two brief practical illustrations.

Section 1: In search of *kairòs* time

It is no surprise that I should be drawing on several Marxist thinkers as a resource for thinking about public (or political) time, since Marxism (drawing heavily on work of Hegel) reads much into the meaning of historical process and human development through time. This was a particular interest of Alexandre Koyève whose own brand of more existentialist Marxism explored the curiously theological theme of the relation between time and eternity. Essentially, Koyève sought to ask the question, should we regard truth as eternal and atemporal or is truth something experienced within time? What's interesting is that while Koyève explores this question from his ostensibly atheistic point of view, very important parallels can be drawn with how Christians might think about the discernment of divine truth in the world, particularly as we come to reflect on public or political theology. So his work opens up some interesting points of departure for us in thinking about the proper relationship between God and time.

Koyève explored this question in a series of lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*² and in his sixth and seventh lectures he debunks two myths about time. He looks at two unhelpful models of understanding the relation of temporality to eternity (which he labels Platonic and Aristotelian) as a

¹ *Forth in the peace of Christ we go*, NEH 361

² These were collected and edited by Koyève's former student Raymond Queneau and published in 1947.

background to Hegel's theory of the emergence of absolute knowledge *within time*. So he begins by arguing that in Plato's *Timaeus*, eternity is situated outside of time and their relation becomes the permanent possibility of *transcendence*. Essentially all of time is the same, but "at *every* instant of time (of the existence of Man in the World) the same relation to one and the same extratemporal entity is possible".³ This understanding of time can be conceived of as a circle of which the central point is God, the Eternal. A radius can be drawn at any point along the circumference of the circle back to the same centre: Eternity. In this way, truth appears in time, but time does not change it. Under this view, things are as they are within the temporal because of their permanent relation to Eternity. The process of the generation of meaning within the world is the constant intercourse of this relation.

Under this Platonic model, eternity *animates* the lifeless temporal in a more or less uniform way. Reality has a transcendental underpinning and the progression of time is deprived of any formative role. Koyève's rejection of this view is a classically Marxist move since it is a form of the Marxist critique of religion – that it externalises truth, and consequently freedom, as something that can only be mediated by the Church and never emerges "from below". It also remains the underlying logic of much religious thought today which, for example, conceives of liturgy as a removal from the temporality of "ordinary life" into God's eternity. Similarly it is a key element in the theological Occasionalism that has underpinned much twentieth century thought about revelation and divine action (e.g. Bultmann, Barth). Under this view the Incarnation, for example, is seen as the incursion of the eternal into the temporal rather than viewing God's involvement with the world as situated *within* time.⁴

The second (contrasting) model that Koyève considers he attributes to Aristotle. For Aristotle, time is not outside of eternity; *time itself is eternal*. There is no possibility of getting outside of time, since time is like a circle, going around endlessly. This is, therefore, a strange kind of temporality since reality is still predicated upon infinity. But, "since Eternity is *in* Time, all possibility of going outside of Time is excluded".⁵ Koyève therefore identifies Aristotle's theology as essentially polytheistic and condemns this system as unable to explain the human being as an historical and free individual. St Augustine, in *City of God*, makes similar criticisms of those who view time as a closed circle.⁶ Time without an opposing eternity is, for Augustine, a nightmare in which the soul passes ceaselessly between false blessedness and true misery. If the soul can truly be redeemed in God, Augustine argues, past miseries are consigned to history and "something new comes about in time which does not have an end in time".⁷

So we've got two understandings of time here that aren't very fruitful. One can be seen as a disempowering dualism, the other a rather flat, unanimated form of perpetual time from which we need some kind of liberation. Koyève finds his "third way" through Hegel in terms of a far closer identification of the eternal with the temporal, which can be summarised in Hegel's maxim "Geist ist Zeit" (Spirit is Time). About this Koyève writes that Truth, "subsists in *time*, while being by definition *eternal* – i.e., something essentially other than time."⁸

If that sounds rather paradoxical then perhaps it should remind us theologians of Christian teaching about Creation – the emergence of time out of the Eternal. Christianity holds that the temporal is the arena in which the eternal can be revealed, precisely because the temporal is grounded through Creation in the eternal. God's act of creation happened, not "in time", but *out of eternity*, or rather, *out of Godself*. Sergius Bulgakov (also influenced by Marxist readings of Hegel) thus argues that:

³ Koyève 1969, p.104

⁴ Bultmann, for example, views the divine as "the very counter pole to the human". Consequently he stresses the sense in which the incarnation is "a paradox, an offense" (1955, p.41).

⁵ Koyève 1969, p.115

⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, Chapter 14

⁷ Augustine 1998, p.516

⁸ Koyève 1969, pp.103-4

We must conceive of the creation of the world as an act of eternity, as God's eternal self-determination... The Creator creates the world in His divine eternity, and the world is eternal by God's eternity.⁹

Bulgakov avoids reducing this eternal self-communication of God in creation to the total identity of God with creation (pantheism) by maintaining the category distinction between the *being* of the eternal creator and the *becoming* of the temporal world. Creation as an action is above and beyond all time but situates the eternal inherently within time:

The Creator creates the world in eternity. His creative words, uttered once before the ages, sounds through all the ages. Translating this into the language of time, one can say that God always creates the world. But this translation is imprecise, since *always* does not exist for eternity, whereas eternity exists for and determines *always*.¹⁰

The eternal is, therefore, deep at the heart of the language and experience of time. And time is not (as we might infer from Aristotle) just a flat continuation. It has the potential, at least, for periods of deep significance: time (one might say) for change.

It is from this rich understanding of time that we might begin to understand the category of *kairòs* (often translated as the "right time" or "opportune time") as periods of intense awareness of the eternal within the temporal. *Kairòs* is often used in the New Testament to designate times of prayer¹¹ and at the beginning of Mark's Gospel, it is the "time" when Jesus' Kingdom is near. At its fundamental level, therefore, *kairòs* is the time when connections are established, between humanity and God and between humans. *Kairòs* is the present, "but a singular and open present".¹²

Antonio Negri, coming again from a resolutely atheist perspective, sees *kairòs* as the fundamental concept of political agency. He argues that the connection made possible by *kairòs* is essentially the connection of language and meaning. *Kairòs* is the present in which coherence is cultivated and relationships established; it is the present where we experience *the true Reality*. The term "present" is used carefully here, since *kairòs* is not a punctiliar "moment" of enlightenment such as might be associated with the mystical tradition. It is less fleeting and less individualistic than that. *Kairòs* is a realisation of the common process of becoming that is a social experience. This has, for Negri, a lot to do with the realisation of shared language (the theme of course at the heart of this seminar series). In some sense, for Negri, *kairòs* is the time when language makes sense:

Kairòs means singularity. But singularities are multiple. So, before a singularity there is always another singularity, and *kairòs* is, so to speak, multiplied in other *kairòs*. When the name is said and heard, each lives in language, every *kairòs* will be open to another *kairòs* – and all together these events of naming will come up in facing one another, in dialogue and perhaps clashing, constitute common names. It is in relation to alterity that the name spills into the common. Here, being reveals itself as *mit- Sein*, as "being-with".¹³

And so the *kairòs* present becomes both cognitive and behavioural. In making connections in the way we think, collective behaviour is shaped as this delimited and intensified period of time. So for Antonio Negri, *Kairòs* is necessary for politics.

⁹ Bulgakov 2002, p.58

¹⁰ Bulgakov 2002, p.58

¹¹ e.g. Matthew 11:25 and Ephesians 6:18

¹² Negri 2003, p.152

¹³ Negri 2003, p.155

Section 2: Distortions in time

I have deliberately used two atheist political philosophers Koyève and Negri to discuss these theological themes for two reasons. Firstly, to remind us of the political import of all theology and, secondly, to challenge the popular conception that speaking about Christian ideas in the public sphere necessarily requires speaking a different kind of language from everyone else. In today's political culture we are all wrestling with the same kinds of problems and struggling to respond to the kind of changes taking place around us. We are going to look now, very briefly, at some of those changes in relation to the possibilities for the emergence of *kairòs* within time in today's culture, through the work of another, very disillusioned, Marxist, Jean Baudrillard. Much of Baudrillard's work can be seen as a response to a perception of political frustration after the failed revolutionary events of 1968 and in his later writing Baudrillard gives up on the possibilities of politics altogether. Baudrillard believed that essentially society is disintegrating because it does not know where it is going. And he thinks that is having two effects on time: it is speeding up and it is slowing down!

So, firstly, the "speeding up". Central to Baudrillard's work is the idea that there is an immediacy about our society: objects, information and images are all circulating at such a speed that all events are so immediate they are almost pre-empted, reduced to spectacle with predetermined outcomes. He famously said this about the first Iraq War: that everybody knew how it would end and that it was little more than a series of televisual images. The speed at which our society, including our political culture, now operates simply does not permit for the conditions of *kairòs*. *Kairòs* requires some kind of historical reflection which has been rendered an impossibility since history requires a "degree of slowness", a certain distance to permit "the kind of condensation or significant crystallisation of events we call history, the kind of coherent unfolding of causes and effects we call reality".¹⁴

In the liberation of events from meaningful sequences, the possibility of "re-telling" events as an historical narrative on which we can reflect is lost. The recent innovation of 24 hour news channels has provided us with the new experience of being constantly bombarded with information about events as they take place, but without this possibility of critical reflection. A consequence of this is a generalised sense of urgency and alert. Since news items cannot be ranked within a delimited news programme, whatever we are presented with at any given moment is considered to be of singular importance, often accompanied by eye-catching printed headlines on the screen. In the commodification of information, every news item has the status of an immediate crisis to catch our attention. Note that when the Archbishop of Canterbury was guest editor of the Today programme last year the first thing he wanted was fewer, more *in-depth* news items.

But in addition to this process of the "speeding up" of time, Baudrillard argues that there is also a certain "slowing down" which equally militates against *kairòs*. Just as physics has demonstrated that the density of matter can slow the passing of time, so history is reaching a kind of inertia as it rubs against the "silent majorities" of the consumer public. At the height of the mobilisation and liberation of the masses, we have been hit by "an equivalent force of inertia, of an immense indifference and the silent potency of that indifference".¹⁵ Baudrillard language is very prosaic, as ever, but what he is really pointing to here is the kind of political impasse that been brought about by a global form of capitalism that is based on consumer power. Basically, it is very difficult to do things that fundamentally change anything! The most obvious example, of course, is the ecological crisis. The need for action is getting more and more urgent but the political response almost seems to be getting remote as the necessary actions of restricting consumption (be it carrier bags or air travel) are untenable since they run against the fundamental logic of the system which is growth and consumer freedom.

¹⁴ Baudrillard 1992, p.12

¹⁵ Baudrillard 1992, p.14

So we had these two experiences of time. On the existential, day-to-day level we experience an acceleration that prohibits reflection and on the collective level we have a radical slowing down, a kind of cultural inertia. Both of these forces militates strongly against the conditions for *kairòs*. These are both symptoms, Baudrillard argues, of the loss of teleology. He writes:

History is no longer able to transcend itself, to envisage its own finality, to dream of its own end; it is being buried beneath its own immediate effect, wearing itself out in special effects, imploding into current events.¹⁶

Section 3: The liturgical shaping of *kairòs* time

So the Church needs to do some thinking about time. We need to think about how we rehabilitate time or, in the James Quinn's words, *consecrate* time, so as to make the emergence of *kairòs* a possibility. We need to shape and order time such that it reveals or enacts the eternal. We need an experience of time that is the intensification of human relationality and identity in God within the present moment. This is what I want to call the **liturgical present**. Liturgy is not a removal of the self from the temporal. Rather it is the revelation of the eternal *within* the temporal through the performance of holiness, even the "performing of God".¹⁷

Where I want to begin thinking about that is, therefore, in relation to the action in which Christians understand God to have been supremely performed: the crucifixion. The cross symbolises eternity and serves as an archetype of the liturgical ordering of time such that it brings about *kairòs*. We are going to consider four aspects of the crucifixion as liturgical time.

Firstly, the Cross was not the suspension of the temporal. It is a clearly **delimited period** of three hours from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon.¹⁸ It is a fixed period of time that defines the eternal character of Christ before the Father, encapsulated starkly by Pascal in his remark that "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world".¹⁹ The crucifixion is indeed a "once for all" act. But it reveals the eternal glory of the Son dying in fullness of communion with the love of the Father. This is time in which the eternal is laid bare, symbolised by the tearing of the veil of the Temple. The eternal has not invaded the temporal, but the eternal has been made plain through temporality.

Secondly, the liturgical character of the crucifixion is revealed in its **intensification of human relations**. This is a particularly strong theme in the Fourth Gospel where the "hour" of Jesus' execution is given explicit social and political meanings. It is the moment of God's revolution where the existing order is overturned: "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw *all people* to myself."²⁰ This liturgical time which is Christ's glorification is, therefore, *our* "hour" also. It is the hour of the social; the drawing together of the political body. Jesus' hour is the hour when "us" begins to happen. John gives particular expression to this in Christ's action from the cross of forging new relationships, saying to his mother, "Woman, here is your son" and to the disciple whom he loved, "Here is your mother." New ethical commitments are expressed based on the familial relation of the Baptised within the Eucharistic assembly.

Thirdly, this opening-up of a new relationality is founded on the overcoming of the failed relationality of the past. This is the time of **forgiveness**: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are

¹⁶ Baudrillard 1992, p.15

¹⁷ I am grateful to Fr Peter Allen CR for stating this so starkly.

¹⁸ see Mark 15:33

¹⁹ *Pensée* 736

²⁰ John 12:31-32

doing."²¹ This, of course, is at the heart of what we have come to speak of as "atonement theory". Whichever images we use (sacrifice, ransom, victory, oblation), this is the time in which human condemnation is absorbed into Godself, the culmination of God's reconciling action in Christ. Reconciliation is the character of liturgical time because within it the Eternal opens to us the abundance of grace that seeks to reconstitute relationships in the face of our recurring disconnection from one another. Liturgical time is thus primarily concerned with overcoming sin through the cultivation of peace. When we allow ourselves to be formed by liturgical time, it becomes possible for us to live at peace and to be agents of reconciliation; we leave the liturgical assembly "more whole" than when we arrived. It is through the peace of the cross that liturgical time enables us to "go in the peace of Christ".

Finally, the liturgical moment of the cross **looks forward**. "Today you will be with me in Paradise"²² indicates that this is a time whose meaning is drawn from the future. The meaning of this particular liturgical present is, of course, found in the coming resurrection and, with all other liturgical moments, it is placed within the teleology of God's consummation of creation in the second coming. But with this priority of the future, *all* time is manifested in this liturgical enactment of God. The intensity of eternity – the mystery of God – is manifested in this temporal sacrament. In his study of Greek myth and Christian mystery, Hugo Rahner describes the cross as "both retroactive and predetermining, it embraces everything that has happened or will happen in the world".²³ He shows how, for Irenaeus, the cross is the recapitulation of the entire universe in Christ.

Drawing these reflections together, we can see that the cross represents the supreme liturgical present as a delimited period of time that captures the fundamental character of all time, and thus manifests the eternal. In so doing, this liturgical present is the location of intensified human relationships before God. Debts are reconciled and new relationships are formed.

So using the cross as a basis for the exploration of liturgical time, we can now move on to consider the kind of liturgical time we experience in the Eucharist.

There is a recurrent desire to attempt to encapsulate the presence of the eternal in the Eucharist within a single temporal moment. However, efforts to pinpoint the moment of consecration prove futile. It is better to regard the whole Eucharistic Prayer as a consecratory movement concentrating liturgical time²⁴, itself part of the whole structure of the liturgy. As in all temporal experience, the present of liturgical time, is elusive. To borrow Proust's famous title, we are forever "in search of lost time", the past always irretrievable and the future always unattained. The "now" of human experience, of which liturgical experience is no exception, cannot be isolated. This is why temporality plays an important role in sacramentality: time mediates our experience of the eternal because raw eternity can never be immediately accessible to us. The liturgical present must therefore be experienced through the proper **ordering of temporality in its relation to past and future**. This focusing of time is precisely what has been rendered impossible by the deconstruction of time in our immediacy-focused consumer age. We live in the tyranny of the present. But liturgy cannot be properly experienced as an instantaneous moment, only as a present that has been shaped by the totality of time. As one theologian has put it, in the "present of worship the once fleeting present becomes pregnant with eternity and hereby gains a more than transitory significance. As taken up into the dynamic of eternity in this way, it exists for its own sake".²⁵ Through our experiencing of this dynamic of eternity, liturgy takes on a therapeutic character which "helps us to make the most of our temporality".²⁶

²¹ Luke 23:34

²² Luke 23:43

²³ Rahner 1963, p.47

²⁴ Recent advice to sustain the same body posture from the *sursum corda* to the Great Amen is an important and useful way of signing this (Bradshaw).

²⁵ Susannah Ticciati, quoted in Quash 2002, p.111

²⁶ Quash 2002, p.107

The liturgical present is elusive precisely because the Eucharist is not linear or static, but is shaped by a complex interaction of symbolic language, actions and objects. These turn around the primary dynamics are those of anamnesis (remembrance or memorial) and eschatology (looking to God's future in Christ). These flows of past and future allow the shaping of a present that is caught up in the dynamics of eternity, a present of thanksgiving and praise.

This dual focus of anamnesis and eschatology have been at the heart of much twentieth century liturgical revision. In the liturgies of many denominations, the preface of the eucharistic prayer has been broadened to contain a reference, not merely to the memorial of the cross, but also to the "mighty acts" of God, primarily the birth, life, passion, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly intercession of Jesus Christ. Recent prayers even remember creation itself, humanity's creation in the divine image and God's faithfulness to Israel through the law and prophets.²⁷ This has been combined with the rediscovery of an eschatological prospect, "looking for his coming in glory". Moreover in some of the new prayers this future perspective is not simply a "longing" or "waiting" for Christ's coming (which perhaps betray something more of Plato's more transcendent Eternity), but is an expression of the transformation that God is enacting in the world:

Bless the earth,
heal the sick,
let the oppressed go free²⁸

Or from an even more collaborative *kairòs* perspective:

Help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.²⁹

These dual flows of anamnesis and eschatology are what structure and shape the delimited time of the liturgical present. Far from taking us *out of time*, therefore, the liturgy grounds us more firmly within the temporal than ever, putting us into a right relationship with it. The liturgy orders our experience of time and, within it, forms our character in a present that has been opened up to us. This is where, I suggest, we experience *kairòs*, situated at the arrowhead of time that has been and time that will be. Here we truly give "thanks and praise"; attentive to what is good amidst the "abundant eventfulness of life".³⁰ This is the experience of the eternal as the temporal.

Section 4: The political primacy of advent

So liturgical time acts as a kind of rehabilitation of our experience of time in order to bring about the kind of reflection that permits of *kairòs*. In this way, liturgy responds to the speeding up of our immediacy culture. But more needs to be said about the "slowing down" Baudrillard identifies in a culture that does not know where it is going. We need to think a little more about how *kairòs* is revealed by what is "to-come" in the future.

What I think will increasingly mark out Christians over the decades to come will be their ability to demonstrate some kind of *hope for the future*. There is not a lot of optimism about the future around. The ecological crisis is finally entering into popular consciousness and there is an increasing cynicism about

²⁷ Prayers F & G

²⁸ Prayer F This formula is influenced by the eucharistic prayer of St Basil, and Eastern text thought to derive from the time of Basil the Great (d.379).

²⁹ Prayer E

³⁰ Ford 1997, p.133

humanity's future lurking in the background of public discourse. Many see no future for the planet at all³¹ and, as we saw, that lack of optimism is rooted in a systemic inability for politics to bring about necessary change. Humanity seems to be lacking a constructive direction.

Christians must retain a genuinely open concept of the future conceived as being rooted in creative potential. This is the *to-come* – advent – which is born out of the *kairòs* present which conceives of the future, not as a distant land whose coming we await with fearful inevitability, but as a reality which springs *out of the present*. In this sense, *the future is now*, in the *kairòs* present where the eternal is made plain in the temporal. Negri describes this as the way in which *kairòs* restructures the present, calibrating and re-synchronising its rhythms: "Repetition, and with it duration, are de-structured by the current experience of the *to-come*, and the real is in this way comprehended in a new manner in the making of *kairòs*."³² This powerfully heightens the creative, political potential of the present since it is no longer the inevitable out-working of sameness, but becomes time that is radically particularised, in which our particular actions can bring about change and transformation. This discovery that the present is the terrain in which we engage with the *to-come* – that the future is bound up in present action – is what has been missing from much Christian eschatology, but is at the heart of the liturgical experience of time. Negri argues that this is precisely where fullness of life is found:

It is indeed in the struggle for the free appropriation of the present that life opens itself to the *to-come*; and desire perceives – against the empty and homogenous time in which all is equal,... the creative power of *praxis*. If life is not based on this active experience of the *to-come*, it cannot be called life.³³

So in liturgical time, it is the future that drives the present. The fulfilment of all things in God is what shapes both past and present. Koyève saw this understanding of the primacy of the future as fully recognised by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Mind*. In pre-Hegelian philosophy, the movement of time went from the past to the future by way of the present. For Hegel, however, the movement is "engendered in the Future and goes towards the Present by way of the Past: Future→Past→Present(→Future). And this is indeed the specific structure of properly human – that is, *historical* – Time."³⁴

Koyève, in common with other twentieth century French interpreters of Hegel, identifies this initiative of the future in a movement that arises from desire. Desire is the creative human capacity that brings into existence that which does not yet exist. To orient one's actions through desire is to be motivated in the present by the *to-come*; it is to act in the *kairòs* present. This historical agency of desire is rooted in Chapter Four of *The Phenomenology of Mind* where the parable of the Lord and the Bondsman serves to illustrate that the struggle for recognition forms the dynamic principle of all historical progress. Desire is therefore the instrument of freedom, seeking to bring into being a new reality. The primacy of the future leads to transformation of the present through the identification and realisation of what is desired. Thus Koyève presents the whole historical process as driven by the future as *time realised through desire*.

³¹ See, for example, Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (2006) and James Lovelock's *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006).

³² Negri 2003, p.163

³³ Negri 2003, p.163

³⁴ Koyève 1969, p.134. Roth discusses the ironic twist that Koyève, in fact, held that historical progress had come to an end and that he was living in a post-historical world where nothing really new occurred (1988, chp.4). Koyève's writings on this topic appear to have inspired Fuyakama's subsequent declaration of the "End of History" (1992). Roth sees a contradiction, noting that "the content of his discourse seems to be at odds with the form and the point of this pedagogy" (p.84). But surely Koyève's project is similar to my own in that he is seeking to theorise from Hegel a dynamic account of the future in order to overcome the political impasses of the present, as Roth states, "to think through the ways in which action can be meaningful both because of its orientation toward the future and because of the fact of human finitude" (p.84).

The Church expresses this willing-into-being of desire in the Christian season of Advent as expressed most powerfully in the cry "Maranatha!", "Come!". Advent is the season when we acknowledge that we are not yet what we desire to become and what God will make us. It situates desire at the heart of our liturgical expression, exemplified in the eighteenth-century hymn *Veni Emmanuel*, based on the ancient Advent Antiphons. The last verse of this hymn, based on the sixth antiphon, illustrates how desire for the future realisation of the Kingdom and the restoration of humanity in God underpins the Christian political vision:

O come, Desire of nations! show
Thy kingly reign on earth below,
Thou Corner-stone, uniting all,
Restore the ruin of our fall.

The antiphon invokes God as "King of the nations, and their desire" and may be read both that the Messiah is the one whom the nations desire and also that God is *in their desiring*. He is the desire which is the cornerstone of their unity. Thus the process of desire is holy. It is in the desire for the *to-come* that God is made manifest in God's people and it is this location of the holy within desire that moves us towards some understanding of the more developed New Testament recognition of God as love.³⁵

So it is loving that drives us forward, or rather, it is loving that pulls us forward into the future. Loving is our eschatology and Love is our future. So the primary Christian act of political witness is the cultivation of love and that, although we often forget it, is what our Eucharistic life is all about. The Eucharist is the performance of the life of the triune God of love who will gather all humanity into a heavenly banquet of justice, peace and joy.

Christianity teaches that the love of God is supremely expressed in the death of Jesus on the cross. This was the way in which God's love was revealed.³⁶ But it is not simply enough for Christians to believe this: love is not purely an object of cognition, it must be performed. The Cross is the present which, as we saw earlier, epitomises liturgical time in its four core characteristics: time delimited and ordered; time of intensified relationality; time of reconciliation; and time that looks forward. The Cross is, therefore, the liturgical present driven by the *to-come* – the advent of love – where the new political community of the Church is formed.

I am sure a lot of that sounds quite theoretical. But theory matters because it helps us understand what God is doing and, hopefully, allow it to happen more. So I end with two practical illustrations. On the level of liturgical practice and the cultivation of *kairòs* through reflection I think of a member of my church back in 2001 who ended a lifelong affiliation to a political party when it adopted an aggressively anti-immigration stance. "How," he asked, "can I gather round the altar with applicants for asylum on Sunday morning and deliver leaflets urging their deportation on Sunday afternoon?" Here, the cultivation of reflection in the performance of the Eucharist leads to *kairòs* and the shaping of political agency.

Secondly, on the plane of eschatology and advent, what better example can there be of the shaping of time through a vision of the future than the millennium's *Jubilee 2000* campaign? This was Christian people saying, the future is not a continuation of the same, in which market logic makes the choice for justice impossible. Time can be shaped into *kairòs*, there can be times of "Jubilee" where our vision of the heavenly banquet is made more real in the present.

Change takes time. But time needs to be shaped for change. That is what happens as we inhabit the formation of liturgical time through our worship. And it is in this temporal formation that love becomes manifest in the political agency of *kairòs*. This is how we perform holiness and the world is transformed.

³⁵ 1 John 4:8

³⁶ 1 John 4:9

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