

A History of Worship in the Christian Reformed Church

by Bert Polman

This article traces the development of worship practices in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), beginning with a review of the Reformed liturgical tradition in the Netherlands and how this tradition was adapted by the early Christian Reformed immigrants in North America. This history concludes with an account of more recent worship developments in the denomination.

In the Footsteps of Datheen

The early development of the Dutch Reformed liturgy began with the work of Peter Datheen (1531-1588) one of the Dutch refugees who had settled in Frankenthal, Germany.

The early Dutch Protestants had fled persecution; the group in Frankenthal had first settled in England, and then after Queen Mary I ascended the throne in 1553, they moved again, this time to the German area along the middle Rhine region known as the Palatinate. In 1566 Datheen prepared Dutch paraphrases of the Genevan Psalter, which had been completed with French texts only four years earlier (see "The Genevan Psalter," p. 28). Datheen also translated into Dutch the church order used in the Palatinate. This church order contained not only the Heidelberg Catechism (which soon became one of the confessions of the Dutch Reformed Church) but also some liturgical materials that are known as the Palatinate Liturgy.

Like the Heidelberg Catechism, the Palatinate Liturgy was drawn up by Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus in 1563 on the request of the Elector of the Palatinate, Frederick III, who wanted to unite the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the Zwinglians in his domain. Consequently the Palatinate Liturgy represents a blending of various liturgical texts and traditions.

The compilers of the Palatinate Liturgy drew on the liturgy of the Dutch exile congregation in London, summarized in Marten Micron's *De Christelycke Ordinancien* (1554) and expanded in the *Forma ac Ratio* of Johannes à Lasco (1555). The Dutch liturgy from London represented Zwinglian teachings, since both Micron and à Lasco were Zwinglians who had been influenced by the teachings of continental Sacramentarians. The Calvinist strain in the Palatinate Liturgy can be traced to the *Liturgia Sacra* of Valerand Pullain (1551), used by the French Reformed refugees in London where the Dutch exiles had become familiar with it. Pullain had translated his liturgy from that of Calvin at Strasbourg, *La Forme de Prieres* (1545), which was itself based on Martin Bucer's *Grund und Ursach* (1524). The Lutheran influence on the Palatinate Liturgy came from the simple preaching service of the *Kirchenordnung* of Württemberg (1561).

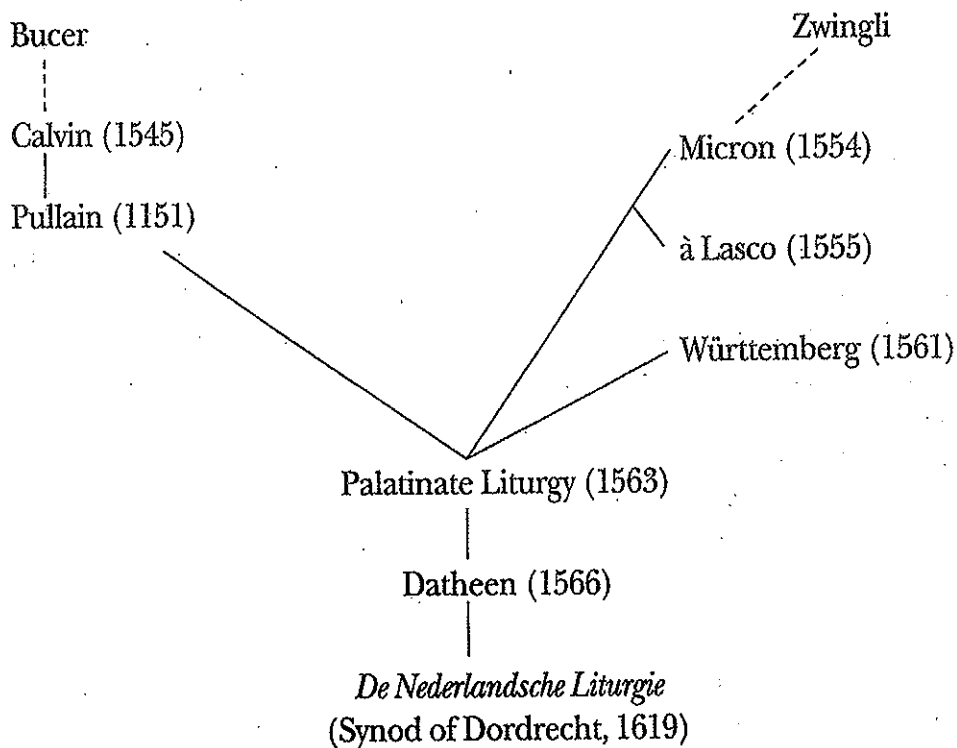
The Palatinate Liturgy provided an outline for a Sunday-morning preaching service in which the sermon is preceded and followed by long prayers and one psalm is to be sung by the congregation. The second Sunday service was a teaching service that

incorporated the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism. The Lord's Supper was to be administered once a month with the use of a largely didactic formulary.

Datheen translated this Palatinate Liturgy into Dutch, made some minor changes in it, and published his work in 1566 along with his Dutch Psalter. When the National Reformed Synod of Wesel adopted Datheen's *Psalmen* in 1568, the prayers and formularies from the Palatinate were also accepted for use in the Dutch Reformed congregations. The following years witnessed additional, if also minor, changes to the liturgy adapted by Datheen. The Provincial Synod of Dordrecht (1574) decreed that the Lord's Supper should be observed once every two months and that the Calvinist *votum* ("Our help . . ."—Ps. 124:8) be used at the beginning of the service. The lengthy confession of sin in the post-sermon prayer was replaced by a prayer of thanksgiving, and the sung Decalogue (Ten Commandments) shifted from the second service to the morning service. The great Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) brought an end to the formal revisions in 1619 and, in effect, "froze" any further developments to the Dutch Reformed liturgy until major revisions were undertaken in the twentieth century.

The Dutch Reformed liturgy is essentially a collection of prayers and liturgical formularies; it is not a complete order of worship, as were its Calvinian predecessors. It is thought that the skeleton nature of the early Dutch Reformed liturgy provided the minimum items of worship desired by the Zwinglians but allowed the interpolation of other acts of worship which the Calvinists may have wanted.

The following chart graphically summarizes the development of the early Dutch Reformed liturgy:



Howard Hageman aptly concludes his study of the early Dutch Reformed liturgy with these words:

The liturgy of the Dutch church was German in origin, composed of elements drawn from the liturgies of the French church in Strasbourg, the Dutch church in London, the Lutheran church in Württemberg, woven together by a compiler whose theological cast was overwhelmingly Zwinglian.

—from *"The Liturgical Origins of the Reformed Churches"* by Hageman in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. John H. Bratt (*Grand Rapids*, 1973), p. 136.

And the Zwinglian pattern prevailed! The typical Dutch Reformed service of worship since the time of the Reformation is a Zwinglian preaching service from which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and other traditional Christian rituals were largely absent. In addition, the formulary for the Lord's Supper leans strongly toward Zwingli's memorialist position. Though Calvinist in its creedal theology and its use of the psalms in worship, the Dutch Reformed Church became Zwinglian in its *orthodoxy* (that is, in its "proper manner of worship") and liturgical structures. The inherent tension between the Calvinist and Zwinglian practices of worship resulted in some struggles for the young Dutch Reformed Church. The same tension is still evident in the Christian Reformed Church today.

An Early Seventeenth-Century Service

To illustrate a local congregation's practice of psalmody and liturgy in the Dutch Reformed Church in the early seventeenth century (before the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619), here follows a reconstruction of a typical Sunday-morning service (with some commentary).

As the people walk to the church, they bring their own Bible and *psalmboekje* (a small psalter, frequently bound into the same volume). As a preliminary exercise in the church sanctuary, the people join together in singing one or several psalms from the Datheen Psalter, using the corresponding Genevan melodies and rhythms. The singing is done in a strong unison, without the benefit of any organ accompaniment. A *voorzanger* (cantor or precentor—often the local school teacher) intones each of the psalms or uses a lining-out technique on the more difficult tunes. The *voorzanger* may also serve as *voorlezer* (lay-reader) by reading passages from the Bible. Some people perhaps lift their eyebrows or shake their heads as they stumble over the mismatched textual and musical accents in some of Datheen's psalm paraphrases. Neither the text nor the singing is polished, and the singing tends to slow down in places, but the people sing from the heart. At some point during the singing, the *dominee* (minister) and the elders enter the sanctuary, and at this time the service can begin properly.

That proper beginning involves the Calvinist *votum*, Psalm 124:8 ("Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth"), and the apostolic greeting ("Grace and peace be unto you . . ."). Both are spoken by the minister. Then the minister uses Datheen's pre-sermon prayer to lead the congregation in a lengthy confession of sin. This prayer concludes with a petition for the right hearing of the

preached Word and with the Lord's Prayer (possibly spoken in unison). Then follows the congregational singing of the Decalogue, after which the minister begins reading his Scripture text for the sermon and delivers his sermon. Reading and preaching constitute one single event. The minister chooses the Scripture according to the practice of *lectio continua*, preaching through a given book of the Bible.

After the sermon comes another lengthy prayer, again led by the *dominee*. This prayer consists of both thanksgiving and intercession for the needs of all Christendom. Like the first prayer, this one also concludes with the Lord's Prayer. Then the *voorzanger* takes up another psalm with the congregation, and the *dominee* concludes the service with the Aaronic benediction, Numbers 6:24-26. The people return to their homes perhaps two hours after beginning the first psalm.

Several things should be noted about this morning service. First, the liturgy consists primarily of form prayers and of preaching. The two long prayers are straight from Datheen's Dutch Reformed liturgy, while the singing of psalms by the congregation can also be understood as form prayers. Thus the prayers of this era are common prayers or corporate prayers—they are the prayers of the people, whether spoken or sung. (When the prescribed prayers are spoken only by the minister, they can still be followed by the people in their psalters.)

Second, the music of this morning service is music by all the people. There is no choir, and the organ is not used during the service. Though the singing is not without its difficulties—given the Datheen Psalter—and the singing tempo may be slower than that used originally in Calvin's Geneva, the people make a valiant attempt to sing the Genevan melodies and vibrant rhythms.

Finally, the order of the morning service is not yet totally fixed, as the preliminary singing of psalms and the initial Scripture readings are not yet integrated into the service proper. However, the order definitely indicates the preeminence of the sermon. The Lord's Supper is probably observed once every three months, appended to the typical morning service; baptism is administered as needed, and its formulary is probably used at some convenient point in the usual order of service.

From Passivity to Turmoil

Under the influence of the Pietist teachings of Jean de Labadie and his disciples, extemporaneous prayers gradually replaced the form prayers in the Dutch liturgy. By the mid-eighteenth century, free prayer had become commonplace and increasingly became the standard by which the piety of a minister was judged. Thus the spoken public prayers became entirely the domain of the clergy—they were no longer the corporate prayers of the congregation. Except for the singing of psalms, the people assumed a passive role in their worship of God. Always preaching-centered, the Dutch Reformed pattern of worship now also became preacher-centered as the *dominee* enacted most of the worship on behalf of the people—not unlike the role of the medieval Roman priest (a phenomenon to which all the Reformers had objected).

The psalm singing and Scripture readings that were part of the “preliminaries” in the early seventeenth-century service (see above) were gradually incorporated into the service proper during the next century—most often by placing the *votum* and greeting before these readings and psalms. The sermon retained its central and climactic role in the order of worship. But by the later eighteenth century the liturgical meaning of each part of the service in relation to the other parts and to the whole of the service was often spurious. For example, the Scripture reading(s) at the beginning of the service were not usually related to the sermon, and any observance of baptism or the Lord’s Supper would simply be inserted into a service as a separate event. In summarizing the later eighteenth-century Dutch Reformed practices of worship, John Vriend suggests,

The “law,” for instance, appears as a floating element without any liturgical anchorage either in that which precedes or follows. Neither is there a clear logical progression, or movement, in this order. It is more a jumble of unconnected parts, held together loosely by a beginning *votum* or Salutation and a concluding Benediction.

—from “A History of Liturgy in the Christian Reformed Church” by Vriend in Proceedings of a Conference on Liturgy and Music in Reformed Worship (Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1979), pp. 9-10.

A Late Eighteenth-Century Service

To illustrate a local congregation’s practice of psalmody and liturgy in the Dutch Reformed Church in the late eighteenth century (after the French Revolution, 1789), here follows a reconstruction of a Sunday-morning service in which the Lord’s Supper is observed (again with some commentary).

As in the previous century, the people walk to church carrying their Bibles and *psalmboekjes*, which contain the new psalm paraphrases published in 1773. An organ prelude is played, during which the people meditate or pray silently. When the *dominee* and elders enter, the service begins properly with the *votum* and the greeting, all spoken by the minister alone. Then all stand for the singing of an entire psalm. The singing is extremely slow; each stanza is begun with a “gathering note,” and the organist plays *tussenspielen* (one-bar interludes) between the phrases of each stanza. After the psalm is sung—entirely in isorhythm (all tones in the same rhythm; for example, all half notes)—the *dominee* reads the Decalogue from Exodus 20 and follows this with another, though unrelated, Scripture reading. A penitential psalm is sung, and then the minister begins the “long prayer.” It is a lengthy, extemporaneous prayer of confession of sin, filled with biblical quotations about human misery and humanity’s hopeless condition; the prayer concludes with a petition for mercy and with brief intercessions for all humankind and for peace in the world.

After this prayer another psalm is sung, during which the deacons collect the offerings of the people. Then the *dominee* reads the Scripture text on which his sermon is based, and he delivers the sermon. As the sermon is also lengthy, he asks that the congregation sing another psalm midway. A shorter prayer of thanksgiving and another psalm bring this part of the service to a conclusion.

Then the formulary for the Lord's Supper is read by the minister from the pulpit, but he adds significantly to the "fencing of the table" by naming specific sins that prevail in the congregation. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, which are part of the formulary, are spoken only by the minister; the congregation is silent throughout. As most of the adult members of the congregation fear the Lord's Supper and are deeply aware of their own sin and lack of moral dignity, few actually come forward to sit down at the communion table to receive the elements. The service concludes with the reading (not singing) of Psalm 103, a prayer, and the benediction—all spoken by the minister. Then the people solemnly leave the church during an organ postlude.

A typical Dutch Reformed in the late eighteenth-century would include everything mentioned in the above description except for the observance of the Lord's Supper, which would probably occur every three months. The *dominee* established the entire liturgy by his own choice of Scripture readings, of the psalms to be sung, and by the wording of his prayers and sermon. Even the traditional formulary for the Lord's Supper might be altered at his discretion. The services were strongly didactic in tone, with much emphasis in the prayers and sermons on sin and moral righteousness.

Beyond the offering of alms, the primary liturgical act of the people was their singing of the psalms. And this they did with much fervor—even at a slow tempo. The psalms constituted their corporate worship, their ritual prayers, and no one would easily take these psalms away from them. When the nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed immigrants organized the Christian Reformed Church in North America, they sang these psalms with deep devotion and brought with them the liturgical practices described above.

Seeds of Transition

Noting the disarray of the Reformed churches after Napoleon's domination of the Netherlands, Dutch King William I reorganized the Reformed Church into a national church in 1816. The new changes in church governance, the imposed use of a collection of hymns in addition to the psalms (*Evangelische Gezangen*, 1806), and the theologically liberal trends in the Dutch church were opposed by a number of people who had been influenced by the *Reveille* or "Great Awakening" movement. The conflicts led to a formal Secession, the *Afscheiding*, in 1834, and after a disastrous potato-crop failure in 1846, a number of these Seceders left the Netherlands the following year and migrated to Michigan and Iowa in the United States. Initially these immigrants joined the Protestant Dutch Church of North America (now known as the Reformed Church in America), but in 1857 they separated again to establish what is now known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Affirmation of the Dutch Tradition in North America

The new settlers and church planters found strength in their separation from the liberal church in the Netherlands but also in their isolation from American culture, for they safeguarded their ethnic heritage and language fiercely in their new homeland.

Up until World War I (1914-1918) these immigrants kept the Dutch liturgy and continued to sing the slow "Dutch" psalms.

The adoption of the English-language *Psalter* in 1914 was an important milestone in the Americanization of the Christian Reformed Church (see the essay "Christian Reformed Psalters and Hymnals," p. 97). The singing schools and church choirs in the denomination were similar products of the American environment. But it was not just the language of worship and the music that changed as the church became more American. The liturgical practices of the denomination were also influenced by the American culture and by American Christians from other denominations.

This influence was first noted officially at Synod 1916, where Classis Illinois wanted a "uniform order of service in our American-speaking churches in which the congrega-

Traditional Order (from <i>Acts of Synod 1928</i> , p. 287)	Proposed Order (adopted, <i>Acts of Synod 1928</i> , p. 55; rescinded in 1930)	New Order (permitted, <i>Acts of Synod 1930</i> , p. 187)
Votum Salutation Psalm	Votum Salutation Psalm	Psalm Invocation Salutation
The Law Scripture Lesson Psalm	Reading of the Law Confession of Sin or Penitential Psalm (or both) Absolution Apostles' Creed Psalm	Reading of the Law Psalm of Consecration and Devotion
General Prayer Psalm with the Offering or following the Offering	General Prayer Offering and Psalm Offertory Prayer (optional)	Prayer Offering and Psalm Offertory Prayer (optional)
[Sermon Text] Sermon	Scripture Lesson Sermon	Scripture Lesson Sermon
Closing Prayer Psalm (and Doxology) Benediction	Prayer Psalm Benediction Doxology	Prayer Psalm Benediction Doxology

tion takes a more active part" (*Acts of Synod 1916*, p. 30). Synod appointed a study committee, which reported in 1918 that it recognized deficiencies in the denomination's worship life and yet affirmed a number of principles. An enlarged committee reported extensively in 1920 and proposed an order of worship for the morning service; this order of worship was clearly structured in a dialogic fashion, that is, "acts from God's side and acts from the side of God's people" were alternated in logical order. Much debate on the issue ensued during the next several years, but finally in 1928 synod adopted a revision of the "uniform order of worship" proposed in 1920. Severe protests led synod in 1930 to abolish the "absolution" section of the order and to rescind the obligation to use this new order. Instead, a modification of the traditional Dutch liturgical pattern was recommended, although its actual use was left to the discretion of local consistories. Thus ended a liturgical battle that lasted more than a decade. Synod never again adopted a compulsory order of worship.

Some crucial issues surfaced during this liturgical battle:

- It is clear that the denomination was gripped by a conservatism that declared essentially the eighteenth-century Dutch pattern of worship to be normative.
- Equally divisive was the question of whether synod had the right to establish an obligatory order of worship, and ultimately the denomination chose a congregationalist polity on liturgy and not a presbyterian one. This congregationalist trend has marked the worship life of the denomination ever since.
- The debates during the 1920s also affirmed the Zwinglian heritage of the denomination in favoring preaching as the central element of worship—there was virtually no concern for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- Though the various liturgy committees wanted to give a greater role to the people in worship, the dialogic structure of the liturgy was often interpreted to mean that the minister speaks for God but also speaks on behalf of the people.
- The need for liturgical education was evident not only among the common people but also among the ministers. However, the synodical debates did little to improve the understanding of liturgical principles and tended to generate more "heat" than "light."
- The various proposals and counterproposals on worship betray the catalytic influences of other American denominations but do not appear to be affected directly by the ecumenical liturgical movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Toward Worship Renewal

When the Christian Reformed Church examined its liturgical practices in the 1920s, it did so under considerable pressure from its American environment, for there was a strong element in the denomination that had shed the initial desire for cultural isolation and now favored imitating the worship life of other Christian churches in North America. After the 1928 "uniform order of worship" was rejected in 1930 and the traditional Dutch liturgy prevailed, the Dutch-language prayers and liturgical formula-

ries were translated into English and published in the first *Psalter Hymnal* (1934); later, formularies for marriage and public profession of faith were also introduced. Hymns were also included for the first time as officially accepted songs for worship in the 1934 *Psalter Hymnal*.

That first *Psalter Hymnal* introduced a large body of ecumenical hymnody into the denomination, and this phenomenon was even more prominent in the 1957 edition. It took almost another decade, however, for that ecumenical consciousness to be articulated in the general worship life of the denomination. Responding to various overtures, Synod 1964 appointed a group to serve as Liturgical Committee and gave them a wide-ranging mandate. The first members of the committee were John H. Stek (chair), Alvin L. Hoksbergen, Carl G. Kromminga, John F. Schuurmann, Calvin G. Seerveld, Lewis B. Smedes, John Vriend, and Nicholas P. Wolterstorff. In 1968, this committee presented to synod an extensive report that is now known as "the 1968 Liturgy Report"; its primary author was Lewis Smedes (the report is available in *Agenda for Synod 1968*, pp. 67-131 and in the 1974 *Psalter Hymnal Supplement*).

The report devotes many pages to a historical and principial discussion in which the dialogic structure of liturgy is reaffirmed but in which also the Lord's Supper has greater prominence as the desirable regular complement to preaching. The committee elaborated four criteria by which the church was to be guided in its worship life: the biblical motif, the catholic motif, the confessional motif, and the pastoral motif. The report also contains three "Models for the Morning Worship" and a model liturgy for the Lord's Supper. Prayers from various sources—from Chrysostom to Taizé—are included; the observance of the ecumenical church year receives a qualified commendation; and suggestions are given for singing canticles, hymns, and liturgical texts such as the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei*.

In the footsteps of this significant report, the Liturgical Committee set out to revise traditional formularies and to prepare new ones for various worship acts and events. It also issued more model services with seasonal church-year emphases, and it provided a group of prayers and responsive readings of the Ten Commandments. Eventually most of these materials were published in the Christian Reformed *Service Book*, Parts 1-5 (1981), and some were incorporated into the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*.

The position of Music and Liturgy Editor was created within CRC Publications in 1983. Emily R. Brink was appointed to that position to edit the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*. After the completion of that project, the *Psalter Hymnal* Revision Committee was dismissed, the mandate of the Liturgical Committee was expanded to include church-music issues, and that committee was renamed. Now operating under the auspices of CRC Publications, the CRC Worship Committee has continued to prepare or revise formularies, and has begun to dialogue with other agencies of the Christian Reformed Church as well as to be consciously influenced by a liturgical consensus that is clearly ecumenical. The committee has also been instrumental in preparing several resources, including *In Life and in Death* (1992), written and compiled by Leonard Vander Zee, offering for the first time denominational materials for funerals; and *Lift Up Your Hearts:*

Resources for Planning Worship (1995) by Howard Vanderwell and Norma deWaal Malefyt, which was copublished with the Reformed Church in America.

Various studies of Christian Reformed worship from the 1970s to the early 1990s show clearly a number of diverse tendencies or patterns in the worship life of the denomination (see, for example, Chapter IV of *Church Music & Liturgy in the Christian Reformed Church of North America*, by Bert Polman, Univ. of Minnesota, 1981; and a survey of worship practices conducted by the denominational Worship Committee in 1990). Some of these developments are noted as follows:

- More congregational participation occurs in readings and prayers, but the centrality of the sermon is continued.
- Choirs, special music, and visual art such as banners are important components of worship in most congregations.
- There is a growing consciousness and celebration of the Christian year, especially in Advent and Lent, along with some interest in using the *Revised Common Lectionary*.
- Congregations are moving toward both a more joyful and more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- The second service is poorly attended, and various attempts are being made (often unsuccessfully) to alter its format to make it more attractive.
- There is greater concern for the role of children in worship, especially through the use of the Children and Worship program.
- The church-growth movement, "seeker" services, and the "praise and worship" style are making significant inroads into traditional Christian Reformed worship patterns.
- The denomination is beginning to address an educational role in worship through the journal *Reformed Worship* (beginning in 1986), through periodic regional and denomination-wide conferences on worship, and through new core courses as well as elective classes in worship at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- The diversity of worship practices is increasing not only with regard to differences in tradition between rural and urban churches or between established churches and new church plants, but also with regard to a variety of styles among congregations in the same community.
- Both the traditional and more recent liturgical forms are perceived to be "suggestions" only, for in actual practice many ministers, musicians, and local worship committees improvise their own worship materials.
- Psalmody continues to decline in the denomination.

The following assessment by John Vriend in 1979 with regard to the worship life in the Christian Reformed Church continues to be valid for a number of congregations:

New forms, revised forms, and new translations of old forms come down the conveyor belt year after year. The standing Committee on Liturgy provides us with materials and their rationale; it never imposes any action on a congregation,

nor does synod. It leaves all the churches free to do as they wish. And the churches, by and large, continue to do what they have done before, though with increasing flexibility, increasing congregational participation, an increasing number of options, and ever growing diversity.

[The liturgical consciousness of the Christian Reformed Church] is of a people who were twice bitten in the Old World and somewhat unsure of themselves in the New. In the sixteenth century we were stung by the superstitions and corruptions of Rome, and in reply we exalted the gospel of justification as the thing that matters most. In the nineteenth century we were stung by the liberalism and laxity of the state-church under King William and, in reply, we exalted purity of doctrine as the thing that matters most.

The liturgical consequence of the first is that our services have one focus, the sermon; they tend to be catechetical rather than dialogic in structure, and often lack a clear climactic order. The liturgical consequence of the second is that, rather than leaving to the ministers the challenge of instruction in the sacraments and ceremonies of the church, we have insisted on the use of official forms that tend to be long, monologic, and "heavy," rather than worshipful in character.

—from "A History of Liturgy in the Christian Reformed Church" by *Vriend* in Proceedings of a Conference on Liturgy and Music in Reformed Worship (*Grand Rapids, 1979*), pp. 13-14.

Given the declining influence of traditional Reformed worship materials, increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, and strong congregationalistic tendencies within the denomination as a whole, many Christian Reformed congregations today experience a worship life in which "everyone does what is right in their own eyes" without significant concern for denominational identification, ecumenical liturgical consensus, or application of Reformed principles to worship. Still other congregations are quite conscious of the 1968 Liturgy Report's four motives (biblical, catholic, confessional, and pastoral) as they modify the inherited Reformed patterns of worship to suit the needs of their particular ministries.

Building on the 1968 report, another major report titled "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture" was prepared for Synod 1997 and then published separately. That report deals extensively with cultural analysis and theological reflection, and it offers pastoral guidance in the form of questions and answers on a number of issues that churches are struggling with. The leadership of the denomination will continue to be challenged by the various worship needs of the different segments of a church that is in transition from being a respected cultural institution to being a union of mission-oriented congregations. Admittedly, when worship practices venture into all different directions, some of the results are chaotic. But, equally important, the liberation from unthinking and unfeeling use of traditional, didactic liturgies presents new opportunities to achieve a worship life that honors God, employs diverse spiritual gifts, and meets the needs of people who live in a post-modern, relativistic society.