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Liturgy

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Benedikt Kranemann

The centre of Christian liturgy is the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. In the first section of this article, the understanding of this liturgical centre is unpacked within different denominational contexts (mystery celebration, proclamation event, sacred play, staging of the gospel, etc.). Concepts of time and spatiality within liturgy, which are not only functional but also theologically enriched, are presented. The second section deals with the liturgical assembly and its structures, and the significance of assembly for the liturgy is explained. The place of assembly is addressed before looking at roles and ministries in worship. The third section explores the Bible and liturgy. It examines the different ways in which the Old Testament and New Testament are received in liturgy (e.g. readings and pericope systems, biblical prayers, readings of the Psalms, and sermons). The function of the Bible and place of intertextuality in liturgy (anamnetic, catechetical, etc.) are discussed. The fourth section focuses on different rites and textual forms and the significance of bodies in liturgy. The importance of different media for worship is unpacked before discussing different text types (oration, acclamation, etc.). The fifth section is devoted to the dynamics and diversity of liturgy. It briefly turns to historical phenomena and then demonstrates the factors at work in the dynamics of liturgy (top-down, bottom-up). The sixth section centres on theology and liturgical scholarship, in which different concepts of theology of liturgy and liturgical theology are explained. It also shows how liturgy has been reflected differently at different times in church history. Finally, current questions of liturgical scholarship on worship are explored.

Keywords: Worship, The Christian church, Christian denominations, Assembly, Biblical reception, Liturgical theology, Roles and offices, Globalization and liturgy, Body, Ecumenical worship, History of liturgy, Liturgical rites, Liturgy as ritual

Table of contents

1 The concept and theological understanding of liturgy

1.1 Liturgy as an event between God and human beings

1.2 Liturgy as understood by different churches

1.2.1 Liturgy's reference to Christ

1.2.2 The biblical witness as the centre

1.2.3 Liturgical celebration in community

1.2.4 Freedom and order in worship

1.2.5 Challenges to Christian liturgies in the globalized world

2 Liturgical assembly and its structures

2.1 Worship as assembly

2.2 The place of the worshipful assembly

2.3 Roles and offices in worship

3 Bible and liturgy

3.1 The Bible as the basic text of Christian liturgy

3.2 Organization of biblical texts in liturgical reading orders

3.3 Ritual form of the proclamation of the word

3.4 Old Testament Psalms in Christian worship

3.5 Liturgical biblical reception beyond scripture reading

3.6 Biblical reception and intertextuality in liturgy

4 Texts and rites of the liturgy

4.1 Body language

4.2 Media of the liturgy

4.3 Liturgical text types

5 Dynamics and diversity of the liturgy

5.1 Dynamics and diversity in the history of liturgy

5.2 Inertial forces of the liturgy

5.3 Formative forces of a dynamic liturgy

5.3.1 Liturgical reforms: top-down

5.3.2 Dynamics from liturgical practice: bottom-up

1 The concept and theological understanding of liturgy

1.1 Liturgy as an event between God and human beings

Liturgy, connected to the Greek term *leitourgia* (from *laos*, ‘people’, and *ergon*, ‘service’), denotes the ‘service for the people’ or the ‘service of the people’ (Italian and Spanish, *liturgia*; French, *liturgie*; English, *worship*; for the English synonyms ‘worship’ and ‘liturgy’ see Weil 2013; Gordon-Taylor 2013). In the Christian context, the term refers to ritual acts in which the biblically attested salvation history of God is remembered in the lives of people today and celebrated towards its completion with God (Meßner 2022). Different levels of time – remembered salvation history, lived present, hoped-for future – are interlocked with each other. They are bundled together in the mode of ritual narration. From a theological perspective, they are encompassed by God’s time and presence.

The centre of Christian liturgy is the revelation of God in the history of Israel and in Jesus of Nazareth. In particular, Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection are central. Biblical texts, images, motifs, and concepts – such as the Pascha mystery – demonstrate the centrality of the history of Israel in Christian liturgy. Despite sharing common ground, these liturgies have different theological and aesthetic emphases. The churches assign different interpretations of the liturgy: as mystery celebrations, proclamation events, sacred play, staging of the gospel, and so on.

Liturgy is considered here as a ritual on the basis of a broad scholarly consensus (Lukken 2005; Bradshaw and Melloh 2007; Graupner 2019; Odenthal 2019; Kranemann and Post 2009). Like other rituals, liturgies are also characterized by the repeatable sequence of action units, which can be less or more evident and realized. Formalization, stylization, and symbolic action are also encountered in liturgies. In services, individuals and groups express their ideas, ideals, mentalities, and identities through rituals, which are in turn influenced by rituals. Looking at liturgy from the perspective of ritual studies brings into focus the ritual dimension of worship and requires attention to performance as a whole, sensitivity to ritual action, and consideration of ritual structures in liturgy.

Liturgy understood as ritual, with its verbal and non-verbal symbolic language, is the basis of a theology of liturgy (as ‘classics’: Vagaggini 1957; Wainwright 1982; on the research task: Geldhof 2020; sources and studies: Vogel 2000; Hoping and Jeggle-Merz 2004). For this theology, the liturgy is *theologia prima* (theology done in the liturgy) (Kavanagh 1984) and *locus theologicus* (liturgy as actual source of theology). It is in the celebration of the liturgy that faith takes shape (Knop 2012; Winter 2013; Grillo 2006). Here one finds the ‘meaning of Christianity’ (Grillo 2006: 61). Such a theological approach necessarily links anthropology to liturgical studies (Kranemann and Winter 2022). Liturgical

theology understands liturgy as the source of theology (Fisch 1990: 11f; Irwin 2018). Theological studies and liturgical experience are closely linked. Christian faith is rooted in experiences of faith, as they also arise in the liturgy. Theology should be liturgical in that it is in communication with the liturgy (Fagerberg 2004: 189–217). Liturgical theology as an ‘elucidation of the meaning of worship’ aims to show how the church expresses itself in liturgical events (Schmemmann 2003: 16). Thus, it asks ‘how the Christian meeting, in all its signs and words, says something authentic and reliable about God, and so says something true about ourselves and about our world as they are understood before God’ (Lathrop 1993: 3).

In the following sections, this article proceeds from the basic understanding of worship via the place of the Bible in the liturgy to individual liturgical rites. Liturgy is understood as a multifaceted and dynamic event. At the end, the question will be posed as to why this is the case. It will explore commonalities and differences between different denominational understandings of liturgy (1.2). With the liturgical assembly (2) we will see that liturgy is essentially the coming together of people before God (2.1). The question is asked about the proper place of assembly, which is of great importance in many faith communities (2.2). Roles and ministries, i.e. the inner structuring of the celebrating congregation (2.3), will be discussed. The first and fundamental book of every liturgy is the Bible (section 3), so its role in worship must be analysed in more detail (3.1). The significance of the Bible in liturgy is investigated, including the act of reading orders (3.2) and the ritual form of Bible proclamation often associated with them (3.3), the handling of Psalms as Old Testament texts in Christian worship (3.4), and other forms of use of the Bible in worship (3.5), concluding with references to the Bible and intertextuality in liturgy (3.6). In terms of the ritual events of the liturgy (section 4), the significance of the body (4.1), various natural objects (bread, wine, water, oil, etc.) (4.2), as well as the different verbal texts (4.3), will be examined. Liturgy is always subject to change, even if only in its understanding. Thus, it changes and is also celebrated in its diversity (section 5). Both the dynamics of worship as a historically situated phenomenon (5.1) and persistent forces (5.2) are to be investigated.

1.2 Liturgy as understood by different churches

The liturgies of the various churches in which Christian faith is celebrated are diverse in both form and theology. This applies to both the West and the East. Different theological, cultural, and social influences have led to the development of distinctly different rites (including music, liturgical calendars, vestments, buildings, etc.) and interpretations of worship. This becomes obvious when studying the liturgical books of the different churches, but even more so by studying liturgical practice. These differences become evident in the question of what biblical texts are read in worship (section 3), in the structure of the prayers and the respective liturgy as a whole, in the participation of the baptized in the celebration of worship, etc. These differences apply to the nature of the (ordained)

leadership of the liturgy, including the gender of the liturgist. They apply to the question of what is considered liturgy and which liturgy is understood as sacrament and what, in turn, 'sacrament' means. In different ways, churches either insist on narrower orders or allow variations or wider freedoms in the design.

The liturgy is a marker of identity for the respective church and reflects the makeup of that church. With regard to their own understanding of faith and identity, churches distinguish themselves from one another through their liturgies. In the twentieth century, the ecumenical movement has broken down or at least reduced such barriers, despite regional differences. For the dividing issues, such as the meaning and observance of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist, answers are emerging through ecumenism (Leppin and Sattler 2020). In many contexts, ecumenical services of the word have long been common practice. Ecumenism itself has also produced new liturgies, such as the 'Women's World Day of Prayer'. Finally, mutual adoption between the denominations can be observed, such as in individual prayers at the very centre of the Eucharist, in hymns, in the theological discussion of liturgies (the design of eucharistic prayers under the influence of Orthodox anaphors; Roman Catholic discussion of the blessing of a second marriage according to the Orthodox model; design of Protestant reading orders in North America according to the Roman Catholic model, etc.).

1.2.1 Liturgy's reference to Christ

There are fundamental commonalities between the different denominations. In different churches, liturgy is understood as an event in which believers are gathered around Christ before God. The event of Christ determines the theological hermeneutics of worship. In the celebrations, people come before God with and through Christ and relate their lives to him. In this context, worship can be understood, for example, as *mysterion* or mystery, which is encountered not only in Orthodoxy, but also in Roman Catholic or Old Catholic churches, in Lutheran churches, and so on. In addition, worship is interpreted as communication of the gospel. This is contrasted with a view of the liturgy as worship owed to God. Other emphases emerge when liturgy is interpreted as an encounter or dialogue between God and humanity (Meßner 2022). Different theological concepts of liturgy can, therefore, play a role in the dialogue between the churches. Frequently, however, these concepts either co-exist in individual churches or are in conflict with each other.

Various churches emphasize that liturgy is primarily the action of God in Jesus Christ. Eastern churches understand the celebration of the liturgy as a gift and event of divine salvation to human beings, whereby they are deified in their corporeality. Human beings become bearers of the Spirit of God through the action of Christ, who is the actual subject of the liturgy. Orthodox liturgy is celebrated as a communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit (Alexopoulos and Johnson 2021).

According to Roman Catholic understanding, liturgy is the sanctification of man through God (*catabasis*) and service of man towards God (*anabasis*). It happens in the Holy Spirit and actualizes the Christ event (*Paschamysterium*; cf. Schrott 2014). This is emphasized, for example, in the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’ (SC) as a fundamental document. Liturgy lives through the memory of God’s saving acts, which are believed to be present. In this way, liturgy is ‘memory of a past and yet liberation in the present’ (Häußling 1997a). For all churches, understanding worship will require distinguishing between official statements by churches, theological interpretations, and what people perceive and believe in the liturgy.

From a Lutheran perspective, the liturgy celebrates the salvation given by God primarily in the Word of Scripture. The catabatic and anabatic dimensions belong together, as shown by the quotation from Martin Luther’s sermon on the consecration of the church in Torgau in 1544, which is still referred to today: liturgy means ‘that our Lord himself speaks with us through his holy word, and we again speak with him through prayer and praise’ (*Weimarer Ausgabe* 49, 588). It is a God-human exchange of words, is a ‘*WortKult*’ (interaction between word and cult) (Deeg 2012: 227), which is expressed in different word forms – ranging from biblical reading and sermon, song and prayer, the word in the form of bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper to silence (Deeg 2012: 496–534). The word-answer event starts with God; the service is ‘a space of God-human togetherness prepared by God’ (Deeg 2012: 474). The proclamation of the Gospel is a remembrance of Christ’s saving work, and the proclaimed word is effective word.

1.2.2 The biblical witness as the centre

The Bible plays an important role in all Christian liturgies – although the reception of the texts varies – from salvation history to the reference of the liturgy to God and Christ (explored in detail in [section 3](#)). The biblically attested history of human beings is received through the biblical texts, prayers, songs, and so on, that were created against their background. This applies, for example, to the various forms of proclamation of the Word or the contents of most Christian festivals. The concrete practice varies from one church to another ([section 3.2](#)), partly due to differences in cultural and social contexts. The rites, the places of reading, the distribution of roles, and so on, in which the meaning of the proclamation of the Word is expressed, also vary from church to church.

1.2.3 Liturgical celebration in community

The community of believers has special weight in the services ([section 2.1](#)). Liturgy is understood as a communal event. The role of leadership and hierarchy in worship can be defined very differently. As a result, ‘community’ is also defined differently. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, emphasizes the participation of all the baptized in worship. But through word and rite or through the shape of the liturgical space, the role of the

clergy can be so emphasized that the idea of community is undermined and counteracted (Francis 2019; Böntert et al. 2021). Reformed liturgy is also understood as the communal celebration of the Christ event. The sanctification and edification of the individual Christian are decisive (Bürki 2003: 160). For Quaker worship, the aspect of community and a 'corporate form of mysticism' play a central role (White 2003: 186). The members of the community, men and women, are to strengthen each other in faith. The Methodist Church emphasizes the fellowship of believers with one another, which is to be expressed in the liturgy; for example, the prayer mentions events that are important for the life of the believers in the congregation (Westerfield Tucker 1996). For services in the free church, emphasis is placed on the participation of many, which is why communal singing, among other things, is of great importance. At the same time, the worship service gives space to the witness of the individual. This arises from the relationship between the individual and God, with great importance being attached to personal prayer. A communal confessional text, such as the Creed, is missing (Schweyer 2020).

For most churches, initiation is the prerequisite for full participation in worship. However, initiation happens in different ways. This is true, for example, of the Eastern Churches, where water baptism, Chrismation, and First Communion are part of one initiation, which is also performed on infants. The Roman Catholic Church poses similar conditions of access. Its liturgy is understood as a celebration of all the baptized. In this church, however, infant baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation – usually in that order – are celebrations of individual sacraments (unlike adult initiation, which integrates the three celebrations into one). All the baptized, according to Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) 11, are to participate actively in the celebrations, which are celebrated as events ('dialogue' – Lengeling 1988) between God and human beings. For Lutherans, too, baptism is a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper, with confirmation following later. However, there are discussions as to whether this must be the case in the future. The churches mentioned also provide different regulations as to whether they allow baptized persons from other denominations to participate in the Lord's Supper.

1.2.4 Freedom and order in worship

Different churches understand freedom and order in the liturgy differently. The liturgical orders of the churches of the Reformation are characterized by greater freedom than is the case in Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. This is due to church structures, but also because of the underlying understanding of liturgy and church. A magisterial church understands liturgical order in a specific way. Some churches emphasize the personal witness of the individual instead of an obligatory order. The common faith is contrasted with different forms and expressions of worship.

The Anglican Church's characterization of the relationship between freedom and order offers a distinctive example. It adheres to the Book of Common Prayer, which has

undergone various far-reaching revisions. Although the liturgy is celebrated in modern English or in local languages. Tudor English is also used. In many provinces, efforts are being made to use inclusive language. The Alternative Service Book of 1980 stands for a freer liturgy. Liturgy according to prescribed prayer texts and orders is thus encountered as well as freer forms of liturgy (Bradshaw 2001–2006).

In the worship of charismatic and Pentecostal congregations, these questions are posed differently. Here, elements such as glossolalia ('speaking in tongues') and prophecy, as well as healing prayer and falling down in religious ecstasy ('slain in the Spirit'), play distinctive roles. Worship is understood as a spirit-led event; individuals are to experience themselves as being taken hold of by the Spirit of God. Quaker worship is also structurally less fixed.

1.2.5 Challenges to Christian liturgies in the globalized world

Different traditions, churches, as well as social and ecclesial environments, encounter similar challenges in the midst of today's globalized world. In large parts of Europe and North America, those responsible for liturgy as well as the faithful today face the challenge of constantly having to recalibrate their own traditions according to cultural and social environments (Chupungco 1992; Pecklers 2003; Geldhof 2018). Tradition can enrich faith, but may also become a burden. Churches often react to this burden with reforms (Klößener and Kranemann 2002). While for one group of believers too much adaptation to modernity ('modernism') endangers worship, for others too close a connection to tradition ('traditionalism') leads to undermines the place of worship in the church.

Given the ongoing global environmental catastrophe and the questions connected with the so-called Anthropocene era, creation-theological aspects of worship – and their cosmic dimension – are growing in importance (Berger 2019). Many churches demonstrate significant sensitivity to creation, expressed in readings and prayers, in individual feasts, in blessings, and the emphasis on human responsibility for one's fellow world in poetic and ritual ways. In the liturgy, human beings see themselves as part of God's history and of creation, and are endowed with responsibilities accordingly. In light of today's environmental challenges, liturgy becomes a way of life, centred on responsibility towards creation, important beyond worship. Liturgy reveals the special responsibility of human beings towards God. The relationship between liturgy and ethical identity takes on a new relevance, with giving thanks to God for creation becoming a commitment for life beyond liturgy (Morrill 2021; see Ecotheology and Ecological Ethics for more on this topic).

The pandemic around 2020 posed another challenge, with discussions about digitalization flaring up, especially with respect to worship services. Worldwide, worship services of different denominations were streamed, made available as video, or celebrated digitally. Liturgy in the digital space gives rise to theological and aesthetic questions (Berger

2018; Campbell 2020). Is presence possible in the digital sphere? Would the physicality and embodiment that is indispensable for liturgies, including baptism and the Eucharist, be lost? Is a communion in digital form conceivable and practicable? How does the sacredness of liturgy relate to the profane space of the internet? How can we think about time and space in worship under the unique conditions of the internet? (See Theology and Technology for more on this topic.)

All Christian churches today are faced with the question of how to deal with different power relations. This question addresses issues such as clericalism, sexual and spiritual abuse of power, unjust gender structures, colonialist oppression of cultures, etc. (Hoff, Knop and Kranemann 2020; Böntert et al. 2021; Gruber et al. 2022). Liturgy plays a part in those unjust processes and structures that oppress people and put faith in the wrong. Many such discussions are just beginning to take place, for example in studies on liturgy and power or through the application of postcolonial studies in liturgical studies (Carvalhoes 2015).

Liturgies are celebrated in a global world (Pecklers 2003). In their commonalities and differences in theological and cultural expressions, liturgies remain affected by globalization in a variety of ways. The challenges of homogenization and heterogenization will be analysed. The consequences of the globalization of cultures for liturgical faith life must be considered.

2 Liturgical assembly and its structures

2.1 Worship as assembly

The liturgical assembly is a communal event (see 1.2.3). This emphasis on the communal aspect within liturgical theology is supported by early church history. The very term 'liturgy' makes it clear that it is an action of the people and for the people. The liturgy of the first centuries, in particular, was celebrated as a communal liturgy. The 'First Apology' of Justin Martyr speaks of gathering on Sunday, knows different actors in this gathering and puts an emphasis on the celebration of community. Throughout history, people have come together for prayer and ritual action, seen themselves gathered in faith around the presence of Christ, in communication with God, with and through Christ. What is special about liturgical assembly is that its performance demonstrates that it is called by God (opening rites) and made possible by the power of God's Spirit (especially in epicletic prayer, in which the Holy Spirit is invited as part of the eucharistic liturgy). The very basic rites of the liturgy are designed for the mutual encounter between God and human beings, as exemplified by the basic forms of the Eucharist, summarized by Gregory Dix: the receiving, blessing, breaking and giving (Dix 2005). Listening to the Word of God (biblical readings) and responding in the liturgy, giving thanks, praising, petitioning, and lamenting, are expressions of an event clearly designed for the assembly. The distribution of roles, also regulated by liturgical

books, underlines this, as do communal postures – standing, sitting, and kneeling (see 4.1).

The ways in which individuals and community come together can be seen, for example, in singing: a community comes into being when the individual participates with his or her voice, perceives the fellow singers and create sounds together with them. Individual voices create a common sound, whereby the individuals in the service form a celebrating community. The individual is part of a community that cannot exist without individuals.

The assembly can be realized in a simple liturgy of the word and in a, possibly, more complex sacramental liturgy. It can, likewise, be realized in a celebration of blessing or a liturgy of the hour, in a liturgy of the day or a celebration of the church year, in a parish, through a spontaneously gathering community or a monastery, as part of a liturgy authorized by the church office or a freely designed liturgy. All types of worship gatherings participate in the same basic event; namely, the Christ event (Pahl 1996). The entire character of the liturgy must be designed in such a way that its centre is not obscured and the faithful can fully celebrate Christ.

2.2 The place of the worshipful assembly

Assembly is expressed in particular in space. As a relational quantity, ‘space’ can mean the relationship between people, such that the communal character of the liturgy is generally included in the assembly. However, ‘space’ can also refer to an enclosed space that makes different types of assembly possible. For example, the choir stalls of a monastery enable a community praying and singing together and in response to the congregation. Rooms in which people come together in an elliptical arrangement are also an example of this. Corresponding models of assembly can also be realized in central buildings. Path churches (*Wegekirche*) still show a community on the way towards God (Gerhards and Kranemann 2017: 324–335). Prayers in which the leaders of the service and other believers turn towards the east can reinforce a sense of community.

In many churches, we also encounter spatial arrangements in which liturgy takes place as if on a stage before the congregation. Liturgy can, thus, become a one-person show. The faithful are then more spectators than participants, which clearly contradicts the character of liturgy. Such liturgies are often hierarchical and non-communal. Historically, certain spaces, including the altar area, have been reserved for clergy, such that lay people and women in particular were not allowed to enter them. Historically, the (sexual) purity played a central role, and such purity was expected of the priest and was needed to maintain the sacrality of the liturgical event.

The church is understood in terms of the assembly and the arrangement of the space. The church’s self-understanding is communicated through the form of the rite. At the

same time, the church is constantly renewed, as exemplified by, in particular, eucharistic ecclesiology (van Cangh 2009).

2.3 Roles and offices in worship

The communal character of the liturgy touches on the question of ministries and roles. Passages such as Gal 3:28 emphasize the equality of the baptized community. In the baptismal liturgies, 1 Pet 2:9 expresses the calling for all the baptized to be priests, kings, and prophets (Lepage 2019). Differentiated tasks in the liturgy are primarily explained functionally in terms of worship processes and not by the theological necessity of a sacerdotal office (the ascribing of [sacral] powers to the ordained). There is a tension between functional necessities and the priesthood as ontologically sacralized. Our understanding of the ecclesiastical office needs to be critically discussed in individual churches, not only with regard to the liturgy, but also with a view to what has been achieved so far in ecumenical conversations (most recently Leppin and Sattler 2020).

Many churches entrust the leadership of central liturgies, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, to the ordained and appropriately trained people – those who hold corresponding authority for worship by liturgical law and liturgical ordinances, and are appointed to do so by ecclesiastical authority. However, even in this central area, being an ordained deacon or priest is not always a prerequisite. Non-ordained persons can baptize and lead Sunday services of the word in the Roman Catholic Church. In some Protestant regional churches, predicants can lead the Lord's Supper. Leading services of the word and blessings on various occasions is a natural practice in many Christian churches, although it is always a matter of debate. Orthodox worship, on the other hand, is led exclusively by clergy.

While complex liturgies need leadership, it should not dominate it. Rather, it should enable celebration in community. It is crucial that

the ministry structures are adequate to helping them to pray together, to receive teaching that promotes understanding and discipleship, to keep them together as a group, to answer specific needs a group might have [...] and ensure that the ministers do not behave in a manner that is tyrannous [...] or abusive [...] or self-serving [...]. (O'Loughlin 2013: 88)

The offices and roles have been shaped in a variety of ways due to cultural and social influences – at least since the so-called Constantinian Turn (313 CE) – but also as a result of a theologically motivated clericalization and sacralization of, especially, the priesthood and the episcopate. Social emancipation processes, and especially the emancipation of women, have an influence on theology. Thus, the twentieth century has seen an increasingly intense discussion about the understanding of church structures. In some churches, a division of the congregation into ordained and non-ordained can still be observed today, according to which liturgical action is restricted to the ordained. Hence,

and all others are only able to co-act or merely attend. The ordained alone are, then, attributed the power of consecration by virtue of ordination and office. The underlying theological idea is that they act *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ the head), which is sometimes interpreted ontologically. In some churches this is underlined by celibacy, to which priests (Roman Catholic Church) or only bishops (Orthodox churches) are committed as a way of life.

Access to roles and ministries remains a topic of theology and is the subject of church-political disputes. In some churches, the lack of ordained overseers forces more responsibilities into the hands of non-ordained persons, which leads to a theological reinterpretation of a church's self-understanding or sacramental structure. In other churches, baptized who are not ordained require more liturgical skills to live out their charism and baptismal vocation. A more far-reaching responsibility for the liturgy is required. Gender is not a sufficient basis for exclusion. A debate is being held regarding church roles and how those relate to roles in other churches. There are significant inequalities in individual churches, especially in the Roman Catholic Church (Hoff, Knop and Kranemann 2020; Böntert et al. 2021).

3 Bible and liturgy

3.1 The Bible as the basic text of Christian liturgy

The Bible, with its Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT), has special significance for Christian worship. With the help of the biblical texts, Christians as a 'community of narrators' (*'Erzählgemeinschaft'*; Metz 1980: 189) remember and reflect on God's enduring presence in the lives of people and creation. The foundation of the Christian faith is expressed in those texts which many liturgies qualify as 'Holy Scripture'. The reception of the Bible expresses the conviction 'that the Christian assembly continues to live in the presence of the biblical God and to experience the matters to which the biblical texts bear witness' (Lathrop 2005: 59). This includes eschatology, for what is proclaimed in the Bible also tells of the hope of eschatological perfection in God. From a theological perspective, biblical proclamation is essential for remembrance in liturgy, and extends beyond just the reception of traditional texts. Liturgy as an event between God and human beings emerges especially from the listening and responding in worship, and through biblical proclamation (Klöckener, Bürki and Join-Lambert 2006). This is why many churches emphasize, again and again, the importance of a rich proclamation of the Word, including the churches of the Reformation, the Old Catholic Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. Catechetical ('educational or pedagogical') (Bradshaw 1992: 36), kerygmatic-anamnestic (biblical justification and basis for the celebrated liturgy with its anamnestic character), paraclete (interpretation for Christian living), and doxological ('to offer glory to God' [Bradshaw 1992: 42]) functions are attributed to the biblical scriptures (Bradshaw 1992). For many

churches, the reading of biblical texts is an essential part of their worship services (Benini 2020).

3.2 Organization of biblical texts in liturgical reading orders

Especially in the twentieth century, churches reformed their orders for the reading of biblical texts in the liturgy. These reading orders vary greatly in terms of the engagement with OT and NT texts, the extension over different periods of time, their differentiation between weekdays on the one hand and Sundays and holidays on the other, options and variations, and have varying degrees of binding force. Some reading orders, for example, practice the reading of entire biblical books (in selection), and parts of them extending over several Sundays; others select them according to specific occasions. Some place the biblical texts next to each other without a direct thematic reference, while others try to establish common references between the biblical texts within the liturgy. Thus, some biblical books are abridged because of the length of the text, disturbing or difficult-to-understand passages, and sometimes to maintain the compatibility between the various biblical texts within the liturgy. Some orders apply ideally, as in the Roman Catholic Church, globally; others regionally.

Various churches prescribe binding rules that stipulate which translation of the biblical texts is to be used. Churches such as the Reformed church, for historical reasons, rely on specific orders for scripture readings or allow the leading person to set the biblical pericopes; by contrast, the free churches provide 'hardly any liturgical readings of biblical texts', no lectionary, and no clearly defined place for Bible use outside the sermon (Schweyer 2020: 268f; Ellis 2004). The Epistles of the Apostles (Acts, in the Easter season) and the Gospels are read as part of the Byzantine liturgy, comprised of three cycles of readings for weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. OT readings are only rarely encountered; occasionally in vigils for Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter. According to the East Syriac rite, a first reading from the OT (appropriate to the church year), a second reading from the prophets, a third reading from Paul's letters, and, lastly, the Gospel are read in the eucharistic celebration.

The Roman Catholic Church prescribes one order of readings for the weekdays (with two annual circles) and another order for Sundays and feast days, which extends over three reading years. The latter comprises three texts: an Old Testament reading, a New Testament Epistle reading, and a Gospel text. In the Easter season, a reading from the Acts of the Apostles is included. In response to the Gospel, the texts have been chosen from the Old Testament. This order has been adopted by many English-speaking churches and modified in the Revised Common Lectionary.

The German Lutherans have chosen a different path; their reading order is organized into a one-year cycle with readings and sermon texts from the OT and NT (Perikopenbuch

2019). In Baptist worship, verbal elements dominate. The Bible is of great importance in free church worship, where the local congregation is rooted in local tradition. God is believed to be near and present. This is especially evident in the sermon, which is central to the service.

3.3 Ritual form of the proclamation of the word

In some churches, the proclamation of the word is ritualized in a special way (Meßner 2012; Tichý 2016). For example, the gospel altar is carried through the room in a solemn procession as a sign of Christ's presence. There is a separate place for the reading of the texts (referred to as an 'ambo'). The use of candles and incense, the elevation of the book from which the texts are read, the singing of the biblical texts, the standing of the congregation, and the ways in which specific persons are entrusted with the reading of the OT and NT show that it is Holy Scripture that is being proclaimed. Accompanying words declare, among other things, the texts as the Word of God or acclaim the Christ believed present in the proclamation.

3.4 Old Testament Psalms in Christian worship

The Old Testament Psalms play a role of their own in Christian worship, for they are a basic component of the Liturgy of the Hours in particular (Taft 1993). They can be encountered as a whole text, in sections and as individual verses, and are also used in songs. One and the same psalm can be used in different liturgical contexts, due to specific keyword connections or for reasons of tradition. Psalms are used in the order of the Psalter and selected for specific occasions. Jewish and Christian liturgies draw on them. The example of the Psalms can be used to study the problems of Christian hermeneutics of OT texts. Because of their messianic meaning, the complex texts are read as *Vox Christi ad Patrem*, *Vox Ecclesiae* and *Vox de Christo* (the voice of Christ to God the Father, the voice and prayer of the church about and to Christ; Fischer 1982). There is a danger that the OT texts are regarded as acceptable within a Christian context in so far as they can be interpreted christologically. Thus, their intrinsic value is not appreciated and the texts are forced into a theologically questionable scheme, according to which the NT is regarded as having surpassed the OT in importance, leading to an underappreciation of the OT and the history of Israel. In contrast, the use of *currente Psalterio* (recitation of the individual texts in the sequence of the Psalter) illustrates the possibilities of a diverse and open reflection of the Psalms in worship (Franz 1997).

3.5 Liturgical biblical reception beyond scripture reading

In the various churches and their liturgies there are further forms of biblical reception (see Jeggle-Merz, Kirchschräger and Müller 2014; 2015; 2016 for examples of the reception of the Bible in Roman Catholic Mass). Individual biblical texts such as the *Magnificat* (Lc 1,

46–55), *Benedictus* (Lc 1, 68–79) and *Nunc dimittis* (2, 29–33) and the Lord's Prayer (a basic Christian prayer) are used as separate liturgical pieces. Other liturgical texts, such as the *Gloria* as a great doxology or the *Te Deum* as a hymn, integrate biblical verses into a new poetic textual whole. Scriptural reception takes place in prayer, alongside orations, e.g. in biblical paradigms in eucharistic prayers and anaphors, in the different forms of the words of institution.

In most cases, biblical images or motifs are used to establish a connection between the current liturgical celebration and the history of salvation. In a communion prayer of the Methodist Church of New Zealand (1992), the congregation gives thanks in the preface for 'Jesus Christ, your living Word', and then continues: 'Born into a human family, he became one of us, restoring broken humanity, offering to all the liberation of forgiveness and new life' (Wainwright and Westerfield Tucker 2021: 398). Many churches proceed in a similar way with central prayers. Biblical themes are also used in simple orations, such as in the *Collette per le domeniche e le solennità* (prayers for Sundays and Feast Days) of the Italian Messale Romano, which refer to the biblical texts of the respective Mass celebration and thus thematically shape the liturgy from these texts (Conferenza episcopale italiana 2021: 1003–1051). Central prayers in the baptismal liturgy, for example, use biblical narratives to express the connection between the act of baptism and God's action in creation, the flood, Israel's passing through the Red Sea, Jesus' baptism, and so on (Kranemann 2011).

An essential function of preaching is to make biblical texts accessible to our current context and for the life of the faithful. Some churches reserve it for the clergy, whereas members in other churches are allowed to preach (Bauer and Rees 2021). The ways in which the permission to preach is regulated demonstrates the importance of scriptural interpretation and the concern regarding heterodox interpretations of the texts. However, such regulations can, at the same time, neglect diverse life experiences in the church – especially those of women.

Various formulas and acclamations in the liturgy are of biblical origin. 'Amen' ('it stands firm and it is valid') occurs frequently in the OT and NT, and has been given different meanings within Christianity (including Neh 5:13; 8:6; 1 Kgs 1:36; Ps 41:14; 72:19; 89:53; 106:48; Rev 5:13f; Rom 11:36). In today's liturgy, it can be an affirmation of a prayer by the congregation, take on a confessional character (understood as an affirmation that the bread of communion is confessed to be the body of Christ), an expression of the congregation's self-commitment that the faithful adopt a life of prayer.

Additionally, 'Hallelujah' ('Praise the Lord') occurs frequently in the OT, but is also attested in the NT. 'Maranatha' ('Our Lord has come'; 'Our Lord, come!') (cf. Rev 22:20; 1 Cor 16:22; Didache 10:6), a call with an eschatological character, occurs in the Eucharistic

Prayer of the Lima Liturgy at various points as a congregational acclamation: 'Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!' as an offertory, and 'Maranatha, the Lord comes!' as a conclusion of the anamnesis and intercessions (Kranemann 2021: 532, 534). 'Hosanna' ('Help'), which is heard in Mark 11:9 and John 12:13 as an acclamation by the crowd when Jesus entered Jerusalem for the Passover, is encountered in the liturgy as a cry of confession.

Different songs in the liturgy incorporate biblical material in a variety of ways, process corresponding motifs, and re-contextualize content. Biblical reception also takes place in scenic plays, in space and image. Such plays can have a catechetical character (such as in nativity plays) and can be an integral part of the liturgy; for example, in palm procession on Palm Sunday, the foot washing on Maundy Thursday, and processions on Good Friday. Here, mimetic and anamnestic action are combined and an identification of the acting persons with the biblical situation is made possible across time.

3.6 Biblical reception and intertextuality in liturgy

Liturgy is an intertextual event in which individual texts and actions are in dialogue with each other and form the macro-text (Zerfaß 2016). The OT and NT, prayers, and songs create a context in which the biblical texts can be heard again and again and are brought to life. With the use of the biblical texts, a ritual space is created in which people encounter the message of God and enter into communication with it. Many churches celebrate liturgy in the conviction that God himself is present in the polyphonic biblical message, which is always expressed in a contemporary manner.

4 Texts and rites of the liturgy

Liturgy as an event should address the human being as a sensual being by including the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements in various services (Bradshaw and Melloh 2007). Different symbolic languages are used to pass on the message of God, who is experienced simultaneously as both near and withdrawn. From a semiotic perspective, liturgy is communicated through verbal languages and sounds, body languages, object languages, and social languages. The 'text', the 'script' or the overall event of the liturgy emerges from the different languages (Bieritz 2004: 42–46). The liturgical signs form a highly complex event that becomes accessible in a mystagogical culture of celebration in which individual actions and texts attain plausibility from within themselves. However, institutions, such as the ancient catechumenate, show that religious-ritual socialization and catechesis are presupposed in many liturgies.

Liturgies, like other rituals, rely on different sign languages and media: 'Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media' (Tambiah 1979: 119). As sign acts, they do not primarily have an informative and indicative function, but rather

– according to Christian conviction – unfold a performative effect through the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26f), and, like baptism, create a new reality.

In terms of liturgical theology, liturgy as an event between God and human beings is dependent on various modes and media, so that human beings can approach the mystery of God with all their senses and means of expression. Consequently, the acts of communication in worship transcend the merely verbal and, thus, express what could not be communicated otherwise. For this reason, liturgy requires different forms of presentation (textual forms, actions, visual, and acoustic). It combines the material and the immaterial with different forms of representation. Therefore, liturgy, in its complexity, is not reducible to text alone.

4.1 Body language

Body language, including postures, expressions, gestures, facial expressions, and so on play a special role in the liturgy (Morrill 1999; Senn 2016; Gerhards and Kranemann 2017). From the moment the worshipper enters the church until the moment they leave, body language plays a role in the service (depending on the denomination and personal spirituality: crossing with holy water, walking, kneeling, sitting, standing, gestures as in the greeting of peace). In singing, the person participates with their whole body. Baptism, marriage, ordination, anointing of the sick are experienced bodily. Communication in the Eucharist and the Lord's Supper happens bodily through eating and drinking. Ecstasy in worship or speaking in tongues (glossolalia) are also bodily events.

Christian faith is lived and communicated through the body and body language (Pahud de Mortanges 2022). The explanation published by the German philosopher Romano Guardini in 1918 in 'Vom Geist der Liturgie' is still influential. According to this, a symbol arises when something interior and spiritual expresses itself in the exterior and material. The translation of the spiritual into the material is crucial for Guardini, given that the human body is a natural expression of the spiritual. The posture and gestures of the person in worship manifest the spiritual event. That which moves a person inwardly and spiritually is expressed bodily. Guardini relates this to the liturgy and goes on to explain that such a symbol should not be ambiguous. Indeed, the symbol must be so clear and distinct that it cannot represent anything else. Its expression must be precise, and must be universally understandable. According to Guardini, a genuine symbol is a natural expression of the human soul (Guardini 1921: 51). The transformation of the human being in the encounter with God thus proceeds essentially through the body as the foundation of the human existence. At the same time, other and more extensive forms of communication are available through the body than with verbal language alone. Within the context of the liturgy, body language, like other sign languages, articulates what is being celebrated, follows the grammar of the respective liturgy, and becomes meaningful within the wider

reference system of 'worship'. At the same time, it has theological relevance, because it is in this language that the event of celebration between God and humankind takes place (for example, the giving and receiving of communion; the eating and drinking of bread and wine). It has to express the mutuality and togetherness of God and human being. Symbolic actions bring the Christian faith into the flesh.

4.2 Media of the liturgy

Liturgies, like many rituals, make use of various object languages and materials. Natural materials such as bread, wine, water, oil, fire, incense, and so on take on a special meaning within the liturgy. Individual churches regulate the necessary quality of the liturgy and, thus, emphasize relevance and expressiveness. The Catholic Church, for example, stipulates that eucharistic bread must not only be made of pure wheat flour and unleavened, but must also be recognizable as food (Eucharist as a meal) and suitable for the breaking of bread. The discussion as to whether wine can be replaced by grape juice in the Eucharist and the Lord's Supper shows the importance of the nature of natural elements in worship.

These 'media' of the liturgy, in which what is celebrated is expressed, are often placed at the centre of the respective liturgies, as the example of bread and wine in the Eucharist, the water of baptism, the oil in the anointing of the sick, or fire and light in the Easter Vigil show.

The use of holy water in Orthodox and Roman Catholic services, for example, illustrates the symbolic use of water in the liturgy. The water is blessed before it is sprinkled on the congregation. It is interpreted by a word of blessing or accompanying prayer. In this way the sign/action becomes part of the liturgy. The blessing is performed. Such sign acts are ambiguous: water is reminiscent of creation, as well as of decline and new beginnings. It is a sign of purification and invigoration, an indication of God's presence, and a remedy against evil. Water itself is ambiguous and allows countless connotations. It serves as a remembrance of baptism and forgiveness of sins, is a sign of protection against illness and danger, of creation, salvation, and covenant closure (according to theological interpretations of prayers of blessings within various churches). The liturgy makes use of the natural expressive power of water and thus preserves the dynamics of the worship event by enabling ever new chains of connotations and making the sign available for a variety of receptions (Stuflesser 2012).

4.3 Liturgical text types

Prayer is a central verbal element of liturgy, which in some churches is largely established as an expression of church unity and common faith, whereas others, such as free churches or charismatic communities, specifically emphasize free prayer, which is

understood as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Various forms of prayer accompany liturgical acts (e.g. blessings), conclude sections of the service, and interpret liturgical events (e.g. communion prayers). They are often related to events in the lives of people and the church, and to times of the church year. By addressing God 'You', the liturgy becomes an event in which the human being stands before the personal God. This is a public prayer with distributed but defined roles. A possible silence for personal prayer after the opening of prayer and invitation to prayer and the acclamation 'Amen' at the end of the prayer show that it is a communal action. Prayers are meant to both express and create community. As such, prayer transcends the concrete assembly and its space and 'connects them to others who pray in a way that transcends the conventions of place and time'. Prayer embraces the 'church on earth' and the 'church eternally gathered in the presence of God' (Nichols 2013: 52).

Liturgical prayer is a prayer of the congregation led by the ordained (as, for example, in the Eucharist) or other ministers (as, for example, in the Liturgy of the Word). The Collect (e.g. closing the opening of the celebration of the Mass) is preceded by an opening ('Let us pray'). After a silence during which individuals pray, this is then summarized and concluded by the prayer spoken by the presider. In prayer and its temporal dimensions, God's history and human history, God's action and human praise, petition, and lament are brought together. The *oration prayer* usually consists in an address to God (anacthesis), a reminder of God's action in history (anamnesis or predication), a petition and a concluding doxology, as well as the congregational acclamation ('Amen'). With their 'Amen', the congregation confirms the prayer of the leader of the service and concludes it. Orations presuppose the possibility of encountering God, who has revealed himself personally in Jesus Christ and is believed to be present in the power of the Holy Spirit (demonstrating a trinitarian character of prayer).

The 'Great Thanksgiving', a terminology of Catholic liturgical studies, is an elaborate form of liturgical prayer. Eucharistic Prayer and Anaphora (Buchanan 2011; Jasper et al. 2019; Pahl and Böntert 2021–2022), consecration prayers for the baptismal water, prayers of blessing over the bride and groom, the Exsultet, and so on, belong to this genre of liturgical prayer. This solemn form of prayer, occurring at a central point of the respective liturgy, contains a double structure of anamnesis and epiclesis, that is of a visual recollection of God's saving deeds and of a petition for the gift of the Holy Spirit. This structure can be extended by other prayer elements depending on the 'Great Thanksgiving' and the church. Other elements of these prayers can be intercessions, doxology, and so on. The respective liturgy is essentially interpreted from the standpoint of 'Great Thanksgiving'.

Acclamations are small liturgical forms (short formulas) which serve the purpose of inspiring reverence, petition, or assent (see below). Other forms of prayer are, for example,

prayers of blessing or doxologies (such as the 'Gloria' as a great praise to God). Litanies (including intercessory litanies) are 'composed of biddings (invitations to pray for particular causes) with a response after each petition' (Nichols 2013: 50). For some prayers, such as intercessory litanies within, for example, the celebration of Mass, and the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, make thematic specifications, but allow the prayer to be freely formulated. Common Worship (2000: 174) includes a range of themes 'the Church of Christ; Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority; the local community; those who suffer; the communion of saints'. Prayer, here, is also understood as vicarious prayer for society and the world. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church prays 'a. For the needs of the Church; b. For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world; c. For those burdened by any kind of difficulty; d. For the local community' (General Instruction of the Roman Missal No. 70; see Foley, Mitchell and Pierce 2007).

5 Dynamics and diversity of the liturgy

Liturgy is a dynamic event that develops together with culture and society. 'Dynamic' refers to the changeability and development of liturgy in theological interpretation and form, with regard to its legal prerequisites, and the conditions of cultural and social frameworks. It entails the emergence of new liturgies and the modification of existing ones. Such a view of the liturgy sets itself apart from the idea of a fixed, unchangeable, and standardized liturgy. Worship services evolve like other cultural entities. This includes the form of the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist, which, for example, underwent far-reaching changes within Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism throughout the twentieth century. It also refers to the different forms of the liturgy of the hours, which developed during the course of the early Middle Ages into, for example, familiar forms of Lauds and Vespers that then underwent further changes over subsequent centuries. Simplifications of complex liturgies of a feast or sacrament in practice, for example, indicate changes in liturgical practice. Liturgies are 'in motion' when new liturgies are adapted to specific ecumenical contexts, or when digital formats of liturgy are developed (as was seen during the pandemic and beyond).

This thesis of a dynamic liturgy was and is not uncontroversial, because the idea of a liturgy that is static or largely resistant to change is often associated with the idea of orthodoxy and effectiveness. The understanding of liturgy plays a role here. Where liturgy is understood as God's action on human beings and human beings' response to it, it remains dynamic because it will change with the faith and lives of human beings (Häußling 1997b: 41–43). In the case of a liturgy that is primarily understood as a cult that must be offered to God, this can be different (on the relationship between cult and liturgy, cf. now Meßner 2022: 88–99, 103).

5.1 Dynamics and diversity in the history of liturgy

The dynamic and diversity of liturgy are reflected in various models of liturgical history (Gerhards and Kranemann 2018). Both are related to the perception of the sources, the description and regulation of roles in the liturgy and liturgical legal regulations. Normative sources paint a different picture of the development and practice of liturgy than first-person documents (biography, letters, and other personal testimonies). If one takes an organic and, thus, biological model of liturgy as a basis, one arrives at a different understanding than if one starts from developments of rites that are understood as culturally conditioned. It makes a difference whether one assumes a 'golden age' of liturgical history, against which later times must be evaluated as an identity-creating variable, or whether one considers the various epochs of liturgical history in themselves without understanding them as models of the present. A 'decay model' of liturgical history is aware of the dynamics of the liturgy, but reads it as an ever increasing departure from the idealized origin of the New Testament early-church period. This ideal time is rarely appreciated for its distinctive developments and diversity, but is reduced to a simplified understanding. This is not the case with a model that interprets liturgical history in terms of a positive teleology, according to which liturgy developed appropriately up to a certain point of time, after which it deteriorated more and more. This means that long periods of liturgical history are only seen negatively and not appreciated for their intrinsic value.

Dynamism can be observed when one, according to the development model, traces the centuries-long genesis of the liturgy (Jungmann 1941; 1948; Rietschel 1951–1952 [first published 1900–1909]). As soon as an organic development of the liturgy is assumed, however, one may only observe the possibilities of cultural development within the liturgy to a limited extent (Angenendt 2001; Reid 2005). Even the question of the laws of this development reckons with liturgy in motion (Baumstark 1923; Baumstark 1934). This also applies to current deconstructive research approaches, which no longer read sources normatively, question traditional images of history and, above all, do not see such sources as binding for today's liturgy (Meyer-Blanck 2018). Newer research of liturgical history contributes to this understanding, which, among other things, draws on methods and questions of cultural and social sciences (Stringer 2005). It takes its starting point from a changed understanding of liturgy and, in particular, from a new view of the relationship between liturgies and cultures (on liturgical history, see Bradshaw 2002; Wainwright and Westerfield Tucker 2006; Bärsch et al. 2018; Berger and Spinks 2016; Ross and Lamport 2022).

5.2 Inertial forces of the liturgy

Liturgies, as with many other religious rituals, create the impression that they are unchangeable rituals that go back to a mythical time of origin. Non-verbal signs contribute to this impression, which are seen as biblically based or as set by a 'venerable' tradition. Prayer texts can play a special role if, like the anaphora of the Orthodox Chrysostom

liturgy or a communion prayer in the tradition of Martin Luther, they are associated with authoritative figures in church history or are defined by a church as normative and sacrosanct texts. Sacred scriptures – above all Old Testament texts – can have such an effect if their cult regulations or, better still, ideal images of cult that they convey are understood as normative.

Extra-liturgical factors have the same effect. The strong emphasis on an apostolic succession corresponds to the idea of a liturgy that remains in a line of succession, in which there is little development or room for manoeuvre. Orthodoxy in the liturgy, which is also seen in connection with the beginnings of Christianity, is communicated through continuity. At the same time, such a liturgy can correspond to inner-church political interests. A denomination distinguishes itself from other denominations and religions by strengthening its own profile, leading to an exclusivist effect. The liturgy may play a political role, if it is supposed to contribute to the stabilization of a political system (Carolingian period, Byzantium; see the above presentations of the history of liturgy). Therefore, the discussion about the dynamics of the liturgy includes a range of issues and touches upon the basic understanding of the liturgy.

5.3 Formative forces of a dynamic liturgy

5.3.1 Liturgical reforms: top-down

The dynamics of the liturgy are brought about and are at the same time maintained on different levels. Different models have been used to reform and shape worship. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the Roman Catholic Church created the conditions for a reform of its liturgical books, leading to significant decisions regarding the doctrine of the sacraments, the doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Communion of the Chalice, and by addressing malpractices in liturgical practice. On 4 December 1563, the Council ordered the Pope to issue a new Breviary (published in 1568) and Missal (published in 1570). These steps of post-conciliar reform were not completed until 1614 with the publication of the *Rituale Romanum* ('Roman Ritual', a liturgical book of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church).

At the level of the universal church, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) adopted fundamental theological principles and individual steps towards a reform of the liturgy, articulated in its own document (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy', approved on 4 December 1963). This reform was to be implemented in cooperation between Rome and the local churches. After a few decades, the fundamentally revised Latin-language liturgical books were available (*Editio typica*), on the basis of which vernacular translations of liturgical books were compiled; for example, the *Ordo baptismi parvulorum* (1969), *Missale Romanum* (1970), and *Officium divinum ... Liturgia Horarum* (1971/1972). Many of these and other Latin liturgical books

have since been revised and republished. The reform was accompanied by an intensive debate on the theological understanding of the liturgy, a revision of liturgical law, and an intensification of liturgical education. Among other things, the Council made the active participation of the baptized, and thus the human being themselves, the standard for this liturgical reform. Thus, the renewal of the liturgy remains a constant challenge. The success of this reform in terms of objectives, scope, and internal church competence (a criticism of Roman centralism) is a matter of debate and can ultimately only be decided on a local church basis.

In the liturgical history of this church, there have also been far-reaching local church liturgical reforms (e.g. in the Church of Milan in the early Middle Ages or in post-Tridentine France) and in religious orders (Benedictines, Carthusians, Mendicant Orders, etc.). Characteristics of such reforms in various churches are, among other things, the comprehensive renewal of the liturgy, including the revision of liturgical sources, a clearly definable scope of the reforms at the respective church level, recognition by the ecclesiastical authority, mediation and reception in the church, and an often embedding of the liturgical reform in the context of other ecclesiastical and social reforms (Klöckener and Kranemann 2002: 1087–1105).

The hermeneutics of such reforms is denomination-specific, contributing to the diversity of the liturgy within the church. To varying degrees, the reference to a theological centre of reform, tradition and (often biblical) origins, unity of the respective church, ecclesial integration, safeguarding orthodoxy, inculturation and reference to the cultural and social environment play a role (Klöckener and Kranemann 2002: 1092–1097). In the Lutheran and Reformed churches, the regional churches (with their synods), and the respective dioceses for the Old Catholics, have remained the decisive authorities. For the Roman Catholic church, on the other hand, the relationship between the Roman Curia and the local church is characterized by ongoing exploration. Provinces remain at the centre of liturgical reform within Anglican churches, leading to variations between individual rites. The Anglican Consultative Council and the International Anglican Liturgical Consultations seek to maintain common ground. Within some strands of Orthodoxy, it is disputed whether liturgical reform is possible at all and, whether the liturgy is not unchangeable. Proponents of reform see the Holy Synod as the authority, with responsibility resting with a pan-Orthodox council (on reforms in the history of Byzantine liturgy see Pott 2000).

There are differences in emphasis in the individual churches, depending on time, social context, cultural area, change of mentality, developments in piety and spirituality, and so on. This also applies to changes in liturgical practice.

5.3.2 Dynamics from liturgical practice: bottom-up

Changes and continuous dynamization of the liturgy also arise from practice. Liturgy is neither identical with church orders and books nor is it identical from one place to another. It is an everchanging process that varies according to the church, the church personnel, and the celebrating group. Many reforms and changes in worship can be traced back to interventions and movements of believers. At the same time, there are changes in practice that are adopted in the long term by church leaders and implemented in liturgical ordinances. Some of it is inspired by theology.

Changes to the role of women in worship in various churches is largely due to protest and demands from women themselves. They considered the liturgy an area of discrimination, and criticized masculine-dominated forms of worship. The liturgy, in their view, excluded and failed to take into account female spirituality and important female figures in the history of the church and piety. As a response to this critique, liturgies have changed to varying degrees. In some cases, traditional liturgies have changed accordingly in light of this critique, but completely new liturgies have also developed (Berger 2005; 2011).

Such changes can also be observed in many forms of ecumenical worship, which is not (solely) due to the initiative of church leaders, but as a result of the commitment of Christians in groups and congregations. Participating in the liturgies of other churches has also become common practice for many Christians where the official ecumenical dialogues between the churches have not yet led to a breakthrough. In many places, mutual participation in the Eucharist or Holy Communion is practised. Ecumenical services of word and blessing have developed in distinct ways. For example, ecumenical blessings of couples on Valentine's Day (14 February) are very common in the German-speaking world. Due to the occurrence of major catastrophes, funeral services have developed in ways that go beyond the denominational boundaries and religions (Hoondert et al. 2021). The same applies to interreligious celebrations in some contexts, such as prayers for peace. Because of the knowledge of liturgies of other denominations and religions, new elements are incorporated into one's own liturgy, as evidenced, among other things, by the controversial adoption of elements of the Seder celebration into Christian liturgy.

In terms of the dynamizations of practice, one could mention the language of the liturgy, the area of church music, and changes to the prayer practice (for example, contents of intercessory prayer). One can also mention changes to worship practice in light of remarried divorced people, same-sex couples, or a more diverse congregation. Many formats of digital worship services were also developed by the faithful during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many other, quite far-reaching changes are not solely due to liturgical reform, but to departures from traditional practice.

Attributions

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• Further reading

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