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**The Renewal of Reformed Worship through  
Retrieving the Tradition and Ecumenical Openness**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The twentieth century has marked a huge interest in the renewal of Christian worship. It was essentially sparked off by the Liturgical Movement early in the twentieth century. The second Vatican Council also devoted much time and effort to discussions on the renewal of worship. The changing times parallel to the often stereotypical and stagnant worship forms have generated an exodus of many young people out of many church denominations, but particularly in the Reformed tradition. In chapter two, for example, I look at the many criticisms that are levelled at Reformed worship.

Ironically, the criticisms that are made now against Reformed worship are basically the same that the Reformers of the sixteenth century levelled against the Roman Mass. Chapter one deals thus with an historical account of how the Reformers wanted to renew and simplify the Roman Mass in order to be true to Scripture and the Early Church.

Chapter two examines how we as contemporary Reformed worshippers can retrieve what the Reformers strove for in the sixteenth century. The discussion then surrounds the following question: How can we be relevant in our worship of God in ever changing times and still be true to our traditional roots and Scripture?

One of the causes of the exodus out of the church, is that worship on a Sunday morning and life beyond that are treated as two different entities. There is barely any connection between worship and life. Chapter three argues in favour of the connection

on the basis of Romans 12:1. The conclusion is that whenever worship and life are linked up, a better humanity is in creation. Hence the crux of this thesis is that renewal of worship has to take place continuously as its relevancy will lead to a better relation between humans and God, and also between human beings themselves.

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## PREFACE

This thesis arises out of my growing awareness that for the church to be of continuous relevance, it needs to be renewed constantly. It is therefore hoped that this dissertation can make a contribution to a richer worship experience, which is not only one dimension of church life, but also the most important.

My special thanks to Prof. John de Gruchy, whose constructive supervision has made this work possible. His editorial skills together with the staff of the Writing Centre at the University of Cape Town eradicated many of the grammatical and stylistic errors. Needless to say, any errors of substance or style that remain are my own responsibility.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. I further acknowledged the financial support of the University of Cape Town as well the United Church of Canada. All opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development or any of the other sponsors.

Finally, a word of thanks to those who have throughout the duration of this research project shown a keen interest. Lastly, a special word of thanks to my girlfriend Mildred, who has given me her neverending support and inspiration.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Topic*

If one wants to start a lively conversation amongst Christians, David Peterson suggests that the subject of worship must be introduced<sup>1</sup>. For most of us that means debating styles of music, ways of conducting church services or methods of preaching. Disagreements can be heated, reflecting denominational traditions or individual preferences. Yet dissension can also reveal profound theological differences about the nature and significance of Christian liturgy. For example, to what extent do we meet together to encounter God and to what extent do we minister to each other? Is God especially present in the gathering of his people, and if so, how? Is worship fundamentally a response to God's word in prayer and praise, or is it something more? What is the relationship between congregational worship and the worship or service due to God in everyday life? An attempt to address such questions lies at the heart of this thesis, though not all can be fully dealt with. Many of these questions are asked because of the demand for the renewal of worship. Since I am a Reformed worshipper I will therefore devote my attention in this thesis to the renewal of Reformed worship. This I will do through retrieving the tradition as well as ecumenical openness.

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<sup>1</sup> "Worship in the New Testament" in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 51.

### *Background and motivation*

From the beginning of my theological studies I became more and more aware of the exodus of young people out of many Reformed churches<sup>2</sup> to the Pentecostal churches<sup>3</sup>. After I had made some enquiries, it became apparent that the majority was leaving their denominations for similar reasons. One major reason was that they were not experiencing the fulfilment, joy, and satisfaction of worship. For most, church services had become monotonous, cold and without meaning, hence the mass departure. My concern for renewal of worship started as I experienced the coldness myself.

During the latter part of 1997, the Rev. Dr. Robin Petersen organized a Spring School in Bellville for ministers of the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa on 'Transforming Worship and Church Growth'. Sadly only about 30 of a total of about 250 ministers attended. What I regarded as the ministers' lack of interest in worship, which I believe is the most important element of the church life, made me understand more clearly why young people are not happy with our ways of worship. Bruce Theron points out that in all aspects of worship, from the construction of the sermon to the selection of hymns and to the composition of the prayers, we must begin to instil the

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<sup>2</sup> Protestantism is made up of many strands, of which the four major traditions are: Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Anglican. Protestantism was called by Ernst Troeltsch a 'modification of Catholicism'. This indicates that Protestantism was not a departure from Roman Catholicism, but rather the attempt to reform it. Of the four wings of Protestantism, my focus will be on the Reformed tradition which traces its origins to the Swiss Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It subsequently developed in various ways depending on historical contexts. In South Africa, the Reformed tradition is represented inter alia by the United Congregational Church, the Uniting Reformed Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church.

<sup>3</sup> I am not at all suggesting that this is wrong or that it should not be, but I was fascinated by the reasons for it.

impression that what we are doing is of great importance and immense significance<sup>4</sup>. As he stated, the “hitherto sloppiness of how much of our liturgy, worship and celebration of the sacraments are conducted, does not go unnoticed by lay people”, especially the youth. In order to address the issues raised, then, we need to focus on what we do when we worship, for worship ought to be the central element in the life of every Christian.

From a Christian perspective the whole of life ought to be worship (Rom. 12:1). This is another issue that prompted me to give closer attention to the subject of worship in the life of the church. I come from a community (and this might be so in many other communities also) where, when you talk about God outside the church, you are viewed as ‘wederdoper’ (pentecostal or evangelical). It is a strange phenomenon to talk about God outside the Sunday morning worship service. This is a classic example of how people want to confine their worship of God to a certain time of the week while the Bible speaks of worship as a lifestyle. I do not mean that one must be ‘churchy’ at all times, but it is unbiblical to restrict worship in this sense. It seems that it is almost generally accepted that only the minister or the deacon speaks about God. This could be due to the small extent of participation by the congregation that is usually allowed in Reformed churches. We are afraid even to say ‘amen’. If we, for example, look at the meaning of the word ‘amen’ which is ‘let it be’ then there is no reason why it cannot be uttered (even aloud) in church as well as outside because it is an affirmation. I recall one incident where an American (Reformed) minister on his visit to South Africa

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<sup>4</sup> *The Caring Church is a Worshipping Community* (M. Th. Dissertation) (University of South Africa, 1996) p. 27-28.

conducted a worship service on a Sunday morning in a Reformed church. As he was nearing the end of a prayer, he said, “And all God’s people say...”. It was expected that all should respond to end the prayer with ‘AMEN’. Only a very few voices were audible. At that very moment I realized that even those people who attend the worship services regularly seem to be unaware that they can respond verbally when necessary or that they have a participatory role to play. This lack of participation and ‘emptiness’ in church worship has prompted my research.

### *Aims and Objectives*

The primary focus of this thesis is on the renewal of worship in the Reformed churches such as the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa of which I am a member. In seeking to achieve this aim I propose that we first examine the Reformed tradition and the attempt to renew worship in 16<sup>th</sup> century Switzerland. Having done so I will highlight three major themes: a) Lay Participation; b) Word and Sacrament; c) Worship and Life. These themes were, according to the Reformers, central to the worship of the Early Church. That is why they sought to recover them. Unfortunately in many ways these elements have been squandered. The renewal of Reformed worship today requires that we retrieve such key elements within our contemporary context. This requires not only listening again to the Reformers but also to Scripture and to other traditions within the ecumenical church.

My intention in this thesis is definitely not to provide a ‘quick fix’ to overcome the problem of ‘empty worship services’. The idea is to explore the possibilities, the means,

and the ways that could be used to enhance the worship experience. Many books have been written in which attention is directed to the meaning of worship rather than to the means of worship. My interest at the moment lies in the latter. In other words, in this thesis, my focus is not so much on God (although praising and serving God underlies the whole thesis) but the ways in which people gratefully respond to God's love and mercy manifested in blessings and good things<sup>5</sup>. Hence the focus on what the people do when they worship and what it means to them. Because of the criticism made above against the current Reformed worship<sup>6</sup>, I thought it advisable that, for the thesis to be of any useful help, I needed to give much attention to the 'how-to' questions. The objective then was to be practical because the nature of worship demands this, yet in a way that is theologically grounded.

### *Methodology*

In attempting to deal with the quest for the contemporary renewal of Reformed worship, I have carried out an extensive literature review. Although almost half of the sources are North American and only a few are from different countries in Europe or from South Africa, they are all significant. I have consulted almost all the relevant books available at the universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, and the Western Cape. My supervisor in this project, Professor John de Gruchy, also made sources available to me.

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<sup>5</sup> Worship is a two-way event; God is the initiator and the people are those who respond. Although the former takes precedence over the latter, my focus will be the latter for reasons outlined above.

<sup>6</sup> This is not meant to be a blind generalization. I am aware of revivals and have experienced worship in some Reformed churches that deeply affected me.

### *Scope and limitations*

At the outset it must be said that it was never my intention to write chiefly about the theology or principles of worship. There are many good books<sup>7</sup> which deal with these topics and further discussion here seems superfluous. There are other issues that should perhaps be developed more extensively but due to the limited space their discussion is restricted. Likewise, discussion of liturgical theory has been kept largely in the background in the interest of developing a practical resource which will try to point out where we (Reformed worshippers) might have gone wrong and provide some ideas for improving our worship.

### *Overview of thesis*

Despite the practical focus of my thesis I begin with a historical account of Reformed liturgical development. Because the core of the thesis is about the quest for contemporary Reformed worship, I deemed it necessary to start here. The first chapter thus deals with the reasons why the reformation of worship happened and how it took place. It therefore includes a fairly detailed discussion of the roles that the main Reformers played in the process. I examine what the Reformers did for the renewal of worship in order to understand the tradition I am seeking to retrieve. At the end of the chapter I have set out some criteria which would characterize a Reformed worship service.

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<sup>7</sup> Among others are "*The Integrity of Worship*" by Paul Hoon and "*Principles of Christian Worship*" by Raymond Abba.

Chapter Two goes to the heart of the thesis. Here I look in detail at the criticisms that are levelled against Reformed worship and how they can be addressed. For this reason I explore in depth how the elements that constitute Reformed worship could be expressed in contemporary ways. This chapter focuses on the 'how-to' issues as we retrieve the tradition to make it contemporary and relevant. Some important elements that come to the fore are different preaching styles and the use of music and art in the sanctuary. The significance of lay participation is discussed extensively as the Reformers laid heavy emphasis on it. I must, however, stress that this chapter does not explore new possibilities for the sake of creativity and variety alone, but emphasizes that, in the renewal of worship, God must still be the one to be praised, i.e. renewal must take place around the principles of Christian worship.

Chapter Three brings together worship inside the sanctuary and worship outside in the life of the world. Here I argue what the Reformers also argued that there is indeed a connection between what one does when one worships and one's lifestyle. This chapter further highlights the fact (which emanates from the second chapter) that it is not only what is done in worship, but *how* it is done that is important.

**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**REFORMED WORSHIP**

I. THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF REFORMED WORSHIP

The Protestant Reformation had many deeply embedded historical roots, also in liturgics, and can be understood only against the background of developments that had begun long before. The Reformers were deeply convinced that the medieval church had gone astray and therefore they wanted to go back, not only to Scripture itself, but also to the Early Church, which in their opinion had been faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore they felt committed to a purification of the liturgy and the transformation of its theological and spiritual content<sup>8</sup>.

It was especially towards the end of the Middle Ages that the need to reform the worship of the Roman Catholic Church was generally felt and widely expressed. The eve of the Protestant Reformation was marked by a revival in religious practices, festivals, prayer meetings and convent services. This occurred only quantitatively, because qualitatively, it was decline, deterioration, and confusion<sup>9</sup>. While the Mass was the centre of church life, it was in its essence a mere spectacle. The sermon had fallen into grave decline, most parish priests being too illiterate to preach, and the place of the Scripture lections had been usurped on many days by passages from the lives and

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<sup>8</sup> Klaas Runia, *The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition*, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, D. A. Carson (ed.) (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 243.

legends of the saints<sup>10</sup>. Amidst this decay, there were some voices crying out of the wilderness for renewal. Hence it is in the worship service that the reformation actually started<sup>11</sup>.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers objected to many elements in the Mass of which I will highlight only the most important. First, there was an uneasy feeling about the propitiatory character of the Mass, whereby Masses could be offered up to placate God for an individual's offences or to obtain special favours from God, as for example, before setting out on a journey. In fact the Reformers contended that the medieval Mass was regarded as an *officium* rather than as a *beneficium*<sup>12</sup>. Allied to their disapproval of the Mass was their objection to the implicit views of the priesthood. For if the priest was to be regarded as the indispensable instrument for procuring God's favour, he became not a vehicle of grace but an impediment and an obstacle to communion between God and people<sup>13</sup>. The Reformers believed that it is Jesus Christ, not the priestly hierarchy, who is our mediator to God.

The Reformers were not only agreed in their negations, they were also of one mind in many positive affirmations. They all wished to restore the pure worship of the primitive Church with its emphasis on lay participation, the integral relationship between word and sacrament, and the connection between worship and life.

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<sup>10</sup> W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 248.

<sup>12</sup> Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1948) p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The Reformed tradition traces its historical roots to the life and work of John Calvin. The views of this French Reformer made a huge impact on the city of Geneva and his influence has continued to exert an important influence to the current day. The earliest Swiss Protestant Reformer, however, was Huldrych Zwingli. His views developed apart from Calvin's but also had a significant role in the development of Reformed theology. The Reformed tradition developed throughout Europe and spread to the Americas as a Protestant alternative to Lutheranism and Anabaptism<sup>14</sup>.

From the very beginning there were two very different liturgical conceptions within the Reformed wing of the Reformation: the Zwinglian and the Calvinist. Both have proven historically viable in the Reformed church. With "negligible exceptions", as Runia puts it, "all the worship of the Reformed churches can be traced back to one of these sources"<sup>15</sup>. Zwingli's liturgy, which adopted the more radical pattern, came first. Even though he still used many of the traditional elements and ceremonies, he in actual fact largely replaced the traditional liturgical structure. Calvin, who came later, attempted to keep the worship of the re-formed church within the historical Christian worship pattern. Even though he almost abandoned the elements and ceremonies that had come into existence during the Middle Ages, he carefully preserved the traditional shape of the liturgy<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Donald McKim (ed.), *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992) p. xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Klaas Runia, "The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed by D. A. Carson (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

The term *Reformed* arose from the emphasis of the Swiss Reformers on the reform of the church according to the Word of God. During the sixteenth century, the term applied to all Protestant churches, but the Swiss Reformers, because of their thorough commitment to Scripture as the source of authority for the church and their emphasis on simplicity in worship and discipline both in private and public life, came to be called 'Reformed' in a particular way<sup>17</sup>. The desire to reform all life according to the Word of God was a comprehensive commitment and the underlying foundation for those who went on to develop the Reformed theological tradition. The development of Reformed tradition follows from several centers such as Zurich, Strasbourg, Basel, Berne, and Geneva and from the work of a variety of leaders such as Zwingli, Calvin, and Martin Bucer. It is however paramount that we first look at the role Martin Luther played and the influence he had on Reformed worship.

### *Influence of Martin Luther*

Martin Luther laid the foundations for liturgical reform as well as other aspects of the Reformation. As early as 1516, in a sermon on the third commandment, he stressed the importance of 'hearing the word of God' over 'hearing Mass'<sup>18</sup>. It is not that medieval Christianity lacked preaching. But preaching based on the Scriptures, using a 'historical-grammatical hermeneutic, as opposed to preaching based on an allegorical

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>18</sup> F. C. Semm, "Protestant Liturgy", in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Vol. 2). Ed. by H. J. Hillebrand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.439.

interpretation of biblical texts', became the central practical reform that united the whole Protestant Reformation<sup>19</sup>.

In one of Luther's writings, *De captivitate babylonica* (1520), he attacked the heart of medieval religion: the sacramental system. He denied that there were seven sacraments and accepted only baptism, penance, and the Lord's Supper. He thought that the sacrament of the bread was held captive in three ways: the cup was withheld from lay communicants, the mystery of the Lord's Supper was rationalized with the dogma of transubstantiation, and the Mass was offered as a 'good work and a sacrifice' instead of being perceived as the gift of Christ to his church. Luther's attack on the Mass as a sacrifice had liturgical consequences for the order of the Mass itself since it involved liturgical reorientation. He undertook a revision of the Latin Mass in his treatise on the *Formula Missae et Communiones*<sup>20</sup>.

Despite Luther's uneasiness with the Roman mass, it was important for him in the beginning that the changes he intended to bring about should start slowly. He was very aware that new forms of worship might not be so easily accepted because the old forms had become part of the life of the people and that to institute instant change was to ask for resistance. Luther also realized that changing the order of service in a congregation is a critical concern because of the fact that worship expresses both the theological and the ethical convictions of the people and shapes those convictions. "Faith is expressed in worship before it is expressed in creed, and it is learned in worship before it is

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

learned in schools”<sup>21</sup>. Thus worship is the heart of the Christian’s community’s common life. Changes in worship, therefore, should be made with the necessary sensitivity. Hence Luther decided that the beginning of the renewal should start by the gospel transforming the hearts of people. If the hearts are changed and transformed, then new forms and expressions will come by themselves<sup>22</sup>.

Luther’s different perspectives on the worship service are condensed in his thoughts at the inauguration of the castle in Torgau on 5 October 1544. He pleaded with the congregation that what should take place in the church is that God would speak to them through his Word and that the congregation should respond with praise and worship<sup>23</sup>. All those extra elements which made of the Mass a ‘spectacle’ must be omitted. The worship service must become simple again. The emphasis on preaching and the people’s response is the thrust of the worship service. We will see later how this fits in with the views of the *Reformed* Reformers.

Although Luther devoted much time to writing, thinking, and meditating about reform and changes in worship, it took him about six years to start implementing these ideas. Some of the changes he wanted to bring about were based on his belief that the believers are not just spectators, but actual participants in the worship service<sup>24</sup>. This, in turn, was based on what he referred to as the ‘priesthood of all believers’. To perpetuate

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<sup>21</sup> J. H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of being the Christian Community* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1977) p.174.

<sup>22</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 259.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

involvement of the laity, Luther introduced communal singing. Music was from the beginning one of his predilections and he soon realized its participatory value for worship. He made an enormous contribution to the history of Christian praise and even to the history of music. He wrote music himself and some of his hymns are still immensely popular. There were also a host of hymn writers traveling the same road as Luther so that within a generation the churches which received his reforms had developed a rich tradition of doxology<sup>25</sup>.

### *Influence of Huldrych Zwingli*

As has been mentioned, the Reformed churches arose from two distinct but similar expressions of the Protestant spirit. The first was led by Zwingli. The second was championed by Calvin, who had never known Zwingli. According to McNeill, Calvin, who can be regarded as the chief of those who gave to the Reformed their theology and ethics, owed much more to Luther than to Zwingli<sup>26</sup>. But on the other hand, the church that was shaped in German Switzerland under the leadership of Zwingli became attached to that which emerged in French Switzerland under the direction of Calvin. This is an indication of the commonalities in the thoughts of Zwingli and Calvin. At the same time one needs to be aware of their differences which will become more apparent as this chapter progresses.

For Huldrych Zwingli, preaching was paramount to the worship service. In fact, he

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<sup>25</sup> H. O. Old, *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> John Mc Neill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) p. 4.

regarded it as the heart of the service. Zwingli took his focus of 'hearing the Word of God alone' so far that he led a company of craftsmen in the 'cleansing' of the churches. They entered the churches and set to work. Bard Thompson describes their cleansing process as follows:

They disposed of the relics, raised their ladders against the walls and whitewashed the paintings and decorations, carted away the statues and ornaments, the gold and the silver equipment, the costly vestments and splendidly bound service-books. They closed the organs in token that no music of any kind would resound in the churches again: the people were to give ear to the Word of God alone<sup>27</sup>.

Zwingli even regarded the Lord's Supper as another form of preaching and refers to it as "the dramatic re-enactment of what on other occasions had been said from the pulpit"<sup>28</sup>. This was without doubt also the reason why he (unlike Calvin) did not plead for a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper but was satisfied with four celebrations a year.

Not only the importance of preaching was emphasized by Zwingli, but also conformity to Scripture. Whereas Calvin would allow worship rites that are not in Scripture but which conform to its general rules, Zwingli on the other hand wanted everything that

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<sup>27</sup> Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) p.142.

<sup>28</sup> Klaas Runia, *The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition*, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, D. A. Carson (ed.) (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 99.

was not sanctioned by Scripture to be eliminated from worship. This included ceremonies, the veneration of the saints, liturgical garments, paintings and decorations<sup>29</sup>. Nothing must be unscriptural or a distraction from the Word. Even the use of music was abhorred by Zwingli.

Zürich then, was the only centre of the Reformation movement where singing was abolished; elsewhere the more reasonable course was taken of substituting congregational singing for more elaborate music rendered in the old rites by choirs. But before the end of the sixteenth century, Zürich had abandoned the extreme view that led to the exclusion of music from worship, and introduced congregational song<sup>30</sup>. It is ironic that as a gifted musician, Zwingli was not fond of using music in the worship services. While music is not the essence of worship, it can be a powerful and healing means of worshipping. However, for Zwingli, the holiness and edification in worship lay in the silence before and during the service of the Word. Nothing must be a distraction to the preaching of the Word because that is what the service was all about for him.

In April 1525, Zwingli published the first German rite to appear in Zürich. It was entitled *Action oder Bruch des Nachtmals*, and became the norm of all later Zwinglian worship. As Maxwell indicates, two points emerged from this: First, we have here the origin of sitting communion, and secondly, although Zwingli encouraged more frequent

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<sup>29</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 282.

<sup>30</sup> W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 86.

communion than the medieval Church had done (once a year), he confined it to four times a year<sup>31</sup>.

A critique of Zwingli's approach to worship is that the actual content is bare. Maxwell regards the Zwinglian rite as the least adequate of all the Reformation liturgies. Its most tragic influence was the beginning of the separation of the Lord's Supper from the Lord's Day, making it no longer the norm for Sunday worship, but a memorial feast infrequently celebrated. Zwingli was more "rationalistic in his theological outlook, less mystical, and more subjective and analytical: while his idea of God is characterized by an extreme transcendentalism difficult to reconcile with the necessary complement of immanence"<sup>32</sup>. This, Maxwell argues, had two effects upon his proposed forms of worship: a) his prayers tended to be precise theological definitions of belief rather than simple direct petitions and praise; they were didactic rather than devotional; b) a further effect was to obscure the idea of fellowship in Holy Communion, for such ultimately depends upon the Real Presence.

#### *Influence of Martin Bucer*

Bucer was the main Reformer in Strasbourg. On his arrival there he found an existing liturgy which the Lutheran Diebold Schwarz had prepared for the church at Strasbourg. According to Runia, Schwarz purified the medieval mass of all objectionable parts and introduced some ancient responses (such as the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus* and the *Benedictus*) and also the Creed and prayers to be said by the people themselves in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 81.

adherence to the Early Church principle of lay participation<sup>33</sup>. Bucer modified the liturgy further but still held to the basic structure of the ancient liturgy. This was the fundamental difference between Bucer and Zwingli. While Bucer retained the basic structure underlying the medieval Mass and deriving from the Ancient Church, Zwingli, on the other hand, adopted the medieval preaching service as his starting point. Therefore Zwingli only had a liturgy of the Word while Bucer had a liturgy of Word, response by people, and sacrament. Thus Bucer was much truer to the Early Church than Zwingli.

In Strasbourg worship had become a corporate action in which the two characteristics of the early worship, as recorded in Acts, fellowship and joy, were predominant. Maxwell refers to one letter written by a member in Strasbourg which testifies to this:

No one remembers to have seen the benches of our churches filled by a people so zealous, resourceful, and eager for instruction. Before the minister has gone into the pulpit, one sees innumerable crowds discussing the Word of God, or listening to the reading of the passage that is to be expounded. The buzzing of the crowd as it arrives is such that one would have said a bishop was to be consecrated<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Klaas Runia, "The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 99.

<sup>34</sup> In W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 98.

Thompson contends that this was due to the prodigious scholarship Bucer devoted to his liturgy<sup>35</sup>. This contributed to the fact that Strasbourg was acclaimed 'a center of liturgical reform'.

In his writing of *Grund und Ursach*, Bucer offered proposals for the restoration of the liturgy to that shape which is 'old, true and eternal'<sup>36</sup>. The first principle of liturgical recovery that Bucer held to was adherence to the 'clear and plain declarations' of Holy Scripture. The Bible, which envelops the Word of God, must be authoritatively applied. The second principle is to give precedence, not to the physical or structural things of worship, but to the activity of the Holy Spirit. The third principle is Christian liberty, i.e. nothing should be dictated in the assembled congregation except for the sermon. This means that everyone may pray and praise without restraint. There is, however, danger in the freedom that Bucer advocated here, which will undoubtedly have consequences of disorder and chaos if it is not controlled. One of the goals of the reformation process was in fact that order in the worship service must also be renewed.

Although it was Zwingli who argued for Holy Communion to be held only four times a year, it was in Strasbourg that there emerged, for the first time after the Reformation, the service that was to become the norm of the Sunday Morning Worship in the Reformed Churches, namely, the eucharistic service but with the offertory, consecration, and Communion omitted<sup>37</sup>. Of the Reformers, it was Bucer and Zwingli who argued for

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<sup>35</sup> Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) p.166.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>37</sup> W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 111.

the dominance of preaching over and above the Holy Communion. Hence it is expected that the worship service without the Lord's Supper should be adopted in places where they served. John Calvin, although deeply influenced by Martin Bucer, was never happy with the worship service with infrequent Holy Communion that Zwingli and Bucer proposed.

### *Influence of John Calvin*

Calvin, in his *Institutes*<sup>38</sup> which was first published in March 1536, had given special attention to the liturgy of the church. According to Runia, he appeared to have some very clear and outspoken ideas<sup>39</sup>. Since he dealt with the liturgy in the context of his discussion of the sacraments, the emphasis was on the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but even so, Runia remarks that it is abundantly clear that, for Calvin, the complete worship service should consist of both preaching and the celebration of the Holy Communion, because this was done in the Early Church. The structure of Early Church worship was indeed the basis for Calvin because he reflected again and again on it in his renewal and re-formation attempts. Therefore transformation for Calvin was not creating an entirely new liturgy but going back to the liturgy of the Ancient Church or in the words of Runia, Calvin was "prepared to carry out extensive surgery, but not wholesale amputation"<sup>40</sup>. This is also the reason why he called his published liturgy:

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<sup>38</sup> John T. McNeill (ed.), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1961) p. 1228.

<sup>39</sup> Klaas Runia, "The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

*The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns with the Manner of Administering the Sacraments and Consecrating Marriage According to the Custom of the Ancient Church.*

Yet Calvin did not want to imitate exclusively the practice of the New Testament, hence he approved of those human institutions which are drawn from Scripture. He therefore wrote in his *Institutes*,

Because he [the Master] did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. [Furthermore,] because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones<sup>41</sup>.

But Calvin was also eager to warn against any innovations which serve no purpose or carried no message or meaning. Thus he was against creativity for the sake of

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<sup>41</sup> See John McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) p. 153.

creativity, but he totally endorsed it if it was for the enhancement of God's glory and a more fruitful worship experience of the people.

Like the other Reformers, Calvin also emphasized the sermon as the climax of the worship service. For him

God's greatest gift to the church is the preaching of the good news which is mighty to save, alive with blessing and judgment ... and the church is most church when the Word is preached and heard, for there God is actually calling, justifying, sanctifying his people<sup>42</sup>.

Not only did Calvin emphasize the importance of preaching, but he was also a great and gifted preacher himself.

For Calvin, the sole purpose of the worship service must be the glory of God. In every aspect of the service the glory of God must be the dominant principle. The community gathers for no other reason than to pay tribute to their Creator, to appreciate God's presence, to praise God's holy name. Reformations must therefore not take place at the expense of the principles of Christian worship<sup>43</sup>.

Unlike Zwingli, Calvin was not musically inclined. Therefore, one of the things that

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<sup>42</sup> Nichols in A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 333.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed discussion on this, see Raymond Abba, *Principles of Christian Worship* (Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House, 1977).

was a strange phenomenon for him in the worship service was communal singing. The first time that he experienced it was in Strasbourg when he was invited by Martin Bucer<sup>44</sup>. The beauty and the harmony that the human voices produced moved Calvin to tears. In his own words he wrote,

For five or six days at the beginning, when I looked at this little company of exiles from all countries, I wept, not for sadness, but for joy to hear them all singing so heartily and as they sang giving thanks to God that he had led them to a place where his name is glorified. No one could believe what joy there is in singing the praises and wonders of the Lord in the mother tongue as they are sung here<sup>45</sup>.

After this emotional and moving experience, Calvin started appreciating the beauty of harmonized and communal singing. This inevitably led to his decision of allowing communal singing, but with a requirement: the melodies of the hymns must never overshadow the message that the hymns embody. The melody supplements the words and the message – it is the carrier and translator of the contents of the hymn. In other words, the melody and the words form a unity.

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<sup>44</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 317.

<sup>45</sup> See Klaas Runia, *The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition*, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, D. A. Carson (ed.) (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 106.

For the transformation and renewal of worship, John Calvin proposed three principles as the foundation for reform<sup>46</sup>. The first which he insisted upon is the biblical and theological integrity of worship. Leith says that Calvin applied the second commandment, "Thou shall not make any graven image", by eliminating the visual arts from the worship<sup>47</sup>. Feelings and emotions, aesthetics and beauty were all subordinate to theological soundness. Calvin, however, was not in principle against the use of art in worship, but he was against the representation of God in visible form. This is wrong not on philosophical grounds but because God has forbidden it. Calvin recognized, as Old points out, that both painting and sculpture were divinely given talents when used as God intended them<sup>48</sup>.

The second principle for Calvin is theological intelligibility. Worship must not only be correct; it must also be understood<sup>49</sup>. The first step toward intelligibility was the Protestant insistence that worship must be in the language of the people. As in music, the melody must not obscure the meaning, so in preaching, language must be used to communicate thought, not to impress the hearer with the speaker's knowledge. Sacramental actions must always be in the context of preaching and teaching, so that the act or the symbol will be clearly understood. Teaching was crucial for Calvin because people must understand what they are doing and why before they can make

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<sup>46</sup> J. H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of being the Christian Community* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1977) p.175.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Hugh Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship", in *John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. by Timothy George (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 244.

<sup>49</sup> J. H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of being the Christian Community* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1977) p.175.

- informed contributions. Understanding leads to participation.

A third principle which Leith mentions in Calvin's theology of the liturgy is edification<sup>50</sup>. He argues that personality is shaped by the liturgy, by the very nature of worship itself. Psychologists have noted the great influence of frequently repeated acts, and no act is more frequently repeated in the public life of the church than the act of worship. Runia remarks that from its beginning, the Reformed tradition has in fact been aware of the broader concept of worship i.e., what we do 'in church' and the worship of everyday life<sup>51</sup>. We find it in Calvin's *Institutes*. We encounter the same emphasis on the whole life of the Christian, which is an expression of obedience and worship, also in the views of Abraham Kuyper. The latter tried to revive classical Calvinism in the Netherlands during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Runia further states that Kuyper, in his famous Stone lectures on Calvinism, strongly emphasized the idea that worship means serving God in the whole arena of life<sup>52</sup>. Runia also refers to what a 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch scholar said in summarizing this basic Reformed conviction in these striking words: "The real liturgy occurs on the street". The connection between the liturgy and life is a striking feature of Reformed and Early Church worship. The significance of this association will be argued in the third chapter.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 176.

<sup>51</sup> Klaas Runia, "The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed by D. A. Carson (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Like the other Reformers Calvin also insisted on the corporate character of worship<sup>53</sup>. He fought against clericalism because he maintained that worship should be the corporate action of the people of God, not something done on their behalf. Thus worship should not be something done by individuals but as a people or a congregation together. This was also the reason why the general confession of sin, which in the Mass was a private confession of the priest and his assistants when approaching the altar, was moved to the beginning of the service and became a public confession of the whole congregation<sup>54</sup>. Calvin also introduced another change: In the Middle Ages the Apostles' Creed was generally used only at the baptismal service and then only in Latin. Calvin wanted it included in every Sunday service in the vernacular as a congregational act. These alterations emphasized the participatory role of the people.

The changes that Calvin made were related to the general conviction of the Reformers that the worship of the congregation must witness to the priesthood of all believers. Worship is not a spectacle, executed by a special class of people and watched by an inactive congregation. It is the corporate task of the entire Christian community, the whole *koinonia*, which is the body of Christ. Hageman, quoted by Runia says:

No Reformed liturgy is truly Reformed which does not make a large and adequate place for the exercise of the priesthood of all believers in corporate

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

prayer, praise, and affirmation as the people of God respond to the life-giving Word of their Creator and Redeemer<sup>55</sup>.

We have thus far been looking at the viewpoints of the major Reformers on the issue of re-formation of the Roman Mass. It is appropriate at this point to make a comparison between the Roman Mass as it was on the eve of the Protestant movement and the Reformed worship service proposed by the Reformers.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF REFORMED WORSHIP

### *Reformed Worship and Roman Mass*

The most important difference is certainly that the Reformers wanted to restore the dominant role and place of the sermon in the liturgy. However, among the Reformers, there was a difference in the emphasis laid on the sermon. As mentioned before, Bucer and Zwingli argued for the dominance of the sermon in the liturgy, while Calvin and Luther (although not Reformed in the strict sense) argued for a balance between the Word and the sacrament. Hence in many liturgies that the Reformers (especially Luther and Calvin) prepared, the close connection between the sermon and Communion is obvious. For the Roman Catholics on the other hand, the climax of the service was the sacrifice of the Mass, and the sermon was either reduced to a brief homily or omitted.

Another difference was the sole use of Latin in the Mass. This had the consequence of Latin becoming a sacred language which was only understood and used by the clergy.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

The Reformers broke with this in order to make worship more intelligible. People can only participate if they understand what is going on. Contrary to the Roman Mass where priests conducted it in a 'one man show' fashion, the Reformers regarded the worship service as a community act between God and his people<sup>56</sup>.

As already mentioned, the perceptions on the Lord's Supper were another contributing factor for the breakaway. Adding to the objections, the Reformers could find no biblical justification that the wine should be withheld from the faithful. Everyone must have equal opportunity to partake in both the bread and the wine because as a believer, one is part of the body of Christ.

Throughout the renewal and transformation attempts, the intention was not to replace the Mass, but to simplify and purify it. The Liturgical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church (USA) in 1968 put it this way:

The liturgy was purified inwardly; the theological and spiritual content was transformed. All that smacked of the meritorious sacrifice of Christ in the Mass was cut away. Altar gave way to table; sacrifice made way for communion. The balance between Word and sacrament was restored – not by diminishing the importance of the sacrament but by upgrading the place of the Word. The extraneous extravaganza of pomp and ceremony was all but eliminated – but only to let the essentials of the liturgy become more prominent. The people

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<sup>56</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 255.

were restored to their liturgical office as priests at the altar of praise; they were led down from the observer's balcony into the field of liturgical action<sup>57</sup>.

It is quite clear from the above-mentioned that there are definite distinctions between the worship of medieval Roman Catholics and that of the Protestant Reformers. We will now look at the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

### *Reformed Views on Holy Communion*

The Reformers had severe criticisms against the perceptions of Roman Catholics on the Sacrament of Holy Communion. While the Roman Catholic worship services were sacramental, the Reformers emphasized the connection between the Word and the sacrament<sup>58</sup>. In the Roman Mass the Lord's Supper was viewed as a sacrifice, while the Roman Catholics also believed in the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine. Luther fiercely criticized the Roman Church for holding that Christ is present in the sacrament as a sacrifice. He also rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation which claimed that the wine and bread was changed into Christ's real blood and body<sup>59</sup>.

For Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, and Calvin, there was agreement about the most pressing liturgical reforms needed in the celebration of the communion service<sup>60</sup>. The first stage of liturgical reform was to translate the text into the language of the people for the

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<sup>57</sup> Klaas Runia, *The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition*, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, D. A. Carson (ed.) (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 98.

<sup>58</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 254.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 263.

<sup>60</sup> H. O. Old, *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) p. 126.

service to be intelligible. They also removed the prayers of sacrifice and emphasized the actual communion of the faithful. An indispensable part of the celebration was the participation of the believers in both the eating of the bread and the sharing of the cup. For Luther the sacrament of communion was to be understood as a gracious gift *from* God and not as a sacrifice *to* God. He sharply attacked the medieval view of the sacrifice of the mass, which taught that the Mass was a repetition of the sacrificial death of Christ. But he did not make the mistake of discarding altogether the idea of sacrifice. He transformed it, giving it a truer interpretation. In Holy Communion, he declared, we do not offer Christ because he was offered once for all on Calvary. According to Maxwell, Luther held the view that we “offer ourselves in fellowship with Him; and we offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as we identify ourselves with him”<sup>61</sup>. In this sense, Luther argues, the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice; but it is not a veritable re-enactment of our Lord’s sacrificial death.

Calvin, in his stress upon the spiritual presence of Christ’s body in Holy Communion, is nearer to Luther than to Zwingli; but he is as hostile as Zwingli to the notion of the ubiquity of the body<sup>62</sup>. The sacrament brings an especially vivid moment of communion with Christ in which we are enabled, by a mysterious and incomprehensible intervention of the Holy Spirit, to take part spiritually of his glorified body. The sacrament is an extension of the Word and is not to be dissociated from it or

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<sup>61</sup> W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> John McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) p. 218.

celebrated without the words of institution. There is here, no less than in the Mass, a miracle; not a physical miracle but a spiritual one<sup>63</sup>.

In Calvin's view Christ offers himself to believers in the Lord's Supper, and in the Supper they find true communion with Jesus Christ. Christ's presence is authentically manifested and exhibited; Christ is truly present and is presented to us anew. The only issue, as Calvin declares, has to do with the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament. Calvin states emphatically that he does not mean by the real presence of Christ that Jesus Christ is 'locally present' in the sense that his body could be 'taken into the hand, and chewed by the teeth and swallowed by the throat'<sup>64</sup>. For Calvin it was important to affirm that while Christ truly offers himself to us in the Lord's Supper, there is no necessity to bring Christ onto the earth that he may be connected to us – that is, have true communion with us. To insist on such is to fail to understand the work of the Holy Spirit. The latter makes possible by faith what our minds cannot completely comprehend – namely, that through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, 'that sacred communion of flesh and blood by which Christ transcends his life into us' is attested and sealed in the Lord's Supper<sup>65</sup>. Calvin was quick to acknowledge that the mode of Christ's presence can never be grasped fully by our minds but can be apprehended only in faith.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 219.

<sup>64</sup> See Robert Shelton, *A Theology of the Lord's Supper from the Perspective of the Reformed Tradition*, in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, [Donald McKim (ed.)], (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992) p. 262.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Despite the agreements of the Reformers on the Lord's Supper, it became evident in 1525 that Zwingli and Luther had their differences on it. According to Senn, their debate ended with disagreement<sup>66</sup>. The real presence of Christ in the sacrament and the interpretation of the words, 'this is my body', were at the heart of the debate. Zwingli argued for a spiritual interpretation while Luther advocated a literal one. Senn suggests that the liturgical consequence of this was to reenact as closely as possible the original institution of the Lord's Supper<sup>67</sup>. For example, in some Reformed churches, notably in the Church of Scotland, the elders sat around the table to receive the bread and wine. The Reformed emphasized the fellowship aspect of Communion, and strove to include the whole congregation in the celebration, whereas the Lutherans emphasized the sacraments as 'means of grace', and reception became an individual matter.

It was Calvin and Zwingli that put emphasis on the Communion as an act of fellowship. Through this fellowship with one another and with God, the believer grows spiritually. But, as mentioned previously, an important difference between Zwingli and Calvin is that Calvin set his sights on a weekly celebration of Holy Communion, while Zwingli wanted it to be held only four times a year. Zwingli furthermore differed with the other Reformers in that he did not regard the Lord's Supper in itself as a means of grace, or as the norm of Christian worship<sup>68</sup>. Hence his denial of frequent celebrations as previously pointed out. Calvin would have continued the weekly celebrations if he had

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<sup>66</sup> F. C. Senn, "Protestant Liturgy" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Vol. 2), ed. by H. J. Hillebrand, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 442.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its developments and forms* (London: University Press, 1936) p. 75.

not been prevented from the realization of his ideal by the direct veto of the city council, who wished to follow Zwingli in a quarterly observance.

Through Zwingli's insistence on a quarterly celebration, he actually broke with what the Reformation was about: the recovery of first century and New Testament worship. However it must be recalled that before Zwingli changed the frequency of the Holy Communion to four times a year, it was celebrated only once a year for communion of the people. This was in dire contrast with the Early Church because the celebration of the Holy Communion was an integral part of the worship of the Ancient Church as it is still in the Roman Catholic Church today. Calvin never swerved from his position on weekly celebrations but his hands were tied. All he could do was to hope for better in the future. And so he said:

I have taken care to record publicly that our custom is defective, so that those who come after me may be able to correct it the more freely and easily<sup>69</sup>.

Thus, as a result of civic interference, Calvin was forced into a practice that he abhorred, and which he knew to be completely at variance with the teaching and practice of the New Testament and the Early Church. The question arises then whether we should respond to Calvin's plea and 'correct' the infrequent observance. Is the infrequent celebration a truly Reformed characteristic having in mind it was forced upon the church by a city council? Would we deviate from the Reformed tradition if we

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 118.

were to go back to the practice of the Early Church? Is the Reformed Church not a church in continual reformation? All these questions need to be dealt with when confronted with contemporary and ever changing times.

One can understand Calvin's emphasis on weekly celebrations because he was of the opinion that the Holy Communion has a function in that it nourishes believers in their pilgrimage to eternity. Hence, the Lord's Supper had profound ethical and moral implications<sup>70</sup>. Calvin, in one of his treatises on the Lord's Supper, held the view that not just anyone could come and join at the table. He therefore stated that the Holy Supper should not be

soiled and contaminated by those coming to it and communicating, who declare and manifest by their misconduct and evil life that they do not all belong to Jesus. For in this profanation the sacrament of our Lord is gravely dishonoured. Hence it behoves us to be on our guard that this pollution, which abounds with such dishonour to God, be not brought amongst us by our negligence, in view of the so great vengeance on those who treat this sacrament unworthily. It is necessary that those who have the power to frame regulations make it a rule that they who come to this communion be approved members of Jesus Christ<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> H. O. Old, *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) p. 135.

### *Distinctions of Reformed Worship*

There are certain elements that distinguish traditions from each other, elements which give them their character. We will therefore look critically at the factors that distinguish Reformed worship from other traditions. According to Old, the first characteristic of Reformed worship is that it is according to Scripture<sup>72</sup>. This was the intention of all the Reformers. However this is a characteristic that cannot be attributed solely to the Reformed tradition. Other traditions would also claim to be Scriptural and rightly so. Nonetheless it was the Reformers that emphasized it the most. Martin Bucer, for example, held the view that it is only the worship that God asks of us that really serves him. True worship for Bucer takes place where the Word goes out to the people and the people respond with prayer and praise to God<sup>73</sup>. Old however, holds that Bucer refused to regard worship as though it were some sort of creative art, as though the object of worship were to entertain God with elaborate liturgical pageants and dramas<sup>74</sup>. A critique on Bucer will be that there are many ways which are not specifically scriptural, but still can be to the glory of God. Not only the means or the content of worship is important, but also the intention of the worshipper. The question then whether Reformed worship should be solely according to Scripture (especially in times when Scripture is silent on many contextual issues and is no more the blueprint document for everything), is debatable. Zwingli also followed the Bible even more stringently, rejecting whatever the Bible did not prescribe. For this reason the reformation in Zurich

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<sup>71</sup> J. K. S. Reid (ed.), *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954) p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> Hugh Old, *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 296.

<sup>74</sup> Hugh Old, *Worship: Guides to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984) p. 3.

tended to strip away more traditional symbols of the Roman church like candles, statues, music, and pictures as they were regarded as unscriptural.

The second characteristic emanates from the publication of Zwingli's liturgical work, *An Attack on the Canon of the Mass*, in 1523. It is apparent that this work seems to be a reformation directed from the head rather than from the heart<sup>75</sup>. And it cannot be ignored that Reformed worship has always seemed the most cerebral of the Christian traditions. This, then, is the second characteristic of Reformed worship: it was and is intellectually inclined. In Geneva, where worship was an integral part of the life of the city, the services were full of instructions. So great was the imperative to teach that each service contains a condensed course in theology and ethics. This indeed became a lasting characteristic of Reformed worship, contributing to its overwhelmingly cerebral character. This emphasis on the cognitive has its strengths, but it becomes all the more questionable in a society influenced by pictures, visuals and images. We will elaborate on this point in a later chapter.

The third characteristic of Reformed worship is the involvement of the laity. Worship is a community event where people participate. The doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' was strongly emphasized. Believers must definitely partake in worship which was then manifested in the introduction of communal singing and their reception in both the bread and the wine during holy communion<sup>76</sup>. Maxwell mentions that besides

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<sup>75</sup> James White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) p. 60.

<sup>76</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 297.

the other meanings that the Reformation had for people, it indeed returned the liturgy to the people<sup>77</sup>. Worship reclaimed its historic notes of joy and adoration as the people again sang the liturgy.

Unfortunately the corporate nature of Reformed worship did not endure; it degenerated during the centuries that followed the Reformation. Slowly the liturgy again became an instrument in the hands of clergy. It was in this context of clerically dominated worship that the 20<sup>th</sup> Liturgical Movement started with its aim to recover the participatory role of the laity.

#### *Criteria for a truly Reformed liturgy*

Having the characteristics of Reformed worship in mind, is it then possible to derive at least some criteria that should guide a Reformed church in the review and reform of its liturgy? In 1965 a synodical liturgical committee of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands tried to do so. They distinguished four motifs that should guide a Reformed church and Klaas Runia<sup>78</sup>, who reports on this, believes that a fifth motif should be added to them:

##### *i) The biblical motif*

Although the Bible does not prescribe a definite order of worship, it remains the basis for Reformed churches. The Bible teaches us in what frame of mind and heart we should worship God, namely, as an act of thanksgiving and self-dedication.

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<sup>77</sup> J. M. Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology: The Liturgical Lessons of Mercersburg* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1976) p. 389.

<sup>78</sup> *The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition*, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, D. A. Carson (ed.) (Carlisle UK: The Paternoster Press, 1993) p. 106.

ii) *The ecumenical motif*

Since the Bible does not prescribe an exact order of worship, the church itself, in the course of the centuries, has taken many decisions concerning the liturgy. A Reformed church, Runia says, should always be willing to listen carefully to what the church of the past did and the other churches of today do in their liturgy in order to learn from them<sup>79</sup>. This does not mean that the Reformed church of today should uncritically accept what has been done in the past, either by others or by its spiritual forebears. It is true that there have been many deformations in Christian worship, but whatever deformations and reformations there may have been, it remains a fact that, at least formally, there always has been a basic structure, which can be recognized in most ecclesiastical traditions. Runia suggests that the Reformed church should be ready to examine critically the liturgical past of all churches and at the same time be willing to let the tradition of the Christian Church evaluate and judge its own present liturgy<sup>80</sup>. The Reformed churches of today must not only retrieve the reformations that happened in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but also seek what the Reformers wanted to recover from the first century. In this process we may discover certain elements or strong points from Early Church worship that the Reformers perhaps missed or did not regard important for their time but can perhaps be fruitful and helpful in our day and age. This links up with ecumenical openness as in going back to the Early Church, we might learn something from other denominations that is true of the Ancient Church. Hence we must continually reach out to learn from others for the strengthening of our worship services. In this endeavour, the following questions might be useful to ask:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

- What insights from other traditions could be implemented in one's own tradition?
- What would be the obstacles to implementing new ideas?
- What are some possible ways to overcome such obstacles?

iii) *The confessional motif*

This motif serves as a counterbalance to the ecumenical. Every congregation comes to its worship as a people that is committed to a certain confessional perspective on God and human beings. Although confessions do not spell out the form of worship, they do contain the theological decisions that determine worship. While the ecumenical motif speaks about the relationship between denominations, the confessional motif speaks about the relationship between liturgy and confession. On the one hand, the liturgy will demonstrate what the church's faith is, what its hope is, and what its life is. On the other hand, this very same liturgy will strengthen the faith and hope and life of the worshipper<sup>81</sup>.

iv) *The pastoral motif*

This motif takes into account that the liturgy is always a liturgy for people of a certain time and culture. This motif furthermore stresses the need for flexibility. The liturgy wants to edify the people and build up the congregation. It can do this only when the church that is responsible for the form of the liturgy bears in mind that people in various times and places have different needs<sup>82</sup>. As this motif focuses on time, culture, and relevancy, the following questions might prove to be helpful in making worship contemporary and local:

- What elements from my culture contribute creatively to the form of worship we use

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

and should be preserved?

- What elements of my culture that might make a positive contribution to our worship have been excluded?
- What elements from another culture have we embraced and should be retained?
- What elements have been imposed on us by another culture and should be rejected or transformed?

v) *The 'all of life is worship' motif*

Runia holds that a Reformed church that seeks the renewal of its liturgy should ask itself: Does the worship in the service of the Lord's Day inspire the members of the congregation to be active in the world and to engage in the service of God and their fellow human beings in society at large<sup>83</sup>? However important the Sunday services may be for the mutual upbuilding of the congregation, their purpose should not be restricted to this mutual edification. The congregation meets also for the adoration of God, which in turn should lead to action in the world, which is another form of worship. Thus worship extends beyond the Sunday morning service and should have a transformative effect on the life of the churchgoers, and hence society. This concept of 'all of life is worship' is nothing new to the Reformed church as it was one of the points emphasized by the Reformers. They in turn recover it from the Early Church tradition where there was no separation of life on Sabbaths and during the week.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

*Conclusion*

In the Reformed churches in South Africa, the sermon was and is still the climax and the centre of the worship service. Like a concert or a musical show where the best is saved for last, so it is with the sermon in the worship service. Almost everything is put before the sermon so that the service could end with the sermon as the highlight of it. Hence the balance between the Word and the sacrament which Calvin advocated has become lost along the way. Even the order of the liturgy has been changed in many churches in a way that parts that needed to be together, are not. Many times I have observed that there is a time space between the reading of the Word and the proclamation thereof whereas the Reformers put the two together. This however is not the main reason why it should be together, but also to build on coherence and continuity. Even in the worship of the Early Church, the sermon followed the Scripture reading because together, they form the 'service of the Word'. So many Reformed churches have deviated from the original re-formations and are no longer following the Reformed tradition. One must then ask whether they should. Should we stick strictly to traditions for the sake of tradition or should we change or reform the tradition for the sake of relevance? These are some of the questions that we will address in the next two chapters.

In South Africa there are many different denominations which are under the umbrella of 'Reformed'. Although the Congregational Church and the Dutch Reformed family are both part of the Reformed branch, they do not put the same emphasis on the order

of worship. Almost all the congregations in the Dutch Reformed family follow a certain order of worship, for example, their worship service is divided into 'smaller services' like 'service of the Word', 'service of penitence', 'service of thanksgiving', and 'service of sacraments'. One can clearly distinguish what point the service has reached. While the Congregational Church also accommodates all this, they have a freer liturgy (but not without order) and the worship leaders have more liberty to arrange the order of worship appropriately.

It was the Reformation that first sought that every aspect of the liturgy be carefully and critically reviewed. Drastic changes in the worship service took place. Barnard quotes Nichols who says that "in the long history of the worshipping community, the sixteenth century witnessed the most momentous changes since the days of Gregory the Great in the sixth century"<sup>84</sup>. But as time goes by and transformation and renewal continually take place in all spheres of life outside the church, the quest for transformation in the church and particularly in the worship service become ever important. As White states, the purpose of worship reform is simply to enable people to worship with deeper commitment and participation<sup>85</sup>. This was the aim of the Reformers and it must also be the aim of all concerned believers today. For worship to be invigorating, meaningful, and relevant, it has to be 'polished' over and over again. In the next chapter we will look at ways and proposals how this can be done.

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<sup>84</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 256.

<sup>85</sup> James White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) p. 213.

**CHAPTER TWO :**  
**LITURGICAL RENEWAL**

*Introduction*

During the latter part of the twentieth century much attention has been given to the Sunday morning worship service, in the form of writings, conferences, and workshop discussions. It is generally accepted amongst Christians that the worship service is a central element of Church life. Some theologians (e.g. James White, Paul Hoon, A. C. Barnard, and many others) would argue that it is the most important part of Church life. An example to illustrate this is: if people on holiday want to attend church, it is almost certain that they would not go to the prayer meetings, but to the Sunday morning worship service. What they experience there will most probably be contained in their description of how they have experienced the church they have visited. The same is true of those members of the church who are not actively involved in church activities. Their only activity is their attendance of the worship service. This will most certainly also be their main or major experience of the church. In other words, one could almost make a general assumption that people experience the church when they experience the Sunday worship service.

James White argues that there is no better way to discover the heart of Christianity than by becoming aware of what Christians do when they worship<sup>86</sup>. The worship service is

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<sup>86</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990) p. 13.

the heart of the church. It is there where the members are fed and reborn week after week. It is there where the members are enriched and strengthened for the week to come. It is there where the members are renewed and their spiritual life uplifted. If the members experience a passive and dull service, they might not have the power and strength to face the world<sup>87</sup>.

In the history of the church there is a clear relation between the main worship service and the state of the church. Barnard shows that wherever there has been a lapse in the worship service in church history it has permeated through to the general life of the church<sup>88</sup>. Likewise, whenever the life of the church is stagnant and dull, it becomes evident in the worship service. On the positive side it is equally true that where renewal has taken place in the worship service, it has become visible in the life of the church. And where genuine renewal has taken place in the church, there has been rebirth in the worship service. I would go so far to say that, if the worship service is enriching and filling, it could contribute to a better community where peace, harmony and love will be triumphant. Karl Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, says: "It is not only in worship that the community is edified or edifies itself. But it is here first that it continuously takes place"<sup>89</sup>.

Paul Hoon observes that many clergy have begun to see all too clearly the contradiction between more or less well-filled churches on Sundays and the immoralities of our

<sup>87</sup> J. Muller, *Vastheid, Variasie, en Kreatiwiteit in die Liturgie*, in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* (3): Perspektiewe op die Erediens, A. J. Smuts (ed.) (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1987) p. 37.

<sup>88</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 63.

<sup>89</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley. IV/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), p. 638.

society<sup>90</sup>. Something seems to have fatally gone wrong and Hoon rightly suspects that it has to do not least with the Church's worship. Because of this he therefore make this confronting statement: "The powerlessness of worship to transform life is appalling, and seems to be reducing the Church to impotence"<sup>91</sup>. Here one can deduce Hoon's high regard for the worship service. The function of the worship service is to worship God and in this one's life is to be transformed.

The twentieth century call for liturgical renewal was made because of its significance for the transformation of life and not for the sake of change. Much of the ecumenical liturgical renewal earlier this century was fostered by Roman Catholic scholars and embodied in the decrees of Vatican II and subsequently in the life of parishes. I will therefore start off this chapter with a brief history of the search for liturgical renewal in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as embodied in the Liturgical Movement and Vatican II. I will look in detail at the various reasons for liturgical renewal, what is meant by renewal and how it should be manifested; in other words, what could and should be changed and how. The latter part of this chapter will be a discussion of renewal of some of the most important elements in Reformed worship.

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<sup>90</sup> Paul Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) p. 30.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

### *Liturgical Movement*

The term 'liturgical movement' denotes the phenomenon of recovering the centrality of worship in the life of the 20<sup>th</sup> century churches<sup>92</sup>. This movement had antecedents in attempts at liturgical reform and renewal during the Enlightenment and, particularly, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One example is the Anglo-Catholic revival that brought a renewed interest in liturgical sources as well as theology and led to a renewal of liturgical life in many Anglo-Catholic communities. But it was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Liturgical Movement gained momentum particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. It actually started off with a speech by the Benedictine monk Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960) at the Catholic Lay Congress in Malines, Belgium, in 1909. This conference signalled the inauguration of the Liturgical Movement. The movement was first seized upon by intellectuals and university students but, later, it won ground among a large number of parishes. The concerns of the Liturgical Movement also fell on fruitful ground in many non-Western countries, where the churches had long suffered under the alienation between traditional Roman Catholic liturgical life and the worshipping community<sup>93</sup>.

One of the Movement's basic insights was the rediscovery of the active role of the congregation in worship. Thus the movement rediscovered the Reformation. The conference of 1909 realized that active participation by the people in the liturgy was the

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<sup>92</sup> Teresa Berger, *Liturgical Movement*, in *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, J. G. Davies (ed.) (London: SCM Press, 1986) p. 616.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 617.

best means of nourishing and deepening the spiritual life.

The Liturgical Movement was not anti-traditionalist and aimed at renewal rather than revolution. It was concerned with the situation in the church and how that situation might be changed to bring about a better future. It sought to recall the members of the church to active involvement in the liturgy of the church. It strove for a living worship service in which the whole church could take part actively and with understanding, as the wellspring of a renewal of Christian life and mission<sup>94</sup>.

While it was the Reformers of the sixteenth century who have laid much emphasis on lay participation, it is the Roman Catholic Church of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which discovered the value of lay participation. The irony is that the Reformed Churches need to learn now from the Roman Catholics and in particular from the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy which was adopted at Vatican II with its elaborate discussion on the need for the laity to participate in worship.

However, the Liturgical Movement has not been confined to the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed churches also had their liturgical pioneers, both in theology and in praxis, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Eugène Bersier, Wilfred Monod and then the Taizé community in France, Richard Paquier and Jean-Jacques von Allmen in Switzerland, Prof. G. van der Leeuw in the Netherlands, the Mercersburg movement in the US, William D. Maxwell, and the Iona community in Scotland.

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<sup>94</sup> H. E. Chandlee, *The Liturgical Movement*, in *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, J. G. Davies (ed.) (London: SCM Press, 1986) p. 314.

Although the movement originated in the Roman Catholic Church, it spread to almost every other church. At the present time, the Liturgical Movement is an integral part of the Ecumenical Movement.

### *Vatican II*

The time was ripe for a radical and comprehensive reform of the liturgy. It was, as Adolf Adam remarks, an “event of epochal importance” not only in the history of the liturgy but in the life of the entire Roman Catholic Church when, on 4 December 1963, the document on the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy was accepted<sup>95</sup>. The Council was deeply influenced by the Liturgical Movement, and hence by the Reformation because the former in its essence was a revival of the latter, particularly pertaining worship. As the Liturgical Movement, the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy concentrated much on participation in the liturgy. It was thus decided that pastors should ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively and fruitfully<sup>96</sup>. This was demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by Christian people as a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people” (1Pet. 2:9) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. By way of promoting active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, gestures, psalmody, antiphones and songs, as well as bodily actions. This theme of awareness and active participation is one of the basic themes of the Constitution.

<sup>95</sup> Adolf Adam, *Foundations of Liturgy: An Introduction to Its History and Practice* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> W. M. Abbot (ed.), *Liturgy in the Documents of Vatican II: The Message & Meaning of the Ecumenical Council* (London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) p. 143.

The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy makes important statements about the nature and meaning of the liturgy and sets the course for far-reaching reforms. Among the aims of the document were the following:

- to foster a new esteem of the liturgy, because ‘no other action of the Church can equal its effectiveness by the same title and to the same degree’;
- to promote active participation by the faithful;
- to promote liturgical science and liturgical formation;
- to effect a general renewal in the changeable parts of the liturgy insofar as ‘the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires’ it; that is, it should be directed to the communal nature of liturgical celebration, to simplification and greater clarity, to adaptation to the tradition and special characters of people, which implies a degree of decentralization, and to greater consideration of the vernacular<sup>97</sup>.

Jaroslav Pelikan, in his response to the Constitution, writes that “worship is the metabolism of the Christian life”<sup>98</sup>. He mentions that the Constitution contains many remarkable expressions of the insight that liturgy must adjust itself to the state of spirituality and of the culture among a particular people. The uniqueness of each culture must be respected. There is also the explicit recognition that while the fundamental elements of the liturgy cannot be changed, everything else is changeable<sup>99</sup>. This affirms the fact that when renewal needs to take place, it must happen on the basis of principles

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<sup>97</sup> Adam Adolf, *Foundations of Liturgy: An Introduction to Its History and Practice* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 44-5.

<sup>98</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, “A Response to the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy”, in *The Documents of the Vatican II: The Message and Meaning of the Ecumenical Council*, ed. by Walter M. Abbot (London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) p.179.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

and yet with flexibility.

Vatican II laid the foundation for many changes in Catholic worship. It was declared that services would be conducted in the language of the people; the latter could now receive the cup during Holy Communion while denied previously; in worship, the culture of the people was taken very seriously. Dramatic changes were instituted which changed the outlook of the traditional Mass. There was a need for renewal and the Roman Catholic Church responded to it.

#### *The Need for Renewal*

As changes are inevitable, so the forms of worship change; nothing human is permanent. The forms of Christian worship are frequently changed by contingent matters of ordinary human life<sup>100</sup>. In other words, Christian worship is very much part of the world in which humans live their lives. But in using the changing means of the world in worship, Christians are still worshipping the same God. Precisely because God is changeless and eternal he can encounter humans in the very fluctuation of our means of worship. Beneath this apparent diversity they reflect the unchanging nature of the God whom we worship. The amazing fact of the history of Christian worship is not the variety of means of worship but their fundamental unity<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> James White, et al., *The Celebration of the Gospel: a Study In Christian Worship* (London: The Epworth Press, 1964) p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

One of the changes or developments in human life is that, especially the generation of today is looking for excitement, even in church. Bob Sorge affirms this when he argues that worship is not work—it is fun; it is enjoyable and relaxing<sup>102</sup>. One must be careful not to misunderstand or to misinterpret Sorge. What he means is that we should have fun worshipping God. We should enjoy ourselves in God's presence because, in this way, worship will be renewing, invigorating, and therapeutic. Excitement and a joyous environment can do wonders to one's state of mind; it feeds the soul. The significance of a joyous worship services lies in the fact that many people are troubled during the week and sincerely want that sense of hope, peace and joy that only Jesus Christ can provide, and might find this in the worship service. Worship for Sorge is nothing more than opening one's heart to God and enjoying a relationship of loving communion with God<sup>103</sup>. This is, however, not the reality yet, but the ideal, because if we look at the criticism against Protestant and in particular Reformed worship, we will see that we are still far behind.

There are many criticisms voiced against our current practice of worship. The most frequent critique of Christian worship has been that of dullness, which has many causes but in particular the cold and stern atmosphere that is experienced in many worship services<sup>104</sup>. A great deal of the dullness is due to the passiveness in the worship service. People coming to church are not involved. Most of the time they sit, standing only when a hymn is being sung. Many times the sermon does not allow for active

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<sup>102</sup> Bob Sorge, *Exploring Worship: A practical guide to praise and worship* (Canandaigua, New York: Oasis House, 1987) p. 84.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990) p. 78.

engagement because of the way it is communicated and its substance. Because young people are growing up, apart from crime and violence, in an era of excitement, it is therefore not surprising when they find the church boring. They then either withdraw totally from church or they look for 'greener pastures' or as Wright puts it, "they go where the action is – where they think their needs will be met – regardless of denomination, apparent doctrine, or location"<sup>105</sup>. Worshippers are like consumers doing shopping. For 'consumers', the worship service is one of the major reasons for choosing a church. Because they value worship style, most 'shoppers' visit several churches before making their decision. On each visit, before the service is over, most of them will have decided whether they intend to come back. In other words, there is no second chance to make a good first impression. If the service is dull and irrelevant, people will continue their search. If the service is alive and practical, their 'shopping' has probably ended (for the time being, anyway).

If the Reformed tradition wants to grow outwardly, it has first to grow inwardly. The inward growth will obviously start at the heart of the church, which is the worship service. For congregations committed to maintain and extend their membership, the implications warrant serious consideration: attracting and reaching people means a thorough and sympathetic understanding of their unique values and motivations. It means seeing life and church through their eyes. It means designing worship services that correspond to their needs.

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<sup>105</sup> Timothy Wright, *A Community of Joy: How to Create Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) p. 17.

Timothy Wright points out that “some worship services come across like empty wrappers”<sup>106</sup>. They contain nothing. And when this occurs on a regular basis, he warns that the following could happen: a) regular worshippers receive insufficient spiritual nurture; b) new attenders or visitors do not return – this means that no outward growth will take place; c) other aspects of a congregation’s effectiveness suffer. This is another affirmation of the importance of the worship service and its relationship with the rest of the church’s life. If the worship is empty, it will empty the church both of people and vitality<sup>107</sup>.

If we find Christian worship as we know it to be uninspiring and boring, we shall be driven, not necessarily to abandon it, but to seek other ways<sup>108</sup>. These other ways of worship may be more meaningful than the traditional ones. They may even preserve elements of traditional worship. But the fact remains: Christian worship needs renewal. Walter Harrelson remarks that perhaps the greatest crime in Christian worship is making of what is an act of celebration an occasion of boring and tiresome routines<sup>109</sup>. We need to guard against this danger, hence the quest for renewal will always be relevant. In this quest, we can learn a lot from other traditions (especially the charismatic tradition as most young people leave the Reformed tradition to worship there) which focus especially on celebration.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Walter Harrelson, *From Fertility to Cult Worship: A Reassessment of the Worship of Ancient Israel* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company Inc., 1970) p. xi.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

We shall now consider some of the aspects of Christian worship that should be revisited and possibly transformed if renewal and revitalization are to take place.

### *The Process of Renewal*

In the renewing process we are not moving from the purpose and reasons for Christian worship, i.e. to praise God. We still get together to worship God because through this we open up the channels of communication between God and ourselves<sup>110</sup>. We still worship to enhance the sense of unity within the Christian body. We still worship to increase our faith and to grow in holiness. All this we can do in many different ways; ways which are relevant and contextual; ways which can enrich and have meaning for the modern person. During the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in 1968, it was agreed that the language, the music, the prayers and the sermons should be dealt with in such a way that they are understandable to the generation of today, and as time goes by, worship will only be fruitful if it is clear, understandable, and relevant to the people of that time<sup>111</sup>.

Renewal could mean breaking with the old and adopting new styles. It could mean communicating the gospel in a wholly different way. But the renewal of the worship service could also mean that one goes back to the traditional and polishes it. Some of the traditional practices of the Early Church have been lost along the way. These can be

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<sup>110</sup> For a more elaborate discussion on the reasons for Christian worship, see Bob Sorge, *Exploring Worship: A practical guide to praise and worship* (Canandaigua, New York: Oasis House, 1987) p.108-122 where he differentiates between the vertical, horizontal, and inward aspects of worship.

<sup>111</sup> M. J. Du P. Beukes, 'Vernuwing van die Erediens', in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika (3): Perspektiewe op die Erediens*, ed. by A. J. Smuts (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1987) p. 1.

recovered and made relevant to us. Of course one cannot restore the Ancient Church in the twenty-first century as it was in the first centuries because history has moved on. But what is possible and imperative today is that the church be reformed and renewed through Word and Spirit both in correspondence with the Ancient Church and the reality of a new historical context. There is an analogous situation in everyday life in that many of the clothes that we wear today were in fashion years ago; today these styles are in fashion again, with a change here and there but with the same basics. One example of recovering the traditional in worship is the participatory role the laity had in the Early Church. While we cry out for active participation in our worship, we can take a fresh look at the meaning of the Greek word '*leitourgia*'. This will be discussed later under another heading.

When thinking about renewal, Gjerding & Kinnamon tell us that it is "worth remembering that many 'traditional' forms of worship are themselves the result of a spirit of renewal at some point in the history of the Church"<sup>112</sup>. Thus renewal is not new to the Church of Christ. Contemporary worship patterns grew out of what was then a new understanding of the relationship between God and the world. These patterns, according to Gjerding & Kinnamon, were seen as a means of transforming worship life<sup>113</sup>. The only problem is that what was transformative at one point in history may be seen and experienced today as a rigid tradition incapable of expanded meanings or symbols.

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<sup>112</sup> Gerdjng 7 Kinnamon, *No Longer Strangers: A Resource for Women and Worship* (Abingdon: Nashville, 1993) p. 11.

*(i) Renewal through a return to the tradition: Eucharistic Worship*

As has been mentioned earlier, renewal could mean the recovery of the traditional, as for example, in making the eucharistic service of the Early Church normative. The question was asked in the first chapter whether we would still be Reformed if we return to weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper or, will we be Roman Catholics? The simple answer is that we will still be Reformed since the Reformation was an attempt to be true to first century worship as well as the New Testament. Hence frequent celebrations of Holy Communion would not make us Catholics, but obedient to the plea and wish of Calvin that the defective custom of infrequent celebrations be corrected. The significance of recovering weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper lies in the fact Communion has a function that it nourishes believers in their pilgrimage to eternity; it edifies; it renews.

*(ii) Renewal through learning from other traditions*

Besides recovering the traditional, renewal also refers to something new, something that is not there and hence must be learned. During the Spring School in 1997, a whole afternoon was devoted to the question what we as Congregationalists (Reformed) could learn from other denominations or traditions in the endeavour to enrich our worship services. We invited ministers from other denominations who could speak with authority from their traditions. As the panel and group discussions progressed, we pointed out the liabilities in the different traditions, but more importantly, we highlighted the strengths and focussed on it. This gathering helped us to discover the

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

assets in our different traditions and how we could incorporate them intelligibly for the enhancement of our worship experience.

*(iii) Renewal through Inculturation*

One form of renewal in worship and church life which has been given much attention lately is inculturation. It is best to describe it as the “incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation”<sup>114</sup>. The critique in many African countries, particularly in South Africa is that our way of living and doing things is too western; we are not true to our different cultures in Africa. Inculturation therefore refers to the way of living and sharing one’s Christian faith in a particular context or culture. Hence the liturgies in worship services need to be adapted to reflect the culture of a people. Christian worship, as a human expression of the encounter with God, has to be local to be relevant. Africans must worship in an African way because the life outside the sanctuary as in the sanctuary will have to be integrated to make worship more meaningful (this point will be further developed in the third chapter). There is no sense in being part of a certain culture during the week and then worship on a Sunday in a different culture. Surely cultures have much to learn from each other as well as to offer each other. The point that I am making is that the life outside the worship service must be reflected in the worship service in order to render worship meaningful. For this to

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<sup>114</sup> P. Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York, Paulist Press 1990) p. 6.

happen, inculturation must take place. Although the Christian faith is one, its expressions could be many<sup>115</sup>.

*(iv) Renewal and Symbolism*

Renewal is not only about what we hear or experience, but also about what we see. The use of symbols and colour can contribute hugely to the renewal of worship. I suspect the black gown that the majority of Reformed ministers wear in worship services is a contributing factor to the barrier that sometimes exist between the minister and the congregation. The reason for this being the fact that the judge or the magistrate as well as lawyers and advocates also wear black gowns. The connotation with the judge, in conjunction with the authoritative tone that the service is sometimes conducted in, could convey an impersonal and stern atmosphere. Thus I think that renewal also means taking a fresh look at the liturgical vestments of the clergy as well as the expectations that the congregation put on themselves pertaining the clothes that they wear to worship services.

Liturgical vestments, as Grisbrooke states, comprise a “special case of ceremonial clothing and are, therefore part of a complex pattern of communication”<sup>116</sup>. They serve both to express the nature of the occasion when they are worn and to distinguish the respective role and rank of each participant. They have over the centuries acquired symbolic significance of various kinds whether spiritual or theological. However it is

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<sup>115</sup> E. E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation* (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press 1997) p. ix.10

<sup>116</sup> W. Jardine Grisbrooke, “Vestments”, in *The Study of Liturgy* (Revised Edition), ed. by Cheslyn Jones et al. (New York: University Press, 1992) p. 545.

recognized that whatever particular meanings vestments have acquired, there must from time to time, be an appraisal of the symbolism of vesture and its relevance and effectiveness in the total communication pattern of worship. Hence we need to review our clothes and more importantly, the colour of liturgical vestments.

There are certain symbols that speak a universal tongue and one such symbol is colour. Some colours lift the heart while others have a somber effect upon human beings. Let us then look what different colours were used in the liturgical history of the Christian Church, how they were used and what meanings they have communicated and still communicate:

**White** is a joyous colour and was used for weddings, baptisms, Christmas, and Easter. **Green** was used for the period of Epiphany, expressive of the universal meaning of our Lord. **Purple** and **violet** have been used for the seasons of Lent and Advent, periods of penitence and preparation. **Red** is a colour evoking violence and passion. It has been associated with Pentecost and the strong manifestations of the Holy Spirit. **Black** is the obvious sign of mourning. On only one day of the Christian year was it used in the church's worship, and that was Good Friday in memorial of the black despair of the crucifixion<sup>117</sup>.

As has been mentioned, most ministers in the Reformed Churches wear black gowns. For me, this is in contrast with the atmosphere and meaning of worship. As the latter is

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<sup>117</sup> K. G. Phifer, *A Protestant Case for Liturgical Renewal* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965) p. 138.

a joyous and festive occasion, the symbols need to communicate it. I would therefore suggest that a white gown (which communicates joy, hope, and cleanliness) be used in worship and that the colours explained above be the colours of the stoles that could be used as the seasons demands. Again we as Reformed people can learn from the Roman Catholics who used the different colours effectively. Colour symbols may need to be explained to the average congregation but once they have become a part of the general atmosphere, they communicate their own message and help create their own effect.

The last aspect that needs to be touched on is the clothing of the congregation. The type of clothing we are expected to wear to worship services sometimes creates a barrier. Contemporary worship as, Wright holds, breaks down such barriers through a warm, inviting climate<sup>118</sup>. The formality of the service takes its cue from the surrounding culture, i.e. the culture of the area and the audience determines appropriate dress. Ironically enough, the so-called coloured and African Christians are more crazy over a suit and tie and formal clothing than white Christians whose foreparents introduced them to Africa and South Africa. Many a time I have heard from people that their lack of appropriate clothes is the reason why they are not attending church. The unfortunate fact is that the majority of the African and so-called coloured people are poor and cannot even afford to have food everyday, let alone buying a suit or a formal dress. For the church to renew and to expand, we need to raise above the differentiation of 'this is my church clothes and this is my everyday clothes'. It is not the clothes that determine who or what one is, but one's character. Judging people for not wearing formal

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<sup>118</sup> Timothy Wright. *A Community of Joy: How to create contemporary worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) p. 69.

clothes to church, is parallel to what the apartheid regime did in South Africa by judging people by their skin colour and not by the content of their character. By eradicating the demand on 'church clothes' we might as well be free of the stiff and stern atmosphere that currently exists in many church services. This is the demand of contemporary Reformed people: that our worship services be renewed through variation, creativity, adaptation, symbolism, retrieving our tradition, and a warm inviting climate.

*(v) Renewal through Involvement and Participation*

One of the critiques (if not the major one) against Reformed worship is that there is very little involvement and participation. Ironically enough, this was one of the main reasons for the Protestant departure from Roman Catholicism. The involvement of the laity was dear to the hearts of the Reformers. While the Catholics had to learn from the Reformers about lay participation in the sixteenth century, Reformed worshippers of the twentieth century had to learn it again from the Catholics as it got lost along the way.

The conducting of worship services today is very different from what it was in the first century. In the Early Church, the whole congregation participated in the service<sup>119</sup>. It was in the early Middle Ages that certain changes took place in the worship services of the Roman and East Orthodox Churches. The clergy started conducting the whole

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<sup>119</sup> M. J Du P. Beukes, 'Vernuwung van die Erediens', in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika (3): Perspektiewe op die Erediens*, ed. by A. J. Smuts (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1987) p. 12.

service from beginning to end. The congregation was able only to listen. Even the hymns became the sole domain of the deacons and the choir.

Another extreme change was that the service was no longer conducted in the language of the people, but in Latin. It was only during the Reformation that these changes were reversed. The service was again in the language of the people so that they could understand and participate<sup>120</sup>.

This widespread concern for liturgical participation by the congregation raises important questions:

- Why must Christian worship be participatory?
- What form should participation take?
- Are some types of participation superior to others?
- What is the relationship of participation in worship to the spiritual renewal of the church?
  
- What is the underlying significance of all liturgical participation?

These are the questions that we will attempt to address in this part of the chapter but first we must understand the origin of the idea of participation.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

The word that describes how the worship service was conducted in the first century is “*leitourgia*”. This Greek word is composed from words for work (*ergon*) and people (*laos*)<sup>121</sup>. Literally it means that the worship service was the work of the people and not of one person. From *leitourgia* is derived the word ‘liturgy’. To call a service ‘liturgical’, is to indicate that it was conceived so that all worshippers take an active part in offering the worship together<sup>122</sup>. The very word ‘liturgy’ is a lie unless all the members of the body take an active part in the worship of God. Therefore it seems that the cry is to go back to that tradition which is then precisely what the Reformers intended.

Erickson highlights the all-important point which Luther also emphasized of the church being a royal priesthood<sup>123</sup>. In worship, Erickson continues, the identity of the church is most fully revealed. Because the church is a priestly body, its worship ought to be participatory. A clergy-dominated performance before a passive congregation obscures the priestly character of the entire church. According to the New Testament, when the church gathers for worship, it does so as a collective priesthood.

Despite firm biblical evidence in favour of participatory worship, it is not a concept that is warmly embraced by all. Differences in preference for forms of active participation are to be found in every local congregation. From his own experience, Erickson states that participatory worship is a concept that is “guaranteed to raise the blood pressure of

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<sup>121</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990) p. 31.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>123</sup> G. D. Erickson, *Participating in Worship: history, Theory, and Practice* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989) p. 1.

some members of congregations”<sup>124</sup>. Therefore, before any liturgical reform is attempted, it is important that, among the people who will be affected, a consensus should exist on the desirability and appropriateness of participatory worship.

Erickson suggests that participation must be undertaken knowingly and actively so that the result will be fruitful<sup>125</sup>. To participate knowingly, there must be an ongoing study of the Bible that is based upon an ardent and living love for God’s Word. This is a vital ingredient of growth in the Christian faith. It prepares the heart and mind for the worship of God. It is only when one knows the basic tenets of our faith that one can be ready for active participation in worship. The level of active participation, however, involves deep-seated factors that cannot be ignored. An invitation to more active participation in worship directly challenges current levels of personal faith and commitment to Christ and the church<sup>126</sup>. Feelings of discomfort over what is going on in worship and possibly over those who are leading it and sharing in it will need to be dealt with creatively. For many, a more active level of participation will occur only as the result of a faith awakening nurtured by exceptional pastoral skills<sup>127</sup>.

Active participation will become fruitful participation. The latter issues forth in mission as acts of charity and as efforts on behalf of social justice and world peace. In this sense the liturgy of the sanctuary and the liturgy of life are integral to each other. The purpose of liturgical participation is not simply to perform the liturgy better. Its twofold purpose

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

is the glorification of God and the equipping of Christians with power to carry out the witness and mission of the church in the world. These two dimensions of liturgy are inseparable.

J. D. Benoit argues that the liturgy of the church does not develop artificially and arbitrarily; it is a living, growing organism, a tree which develops and is always sending out new shoots<sup>128</sup>. The liturgy is furthermore an

uninterrupted stream, a living spring of prayer throughout the centuries, sustaining the prayer of the church and our own individual prayers. To this great river of liturgical life, which is one with the stream of Christian life itself, we must continually be returning, so that our liturgies do not become little streams at its margins which soon lose themselves in sterile backwaters. The stream can be enriched as the years pass. To deny that the centuries have brought their tribute of pure spring waters to swell the river of Christian liturgy, would be to deny the presence of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The liturgy is not a closed tradition, turned in upon itself<sup>129</sup>.

The liturgy ought to be ever afresh and continually renewing. This does not mean that everything must be new every time. The same thing could be done differently at different times so that it will be fresh and new. White comments that in the early

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<sup>128</sup> J. D. Benoit, *Liturgical Renewal: Studies in Catholic & Protestant Developments on the Continent* (London: SCM Press, 1958) p. 67.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

church, a variety of books were used by several people in performing ministries of worship leadership within a single service<sup>130</sup>. Both lay people and clergy had their particular ministries to perform. They also had proper books to guide them in partaking in their distinct roles in worship. The roles were also changed from time to time, which brought about variety and newness. The using of the various gifts of the different people in the church was for the benefit of the whole gathered community. The idea of the clergy doing everything was not known in the Early Church. Clericalism was a medieval development, as has been stated. It is most unfortunate that in the very churches that did so much in the Reformation to restore the role of the people to genuine corporate worship, there is so little appreciation of the fact that the liturgy is the people's work<sup>131</sup>.

Sharing leadership was part of first century Christian worship. What is important to note is that the participation of lay people, according to Willimon, reinforces the belief in the priesthood of believers<sup>132</sup>. Willimon says that this becomes a sign of what the laity do throughout the week – assisting the pastor in caring for the congregation so that the latter can fulfil its ministry in the world. Paul reminded the church in Corinth that Christian worship is primarily a corporate affair. All those who worship should participate in it. But lay people, in order to participate, must be trained for their leadership. The Sunday worship is too important to be spoiled by anyone. Everyone

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<sup>130</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990) p. 46.

<sup>131</sup> Brown in Taylor 1967: 210.

<sup>132</sup> *Preaching and Leading Worship: The Pastor's Handbook* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984) p. 38.

should know what to do and how to do it so that the service does not erupt in disorder; amidst participation, it must be orderly.

After all is said and done the question remains: Why the emphasis on participation? Two answers can be given here. Firstly, being a minister does not necessarily mean that one has received all the gifts of leadership, preaching, praying, comforting and all those elements which form part of the worship service. As a pastor one should be trained in worship leadership<sup>133</sup> and preaching, but this still does not necessarily make one the best worship leader or the best preacher. By this I am not saying that only the best should participate. What I do say is that those with the gifts of preaching should be allowed to preach. Let the people exercise their different God-given gifts. The gifts that Christians have received were given to be shared in community, not be kept in isolation.

Secondly, there are many people who may want to worship God themselves, i.e., to participate in congregational worship; they may like to have an opportunity for prayer, for reading Scripture, for collecting the money, for serving the Lord's Supper. Through partaking in all these activities worship could become more fulfilling and satisfying to them than it is if they merely watch and listen. This idea was totally endorsed by the Liturgical Movement which realized that active participation by the people in the

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<sup>133</sup> Many seminaries neglected and still neglect to prepare ministers for competent leadership. More theological students get training at a university where the emphasis is on academic information; the practical side of ministry is often overlooked. Inevitably churches have become prey to the idiosyncrasies of their ministers who themselves lack liturgical expertise. It has also led to the almost total absence of liturgical understanding on the part of the lay people who lead worship Sunday by Sunday in so much of the Church. As a result, the worship of churches has tended to degenerate into a

liturgy was the best means of nourishing and deepening the spiritual life<sup>134</sup> and hence set about promoting this. People want to worship God fully and to enjoy the 'priceless privilege' of fellowship with God<sup>135</sup>.

It is important, however, that the idea of active participation in the worship service should not be misunderstood. It does not mean that every individual should play a special role in every service. Not only is this not practically possible, but it will also cause chaos and disorder. Muller suggests that people could be used in groups<sup>136</sup>. One group could help with the preparation of the liturgy, others lead the hymns and choruses, others help with the sermon, etc. Unfortunately many of the Sunday orders of worship consist of the pastor speaking, the pastor praying and the pastor reading, with little opportunity for the congregation to do anything but to sit and listen<sup>137</sup>.

According to Allen & Borrer the entire congregation's acts of adoration, praise, confession, thanksgiving, and dedication are more important than the preacher's singular act of proclamation<sup>138</sup>. They warn that the 'one man show' service may well be robbing many churches of their spiritual assets. Psalm 150 calls us all to participate in worship, "... let everything that breathes, praise the Lord".

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mere haphazard mixture of hymns and prayers, scripture readings and sermon and offertory, with no discernible structure to it.

<sup>134</sup> H. E. Chandlee, 'The Liturgical Movement', in *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. by J. G. Davies (London: SCM Press, 1986) p. 308.

<sup>135</sup> Allen, R. & Borrer, G., *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1982) p. 10.

<sup>136</sup> Julian Muller, *Erediens as Fees* (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1990) p. 115.

<sup>137</sup> W. H. Willimon, *Preaching and Leading Worship: The Pastor's Handbook* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984) p. 20.

<sup>138</sup> Allen & Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1982) p. 9.

Throughout almost the whole world, the proportion of educated, literate worshippers has increased. This has led to a new emphasis on understanding and involvement (parallels can perhaps be seen in management and education styles). The result is a decentralizing of the manner in which worship is conducted. Thus worship is no longer a spectacle (and never should have been), but a community action.

Because worship is a community action, it involves both men and women. Although women have generally constituted a larger percentage of worshippers than the men, they have been denied of leadership roles until recently. Some have claimed that the word 'men' in the liturgy includes women. However the use of exclusive male language has caused and is still causing great problems in the church. If the worship is to be renewed, the language must also be renewed. This aspect is further developed below.

*(vi) Renewal through Inclusive Language*

The twentieth century has seen a marked change in the position and perception of women. This changed position of women is reflected in varying degrees in different parts of the world. It is pleasing to see that many churches also now have a different perception of women than was the case a few decades ago. Many denominations worldwide now allow women to be ordained to the priesthood. For a few others, it is

still a burning issue. However the world has partly<sup>139</sup> come to an acceptance of the equality between women and men.

The realization of the equality between men and women has raised many issues in the church and in particular in the worship service. The reference to humanity has traditionally been masculine. This tradition is ages old but is no longer acceptable because it undermines women. As male and female are equal in South Africa's constitution, so are they equal before God. Paul's famous verse to the Galatians pertinently says that in Jesus Christ, all are equal. In Christ there is no Jew nor Gentile, no slave nor free, no male nor female (Gal. 3:28).

The quest today is for the equality between male and female to be visible and evident in our worship as well. First it should come out in liturgical language. Generic terms that are identical with masculine forms are no longer acceptable. Liturgy, which has the power to teach and shape minds, is required to be recast in language more truly inclusive. A liturgy that does justice to everyone, which by definition cannot and may not exclude anyone, will be sensitive in its language use. The liturgy is the place in which God's liberating Word needs to resound, in which we symbolically experience our *koinonia* with God and one another to the full<sup>140</sup>. If the liturgy tends to be alienating and drives people away instead of inviting them, then there is an urgent need for work

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<sup>139</sup> There are still those who view themselves as superior to women in the church, in the business sector and almost everywhere. Patriachalism is so deeply rooted that it will take ages to be fully eradicated. But meanwhile more and more men come to the realization that we are all equal.

<sup>140</sup> Jozef Lamberts, 'Contemporary Feeling and Liturgy,' in *Concilium: Liturgy and the Body*, ed. by Chauvet, L. & Lumbala, F. K. (London: SCM Press, 1995) p. 134.

to be done to overcome this.

A much bigger problem to deal with is the use of masculine forms in reference to God. Marjorie Procter-Smith points out that exclusive or dominant male language for God has granted authority to men in a patriarchal culture and religion<sup>141</sup>. She suggests that avoiding gender-specific language altogether can perhaps alleviate this danger of male God-language. Erickson also sees the potential danger but argues that the scrubbing of the gender-specific references is counterproductive, for it narrows the poetic possibilities for liturgical expression<sup>142</sup>. He therefore suggests a wider range of images. This would mean a searching for new and non-discriminatory ways of addressing God. In this endeavour one needs to be very sensitive so that we do not make the mistakes of the past. One could nevertheless still be very creative. We experience God as much more than just a father. The Bible refers to God also as a mother (see for example Isaiah 66:13). Besides this there are also other ways to address and view God. The language of much modern worship has tended to favour such terms as Father, King, Master, Lord, etc. In contrast, however, the Bible uses an expanded repertoire of similes and metaphors like the Rock, Truth, Refuge, Foundation, Shepherd, Light, etc. God is also referred to as our consoler, our comforter, our friend, our guardian, our lover, our provider, our caretaker, and many more. "Utilizing a fuller diversity of

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<sup>141</sup> Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990) p. 86.

<sup>142</sup> G. D. Erickson, *Participating in Worship: history, Theory, and Practice* ( Louisville, kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989) p. 122.

biblical images in worship will offset an overuse of masculine images and enrich the perception of God's being"<sup>143</sup>.

Liturgical language must be reconstructed with awareness of the limits and dangers of male language and, as Procter-Smith adds, "with a parallel awareness of the problem of the absence of female language"<sup>144</sup>. But the debate over inclusive religious language is most critical where proposed linguistic changes dovetail with theological changes. Some of the proposed references to God imply a reshaping of traditional theology. The doctrines of the trinity, the relationship of Christian faith to nature, and the immediacy of a personal Saviour-God are cornerstones of the faith that are being challenged by some in the debate over inclusive language<sup>145</sup>. The use of feminine designations for God for the purpose of balancing masculine imagery poses an additional problem. To assign some qualities to God's 'feminine side' and other to God's 'masculine side' inadvertently makes sex-stereotyping even more rigid<sup>146</sup>.

The language issue is clearly a contentious one which is connected with many social, political and ecclesiological questions. Its outcome will be determined by criteria beyond purely liturgical ones. In the meantime we can enhance worship by implementing innovative ways of speaking about and to God.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Marjorie Procter-Smith, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990) p. 86.

<sup>145</sup> *Participating in Worship: history, Theory, and Practice* ( Louisville, kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989) p. 123.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

*(vii) Renewal through Preaching*

Protestants have generally considered preaching as the main event of worship to which all else is preliminary; the rest of worship is simply a frame to surround, or at best enhance the all-important picture. It is only on rare occasions that something else may be the focus of worship. A more holistic approach is emerging today: preaching and other parts of worship complement each other, and both grow out of the texts and themes for the day. Thus other parts of worship echo and reinforce what has been said in the sermon, while the preaching focuses on the meaning of other parts of the worship. However, preaching is still regarded as the part in the worship service that can never be omitted or substituted by something else, such as a dramatic performance, for example. Because it is regarded as the highlight of worship in the Reformed tradition, we will now give some attention to preaching.

Many of today's sermons are anathematized as boring, dull, uninteresting, irrelevant, and incomprehensible<sup>147</sup>. They are furthermore characterized as formal, impersonal, and giving no guidance for commitment and action. They are also viewed as too abstract and too theoretical. According to the research done by Barnard people feel that the sermon is preached with too much authority and finality<sup>148</sup>. Fred Craddock, in his book, *As One Without Authority*, affirms this when he remarks that it is one of the reasons why the "verdict on preaching has been rendered and the sentence passed"<sup>149</sup>. James White also adds his voice to this concern by observing that preaching

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<sup>147</sup> Daniel J. Baumann, *An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972) p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> A. C. Barnard, *Die Erediens* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1981) p. 5.

<sup>149</sup> Fred Craddock, *As One without Authority* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1971) p. 1.

too often “presents an image of authoritarianism rather than authority”<sup>150</sup>. He distinguishes between the two by explaining authoritarianism as a pose, which rests on style and format rather than direct knowledge of the subject. This is what gives preaching a negative connotation, so much so that to say ‘don’t preach to me’ actually means, ‘don’t force your opinions on me’<sup>151</sup>. Authority, on the other hand, refers to respect for someone’s knowledge on the subject. Genuine preaching has authority because it has a reflection on Scripture and the life and surroundings of people today.

While the worship service is the heart of the church, it is the sermon, especially in the Reformed churches, that is today regarded as the heart of the worship service. It is so highly regarded because we assume that, in preaching, God is communicating with us. Therefore preaching needs to be given much attention and devotion. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones has such a high view of preaching that he challenges himself by viewing preaching as the “highest and the most glorious calling”<sup>152</sup>. This is a view shared by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers and for us to recover this, we need to devote as much time possible on meditating and preparing God’s Word before we deliver it<sup>153</sup>.

The question is how effective and fruitful is our preaching today; does it make sense to the modern person; do our preachers communicate the Word of God clearly and understandably enough? Guided by the critiques mentioned above, the answer is in

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<sup>150</sup> James White, *New Forms of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) p. 181.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> See D. Martin Lloyd-Jones’ famous book on *Preaching and Preachers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971)

<sup>153</sup> In his book, *The Practice of Preaching*, (1995) Paul Scott Wilson suggest that sermon preparation should start on Monday. He is very helpful in proposing steps to be taken everyday to accomplish thorough and thoughtful sermons.

most cases in the negative. We are in dire need of effective ways of preaching. We need to revive our preaching because, as Bruce Mawhinney rightfully points out, “the shallow and shoddy preaching over the years has seriously harmed Christianity”<sup>154</sup>. Hence we find that many contributions have been made to the renewal and refreshing of our preaching.

Beukes believes that the focus in preaching should definitely be on the life issues confronting Christians today<sup>155</sup>. This means that sermons should address our needs. However, there is disagreement between Beukes and Barnard on what the modern person is looking for in the sermon. According to Beukes, people are looking for answers on life issues while Barnard argues that the modern person is not looking for answers but wants to engage in the search for solutions. Thus Barnard believes that people are not looking for a sermon with the final answers to problems, but rather sermons which can help them in their search. Normally the preacher does everything in the sermon. The preacher states the problems, connects the ideas, fills in the gaps and resolves the problems.

In their sermons preachers should not indicate that they know all the answers, because they do not. They are only guiding the congregations in their search to comprehend the struggles and to deal with problems in appropriate ways. I would therefore disagree with Beukes and those who are seeking the answers to problems in the sermons. Some

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<sup>154</sup> Bruce Mawhinney, *Preaching with Freshness* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1991) p. 87.

<sup>155</sup> M. J. du P Beukes, “Vernuwing van die Erediens”, in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika (3): Perspektiewe op die Erediens*, ed. by A. J. Smuts (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1987) p. 27.

might find answers, others might not. But in preaching, the preacher can give the sermon in such a way that those with troubles and trials will feel easy about discussing their issues. So often people feel discouraged from discussing their problems with the minister and even disagree with her/him because of the authoritative way, the so-called 'pulpit voice', in which the sermon was preached. One might have to seek for sermon forms other than the traditional ones. I indeed think that today we need sermons which allow for dialogue and communication.

According to White, the newer communications media have brought to light an increasing shift in the minds of people away from the type of thinking we have assumed good preaching presupposed – a clear and consistent presentation<sup>156</sup>. Preachers have learned to build their sermon outlines in clear and precise progression. Suddenly they find that many people, especially younger people, are not impressed by this<sup>157</sup>.

A fuller form of involvement and participation occurs in the **open-ended sermon** that James White suggests. According to White, this is where

the minister begins by interpreting a text or some commonly held belief, raises some problem with regard to it, maybe offers his (*sic*) own resolution in regard to this, and then turns the sermon over to the congregation. Individuals stand up

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<sup>156</sup> James White, *New Forms of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) p. 180.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

and contribute their witness to the interpretation of the text or belief in terms of their own lives and experiences<sup>158</sup>.

This sermon-type is good to employ in small groups. It might also work well with a bigger congregation, but it has dangers in it. People might respond but they also might not. Because of these uncertainties, such a service requires a minister who is fairly secure and willing to take a risk that almost anything may happen or perhaps nothing at all<sup>159</sup>. If nothing happens, the minister should be able to handle the situation. At other times the interest may be so high that it will difficult to control the discussion and end in reasonable time.

Another engaging sermon-type which is relevant to our time, but rarely used, is the **dialogue**. The opposite of the dialogue-sermon is the monologue-sermon. The latter is what we mostly experience and practise – the preacher assumes a monopolistic role; the preaching is done by one person speaking while the others listen. This, according to George Swank, might often result in the preaching being a distant and impersonal event<sup>160</sup>. The concern here is whether the style of preaching should be monological or dialogical. In the monologue, the preaching is usually a one-way event; hence communication is seldom enhanced. Swank argues that communication is intended to

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> George Swank, *Dialogic Style in Preaching* (More effective preaching series) (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1981) p. 24.

bring together meanings from both sides<sup>161</sup>. Because the dialogical sermon allows this, it is therefore strongly recommended, especially in a pluralistic and diverse environment.

Dialogue sermons<sup>162</sup> begin with the concerns of the people. In this form of sermon, the preacher attempts to help the people to think together; the people are involved as the preacher steers them to search, to think, to discover. Thompson & Bennet, as a positive appraisal of the dialogue sermon, quote the following from the American news magazine *Time* (17 May 1968):

... more and more clergymen (*sic*) are letting the people in the pew talk by experimenting with 'dialogue sermons' as an alternative to the pulpit monologue. One reason for this communal approach to the exposition of God's Word is that today's educated congregations are unwilling to put up with authoritarian preaching that lacks the stamp of credibility. Advocates of the dialogue sermon point out that since industry, government and education have discovered the virtue of the seminar and the conference, the church should also explore this avenue of intellectual discovery<sup>163</sup>.

Thompson & Bennet also mention that the 1968 report of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala on *The Worship of God in a Secular Age* cites dialogue sermons, dramas, and visual arts as forms of presentation that may help the modern person in

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> For a brief history of dialogue as a means of communication and the basic types, see W.D Thompson & Gordon C. Bennet, 1969. *Dialogue Preaching: The shared sermon*, Valley Forge: The Judson Press.

understanding the Christian message<sup>164</sup>. The traditional sermon format should not be discarded, but is only one way of presenting the Gospel message. Dialogue preaching is not proposed as a substitute for monologue preaching, but rather as a supplement to it.

Besides the dialogue sermon and the monologue sermon there are also other sermon forms which could be used to convey the message of God powerfully. The Bible is full of different sermon forms. It was mainly through parables, through storytelling, that Jesus preached. We must reflect and discover that the Bible is a very rich source of sermon forms. Form is crucial for effective preaching. According to Ruth Duck, variety in form enhances preaching and some forms are more effective than others, depending on the content of the sermon<sup>165</sup>. Pieterse mentions that an empirical study of a number of sermons revealed that ninety-nine percent of those analyzed were text-thematic<sup>166</sup> in form<sup>167</sup>. There are, however, different ways to clothe the contents of our messages, such as the narrative sermon, the poetic sermon and the topical sermon<sup>168</sup>. The usage of these forms alternately with the text-thematic can bring colour into the pulpit, not only for the sake of change, but also in the search for God's Word to be ever fresh and new.

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<sup>163</sup> Thompson & Bennet, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1969) p. 7.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ruth Duck, *Finding Words for Worship: A Guide for Leaders* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Press, 1995) p. 51.

<sup>166</sup> The text-thematic sermon form is designed mainly to convince the hearer. It may take the form of an exposition; instruction; a discussion of the message with the aim of comforting, exhorting or admonishing; proving a statement or truth; unfolding the message of the text by illuminating it from different angles; exploring and answering a question; providing information; persuading.

<sup>167</sup> H. J. Pieterse, *Communicative Preaching* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987) p. 136.

<sup>168</sup> For an elaborate discussion on these sermon forms, see Pieterse, *Communicative Preaching* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987) p. 134 – 190.

As we seek for new word forms and styles to convey the Word of God, so is there also a quest for fresh music and singing styles.

*(viii) Renewal through Music*

Music has the capacity to convey praise and joy, concern and sorrow, in a manner that defies words. Welton Gaddy encapsulates the power of music in the following sentences:

Music is a medium through which every act of worship can find meaningful expression. God can be praised by music. Convictions of faith can be sounded through music and thereby strengthened. The pathos of true penitence can be communicated musically. Assurance of divine forgiveness can be announced musically. Music is a major medium for the proclamation of the gospel. By means of music, an invitation can be extended and a decision of faith celebrated<sup>169</sup>.

It is however important to note that not all of the above-mentioned actions or effects can be accomplished by the same kind of music or in the same way. The importance of music is not simply in the singing or playing of notes, but in the interpretation of those notes and words that will produce a harmony which will fit the action or express the moment. The desired effect in worship can be achieved by the creative use of music. This must certainly not be the sole aim of music, but it can enhance the worship

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<sup>169</sup> Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992) p. 153.

experience.

Music stirs our emotions. It helps us to create a right and warm atmosphere for fruitful worship. Many times we are praying for the right atmosphere to worship, but what are we doing from our side to create that? Although the Holy Spirit is the first creator of atmosphere, we also have to work on our surroundings because, in worship, they have an influence on our feelings, reactions and thoughts<sup>170</sup>.

Music is definitely one of the most effective elements in creating atmosphere. Even in movies, television series, dramas, etc., music is effectively used to instil certain emotions and reactions in the viewers. The music leads on into what is to come. By making effective use of music, the coldness in many churches can be transformed into warmth that will feed our souls.

It is very unfortunate that in the Reformed churches music is used so little. As Reformed worship is known to be intellectually inclined, this could then be the reason for the ignoring, denying, and forgetting of emotions. Reformed worshippers seemingly tend to forget that when we worship God it should be with our whole body, mind and soul. In this process, Muller suggests, music is a dynamic vehicle<sup>171</sup>. But in most Reformed churches music is only used to lead the singing.

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<sup>170</sup> Julian Muller, *Die Erediens as Fees* (Transvaal: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1990), p. 29.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

In the Old Testament we read about different instruments that were used during worship. Psalm 150 mentions the trumpet, the harp and lyre, the tambourine, the strings, flute and cymbals. Today, in most Reformed churches, the organ<sup>172</sup> is the only instrument accepted. It is perhaps the best musical instrument in guiding the congregation, because the organ can produce the harmony of many voices at the same time and still lead with the melody while instruments like the violin, trumpet, and saxophone can only lead with the melody part. But this does not at all justify the exclusion of other musical instruments. Older people grew up with the idea of only the organ being used and thus they have accepted it as the only instrument suitable for use in the worship service. The younger generation have also grown up with the organ, but they are exposed in everyday life to the different musical instruments in popular music, jazz music, etc. They enjoy and appreciate the combination and harmony of many instruments in one song. The youth of today enjoy themselves in the disco because the rhythm and the beat create a joyous and festive spirit in them. But what happens in the church? Young people<sup>173</sup> do not feel like singing and participating in the worship service. Why not? Because to many of them it does not appear to be a joyous and festive occasion, although the Bible points out that the worship of God is a festive event. Muller also emphasizes this in his book with the title, *Die Erediens as Fees*.

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<sup>172</sup> One of my professors in an undergraduate course once told the class that her father believes that only the organ should be allowed in the worship service. He regarded it as a sacred instrument and so do many others. That is one of the reasons for the exclusion of any other musical instrument.

<sup>173</sup> I admit there are many exceptions, however this is more common than exceptional.

Gaddy records that some groups early in the Free Church tradition banned the use of musical instruments in worship, with varying reasons<sup>174</sup>. Some argued for the precedent of an absence of musical instruments in the earliest forms of New Testament worship. As Gaddy rightly observes, their historical knowledge was accurate, but their reasoning was faulty<sup>175</sup>. Primitive worship took place in family dwellings and other locations where musical instruments were unavailable. Strict fidelity to this pattern of worship would require an abandonment of church buildings as well as prohibition against musical instruments<sup>176</sup>. Other people have assumed that musical instruments belong to 'worldly' buildings and activities. The pipe organ was especially viewed as an instrument that belonged in a concert hall.

Musical instruments serve a purpose in worship that is very different from their purpose in a concert performance. When people gather to enjoy a musical recital, instrumentalists are expected to call attention to their musical expertise and to the importance, beauty, and versatility of the instruments that they play. When the people assemble for worship, however, all the attention belongs to God. A musical instrument has a place in worship, but only as long as it contributes to that focus on God.

The question to be asked is whether we can accept any style of music in our worship services today. What style of music is relevant and appropriate? This is a complex issue, because style is not something static, but dynamic. If we continue to use the

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<sup>174</sup> Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992) p. 156.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

organ only we perhaps run the risk of losing the youth who grow up with more variety and would like that in church. Or are we to do away with the organ in favour of having a band as musicians, and perhaps lose the elderly and traditionalists? Or are we going to use the organ and the band alternately to satisfy both older and younger members? These are the questions to which local churches have to respond. The church must consider the needs of all its members, especially the youth and the children, because they are not only part of the church of today (contrary to what many people would argue) but also they are the church of tomorrow. They are part of today because the church does not consist only of elderly people, but the children form an important and an integral part of it. Jesus set the example by saying that the kingdom of God is for such as the children.

Music is such an important part of Christian worship that its role, its effects, and its relevancy need to be addressed continuously. Music has the ability to attract people to church, but it also has the ability to repel people from it. The latter is not what the church needs. We need growth and must use all our power and sources that God has given us to enlarge God's kingdom on earth.

Despite the many positives that could be accomplished through the creative use of music, we need also be aware that there is a danger in the power of music, in that it inspires many reactions some of which could be quite foreign to worship. The use of music does not necessarily contribute to the enhancement of the worship experience. I have experienced instances where especially young people dance at Gospel concerts not

with the idea of 'dancing for God', but only because they enjoy the music by virtue of the fact that the beat and rhythm are similar to that in the nightclubs. Nowadays some so-called 'Gospel music' is also played in the nightclubs. The problem with this is that almost all those who attend nightclubs do not go there to listen to the words of the songs played, but to enjoy the rhythm and harmony that the different musical instruments produce. Hence I would think that style (form) is crucial in conveying the content of the Gospel message. While there is no such thing as a Christian style, we must not be misled or naïve in thinking that various styles have no relation whatsoever to the content or the message. Styles themselves are developed as symbol systems or vehicles for certain worldviews or messages<sup>177</sup>. To make this point clearer, Schaeffer uses the following appropriate illustration:

Let us say, for example, that you are playing in a Christian rock group, making an art form of rock. Suppose further that at the same time you are going into certain coffeehouses and using rock as a bridge to preach the Christian message. That's fine. But then you must be careful of the feedback; when you have finished playing, you must ask whether the people who have heard you play have understood what you have been doing. Have they heard your message clearly because you have used what they have always heard when they have listened to rock, because you used their form? Sometimes the content will get through, sometimes it will not. Not all situations will be the same; the immediate situation and what you are trying to do must be kept in mind<sup>178</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Art & the Bible* p. 52.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

Till recently the Christian message in music was 'dressed' in a particular style. One could listen to it and realize that it was 'Gospel music'. With the introduction of the Christian message in rock, rap, or pop style, it is hard to distinguish which is what unless you listen carefully to the words. The intention here is not to prescribe what style must be used and what is not suitable, but simply to highlight that some styles have potential danger. Hence the use of musical instruments and other musical genres in worship (which I fully endorse) calls for diligent care to ensure the best possible use of this means of expression.

Music, which is an art form, is not the only art form that can be used to light up and transform a worship service. Various other forms of art, like paintings, drama, sculpture, images, etc. can be used to enhance our worship experiences. Let us then explore the use of art in the sanctuary as a means of enriching our worship of God.

*(ix) Renewal through the use of Art*

Many of the books with suggestions and proposals for creative worship that have been written thus far highlight the fact that worship services are frequently deprived of creativity, variety, and beauty. In looking at ways to improve our worship experiences, it is suggested that the arts can be a powerful vehicle in accomplishing this. It is also noted that the use of different art forms in worship is not only able to bring about creativity, but also have the capacity to enhance the worship experience at a very deep level. We will consider this point by first exploring what purpose art serves in the

sanctuary and what ought to be the intentions of the artists and the worshippers. Then we will see how the arts can beautify the worship service and how beauty can be manifested in that service. We will also critically look at the criteria for appropriate art in the sanctuary.

Art can be beautiful, but it can also be ugly. For its intended usage in the sanctuary, it should be beautiful because it has to portray something about God or what God embodies. It needs to be beautiful because God is beautiful – God is the creator of beauty and beautiful things. However, one must exercise caution here, because it can be very easy for our attention in the church to be drawn to the art (because of its beauty) rather than to God. Numerous are the stories of Christians artists and architects who have devoted their lifetimes to the pursuit of artistic beauty in the praise of God. Nevertheless, when they leave the world scene, they leave behind art that is misunderstood or even ignored by the Christian community<sup>179</sup>. Many beautiful places of worship built in another day have become mere reflections of the art of their age. Beautiful cathedrals, especially in Europe, often serve as museums crowded with sightseers and tourists, making money for guides and tourist agencies. While it is not possible to know the exact spiritual condition and heart motive of all who worked to build such magnificent structures to the glory of God, many thousands of hours and great amounts of money were given to worship through this artistic expression of

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<sup>179</sup> Allen & Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1982), p. 29.

architectural, structural, and craftsmanlike efforts<sup>180</sup>. It is thus a pity that intentions of praise and worship are often lost along the way.

The danger in today's worship services is that the intention or the reason for the gathering on a Sunday morning can be distorted. This is especially liable to happen in churches that put too much emphasis on beauty and the use of art. Hence we must be careful not to replace God with art as the object of worship. We must never lose sight of the fact that the art in its various forms is a means of worship and better communication. In the service of the Lord, art is never an end in itself. When this happens, it becomes idolatry. The choice we face does not lie in whether we use art as one of our tools of worship or not; but rather in whether or not the materials we use for worship are clear means that show forth and celebrate the gospel<sup>181</sup>.

Some people believe that to be artistic is somehow unspiritual. They seem intentionally to avoid the pursuit of artistic excellence so that they will not fall into a possible trap of placing the art above God. Allen and Borrer record artistically gifted Christians who have given up their artistic pursuit because they believed that the art was "taking them away" from God<sup>182</sup>. One can only wonder why could they not have dedicated their art to the glory of God as an expression of worship and still remained artists. But it is only when our hearts are focused upon loving and serving God alone that all the arts will

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> James White F. (et al.), *The Celebration of the Gospel: a study in Christian worship* (London: The Epworth Press, 1964), p. 99.

<sup>182</sup> Allen & Borrer, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1982), p. 22.

suddenly help us to love God more fully. It is then that the arts become beautiful because the intention of both the artist and the worshipper is to serve God.

Allen and Borrer tell the story of a craftsman who had travelled to America from Europe to dedicate his life to some of the detail work of one of the country's grandest places of worship<sup>183</sup>. One day a sightseer who was touring the edifice observed the workman meticulously labouring near the high ceiling on a symbol which could hardly be seen from the floor. What is more, he seemed to be occupied with a detail on the top, out of view of even the most carefully observant worshipper. The sightseer said, "Why are you being so exact; no one can even see the detail you are creating from the distance?" The busy artist replied, "God can!"

Our utilitarian society often misses or even scorns the artist's careful efforts. The sightseer mentioned above viewed the art as an end in itself, not as a means of presenting to God an expression of worth and praise. God is a God of beauty and detail. His creation gives ample evidence of his attention to detail. Observe the rose, the insect, the animal, the human being, and the stellar system. The more carefully we look, the more perfectly beautiful we see it to be. How awesome and breathtaking is the detail! This beauty in the detail is a marvellous vehicle for the believer in worship expression. The Lord of detail has seen to every detail of our redemption as surely as he has in all of creation. As God uses art to reflect his beauty and creativity; so ought his redeemed children to worship Him<sup>184</sup>.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 29-30.

The beauty of the arts, whether music, paintings, images, sculpture etc., is that it can create change. It brings about creativity in the dull worship services if used correctly and intelligently. It has the power to convince and to penetrate. It certainly cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world. The change could be for the better or for the worse. In the worship service it is hoped and intended that it would be for the better. Hence art must be applied appropriately and sensitively in the light of the importance of the worship service.

Allen & Borrer argue that God's glory, which is so beautiful, can be portrayed beautifully in creative expression<sup>185</sup>. They further comment that

our utilitarian, pragmatic thinking keeps us from development of aesthetic appreciation. If it works, it is good; if it is just for visual beauty, it is not. Persons with indiscriminating ears sometimes find it difficult to appreciate aural quality. They feel if an instrument 'works', that is all it takes. If, when a key is pressed, sound comes out, it is good; little attention is given to the quality of that sound... The same mindset concludes that if a building does not leak, and has some heat and light, it is fine. Little or no appreciation is given for its shape or finish texture. It is good and right to give attention to beauty; appreciation of

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

beauty is a step of maturity—especially beauty God has given to draw attention to Himself!<sup>186</sup>

We are thinking here, not of beauty (or art) for its own sake, but of beauty which draws attention to the Lord of beauty. This beauty is seen in our church buildings (which are symbols), in our symbolism (always conspicuous, even when absent), in our musical expressions (quality of composition and presentation). For beauty to be acceptable before God, it is important that it be true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, reputable, and praiseworthy. Beauty must declare God's glory, both in public worship and in private adoration of God's works.

God sanctioned beauty in the building of the temple by Solomon. The beauty of the temple may be regarded as an example of the characteristic spiritual and aesthetic beauty of the believer<sup>187</sup>. God surely has room in his creation for such beauty. The Old Testament speaks in detail about the beautiful temple that Solomon built. As God places high value on beauty, so do most of us. We have flowers in our yards to colour our environment. We plant trees and grass around our houses to give taste to our homes. We do this not only for the sake of beauty, but we also see the love of God in it; we see God's beauty in the green leaves of the trees; we observe God's love in the beautiful colours of the flowers. This beauty has an effect on our lives. It must be an emotionless person who could walk through a beautiful garden and not be touched by it. Beauty touches our lives as a dull environment equally brings dullness to our lives.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.101.

Because of the power of beauty, one can then argue that it is imperative in worship. Because it can bring about changes for the better, it is a must for worship. One of the ways or elements that illuminates beauty in a worship service is creativity.

Creativity is an important dimension of worship; and the creativity that best serves worship is a process, not a product. Ruth Duck says that

The creative process is a bridge between right and left brain functions, between creativity and discipline. Right brain creative functions allow images, narratives, and feelings to surface that make worship services interesting. Left brain discipline allows to choose among various imaginative possibilities and arrange ideas and images in an intelligible framework. The ability to move freely back and forth across the bridge that connects creativity and discipline, right and left brain, is essential for effective communication in worship<sup>188</sup>.

The point emanating from here is that creativity should not be implemented for the sake of it, but to enhance better communication, to convey the gospel in different creative ways, to make the gospel more intelligible. Creativity for its own sake is idolatrous. If it does not lead to a richer worship experience, it does not serve the purpose, at least not in worship. Thus, creative worship should not be about innovations or gimmicks that

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<sup>188</sup> Ruth Duck, *Finding Words for Worship: A Guide for Leaders* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 10.

make worship appear contemporary but that may not deepen corporate prayer. Creativity is a means and not an end in itself.

On the other hand, failure to provide for creativity or variety in worship represents a blatant disregard for human diversity. To stifle variety in worship is to display a sad insensitivity to the multiple dynamics of worship, which will rob some people of the possibility of meaningful worship<sup>189</sup>. But no service can be expected to provide adequately for the needs of everyone. Personal tastes and abilities are important factors, as are various levels of spiritual maturity. However, the two principles cannot be set aside. Worship should always be biblical and fundamentally consistent with God's nature. New Testament worship was characterized by much greater variety and creativity than can be found in the experiences of most churches today. A basic structure of worship persisted, but within that structure great variety developed<sup>190</sup>.

How can we bring about creativity and variety? How can we make worship beautiful? There are many ways but we will focus here on the creative use of art in the sanctuary.

One form of art that is central to creative worship is imagery. Concrete imagery holds people's interest more than abstract concepts do. The short simple sentences and words in worship can easily become boring or trite without images on which we can focus. Imagery can engage the imagination so that worshippers do not simply think about

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<sup>189</sup> Welton Gaddy, *The Gift of Worship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 188.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

what is said, but actually participate in it<sup>191</sup>. That is also why narrative and poetic sermons are much more effective than text-thematic sermons. Storytelling is part of our lives. We listen when we hear a story. We engage with it. We associate with it. A great many of Jesus' lessons came across powerfully through storytelling and the use of images.

As already mentioned, art forms like paintings, drama, sculpture, etc. have the power to deepen the worship experience. The Reformers, however, were very skeptical of the use of arts in the sanctuary. From the beginning, they rejected paintings and sculpture as a means of Christian education and as aids to worship<sup>192</sup>. As humanists the Reformers had confidence in the power of words, and as observers of history, they believed they had seen the theological illiteracy and corruption that reliance on images had produced. They argued that images and paintings could not communicate the faith. While I agree with them on this point, I would however argue that, especially nowadays, one must never underestimate the power of arts and aesthetics as communicative means in worship. The reason why television is such a huge success is that people prefer to see rather than merely to hear. Primary school teachers are using visuals and pictures more often because they realize, and it is proven, that children learn much faster with visual aids. The danger however in using visual aids only is that it could lead to laziness and reluctance to think for oneself. Nonetheless, for better communication, images and

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<sup>191</sup> Ruth Duck, *Finding Words for Worship: A Guide for Leaders* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 33.

visual aids must be used in conjunction with words. It is always better, for total understanding and clarity, to illustrate a point that is being made in practical terms.

That art can change convictions and perceptions is precisely one of the major reasons why churches have normally insisted on establishing criteria for placing works of art in the sanctuary or using them in Christian formation. Art contributes in a significant way to the liturgical life of the church and therefore must be evaluated accordingly. De Gruchy mentions that the decree on the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church accepts that the criteria are those of noble beauty rather than extravagance; the encouragement of faith, morality and piety; and the avoidance of mediocrity and pretence, as well as a faulty sense of devotion<sup>193</sup>. Catholic theologian Aidan Nicholls further proposes that as long as art is consonant with Christian belief it can be included in the sanctuary<sup>194</sup>. If art is to find a meaningful place in the Christian sanctuary it surely has to be at the service of the church's liturgical actions and not be there simply for the purpose of aesthetic contemplation.

Art in the sanctuary is appropriate when it contributes to a sense of the presence of this God who seeks to draw us into the divine life, and who sent us into this world to bear witness to his love, grace, and justice<sup>195</sup>. As such, art is formative for Christian life and witness. Art in the sanctuary is not primarily for the sake of contemplation apart from the world, but a way of enabling responsible action in the world. Thus faithful

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<sup>192</sup> J. H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A way of being the Christian community* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), p. 100.

<sup>193</sup> John de Gruchy, *Art in the Life of the Church* (a chapter in a forthcoming book) p. 15.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

creativity also has to do with the way in which art in the sanctuary incites Christian involvement in society. Hence we can conclude that, by using art in the church, human beings can change for the better in the striving for a transformed society. It is thus the various elements that constitute a worship service that all enable us in the striving for a better society. From the processional hymn to the benediction, all of worship is connected to life as the Reformers proposed.

### *Conclusion*

Genuine renewal in the liturgy is not just taken from somewhere and forced upon a congregation<sup>196</sup>. It should gradually grow out of the congregation itself. That does not exclude inspiration and ideas from outside, but it is important that the seed should be planted so that it can grow spontaneously at the right time. For the seed to grow, the right atmosphere must be created<sup>197</sup>. How can we do this? Muller has a few suggestions. Firstly, the congregation must be devoted to studying and learning from God's word<sup>198</sup>. People who are deeply inspired by God's word would not be happy with stagnation in any form. The congregation must be allowed to be more involved in the liturgy whether it is in planning or actual participation. Because liturgy is a practical matter, Muller suggests that there be an openness to some kind of experimentation with new and fresh possibilities. Because this is such a sensitive matter, experimentation

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>196</sup> Julian Muller, *Die Erediens as Fees* (1990) p. 116.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

must be limited and performed with much care so that we do not incur the warning of C. S. Lewis that the charge is 'feed my sheep' not 'run experiments on my rats'<sup>199</sup>.

It will be helpful to have a committee in the congregation where new possibilities can be carefully discussed. From here onwards it is important that the changes, developments, innovations and new possibilities be explained, because if people do not understand them, they might reject them. To conclude: while the church seeks renewal in its worship of God, it needs to seek it urgently, but also with sensitivity and understanding.

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<sup>199</sup> quoted in William H. Willimon, *Worship as Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979) p. 17.

**CHAPTER THREE :**  
**LITURGY : WORSHIP AND LIFE**

What ought worship to mean for us in our actual life situation? Shall we be happier, stronger, more resolute and more serene for having made obeisance to the Lord on Sunday in the midst of God's people? Let there be no misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that the main object of worship is the effect it may produce on the worshippers. Its object is God; its aim is his glory<sup>200</sup>. But we want to see just where and how worship and life meet together; and thus, without any descent into false subjectivism, we are certainly entitled to ask since it was fundamental in reforming 16<sup>th</sup> century worship in accordance with the Early Church. When we leave the sanctuary, what spirit ought our worship to have kindled within us as we go out to face life and all its crowding, clamorous perplexities again? Before we respond to these questions, let us first understand what Christian worship is. It may perhaps seem odd to engage with the understanding of worship only now, and not at the beginning of the thesis, but it is deemed necessary only at this point, as we will explore the area of worship as a part of life.

*The Rhythm of Adoration an Action*

Christian worship can be defined in many different ways. In the previous chapters I have attempted to look at what constitutes Christian worship and how the different

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<sup>200</sup> James S. Stewart, "The Relevance of Worship to Life", in *Classic Sermons on Worship*, ed. By Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1988) p. 73.

elements could be performed in a contemporary way. Because of my belief that there is indeed a relation between worship and life, I would like to focus on the understanding of worship in this context.

Miroslav Volf correctly portrays Christian worship when he observes that it “consists both in obedient service to God and in the joyful praise of God”<sup>201</sup>. Both of these elements are brought together in Hebrews 13: 15-16, a passage that comes close to giving a definition of Christian worship: “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” The sacrifice of praise and the sacrifice of good works are two fundamental aspects of the Christian way of being-in-the-world. As Volf rightly says, they are at the same time the two constitutive elements of Christian worship: “*authentic Christian worship takes place in a rhythm of adoration and action*”<sup>202</sup>. Action and adoration are two forms of human activity. “Action designates deeds that are directed toward the world while adoration designates words and symbolic actions that are directed toward God”<sup>203</sup>. This is why the writer of Hebrews can describe both the action and the adoration as ‘sacrifices’: the one is a sacrifice of good works, the other a sacrifice of praise (see Heb. 13:15-16). As sacrifices, action and adoration are something human beings give to God. This is why both can properly be called ‘worship’<sup>204</sup>.

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<sup>201</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the-World” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 207.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Adoration and action are thus two distinct aspects of Christian worship, each of which is valuable in its own right. The purpose of action is not merely to provide material support for the life of adoration, as the purpose of adoration is not simply to provide spiritual strength for the life of action. When we adore God, we worship him by enjoying his presence and by celebrating his mighty deeds of liberation. When we are involved in the world, we worship God by announcing his liberation, and we cooperate with God by the power of the Spirit through loving action<sup>205</sup>.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the Protestant reformation was overcoming the monastic understanding of the relation between the life of contemplation and life of action. Volf highlights the fact that after almost five centuries since the Reformation, “some important segments of Protestant Christianity (especially of the evangelical brand) are still caught in the false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular and are operating with a pre-reformation understanding of the relation between (what they term) spiritual worship and secular work”<sup>206</sup>. In the context of the reflection on the Christian understanding of worship, Volf suggests that it is important therefore to recall Luther’s rediscovery of the Christian calling to active service of God in the world<sup>207</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

Together with the discovery of the merciful God who justifies sinners through faith alone, Luther overcame the medieval bias in favour of the contemplative life<sup>208</sup>. This can be best seen in his views on Christian vocation. He came to believe that all Christians have a twofold vocation. One vocation he called *spiritual*. It consists of the call of God through the proclamation of the gospel to enter the kingdom of God. The other vocation he called *external*. It consists in the call of God to serve Him and also fellow human beings in the world. For Luther, work in every profession, whether it is housekeeping, proclaiming the gospel, or governing a state – is all subject to a divine call. And if God calls us to every type of work, there can be no hierarchy of human activities. Contemplation and action are fundamentally of equal value, because God calls people to both. Once Luther had dismantled the hierarchy of activities, the way was open for the belief that one can honour God equally in all dimensions of one's life, provided that one obediently does the will of God<sup>209</sup>. The worship of God thus does not stop in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning, but extends far more beyond it.

### *The Living Sacrifice*

In his helpful essay on "Worship in the New Testament" David Peterson makes Luther's point even clearer when he convincingly demonstrates that the concept of worship in the New Testament is much broader than what happens in the regular church service on Sunday. In the beginning of his essay he proposes the thesis that "worship is a comprehensive category in the New Testament and is essentially an engagement with

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

God through faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done for us”<sup>210</sup>. Such faith, Peterson says, will express itself in daily obedience or service to God in every sphere of life. What we do ‘in church’ must be considered as part of that engagement with God, but it is misleading to restrict the notion of worship to the congregational gathering<sup>211</sup>. Although the stress is here on ‘what we do in church’ I believe that it is not only ‘what we do’ but ‘how we worship in church’ that has an effect on our lives. This aspect has been dealt with in the previous chapter.

Peterson goes on to show that even in the OT the cultic service is set within the broader framework of fearing God, walking in all his ways and obeying all his commands and decrees<sup>212</sup>. Klaas Runia states that this very same emphasis is present everywhere in the New Testament<sup>213</sup>. We encounter it for instance in the Gospels and in particular also in the writings of Paul. A very clear instance is what the apostle writes in Rom. 12:1, exhorting the believers in Rome to present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Actually these words cover all that is said in the last chapter of that particular epistle. From chapters 12-15 it is clear that acceptable worship involves effective ministry to one another within the body of Christ; love and forgiveness towards those outside the Christian community; right relationships with ruling authorities; living expectantly in the light of Christ’s imminent return and expressing

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<sup>210</sup> David Peterson, “Worship in the New Testament”, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. By D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 52.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>213</sup> Klaas Runia, “The Reformed Liturgy in the Dutch Tradition”, in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 95.

love especially towards those with different opinions within the congregation of Christ's people<sup>214</sup>.

As is mentioned above, contemplation, meditation, and adoration constitute only one dimension of worshipping God. We also know that the objective is to worship God and to experience God's holy presence. As children of God we make time to worship our Creator. In this the process of edification is at work. One cannot go unchanged out of a worship service if one had there a deep spiritual encounter with the Lord. One must have been edified, which is one result of sincere worship. The other result, which we will give attention to later, is 'action'.

The concept of edification blends with that of the church as the body of Christ in Eph. 4: 12-16. Paul's ideal is that the members of the body be "rightly related to one another, each making its own contribution, according to the measure of its gifts and function, to the upbuilding of the whole in love". Edification occurs when Christians minister to one another in word and deed, seeking to express and encourage a Christ-centred faith, hope and love<sup>215</sup>. Clearly this ought to take place when the congregation meets together, but also individuals should have the opportunity to minister to one another in everyday life situations (cf. 1 Cor.8:1, 10; 10:23). However, it must be stressed that Paul's primary focus here is not on the need for individual growth to maturity but for individuals to learn to contribute to the life and development of the

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<sup>214</sup> David Peterson, "Worship in the New Testament", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993) p. 69-70.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Christian community<sup>216</sup>. The very act of ministering the truth to one another should be *an exercise of love*: only when a church is functioning in this way can it be said that it is being edified. For this reason, Paul concentrates in vv. 26-40 of 1 Cor. 14 on the manner in which gifts are to be exercised in the congregation<sup>217</sup>. “Encouraging others to exercise their gifts is an aspect of edification”<sup>218</sup>. This means that participation is necessary because people must use their God-given gifts. So participation (as indicated in the previous chapter) plays a vital role in edification, and hence in everyday life.

The edification of the church is an important expression of our devotion and service to God. The edified congregation is a congregation that will worship God also outside the church by doing good things; it is this congregation which echoes Jesus’ mission statement in Luke 4; it is this congregation who sees Jesus in the street child; it is this congregation who sees Jesus in the prostitute; it is this congregation who feeds the hungry, who gives water to the thirsty, who provides homes for the homeless; it is this congregation for whom the Lord will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! you have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness! ” (Matt. 25: 23).

The relation between worship and life comes a long way and is inextricably connected. Raimundo Panikkar, in affirmation of this, holds that “worship, if it is to be really what it claims to be and also to be of any relevance, has to have a direct bearing on the life of

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

the people”<sup>219</sup>. Worship cannot exist only on what Panikkar calls “the transcendental plane”. There has to be a congruency between what we believe and what we re-enact in our day to day living. Worship therefore becomes a way of life and is not reserved for sixty minutes on Sunday morning.

As Theron rightly observes, worship in our South African context has for too long been divorced from our everyday life<sup>220</sup>. What is required is a mode of worship that involves a critical reflection within a community context on lived experiences. Worship must not be an “escapism from the challenges of daily life”<sup>221</sup>. It has to permeate human life and render it more meaningful, and give the necessary strength for one to live up to the demand of the call to worship God. On one hand, worship has to permeate ordinary human life and, on the other, real human life has to make worship alive and significant. The symbiosis, Panikkar says, is a vital and important one<sup>222</sup>. At the same time Panikkar rightly admits that it is also difficult. For centuries, in the West at least, these two realms have existed apart and with little contact. Life has gone its own way while worship has followed its own course<sup>223</sup>. There is a quest for worship to be restored to its original meaning because only a community that worships is a true Christian community, and out of this faith community, believers must find ways to give

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<sup>219</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973) p. 56-57.

<sup>220</sup> Bruce Theron, *The Caring Church as a Worshipping Community* (M. Th. Dissertation), (UNISA, 1996) p. 28.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>222</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973) p. 61.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

expression to their faith<sup>224</sup>. Expressions, however, need not only be shown outside the sanctuary, but can also be incorporated into our liturgies.

*An Example of Liturgical Integration of Worship and Life*

The liturgy at a Sunday morning worship service can be used creatively to interact with life situations. For example, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa devoted the first Sunday in August 1999 to caring. The appointed Liturgy and Worship Committee drew up a liturgy for the Sunday which they referred to as CARE SUNDAY. This is an excellent example of how a liturgy could be constructed that it is in touch with the issues, challenges, problems and joys of our daily life. What follows is the suggested order of service:

1. Call to Worship: Luke 4: 18-19 or Matt. 25: 41-45

*Leader* : *Jesus says, ... For I was hungry and you gave me no food.*

*Congregation:* Lord, when did we see you hungry?

*L* : *Jesus says, ... I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.*

*C* : Lord when did we see you thirsty?

*L* : *Jesus says, ... I was a stranger and you did not take me in.*

*C* : Lord, when did we see you a stranger?

*L* : *Jesus says, ... I was naked and you did not clothe me.*

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<sup>224</sup> *The Caring Church as a Worshipping Community* (M. Th. Dissertation), (UNISA, 1996) p. 40.

C : Lord, when did we see you naked?

L : *Jesus says, ... I was sick and you did not visit me.*

C : Lord, when did we see you sick?

L : *Jesus says, ... I was in prison and you did not minister to me.*

C : Lord, when did we see you in prison?

L : Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

2. Prayer

3. Hymn

4. Scripture Reading

5. Hymn

6. Prayer of Intercession

7. Message (Could be in the form of people telling their stories, etc.)

8. Act of dedication and commitment

Leader : Someone's crying as we celebrate and sing

There are tears of weakness and disappointment

Tears of strength and resistance,

There are tears of the rich, tears of the poor,

There are tears of the hungry, the oppressed, yes, tears of the Prisoners

And we are crying ... because there is so much suffering and pain

Leader : We are the hands of Christ

Congregation : *Fill us with kindness*

L : We are the feet of Christ

C : *Speed us with joy*

L : We are the eyes of Christ

C : *Seeing as Christ sees*

L : We are the lips of Christ

C : *Speaking with love*

L : We are the ears of Christ

C : *Ready to listen*

L : We are the arms of Christ

C : *Serving with love*

9. Hymn/Chorus : Bringing articles and offerings to the altar

10. Prayers of Dedication/Celebration and Thanksgiving

Leader : O, God the giver of all good gifts, give us thankful hearts for the many things we possess which we look on as our right, forgetting that they come from thee. Show us, O Lord, thy will regarding all that we have, that nothing may be spoilt or wasted, but all used in thy service.

Congregation : *Lord God help us and give us your mercy.*

Leader : Thanks be to thee, O Lord Christ, for all the benefits which thou

hast given us, for all the pain and insults which thou hast born us. O merciful Redeemer and Friend, may we know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly for thine own sake.

Congregation : *Lord God help us and give us your mercy.*

Leader : We thank thee,

O God, for the sun that warms us and the air that gives us life,  
 For all the beauty of the earth, in field and hedgerow,  
 Brook and convert, wood and hills,  
 For the changing seasons, each in its order beautiful,  
 For our homes, for health of body and mind,  
 For our land we love, for freedom and just laws,  
 For the lives and examples of the good and the brave of  
 Every age and every race, and for the life on earth of Jesus our  
 example,  
 Who came to show us how to live.

Congregation : *Lord God help us and give us mercy.*

11. Hymn

12. Blessing

It is vividly clear how the two dimensions of worship, adoration and action, are blended together in one in this liturgy. Care Sunday was meant to be an action Sunday. In the circular that accompanied the suggested liturgy, it is highlighted that Jesus invariably coupled the feeling of care or compassion with an appropriate act, for example, in Luke 7:13, in the account of the raising of the widow's son, we read that "his heart went out to her". The act that followed was the miracle of bringing the young man back to life. Another example was the occasion of the feeding of the multitude (Matt. 15), where Jesus says to his disciples, "I have compassion on these people.... I do not want to send them away hungry!" This led to the miracle. This led to action.

There are many other issues that confront the Church of today. South Africa seems to be a country of extremes. We experience a very high rate in crime; we have the highest rape statistics in the world; we have among the highest statistics of car hijacking in the world; HIV/AIDS in South Africa is spreading like fire. All these are concerns for all people in our country. Why are we dealing with them so little in our churches? Synods and Regional Councils discuss them on their particular levels, but why are they absent from our worship services? Isn't the worship service the place where the most members of a congregation gather at one time and hence the appropriate place to address these issues? Why do we only seldom (or never) hear sermons on rape, on women battering, on child abuse, on AIDS, on the need to care for the environment? All these are issues that confront the very wellbeing of all God's creatures, great and small. Certain days in a calendar year are set aside by the governing bodies of the world to highlight certain issues. For the worship to be of any relevance, we need to focus on these issues; we

need to incorporate them into our worship because worship and life are not two different entities but they impinge together. One reason for empty pews in churches, and we have alluded to, is the fact that most liturgies are too much separated from real life. I can imagine that if people's worlds are addressed in churches, they will most likely attend worship services more often. It is more likely that one will attend to something one can associate with rather than the opposite. We use to have 'full churches' during apartheid where the injustices of the time were addressed because people felt connected. Today's liturgies and sermons must still reflect the concerns and sorrows, as well as joys of the time. By doing this, I believe that the church will maintain and even continue to extend its membership.

There is a further dimension which needs brief comment. For the connection between worship and life assumes that worshippers themselves are renewed through worship. Renewal of worship and the renewal of members in the church belong together. Kennon Callahan observes that in healthy congregations the worship is not only corporate and dynamic, but it is also stirring, inspiring, helpful, and hopeful<sup>225</sup>. It is also full of joy and wonder, grace and peace. Through it people discover help, hope and home<sup>226</sup>. Callahan suggests that there are eight hallmarks that can make a worship service a powerful experience<sup>227</sup>. It is a service that conveys a sense of progress – of starting, journeying, and arriving. A service that succeeds in this respect:

- communicates strength and grace;

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<sup>225</sup> Kennon Callahan, *Dynamic Worship: Mission, Grace, Praise, and Power* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994) p. ix.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

- launches people forward into a new week;
- focuses on human hope and confidence;
- holds together well, with its various parts connected, and embraces spontaneity;
- takes its mission and purpose seriously;
- spends as much time celebrating new life and blessings and looking to the future as it does memorializing losses;
- focuses on the whole person, offering a balance between the simple and the complex, the emotional and the intellectual;
- has an order of service that helps people in their foundational life searches<sup>228</sup>.

A worship service that accomplishes all these is indeed worship that brings adoration and action together. This type of service encompasses both adoration and calls to action; it incorporates life's struggles in the very act of worship. In such a service people are allowed and feel free to praise God with mind, soul, and importantly, (especially for the Reformed) the body, because that is what God requests and desires of us.

Callaghan furthermore states that a service that embodies the eight hallmarks mentioned above would pass the following criteria:

- the service is warm and winsome;
- the music is dynamic and inspiring;
- the service has power and movement;

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 81-82.

- the service and sanctuary help the congregation reach persons in the community in mission;
- the preaching expresses the character of the gospel and the quality of compassion<sup>229</sup>.

If these qualities are present then it should be a strong, healthy service where those attending will grow and grow and grow.

### *Conclusion*

After all, it needs to be said that liturgical renewal cannot be brought about simply by changes in the formal rituals or the style in which they are celebrated. It is part and parcel of total church renewal, and effective liturgical renewal must ultimately flow from and be an integral part of a deep and comprehensive renewal process in the Church<sup>230</sup>. We come back to Romans 12: 1-3 that says that our thinking must change, we must have the perception that worship is a lifestyle. As we partake in life's daily routines, we would also like to participate when we worship. The alienation of life from worship has been shown to cause unhealthy repercussions in our lives. It is only when we bring our world into worship that we will begin to understand the purpose of worship. It is when ministers allow God's children to use their God-given gifts that people will start to experience fulfillment in worship. It is when the gospel is preached gently, honestly, and with integrity, that God's people will start to listen. It is when

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>230</sup> Fred Krause, *Liturgy in parish Life: A Study of Worship and the Celebrating Community* (New York: Alba House, 1979) p. 3.

God's people feel their Creator in their music, that the church is about to come alive. It is when we deal with life's struggles like retrenchments, unemployment, crime, etc. in our worship that we are able to see God everywhere.

May God grant to us a hunger for Him which will cause us to pursue him in worship as a way of life (Col. 3:17), a hunger which will drive us to closer fellowship with his people. This will result in a rich corporate worship experience, characterized by unity, sensitivity, and understanding (John 17). In loving God with our whole being we will love what he loves, hate what he hates, and long to see his purposes carried out through us (Matt. 22:37).

## EPILOGUE

As worship is a popular topic for discussion, so is it also a deeply sensitive issue. Many denominations in the history of the Christian Church have split due to issues such as worship. The Protestant Reformation is a classic example in this regard. Any attempts at changes or transformation in worship whatsoever must therefore be attended with outmost care. This includes continuous prayer, Bible study, meditation, consultation, and explication.

This thesis demands that Reformed worshippers must realize the urgent need for our worship to be contemporary but still faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our historical roots. This is what characterizes a Reformed church as stipulated in chapter one. While we be true to Scripture, the Early Church and the Reformers, we also need to reach out to other traditions not only for the sake of building or strengthening ecumenical ties, but to learn from each other. In this continual process, we must always be aware of the significance of the basic and underlying themes of Reformed worship we persistently have to strive for: Word and Sacrament; Lay Participation; Worship and Life. The accomplishment of these will undoubtedly have the result of nourishing and deepening our spiritual life so that we could faithfully praise God our Creator by being obedient and living according to his will as we go forth to serve our Maker and one another.

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