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Introduction

WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early churches worshipped God in their gatherings, but that worship was neither defined by cultic laws of sacred places, times, intermediating authorities and rites, nor was it all they meant by worship. “Christian worship subsists not only in the strict sense of the meetings of the community, but also in the extensive sense of the Christian obedience of faith in the world of the ‘present Christ’ . . .” (Lange 1984:90, translation mine from German) It is not only in worship that we respond to God’s goodness, but, White (1967:121) says, “by living to the glory of His name.” He also asserts: “Our praise is not exhausted in worship. The demand before us is that we continue our praise in life lived outside of public worship” (:125). Service of love and witness to Jesus’ death and resurrection pertained to the conception of worship of our early brothers and sisters, according to the teaching of the apostles and, ultimately, of the Lord Himself. They generally understood that Jesus’ interpretation of God’s demand, as Bultmann (1965:11) remarked, does not differentiate between religion and morality, nor allows for laws about worship separated from laws about everyday life. As God claims the human being whole, Bultmann goes on, religion and ethics constitute for Jesus a unity, while cultic and ritual demands are excluded; “so that along with ethics Jesus sets free the purely religious relation to God in which man stands only as one who asks and receives, hopes and trusts” (:13). About the relation between cult and everyday life, he proposed some options in question form, the latter of which conveys his position: “Or is one’s conduct of life positively determined by the cult in this sense: that both the congregation and the individual are regarded as the temple of God and of His Spirit, a fact which each must confirm by ethical conduct so that one’s whole life becomes service of God, or ‘cult,’ or ‘sacrifice’ . . .?” (:152) Accordingly, Richardson (1958:300) wrote: “The Christian life is liturgy; and morality and cultus are (as the OT prophets longed to see them) at one. There is no longer a divorce between living and worshipping . . .” Also agreeing, Kellermann (1991:122) said regarding the prophets: “In yearning for a ‘circumcision of the heart’ (Jer 4:4 or Dt 10:16) they insisted on the commitment of the person, an integrity of liturgy and life.” But this could become possible only through Christ, who brought about the possibility of sanctification of the whole reality of His believers, through the Holy Spirit who abides in them; so that there is no boundary line between their worship and *Christian* life. Then Willimon (1983:72) can say that the Christians’ *diakonia* “provides the context and the need for their *leitourgia* until, in

leitourgia or *diakonia*, worship or service, it becomes difficult for the Christian to distinguish between the two.” It is really as Kellermann says: “Liturgy and life are made one in Christ. Their truth is one and the same” (:129). And, in Willimon’s words: “Worship and ethics have the same Lord” (:19).¹

In his analysis of Romans 12, Käsemann (1969:191) gives an outstanding description of the comprehensive worship proper of the Christian dispensation:

Sacred times and places are superseded by the eschatological public activity of those who at all times and in all places stand ‘before the face of Christ’ and from this position before God make the everyday round of so-called secular life into the arena of the unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will. At this point the doctrines of worship and Christian ‘ethics’ converge. This shows conclusively that the total Christian community with all its members is the bearer of this worship and that not only sacred functions but also cultically privileged persons lose their right to exist. The universal priesthood of all believers, called forth and manifested in the whole range of its activity, now appears as the eschatological worship of God which puts an end to every other cultus.²

This general worship in daily life does not exclude or make secondary in any case the worship in the believers’ regular gatherings. As Hoon (n.d.:32) claimed, “it is as much an error of reductionism simply to equate worship with service and witness in the world as it is to restrict the meaning of worship simply to cultus.” The affirmation of the legitimacy of the former does not entail underestimation of the latter. Our discourse is not about replacement but about completeness. We are speaking, with Lange (1984:146ff.), about the “biphasicity” (*Zweiphasigkeit*) of Christian worship, in the assemblies and in the dispersion of the believers, or, with Volf (1993:207), about its “biformity,” in adoration and in action. This duality is not tantamount to dichotomy and dialectical confrontation. Each of both “phases” of worship is indispensable and must be kept in the proper relation to the other. And what is the adequate relation between them? The worship of the assembled church is the center of a whole – only the center, but not less than the center – and the worship of the church in her witness of Christ

¹ Shepherd, Jr (1964:33) affirms that “liturgy and mission are but two names for the same reality. Both terms describe the Church’s manifestation in and to the world in the here and now: that single and final revelation of God in Christ for man’s salvation. Both liturgy and mission make evident that givenness of grace for the restoration of humanity in communion with God, which is occasion for our repentance, faith, charity, and obedience.” Shepherd, Jr. acknowledges, though, that there is a difference of form (:36f.): the church’s immediate environment in the liturgy is heaven, while in mission, it is the earth. We can add that in corporate worship the immediate *human* goal is the church herself, in the sense of her edification (e.g., Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; 1Co 11:17), being people in general the human immediate goal of mission. In both cases, the ultimate goal is of course God.

² Bornkamm (1969:161f.) says in like manner that the eschatological consciousness of the congregation “is the basis for the rejection of all cult, which is the great theological theme of Hebrews, but is already widely announced in the gospels and no longer leaves room for holy places, holy times, and the cultic boundaries between the privileged people of God and pagans, or between priest and people.” He believes that the spiritual character of the proclamation of the word, baptism and Lord’s Supper, confession, hymns and prayers, as well as the ways in which the congregation expresses in life its relationship to the Lord, is how, positively, that eschatological consciousness is announced.

to the world is the context both necessary to and dependent upon that center.³ Young (1963:77) rightly said in this regard: “Worship, conceived as the joyful response of Christians to God’s action in Jesus Christ, was not defined first and foremost in terms of what happened in a certain *place where* and at a certain *time when* Christians assembled. What happened on these occasions was understood within the context of response to God in their total existence.” W. Hahn (1963:43) wrote, accordingly: “To isolate the ‘cultus’ as the sole response to God’s act in Christ would be to abbreviate the response in such a way as to distort it. Worship can be a valid response to God’s act in Christ only in the context of a total imitation and of the service of one’s neighbour.” To him, worship, as human response, is something very comprehensive, far transcending the liturgy (:44), which is, in any case, the center of the church’s life (:60). F. Hahn (n.d.:39) is of the same thought: “Worship in the sense of devotion to God is by no means abolished; but this devotion does not take place in a special defined area, but belongs in the midst of the life lived by Christians. Only thus can Christian worship preserve its essential uniqueness and take on its proper form.” Also thinking likewise, White (1967:109) reminds us that (corporate) worship “is one segment of the Christian life, a very vital one, but never the exclusive one. Saturday night is just as much a part of one’s life in Christ as Sunday morning.” Let us take account as well of what Kendrick (1985:26), one of the British leading singers and songwriters, said about the meetings for corporate worship: “Those times, special though they are, are really just a token of the fact that all of life belongs to, and is being offered up daily in thanksgiving to, the Creator.” We mention finally the claim made by Smith (1995:44) that “the evidence is weighty that Christian worship, rightly understood, means to display life in submission to and conformity with God’s holiness and righteousness.” Here we have a fine general definition of worship. Everything done “in submission to and conformity with God’s holiness and righteousness” pleases or worships God. Smith sustains that the gospel “knows nothing of sundering liturgy and the moral life” and that “liturgy is everything which the church does in the name of Jesus – services of worship, committee meetings, community service, covered-dish suppers, and ministries of manifold types. *Liturgy is everything the church offers to God in the name of Jesus*” (:37).

The Old Testament cultic order functioned didactically as shadow announcing substance (Col 2:16f; Heb 10:1). Since Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary, where he serves as high priest on our behalf (Heb 8:1; 9:11, 24), the shadow is over. The arrival of its referent naturally made it unnecessary and, indeed, senseless (Heb 9:1, 10). Worship is no longer a function of sacred places and times, nor is it dependent upon cultic formalities any longer. It

³ Compare this with Willimon’s saying that *diakonia* provides “the context and the need” for *leitourgia*.

is “worship without cult,” as Walter (1979:436, translation mine from German) spoke based on his studies of Ro 12:1 and 2Co 5:18-21, and also Ro 5:10f.

This was the character of the worship of the early Christians. But did it stay this way? Bultmann (1965:116) asked (rhetorically): “Still, will this position of non-cultic worship be consistently maintained? Will not the worship of Jesus Christ as ‘Lord’ take on cultic character?”⁴ Conzelmann (1969:46f.) says accordingly: “The perspective from which to assess further development is to ask whether this worship will in time again become a cultic action of blessing, a new Christian mystery with Christian holy actions and persons.”

THE PROBLEM

As time went by, it really came to pass that temples were reintroduced as sacred places, Sunday was made a “Christian Sabbath” and worship became somewhat cultic, with priest-like officers and rites.⁵ Christianity receded to the pre-Christian stage (cf. Rauschenbusch n.d.:14). The old didactic and provisional division of time, space, things and acts into sacred and secular, which Jesus had abolished, was reintroduced, so that the Christian doctrine of worship, now reduced, did not accommodate what Christians did in their daily life. Worship pertained exclusively to church gatherings. The Old Testament cultic terminology, used in the New Testament to refer to holiness and expressions of love, came to be used again in the old sense. The New Testament use of it faded away. Moule (1961:83) stated that “it is interesting to find what later became technical terms of worship (and some of them were already beginning to carry such associations) employed in the New Testament to describe the dedicated activity of entire Christian lives.” The words of the “liturgy” group (*leitourg^a*, *leitourg^v*, *leitourg^o*, *w*), for instance, associated in the Septuagint with the priestly cult in the temple and related in the New Testament especially to mission and doing good in general, came to designate again only formal worship. The idea that pleasing God by a holy and witnessing behavior is worship disappeared virtually. The terrain of worship was unduly

⁴ See Bultmann (:116; cf. :123) for possible points from which a cult could develop (and eventually developed) in the early churches.

⁵ Under Cyprian, in the third century, the priesthood came to be understood again in the Old Testament sense of work of a special cultic, intermediating class. In *De ecclesiae unitate*, he regards Matthew 16:18 as the constitution of the monarchical episcopate. “This transition cannot be regarded,” Eastwood (1963:80f.) wrote, “as a slight deviation in the Church’s teaching on priesthood, it is rather the antithesis of the interpretation which was prevalent in the first two centuries. . . . It proved a far more difficult task to re-establish the original doctrine of priesthood.” He also noted that “the concept of the universal priesthood, whose privileges, responsibilities and duties were so highly treasured by the first two centuries, vanished at the first Council of Carthage and was not revived by the Church until the appearance of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century” (:87). The New Testament teaches about pastors (with a variety of terms) who take care of the churches, but they do not stand between God and the faithful like the priests in the old cult.

diminished, both conceptually and in practice, leaving ethics/witness outside – the very same reason for the cry of the prophets in the Old Testament. Ferguson (quoted in Peterson 1993a:182) comments on that change:

What began in Christianity as a metaphorical and spiritual conception was by the age of Constantine ready to be taken literally again. The extension of sacrificial language had come to encompass the ministry as a special priesthood (Cyprian), the table as an altar and buildings as temples (Eusebius). Sacrifice was increasingly materialized and traditional content was put into the words. Sacrifice became again not only praise and thanksgiving but also propitiatory (Origen and Cyprian). A blending and transformation of conceptions – pagan, philosophical, Jewish and Christian – created a new complex of ideas. We not only use words, but words use us.

The division of reality into a sacred and a secular or profane sphere, Bonhoeffer (1955:63) wrote, “creates the possibility of existence in a single one of these spheres, a spiritual existence which has no part in secular existence, and a secular existence which can claim autonomy for itself and can exercise this right of autonomy in its dealings with the spiritual sphere.” Similarly, C. W. Williams (n.d.:2; cf. Johnson n.d.:8) asseverated that “the local congregation is now so structured that it is a sacred island in the secular world, pulling individuals out of the world and causing them to act as commuters shuttling back and forth – leaving the world to enter Church, and leaving the Church to go back to the world, with no real relation between the two parts of their life.” Kraemer (1958:114) also expressed his worry about the problem, saying that believers “are moulded, mangled, confused or suffocated by the dominant trends of thought. Many are bewildered; also many develop a schizophrenic type of mind, harbouring two incompatibles in their thinking, delegating the Christian Faith and what it is about to an innocuous Sunday-department of life, and so losing the acute sensitivity of what the Christian Faith and Church are really about.” Likewise, Kendrick (1985:27) wrote that “if we relegate worship to services and meetings, we are in danger of living in a kind of spiritual schizophrenia, shutting off the greater part of our lives from being offered to the Lord who fills all of life.” And Bonhoeffer further described in a short, shocking and conclusive way the problem of a Christian left to live in that two-realm reality: “He seeks Christ without the world, or he seeks the world without Christ” (:63).

Missionary indifference was a natural consequence of the narrowing of the concept of worship, now alluding only to formal worship, mainly in the temple and on Sundays. Witness to the world, not viewed any more in the category of worship, no longer was a basic preoccupation of the believers. Faith became inward, “implicit.”⁶ It is widely thought that the

⁶ “The pre-Constantinian period was for Christians an age of explicit (rather than merely implicit) faith for the laity no less than for the ordained leaders” (G. H. Williams 1963:41).

duty to worship God is fulfilled in cultic gatherings alone. The society at large is no longer seen as the arena in which God should be worshipped through a vigorous witness to His Son, but merely as the place of work, of “secular life.” Religion ends up having little or nothing to do with life in general: work, use of money, sex, leisure, etc. There is little, if any, awareness that we can and should offer all things to God as legitimate acts of worship, by anointing a biblically informed use of them with prayers of thanksgiving (cf. 1Ti 4:4f.). Oldham (1953:88, emphasis added) reminds us that religion “is not a form of experience existing separately from other forms of experience. It is the *transfiguration of the whole experience*.”

Young (1963:77) rightly observed that worship, as popularly conceived nowadays, “does not do justice to the theological context in which the early Church understood its worship,” just because worship was not defined first and foremost in terms of what took place in the meetings of the church, but in terms of Christians’ total existence, and the context within which what happened on these occasions was understood. He argues that where response to God in the total existence prevailed as “context of understanding,” “the New Testament Church did not have such a problem as arises in our day – the problem of endeavoring to see the relation between the worship of the Church, the mission of the Church, and the ethical life of the Church” (:77f.).⁷ The first Christians really did not approach worship and witness as a dichotomy as we are used to do. They surely did not ask: “What is the main function of the church – worship or evangelization?” For witness in everyday life, as service to God in the power of His Spirit (Ac 1:8), was included in their total concept of worship. Mission is part of our worship, so that without dedication to it we cannot honestly speak of the integrity of our worship. “Without the worship, the mission would be powerless; without the mission, the worship would be a sham” (Perry 1977:63). Without engagement in the proclamation of the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand, worship is a heart without body, the center of a void, a “false center” (Piet n.d.:61).⁸

⁷ Accordingly, Corriveau (1970:226) noted that the very fact that the apostle Paul, who speaks of the various facets of Christian living in liturgical terms and also refers to corporate worship as a common aspect of community life, passes so freely from one aspect to the other “is an indication that he did not experience our present-day problems in regard to the relation between the worship of the Church, her mission and her ethical life.” He mentions Eph 5:17-21 as example, “where Paul passes almost imperceptibly from the cultic assembly to the daily life of the family.” He explains it: “Liturgical worship (v. 19), prolonging itself in an attitude of thanksgiving in our everyday actions (v. 20), cannot be separated from the family life of service and love (vv. 21f.), which is itself sacrificial in character (vv. 25-27).”

⁸ Piet says that the church creates a false center if it “turns inward and focuses its attention upon the individuals gathered for worship.” He adds that “God summons His people in order that they may concentrate upon Him and what He would like to accomplish among men.”

*Models of Relationship between Worship and Mission*⁹

We can identify the following patterns of understanding the relationship between worship and mission:

(a) *Worship alone* – There is no awareness of or interest in evangelization. Religion is reduced to devotional exercises and worship is seen exclusively in terms of corporate praise. This model has prevailed for centuries in the churches.

(b) *Worship as mission* (or *mission-in-worship*) – Mission is interpreted as a function of corporate worship. Evangelization is achieved mainly by bringing visitors to the divine services, which may eventually be specifically evangelistic. This is the “come (to Mount Zion)” method of evangelization. It happens also that worship has nothing directly evangelistic, mission being (strangely) only the presence of the worshipping community in the world.

(c) *Worship and mission, conceptually unrelated to each other though* – Worship and mission are kept as two separated compartments. Often one is viewed as more important than the other or “the main function of the church.” Mission is not fully integrated into (1) the life of the churches (being rather left to special Christians, “missionaries properly,” and para-ecclesiastical organizations, the mission societies); (2) theology (missiology apart from the other theological disciplines); and (3) theological education (schools of mission separated from theological colleges or seminaries).¹⁰ This approach is the most common where mission has a place.

⁹ Smith (1995:37) contends that it is “both misleading and mistaken to ask, ‘What is the relation between liturgy and ethics?’,” because to put the issue this way is to suggest that they are “autonomous, independent, separable entities which now, by some contrivance, need to be or can be brought into some sort of relation.” It is surely possible that one puts that question with a view to bringing liturgy and ethics, viewed as two autonomous things, to some kind of relation among themselves. However we ask it only because liturgy and ethics are commonly seen as two independent things, not because that is right. We depart from the reality of that dichotomy in order to bring about their synthesis in people’s minds. There is no problem with the question about the relation between liturgy and ethics as there can be with the answer to it, as this section about the models of relationship between worship and mission shows.

¹⁰ Mission was left to “missionary circles,” so that, as Bosch (1991:492) wrote, “missiology continued to exist in splendid isolation. By duplicating the entire field of theology, it confirmed its image as a dispensable addendum; it was a science *of* the missionary, *for* the missionary.” And Senn (1993:8) pointed out the “lack of cross-fertilization” between worship and evangelism as well as between the disciplines of liturgiology and missiology. Liturgiologists hardly consider witness and missiologists have little interest in cultic acts “except to fine-tune them into evangelistic tools.” Bosch (1980:244f.) claims that “it is a misconception that missiology is a theological minor, a dispensable extra, a special field of study exclusively for those who plan to do mission work in Third World countries.” He notes, however: “After many centuries it has gradually begun to dawn on us that the Church is essentially missionary, or she is not the Church of Jesus Christ.” We mention also Smith (1995:x), who spoke of his concern, together with a colleague, “about the ways in which the theological encyclopedia had tended to isolate aspects of theological education which belong together.” Then he they conceived a course in Christian ethics in terms of “Liturgy as Ethics/Ethics as Liturgy.” Smith maintained that “the separation of liturgy from ethics, of moral theology from worship, is artificial and contrived and mistaken – and recent!” It is surely artificial. But is it really recent? Smith argues that if we find it difficult to talk about liturgy and ethics in

(d) *Worship as a comprehensive category embracing collective worship and worship-in-witness* – This is the New Testament pattern. Worship and mission are not merely juxtaposed – there is an interpenetration. Dodd (1951:4) says it about the religious and ethical elements in Christianity: the idea that what is necessary is a sound balance between them “does not go to the root of the matter.” Neither can be rightly understood “unless we can in some measure hold the two together and understand them in their true, organic relations within a whole.” Corporate worship is the center of the total worship of the church – only the center, but not less than the center (or neither less nor more than the center). Christian service to the world must be rooted in worship. It must be rooted there, but must *flourish* “out there.” In fact, witness is worship because it is essentially worship; it is worship made witness, “applied worship” (Webster 1962b:74).¹¹ This model leaves no room for the artificial debate on the main task of the church, whether to worship God or to evangelize the world. Webster (1962a:108) challenged *unqualified* statements that present worship as the sovereign function of the church. They are, he rightly said, “unsupported by Scriptural warrant.” He well remarked: “Mission was not the second thought in that early Church” (:109). A fine example of a *qualified*, hence legitimate, statement that worship is the only function of the church comes from Gunton (1989:200): “In one sense, the church has nothing else to do but praise, when that word is used to characterise not just the particular acts we call worship, but a whole way of being in the world.” We can only affirm that worship is the main or even the only function of the church if we add the qualification or condition that *witness of Christ to the world is very part of it*. Thus we have a doxological doctrine of mission and, containing it, a missiological doctrine of worship.

(e) *Worship for mission* – In this model, worship has no value in itself apart from being preparation for mission. Of course, corporate worship defines the believers’ mission and inspires, prepares and empowers them for it. But if worship plays that role, it is not less worship for that sake. Instead, it does it just for being worship, exactly for being an expression of awareness of God’s being, love and will, that is, worship.

(f) *Mission alone* – The typical case of this position is the movement for a “churchless” Christianity. But if corporate worship is not the entire Christian worship, mission is not alike; so that we can only talk about *mission as worship* insofar as it does not mean *mission alone as worship* (or that morality is the whole of religion).

the same breath, “this is symptomatic of a point of view which sees liturgy as something other than ethics, or which looks at each of these as relatively independent of the other, or which even sees them as mutually exclusive” (:36).

¹¹ By “applied worship” Webster means the transposition of what happens in corporate worship “to the outside and unbelieving world into which the *ecclesia* is sent as a *diaspora*.”

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Why is the comprehensive approach to worship not a common object of pastoral instruction in the churches, so that evangelization may be a tacit way of the churches being churches? When there is no commitment to explicit witness to Christ to unbelievers, worship is only “half-pleasing” to God (ultimately, not pleasing at all). Why is this truth not widely and consistently taught to the Christians? The reasons are obvious: theoretical ignorance (doctrinal vice) and rooted customs (historical vice). The idea that corporate worship is only a part of the total worship the church owes to God is not well known among Christians. Well, Hoon (n.d.:30) suspects – and we suspect with him – that “what most deeply troubles today’s ministers” is “the frightening gulf between the Church’s worship and the ethical witness of her people in the world.” But we suspect further that very few ministers who, acquainted enough with it, teach their churches that there is no gulf separating, in God’s eyes, their worship together and their *worship-in-witness* everywhere; that the Lord observes us from His *holy temple* (Ps 11:4), so that wherever we are, we are always before Him, worshipping Him or not, depending on our thoughts and doings.

As regards the scholarly circles, a significant number of works have been dedicated to the subject mainly since the 1960s, though more partially than wholly, less specifically on worship in terms of mission than in terms of holy behavior in general. Furthermore, we cannot thus far say that the subject is common to theology at large. Interest in it is still too incidental. It is not a common-place even in the sector of theology devoted to mission foundations. In his *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Bosch (1991:139) says:

Perhaps some of Paul’s recent converts were puzzled by his insistence on cult-free worship; to them he gives the assurance that all cultic practices have been antiquated by God himself. Even so, Christians do have a form of *latreia*; their exemplary conduct for the sake of salvation of others is ‘a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God’, their ‘spiritual worship’ (Rom 12:2) rendered in their day-to-day existence; this is their substitute for all cultic practices.

Bosch’s assertion about the new worship, missiologically defined, is precise.¹² But we wonder whether the subject did not deserve a more extensive treatment in such a monumental work of mission theology, perhaps under “mission as worship” in the chapter in which he discusses a series of “mission as” (:368-510). Yet we have to ask to what extent he could have been *prescriptive* in a *descriptive* work – he is dealing with the *emerging* missionary paradigm. More important than to suspect that he could have been prescriptive after being descriptive, is

¹² I am indebted to Professor David J. Bosch for introducing me, as his missiology student at the University of South Africa, to the concept of non-cultic, *missionary* worship.

to get aware that the idea of missionary worship is not really part of the emerging missionary paradigm. That's the problem to be looked at in this study.

Worship in terms of mission has not received wide attention from scholars, hence it is not usually taught to candidates to the ministry, at least with the necessary emphasis. Consequently it still remains an unknown subject to the vast majority of the Christians. It seems that witness has its status of worship recognized only figuratively or illustratively. The outcome could not be different: the comprehensive doctrine of worship hardly informs the life of the churches. Their worship is only "a half of the whole." Mission suffers.

Beyond the problem of lack of knowledge, we find the problem of resistance to change. It is hard to change a worldview and well established habits. The non-cultic, comprehensive idea of worship, is indeed easily viewed with suspicion. Young (1963:78) wrote that in the New Testament church, worship, ethics and mission "were not compartmentalized areas and activities of life, theologically speaking; they were different aspects of the one relation between God and his people." This is the reason, he argues correctly, why "one does not find in the New Testament a vocabulary of worship in the narrow sense of that word; worship in this bifurcated sense had no separate existence and hence no peculiar vocabulary." However, he admits that these claims, despite the evidences, "may seem strange or excessive." The situation remains mostly the same nowadays.

We must admit that it is truly difficult to change an established theory and adopt a new behavior. The thoughts and feelings of Hoon (n.d.) illustrate it very well. He spoke of the "far-reaching effect upon liturgical thinking of recent studies in biblical and historical theology," some of which "hold what some people may regard as catastrophic implications for worship as the churches today conventionally conceive it" (:17). He tells what it is:

Very simply, our traditional understanding of worship as restricted to the cultic gathering of the congregation at a designated time and place for rite and proclamation will no longer do. This is not what the New Testament means by worship. Rather, worship in New Testament terms is a comprehensive category describing the Christian's total existence, and it is to be thought of as coextensive with man's faith-response wherever and whenever this response occurs. The Christian's life in its totality is a liturgical life, and liturgically it can be thought of as much missionary as cultic.

Then Hoon affirms that such "recovered understandings of liturgy," which "have to do with the very roots of the Church's being," are so radical that "a new mind-set, really, is required to deal with them." Then he confesses:

I doubt whether on the whole I have succeeded in making the changeover in that I have not been able to shed earlier ways of thinking forged through the years. My predominant orientation – and most ministers will probably share this – is to think of worship as essentially cultus; I still consider this to be a valid way of thinking about

worship . . . Yet the larger understanding of worship has at least gotten hold of me to a degree, and the reader may find it not uninteresting to wrestle through its implications with me (:17f.).

Actually, most Christians think of worship uniquely in terms of the formal cult and it is surely difficult to get familiar with the new approach – which is not indeed new but rather the original one that has been rediscovered after centuries of forgetfulness (as happened also with some doctrines that had to wait for the Reformation to be recovered from centuries of neglect). The point that must be made is that the worship of the gathered church is not to be “replaced” by the worship of the believers in their daily life. As Hoon himself wrote, “it is as much an error of reductionism simply to equate worship with service and witness in the world as it is to restrict the meaning of worship simply to cultus” (:32). Hoon was experiencing a natural tension between tradition (“I still consider this to be a valid way of thinking about worship . . .”) and change (“Yet the larger understanding of worship has at least gotten hold of me to a degree . . .”). In this situation, he calls us to do what must be done: to wrestle through the implications of the recovered model. We shall attempt, in this study, to show the reality, logic and implications of the New Testament model of worship. We are committed to finding out and articulating the “deeper soundings,” which Dodd (1951:4) affirmed to be necessary if we are to come to terms with the problem of the dichotomy of the religious and ethical elements in Christianity.¹³

We have to learn “to worship as a way of life,” according to the title of the praiseworthy work written by Kendrick (1985), in which he critically asks whether the command to proclaim God’s excellencies or declare His praises is “totally satisfied by what normally goes on between certain set hours every Sunday” (:16). He answered it thus: “Worship is not just a matter of what happens between set hours on a Sunday. If we fail to realize this, we are fooling ourselves. . . . What we so often fail to recognize is that worship is at the very heart of a radically different way of living. . . . To worship implies far more than participation in a series of devotional acts at regular intervals” (:31). He argues that Jesus is our best example of

¹³ Dodd (1951:3) says that the Christian religion “recognizes no ultimate separation between the service of God and social behavior.” But he also sees them historically kept apart from each other, competing with each other, in need of a comprehensive approach:

In various contemporary ways of presenting Christianity there are marked divergencies upon this point, as indeed there have been at most periods of its history. In some quarters the strongest emphasis is laid upon the specifically religious elements . . . In other quarters it is the specifically ethical aspect which commands almost exclusive attention . . . The advocates of the respective views are often severe with one another. Words harmless enough in themselves, such as “mysticism” and “moralism,” are hurled about as if they were terms of opprobrium.

It is easy enough to say that both aspects are essential to Christianity and that both are important; even, perhaps, that both are of equal importance and that all that is required is a sound balance. That is true, but it does not go to the root of the matter. It is impossible to understand either the ethical content of

a life of worship, “whose every breath was breathed, every meal eaten and every word spoken in natural relaxed worship of God” (:28). This means that he was not “more holy” or that His life was “more offered up” or “more acceptable” to God when he did this or that (:29). The implications thereof for us is that however enthusiastic our participation in corporate worship may, Kendrick affirms, “unless in the reality of daily living, we have offered ourselves to God, and truly belong to him, it will be no more than wasted energy and meaningless noise” (:30). Then he warns: “Let us beware of the danger of attempting to renew our forms of worship when our daily lives are evidence that our bodies are not offered up on the altar as a ‘living sacrifice’.” We should engage in what Lange (1984:55, translation mine from German) calls “‘fluid’ liturgy” – a liturgy that flows from corporate worship and permeates all corners of our life and the world.¹⁴

What should the Christians be taught in order to reintroduce effectively that comprehensive approach to worship, on behalf of the world and for God’s glory? Basically that:

- (a) Christian thought and practice were not always as we know them today and assume to be the “purest truth,” “what the Bible doubtlessly commands” and the like. Tylor (1869:3f.) wrote in this respect: “An impartial search of the New Testament will show us that many forms and practices to which we are accustomed and which we suppose to be derived from Scripture have no foundation there.” The *cultus publicus*, for instance, as Davies (1973:255) argues, “is only one way of understanding worship which did not emerge within Christianity until the time of Constantine and the inception of Christendom” The position that Christian worship should be seen in this way alone, Davies completes, “implies that prior to Constantine, and so for some three centuries, Christians were not really worshipping at all.” Other related concepts whose reinterpretation forged throughout history made them different from their apostolical configuration, to mention only those that we shall discuss in this study, are the Sabbath, temple, tithes and priesthood. The churches have in general retained these formal elements of the Old Testament, really as law requirements, as if the New Testament perspective of *responsible freedom*, which is the full meaning of them, did not imply their natural displacement. The New Testament is commonly read through the unperceived lens of history, which has forced it to resemble the Old, as far as the cultic

Christianity or its religious content unless we can in some measure hold the two together and understand them in their true, organic relations within a whole. This calls for deeper soundings. (:3f.)

¹⁴ Lange uses other concepts as well to speak of worship in everyday life: “worldly worship” (:37f.), “‘worship in the scattering’” (:148) and “worship of the diaspora” (:150) (translations mine from German). “Diaspora,” a term designating the collectivity of the dispersed Jews, that is, those not living in their own land (cf. Jn 7:35), is used metaphorically by Lange and others in reference to the Christians scattered after their assemblies.

order is concerned. As if the New Testament actually were, regarding worship, a “New Old Testament” or an “Old Testament – light version.”

- (b) The more religiously formal a church is, that is, the more she lives on the basis of laws imported directly from the Old Testament, the less she is able to experience a true spiritual freedom and security. We can still say today as Tylor said in 1869: “In our age the tendency is to an increase of symbols and outward observances; and the ground of this movement is alleged to be, the desire of a nearer and more spiritual communion with God” (:3). We must stand fully, nevertheless, by what the apostle Paul teaches: “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2Co 3:16f.).
- (c) Corporate worship is only the central part of the whole worship the church owes to God. It is not less than that, but is also not more than that. For the sake of the common tendency to take the center of a thing for the thing itself, it is quite necessary to asseverate proverbially that the heart is not the body. In worship, *pars pro toto* is a theological impossibility. If the worship of the assembled church is the central and constitutive part of the whole worship, the remaining part is holiness and witness in the world. Both have to be respected, lest our worship be incomplete and “half-pleasing” to God, as if it were.
- (d) Therefore, in the recovered approach the worship of the gathered church is not “replaced” by the worship of the dispersed church, as one may be afraid of, but rather placed in a proper and necessary relation to it.

In order to substantiate these claims biblically, theologically and historically, that we may get nearer the apostolical conception of worship, the following procedures may prove useful:

- (a) To survey the history of the rediscovery of the worship character of ethics/witness.
- (b) To keep exploring the universalization of holiness in the New Testament, that is, the demand for the “consecration of everything.” This entails that the Old Testament cultic order, whose logic lies in a holiness restricted in terms of space, time, things and acts (and even people), must disappear, giving its place to a Christian responsible freedom.
- (c) To keep exploring the New Testament indications for a broader approach to worship, which includes, beyond corporate worship, the Christians’ holy and missionary way of life in the world.
- (d) To find out the logic of evangelical service to people as service to God, so that we may challenge the “two line reasoning” that worship, represented by a vertical line, cannot

be understood in terms of mission, represented by an horizontal line.¹⁵ We want to answer this question: what makes mission to *people* worship of *God*?

- (e) To demonstrate that the introduction of Sunday as “Christian Sabbath” (far from apostolical influence) was a major cause of the reductionist approach to worship, with dramatic consequences for mission. This task will be achieved by explicating the following: (1) Sunday is in no way theologically dependent upon the Sabbath commandment; (2) the historical process by which Sunday was made a Christian Sabbath; (3) the treatment of the Sabbath in the gospels, and even in the Old Testament, does reveal a missiological potential to it, which goes usually unperceived, just because we think it has been still understood totally in the category of time, in a frank absolutization of the symbol (holy day of rest) at the expense of the thing symbolized (spiritual rest in Christ).

These measures define the chapters of this investigation, which is, methodologically speaking, a natural exercise in non-dialectical theology (*synthesis theology*), in an attempt to overcome the worship/mission dichotomy and dialectic, without however resulting in a monism.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of the Rediscovery of the Cultic Significance of Witness to the World

¹⁵ “Evangelical service” is used in this study as a comprehensive category for any service “in truth” (Jn 4:24), that is, anything done in the awareness of the gospel, worthy of it, inspired and defined by it, and that affirms its values and transmits it somehow.

The worship of the gathered church has long been regarded as the complete substitute of the Old Testament cult (as far as the human part is concerned, which depends upon Christ's vicarious sacrifice and priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary). Fortunately, however, we have been awakened to the truth that a holy moral life, with witness of Christ as its highest criterion and corporate worship as its reference center, is the full worship the Christians need to address to God. It is not an easy development, as the dichotomy between worship and witness, when the latter was not completely ignored, has prevailed for centuries. To be more precise, the dichotomist misunderstanding of the relation between the Christians' relation to God and to people has been present in Christian history since its inception. A case in point is the problem of the relationship between the commandments of love to God and to the neighbor, as well as the case of the relationship between faith and works (a problem with which both Paul and James struggled).¹

The history of the rediscovery of the cultic significance of witness or evangelization pertains substantially to the later half of the twentieth century; but we shall contemplate also the development of the more general subject of worship approached ethically.² One will notice that the waves of development, the main of which we shall examine, like waves themselves, were not always cumulative. Sometimes findings of preceding explorations were not incorporated into later studies for difference in tradition, context, methodological approach (philosophical, systematic, historical and exegetical) and emphases.

¹ Various binomials have been used to depict the believers' relation to God, or their spiritual life (*stricto sensu*), and their relationship to people: faith/works, contemplation/action, mystical experience/moral life, communion with God/communion with the neighbor, divine service/neighborly service, faith/charity, piety/virtue, devotion/duty, prayer/labor, prayer/praxis, faith/ethics, religion/morality, spirituality/morality, inner spirituality/outer spirituality, passive spirituality/active spirituality, *via negativa*/*via positiva*, spiritual devotion/social commitment, liturgy/life, vertical relationship/horizontal relationship, worship/mission, etc. The relationship between the elements of any of these couples has been misunderstood for centuries. A case in point is the debate on the alleged tension or plain contradiction between Paul's discourse about salvation by faith alone, without works, and James' about salvation by works beside faith. See Chapter 4 for the idea that there is more harmony between the teachings of these apostles than is usually believed.

² But the interest in the relation between worship and life as a whole, in terms of "bringing liturgy into life," emerged also in the second half of the twentieth century.

1.1. LUTHER: THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Martin Luther called attention to the New Testament concept of the “universal priesthood of the believers” in his three 1520 writings: a message to the Christian nobleness of the German nation; a message to Pope Leon X, accompanied by a treatise on Christian liberty; and a manifesto on the “Babylonian captivity of the church.” In the discussion on Christian liberty, for instance, he contended that the word “priest,” among others, was deprived of its true meaning by being applied only to a reduced number of men who form the institutional priesthood. He maintained that the Holy Scriptures make no distinction between Christians, except for those separated for the special task of preaching.

A cognate doctrine, recovered by both Luther and Jean Calvin, was that of (general) *vocation*. They applied the term *vocatio*, meaning “divine calling,” to the daily affairs of common Christians, thus opposing the medieval idea that the monastic practice, the contemplative religiosity of a special group which, by “vocation,” keeps secluded from the world for that purpose, is more pleasing to God.

The recovery of the general priesthood is praiseworthy, but it was conceptual alone; “despite the fine theory, became largely a dead letter” (Scherer n.d.:26). Bosch (1991:469), after recognizing that Luther is to be credited with the rediscovery of that doctrine, says that when his understanding “was under assault from Anabaptists (some of whom had jettisoned the idea of an ordained ministry altogether) and Catholics alike, he reverted to the inherited paradigm. In the end, he still had the clergyman at the center of his church, endowed with considerable authority.” So the concept of a general priesthood was not worked out to the point of implying that its exercise in everyday life, especially in its evangelistic significance, is essentially part of the worship of the church, as the idea of priesthood should naturally imply. Be that as it may, we must acknowledge that, as Calhoun (1935:20) remarked well, the Reformers’ thought (about vocation, in the case) “was a fresh and authentic, though still not fully comprehended nor completed, approach toward reassertion of the ancient premise that worship and ordinary work belong together; that the adoration of God should be integral to, and not sundered from everyday life.”

1.2. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND “ETHICAL RELIGION”

1.2.1. *Kant: Service to God as He wills, by a good moral life*

The religious import of the moral life of the faithful only came expressly into light in the eighteenth-century intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*, in German), as a criticism of religion reduced to inward piety. Immanuel Kant, the most representative voice of the movement, claimed that the moral aspect of the Christian religion is essential to the adoration of God. He explored the subject extensively in his work *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der Blossen Vernunft* (English version: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*), published originally in 1793. His contention was that men

are yet not easily convinced that steadfast diligence in morally good life-conduct is all that God requires of men, to be subjects in His kingdom and well-pleasing to Him. They cannot well think of their obligation except as an obligation to some *service* or other which they must offer to God – wherein what matters is not so much the inner moral worth of the actions as the fact that they are offered to God – to the end that, however morally indifferent men may be in themselves, they may at least please God through passive obedience. It does not enter their heads that when they fulfil their duties to men (themselves and others) they are, by these very acts, performing God’s commands and are therefore in all their actions and abstentions, so far as these concern morality, *perpetually in the service of God*, and that it is absolutely impossible to serve God more directly in any other way (since they can affect and have an influence upon earthly beings alone, and not upon God) (1960:94).

He says also: “Whatever, over and above good life-conduct, man fancies that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious illusion and pseudo-service of God” (:158). He speaks elsewhere of “pseudo-service” (*cultus spurius*) as “the persuasion that some one can be served by deeds which in fact frustrate the very ends of him who is being served” (:141). He argues that this happens “in a commonwealth when that which is of value only *indirectly*, as a means of complying with the will of a superior, is proclaimed to be, and is substituted for, what would make us *directly* well-pleasing to him. Hereby his ends are frustrated.” Still harder is his definition of pseudo-service as “pretended honoring of God through which we work directly counter to the service demanded by God himself” (:156). He speaks as well of “devotional hypocrisy” (*devotia spuria*), that is, “the habit of identifying the practice of piety not with well-pleasing actions . . . but with direct commerce with God through manifestations of awe” (:172). The determining factor of religion, he asserts, “hinges upon knowing how God wishes to be honored (and obeyed)” (:95). This is a fundamental philosophical principle.

It is God that defines the way we should worship Him, not ourselves.³ We have to ask what He desires, instead of taking for granted that worship is exclusively equal to cultic ceremonies. In God's mind service to people is worship of Him.⁴

Kant complained that "man busies himself with every conceivable formality, designed to indicate how greatly he *respects* the divine commands, in order that it may not be necessary for him to *obey* them; and, that his idle wishes may serve also to make good the disobedience of these commands, he cries: 'Lord, Lord,' so as not to have to 'do the will of his heavenly Father'" (:189). Common man, Kant pointed out, regards ceremonies as the whole of religion and dedicates himself to *piety*, "a passive respect for the law of God" and ignores *virtue*, that is, "the application of one's own powers in discharging the duty which one respects." However it is that it is only virtue, combined with piety, that "can give us the idea which one intends by the word *godliness* (true religious disposition)."

Kant admits that the Supreme Being may wish, in addition to morally good life-conduct, to be served by actions wherein there is nothing moral (:165). But he adds: "Now if the two are to be united, then each of them must be regarded as a way in which one may be well-pleasing to God directly, or else one of them must be regarded as but a means to the other, the real service of God. It is self-evident that the moral service of God . . . is directly well-pleasing to him." He still sustains that "actions which have no moral value in themselves will have to be accepted as well-pleasing to Him only so far as they serve as means to the furtherance of what, in the way of conduct, is immediately good (*i.e.*, so far as they promote morality), or, in other words, so far as they are performed *for the sake of the moral service of God*."⁵

Kant's insistence on the religious significance of commitment to a good moral life, that is, that our moral behavior is service to God is quite relevant. But the Enlightenment, as a movement of "emancipation of human reason," denied dependence on supernatural revelation in religion. Kant's thought had no place for God's revelation. He believed in "religion within the limits of reason alone." In a religion purely moral, "each individual can know of himself, through his own reason, the will of God which lies at the basis of his religion; for the concept of the Deity really arises solely from consciousness of these laws and from the need of reason to postulate a might which can procure for these laws . . ." (:95) This emphasis on human reason at the expense of God's revelation, as if the creatures had not their nature cursed and their perception blinded by sin, is illusory, arrogant and, as such, unacceptable. The

³ Cf. Chapter 4, p. 76, *The fundamental principle: God is served as He wills*.

⁴ We shall explore the logic of this in Chapter 4.

⁵ On pp. 181-188 Kant argues that prayer, church-going, etc., are illusory if they are not means to promote the real service of God, namely, good moral action.

consequence of substituting God's revealed law for the moral law (perceived naturally by humans themselves, as alleged) led to the error of replacing one-sided piety with the opposite error, namely, religion viewed also one-sidedly in the exclusive terms of morality.

Kant's arguments on behalf of the ethical service of God are, *mutatis mutandi*, that is, if read in the right context of God's revelation and demand of faith in Jesus Christ, legitimate and challenging.

1.2.2. Ritschl: Piety-controlled Ethical Commitment as Service to God

Ritschl (1900:14), who managed to accommodate Kant's insights into the Christian system of thought properly, wrote: "The history of theology affords only too many examples of the construction of what is either merely a doctrine of redemption or merely a system of morality." From this observation we can conclude that in principle he was not pleading for a one-sided ethical interpretation of the Christian faith, as is sometimes said. His complaint was that Protestant theology overemphasizes the redemption through Christ and does injustice to the ethical interpretation of Christianity (:11). He sustained that "all the true impulses of the Christian religion can be appropriated, not in inaction and effortless meditation, but only when brought into touch with our regular work" (:630). Ritschl's argument was that while moral and devotional actions are different things, "in Christianity moral action likewise can claim the value of service to God" (:284). Since Jesus understood by Kingdom of God, Ritschl sustained, "not the common exercise of worship, but the organization of humanity through action inspired by love, any conception of Christianity would be imperfect and therefore incorrect which did not include this specifically teleological aspect" (:12).

Did Ritschl end up succumbing to the Kantian temptation of reducing religion to morality? Did he dispense with the vertical dimension of the Christian religion? K. Barth (1988:786) contended that the separation of theology and ethics and the basic subordination, explicit or implicit, of the former to the latter, "became and remained the rule, to which at any rate the leading theologians of modern times have adhered." He added: "This constituted the very nerve of the theology of A. Ritschl." Von Dobschütz (1904:xivf., Preface to the English Edition) had issued an opinion decades before, which diverges from Barth's: "It has been said that we are inclined to fall into a mere morality, and the reproach is made in especial (*sic*) against the Ritschlian school. What the author feels at present is the very opposite danger. Among the younger German theologians there is a great inclination towards mysticism." Von Dobschütz held that faith and morality cannot exist apart from each other and critically

recognized, with Ritschl, in a way that does not seem to subordinate theology to ethics, that “the one or the other is always gaining a dangerous supremacy” (:xiv). But Ritschl himself explicitly places the moral life in a proper relation to the spiritual experience, thus contradicting the charge of subordinating theology to ethics. He wrote:

For when good action towards our fellow-men is subsumed under the conception of the Kingdom of God, this whole province is placed under the rule and standard of religion. And so, were we to determine the unique quality of Christianity merely by its teleological element, namely, its relation to the moral Kingdom of God, we should do injustice to its character as a religion. . . . Now it is true that in Christianity everything is “related” to the moral organisation of humanity through love-prompted action; but at the same time everything is also “related” to redemption through Jesus, to spiritual redemption, *i.e.* to that freedom from guilt and over the world which is to be won through the realised Fatherhood of God (1900:12f.).

Ritschl affirmed elsewhere that “as the spiritual activity of those who are called to the Kingdom of God and redeemed does not manifest itself merely in their moral influence on others, but also in the peculiar functions of Divine sonship, ethics must be conditioned likewise by the idea of redemption” (:14). But Ritschl’s ultimate word on the need of subordinating ethics to spiritual exercises, which seems to make Barth’s charge senseless, is perhaps when he says that

as a whole and in principle, the religious functions – trust in God, humility and patience, thanksgiving and petition to God – through which the believer, according to the teaching of Luther, maintains his position against the world, take precedence of the series of moral functions in which we devote ourselves directly to man. For, in the first place, Christianity as a whole is a religion; in particular, it is the specifically moral religion. The religious functions peculiar to it, therefore, are the organs of the Christian life, which assume control of our moral actions (:526f.).

Ritschl’s insights are in general worth keeping. Moral action (with an essential missionary content to it, we would add) can claim the value of worship to God. But believers’ moral influence on others does not claim to be the only area of manifestation of their spiritual activity, as it also manifests itself in the spiritual functions, which, as a whole and in principle, take precedence of and control the moral devotion to people; for Christianity is, generally speaking, a religion and, in particular, a moral religion. The true impulses of the Christian faith cannot be appropriated only in meditation, but by being brought (from it, we should add) into contact with common affairs.

1.2.3. Rauschenbusch: Non-Ethical(ly Concerned) Religious Performances Ended

Rauschenbusch, leader of the Social Gospel school, in America, on whom Ritschl's ideas exerted a major influence (cf. Handy n.d.:201), wrote in 1917: "Every forward step in the historical evolution of religion has been marked by a closer union of religion and ethics and by the elimination of non-ethical religious performances. This union of religion and ethics reached its highest perfection in the life and mind of Jesus" (n.d.:14). He also affirmed that "our Christianity is most Christian when religion and ethics are viewed as inseparable elements of the same single-minded and wholehearted life, in which the consciousness of God and the consciousness of humanity blend completely." The Lord abolished ritual performances and really highlighted the ethical element in our devotion to God. But he did not eliminate "non-ethical religious performances," if this refers to spiritual activities such as meditation, prayer and singing praises to God. What we can say is that he eliminated worship of *ritual character* and *non-ethically concerned* religious performances. As regards the "complete" blending of the consciousness of God and humanity, this can only mean that we do not think in God without thinking in people and *vice-versa*. It cannot signify either that the consciousness of God is dissolved into the consciousness of man or the other way round (cf. K. Barth 1988:410).

1.3. THE CALL TO RESTORE THE LOST UNITY BETWEEN WORSHIP AND WORK

Calhoun released a study in 1935, *God and the Common Life*, in which, dealing with the problem of the divorce between work and worship, he affirms: "A secularized, self-centred daily life on the one hand, and formalized pious occasions, on the other, become scarred fragments which neither taken separately nor added together can be a living whole" (:12). Then he noted that "in our day it is precisely with such disjoined members, secularized work and detached worship, that we have mostly to deal" (:13). And that "one may share acutely in the ancient prophets' disquiet over the separation of religion from everyday life, and of worship from everyday work" (:14). He believed that if we are to recover the lacking "real and effective sense of day-to-day urgency, opportunity, and obligation," we need to be possessed by a unifying and living conviction, one way to which "was rediscovered and rightly marked, though far from fully reopened, by the much-discussed Protestant teaching about vocation" (:17). The vocation of the believers is for the priesthood of love and witness.

And as priestly work is cultic by definition, acts of love and witness to Christ are witness to God.

Worry about the necessity of a more expressive Christian witness to the world was one of the causes of the movement of “rediscovery of the laity.”⁶ Leading figures in this respect were John R. Mott, J. H. Oldham and Hendrik Kraemer, all of them engaged in the ecumenical movement. Mott, the great missionary statesman, leader of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, released the appealing *Liberating the Lay Forces of Christianity* in 1932, in which he exhorts that

incomparably the greatest and most important work in the world – the extension of the reign of Christ – languishes and, in parts of the world, confronts grave peril and possible disaster. The need of the hour is an awakening of the laymen of all the Churches to a realization of their latent energies and their pressing responsibility and the relating of that boundless power to the program of the Living Christ (:40f.).

Kraemer (1958:46f.), in his *A Theology of the Laity*, remarked that a new appraisal of the role of the laity arose largely from “the relentless secularization of modern life, and the resurrected missionary sense of the Church.” But as the Christian faith had for centuries been defined in terms of formal worship and personal devotion alone, to find a place for witness made necessary the reflection on the relation between worship and life. Then, a distinguished contribution was made by Oldham (1937, 1953), who highlighted the need of restoring the relation between worship and work. In a study published in 1937, he claimed: “The God whom the Church worships is a God who has a will and purpose for the world. The business of the Church is to do His will, and the place where it has to be done is in the world. It is a business not only for Sundays, but for weekdays” (:116). Then he says that “if the Christian faith is in the present and future to bring about changes, as it has done in the past, in the thought, habits, and practices of society, it can only do this through being the living, working faith of multitudes of lay men and women conducting the ordinary affairs of life” (:117).⁷ He complains that prayer and worship are referred to as “entering into the presence of God – as though God were not present in every moment of our lives and in every action we perform” (:118). His conclusion could not be otherwise: “If the Church is to be an effective force in the

⁶ The “rediscovery of the laity” was an outcome also of the movement of liturgical renewal, the quest for which led to a consideration of the role of the laity in worship and of the relation between worship and life. The ensuing perception was, in sectors of the movement of liturgical renewal sensible to the Christian mission, that the role of the laity in worship could be explained just by an understanding of the relation between worship and life, in which life is brought into the total concept of worship. (Then attention to mission came indeed later in the liturgical movement. Cf. Jala 1987:21, speaking from a Catholic viewpoint). The answer to the question on the role of the laity in worship was found out, therefore, in the very answer to the question on the relation between worship and everyday life: witness to the world, seen now in the worship category. The response to both questions is found also in the New Testament concept of the priesthood of the whole people of God: all Christians are priests, to serve God in their daily lives by witnessing to his Son.

⁷ Oldham mentions Calhoun’s work and quotes from it (:205).

social and political sphere our first task is to laicize our thought about it. *We stand before a great historical task – the task of restoring the lost unity between worship and work*” (Emphasis added). He pointed out the danger, always present, of the worshipers occupying themselves with their own experience, leaving the will and behavior uninfluenced (:157). “It is at this point,” he comments, “that the modern attack on the life of religion as an evasion of reality contains a sting of truth.” He speaks of worship as “adoration issuing in action,” adding that the unity of these “transforms life into a sacrament” (:158). If the wide gap between worship and work is to be bridged, he notes, “we have to discover *means by which the actualities of daily life are lifted up into worship and the common round of activities is sanctified and fortified by prayer*” (:195, emphasis added). He argues that by “performing their tasks in dependence on God and in the *spirit of worship*,” Christians “redeem the social life from the aridity and shallowness of secularism” (:203, emphasis added). He pointed out the danger, always present, of the worshippers occupying themselves strictly with their worship experience, leaving the will and behavior uninfluenced (:157). “It is at this point,” he comments, “that the modern attack on the life of religion as an evasion of reality contains a sting of truth.”

Later, in *Life is Commitment*, published in 1953, Oldham wrote: “The need to restore the broken connection between the Church and life as it is actually lived demands a radically new understanding of the place and function of the lay members of the Church” (:89). He also wrote that “life for the Christian is a dialogue with God” and that “everything that he does is taken up into the life of prayer, which is the expression of his fundamental attitude” (:108). This is a “translation of daily activity into prayer, the lifting up of work into worship,” as he talked about in his former work.

1.4. THE QUEST FOR A “RELIGIONLESS” AND WORLDLY CHRISTIANITY

In his letters from prison, written until his execution in 1945, Bonhoeffer spoke about a “religionless Christianity,” inaugurating a via of thought that represented a major protest (not without problems) against the prevailing “other-worldliness” and religious formality of the Christian faith, with the consequent indifference towards this world. Bonhoeffer (1967:161) contended: “Our Church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world.” He told of his thinking on how we can reinterpret in a “worldly” sense, by which he meant the sense of the Old Testament and John 1:14, the

concepts of repentance, faith, justification, rebirth and sanctification (:145). Also, he spoke of a secular discourse about God: “When we speak of God in a ‘non-religious’ way, we must speak of him in such a way that the godlessness of the world is not in some way concealed [as it seems to be logical to occur] but for that very reason revealed rather in, and thus exposed to, an unexpected light” (:191). A secular or non-religious discourse about God means that God is not concerned merely with “religious matters,” but with people’s life as a whole, in all of its aspects, with all kinds of problems and errors, with a view to a wide and deep happiness with Him. The secular mind makes of one or more of money, power, fame, sex, etc., its god, its ultimate guiding factor. In response to the portion of this situation which the discourse about a God interested only in the religious realm is guilty of, which reinforces the process of secularization, and in response to that reductionist kind of discourse itself, a “secular discourse about God” speaks, and only in this way it makes sense, of a God willing the secular order, lost in its godlessness, to establish His Kingdom in it and to save it. This does not really mean calling God “the god of this age” (ἡ τοῦ αἰ. nov), a title the apostle Paul uses for the Devil, who “has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2Co 4:4).

The idea of “religionless” Christianity is the idea of a “worldly” Christianity: the Christian faith must be exercised in all spheres of life, not in a religious compartment separated from the world. Accordingly, Vidler (1957:95-112) wrote about “holy worldliness,” which he defines in a very missiological way as “living with men and serving them in all those areas where Christ is never named though they belong to him, or where he is named only to be misunderstood or reviled” (:111).

Jenkins (1962) wrote a study, *Beyond Religion*, on the truth and error in ‘religionless Christianity,’ whose main thesis is that the two intimately related ideas of “the need for an internal critique of religion from the point of view of faith, and of the need to move beyond religion into faithful action in the midst of this present world, are of the greatest importance in helping the Christian community in the Western world to recognize and define the most urgent tasks which confront it” (:14). He claims that faith, which can find expression only in self-forgetting love, lies beyond religion (:16). Only when the church recognizes it, “it is in a position to use the only resources provided for it by its Lord to prevent it from becoming like any other institution to this world which passes away.” What about, however, if the church does not acknowledge it? Jenkins’ answer is: “Where this recognition is not made, the Church may rapidly become an impressive institution – indeed it may find it all the easier to do so – but it will no longer be the servant of the divine purpose. Its very religiousness will do no

more than confirm and celebrate its secularization” (:16f.). We have already said that a discourse about a God interested only in “religious things” reinforces secularization.

J. A. T. Robinson wrote about “worldly holiness” (n.d.:84-104), including a discourse on “non-religious prayer.”⁸ He remarks: “The need for times of withdrawal is accepted naturally, but with no pretension that these times are particularly ‘holy’: nor will they necessarily be more ‘religious’, in the sense that they are devoted to spiritual exercises. They are basically times of standing back, of consolidation of letting love’s roots grow” (:98). He says also about it: “There is no sense in which a Christian *has* to turn aside from the world in order to meet God – any more than the holy of holies is for him in the sanctuary. But there is a sense in which he *has* to go into the world, in unconditional love, in order to meet God; for ‘God is love’ and ‘he who does not love does not know God’” (:100). Robinson wonders “whether Christian prayer, prayer in the light of the Incarnation, is not to be *defined* in terms of penetration through the world to God rather than of withdrawal from the world to God” (:97). He then puts prayer in an intimate chronological relation with engagement with people:

My own experience is that I am really praying for people, agonizing with God for them, precisely *as* I meet them and really *give* my soul to them. It is then if ever, in this incarnational relationship, that deep speaks to deep and the Spirit of God is able to take up our inarticulate groans and turn them into prayer. It is *afterwards* that I find one needs to withdraw – as it were, to clarify on tablets and bring to obedience the revelation given on the mount (:99).

It really happens sometimes that as we are serving people with the gospel, we “agonize with God” for them and, after that moment of spiritual tension, we go to a quiet place to cry before God on behalf of them. But all this does not imply that prayer *before* practical engagement is not “true” or “real” prayer. It does not make sense to say less than that prayer is necessary in all phases of work – preparation, achievement and re-preparation. Prayer *before* is only a problem when it is before nothing; when it is the end of the road, an end in itself. The concern about the chronological relation of prayer to service, to the point of affirming that *laborare est orare*, is in reality the concern about prayer not being related to work at all, in which case, it is idle, an empty spiritual exercise. In this sense, Robinson speaks of a “non-religious” understanding of prayer (as Bonhoeffer would probably do), by which he means that it is deprived, not of the spiritual dimension at all, but of the spirit of inwardness and passivity that tends to dominate our religious experience, thus making religion synonymous with withdrawal – turning our back to the world. Then Robinson condemns passive, distant, theoretical prayer and promotes prayer in engagement – “to open oneself to

⁸ J. A. T. Robinson notes that the Christian life must be a life of, quoting Vidler, “holy worldliness” or of, quoting Warren (from *CMS Newsletter*, No. 52, September 1962), “sacred secularity” (:101).

another *unconditionally* in love is to be with him in the presence of God, and that is the heart of intercession” (:99). Three years before had a work published, *Liturgy Coming to Life*, which is a report of an experiment of celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a college setting. The concern for that started, he says, “where I suspect it always starts, and where our original concern for liturgy started, with evangelism” (1960:53). Convinced that the Lord’s Supper is where the gospel is supremely shown forth, he affirms that “liturgy is the heart of evangelism” (:11).

1.5. ETHICS/WITNESS AS WORSHIP: FROM THE 1960s, THE KEY DECADE, ONWARDS

The 1960s were the years in which the cultic significance of mission started being systematized. This was anticipated by biblical scholarship, which had been pointed out the peculiar way in which the New Testament uses the old cultic terminology. In this respect, Young noted, in 1963: “Recent scholarship has repeatedly underscored the fact that the New Testament refrains from using traditional cultic terminology (e.g. *latreia*, *leitourgia*, *diakonia*, etc.) to refer to its cultic worship” (:89) A very important study was “La fonction apostolique et la liturgie nouvelle en Esprit,” by Denis, published in 1958 in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* (:401-436, 617-656), being a competent exegetical study of New Testament passages that substantiate the conception that the apostolical work is the new worship.⁹ Denis’ study was possibly the first to deal significantly with the proclamation of the gospel as the “new liturgy.” His overall conclusion is that evangelization is worship.

In 1962, Webster called attention to the importance of evangelization for the concept of worship in two studies. In the first, “The Mission of the People of God,” he alludes to J. A. T. Robinson’s increasing conviction about the centrality of liturgy to evangelism and affirms: “Whilst wholly sharing this conviction I want to supplement it with its corollary, the centrality of evangelism to liturgy. To insist on this and to offer reasons for doing so is the theme of this paper” (1962a:107). He asked then: “Is it not time that the same recognition was given to the twin primary functions of the Church, namely worship *and* mission, refraining from an emphasis on one to the exclusion of the other?” Webster was aware of the missiological use of cultic language in the New Testament: “It is notable that in the New Testament the same

⁹ Corriveau (1970:22) held that only the works of Seidensticker (1954), *Lebendiges Opfer (Röm 12,1): Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Apostels Paulus*, an exploration of the ethical reinterpretation of the old cultic terminology, and Denis had approached in a systematic way the theme of the daily life of the Christians as worship of God in Paul’s thought.

language sometimes is used to describe worship and to describe mission” (:110).¹⁰ His conclusion: “Worship and mission are different ways of making the same proclamation, the one in and to the Church, the other in and to the world.”

In the other study, *Local Church and World Mission*, Webster remarked that the apostle Paul “does not think of missionary work as an activity completely distinct from worship; rather does he think of his evangelistic labours as one aspect of both the Church’s worship and the Church’s priesthood” (1962b:74). From Paul’s missiological usage of cultic vocabulary in Romans 15:16, Webster infers that the apostle’s “very missionary work is itself sacrificial worship in action; it is applied worship . . .” Mission is “applied worship,” defined by Webster as the “transposition” of what is done in corporate worship to the outside world into which the church is sent.¹¹ And that author observes that Paul’s priestly (cultic!) concept of mission finds a parallel in 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

Young pointed out, in an important study published in 1963, that the early churches saw worship in terms of response to God in their total existence, and only in this context could what they did in their assemblies be interpreted as worship (:77). So, they did not face problems like ours today, of inquiring about (if not ignoring it at all) the relation between worship, mission and ethical life (:77f.). The Christians, he says, “had nothing to do that could be called worship in the cultic sense” (:79). He proposes that Christ’s consecration of the believers in His priestly prayer (John 17) “involves a mission into the world where by word and deed of love the Church bears witness to the only true God. In the mission the believers are given the glory which God gave Christ, that is, through them testimony is borne to the only true God (17:22)” (:85). The conclusion is that “it is in the total faith response that the believer is consecrated and the ultimate meaning of union with God is articulated. This is worship in Spirit and truth.” The mission of the church “was inextricably bound to its cultic worship. This frustrated any tendency to understand worship as an autonomous intuned activity” (:88).

We have two studies by Schmemmann, both also of 1963, in the first of which he alludes critically to those to whom the liturgy is, of all the activities of the church, “the most important, if not the only one” and those to whom it is “an aesthetic and spiritual deviation from the real task of the Church” (1963a:12). He rightly holds that this controversy is unnecessary, “for it has its roots in one basic misunderstanding – the ‘liturgical’

¹⁰ Webster only did not take due account of the proportion of each use. To say simply that cultic language is sometimes used for worship and sometimes for mission does not do justice to the quite predominant usage of it for holiness in general and witness in particular.

¹¹ Cf. Introduction, p. 8, note 11.

understanding of the liturgy” (:13). He argues that this “is the reduction of the liturgy to ‘cultic’ categories, its definition as a sacred act of worship, different as such not only from the ‘profane’ area of life, but even from all other activities of the Church itself. But this is not the original meaning of the word *leitourgia*.” For him, the Christian liturgy is the end of cult as a sacred religious act “isolated from, and opposed to, the ‘profane’ life of the community.” Thus, the first condition for understanding the liturgy is “to forget about any specific ‘liturgical piety.’” Schmemmann argues that “the Church itself is a *leitourgia*, a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to Him and His Kingdom.” Also that “must not stay on Mount Tabor, although we know that it is good for us to be there. We are sent back” (:30). Then he speaks of “liturgy of mission.”¹² In the other work, Schmemmann affirms that the *leitourgia* “is not a cultural action performed in the Church, on its behalf, and for it; it is the act of the Church itself, or the Church *in actu*, it is the very expression of its life. It is not opposed to the non-cultural forms or aspects of the *ecclesia*, because the *ecclesia* exists in and through the *leitourgia*, and its whole life *is a leitourgia*” (1963b:173). Yet he comments that “the *leitourgia* became once again a cult . . . The categories of the sacred and the profane came back, and became categories within the Church itself” (:176). He says further: “The liturgy became a separate activity, a ‘means of grace’ sharply opposed to all other spheres of Church life – condemned to a progressive ‘profanization’” (:177).

Davies published a work in 1966, *Worship and Mission*, defined as “primarily a doctrinal study of the meaning of worship in terms of mission” (1966a:7), which was the first to explore the cultic significance of mission systematically and in reasonable depth, thus becoming a point of reference in the history of the subject.^{13, 14} He pointed out that

in the past the theological understanding of worship has been developed mainly in one direction, i.e. *inwardly*: for example, it has been interpreted as that which builds up the Body of Christ. While I have no wish to deny the truth of this and similar statements, I think the time has come when we must adopt another approach, which

¹² Senn (1993:1) refers to Schmemmann’s work as “a theology of mission from a liturgical perspective. That is, the worship of the church was viewed as both the source and the goal of evangelism.” What we are concerned with in this study is a theology of worship from a missiological perspective, that is, worship understood *also* in terms of mission.

¹³ In Davies’ opinion, Webster’s and Schmemmann’s works were the only that had made “any significant contribution” to the (specific) subject of *mission as worship* (:9, note 1). Denis’ study, at least, should be added to the list for his important exegetical work.

¹⁴ In the same year another book by Davies was published, *The Early Christian Church*, in which he does not discuss worship in terms of mission, but speaks, more generally, of the essential identification between worship and life (1966b:57). See quotation in the conclusion of this study, p. 114.

is complementary rather than an alternative; we must seek to understand worship *outwardly* in terms of mission.¹⁵

And in the chapter titled “The Unity of Worship and Mission,” he affirms:

Although the title of this first chapter affirms the unity of worship and mission, if we take the contemporary situation as our point of departure we are bound to recognize that it is the disunity of the two that is the more in evidence. It has to be admitted that occasional references are made to their interrelationship, but such statements are little more than lip-service to a dimly perceived ideal and are not representative of any consensus of scholarly opinion nor the result of any examination in depth (:9).

Davies released in 1973 another study (which we deal with at this point to keep his thought united), the insightful *Every Day God: Encountering the Holy in World and Worship*. In this study, he devoted a chapter to the relation between worship and mission (titled exactly “Worship and Mission” like his 1966 work), in which he approaches worship interpreted *centrifugally* (:320); examines “what worship means from a centrifugal or missionary perspective” (:322). And what does it mean? Understanding worship centrifugally signifies that “anywhere is the place of encounter with God in the context of everyday life, and in so far as any temple continues to exist, this is not a building of stone but a community living in the world” (:320). Then, there is a simultaneity of worship and mission: “Cultic acts take place *in via* – they are centrifugally conceived in complete unity with mission itself” (:323). Nevertheless, he laments, “many Christians now understand the vocation of the church centrifugally, but they still persist in viewing their cultic acts centripetally” (:321). They, he contends, “thus give up the logical consistency that is to be found in both the Old and New Testaments, and attempt to combine the New Testament centrifugal concept of vocation in terms of mission with the Old Testament centripetal concept of worship in terms of ingathering.” We must admit yet that there are cases today of which we can speak not even of centrifugal mission combined with centripetal worship: both are experienced centripetally. This is a theological-ecclesiological anachronism. This is Old Testament. Still worse, there

¹⁵ In his work “written in the conviction that there needs to be a more secure connection between liturgy and evangelism” (:4) and defined as “a study of the interrelation between worship and witness” (:5), Senn (1993) says to pick up Davies’ concern with worship understood outwardly, in terms of mission, but modifies it “to indicate ways in which worship is itself an aspect of the mission of God.” With an interest in the missionary dimension of worship *stricto sensu*, Senn does little indeed about the worship dimension of witness. When we say that evangelization is worship because its content is praising God before people for his virtues and saving intervention, we are speaking about content of witness, not necessarily of its form, that is, taking corporate worship as such to places where people can watch to it. J. A. T. Robinson (1960) thought about the role of liturgy in evangelism not in the sense of bringing people to corporate worship in its common place, the church building, but rather by celebrating the Supper in public settings, so that people can presence it. This is what he means by “taking liturgy into life.” And this is somewhat similar to the idea of Keifert (1992:97), who wrote about “away liturgies,” which, in a relation of complementarity with “at-home liturgies,” are worship carried on by itinerant preachers and house churches, responding to “different communities, voices and needs.” Both at-

are those cases of complete disinterest in mission, even centripetal, either for spiritual and doctrinal looseness or for “theological” conviction.

But if Davies dedicated a chapter to worship in terms of mission, in other parts he explores related topics, which support and even substantiate it further. He speaks of the “dialogical nature of the holy,” what means that “the holy is characterized by openness” and that it “overcomes separation, *without eliminating otherness*” (:68)¹⁶ This of the utmost importance for both the doctrine of worship and of mission. Mission is the holy entering the secular without becoming less holy. Mission is *worship-in-mission*. Accordingly, Davies has a chapter discuss the topic indicated in its title, “Worldly Holiness” (:214-241). He asserts that “worldly holiness is achieved by responding to the summons of the holy to serve in the world” (:217). Part Two of the work, comprising several chapters, including that one on worship and mission, is titled “The Holy and Worldly Worship.” In the last chapter, “Rites of Modernization” (:328-351) he seeks to formulate principles for working out in practice the idea of centrifugal worship,¹⁷ dealt with in the preceding chapter.¹⁸ Therefore, it seems that the whole work was written from the perspective of its end. It is, in the last analysis, an outstanding study on worship “from a centrifugal or missionary perspective” or, we can say, *missionary worship*.

In 1967 White introduced, in *The Wordliness of Worship*, the concept of “doxological living” (:109, 119ff.), defined as “the possibility of receiving life and acting in it with a mind to the glory of God” (:119). White says in addition: “It has its beginning in worship but becomes a means of continuing one’s worship through his daily living. It is worship become life.” Accordingly, he still defines doxological living as “the overflowing of the praise begun in worship into all of one’s activities” (:121) and “the effort to understand what God is doing in all areas of life and then to respond by acting to His glory” (:125).

Corriveau released, in 1970, his *Liturgy of Life*, in which he investigates extensively the main pauline texts about the worship dimension of life in general, whereupon he can speak of “life-worship” (:231), and evangelization in particular. He wrote: “The Christian’s incorporation into Christ through the Spirit means, in effect, that his very being takes on a

home and away services, he suggests, “could be played every Sunday, for example, but they would be played with different ‘teams.’” At first, “away liturgies” does not designate the witnessing way of the whole church.

¹⁶ We can also use derivatively the expression “dialogical holiness,” in reference to the dialogical nature of the holy or “the holy as dialogical” (:69).

¹⁷ Davies does not use the expression “centrifugal worship” as such, but it is implicit in his approach to worship *wholly* “interpreted centrifugally.”

¹⁸ Davies speaks, for that purpose, of a “Christian rite of modernization,” which should: “1. Direct attention away from the congregation itself to the wider urban society in which it lives and indeed to the world; 2. Point to and manifest a unity within multiplicity; 3. Promote empathy with strangers and encourage new relationships; 4.

cultic quality. The liturgical value of Christian life on the level of action follows on a cultic orientation in the deepest level of Christian being” (:231). Christians “have something of the holiness which belongs to a temple and as such are consecrated to God’s service and worship. This has the effect of rendering Christians priests in Christ, able to offer up their bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12,1; 15,16) and to engage actively in the liturgy of Christian life (Phil 2,17).” The service and worship of God consists in the pursuit of moral holiness, which is closely connected with love to the neighbor (:233) – “love-service as worship” (:240). Corriveau recalls that the “liturgical term *leitourgia*” is consistently applied by Paul to the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (Ro 15:27; 2Co 9:12; Php 2:25-30) (:242). After analysing Paul’s references to his apostolate in cultic terms in a section whose title is “The Apostolate as Worship,” Corriveau affirms that “evangelization has an essential part to play in the celebration of the new liturgy” (:239).

In the following year, Hoon released one of the most important studies on comprehensive worship: *The Integrity of Worship*. He refers to recent studies of “far-reaching effect upon liturgical thinking,” some of which propose what may be regarded by some people as of “catastrophic implications for worship” as it is commonly conceived by the churches today (:17). He is speaking of the recovered truth that the New Testament does not restrict worship to the cultic assembly of the church. Worship is rather “a comprehensive category” comprising the general existence of the Christians, having the same extension as their “faith-response wherever and whenever this response occurs.” Then Hoon states that the life of the Christian is totally a liturgical life and can liturgically be thought of “as much missionary as cultic.” Their different nature acknowledged, mission is as much worship as corporate worship. Corporate worship and apostolic action are “the same action performed under different modes” (:292f.; cf. Webster 1962a:110). Accordingly, he speaks of “our recovered understanding of the New Testament term ‘worship’ as meaning not only that which cultically happens at a certain time and place but as the Christian’s total existence: in all his living the Christian man is a liturgical man” (:31). He mentions the case of the temple which, as a physical place of worship, “has been displaced in the New Testament by the meaning of ‘temple’ as any occasion when men are confronted by God in the risen Christ and in faith and obedience respond to him.” And after examples of cultic language applied to life in general and mission in particular, he concludes that “the thrust of our recovered understanding of the New Testament conception of worship moves us to a view of the Christian’s life in its totality as *a liturgical life* . . .” (:32). Hoon observes that biblical scholarship “has recovered the

meaning of ‘liturgy’ as so essentially act that we now understand the phrase ‘liturgical act’ itself to be redundant, in that to speak of liturgy at all is to speak of an act” (:292). On the one hand, Hoon claims that even if the term “worship” is applied to all life, worship “as cultus cannot be bleached out of the Gospel” (:32). On the other hand, he asseverates that worship (*stricto sensu*) “which does not engage him [man] with time and history as the matrix in which he is ethically to live out a liturgical life, contradicts itself” (:347).

In the middle of the 1970s, the concept of “the liturgy after the liturgy” emerged, Bria (n.d.:19; cf. :83) tells us, proposed by the Orthodox sector, in ecumenical discussions about the relation between the theology of mission (missiology) and the theology of the church (ecclesiology). Bria quotes from the report of a consultation in Armenia, in 1975, in keeping with which worship, theology and preaching are all a doxology, a continual thanksgiving (:20). Then he makes the point that the concept of the “liturgy after the liturgy” came out of the idea of the extension of corporate liturgy into the daily life of the believers (:20).¹⁹ The “dynamics of the liturgy” goes beyond the boundaries of the assembly of the church in order to serve the community at large. The liturgy “continues with diakonia, apostolic mission, visible and public Christian witness” (:28).

The nineties produced some important studies of exegetical and systematic importance. Old discussed finely, in a work of 1992, the concept of “kerygmatic doxology” (:41-62), by which he means “worship as proclamation” (:41). He rightly observed that the preaching of Jesus and the apostles “was basically doxological, as it proclaimed the reign of God and claimed the faithfulness of all peoples to that reign . . .” (:48). From the same year we have a magisterial study on the biblical theology of worship, by Peterson, who talks of worship as a “life orientation” (1993a:17). The theme of worship, he says, “has to do with the fundamental questions of how we can be in a right relationship with God and please him in all that we do” (:17f.). Worship theology “expresses the dimensions of a life orientation or total relationship with the true and living God” (:18). He contends, then, that Christians nowadays “obscure the breadth and depth of the Bible’s teaching on this subject when they persist in using the word ‘worship’ in the usual, limited fashion, applying it mainly to what goes on in Sunday services.” In the New Testament, worship is, he insists, “a comprehensive category describing

cope with change” (:331f.).

¹⁹ Meinhold (1963:183ff.) wrote about “the Church after worship,” affirming that the new idea of the laity representing the church in its confrontation with the required a “deeper theological appraisal” (:183). One of the first questions to be faced was “how far is the Christian congregation which after Sunday morning service becomes ‘the congregation sent forth into the world’, able to make plain to the world the nature of the experience that has come to it in its acts of worship?” (:183f.) This, according to him, is the “challenge to the congregation that the formula ‘the congregation after church service’ is intended to describe” (:184). He also asserts:

the Christian's total existence." Peterson tests (and confirms) the hypothesis that "the worship of the living and true God is essentially *an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible*" (:20). He discusses "worship as service" in the Old Testament (:64-70), reaching the conclusion that the terminology of service, more clearly than that of homage, implies devotion to God as a way of life (:70). "It is therefore necessary to recognize that, from a scriptural point of view, worship involves specific acts of adoration and submission as well as a lifestyle of obedient service."²⁰ Peterson discusses Paul's usage of cultic terms to refer to his apostolic ministry in a section called "Gospel ministry as a specific expression of Christian worship" (:179-182). Paul's proclamation of the gospel "was a religious act comparable with the praise offered in conjunction with the sacrificial ritual of the tabernacle or temple" (:180). Peterson's conclusion is that evangelism and the strengthening of believers emerge "as a priority for those concerned to offer to God 'acceptable worship'" (:188). Accordingly, he says in the general conclusion of his investigation: "While it is true that worship terminology can be applied to every sphere of life, missionary preaching, the establishment of churches in the truth of the gospel, and support for such ministry are viewed as specific and particular expressions of Christian worship in the New Testament" (:286).

Another noteworthy study appeared in 1993, by Volf, about worship as adoration and action. To him, worship comprises "obedient service to God and in the joyful praise of God" (:207). Based in Hebrews 13:15f, a passage which, he says perceptively, "comes close to giving a definition of Christian worship," he affirms: "The sacrifice of praise and the sacrifice of good works are two fundamental aspects of the Christian way of being-in-the-world. They are at the same time the two constitutive elements of Christian worship: *authentic Christian worship takes place in a rhythm of adoration and action.*" Volf differentiates the two forms of worship so: "When we adore God, we worship God by enjoying God's presence and by celebrating God's mighty deeds of liberation. When we are involved in the world, we worship God by announcing God's liberation, and we cooperate with God by the power of the Spirit through loving action" (:208). Smith (1995:210) also sees worship as a comprehensive category including praise and service: "We glorify God in the church; we serve God in the world; and together these constitute our true worship and bespeak the unity of liturgy and

"Ordained ministry and lay folk, Sunday and weekday, the Church assembled for worship and 'the Church after worship' stand to one another always and necessarily in the relationship of the two poles of an ellipse" (:189).

²⁰ Peterson notes that "it may be helpful to translate words indicating service to God as 'worship'. There is always the danger, however, that readers of the English text will then understand such worship purely in cultic terms!" (:70)

ethics.” Volf manages to make sense of this “biformity” of worship:²¹ it cannot be merely *action* because as much as we need “to do God’s will in the world,” we need also “to enjoy God’s presence” (:207). On the other hand, *adoration* cannot be our “supreme goal,” action being only “a necessary consequence” of it, “because the world is God’s creation and the object of God’s redemptive purposes.” Finally, we would like to mention Volf’s fine observation that “worship can never be an event taking place simply between the naked soul and its God. It must always include active striving to bring the eschatological new creation to bear on this world through proclamation of the good news, nurture of the community of faith and socio-economic action” (207f.). Again and again, it is an illusion to think that spiritual devotion pleases God irrespective of commitment to announcing that His kingdom has come in His Son. Faith without works has no value; is dead (Jas 2:17).

1.6. THE FUTURE

In an article discussing the nature, nurture and mission of the missionaries in the twenty-first century, McKinney (1993:57) says that mission will grow, among other things, out of a “missionary spirituality” (:57), of which worship and witness, brought together, are expressions (:58). Mission will be carried out by “missionaries, agencies, and churches as they respond to the Word in worship, to the world in witness, and bring both of these together in missionary spirituality (*poiesis*). . . . They will respond to the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) making disciples of all nations (witness) with confidence in the power and presence of Christ (worship)” (:58f.). Missionary spirituality “will transform ministry into worship” (:59). Worship and witness will become “a kind of poetry, a creative and expressive ministry that is offered up to God as a spiritual service.”²² Now we ask: how will those missionaries be formed? What kind of church is necessary to produce them? What is the width of the theology of worship that has been taught to the candidates to the ministry? Will the missiological approach to worship be consistently and extensively taught to them and by them to the churches? Or will it remain viewed as something curious only?

Some cognate ideas deserve our attention. One of them is “spirituality,” which may be basically defined as the state of being spiritually driven or living by spiritual directions. White

²¹ We shall discuss in some depth the logic of the bidimensionality of worship in Chapter 4.

²² Bosch (1991) does not include the notion of *worship in terms of mission* in his *description* of the emerging missionary paradigm. He is right in doing so, consciously, we can believe. But McKinney is also right in including something of it, *prescriptively* though, in her discussion of mission work in this century. We read accordingly in the summary of her article that it “combines elements from the emerging mission paradigm suggested by David J. Bosch . . . with insights into the education of twenty-first century missionaries” (:55).

(1967:106) wrote about it: “It is an inclusive term, referring not merely to one’s devotional life but to the attitudes and actions that reflect his Christian belief. It is more nearly a descriptive term for a style of living than a synonym for personal devotions.”²³ Paradoxically, however, “spirituality” has been likewise victim of the same problem as “liturgy”: semantic atrophy. It is also employed in reference to inner devotion alone, a spiritually driven behavior not necessarily implied.²⁴ This semantic weakening has required that qualifications be added to “spirituality,” that it may have its full meaning, comprising both inner piety and active holiness.²⁵ We should take into account, however, that a qualification may simply represent an exploration of further possibilities or particular aspects of the idea at issue. Whatever the case may be, it is, generally speaking, to a practical, Christ-witnessing, contextually relevant spirituality that expressions like “worldly spirituality” (White 1967:106ff.), “dirty spirituality” (Steffensky 1991:40, translation mine from German),²⁶ “spirituality of the road” (Bosch 1979) and “missionary spirituality” (Bosch 1979:13; cf. McKinney 1993:57ff.) refer.

We have still to note the concept of “stewardship.” Mott wrote in 1932: “One of the most encouraging developments in the life of the Churches in recent years has been the growing attention paid to the Christian concept of stewardship” (:52). Christians are stewards of God, entrusted with the privilege and responsibility to administer everything He gives them – time, money, talents, words, etc. By being a good steward in these things the Christian pleases God.

²³ Grossouw (n.d:5, note 3; cf. :157) says accordingly:

The word ‘spirituality’ is an expression which is vague, but in vogue. For this reason it is a convenient term and practically unavoidable. . . . One might paraphrase (Christian) spirituality as the attitude of the spirit, the spiritual life, which is characteristic of every Christian, providing the term ‘spirit’ is not taken to mean immaterial, but the essence that inspires a person or a life. For this reason the notion of spirituality is here made to include not one’s interior life alone (although it embodies this as its primary constituent element) but the whole concrete activity of the Christian in his spiritual-corporeal unity, comprising his existence in the world and his association with others, so far as this is imbued with an authentic Christian spirit.

²⁴ It is about this atrophied meaning of spirituality that Bosch (1979:9) wrote: “I confess that the word ‘spirituality’ has always caused me a degree of uneasiness. Perhaps this has to do with the idea I, and apparently many others as well, have always had about what spirituality seems to mean. By and large, I would guess, most people identify it almost exclusively with what is also known as our ‘devotional life.’” Bosch claims: “Spirituality is not contemplation over against action. It is not a flight from the world over against involvement in the world” (:13).

²⁵ Consequently a qualification is added to “spirituality” also to refer to its narrow meaning of inner piety. Davies (1973:215), for example, speaks of “traditional spirituality”, which, “with its emphasis upon rejection of the world, has had the effect of isolating Christianity from everyday life and confining it within a narrow religious enclave.” As a second example, Bosch (1979:12) so criticizes the spirituality of isolation from the world: “The basic problem with this view of spirituality is that it is docetic. It is based on the idea that matter is essentially evil. We could also call it Monophysite because the Christ of this spirituality has only one nature, the divine.”

²⁶ A “dirty spirituality,” according to Steffensky, is that which “connects itself with the great subjects of life and their threat: with the yearning for peace, with the struggle against destruction, which man plans and brings about, with the struggle around the preservation of life, with the struggle against the oppression of man by man” (:40, translation mine from German). Conversely, an “aesthetical spirituality” has no subject, being “only self-consumption and self-experience. One celebrates oneself.”

This is worship and, as such, is not different in value, but in kind alone, from praising Him with songs.

Finally, we refer to the study of the relationship between the two commandments of love, to God and to the neighbor. We shall not trace back the history of that study, but just note that its best moments have been when love to God is viewed somewhat and somehow in terms of love to people.

Chapter 2

From Cultic Holiness to Holiness of Love in Christ

God is absolutely holy. Human holiness is derivative and relative. Someone becomes holy or is sanctified “when placed in relation to the divine being. Holy and holiness in this connection do not denote a quality but a relationship . . .” (Davies 1973:46). Sanctification is “offering to God” or “separating to God.” In the Old Testament, holiness pertained especially to the tent or temple, the cult and, more generally, to God’s presence. We have reference, for instance, to the holy ground in the “mountain of God” (Ex 3:1, 5) or the holy mount of God (Eze 28:14); the condition that the camp for war be kept holy that God may move about in it and protect His people (Dt 23:9-14); the consecrated tabernacle with everything in it, made thus holy (Ex 40:9-11; Nu 7:1); the consecrated priests wearing sacred garments for ministering in the holy place (*e.g.*, Ex 40:12:15); the sacred assembly (*e.g.*, Ex 12:16). God asked for a part of all categories of things to be consecrated to Him: a part of humankind – Israel (Ge 12:1ff.); a part of all births – every male firstborn, both human and animal, the latter being sacrificed and the former, redeemed (Ex 13:2, 11-15; Ne 10:36; etc.);¹ a part of His people – the priests and Levites for direct service before God, the latter replacing all firstborn sons (Nu 3:12f., 41, 44-51; 8:15-22; Jos 18:7);² a part of time – the Sabbath; a part of space – the tabernacle and, later, the temple (2Ch 7:16, 20; etc.); a part of production – the firstfruits (Ex 23:19; 34:26; etc.); a part of money – the tithes; etc. Why? Why did He not require the whole, if everything is His (cf. Job 41:11)? The common answer is that giving a part means recognizing that everything is His. The whole is thus consecrated by the part. This works in the Old Testament, but not in the New. He required parts in the Old Testament in order to teach about and claim the whole (in order to bless it) in the New. He chose one nation in order to claim through it all nations (cf., *e.g.*, Ge 12:3; Ps 2:8; Mt 28:18; Rev 5:9f.); chose a place for being worshipped (as in the other religions) in order to claim worship everywhere (differently from the other religions); chose a day to be consecrated to Him in order to claim all days (Ro 14:5f.); separated a group for the priesthood, thus teaching the priesthood of His people as a whole, according to which He promised to make the Levites, who ministered before Him continuously, “as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore” (Jer 33:22; cf. 1Pe 2:9); asked for the male firstborn, but wanted ultimately

¹ Male firstborn of unclean animals were replaced for clean animals (Nu 18:15f.; Ex 13:13).

² Only the priests and Levites could enter the tent/temple, “because [only] they are consecrated” (2Ch 23:6).

to bless all children (cf. Mt 19:14; Lk 18:16), indeed all people, as all “souls” are His (Eze 18:4); required tithes to teach the consecration of all income.

Tylor (1869) wrote an insightful pamphlet about the worship of the new covenant, in which he says: “In the *First Covenant* there was a chosen nation and tribe, and a chosen family of that tribe consecrated to the priesthood, a holy city and a holy temple, with its altars and sacrifices, its holy vessels, oil, candlestick and incense, lavations, festivals and priestly garments. By the *New Covenant* all this outward liturgy is fulfilled and finished, and is replaced by a higher and spiritual service” (:4). Those things chosen first by God and consecrated to Him give their place to those that “fulfill” them or which they pointed to. Then Tylor says: “There is no longer any family or priests or any order of priesthood, for the priesthood is expressly declared to be transferred to Christ, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek . . . and no mention is made in the New Testament of any other priest under the Gospel, except where all who are saved by Christ are designated as priests” (:4f.). He still reminds us that, according to 2Ti 2:21, the sacred vessels of the New Covenant “are the believers themselves sanctified and made meet for the Master’s use” (:7). And that there are no longer sacred garments, “but those which have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb” (:8), in accordance with Rev 7:14. All of these changes are explained by the fact that the old cult, pertaining to the law, had to be “perfected.” Jesus came to fulfill the law (Mt 5:17) or to “perfect” it, since the material ordinances were imposed only until the “time of correction” (καιροῦ διορθώσεως) and served as figures of the new order (Heb 9:9f.). Jesus’ “but I tell you” sayings (Mt 5:21-48) expound the full meaning of some elements of the law, what signifies, as is commonly said, a “sharpening” of it: murdering is not only killing the person, but being angry with or despising someone; committing adultery involves not only the sexual act itself, but also the “mere” sensuous thoughts and desires directed to a person outside of marriage; love is to be addressed not only to the friendly neighbors, but also to enemies. In these cases Jesus demonstrated the logic to be applied to every aspect of the law. God never asked for or accepted a partial loyalty (cf. Dt 6:5; 10:12; 30:6), but the Old Testament was a preparation for the full practical implications of loving Him with our “all” (cf. Mt 22:37; Mk 12:33; Lk 10:27). The generalization of God’s demands means that He requires the totality of everything of which only a portion was required in the Old Testament. It is in terms of this “requirement of the whole” that Christians can experience a “surpassing righteousness”, one that surpasses the reduced righteousness of formality (cf. Mt 5:20). It is in terms of it that they are challenged to be perfect as God is (Mt 5:48) or “imitators of God,” living a “life of love,” patterned after Christ, who loved us to the point of

giving Himself up for us (Eph 5:1f). The “perfection of the whole,” both a quantitative and qualitative concept, is the perfection of love. Christians are called to fulfill the law in Christ, what is done through love – for love fulfills everything in the law (Ro 13:8ff.; Gal 5:14; 6:2; Jas 2:8). “Love is not self-seeking” (1Co 13:5). The change in demand is not only from partial to universal. There is also a change in *mode*. The obligation of the law is replaced by the *responsibility of freedom*, which requires consciousness of the truth, thus configuring our “rational worship” (Ro 12:2) or worship “in truth” (Jn 4:24).

2.1. THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF THE “HOLY PLACE”

The book of Deuteronomy is not a mere repetition of the Mosaic law. First, only about fifty percent of the original law reappears in it (cf. Von Rad 1966:13). Second, it contains material not found elsewhere. A careful reading of the book will perceive a recurring theme, which is the basic deuteronomic law: the requirement to worship Yahweh in the unique place chosen by Him. This cultic centralization, revolutionary (cf. Von Rad 1966:16), is contrasted in 12:1-7 with the Caananite custom and in 12:8-12 with the practice of Israel itself. This change from the widespread practice of many sacred places to one only, chosen by God, paves the way for the eventual introduction of worship in and through one “being,” Jesus Christ. He is “where” God meets us. In Him “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 2:9). He is the new “temple” in which we can worship God. “The new family of Zion no longer gathers on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, but in Jesus himself. He died and was resurrected in Zion, thereby fulfilling in himself everything that Zion stood for. . . . Christ himself is now the meeting point between God and humanity, between heaven and earth” (Du Preez n.d.:192).³ The human spirit is a derivative temple, constituted thus by the relationship of faith with Christ, wherefrom there comes the true worship, irrespective of physical place. God seeks worshippers that praise Him in their spirit (Jn 4:24). But this does not mean that worship can be a quiet and introverted devotion. Rather, it means that a believing and conscious spirit should be behind our thoughts, words and acts, so that they are worthy of being offered to God. The apostle Paul wrote that he worshipped (“latreō”) God in his spirit *in the gospel* (Ro 1:9). His worship was “in spirit” in the sense of being deep and sincere, not, as many people say, “in his own way, between he alone and God.” It was “in spirit,” but public: announcing the good news of God’s Son.

³ Cullmann (1953:117) wrote that Christ, whose person God’s presence is bound to (as formerly to the temple), is the center of all worship, reason for which it is no longer geographically limited, becoming worship in the spirit.

On the other hand, every place where we act spiritually is, in a sense, derivatively, relatively, sacred. Worship by faithful witness to the vicarious death and resurrection of Jesus can and should take place everywhere, as before the deuteronomic law, but now perfected in content and mode. The world is our temple, where God's glory is to be manifested by the proclamation of His wonderful doings. "There is no sense in which a Christian *has* to turn aside from the world in order to meet God – any more than the holy of holies is for him in the sanctuary. But there is a sense in which he *has* to go into the world, in unconditional love, in order to meet God . . ." (J. A. T. Robinson n.d.:100)

At the exact moment when Jesus died, the curtain that separated the "holy (place)" from the "most holy (place)" in the temple of Jerusalem, after the model of the tabernacle (Ex 26:33; Heb 9:2f.), "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mt 27:51; cf. Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45). What does that mean? It means that the way to God was opened through Christ. We, "made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10), can now enter the "most holy (place)": "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith . . ." (Heb 10:19-22). But there is also a further implication. The priests served exclusively in the temple – in the "holy (place)." When the curtain was torn, the way to the "most holy (place)" was opened before them. But the doors of the temple also opened behind them. If God's believers could now go into God's presence with Jesus, they should also go with Him to the world in a priestly mission. The world became, in a sense, the holy place of their priesthood. As Jesus is greater than the temple, in the sense of fulfilling its meaning, the Christians' *worship-in-mission* is greater than the old temple worship. To love God wholeheartedly and to love our neighbor as ourselves is "more than," "greater than," the sacrificial cultic requirements of the Old Testament (Mk 12:33). With the arrival of the "time of correction," shadow was replaced by its respective substance (Heb 8:9; 10:1). Jesus "entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). The first testament had cultic ordinances and a sanctuary (Heb 9:1ff.). The new has none. Our doings are presented to God by our high priest, Jesus Christ (Heb 8:1ff.; 10:2). It is through Him that we offer always to God "sacrifices of praise," that is, the confession (public, witnessing, according to Mt 10:32) of His name, and sacrifices of love, that is, doing good and sharing with others, "for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Heb 13:15f.). And these things are not a function of holy places, but can take place anywhere, wherever Jesus' vicarious sacrifice is announced. Our "temple" is there where He

who is greater than the temple must be announced. “The *room* of Jesus’ life, in the middle of which the evangelical worship is talked about, is in any case, not the temple in Jerusalem, but the street, the market, the field, the sea, the Galilean mountains, the place where people follow their work” (Lange 1984:14, translation mine from German).

The appeal to a “religionless Christianity” is a cry against the institutional and formal confinement of the Christian experience. Jesus sent Christians into the world, but unfortunately most of them seem to live as if they had been taken out of the world. In light of this, the appeal for a more informal, pervasive, ethical and missionary Christian experience is in order. Would the prophets not plea for this nowadays too? Bonhoeffer (1967:161) talks about our being Christians as limited to only two things: prayer and righteous action among people. Everything else, including Christian organizing, “must be born anew out of this prayer and action.” It would be a reset of Christianity, in order to make it less institutional, formal, and more pervasive, missionary, than we have made it. It would mean teaching the Christians that we indeed have no cultic laws: “Here are no priests, no Temple, no sacrifice, no fasts and pious practices, but the ever possible and ever necessary triad – a meal, prayer, and love” (Lohmeyer 1962:105). Of course, a “religionless Christianity” should never signify an underestimation of the common spiritual devotion of the believers in their frequent gatherings.

If the general atmosphere prevailing in a particular church, Wren-Lewis (quoted in J. A. T. Robinson n.d.:90) wrote, “conveys the sense that people actually go to church to *find* God, to enter into a relationship with Him which is not possible apart from specific acts of worship, then it would be a miracle if you *did* get the right thing out of going to such a church, and one has no business tempting God by asking for miracles.” And J. A. T. Robinson (n.d.:87) criticizes the situation in which the holy place,

where the Christ is met, lies not, as in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, in the ordinary relationships of life: it lies within the circle of ‘the religious’, from which the worshipper will go out to carry Christ’s love into the ‘secular world’. . . . The sphere of the religious constitutes the holy of holies, and we are back at the Jewish priestly conception of the relation of the sacred to the secular which was shattered by the Incarnation when God declared all things holy and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom.

2.1.1. No Christian temple: circumstances or doctrine?

First-century Christianity had no temple or sacred places of any kind.⁴ The situation remained the same in the two following centuries.⁵ And we have no teaching from Jesus and the apostles about the need of the churches to have a temple and that they should eventually build up one (or many). The new covenant had not to have its holy place(s) as the old had its.

⁴ Christians converted from Judaism really went regularly to the temple in Jerusalem. In some cases, there was a “double engagement”: they converted to the Christian faith, but did not abandon immediately their religious heritage, full of materiality (cf. note 3, p. 97). Probably they lacked a consistent knowledge of the spiritual freedom of the gospel and even of the meaning of Christ. There were also cases of willingness to return to the observance of the law after leaving it behind, as that of the Galatian Christians. See Barclay (1991) for an outstanding discussion of the “Galatian crisis.” But as far as Jerusalem is concerned, most Christians went to the temple as *witnesses*. They went there to pray in, to praise and to preach *Jesus’ name*. It was for the same evangelistic reason that the apostle Paul attended synagogue worship on Sabbath days wherever he went, not because the Sabbath had abiding validity (cf. Ac 13:13, 44; 16:3; 17:2; 18:4). The fact is that “Paul met with Jews and Christians in the synagogues on Sabbath days merely because that was when the synagogue was convened” (Turner n.d.:129). If Peter and John went to the temple “at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon” (Ac 3:1), this does not mean that they considered that place and its scheme of prayer necessary to their own experience of faith. They could pray anywhere, even there. And they surely did it everywhere. But to go there at the time of prayer was important for those whom they could meet there. Accordingly, Rordorf (1968:122) claims that “a passage like Acts 3.1 . . . must not be construed to mean that it was solely for the sake of pious observance that the Christians participated in the hours of prayer which took place three times daily. They may well have done it because they met there many of their fellow countrymen with whom they could converse about their newly found convictions.” Ac 10:9 suggests that the Christians retained the hours of prayer (cf. Rordorf:122, note 1), though we should take care not to put more emphasis on the prayer itself than on the time when it took place, which, from the previous Jewish practice, may have served anyway as a reminder, as it was surely not viewed as a religious law. Peter and John healed explicitly *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* a crippled man who begged daily in a gate of the temple (Ac 3:2-8). Peter spoke to the astonished lookers that Jesus, “the author of life,” whom they disowned and handed over to be killed, was glorified by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who “raised him from the dead. We are witness of this” (vv. 11-15). The apostle insisted on his witness to the Lord: “By *faith in the name of Jesus*, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is *Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him* that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see” (v. 16, emphases added). He went on speaking of Christ (vv. 17-26). Peter urged his hearers to repent and turn to God, *that their sins might be wiped out*. Was this not exactly the purpose of the sacrificial cult in the temple? It is meaningful that the apostle teaches the Jews *in the temple* that forgiveness of sins does not depend in anything upon it, but rather exclusively upon repentance and faith in God’s Son. We know also that the believers in Jerusalem met together every day in the temple courts (Ac 2:46). All of them “used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade” (Ac 5:12). Why? A keen witness to Christ. We are told that “more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (v. 14). This was the result of the teaching and proclamation of the gospel by the apostles there. The angel of the Lord commanded them to stand in the temple courts and tell people “the full message of this new life” (vv. 19f.). “At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people” (v. 21). They often proclaimed in the temple courts “the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (v. 42).

⁵ In *Octavius*, an apologetical work written by Minucius Felix somewhere in the second half of the second century or the first half of the third, we have a clear view that there were not Christian holy places in the first centuries and, what is more important, that they were confidently deemed unnecessary from the religious or theological point of view. The author tells how his friend, Octavius, defended the Christian faith over against the attacks of Caecilius (who ended up converting to the Christian faith). In his discourse, Caecilius finds it strange that Christians *have no temples*: “Why do they have no altars, no temples . . . ?” (X.2) Christians are contrasted with the Jews: “The lonely and miserable family of the Jews worshipped its own, only God, but openly, with temples, with altars . . .” (X.4) Octavius replies: “But do you judge that we conceal what we worship, if we do not have temples and altars? . . . What temple can I build to him, as this whole world, made by his work, cannot contain him? And since I can, as man, dwell in the wideness, can I confine so great majesty within a little shrine? Is it not better that he be dedicated in our mind? That he be consecrated in our inner bosom?” (XXXII.1-2) (Translation mine from Latin)

The temple of the Old Testament pre-figured Jesus, in whom God's glory manifested fully, not "Christian temples." Tylor (1869:6), in a right understanding of the New Testament, states: "No house can any longer be made holy, no building can any longer be rightly called the House of God" (:6). Furthermore, Christianity had not to have temples or sacred places in accordance with a "general theory of religion," that the religions "naturally" have temples or some kind of sacred place(s). What counted in the early Christian assemblies was their content and purpose, namely, common devotion and mutual edification, not the place where they took place. Therefore the early churches did not assemble in houses because they *still* did not have temples, either for the reason that Christianity was still in its formative stage, or because of an unfavorable political situation. Though these reasons could have played a role, before anything else the idea of Christian temples would have seemed troublesome to early Christians, in view of their knowledge of the unlimited presence of Christ in time and space, as well as the fact that he is "greater than the temple," that is, he is that which the temple of Jerusalem foreshadowed. Young (1963:78) notes accordingly: "It is an historical fact that the New Testament Church had no *holy place*, spatially located, which could be designated as *the place* where God, in some special sense, was present to his people." Also: "If we think of worship in the narrow cultic sense, the Christians had no *place of worship*. More than that, they had nothing to do that could be called worship in the cultic sense" (:79). The fact that the very early Christians still went to the Jerusalem temple to pray, he still observes, "might appear to suggest that the peculiar situation of the Christians, without a *holy place* where *holy worship* transpired, was an historical accident. But historical events merely laid bare the theological truth already implicit in a tradition founded upon another event: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (:80).

Of course, the early churches felt the need of larger spaces for their assemblies. But if they got them, no evidence was left that they regarded them as temples or sacred places. Surely the phenomenon of house churches did not represent or constitute a theological pattern, as if houses were the "official" substitute for the temple. But, on the other hand, it is hard to imagine that the apostle Paul, in his reference to some house churches, had in mind something they lacked to be fully churches. They truly lacked nothing from a theological perspective.

Jesus did not say to the Samaritan woman: "You will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in the temple in Jerusalem, but in many temples everywhere." But he also did not say that worship in spirit precludes any visible manifestation. It is improper both to ascribe holiness to a worship building in the Old Testament sense and to deny that a church may have one.

2.2. MERCY: A SUBSTANCE OF THE NEW WORSHIP

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had already demonstrated that the holiness of the space is replaced by the holiness of love and mercy. Jesus' "holy place" was there where suffering (and humble) people could be found – just those who were excluded of the sacred functions and places: the paralytic (Mt 9:1f.), the sinner (Mt 9:9ff.), the dead (Mt 9:18f., 23ff.; Mk 5:35ff.), the bleeding (Mt 9:20ff.; Mk 5:25ff.; cf. Lev 15:25ff.), the blind (Mt 9:27ff.; Mk 8:22ff.), the demon-possessed (Mt 9:32f.; Mk 7:26ff.), the stranger (Mk 7:24ff.). Israel had to put out of the camp every leper (Nu 5:2), but he ate at a leper's house (Mk 14:3). A Jew could not touch dead people. The high priest was not allowed even to enter "a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean . . ." (Lev 21:11); but Jesus, our high priest, not only entered places where there were dead bodies, but also touched them (giving them life again): "He took her by the hand . . ." (Mk 5:41). One is made unclean for touching anything touched by a bleeding woman (Lev 15:27), but Jesus made no case that a bleeding woman had touched His cloak (Mk 5:28). No man who had any defect could be a priest – blind, lame, disfigured or deformed, even in his testicles (Lev 21:16ff.; cf. 2Sa 5:8; Dt 23:1); but the Lord received all of them who believed in Him. God has mercy on fragile people – for instance, the blind, the lame, the gravid (Jer 31:8). We must be "eyes to the blind" and "feet to the lame" (Job 29:15). His kingdom is for their happiness (Lk 4:18), their happiness proves the arrival of the kingdom (Mt 11:5). The Lord commands us to call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind for our feasts (Lk 14:13), and promised eunuchs a place of honor in His house (Isa 56:4f.). The Lord healed in the temple people who were forbidden there – the blind and the lame (Mt 21:12f.; cf. 2Sa 5:8); because he, as "God with us" (Mt 1:23), is greater than the temple and works according to a new law: of love. The law of the new temple is not the law of sacrifice, but of mercy. The cultic holiness is replaced by the holy mercy of telling and "doing" the gospel to everybody, especially to people in distress.

The prophets revealed that God does not distinguish worship of Him and helping one's neighbor (cf. Lohmeyer 1962:19). According to Matthew, Jesus twice quoted a saying ascribed to God by the prophet Hosea (6:6): "I desire mercy [ἡλεον], and not sacrifice" (9:13; 12:7). To Gerhardsson (1974:28), there is here a comparison between "two kinds of worship: the *latreia* which the priests perform in the temple, and the *latreia* in which Jesus and his disciples are engaged." The latter is "characterized by 'mercy'." When, according to Mark, Jesus spoke of the commandments to love God and the neighbor, the inquiring scribe replied that loving God unreservedly *and* loving the neighbor as oneself "is more than all

holocausts and sacrifices” (12:33). It is *both* love to people and love to God that are more than sacrifice, not only love to people as the contrast between mercy (on people) and sacrifice (to God) in Jesus’ quotation of Hosea may appear. And the comparison between the sacrificial system and the double commandment of love implies that both fall in the category of worship. Love to the neighbor is mentioned as a part of the whole that is “more than all holocausts and sacrifices.” According to the cultic laws, Jesus made Himself unclean by eating and drinking with tax-collectors and sinners (Mt 9:10f.). His answer was that God desires mercy to people and not sacrifice to himself (v. 13). The truth of Hos 6:6 appears also, extensively, in Mic 6:6-8:

With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Here also what God requires of His children, which He accepts as worship, is not cult, but justice, mercy and humility. Hill (1978:110) comments that “in man’s relationship to God, what is required is not sacrifice (itself a God-ward directed activity) but the compassionate attitude and merciful action which give concrete expression to one’s faithful adherence to and love for God.” It is interesting that in his study of the use of Hos 6:6 in the gospel of Matthew, Hill insists that the meaning of “mercy” is not exhausted by compassion of person towards person. He claims that there is a notion of loyalty to God involved in our compassion for people. Mercy is addressed to people, but it is *God’s* will. Davies and Allison, Jr. (1988:455) suppose that in Matthew “mercy” and its correlates imply that “merciful action is the concrete expression of loyalty to God, and that what God demands is not so much activity directed Godward (‘I desire . . . not sacrifice’) but loving-kindness benefiting other people (‘I desire mercy’).” Cultic worship is generally understood as the attempt to gaining divine favor through ritual performances and offerings. What Jesus teaches is, however, that “blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Mt 5:7; cf. 18:21-35; 25:31-46; cf. also 6:12, 14f.). In 23:23 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for neglecting the more important aspects of the law, namely, mercy, together with justice and faith.⁶ The apostle James asseverates that “judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy

⁶ Matthew included many texts about mercy that are unique to his work. It was one of his main emphases (cf. Bornkamm 1963:26; Held 1963:257; Stanton 1993:329). “For Matthew, mercy is the focal point of Jesus’ message, which shows what it means to fulfill the Law . . .” (Schweizer n.d.:92)

triumphs over judgment!” (2:13).⁷ The apostle Peter has also a say in this respect: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pe 4:8). Act of mercy pleases God and gets what cultic worship pretends to.⁸ Jesus fully and finally establishes that which was the prophetic claim, that, as Lohmeyer (1961:76) wrote, “it is not sacrifice which expiates but steadfast love for one’s needy neighbour; that it is not the pious contrivance which sanctifies, be it ever so worthy and ever so godly, but the loving heart. . . . wherever loving hearts beat there is found the foundation of holiness which reconciles the oppressed soul with his neighbour and with his God.”

God’s will is that we have mercy or compassion like Jesus had for the lost multitudes (9:36; 14:14, 15:32); as people cried to Him for: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!” (15:22); “Lord, have mercy on my son . . .” (17:15); “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” (Matthew 20:30, 31). But the mercy that God wishes us to show to people is *His* own, as we ourselves enjoyed it. We cannot save anybody. And anything that God may desire us to offer to Him (by serving the neighbor with it) is provided (everything in the old cult, love, money . . . His Son!). David was conscious of it (cf. 1Ch 29:14). Therefore, “I desire mercy” means “I desire you to show my mercy, as you have enjoyed it, to people.” Mercy to the lost or those facing problems is the natural reaction of those who are conscious of being themselves objects of God’s mercy. It is “an active compassion which presupposes a heart touched by the very compassions . . . of the Lord” (Bouyer n.d.:8). Evangelization, comprehending word and deed, is mercy (cf. Mt 9:36ff.) and, as such, as that which God desires, is worship.

The parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) presents in a vivid way the contrast between God’s desire to be served by means of acts of mercy and the human insistency to serve Him by cultic acts alone. “The good Samaritan does not pass by the wounded traveler, as the priest and the Levite did; he goes out of his way to assist the sufferer, and becomes responsible for him. In short, the story is an apt illustration of Hosea vi.6” (Moffatt 1930:123). Those in the tale who thought to be rightly and directly worshipping God by cultic performances (the priest and the Levite) surely misinterpreted His will to be worshipped

⁷ In Tobit (Apocrypha) we find the same principle: “Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. . . . For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness . . .” (4:7, 10, RSV). Cf. Sir. 28:1-6 (verse 4 reads: “He sheweth no mercy to a man, which is like himself: and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins?” For occurrence of the idea that God’s mercy is for the merciful in still other works of the Jewish and Christian traditions, see Dibelius (1976:148) and Davids (n.d.:119).

⁸ In Tobit (Apocrypha) we read that “for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High” (4:11, RSV). Charity to the needy is considered an offering to God. This seems presupposed in the statement “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” Mercy is the “new sacrificial offering” (through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, of course), essential to the worship of the Christian dispensation.

directly through service of love to people in difficult situations. Thus Moffatt (1930:124) sustained that Jesus recognized *direct* service to God “as expressed in prayer and worship as well as in the service of our fellow-men.” For the Synoptic Gospels, Braun (n.d.:131) wrote, “God is not loved by our absorption into him or by religious ecstasy but by obedient behavior, and, indeed, by such behavior as it serves the neighbor in a very concrete way.” He wrote too: “According to Jesus true service to God not only *may* be but *must* be service to people” (:129). This is why the apostle Paul writes twice that love *to the neighbor* – love to God is not mentioned – is how Christians fulfill the law (Ro 13:8-10; Gal 5:14) and James calls love to the neighbor “the royal law according to the Scripture” (2:8). Love to God is presupposed and implicit as a constitutive condition.

People committed to the cultic order avoided nearness to sinners to keep themselves pure. People committed to the “love order” seek sinners that they may be saved too. “As it is the task of cultic institutions to expel sinners, so it is the privilege and task of the eschatological Son of Man to ‘call sinners’” (Lohmeyer 1962:29; cf. :42). Foreigners were not permitted in the temple either. But God promised to bring them to His holy mountain, to His “house of prayer,” and to accept their offerings and sacrifices (Isa 56:6f.). The part of the temple that Jesus cleansed was just the outer “Court of the Gentiles,” not any part holy to the Jews. Jesus was affirming thus the place of the nations in God’s plan and the holiness of the work of calling them into the kingdom. The church is charged with the mission of making disciples of all nations. “God’s house,” a house of prayer for all nations, is not Christian temples, but only the temple of Jerusalem, which pre-figured Christ. He is the “where” and “how” of prayer. “In Him” we pray, in His name. In and through Him is how we get into the Father’s presence, how we see the Father’s glory.

Holiness is separation from sin to God, but the distinctive Christian holiness is the holiness of love. Jenkins (1962:79f.) says:

The element of separation which is always bound up with holiness is achieved only as the members of the Church exercise a self-forgetting ministry to their neighbours, as their neighbour’s human need is seen in the light of Christ. This is the paradox of holy worldliness in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7), that separation unto God is achieved only by identification with one’s neighbour under God.

2.3. THE PRIESTS OF THE NEW AND GREATER WAY OF WORSHIP

God chose a group of men for the priesthood in the Old Testament, though His final intention was to make of His whole people a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6; cf. Isa 61:6). The Old Testament cult pre-figured, besides and in dependence on Jesus’

sacrifice and priestly intervention in heaven, the wide and pervasive worship of God by His holy people through their “priestly” mission of taking God’s forgiveness to the world. The Christians are the “royal priesthood,” whose “cultic” responsibility is to talk of the virtues of God, who saved them, to all people, as example for and invitation to their own salvation (cf. 1Pe 2:9).⁹ Here the “veiled” purpose of God’s people being a kingdom of “priests,” a “holy” nation, is revealed: to be continuously involved in the worship of God by proclaiming His saving virtues. The new priests are not dressed with “sacred garments,” but with that which they were a type of: “May your priests be clothed with righteousness . . .” (Ps 132:9). They are not busy with cultic affairs but with practical mercy. The good Samaritan is, in contradistinction to the priest and Levite of the parable, a kind of priest of the new dispensation – a priest of mercy.

2.4. THE CONSECRATION OF EVERYTHING: WORSHIP FOR, IN AND WITH ANYTHING

In the New Testament the cultic language of temple worship is largely used to refer to holy behavior in the world and, as the highest point of it, their witness of God’s Son. The holiness that pertained (derivatively, didactically, provisionally) to the temple extended to embrace the whole reality (alongside the cultic time that extended to embrace all moments of life). The place of the priests’ service is no longer the temple, but the roads of the world. Priesthood is now defined in terms of world mission. And the “priestly” nature of mission makes it worship of God.¹⁰

As the temple “extended” to include all reality (let me insist on this image), everything was made susceptible of being consecrated, with which or for the sake of which the believer worships God. Things that had no cultic dignity are, in the passage from the Old to the New Testament, no longer considered “unclear” in themselves and are ascribed now a “potential holiness.” There is no longer separation between sacred and profane spheres. Only sin and its consequences remain profane. The cult leaves the sacred place with the sacred things and

⁹ Eastwood (1963:25) pointed out that the use of future tense in Ex 19:6, as well as in Isa 61:6 and Ps 132:16, “clearly indicates Israel’s promised destiny.” Then he comments about the fact that the future is not used in the New Testament to refer to the priesthood of God’s people: “But significantly the tenses in the New Testament are different, and this is because something has taken place which has turned the promise into realization.” He mentions 1Pe 2:9 and Rev 1:6. See also Rev 5:9f. Eastwood completes his reasoning: “It is on the ground of the New Covenant that the idealized priesthood of the Old Testament is transformed into the realized universal priesthood of the New. The concepts of the People of God, the Servant of the Lord, and the kingdom of the priests, are not superseded or displaced but are fulfilled in the People of the New Covenant, the Servant-Priest, and the Royal Priesthood.”

¹⁰ The logic of the priestly nature of evangelization, which makes it worship, will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

invades life, making everything and every place sacred. All reality is called to praise God and serve His purposes. J. A. T. Robinson (1960:44) wrote accordingly about “liturgy coming uncomfortably close to life. For liturgy is nothing less than the gospel of the Word made flesh in action, Christ through his body about his saving work, taking the things of this world and, through the power of his sacrifice, leaving *none* of them untouched.”

The apostle Paul teaches the principle and condition for the consecration of something: “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1Ti 4:4f; cf. Ge 1:31). Everything created by *God* is good and everything that is good comes from Him (cf. Jas 1:17). Nothing is a taboo, but sin. But there is a *conditio sine qua non*: everything must be consecrated to God. Everything represents an opportunity for worshipping Him, by consecrating it to Him. “Consecration” means making sacred by separating for God’s service. Consecrated is something with which or because of which we worship God – no longer in the temple but in life at large. Everything is consecrated, that is, we worship God for or with it, “by the word of God and prayer.” What does “by the word of God” mean? That everything is understood in terms of God’s word: received as a gift of God, made good and pure by His word, and used in the right way, according to His disposition, meeting invariably the overall criterion of love. We dedicate to Him what we receive from Him. David said to God in the assembly: “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1Ch 29:14; cf. Ps 87:7). Understanding something in that right way, it can be approached with a thanksgiving prayer that consecrates it.

For the law, sex makes the couple unclean for a while (Lev 15:16ff.). But the final lesson, which became clear only in the new revelation, is that it is not the sexual relation itself that makes one “unclean,” but rather one’s approach to it. “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. . . .” (Tit 1:15) Sex must be “clean” (a cultic term), that is, practiced in the context of marriage – neither before nor beside. Sex, politics, goods, leisure, etc., can and should be consecrated to God. We agree with Käsemann (1969:192): “In the eschatological age there is no longer anything ‘profane’, except what man himself renders profane or demonic: but similarly there is nothing holy in the cultic sense except the community of the holy people and their self-abandonment in the service of the Lord to whom the world and all its dominions belong.” We agree with (Lohmeyer 1962:31) alike: “Man is no longer confronted by a world of things holy and unholy, divine and devilish in frightening variety, reducing him to helpless servitude of a vague and inexhaustible imperative; rather there emerges in unmistakable superiority the

inner world of the human heart which alone is able to make a man holy or unholy, clean or unclean” The problem is that in the holy/profane view of reality, occupation, money administration, goods, leisure, sexuality, politics, etc., are “secular subjects.” Johnson (n.d.:8) remarks: “We instinctively look upon those things which pertain to our faith and our Church as ‘sacred,’ ‘spiritual,’ or ‘religious,’ and upon those things which pertain to everything else as ‘secular’ (not sacred), ‘material’ (not spiritual), or ‘worldly’ (not religious).” We firmly agree with him that such a separation forces us “to carry on a continuous (and theologically ridiculous) debate to ‘justify’ the concern of the Church with this or that social or political problem” and “is why we find it so difficult to think theologically about such basic realities of human existence as sex, work, and economics.” White (1967:124) commented appropriately about sex: “Today almost every aspect of sex is exploited except the doxological.”¹¹ He contends then: “Our calling, first of all, is to understand our sexuality doxologically, that is, as a gift from God. Then it is to understand the proper use of sex as a means of glorifying God. The ability to say sincerely about sex, as about all else, ‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,’ puts sex in its true perspective” (:124). This may sound exaggerate, but is not really. It fully coheres with that principle taught by the apostle Paul, that everything God created is good and should be received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. The “consecration of everything” means, in a nutshell, acknowledging God in all our ways (Pr 3:6) – recognizing His sovereignty and goodness, being grateful for everything and doing everything in terms of His will.¹² This is the universalization of worship according to which there is no separation between the sacred and the secular.

Moule (1964:82) affirms that “all work done and all life lived for God’s sake is, in essence, worship.” Yet he explains why there is a distinction between worship and work:

That there is any distinction at all between worship and work, or, for that matter, any other aspect of life, is due only to the fact that we are creatures of successiveness, moving in time and space, and unable to concentrate on more than a little at a time. In heaven there can be no such distinction . . . But here on earth it is

¹¹ White stresses the need of making doxological sense of sex, whilst Kellermann (1991:xxvi, emphasis added) does the same regarding political action: he declares that his book is an attempt “to make biblical, theological, political, *and even liturgical sense*” of a series of Christian public manifestations which he describes. He makes a plain connection between liturgy and politics. He wrote about “liturgical direct action” (:xxivff.; also 103ff.), “liturgical politics” (:xxvi), “paraliturgical action” (:107) and “liturgical confrontations” (:108), which mean political protest in form of worship. He still speaks of “counter-liturgy” (:61), that is, rebuking (for instance) ceremonies related to nuclearism, which he calls “nuclear liturgies” (:60) with “right worship” (:70). He states: “These public actions are liturgies insofar as they declare the sovereignty of God” (:105).

¹² It is only in this sense that we can speak of “meeting the holy in all things.” With a view to overcoming the holy-secular dichotomy, some scholars speak of encountering the holy in the secular things. This is how the logic runs: if we can find the holy in the secular, there is no longer anything secular – the holy embraces everything. “Meeting the holy in all things” cannot mean that all things are *ontologically* holy, so that we do not find the holy *in* or *even through* something. It can at most refer to *the way we approach* all things, meeting the holy *because of* it.

necessary to set aside specific times for the rendering to God of articulate praise and for the conscious dedication to Him of our life and work. . . . Since we live within the narrow limits of human capacities, the only practical way to hallow the whole is to bring a token portion of it consciously to God. (:82f.)

He also believes that in this dispensation “we are compelled to let work and worship alternate. Our work and recreation would be less efficient and worthy if we tried consciously to think of God while working out a mathematical problem or shooting a goal” (:85). Sartorius (1884:287f.) thought in the same way, writing that

though labour is itself worship, it still has to struggle so fiercely with the thorns and thistles in the field of this world, and to be so occupied upon its often impure soil, as not to come off without damage and uncleanness and manifold secular distractions. It is the church which gathers Christians from secular distractions to the sanctuary, and, relieving them from the daily yoke of labour, unites them for the direct solemnization of that pure worship, which, through faith in the gospel of the love of God in Christ, is a sacred offering of love brought by God to man and by man to God, through the God-man.

This kind of reasoning is a disservice to all attempts to make Christians aware of God’s presence wherever they go and whatever they do, thus making of all circumstances doors through which the gospel may enter. Therefore Volf (1993:208) is right when he says: “All dimensions of life in the world have what one might call a sacramental dimension: they *can* be places of meeting God in gratitude and adoration.” George (1953:116), in his study on the means of communion with God in the New Testament, sustained that “there is not much in the teaching of Jesus to the effect that we may ‘find God’ (as we often say) in the ‘secular’ activities of life” and that “we miss any unequivocal statement that ‘secular’ employment is also a means of communion with God.” The point is not really whether we can “find God” in our secular affairs or whether there can be any religious meaning in solving a mathematical problem; but rather if we are, as witnesses to Christ, willing to enter that arena with Him, to let Him make the difference there. It is not that we cannot do our secular work and be “religious” at the same time, but that we do everything as witnesses to Christ, in reference to Him, with Him, for Him.

2.5. CORPORATE WORSHIP AND LITURGY OF WITNESS: HEART AND BODY

Käsemann, as quoted previously, affirmed that the Christians stand at all times and in all places before the face of Christ, making from this position before God “the everyday round of so-called secular life into the arena of the unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will.” Wainwright (1984:404) is of opinion that Käsemann “feels obliged to set up, at least

implicitly, an *opposition* between the service of God in daily living and the service of God in the liturgy.” He goes on: “Certainly Käsemann cannot abide a special holiness of times and places, what he pejoratively calls ‘the cult’” (:404f.). He comments elsewhere, not without some reason: “The invigorated exercise of the universal priesthood in the secular sphere was, however, accompanied by the general impoverishment of ritual sense in Protestantism. In some cases there even occurs an ideological opposition to ‘the cult’” (:407f.). He justifies thus his position over against Käsemann’s view: “For my part, I suspect that the ‘unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will’ belongs only to heaven and the final kingdom: ‘I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb’ (Revelation 21:22)” (:405). Surely our worship on earth cannot be compared to our worship in heaven. Worship will be full and unceasing there, as we shall be overwhelmingly fascinated by God’s glory and there will be no force trying to pull us back. But worship here is somehow unceasing: if we recognize God’s sovereignty in every situation; if our life is generally a sequence of decisions made in terms of His will; if our life is a sequence of acts of love; if we consecrate everything by God’s word and prayer; if we are engaged in spreading His word. If John saw no temple in heaven, this does not necessarily imply that there were or there should be Christian temples on earth. John declares not to have found a temple in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:10ff.). He is not contrasting the heavenly reality – with no temple – with the Christian dispensation – with temples –, but rather the heavenly Jerusalem with the earthly Jerusalem. Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to derive a theology of Christian holy places or temples from that text. But before going any further in commenting Wainwright’s views, let us add the ones of Cranfield (1965:11). He noted that Paul’s use of *latre^a* in Ro 12:1 “implies that the true worship which God desires embraces the whole of the Christian’s life from day to day. It implies that any cultic worship which is not accompanied by obedience in the ordinary affairs of life must be regarded as false worship, unacceptable to God (cf. the insight of the Old Testament prophets – e.g. Isa. 1.10-17, 58.1-11, Amos 5.21-24).” Then Cranfield contends: “But it would be quite unjustifiable to argue (as Käsemann seems to do) that the logical implication of Paul’s use of *latre^a* here is that no room is left for a Christian cultic worship carried out at particular times and in particular places.” We now ask: What does Käsemann deny precisely? Corporate worship, in any case? Or the cult as the moment when Christians “go into God’s presence” in sacred places and times? What did he really have problems with: worship “at particular times and in particular places” or “at holy times and in holy places”? Conzelmann (1969:46) affirmed alike: “*logik-* *latre^a* takes the place of the cult (Rom. 12.1; cf. 1 Peter 2.5).” Does he also seem to leave here no room

for corporate worship? It might be if he had not spoken in the same text about the ingredients of (corporate) worship (:258). Käsemann does not seem to have problems with Christian gatherings for worship that are free from those features of the Old Testament cultic order. He is quite right in sustaining (as Conzelmann also does) that holy times, places and rites pertain to the Old Testament (theo)logic. Perhaps he should have been explicit about the relation he sees between “worship in all times and places” and worship in the assemblies of the church, as Cranfield (very finely) was (after, not before Käsemann, anyway):

Provided that such worship in the narrower sense is always understood to be part of the wider worship embracing the whole of the Christian’s living and is not thought of as something acceptable to God apart from obedience of life, there is nothing here to deny it its place in the life of the faithful. What Paul is here saying is, in fact, perfectly consonant with the view that such a cultic worship ought to be the focus-point of that whole wider worship which is the continually repeated self-surrender of the Christian in obedience of life.

Wainwright is quite right in his statement that “the high moments of worship are necessary in order to clarify our vision and renew us in appropriate patterns of behaviour” (1984:405). Volf (1993:209) issued also a legitimate warning, that

if we want to escape the tendency to dissolve the holy into the secular, which seems to be the danger of affirmation that the holy is not restricted to particular places, then we need to reserve special time for the adoration of God, whether it means going to the ‘secret place’ (as Jesus advised), spending a night in the mountains (as Jesus practised), or gathering together in Jesus’ name as a community of believers.

The main problem we find in Wainwright’s approach to worship is that he so stresses the “ritual sense” that mission plays an insignificant role in his perspective on worship. And he is aware of the typical use of cultic terms in the New Testament for activities beyond the boundaries of formal worship: “Certainly St Paul speaks of his work of evangelism in cultic terms” (:432). He commented also that Hahn “shows that cultic vocabulary is characteristically used in the New Testament Church in connexion with evangelism and charitable service” and that “it is in this perspective that liturgy, ethics and the Church’s apostolic task are brought closely together by J. G. Davies . . .” (:574, note 1042)

Macquarrie (1994:487) is right in criticizing those who advocate a “religionless” Christianity, meaning by it “the elimination of the traditional cultic expressions of faith.” He acknowledges, however, that “these protests have their elements of truth, wherever there is a danger that the cult comes to be prized for its own sake.” He assumes the tendency that “worship and the services of the Church become a substitute for action, and that they are a kind of escape by which we conceal from ourselves the real demands of Christian faith” (:490). Jenkins (1962:22) held that the rigorous internal activities of a church “do create more bracing surroundings for the encouragement of the venture of faith.” But he warns that those

internal activities “can also more easily persuade people that the pursuit of their characteristic activities is identical with the venture of faith.” Notwithstanding, he claims that “to see ‘holy worldliness’ simply as a way of depreciating the Church in its consciously Godward direction is the surest way of ensuring that our life in the world will have no holiness about it” (:72). We assume, with Brunner (1952:60), that the first Christians “understood their life to be a continuous act of worship apart from the cult altogether, when each individual in his particular walk in life, in the everyday world, in the family circle or in his daily avocation, offered his life to Christ his Master as a sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” But we also hold with him that “specific cultic acts of worship take precedence of the more general life of worship and witness in the world: for only here occurred the actual realization of the Body’s communion in Christ which is the presupposition for the reality and witness of each individual’s membership in the isolation of his worldly calling” (:60f.). Corporate worship is the heart of Christian worship. Witness to the world is the body. The analogy is self-explained and is helpful that we may fix in our minds the full conception of worship in the New Testament, understanding plainly the logic of the relationship between its parts.

2.6. FROM THE LAW OF THE TITHES TO THE JOYFUL FREEDOM OF LOVE TO GIVE

It should be obvious to the Christians that the New Testament abolished the cultic institutions of the Old by introducing a generalization of God’s demands. “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear” (Heb 8:13). If the Christian churches have retained the law of tithes, this is a misunderstanding of the comprehensiveness of God’s demands in the New Testament. Christians commonly think that if the New Testament does not explicitly abolish the tithes or replace them by something else, this means that it remains binding upon the church. The widespread usage of Mal 3:10 for urging believers to bring in their tithes proves it. Therefore a consideration of what that law may refer to in New Testament, in the light of the general widening of God’s commandments under the law of *responsible freedom*, is most needed.

In an outstanding study published in 1874, *Offerings to the Lord: Old and the New Testament aspects compared*, D. Cole discusses what the tithes were replaced for in the New Testament. He states:

It is a touching thought that the New Testament has nowhere a formal law, prescribing what in form or how much in quantity, or in proportion to their income, God will have His people set aside for Him. The special law of tithes vanished with the rest of the Jewish economy. It has been a “child-leader” to take the church by the

hand and lead it down to a Gospel doctrine and practice in the matter of “offerings to the Lord” (:15).

He insists that the church has no law regulating her offerings, but assumes that “three great general characteristics mark the teachings both of our Lord himself and his apostles, which, if well considered, will reveal to us that the New Testament, in its demands, is no less exacting than the Old.” Let us examine some representative aspects of those characteristics:

(a) Believers are warned “in the most solemn and emphatic manner of spiritual danger in pushing to accumulate the things of this world,” and charged “not to covet and hoard up material possessions” (:15). Also, waste and bad use is condemned – “in the gratification of sensuous and sinful appetites” (:16). Believers are reminded that our life does not consist in the eventual abundance of the things we possess, so that we must beware of covetousness (Lk 12:15). They are advised also to be “rich in good works, ready to distribute” (1Ti 6:18). Cole finely concludes: “The whole spirit of the New Testament says to believers: ‘You must not hoard up wealth for its own sake or beyond what is imperative. You must *use it freely*. You must do good with it and glorify God with it’” (:17).

(b) “The ground having been taken, as we have seen,” Cole argues, “that believers must not lay up money for its own sake, or retain it at all beyond a necessary limit, but must use it in *good works for the glory of God*, the next step is to direct the devotion of the heart, and of course the possessions with it, to specific objects” (:17, emphasis added). He claims that, first of all, “God’s children are charged to bestow their energy supremely upon the kingdom of heaven” – they should seek the kingdom of God first, in response to which all necessary things will be given them (Mt 6:33). Cole remarks that although there is no legal demand, “directly enjoining that the offerings of God’s people shall go in part to the support of the worship of God, in part to the use of the Levites, in part to feasts for the cultivation of family cordiality and general sociability, and in part to the relief and cheer of the widow, the fatherless and the stranger, yet the New Testament is, after all, no less explicit upon these great interests than the Old” (:17). The apostle Paul contends: “Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive from the gospel” (1Co9:13f.). Cole argues that “ministers and missionaries now, like the priests and Levites of old, are to be sustained by the offerings of God’s people” (:18).

(c) There is no formal rule regarding the proportion of income God’s children must set aside for Him, “yet the New Testament is, in this matter, to say the least, no less exacting than the Old. Its charges, declarations and illustrations do not leave it at all obscure” (:19). We are

asked to love God with all our heart and to love our fellow-humans as ourselves, doing them whatsoever we would like them to do us. “While these charges stand upon the page, no one need ever ask how much he must give to the Lord” (:20). Paul advised the Corinthian brethren: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves the cheerful giver” (2Co 9:7). The apostle was in fact speaking of free offerings, in this case for the poor believers of Jerusalem. And we find nowhere in his writings something beyond free offerings that could be assumed to refer to tithes. The celebrated case of the poor widow who gave all she had (Lk 21:1-4) is programmatic for the new way of serving God. Cole states then:

Can anyone doubt, after all this teaching, what the New Testament principle is, as to the proportion of property or income which is to be devoted to the Lord? No one-tenth or two-tenths or any specific portion is mentioned. We are to measure our giving by the amount of love we owe to God, by the spiritual and physical needs of our fellow-men, by the golden rule, by the mercies we have freely received, by the instruction to let our light shine so that men may see it and God may be glorified, by the charges, ‘Freely give,’ ‘Bear much fruit,’ ‘Abound in this grace,’ ‘Do good as ye have opportunity,’ by the hint that ‘God loveth a cheerful giver,’ and by the rule ‘Lay by as God hath prospered you’ (:20f.).

His point is that the charges and illustrations in the New Testament are clear enough about what God demands from His church. Our Savior and His apostles “have spoken clearly, emphatically about the offerings of the church, but have exacted no fixed proportion of its means. *They have left this solely to the heart of the church itself*” (:21, emphasis added). Then Cole asks: “How ought the church to feel in view of this? Ought she to take advantage of it to hold back her offerings or to bring in small offerings, or ought she to feel that she is generously and trustingly thrown upon the promptings of her earnest love, and even bring in far beyond what was required under the ancient law? *Let every believer’s heart think of this and make the answer for itself*” (:21f., emphasis added).¹³

Cole’s treatment of the matter is honorable. Every Christian should read it. Yet we can explore the subject in further depth and wideness. God required the tithes of His people on behalf of the Levites, who depended on them (cf. Nu 18:24; Dt 18:1; 2Cr 31:4-10). God commanded His people to bring the “whole tithes” or the tithe of everything into the “storehouse,” that there might be food in His house. He promised them that, in doing so, they would be so much blessed that they would not have room enough for all blessings (Mal 3:10).

¹³ In a similar vein, Dodd (1951:76) says: “In contrast to the law of tithe, consider some of the precepts that Jesus laid down about money and its use. ‘You cannot serve God and property.’ ‘Do not accumulate capital on earth.’ ‘No one who does not renounce everything he has got can be my disciple.’ ‘Sell all you have and give alms, and so provide yourselves with purses that will never wear out.’ ‘Give everyone who asks.’” He adds: “Clearly, it is impossible ever to say, categorically, that you *have kept* such precepts as these in their full scope; and yet, if you

This verse has been widely used to call Christians to obey the law of the tithes. But we should pay more attention to the finality: that the “storehouse” may have food. The Levites depended upon the tenth part of all produces given to God to live. But in Deuteronomy the rules about the tithes are modified, like that about the place of worship. More precisely, it is extended. The tithes were required to sustain the priestly class. In the deuteronomic development of the law, people are asked to bring their tithes, their votive and free offerings, their firstfruits and firstborn cows and sheep to the chosen place of worship, there to be eaten in festive celebration in company with their children, their servants, and the Levites (Dt 12:5-18). It is likewise demanded that all the produce of the soil shall be tithed every year and that these tithes with the firstlings of the flock and herd are to be eaten in the place appointed by God (Dt 14:22f.). But if that place is too far, it is permitted to convert the produce into money, which is to be taken to the appointed place, and there laid out in the purchase of food for a festal celebration with the Levites, who are especially mentioned (vv. 24-27). There is still the commandment that at the end of every three years all the tithes of that year are to be gathered and laid up “within the gates,” probably a central place in each district, for a festival in which the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, together with the Levite, are to partake (vv. 28f.; cf. 26:12). This done, the people had to declare to God: “I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. . . .” (26:13). The “year of the tithe” seems to take the meaning of the tithes to a fuller dimension, in like manner as the Sabbatical year seems to reveal an ethical meaning of the Sabbath, namely, promoting forgiveness, freedom and rehabilitation, so that it should not possibly be understood only passively as “rest,” but also missiologically as “giving rest,” “relieving.” Jesus did not say to that wealthy man to sell everything and give the money to God, for God needs no money. Really everything should be offered to God, but by caring for those in need and supporting missionaries. We read in the book of Proverbs that “whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Pr 14:31). The apostle Paul received a gift from the Philippian Christians, which he said to be “a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God,” in response to which, he added, God would meet all their needs “according to his glorious riches in Jesus Christ” (4:18f.). And in 2Co 9:7-11 the apostle Paul advises the church about the gifts for the poor Christians of Jerusalem. Here the concept of *responsible freedom* is clear: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion . . .” (v. 7). The reason for doing so: “. . . for God loves a cheerful giver.” The consequences of giving liberally is the very same as

take them seriously at all, they will make themselves felt in every single thing you do that is concerned with the

in Malachi's oracle and in Paul's grateful response to the Philippian church, namely, God's abundant blessings: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need . . ." Moreover, the generosity of the Corinthian believers would make them ever more able to show generosity:

"You will abound in every good work. As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God" (vv. 8-11).

Let us put the three passages side-by-side for a view of the suggestive similarity between the announced blessings for being generous:

	Mal 3:10	2Co 9:7-11			Php 4:18f.
Giving	Bring the whole tithe into the store house, that there may be food in my house.	⁷ Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,	you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;	so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.	¹⁸ ...I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.
Receiving	Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."	for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need,	His righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be made rich in every way		¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

If we consider that there is no passage about tithes in the New Testament which is parallel to Mal 3:10, the likeness between the lovely consequences of giving in the three passages above makes it clear that there is a theological equivalence between the tithes of the Old Testament and the free offerings of love in the New.¹⁴ Two passages from the book of Proverbs bear also on this subject. The first is more typical of the Old Testament itself: “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine” (Pr 3:9f.). The second is of a more general scope: “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty” (11:24).

When the Pharisees rebuked Jesus’ (hungry) disciples for picking heads of grain to eat on a Sabbath, what was forbidden by the law, the Lord answered: “‘Haven’t you read what David did when he and companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread – which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests’” (Mt 12:3f.). Then Jesus makes a great revelation to the Pharisees: “‘I tell you that one greater than the temple is here’” (v. 6). He is the fulfillment of the promise represented by the temple; he is what the temple was symbolically: the place of God’s manifestation to His people. And the fact that he is the true meaning of the temple implies that there is a higher meaning to the priesthood and *food offerings* too. Jesus still said to the Pharisees: “‘If you had known what these words mean, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath’” (vv. 7f.). Mercy is the “sacrifice” that God desires (which deserves that name especially when the aid one gives is costly, sacrificial indeed). David, hungry, ate the consecrated bread in the temple, which only the priests could eat. This seems to indicate prophetically the very service God was preparing His people to offer Him. Food consecrated in the temple and ate by the priests is now consecrated by feeding the hungry and those in the service of the gospel of Christ. The Levites received their “wages” for serving in the temple. Missionaries should be supported for serving in the “temple” of the road. If one wants to consecrate food or money to God, take care of people in need and those preaching the good news of salvation among the nations. In Mt 23:23 Jesus is not confirming the law of the tithes for the Christians, but showing the right interpretation of the law. His saying can be interpreted in terms of another: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” God formerly accepted sacrifices but always demanded justice and mercy too.

¹⁴ The fact that there were, in the Old Testament, “freewill offerings” (cf., e.g., Ex 36:3) beside the tithes, does not represent necessarily a problem to our reasoning. It appears that the free offerings capture the ultimate meaning of the law of the tithes itself. In this sense, it can be that free offerings were, beyond the tithes, an exercise in the *freedom to give* that should become the rule in the New Testament.

In like manner, He required tithes, but “the weightier matters of the law” were equally required – in fact not “equally,” but *primarily* required, as the “weightier.” In the new dispensations, God does not require tithes as such, but anything and everything necessary to meet someone else’s necessity – the poor and those who dedicate their lives to the service of the gospel. Love is the criterion for giving in the New Testament. My neighbor’s need defines what “tithe” means in the Christian economy.

Jesus revealed to His disciples the privileged status (and responsibility) they have by God’s grace: “He who receives you receives me . . .” (Mt 10:40). He also advised them: “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages . . .” (Lk 10:5ff.). The Lord still taught, in Mt 25:31-45, that, in their needs, good done – or denied – to them, His “least brothers” (τοῖς τοῖς ὀλίγοις μου τοῖς ἑσπέραις), His “little ones” (mikroí), is done – or denied – to Himself and will be taken into account in the final judgment of the nations (cf. Joel 3:2).¹⁵ The tithes were offered to God by being given to the Levites for their living. Good done to Jesus’ servants in their want and, more particularly, in their needs as missionaries (compare Mt 25:35, 38 with 10:11-14), is thereby offered to God.

To receive Jesus’ disciples is to receive Himself, so that we can speak of “the Messiah hidden in His believers.” But there is a dimension to “receiving” Jesus’ servants higher than simply taking care of them. Jesus’ disciples are sent out to evangelize. According to Mt 10:14 they are instructed thus: “If one will not welcome you or *listen to your word* [about the kingdom of God, referred to in v. 7], shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town” (emphasis added). In the depiction of the judgment of the nations (Mt 25:31:46), it is presupposed that the Christian missionaries that are fed, clothed and sheltered, “did not simply remain silent about Jesus but plainly stated whom they represented! (Luz 1995:130f.) In a deeper, teleological, sense, to receive Jesus’ emissaries means to receive their message. This is the way they receive the Lord, faith in whom saves.

Finally, we must note that the church sends missionaries because she is missionary, not the other way round. The whole church is sent into the world to announce the gospel. All Christians are priests for the nations. Thus, when Christians live aware of their mission and

¹⁵ Jesus’ “least brothers” are his disciples (Mt 10:42), those who, humble like a child (18:3f.), believe in him (Mt 18:6), do the will of the Father (Mt 12:49f.; Mk 3:35) (cf. G. Barth 1963:121ff.; Bultmann 1976:145; Stanton 1993:220; Luz 1995:129ff.; Kupp 1996:85-88. See also Jeremias n.d.:208 and Schweizer n.d.:479 for the understanding of “least brothers” in a broader sense).

are consistently engaged in it, the money they wisely spend with themselves is equally offered to God. It is “tithes” too.

2.7. CONCLUSION

The cultic order was made obsolete by the torn curtain. In the Letter to the Hebrews the end of cultic worship is stated explicitly and justified: it has fulfilled its role of preparing the way for the worship really intended. The Christian faith does not depend upon cultic laws, but is exerted *freely* and, expectedly, *responsibly*, in the Holy Spirit. Lohmeyer says: “A silent step, tremendous in its silence, is taken from cultic constraint into the *freedom of moral action*” (1962:72, emphasis added). But the churches seem in general always inclined to live by the old laws, as if the spiritual freedom of the New Testament, to be exercised in the Holy Spirit under the “law” of love, were lower than the spirituality of formal laws, depending upon them to “have a form” or to be fulfilled.

Chapter 3

Ethical-Missionary Worship in the New Testament

The early churches learned that the age of cultic worship was over.¹ Conzelmann (1969:46) asked: “Is this renunciation of cult simply a negative attitude, or is there behind it a positive understanding of the new intercourse with God?” In fact those churches understood, under apostolical orientation, that the presence of Jesus Christ made the formal cultic institutions obsolete. He brought about the end of the cultic order because “with the coming of God’s sovereign kingship man is bound directly to God’s will, and can therefore serve him in joy and thanksgiving” (F. Hahn n.d.:31). We have already seen the evidences of the new worship in the teaching of Jesus, the essence of which is: God desires mercy. Now we turn to the terminological indications of that comprehensive worship in the New Testament, which goes beyond corporate worship to include all expressions of love towards people and proclamation of God’s glory in the world.

3.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TERMINOLOGY AS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Especially since the 1950s scholars have pointed out that the cultic terms of the Old Testament are avoided for corporate worship in the New. Young (1963:89) says about it: “The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. There must have been a good reason.” He finds it significant that the apostle Paul employs a term which regularly refers to the ethical life when discussing corporate worship – “building up” (1Co 12-14, cf. 1Co 8:1; 10:23; Ro 14:19; 15:2; 1Th 5:11) – and, on the other side, he often uses Jewish cultic terminology to describe his apostolical ministry (:86f.). Young suggests that a major reason for worship *stricto sensu* not to be described in cultic terms (as well as for those terms to be used for apostolical activity) was the conviction that “even as God’s holy place of meeting men was disclosed in Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ’s action was determinative for the meaning of worship” (:89). He explains it so: “In the cultic sense the early Christians had nothing to do to worship. Unlike the Jews with their cultic service (*latreia*, *leitourgia*) well defined by Torah, the Christians had none. What they were to do in response to God, Christ had done” (:89f.). Hence, worship

¹ Surely the early churches were not homogeneous. They were somewhat different and this is natural. Each had her own particularities and their development was different in time and mode. Notwithstanding we can speak of common aspects, generalities.

meant “responding to that total deed of Christ in one’s total existence,” so that “traditional terms that would suggest restricting the response of ‘worship’ to cultic acts alone were transformed to describe their total response to Christ” (:90). Elsewhere Young speaks very finely of true worship as entrance into the Lord’s obedience “wherever and whenever the faithful lived out their lives in encounter with his deed” (:95). Worship is participating in Jesus’ holiness and ministry, expression of which must permeate the everyday life of the believers.

Reicke (n.d.), aware that the New Testament has no specific term for Christian worship “in the technical sense of the word” (:196), believes in a preventive reason for it: its authors avoided cultic terms for corporate worship “because these expressions were connected with the Jewish temple, as is proved by the vocabulary of the Septuagint, and partly also by that of the New Testament itself. In view of the necessity of preventing believers from confusing the Gospel with Jewish temple worship, it was hardly advisable to use terms like λατρεῖα, which inevitably suggested Judaism” (:197).² His opinion about “terminological circumstances” is that they “are not decisive, even if they illustrate several interesting points. The *idea of ‘worship’* may well be found in the New Testament, even in the absence of any technical expression for it.” Corporate worship is no doubt present in the New Testament and is surely not ritualistic. But a theory of *prevention* (or of *negation*), which tries (but fails) to explain why the cultic language is not used for worship *stricto sensu*, does not explain why that language is used in a wider sense, if, once not applied to its “right” or “primary” object, as if it were, namely, worship *stricto sensu*, it could – and perhaps should – be avoided at all. If the New Testament authors avoided the old cultic vocabulary for corporate worship in order to prevent confusion of Christian worship with Jewish cultic worship, did they then, perhaps, freely ascribe to that vocabulary other meanings – ethical and missionary – which would have nothing to do with worship, only not to throw it away altogether? Not, at all. Would perhaps the apostles use that vocabulary in the way they did if they were not certain that it actually represented the worship, or an aspect of it, proper of the Christian dispensation? Does their use of cultic terms for ethics mean that they have no longer anything to do with worship, having being totally transferred to the realm of ethics?³ Why would they use cultic

² What is “the technical sense” of the word worship? Of course, Reicke means corporate worship. But, as far as the New Testament is concerned, this is not the “technical sense” of the word worship. Then it would be more precise to say that the New Testament has no specific term for *corporate* worship or worship in the *common* technical sense.

³ Several scholars sustain that cultic terminology has not always a religious meaning in the New Testament. B. Weiss (quoted in Coriveau 1970:100), for instance, held that *leitourgēsai* in Romans 15:27 does not place the charitable contribution under the category of a sacrificial service to God anymore than does 13:6 (in which the governors are presented as *leitourgoi* of God). It is only a public service for the common good. However giving

terminology in an ethical-missiological sense, if the new worship, comprehensive as it is, were not the fulfillment of the old cultic worship? The reason why the old cultic language is largely avoided for corporate worship, being rather used mostly for worship *lato sensu*, is not to prevent believers from confusing their worship with the cultic worship of the Jews, but because the Christian dispensation brought with it a really new worship. Of course, a negative aspect is involved in the peculiar use of cultic terminology in the New Testament, since the introduction of a new worship entailed displacement of the old. Therefore, there is not a self-contained preventive intention involved in the peculiar application of cultic language, that is, apart from the change itself represented by that language. Otherwise, we are sustaining that that language is being used artificially. And this will be a disservice to what the apostles wanted to teach positively through it. Therefore we must speak of a theory of *affirmation* (or theory of *positive purpose*), in accordance with which the way the New Testament uses the old cultic terms is not simply to prevent something, but because it positively represents a new mode of worship.

If we assume for a while that cultic terminology was not applied to corporate worship to prevent it to be misinterpreted cultically, a question would arise: was it a necessity only for the early Christians? Is there no longer need to prevent anything? We could say that Christianity has reached maturity, so that a *preventive theory* does not apply any longer. But is it not true that nowadays the cultic terminology refers nearly exclusively to the worship of the assembled church, which is exactly understood in a cultic sense. The truth is that since worship with a cultic structure was introduced into Christianity, cultic language came to be used accordingly, referring exclusively to cultic holiness. The use of that language for corporate worship is not wrong, as it was not in the apostolical age, if two criteria are met: (a)

has a cultic meaning to Paul. Corriveau (1970:100) wrote: "This reasoning, which refuses a cultic sense to the words because it is a question of a service to men runs into difficulty when confronted with texts like Phil 4,18 which gives a sacrificial value to a gift destined to Paul by using terms which are unequivocally sacrificial." As regards civil authorities being termed *leitourgoi* of God, we cannot affirm that Paul had a cultic meaning in mind, so as to regard public service apart from faith as worship of God. It seems that Paul is, in this case, employing the word according to its known secular meaning. However, it is likely that the apostle did not use the term without any theological consequences. He calls civil authorities "ministers of God," emphasizing thus the source – and, naturally, criterion – of their authority. Accordingly, Barrett (1962:247) notes about *leitourgoi* : "The word in itself (although Paul uses it to describe his own office – xv.16) is not a theological term, but derives theological significance from the genitive, 'of God'. The Roman magistrates, little though they knew it, were public servants not of Rome but of God; it was his work they did." They are ministers of God's justice: a civil authority is, as the apostle said to the Roman believers, a *diakonos* of God "to do you good" and "an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (13:4). Therefore, it may be that if, on the one hand, Paul does not use *leitourgoi* in Ro 13:6 in its cultic sense, he, on the other hand, also does not employ it merely in its secular sense. In order to teach obedience to civil authorities, the apostle may be using the term with a meaning that stands somewhere in between the secular and the cultic meaning, where he can preach God's sovereignty over history, in terms of which everything must serve his purposes and is, in a sense, enlisted in his worship. So that civil authorities are, knowing it or not, wanting it or not, a kind of priests – self-unaware priests who serve

The connotation of cult in the old sense, with holy places, times and rites, as well as priest-like officers, is excluded. (b) It is not used in that strict sense without a simultaneous and consistent use of it in the broader sense, insisting that only thus we complete our biblical discourse on worship.

Are terminological circumstances not decisive? They are really decisive. If the apostle Paul used cultic language to refer to believers' general behavior, this is certainly not a case of mere embellishment of his discourse or a rhetorical device of no fundamental importance for the doctrine, used only to "illustrate several interesting points," as Reicke (n.d.:197) put it. "If he expresses himself in a certain way to speak of his function, it is that the chosen terms correspond to the reality," argued Denis (1958:402, translation mine from French). But why did the apostle retain a cultic terminology to speak of a new worship, which is no longer ritualistic? Just because it is of worship he is speaking – a new way of worship, but worship anyway. How could he speak of worship, even of a new way of worship, if not through worship terminology? And is it not by attaching a new meaning to that old terminology that he could speak of the new worship, which is new in mode, but remains worship? As Käsemann (1969:192) has remarked, it is precisely the cultic terminology (in Romans 12), which Paul "deliberately and in no way fortuitously employs," that "demonstrates the radical nature of the shift which has taken place here; so far from there being any room left for cultic thinking, the use of cultic terminology becomes itself the means of making clear, through a paradox, the extent of the upheaval." F. Hahn (n.d.:35f.) agrees: "Nothing bespeaks the novelty of Christian worship so plainly as the terminology employed for its concepts. . . . Cultic terminology is consciously avoided for Christian worship; it serves only to characterize the temple worship of the Old Testament, and to describe the Christ-event or the conduct of Christians in the world." He also said:

The terminological evidence means not only that any cultic understanding of Christian worship is out of the question, but also that there is no longer any distinction in principle between assembly for worship and the service of Christians in the world. Here we clearly find an echo of Jesus' transgression of the boundary between the sacred and the profane (:38f.).

His conclusion about the cultic terminology employed ethically in the New Testament is that "the boundary between worship and the world remains fluid; there is no Christian worship without responsibility for one's fellowman" (:64). Now we ask: will we leave to ethics that which in fact pertains to it and, as such, is now defined by worship language, or will we, exactly for the sake of that language, place ethics also in the category of worship, recognizing

God. Their work may not be *descriptively* (in reality) the work of a true, self-conscious, priest of God; but it is *prescriptively* (ideally) said to be that.

thus that Jesus actually inaugurated a new mode of worship, defined by a permanent and merciful holiness?

3.2. EXPLICIT TEACHING, NOT TERMINOLOGICAL EVIDENCES ALONE

But the evidences of a comprehensive doctrine of worship are not only of terminological nature. Lohmeyer (1962) made an outstanding investigation on the cult from the perspective of the gospel. He cogently proposed that the gospel – “the word and the event, both intimately bound up with the person of Jesus Christ” – “becomes the standard which makes a really and historically ‘new’ worship necessary, it indeed becomes itself the only power that will create and fulfil its forms” (:4). But he sees a problem here, “for where in the Gospel tradition do we find any words which could be taken to indicate the birth of a new cult?” Lohmeyer’s great contribution to our understanding of the doctrine of Christian worship lies, first and foremost, in calling attention to the fact that there is more information in the New Testament about its non-cultic nature than we have as yet perceived; so that “we must seek out cultic references therein which have not been observed or else little heeded” (:5). He explains it further:

Once alerted by some obviously cultic words and narratives, we shall go on to find countless more indirect pieces of evidence of the wealth of material that lies hidden not only in the cult itself but even more in the Gospel. Just as a familiar monument suddenly becomes new and alive when one views it from a different angle, so also the inexhaustible historical and objective wealth of the Gospel appears in a new light when we consider it with the cult, both as an idea and as a reality, constantly before us.

Lohmeyer refers to “the wealth of material bequeathed to us in the Gospel tradition, some of which is obvious, but even more of which lies hidden” and proposes an examination of “well-known words like priest, temple, sacrifice; cultic concepts such as forgiveness of sins and holiness; ritual stipulations such as those about purity and impurity; and ecclesiastical practices such as observance of the Sabbath and fasting” (:24). He reminds us, for instance, that while in the cultic order sins were forgiven on the basis of sacrifices through the priests, now Jesus reveals His power to forgive sins, the only possible conclusion being that “the power which Jesus’ word of forgiveness brings to bear upon the sickness of the palsied sufferer cannot take its place alongside cultic ordinances but must of necessity replace them” (:26). Lohmeyer still put it in other words: “The time has come when the sins of the people are finally blotted out, the Son of Man is there who forgives them – all the significance of the cult institutions pales before the at once hidden and revealed reality of this eschatological event” (:27). A further point is that if for the Jewish belief Jesus became cultically unclean for eating with sinners, he was instead thereby performing the holy act of “calling sinners,” which

“is closely related to ‘forgiving sins’” (:29). We can and must infer from all this that the worship of the New Testament is promoting forgiveness of sin by faith in Jesus. “Calling sinners” to Jesus or evangelization is worship. This presupposes love, which fulfills, hence replaces, the cultic order of the law. Also, Lohmeyer brilliantly says about that change and the new way of worship:

In Jesus’ Gospel the cultic prescriptions have disappeared, and the way is open to comprehend the remaining moral commandments in one basic commandment. . . . The sacred mediation of cult no longer exists. Whether in the company of his neighbours or in the privacy of his own room a man now stands immediately before the face of the heavenly Father, who sees into the inmost recesses of his hearts. The ancient cult is destroyed and from its ruins there blossoms the flower of a new life of holy love for God and for one’s neighbour (:73f.; cf. Käsemann 1969:191; F. Hahn n.d.:31).

We are always in God’s presence. Jesus is with us all days so that our behavior as a whole has a religious meaning. And love defines the kind of “religious life” that pleases Him. We have already discussed His teaching on the role of mercy for an existence pleasing to God. We have to pay attention to everything he did and said that may belong to the comprehensive way of worship he ushered in, which may go unperceived just because in our search for material on worship, we do it with worship *stricto sensu* in mind. Our kind of search is not a “pan-liturgism,” defined by Martin (1974:109) as “the temptation to see early Christian worship in almost every place of the New Testament writings” and by (Moule 1961:7) as “the temptation to detect the reverberations of liturgy in the New Testament even where no liturgical note was originally struck.” Such a criticism refers to a search for signs and echoes of worship in the narrow sense, while we are concerned with terms and conceptions which can be found “everywhere” that tell us that worship cannot merely be viewed in that narrow sense. The truth is that there are much more references to worship in the New Testament that we have perceived, just because we only look at references for worship in the strict sense of that which Christians do in their gatherings.

3.3. A SURVEY OF TERMINOLOGICAL EVIDENCES

3.3.1. *Paul*

It is of great significance that in the two passages in Paul’s letter to the Romans in which he speaks of his apostolate, namely 1:9 and 15:16, he does it using worship language (cf. Corriveau 1970:140; also :94). In 1:9 the apostle says: “For God is my witness, whom I worship [latreō] in my spirit in the gospel [ἐν τῇ εὐαγγελίᾳ] of his Son . . .”

(Translation mine) “In the gospel” means in the dynamics of the “good news,” in evangelization; “refers to the proclamation of the message rather than its content. It is this which is a religious, cultic act” (Corriveau 1970:146).⁴ God is worshipped in the proclamation of the good news of His Son. In 15:16 Paul calls himself “a minister [leitourg`n] of Christ Jesus to the nations, offering the gospel as a sacrifice [derourgoβnta t` e]agg, lion, literally “sacrificing the gospel”] so that the offering of the nations may be acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Translation mine). F. Hahn (n.d.:37, note 12) says about this verse: “Here the various terms from sacrificial and cultic language are removed from their original sphere of meaning and applied to missionary service.”⁵ The Old Testament cult is well represented in this verse: we have the “priest” (leitourg`v translates “priest” in the Septuagint), the sacrifice and its purpose, namely, that people may be acceptable to God. But the sacrifice offered by the New Testament “priests,” with exactly the same finality that people may be acceptable to God is the *gospel*. In what sense can the gospel be “offered as sacrifice”? In the sense that it presents and represents Jesus’ vicarious sacrifice (and resurrection), belief in which makes one acceptable to God. Evangelization is the cultic work of “extending the sacrifice of Christ,” that the nations may be willing and able to offer themselves to God (cf. Corriveau 1970:152ff.; D. W. B. Robinson 1974: 231; Peterson 1993a:180f.; 1993b:70). That the nations may worship God for His mercy, the apostle must worship God among them: “. . . that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name’” (15:9). This is *missionary worship* – “praising God among the nations.” The proclamation of the gospel is the liturgy of leading (or attempting to lead) people to glorify God for His mercy, to obey Him (15:18; cf. 1:5).

The noun leitourg`a – “service,” “ministry” – and its correlates, used in the Septuagint associated with cultic worship, are not used in the New Testament in relation to collective worship, the only exception being Acts 13:2: “While they were worshipping [leitourgo]ntwn] the Lord . . .”⁶ We cannot say that the verb was applied to that case of

⁴ There are some texts in which “in the gospel” seems to mean more clearly “in the proclamation of the gospel”: “. . . he [Timothy] served with me in the gospel . . .” (Php 2:22, NKJV; cf. 1Th 3:2); “. . . [Euodia and Syntyche] who struggled with me in the gospel as much with Clement as the remaining of my collaborators . . .” (Php 4:3, translation mine); “. . . your fellowship [the Philippians’] in the gospel . . .” (Php 1:5, NKJV) The expression “in the gospel” may surely be used with a wider meaning, referring to the state of staying in the Christian doctrine or the “good news.” Really we preach the gospel that people may “be” in it. But the highest point of “being in the gospel” is communicating it.

⁵ Schlier (n.d.) explores in depth the meaning of Paul’s self-definition as “priestly minister of Christ to the nations” and speaks of “apostolical liturgy.”

⁶ In the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, a document that most scholars believe to have been written at the end of the first century, we find the word “liturgy” (leitourg`a) used twice for cultic service (Chap. XL).

worship of a gathered church only because that service had a missionary perspective. Though not representatively, cultic language was used for corporate worship “purely,” that is, without an ethical meaning built-in from a semantic viewpoint (but not from a moral doctrinal perspective). It is interesting, anyway, that the term is used exactly for the corporate worship from which the missionary movement to the nations began.⁷

When those words are not used in the New Testament in reference to the worship of the Old Testament (Lk 1:23; Heb 8:2; 9:21; 10:11), to the work of civil authorities (Ro 13:6) and to Christ’s priestly work (8:6), they are applied especially to aspects of missionary work: the proclamation of the gospel and support to it. Paul, as Webster (1962b:74) put it, “does not think of missionary work as an activity completely distinct from worship; rather does he think of his evangelistic labours as one aspect of both the Church’s worship and the Church’s priesthood.” Peterson (1993b:70) makes also a relevant comment: “Since preaching was not regarded as a ritual activity in Paul’s world, he clearly gives that ministry a novel significance when he describes it as the means by which he worships or serves God.” He notes also that the ordinary sense of rendering a service to someone is retained in Paul’s use of the word “liturgy,” although it is clearly a ministry that glorifies God (:71). And he concludes thus: “The notion of worshipping or serving God *by means of our service to one another* is thus implied.” He is convinced that Paul’s use of *latreuein* and *leitourgein* shows that “expressions

The letter speaks of “liturgies” to be performed at the appointed times and hours. The impression that we have before us a picture of the Old Testament cultic order is confirmed by the mention of high priest, priests and Levites. A first century Catholicism? We are thinking of the cultic order in both Rome and Corinth and the fact that the letter was sent by the Church of Rome (Clement’s name is not mentioned). Bouyer (n.d.:175) wrote that we owe apparently to Clement “the meaning which Christianity was to attach precisely to this word, ‘liturgy’.” He sustained that “Clement applies it for the first time to Christian worship.” Or is it only a metaphorical and eventual use of the Old Testament cultic language for didactic reason? (We have no reason to think in this way as far as the ethical use of cultic language in the New Testament is concerned, for in that case that language is not used simultaneously for cultic realities, as if they were its real object, and, metaphorically, for ethical realities. It is rather not representatively used for the former, being largely transferred to the latter, which becomes its object too, definitively.) The letter deals with the problem of sedition against the presbyters (alluding to the conflict at that church about which the apostle Paul wrote in his letter). To cope with that situation, the author may be using Old Testament categories, metaphorically, to protect the episcopate and to put those who pretended to take over the leadership of the church in their own place. We read indeed in the letter that peculiar services are assigned to each, the high priest, the priests and the Levites, being the laity bound by the ordinances that pertain to the laity (~ la[k]k`v 8nqrwpov to8v la[k]ko8v prost`8gmasin d8,detai). The Corinthian Christians are next advised to give thanks to God each in one’s own order, not going beyond the ministry prescribed to oneself (Chap. XLI). Moreover, the church addressed is in Corinth, but there is a saying in the letter that the sacrifices or offerings are not offered in every place, but only in Jerusalem, at the altar before the temple, by the high priest. Those who do anything contrary are punished with death. Everything is obviously used metaphorically, with a view to calling attention to some truths. In Chap. XLII the metaphorical language is left aside and the church leaders are termed bishops and deacons (Chap. XLII). If we do not have here not even a proto-Catholicism, we have at least a language that favored a cultic order. Regarding specifically the use of *leitourg`a* for worship *stricto sensu*, it is not incoherent with the New Testament, as attested (exclusively) by the *verb leitourg,w* used (spontaneously but not representatively, anyway) in Ac 13:2.

⁷ Webster (1962b:74) remarked: “It was in the context of liturgical worship (the Greek word used is *leitourgeo*) that the Church’s responsibilities for mission became clarified and accepted.”

of faith in Jesus Christ and ministries that encourage such faith are the worship acceptable and pleasing to God under the new covenant.”

The apostle Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance [ʃ sm|n] of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma [e|wdʃ a] of Christ among those who are being saved and to those who are perishing” (2:14f.). Ge 8:21; Ex 30:34-38; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; and Eze 20:28, 41, *e.g.*, present aromas as cultic elements. This is retained by Paul but with a new content: the fragrance that pleases God is the knowledge of Christ being spread. Again, evangelization is worship. And the apostle calls the generous offering of money by the Philippian Christians to support his ministry “a sweet-smelling aroma [ʃ sm|n e|wdʃ av], an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (4:18, NKJV). Care for those who are in the service of the gospel falls into the category of worship, as demonstrated in this verse by the ideas of cultic aroma and sacrifice.

In Romans 12:1, a verse containing several cultic terms, Paul calls the believers’ behavior in general – molded as it is by Christ – a living, “holy” and “pleasant” “sacrifice” which they should “present” to God as their “rational,” “conscious,” worship (logik| latreʃ a). It is worship conscious of God’s mercy, which is the basis of Paul’s appeal (“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy . . .”; cf. 11:30, 32, 35). “For Paul the true worship is rational not in the sense of being consistent with the natural rationality of man . . . , but in the sense of being such as is demanded by the truth of God, such as is consistent with an understanding of what God has done for us men in Jesus Christ” (Cranfield 1965:14). Ro 12:1 is a basic statement of the replacement of the old formal cult by ethical worship.⁸ As Sartorius (1884:290) wrote, Paul “comprises the entire Christian life in the notion of sacrifice and Divine service.” And Beker (1984:320) explains the sacrifice of the believers’ bodies in Ro 12:1 as “the worship of God in the ‘bodily’ situations of everyday life.” He also talks about “an active vocation and mission to the created order and its institutions, that is, the execution of our ‘spiritual worship’ in terms of ‘bodily and responsible life in the world . . .’” (:326f.) Note that 12:1f. is not the first time the apostle writes on this subject in the letter. In 6:12f. we read: “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of

⁸ Corriveau (1970:184) refers to Romans 12:1-2 as “certainly the most forceful expression of Paul’s conception of Christian life as a consecration and constant liturgy rising up to God.” Accordingly, Moule (1961:84) convincingly remarked that the cultic metaphors Paul used to refer to his ministry and the service of others “are

your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” Therefore, to offer our bodies as a living, holy and pleasant sacrifice to God means to offer our body to Him as “instruments of righteousness,” instead of offering it to sin as “instruments of wickedness.” “Righteousness” is clearly more than simply a contemplative and ascetic separation from wickedness. There is an active – ethical and missiological – meaning to it.

Paul also taught that the believers are God’s temple. “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (1Co 3:16f.; cf. Eph 2:21). The presence of the Holy Spirit consecrates the believers and constitutes them “temples” for the glory of God. The apostle does not say “You are like a temple,” as if a temple were something else in a Christian setting. He simply asseverates it: “Don’t you know that you yourselves *are* . . .?” Believers are, in Christ, what the Old Testament temple was symbolically. And they “inherited” the status of that temple: to do evil to them, in whom God’s Spirit dwells, means attracting God’s wrath. In face of the conflicts and division in the Corinthian church (1:10ff.; 3:4; cf. also 11:17-22, 27-29), Paul appeals to the truth that the church is God’s temple to warn about the gravity of damaging her (cf. Corriveau 1970:60f.). As Corriveau (1970:62) has noted, the thought that the Christian’s activity is cultic in nature has not been developed by Paul in 1Co 3:16f – “It remains implicit in the temple image and in the holiness which it necessarily involves.”

But in fact the church did not “inherit” the prerogatives of the Old Testament temple: the stone temple was a pre-figure of the personal temple. The New Testament religion is not merely a “spiritualized version” of the “real thing” that the Old Testament one is. The shadow is the Old Testament, not the New. The full thing is the New Testament, not the Old as its materiality may suggest and is indeed commonly seen. God is living and personal, so that, unlike the supposed gods of the nations, who needs a physical dwelling place, *persons* are the appropriate house of His Spirit. A believer, as a *person*, is a “temple of the *living* God” (2Co 6:16, emphasis added; cf. Pe 2:5, about Christians described as “living” stones and a “spiritual” house, as well as about their “spiritual” sacrifices). Persons can be God’s temple because He is a (divine) person. Our body is a temple of His Spirit, who is in us (1Co 6:19; cf. Eph 2:22). We are made God’s temple because of our faith relationship to Christ, who is the “chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:20f.). All this is amazing, but demands responsibility: “Therefore

only a particularizing of the general description in Rom. 12:1 of Christian self-consecration as the offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice . . .”

honor God with your body” (1Co 6:20; cf. Ro 6:12f.; 12:1).⁹ Christians must keep themselves apart from sin: “What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God” (2Co 6:16).¹⁰ We must keep ourselves aloof from wickedness because we, as God’s temple, are holy.

The natural implication of Christians being a temple in which God’s Spirit dwells is that the whole movement of their life falls into the category of worship (or denial of worship). Believers should live in a permanent glorification of God. There is no place and no moment in which believers are not the temple of the Holy Spirit. Delling (1962:21) asserts: “Not only is the congregation met for Worship a ‘dwelling place of God’ in which He is present ‘in the Spirit’ but also the community when not gathered together in one place is God’s temple.” Hence, “among the dispersed members of the community a continuous service goes on in the presence of God, for the Spirit is present in all the members effecting a continuous union among them and offering uninterrupted worship in them.” To the early Christians, it was, as Davies (1966a:15) wrote, “impossible to abstract worship from the totality of life, since the ‘holy place’ was as omnipresent as the risen Christ.” Every believer says (or should say) continuously in God’s temple, that is, the believers’ own body: “Glory!” (Ps 29:9)

Unfortunately the significance of believers’ being God’s temple for a comprehensive understanding of worship is not well known among Christians, a chief reason for it being that they have long been taught, and are used to think, of worship nearly exclusively in terms of what they do together mainly in “God’s house” and on the “Lord’s Day.”

Paul teaches too, as we saw in the previous chapter, that “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1Ti 4:4). Accordingly, Jesus had taught that what makes man unclean is not eating “unclean food,” but what comes from his heart (Mt 15:11-20; Mk 7:15-23). What makes one unclean is not eating with sinners, but doing it not “in truth,” without a “priestly awareness,” not “consecrating” them by the word of God and prayer, not “sacrificing the gospel” or offering to them the gospel of Jesus’ sacrifice (and resurrection).

Another Jewish cultic concept used by Paul is “festival”: “Therefore let us keep the Festival [ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν ζῶντων], not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread

⁹ In 1Co 3:16f. and 2Co 6:16f. the temple is the church as a community, while in 1Co 6:19f. it refers to the body of the individual believer (cf. Corriveau 1970:65). It is as a member of the church that the believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ Corriveau (1970:56) asserts that 2Co 6:14-7:1 “spells out a program of life which underscores the new life of the Christian as basically cultic in character.” He also says that “from the more intimate and personal ‘dwelling’

without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1Co 5:8). Christian commitment to the truth – acknowledging and proclaiming it – is a “festival.” Our “Passover” takes place whenever the gospel is announced. Evangelization is worship of God.

[of God] in the Christian community there arises a new cult which comprises the whole moral life of the believer” (:57).

3.3.2. *Peter*

The apostle Peter says that Christians, “like living stones [l^c qoi z , ntev], are being built into a spiritual house [bđkov pneumatik^v] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices [pneumatik^{1v} qus^c av] acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). A temple made of stones is replaced by a spiritual house made of “living stones.” God is no longer worshipped in the temple, but in His people’s holiness and witness. Their priestly service or worship is by offering “spiritual sacrifices” to Him, especially witnessing to His doings before the world: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for possession, that you may announce the virtues of him who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1Pe 2:9, translation mine). To “declare the virtues of Him” is to praise Him before people, whereby the proclamation of the gospel is worship.¹¹ The first verse tells of a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices while the second speaks of a royal priesthood announcing the virtues of God. There is no reason to think that the proclamation of God’s saving virtues is something different from offering spiritual sacrifices. Selwyn (1946:295f.) notes in this regard that “the offering of the spiritual sacrifices alluded to is identical with, or at least one form of, the proclamation of God’s excellencies” (or the other way round: spiritual sacrifices are a more general category, the proclamation of God’s virtues is at least one form of offering spiritual sacrifices).

We should see also 1Pe 4:8-11. The apostle recommends fraternal love, hospitality, mutual ministration according to each one’s gift, speaking God’s words and administration conform the strength God gives, “so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” God is praised through Jesus in everything we do in terms of His love, gifts, words and power.

3.3.3. *James*

James (1:27) shows also the ethical component of the new way of worship.¹² He uses cultic words, “clean” (kaqar⁰) and “undefiled” (7m^c antov), to qualify care for people in their afflictions as the religion (qrjske^c a) that God expects from His children. Purity is now seen

¹¹ We shall investigate in Chapter 4 several occurrences of this concept in the Old Testament.

¹² Jas 1:27 has a close similarity in structure and theological logic with Ro 12:1-2. Whereas the latter speaks of the worship that is *pleasant to God*, the former speaks of the religion that *God accepts* (as pure and faultless). Then Ro 12:2 calls believers to not conform to this world and, in like manner, the last part of Jas 1:27 urges them to keep “unspotted,” “unpolluted” (°sπilon). “Unspotted” is another cultic concept used in an ethical sense. “The concept of keeping oneself unspotted has a cultic ring . . . , but as with many cultic concepts this became moral in the NT usage . . .” (Davids n.d.:103).

ethically, not as ascetical isolation or ritual acts (cf. Adamson 1976:87). But it is always useful to repeat that such an ethical approach is in no way understood apart from spiritual devotion, both personal and collective. When James says that the religion “that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless *is this*,” mentioning then caring for orphans and widows, he seems to speak exclusively, that is, as if that were what religion is all about. But James’ concern is with a piety without ethical responsibility. He asserts in the prior verse: “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.” He explicitly urges believers to be “doers of the word” (ποιῶν τὰ λόγια) instead of hearers only, misleading themselves (1:2). James emphasizes that faith without works has no value: “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (2:26). Piety without love is dead (cf. 1:26). Praise without a holy life is an illusion.¹³ Now we cannot think that in 1:27 he teaches that the religion acceptable to God is good works without faith and the common devotional life of the church. James’ statement about the worship God accepts as pure and undefiled must be interpreted in the same way as the saying “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” What God desires is mercy, but this does obviously not mean that prayer and singing hymns of praise are excluded. Mercy is the final product. Faith and fraternal communion stand behind it. This is how James’ definition of what the religion “that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless *is*” can leave spiritual aspects unmentioned without the connotation of a mere moral religion. Works are viewed from the perspective of faith.

We cannot continue with the error of ignoring the ethical-missiological meaning attached by the apostles to the cultic vocabulary, using them in an Old Testament fashion that was ushered in centuries after the apostolical age. This supports the atrophied view of worship and the inexpressive missionary commitment prevailing nowadays.

Chapter 4

The Logic of Service to People as Worship of God

¹³ Adamson (1976:87) says: “Worship and *latreia* and *thrṣkeia* can be properly done in the narrower scope of the narrower sense of these words; but unless it is a real part of the full scope (as in Heb. 9:1, 6) of these words in their all-embracing sense, it is nothing.

It is somewhat difficult to understand that our “horizontal” service to people pertains to our “vertical” devotion to God. How can it make sense that love to people is part of love to God? What is the logic of the “cultic” dimension of service to people? How can it be that *mission is worship*? Volf (1993:207) asks accordingly: “Why does Christian worship need to branch out into action and adoration? What is the reason for this biformity of worship?”

4.1. AN EXPLORATION OF REASONS

4.1.1. *The fundamental principle: God is served as He wills*

(“*God’s will*” as a liturgical category)

Believers should obviously serve God as He wishes. What matters is how *God* wants to be served, not how *we* think He should be served. As Kant (1960:95) held (but did not succeed in applying in a biblical way), the determining factor in religion is to know how God wishes to be honored. It is a “pseudo-service” (*cultus spurius*) to honor God “by deeds which in fact frustrate the very ends of him who is being served” (:141) or in a way that disregards the service that God Himself demands (:156). And God expressly desires to be served by means of our serving people. He complained through the prophet Isaiah, for instance, that His people sought His presence in the formal cults, yet without a commitment to live accordingly, serving Him as *He* had chosen: by helping suffering people (58:1-7). By rendering service to God in their cults, believers are mostly prone to think they have satisfactorily fulfilled their religious duties. But this is what God affirmatively wishes: mercy on distressed people (Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8; Mt 5:7; 9:13 – calling people to repentance is an expression of mercy; 12:7; Lk 6:36). And if God says “I desire,” He is speaking of worship. What God wishes is that through which we worship Him. What pleases Him is worship. This is why we can say that ethics, the essence of which is witness to Christ, is truly part of worship. *God’s will* is a cultic category with an ethical-missionary content to it. There is no other possibility: “I can only honour God by submitting to what He as Creator disposes regarding me and therefore by accepting my responsibility to the thou in the framework of His ordinances” (K. Barth 1988:404). F. Hahn (n.d.:31) wrote, as we have already mentioned, that Jesus abolished the cultic order of the Old Testament because with the coming of God’s kingdom, man is bound directly to God’s will, being able to serve Him joyfully and gratefully. He concludes thus: “In this context the twofold law of love reveals its unity and its critical function: there can be love

for God only where there is also room for love for one's neighbor and enemy . . ." To do God's will in all variety of daily situations and opportunities is worship.

Some statements in the New Testament only seemingly suggest that service to people is the unique component of religion. Paul, for instance, wrote that the entire law is summed up in the single command to love the neighbor (Ro 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). The point is that service to people is required by *God* as service to Himself. It is God's initiative, not a human offering chosen freely, apart from any divine dispositions. Moffatt (1930:127) reminds: "Even the practical James, who encountered spurious forms of religious love, never dreams of opposing them by anything like an ethic which should be a substitute for religion." Therefore, if the ethical requirements come from *God*, emphasis on the horizontal dimension of the Christian religion is in fact only seemingly one-sided – the vertical or spiritual dimension lies in the background. Watts (1745:110) argues, about Mark 10:19, that Jesus does not dispense us to neglect our duties towards God by mentioning only those towards our neighbor. All the rest of the table of the law is implied, as the Lord says in Mt 5:19 that whoever teaches someone to break the least of the commandments will be the least in the kingdom of heavens. Watts gives still another reason why Jesus insisted particularly upon the duties towards people: "Because these Duties to the *Neighbours* were those which the *Pharisees*, who boasted of their own Righteousness, more particularly neglected, while they pretended to much Devotion and Worship of God in all the Forms of his Appointment" (:110f.).

A last point about God's will is that it has no limitation in time and space, so that everything believers do is done *religiously* before God. They are God's temple. They are *always* God's temple, so that none of their acts falls outside of God's view, interest and judgment. "There is no space in which worship should not take place, no time when it should not occur, and no activity through which it should not happen. All dimensions of human life are the 'temples' in which Christians should honour their God – the God who created the whole reality, and the God who desires to redeem it" (Volf 1993:204). A church not committed to witness to the world in every place where her members are, however zealous she is in her collective worship, is a church that keeps the temple of God closed to the world, depriving the world of seeing the glory of God and denying to God the kind of praise He likes most.

4.1.2. *The conditio sine qua non: faith in God's Son*

(No works without faith)

If we say Christians worship God by serving people, this does not mean at all that they find God initially through their works. What starts our relationship with God is not our works, but our faith response to His call. It is the view we have of God in His love for us that enables us to love our fellow-humans with a true love (1Jo 4:7f.). He, not us, is our point of departure. The apostle James wrote that to look after orphans and widows in their needs (and to keep oneself apart from sin) is the religion that *God accepts* as pure and faultless (1:27). Our offerings are responsive: we do what God demands and accepts. We, as beings spoiled by sin, can only respond to God's grace: "We love him because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:10,19).

Kant (1960: 106f.) alleged that we can comprehend the necessity of union of faith in an atonement and faith that we can become well-pleasing to God through a good course of life "only by assuming that one can be derived from the other, that is, either that the faith in the absolution from the debt resting upon us will bring forth good life-conduct, or else that the genuine and active disposition ever to pursue a good course of life will engender the faith in such absolution according to the law of morally operating causes." Unfortunately he adopted the latter conception quite one-sidedly. To him man "must first improve his way of life" (:107). He rejects the idea of a constitutive faith, rather regarding it as a consequence and strengthening factor of a good moral life (:172). He insisted on it: "The courage to stand on one's own feet is itself strengthened by the doctrine of atonement, when it follows the ethical doctrine . . ." In his opinion, when reverence for God is put first, virtue being subordinated to it, such a reverence becomes an idol, as God is viewed as a being whom we can please not through morally upright conduct, but through adoration and ingratiation (:173). We, with our doings, are in the Kantian approach the agents of our own salvation. He said too:

There is no other means (and there can be no other) of becoming worthy of heavenly assistance than earnest endeavor to better in every possible way our moral nature and thus render ourselves susceptible of having the fitness of this nature perfected for divine approval, so far as this perfecting is not in our power; for that divine aid, which we await, itself really aims at nothing but our morality (:180).

As a matter of fact, it is an error to think that our everyday life is "secular," with no religious meaning to it, while God is worshipped solely in the Christian assemblies. This misconception must be challenged by an ethical-missiological approach to worship, according to which the believers' collective worship is the reference center of their broader worship-in-service in their daily life. But, on the other side, we cannot in any hypothesis imagine, as Kant does, that our merit of works should come prior to our reverence to God through His Son. Kant opposes what is clearly affirmed by the apostle Paul, that we are saved by God's grace, by means of faith, not of our merits (Eph 2:8f.). We cannot save ourselves; only God can save

us (Mt 19:25f.). Why did God show His love to us “while we were still sinners” (Ro 5:8), if not because we would never be able to do something capable of bettering our beings and making us acceptable to Him? Our regeneration is a work of God. In order to be new creatures, we must be “in Christ” (2Co 5:17). We can do nothing, and nothing is necessary to be done, for our salvation, beyond repenting from our sins and believing in God’s pardon through His Son’s *death for our sins* (cf., e.g., Isa 53:5; 1Co 15:3). Only thus we are enabled for a good moral life in the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us (2Th 2:13; 1Pe 1:2; Rom 1:4).

Jesus taught: “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:4f.). God is presupposed – not “post-supposed” – in our service to people. Our care for people is consequential to our meeting Him and is especially expected as the core of our service to Him. K. Barth (1968:430) asked: “The general situation between God and man being what it is, how can the primary ethical action be defined as a *veritable worship of God*?” To answer the question, he uses as a starting point the concept of *sacrifice*, mentioned in the verse he is exploring (Ro 12:1). Sacrifice means surrender, “the renunciation of men in favour of God” (:431). This is what Barth calls “primary action.” He concludes thus: “The problem of ‘ethics’ is, therefore, identical with the problem of ‘dogmatics’: *Soli Deo gloria!* It follows, then, that all secondary ethical behaviour . . . must be both related to the primary behaviour and conditioned by it. Our secondary moral behaviour can be defined as *living, holy, and acceptable to God*, only in so far as this connexion is maintained.” Volf (1993:210) likewise defined well the constitutive role of worship *stricto sensu* by affirming that

in adoration a person names and celebrates the context of meaning that gives significance to his or her action in the world and indicates the highest value that gives that action binding direction. In the pantheon of the modern world, adoration identifies the God in whose name one engages in action. Without adoration action is blind and easily degenerates into a hit-or-miss activism.

By faith in Jesus the believer is entitled to worship God through acts of love in the church and society. Likewise the communion and corporate worship of the church is the constitutive factor of the worship by general holiness and witness. The worship of the assembled church stands in the center and is the point of reference of her outwards worship. The center of something is not more, but also not less, than the center. Kendrick (1985:26) says that times separated for corporate worship, “special though they are, are really just a token of the fact that all of life belongs to, and is being offered up daily in thanksgiving to, the Creator.”

4.1.3 Objective Faith

(No faith without works)

We are called out of sin to faith. Sin is essentially egocentrism, self-love, selfishness. Humans' fall was their attempt to be more than themselves, to be like God. Instead of recognizing the Creator's divinity, truth and lordship, they disregarded them by trying to get divine prerogatives for themselves. Humans put their selves in the center. This naturally affected their view of their neighbors: one's neighbors are now those who stand on the periphery of one's concerns. But Jesus sets us free from this sin by making us stand gladly before the Father as servants and enabling us to love and serve our neighbors. "When we submit to God, we submit to the supremacy of the common good. Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the Soul" (Rauschenbusch n.d.:99). The proof that one has been renewed by Christ is one's readiness to serve and willingness to place the other in the center of one's own life. "To love means to transfer the center of one's inner life from the ego to the object of one's love" (Heschel 1969:207). Once Jesus taught a law expert that he should love God with all his being and the neighbor as himself (Lk 10:27). The man of the law asked then: "And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29) Jesus told him the parable so-called of the good Samaritan (vv. 30-35) and asked: "'Which of these three [the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan] do you think *was a neighbor to* the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'" (v. 36, emphasis added) The right question is not about "who is my neighbor" but about "to whom I am a neighbor" (cf. Bornkamm 1973:113). Jesus teaches us to bring our neighbors into the center of our concern and care. This is to love them as ourselves. This is the love that counts as worship of God. This "cultic life of love, which is constant service and gift of self, stands opposed to the way of life which makes a god of self and created things" (Corriveau 1970:208).

We can be saved by faith alone. But the same Paul who affirms it, states also that faith without love is nothing (1Co 13:2). Accordingly, James says that faith without works is dead (2:17, 20, 26). For Paul, faith *working through love* (p^c stiv diH ʔg^opjv ɹnergoum,nj) is what counts in Christ (Gal 5:6). Works of love are the body of faith; are faith at work. James, in turn, writes that faith is showed by means of works: ". . . and I will show you my faith by my works [k⁷g, soi de^c xw ɹk t.n ɹrgwn mou tɹn p^cstin]" (2:18, NKJV). Well, is James not saying, with Paul, that faith works through love? If for Paul faith works through love, love is how faith is shown. And if for James works shows faith, faith operates through works of love. Therefore, for both Paul and James works presupposes faith. They are affirming exactly the same thing.

James confidently defies one to prove the existence of his faith without the instrumentality of works, for faith cannot show itself but through visible acts (2:18). We should understand in

this sense his statement that a person is not justified by faith alone (2:24). Abraham was saved by faith *and* works (2:22) in the sense that his works were expression of his faith. In this sense works make faith complete. Ultimately, what saves us is faith, but a faith that can be proved. Works are not responsible for “some part” of our salvation, but for proving the reality of our faith. Paul does not say (even in Eph 2:8f.) that faith can go without works. Quite to the contrary, he, with James, sees works as the face of faith. Faith works through love (Paul), hence love is faith incarnate (James). The point Paul wants to make is that works cannot save, while James’ point is that abstract faith alone can also not save anybody. “The contrast is between faith minus works, and works minus faith – not between faith and works” (Adamson 1976:132). We are saved only by faith. But faith is shown only by works. Then, in a sense, we are saved by faith and, showing it, works. James’ saying that a person is not justified “by faith alone” denies justification by an abstract faith, but also by works alone – he does not say that we are not saved “by faith.” The love that fulfils all of the law is the love that represents faith in Christ, through which we are justified and saved (cf., *e.g.*, Gal 2:16; Ro 5:1; Eph 2:8). But we ought to consider also that Paul and James are using “works” with different meanings. The former means the works of the law through which one may wish to gain salvation, whereas for the latter works are expressions of faith.¹ But their discourses converge when Paul speaks of faith working through (works of) charity and that faith without love is of no value.

The apostle John stated that “anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1Jo 4:20). God calls us to serve Him in the realm of the distresses of this world. We cannot expect to serve God in abstract ways, mystically, monastically. Braun (n.d.:131) appropriately reminds us that, according to the Synoptic Gospels, “God is not loved by our absorption into him or by religious ecstasy but by obedient behavior, and, indeed, by such behavior as it serves the neighbor in a very concrete way.” The inevitable conclusion is that our suffering neighbor represents for us an opportunity to please God.

¹ Dibelius (n.d.:178f.) comments: “From Galatians we know well enough which ‘works’ above all are on Paul’s mind when he speaks of faith without works. These are the works of the ceremonial law, circumcision, keeping of festivals, rites of purity. . . . Jas discusses none of this. His ‘works’ consist in the fulfillment of the simplest ethical directives, especially those of love and mercy . . .”

4.1.4. *Love to God implies loving everything He loves*

(*Love to humans as part of love to God*)

If we serve people we serve God Himself, because they are His beloved creatures whom He wishes to save (cf. Jn 3:16; Lk 19:10; Ro 5:8; 1Ti 2:4; 4:10). The Lord considers service to Himself the good done to *His* “little ones” (Mt 25:31-46). Jesus “so identifies himself in sympathy and companionship with the suffering and needy that to help them is to serve him . . . active sympathy for needy people is *direct* service to him” (Filson 1967:267f., emphasis added). Then the idea arose that, as Jeremias (n.d.:208) put it, “in the persons of the poor and wretched, men are confronted by the hidden Messiah.” Christ stands, so to speak, behind those whom we serve. We learn from the apostle James: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world”(1:27). Service to our needy neighbor is a *religious* (not merely social) service *before God*.

According to the wisdom tradition, “whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Pr 14:31). And these are God’s words through the prophet Isaiah (58:6f.), a discourse that seems to lie in the background of Jesus’ words in Mt 25:31-46: “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” On the other side, evil done to the unprotected ones is offensive to the Creator. “He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished” (Pr 17:5). “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Pr 14:31). Job 31:13-23 is also very instructive. Verses 13f. read thus: “If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account?” The argument for our responsibility to take care of those without hope is this: “Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?” (v. 15) And in verse 20 we find the amazing truth that *those whom we help really bless us*.

We cannot speak of worship of God if we have no interest in helping people. Cushman (1963:30) wrote: “Worship, appropriate to the one God, can tolerate no competitors. But worship possesses a complementary aspect because the one God is a gracious God, which is to say that entire consent to God’s sovereignty is also consent to his gracious intention toward the creatures . . .” His conclusion: “The *whole of worship* is entire obedience to the two

commandments [love to God and love to people] – not complementary, merely, but inseparable” (:30f., emphasis added). Love to people is part of our devotion to God since love to God entails love to everything God loves. Moffatt (1930:96) well remarked that as God’s “personal nature and demands are revealed in our human relationships, it follows that our love to Him is most adequately exercised and expressed in the fulfilment of our duties to one another.” He said also that an intelligent sympathy with God’s will which takes the form of sincere and willing service of love to others, being this what is meant by loving them for the sake of God, “is at once the surest way of showing our real affection for Him” and that “love for one another is the outcome of His love for us, and thereby alone can we hope to realize the truth of what He is” (:312). Truth to tell, God said through the prophet Jeremiah: “‘He [Josiah] defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?’ declares the Lord” (Jer 22:16). The knowledge of God is ultimately proven by walking as Jesus did (1Jo 2:3-6) and Jesus’ way is the way of love and mercy.

König (1982:115) maintains that if we take the *covenant* as the point of departure, “it is impossible to be aligned with God without being involved with man or to be aligned with man without being involved with God. Man is God’s man.” Accordingly, Moffatt (1930:278) wrote: “The organic tie between love for Christ and love for fellow-Christians precludes the idea that one comes nearer to the Lord by sinking into the depths of oneself in subconscious reverie or rapture than by the activities of service towards those whom Christ loves.” Volf (1993:208) in turn put it so: “Fellowship with God is not possible without cooperation with God in the world; indeed cooperation with God is a dimension of fellowship with God.” Volf goes on to say finely that “by aligning with God’s character and purposes in adoration one aligns oneself also with God’s projects in the world. By praising God who renews the face of the earth and redeems the peoples one affirms at the same time one’s desire to be a cooperator with God in the world. Adoration is the well-spring of action” (:210). How can it be that believers enjoy their communion with God but have no desire to cooperate with Him for the salvation of His creatures who are still lost? Can we truly speak of love to God in such a case? If we live for God, we must live for the world, for He loves the world. K. Barth (1962:762) wrote, in that very respect, that God exists for the world, so that

since the community of Jesus Christ exists first and supremely for God, it has no option but in its own manner and place to exist for the world. How else could it exist for God? . . . The community of Jesus Christ is the human creature whose existence as existence for God has the meaning and purpose of being, on behalf of God and in the service and discipleship of His existence, an existence for the world and men.

To love God is to keep His commandments. The apostle John uttered it: “This is love for God: to obey his commands” (1Jo 5:3; cf. 14:15, 21). And do we not have explicit

commandments from the Lord for the spreading of the gospel? Gensichen (n.d.:40) stated relevantly: “The measure of their being children of God is to be found in their obedient intention to bring all men into the life of God in Christ . . .” Engagement in the accomplishment of God’s saving plan in the world is essential to our love to Him. And there is no other way of worshipping Him than by loving Him in that missionary way.

What is the relationship between love to God and love to people? K. Barth (1988:402ff.) discusses extensively the relationship between the commands of love to God and to the neighbor. He explores three possible explanations.

(a) Love to God and love to people are two distinct, absolute and independent commandments. Barth rejects this conception, as he thinks that though the commandments are different, love to the neighbor is not, like the demand of love to God, an absolute commandment; for it is not exegetically legitimate to compare the brief saying on love to the neighbor with that on love to God “simply by transferring all the definitions of the one to the other” (:402). He adds: “On this explanation, it is impossible to see any way of avoiding the conclusion that the text speaks of the love of two Gods.” However we will see ahead some senses in which the two commandments can be viewed as absolute without implying that we have two possible directions of commitment. Love to the neighbor is an absolute demand, like love to God, because the former is an aspect of the latter.

(b) Love to God and love to people coincide completely, so that the former is possible only through the latter. Barth pointed out correctly the essential problem of this conception: “There is no praise of the God who has first loved us, breaking forth in love to the neighbour. Instead, there is praise of the sanctity and dignity and glory of man, with a somewhat equivocal love for the God created according to the likeness of this man” (:403). Ritschl (1903:4, translation mine from German) proposed: “Love to God has no playroom to act outside of love to brethren (1Jo 4:19-21; 5:1-3).” Barth denied that idea because it considers love to the neighbor the only possible form of loving God, as if love to the neighbor absorbed love to God, making it invisible (:434). He contends that there are also, among others, the practice of meditation, prayer and Sunday worship. Therefore, “the two relationships in which the children of God exist, the one to the invisible God and the other to the visible brother, come together in certain concrete activities, which do not coincide completely and of which we must not deny the one in favour of the other.” Barth wrote too:

To dissolve love to God into love to the neighbour, or love to the neighbour into love to God, would be to deviate from the divine revelation, and to lose again the unity in which love to God and love to the neighbor are commanded. If we try to love God as the neighbour, it will not be the God whom we are commanded to love.

And if we try to love the neighbour as God, it will not be the neighbour whom we are commanded to love (:410).

Lohse (1991:54) also alleged that the command to love God is not absorbed into that to love the neighbor, “nor does the care expended on others simultaneously fulfill the obligation to grant God due love, as if it were the case that the unknowable God could only be loved as met in the human family.” But simultaneity does not necessarily mean that the two commandments are one and the same, nor that love to God is made less important by being exerted, to some extent at least, through love to people. It signifies rather that the second commandment is a dimension of love to God, since love to God’s creation for being *His* creation is in a certain sense love to God Himself. Simultaneity is only legitimately possible, therefore, if we serve humans without losing sight of God; if we do not lose sight that God is God and humans are humans. As Furnish (n.d.:81) commented, “in Matthew service of the neighbor is not just analogous to the service of God, but it is in itself God’s service.” But Lohse (1991:54, emphasis added) himself admits the simultaneity of the commands of love by acknowledging that

this insight can only be attained where the commanding majesty of God is humbly acknowledged and *God is given praise by loving deeds*. But where the first commandment is understood in its comprehensiveness that embraces the whole Decalogue, there it is clear at the same time that love directed to God cannot ignore the neighbor. *For it is God who is honored when the neighbor is served in love* (Gal. 5:13).

Dealing with the same issue, Schrage (1987:82, quoting Braun) asks: “But is it legitimate to go a step further and say that the right way to serve God is to serve others, that what the Samaritan does is ‘an act of love toward God,’ identifying a ‘trend’ that would identify the two parts of the twofold law?” If we see love to God as fully identical with love to neighbor, Schrage is right in alleging “an unavoidable danger in this case that ‘God’ will become nothing more than a codeword for ‘neighbor’ or an ideological superstructure that can simply be dispensed with.” He goes on: “It is extremely unlikely, however, that Jesus thought God himself could be replaced as the subject or object of our love, either by the love manifested through or the love demanded by our neighbor.” Really, love to God is false if there is no love to the neighbor. But this is quite different from saying that the latter is the entire content of the former. Barth well observes: “We cannot believe in our neighbour, nor are we required to do so in this second commandment” (:413). In the same vein, Schrage (1987:84) wrote decisively: “We pray to God, not to our neighbor. We hope for the kingdom of God, not a human kingdom.”

(c) Love to God is the only absolute demand, while love to the neighbor “approximates to it as the first and most important of the particular, relative and subordinate commands . . .” (:402; cf. :406) Albeit this approach seems reasonable, Barth finds it problematic too. In his opinion, it seemingly suggests that love to the neighbor is a commandment of lesser importance which merely accompanies (or not) love to God. He asks the “radical question,” whether it is possible that a commandment of God can be “subordinate, derived and relative” (:407). He insists: “Is not the commandment of God always and whatever it says an absolute commandment?” And he still asks whether conceiving of love to the neighbor as a “secondary” commandment does not inevitably give rise to the idea that in it “we do not have to do with the commandment and judgment and grace of God in the same sense, that we are not bound to obey with all our heart, and all our soul . . .” The problem is now that “when it is a question of the neighbour we are, as it were, at a lower stage of the divine commanding, on a field of secondary decisions, which merely follow or accompany love to God” (:406). In such a case, Barth says that “we might even ask whether the first solution with its two absolute commandments is not preferable to this third with its contrasted absolute and relative commandments; or whether after all we will not have to come back to the doctrine of the identity of the two commandments.”

What is, then, in Barth’s opinion, the relation between the two commandments? He says that there are not two absolute commandments, but “two commandments of the one absolute Lord, so that they both have absolute significance for the same man as God has determined and without competing the one with the other” (:409). Well, this does not seem to be different from saying that both commandments are absolute. But we can in fact assume that both commandments are absolute without implying that humans are placed on an equal with God. For humans are the object of the absolute commandment of love to them, but *not its origin*. We would have a real problem if love to God were demanded by God, whereas love to humans were demanded by *humans* themselves, not because they alleged in faith to be God’s beloved, but apart of and even in opposition to God’s dispositions, standing rather on supposed human merits and rights. In such a case we would have to reject vehemently the absoluteness of the second commandment. However it would not be a “second” commandment any longer, but an arrogant first and only human commandment.

The apostle Paul wrote about the good behavior expected from wives, husbands, children, parents and servants, calling everybody to do everything “from the soul” (ἡ ψυχῇ), as to the Lord, not to men (Col 3:18-23; cf. Eph 6:7). In such a way, the Lord will reward them all, because they are serving Him (v. 24). The commandment of love to the neighbor is, like the

one of love to God, an absolute commandment, because the Lord is its source and because it is obeyed *in the light of the first*, that is, what a believer does in obedience to it is done *as to the Lord*, as required by the first commandment. This is possible because the Lord regards service to people as service to Himself. Love to God's creatures is a manifestation of love to their Creator. The rejection that love to God and love to people are identical cannot mean that we cannot serve God, as taught by Jesus Himself, by serving people. Would Jesus be accused of *humanism*? Braun (n.d.:132) makes a decisive comment in this respect, that

one merely needs to replace the word 'humanism' with the New Testament phrase 'love for one's neighbor.' Then it would indeed be worth making an experiment to see whether the 'only' before the phrase 'love for one's neighbor' would come with some difficulty from the lips of the person who offers this objection insofar as he allows himself to be confronted by the Jesus tradition and – here one may confidently widen the field – the Pauline and, to a lesser extent, the Johannine texts in the New Testament.

Barth's last word about how the two commands of love relate to each other is convincing: the first commandment "is in fact the basic and comprehensive commandment, the greater circle which includes in itself the lesser commandment of love to the neighbour" (:410); the commandment to love the neighbor "is enclosed by that of love to God. It is contained in it. To that extent it is inferior to it. But for that very reason it shares its absoluteness. In and with it, it has all the seriousness and emphasis of the commandment of God, in face of which there is no room for arbitrariness, but only for unceasing responsibility" (411).

We actually hear here and there the unnecessary question: "What is the main function of the church: worship or mission?" Really there has been a long history of undue dialectical understanding of the relation between the glory of God and human well-being or salvation. König (1982:115) affirms that there is "no essential rivalry between God and man demanding that a careful distribution of time be made between God and man, lest one of the two receive an undue proportion." He relevantly asks elsewhere about that erroneous and unnecessary antithesis: "Is it not in fact through man's salvation that God is glorified?" (n.d.:149) The glory of God has sometimes been so much stressed, Bosch says (1979:14), that "one came to think that God can only be glorified at the expense of man." He refers to a certain blend of Pietism "which could close its eyes to the misery of people as long as God would be glorified – as though it were possible to glorify God without having compassion on people!" König (1982:116) also argues cogently that the one-sidedness of love to people in the discourse of Jesus, Paul and James "is actually based on the presupposition, regarded as self-evident, that there is an essential connection between God and man; that man is God's man, and that love for man in obedience to the command of God is a service in love to God." God's redeeming

love for us leads us to love our neighbors, Moffatt (1930:312; cf :317) suggests, “either as devotion to the ends of God in human personality, or, if we choose to put it so, as the effort to love others for the sake of God. This implies the resolve to see them as God sees them.” We should see people “in the light of God’s purpose, and to act towards them accordingly . . .” What God wishes, which is then service to or worship of Him, is our serving others. Bultmann (1965:18) affirms: “There is no obedience to God which does not have to prove itself in the concrete situation of meeting one’s neighbor, as Luke (10:29-37) . . . makes clear by combining the illustrative narrative of the Good Samaritan with Jesus’ discussion of the greatest commandment.” Bornkamm (1973:111) in turn asserts in a similar vein: “Surrender to God now no longer means a retreat of the soul into a paradise of spirituality and the dissolution of selfhood in adoration and meditation, but a waiting and preparedness for the call of God, who calls to us in the person of our neighbour. In this sense the love of our neighbour is the test of our love to God.”

In the New Testament, the human being’s relationship to God, Lohmeyer (1962:47) says, “is determined not by what he gives to God at a holy place but by whether or not he loves God in his neighbour.” And Hoon (n.d.:205) well notes: “As the liturgy of our Lord’s life was the service of God through serving man, so worship ‘glorifies’ God insofar as it ‘benefits’ – that is, ‘does good’ to – man.” God wants mercy to those in need, not cults from unmerciful believers (cf. Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8; Mt 9:12; 12:7; also Pr 21:3). K. Barth (1988:434) warns:

If we really can find refuge in a safe sphere of religiosity, devotional edification and theology, quite apart from the plight and task created by our neighbour, then this is only a sign that we cannot do anything serious or meaningful in this sphere, that it has already become for us a heathen temple which can only be destroyed. We come under the saying in Hos. 6⁶: “I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” as expounded in Mt. 9¹³, 12⁷. Not that we are called away from true sacrifice, from a genuine religiosity, devotional edification and theology – as is often rashly concluded – but we are called back from that heathen temple to a real obedience to the twofold commandment in its unity and therefore to true sacrifice. There may, of course, be an equally arbitrary and impossible flight from love to God to a wrongly understood love to the neighbour.

There is no spirituality which is not spirituality of love. In this respect, Jenkins (1962:82) notes that Christ in the Spirit does not meet the believers less readily or fully when they have to take a decision which meaningfully determines their own and their neighbors’ conduct than he does in the domestic life of the church. We are not less consecrated to God when we are involved in the rescue of people by means of the proclamation of the gospel than when we worship God in our meetings. Moffatt (1930:271) insistently attacked, but without switching completely to the opposite extreme as Kant did, the common tendency to lay one-sided emphasis on the vertical dimension of the Christian faith: “Some pious people would cry, *I*

love God, without any moral content to their emotion; they were sentimental in the sense that they enjoyed the experience without feeling that any obligation rose out of it.” He also makes a relevant comment, that, in accordance with the teaching of the apostle John, brotherly love expresses our loving union with God, “so that mystical piety is freed from the unwholesome tendency, which appeared within some circles of mediaeval mysticism, to regard the supreme object of the soul as a union with God at the expense of human relationships, as though the fewer ties one had with God’s creatures the nearer one might come to God Himself” (:298). Finally, he notes that the apostle struggles in his epistle with

some who were, however, prone to mistake the bearings of their religious faith by depreciating brotherly love in favour of a supposed love-devotion to the Lord which enjoyed itself in rapt experiences or in speculative mysticism. In correction of this error, John holds that the reality of God, as Christ reveals Him, is only accessible to a real life, i.e., to a life which follows the love-way taken by Christ himself on earth (:299).

Spiritual activities are not only those we perform before God apart from the world. The communication of the gospel is likewise a spiritual act: the work of the Holy Spirit is especially related to the gospel proclamation (cf., e.g., Mk 13:11; Acts 1:8; 4; 13:2; 16:6f.). We need to experience a missionary spirituality, a “spirituality of the road” (Bosch 1979). The spirituality of prayer and meditation is not an alternative to involvement in the world, or *vice-versa*. One is not better or higher than the other. One cannot stand without the other.

4.1.4.1. The Issue of Direct and Indirect Service to God

The idea that our service to people is *indirect* worship of God must be called into question. Kant (1960:157) perceptively spoke of a common human principle that something which is done solely to please God, apart from people, shows more precisely our devotion to Him. The natural consequence of this strange dialectical misconception is that the less useful a religious exercise is, that is, the less socially relevant it is, the more it succeeds in attesting our concentration on the person of God or our “spirituality.” The purest religion is thus seen to be exclusively vertical. Nonetheless when we are serving people in obedience to God’s command we are serving God *directly*. We are in fact struggling to demonstrate that service to people in obedience to God is *direct* service to Him. Both spiritual devotion and service to the world are directly well-pleasing to God. If it is not right to sustain that serving the world in obedience to God and according to His dispositions is not direct reverence to Him, it is likewise inappropriate, on the other side, to affirm that service to people is the more direct way to approach God, as if we could not sing songs to Him and address our prayers to Him in

private moments. By sustaining that a good moral life is all that God requires of men to be well-pleasing to Him, Kant plainly depreciated worship *stricto sensu*. To him, what Christians do when they gather together serves only to reinforce their moral conscience – it is not direct praise of God. We have to avoid both extremities: neither supporting the idea that only songs and prayers are directly addressed to God, nor disregarding in a Kantian way the praise of God by both the individual believer and the church. If, on the one hand, prayers and hymns are addressed to God and simultaneously build up the church, on the other hand, service to people is likewise addressed to Him as obedience. But we are actually tempted to say that in our assemblies we worship God directly, whereas when we serve people, God is served indirectly – because people stand, as it were, between God and us or because when we are dealing with people we are distracted in relation to God. Sartorius (1884:40, 287ff.), for instance, differentiated between direct or pure worship, that is, corporate worship, and indirect worship, in the secular activities. First of all, labor is not intrinsically worship. What constitutes our secular work a sacred thing and a service to God is the sense of mission which inspires it and the witness that it transpires. Second, witness is obedience to God and, as such, is not less important than prayer or singing hymns to Him. A son does not please his father if he declares love to him but does not care for his brother. Does a father not feel *directly* pleased by a son who takes care of his brother?

We think Jenkins (1962:94) is right in his suggestion that the task of ministers “is not to make totalitarian claims for the service of the sanctuary, but to ensure that the Church maintains her vital rhythm of gathering and scattering, of withdrawal and engagement.” Gerhardtsson (1974:28) is also correct in arguing that, in the gospel of Matthew, if giving to needy people is to be acts of worship, “sacrifices,” they should mean “losses” from a human point of view, that is, “pure *gifts* which do not bring in returns from men. It means simply this, that they are to be pure, whole, and unlimited *sacrifices* to God.” Then he asks: “Where are these sacrifices to be made – the giving, the ‘losses’ – if not among men?” (:29) Indeed how can we give something to God if not by giving it to people? So Gerhardtsson says: “*Latreia* [service to God] tends to coincide with *diakonia* [service to humans].” And: “*Diakonia* is counted as *latreia*” (:32).

4.1.4.2. The Relation between Evangelization and Social Aid/Political Engagement

It has been widely debated whether the mission of the church is only to proclaim the gospel or whether it includes also humanitarian and political involvement. Social work is sometimes

and in some circles viewed as the true work of the church. K. Barth (1988:427) so describes the thought that we worship God by being involved in actions for a better world:

God does not will the many griefs and sufferings and burdens under which we men have to sigh. He wills their removal. He wills a better world. Therefore we, too, should will this better world, and a true worship of God consists in our co-operation in the removal of these sufferings. Therefore our neighbour in his distress is a reminder to us and the occasion and object of our proper worship of God.

Barth contends, however, that it is only true that God does not will the evil under which we suffer to the extent that “He does not will its cause, the alienation of man from Himself” (:428). This means that help is not true if people are not given also the opportunity to eliminate the *ultimate* cause of their distresses. Therefore, our central mission is to tell people: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Ac 3:19). We must point to sin as the cause of the human tragedy and present Jesus as the only way out of it. Again, a centre presupposes a context, so that the context of our proclamation is our acts of mercy. Barth’s wise conclusion is that “we should love our neighbour by proclaiming to him – not only in word, of course, but in deed – the true amelioration and therefore Jesus Christ” (:428). True amelioration comes through Jesus and is announced by word and *deed*. Again, our acts towards meeting people’s wants are, as illuminated by the verbal presentation of the gospel, part of the message, the visible part of it.

Indeed Jesus’ announced and *demonstrated* the arrival of the kingdom. Shortly said, the verbal proclamation of the gospel is hypocrisy if it is not accompanied with the help one needs, if that be the case. The apostle James proposes a hypothetical case to illustrate it: “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (2:15f.) Though he is speaking of a failing love within the church, his instruction is not less valid regarding a person whom we are evangelizing and is facing a problem of some order other than spiritual. Are there any evangelical blessings or “good news” which, as words, without any accompanying aid one may be in need of, have any credibility? The apostle James asks, then, the “unanswerable question” (Adamson 1976:124): “What good is it?” Thus we see that our mission includes also humanitarian aid, which must be kept in a proper relation to the communication of the gospel. And that relation is not, as has been maintained in some circles, that social aid is a means or pretext for “the true work,” that of evangelizing. The relation is more intimate. The word is like a soul that needs a body of works to be concrete and credible, while works, in turn, need, so to speak, a soul of words to show its evangelical, that is, christological and eschatological, character. “It is the ‘Word made flesh’ that is the gospel. The deed without the word is dumb; the word without the deed

is empty. Words interpret deeds and deeds validate words, which does not mean that every deed must have a word attached to it, not every word a deed” (Bosch 1991:420). The soul of our mission is the communication of the greatest news of salvation through Jesus. The body of our mission is any necessary action, which must be controlled by that soul. We can accordingly speak of “evangelical service” as an inclusive category for any good done in the awareness of the gospel, worthy of it, inspired and defined by it, and that affirms its values and transmits it somehow.² Therefore, social aid is not merely a *pretext* for sharing faith, but a *context* to it. Furthermore, insofar as aid is intimately related to the verbal proclamation of the eschatological full happiness, it is made a *co-text* to it. But at this point no distinction remains: the act of love is no longer co-text, but rather the *text itself*, the *practical* proclamation of the gospel of love.³ While such a close relation is maintained, humanitarian and political acts, for being informed by the proclamation of the eschatological completion of victory over evil, are made signals to that coming event in the midst of chaos. This is worship for announcing and celebrating the kingdom of God.

4.1.5. The Proclamation of the Gospel as (Missionary) Doxology and Priesthood

4.1.5.1. The “proclaiming God’s praise/glory among the nations” motif

In the Psalms, a call or an expression of willingness to praise the Lord is often followed by a call or an expression of willingness to missionary proclamation. The point is that in these verses praise and proclamation are not two, but one and the same act, presented in two distinct ways. This literary device, common to Hebrew poetry, is called *parallelism (parallelismus membrorum)*, typical of Hebrew poetry. In some cases, praise and proclamation actually seem to be two different things. See 9:1, 11; 92:1f.; 96:2; 105:1f. and 145:1ff.. But the evidence for believing that praise and proclamation are identical is the “proclaiming God’s praise/glory” formula, especially when “among the nations” is added. God’s faithful servant is or should be willing to declare His praise (9:14; 51:15; 106:2); to proclaim aloud His praise (26:7); to declare His glory among the nations (96:3); to praise Him among the nations (18:49; 57:9 and 108:3; cf. 2Sa 22:50). In the prophet Isaiah too there is a close link between praise of God and proclamation to the nations. The content of the proclamation among the nations is God’s

² See Introduction, p. 14, note 15.

³ Oldham (1937:170) wrote: “The greatest service that the Church can render to men is to bring them to Christ, in whom their deepest needs are met. But it renders this service not merely by preaching, but by acts which express and confirm the spoken message. In deeds of mercy and kindness, as well as in word, the Church proclaims to men the message of God’s redeeming love.”

doings and that “his name is exalted” (12:4). God formed His people “to proclaim his praise” (43:21; cf. 60:6), to do it “in the islands” (42:12). To “proclaim” the glory of God is to glorify Him before people, that people may want to glorify Him too. And we get from the “proclaiming God’s glory among the nations” motif that the worship of God cannot be confined to the worship of the church in her meetings. In the Old Testament, worship was outward *in principle* only. But in the new dispensation it must be outward *in practice*. The acclamation of God in the Old Testament temple worship foreshadowed the worship of the church, which, in the totality of her members, is the temple of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, is able to glorify God everywhere and at all times. Old (1992:47f.) well observed: “With Jesus the acclamations of the Temple became the proclamation of the gospel. . . . His preaching fulfilled the acclamation of the Temple, ‘The LORD reigns.’ The preaching of Jesus and apostles was basically doxological, as it proclaimed the reign of God and claimed the faithfulness of all peoples to that reign . . .” Old uses the expression “kerygmatic doxology” (:41ff.), which designates precisely the doxological nature of the proclamation of the gospel. Worship is expressing recognizance of God’s divine attributes. Evangelization is also expressing recognizance of His attributes, especially as they manifested in His Son for human salvation. “Worship and mission are different ways of making the same proclamation, the one in and to the Church, the other in and to the world, both indispensable” (Webster 1962a:110). Mission is worship because there is no other content to it than praising God, who – and for the reason that – called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1Pe 2:9) – and with the purpose that others may hear that call too. The spirit of our service to people for their salvation is the praise we owe to God. K. Barth (1988:401) expressed it thus: “The ‘second’ commandment has no other meaning and content apart from and in addition to: ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy name.’” Our mission is to worship God before people for their salvation, so that mission is worship. Barth continues:

And *vice-versa*, it is by the ‘second’ commandment that we experience point by point and exhaustively what is the praise of God . . . Therefore we have to say just as strictly that no praise of God is serious, or can be taken seriously, if it is apart from or in addition to the commandment: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ Whatever else we may understand by the praise of God, we shall always have to understand it as obedience to this commandment” (:401f.).

Elsewhere Barth defines praise in terms of witness: “I praise God, i.e., bear witness to my neighbour of the love with which God in Jesus Christ has loved me and him” (:440).⁴ And

⁴ Old (1992:70) also sees preaching God’s word as worship: “The preaching of the Word glorifies God because it is the outpouring of the truth that God has poured into the hearts of Christian preachers. Preaching glorifies God because it is the preaching of his Word. God delights in the Word, and God is therefore worshiped in its being preached and its being heard.”

again he talks about the exaltation of God as the condition *sine qua non* for an effective care for our neighbor: “I do not withhold from him [my neighbor] the praise which I owe to God. In that way I fulfil my responsibility to my neighbour” (:441). We can only help people meaningfully if we let them know how God is great and loves us, that is, if we praise God before them. In corporate worship Christians minister to each other by singing songs to God (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19-21). This accords with, for instance, Psalm 22:22: “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.” In evangelization they minister to unbelievers by doing the same. To evangelize is to proclaim that God reigns in Jesus Christ, in order that listeners may want to put themselves also under His saving lordship. An emblematic example is that of Paul and Silas. Imprisoned and with their feet fastened in the stocks, they prayed and sang hymns to God while the other prisoners listened to them (Ac 16:24f.).

Spindler (1967:105, translation mine from French) said: “Mission is doxology.”⁵ He claimed that the glory of God is not only the eschatological finality, but also the content of mission (:106; cf. also :108). He adds that the manifestation of God’s glory “is not only a liturgical notion; it is a notion directly missionary” (:108, translation mine from French). Mission is worship simply because its content is worship – *worship-in-witness*, but worship anyway. We can therefore speak of evangelization as “missionary doxology,” “missionary worship,” “etc. Dawn (1999:323) affirms: “We cannot keep our generous God as our Infinite Center without wanting out neighbors to be immersed in his opulent splendor, too.” She refers to evangelism as “an outgrowth of worship” (:324).

In spite of this all, the impression we have is that most Christians do not think of mission in a doxological way. The general idea seems to be like this: “Worship is worship, mission is mission. And worship is the most important thing.” What is worse, the common tendency is that religion is reduced to corporate worship and mission is left aside or receives little and irregular attention. Thanks to God, however, prophetic voices have in the last decades, as we have shown, called attention to this historical vice and pointed out the biblical evidences of ethical/missionary worship. Blauw (1964:132), in commenting 1 Peter 2:9f., finds it incomprehensible that “the proclamation of the wonderful deeds of God has been confined merely to a hymn of praise behind thick church walls.” He goes on: “No doubt the ‘churchly’ hymn of praise is also asked and intended. . . . But the true praise is not only an internal Christian affair; it is witness in and for the world.” Therefore, “we must not remain too long

⁵ Spindler cites Newbigin: “Our mission is not a duty but a doxology” (:105, translation mine from French).

with the raising of songs of praise in the narrower sense. The real praise is the declaration of the wonderful deeds of God in the world” (:132f.).

4.1.5.2. The priestly/sacrificial motif

In the Old Testament the priests offered sacrifice of animals to God that Israel’s people’s sins could be forgiven. All Christians, the priests of the New Testament, offer to the nations the sacrifice of the gospel, that is, the sacrifice which the gospel refers to, namely, the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus (Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10), through whose blood people have their sins forgiven (Eph 1:7). Sins were forgiven through the sacrificial cult in the temple. Now Jesus forgives them anywhere and in any circumstances in which people hear of, and believe in, His death for their sins. It is no longer a matter of place, but of mode, as Jesus revealed to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:21-24).

Jesus said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If one eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). Also: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). The promise of the resurrection for eternal life is for those who have accepted by faith His death for their sins or, figuratively speaking, have eaten His flesh and drunk his blood. “To eat His flesh and drink his blood” to have eternity is to believe, which is the condition for it, as clearly stated in verse 47: “He who believes has everlasting life.” Christians must call everybody in the world to “eat” the Lord’s flesh and “drink” His blood, that is, to offer by faith His sacrifice to God for expiation of their sins, that they may be reconciled with Him and attain eternity.

Whenever and in whatever place the good news of Jesus’ sacrifice is communicated, worship takes place, for there people may be pardoned of their sins by “subscribing” to that sacrifice. “Whenever,” because Jesus is greater than the Sabbath, and “in whatever place,” because he is greater than the temple.⁶ The road is the sacred place of our liturgy. And our liturgy, our mission, is to offer Jesus’ sacrifice to people, that they may offer it to God by faith for forgiveness and reconciliation. It is for this priestly logic that evangelization attains the status of worship of God. Then the apostle Paul could talk of himself as a minister (*leitourgōn*) of Christ Jesus to the nations, “sacrificing the gospel,” that is, offering the

⁶ Epiphanius (quoted in Hessey 1880:71) calls the Old Testament Sabbath *ἡ μικρὴν σάββατον*, “the little Sabbath,” and Jesus *ἡ μεγάλη σάββατον*, “the Great Sabbath.” Likewise, Ambrose (quoted in Hessey 1880:71), in his oration *De Obitu Theodosii*, refers to Christ as “the rest of the just,” “the great Sabbath” (*Magnum Sabbatum*).

gospel as a sacrifice, for it is a sacrifice that the gospel represents and presents. The proclamation of Jesus' saving sacrifice shares the quality of worship of the sacrifice itself.

Chapter 5

The Christian Meaning of *Sabbath* and the Theological Status of Sunday

Worship is generally understood only as praise in the meetings of the church. The two basic causes of this misconception are the adoption of the Old Testament ideas of holy place and holy time: temple as sacred place – “God’s house” – and Sunday as “Christian Sabbath.” Peterson (1993b:82) well notes: “This revolutionary use of the terminology of worship with reference to a Christ-centred, gospel-serving, life-orientation is obscured by the common practice in the English-speaking world [indeed practically in the whole world, we can say instead] of restricting any talk of worship to what is done ‘in church’.” Interest in evangelization decreased, because efforts have been channeled to please God “directly in worship.” Jenkins (1962:77) contended that “if the Lord’s Day is put on an entirely different plane from the other days of the week, the attention of the Christian community is focused upon the wrong objects and the Lord’s Day is turned from a source of blessing into an obstacle to faith in the same way as the Sabbath became in the time of our Lord.” And Blomberg (1991:128) perceptively reminds us that “the remarkable growth of the early church, like the astonishing spread of Christianity in China today, frequently occurred when most Christians had no legally authorized day of rest.” Christians have not been aware for many centuries that their witness of Christ in the world is part of their worship of God. And they generally think that Christian practice was always as it is nowadays. Truth to tell, this happens even to scholars investigating the early Christian conception of worship.¹

¹ Wainwright (1992:62) observes about the early Christian worship:

The evidence is either fragmentary or indirect and has to be interpreted in the light of later practice.

The problem here is to find the *juste milieu*: on the one hand, one must beware of importing too easily into the apostolic age elements whose certain attestation dates only from the second or third centuries; on the other hand, one must give due weight to the possibility that some theological statements in the

NT reflect liturgical practices that were already current in the very early days.

Cullmann (1949:7) observed, in his study of the earliest Christian confessions, that the “retrospective” procedure, that is, proceeding from later developments to the beginnings, “which has yielded excellent results in the examination of the ancient liturgies, also conceals certain dangers if it is applied in too one-sided a fashion.” He explains the problem with that approach: “One runs the danger here of wanting to find right at the beginning the germs of facts which only achieved significance later.” Cullmann proposed a combination of both methods, namely, examining the origins without any reference to later developments and, on the contrary, to allow later developments to illuminate the earlier practices (:7f.). In his work on early worship (1953:7), he recognizes that the sources do not yield a perfectly clear picture, but they disclose “a fairly clear tendency.” Anyway, we should keep the question put by Bradshaw (1992:35) in mind: “If there is no unambiguous witness in the New Testament documents themselves to a particular liturgical practice but it can only be detected by interpreting obscure allusions there in the light of evidence from several centuries later (and often from a quite different geographical region), are we justified in making such a connection?” He recognizes that a line of historical continuity may in some cases run from the New Testament times to the practice of later ages. But he argues that

Is the idea of Sabbath (שַׁבָּת in Hebrew, σάββατον in Greek), after the earthly ministry of Jesus, still to be seen as a concept of time, surviving in Sunday as a Christian Sabbath, instead of being replaced by the spiritual rest which it represented, with the accompanying ethical implications? It is very difficult to convince Christians that things were not always as they know them now and tacitly believe to be “the purest truth.” Historical developments are simply bypassed, so that it is plainly assumed that the present practices reflect faithfully those of the early churches. This is especially true of Sunday. Early Christians did not know it as we do today. Rordorf (1968:157) noted: “Nowadays we have a deep-rooted feeling that both worship and also rest from work are essential components of a proper Sunday. These two components have, however, acquired the appearance of having an inner connection only because they have been juxtaposed by one another for so long.” He also contended, about the title ‘Lord’s Day,’ that “we often misunderstand it in an Old Testament sense as the day (of rest) sacred to the Lord” (:275, note 1). It is therefore necessary to investigate the real theological status of Sunday in the early churches and how it became a “Christian Sabbath.”

5.1. SUNDAY IN APOSTOLICAL TIMES

Jesus’ resurrection, which was for the believers’ justification (Ro 4:25; 1Co 15:17) and opened up the way for their resurrection when he comes back (1Co 15:22f.), took place on the first day of the week (Mt 28:1-6; Mk 16:1-6; Lk 24:1-6; Jn 20:1-9). On that same day he appeared to His disciples (Lk 24:13, 28-36; Jn 20:19) and at least once more he reappeared to them on a Sunday (Jn 20:26).² Then the Lord ascended to heaven and the emerging churches adopted Sunday, so eschatologically meaningful a day, as the main day for their meetings (1Co 16:2; Ac 20:7), with the Supper playing a central role.^{3, 4} Originally Christian meetings

“there are enough instances where recent scholarship is able to demonstrate the improbability of such a trajectory (and to propose instead a much more likely genesis for a particular liturgical custom in the circumstances of a later period) as to make all similar speculation highly risky.” He sustains, then, that “the New Testament generally cannot provide the firm foundation from which to project later liturgical developments that it has frequently been thought to give” (:55). Bradshaw proposed ten principles for interpreting early Christian liturgical evidence (:56-79).

However it is not only the retrospective approach that may be tendentious and misleading in depicting the early Christian worship: we should be cautious not to overemphasize *continuity*, attempting to deduct every aspect of it from its Jewish antecedents. It happened in some cases that Christian worship, eventually free from Jewish cultic formalities, returned to them – F. Hahn (n.d.:50f.) mentions fasting and Sabbath observance.

² There is no record that the Lord appeared to his disciples on another day in between the Sunday of his resurrection and the next one.

³ Christians converted from Judaism did not always leave the Jewish practices immediately, especially prayer at the temple, Sabbath observance and circumcision. See H. Weiss (1990) for indications in the Synoptic Gospels of a “double engagement,” which lasted until a mature Christian understanding could be reached. This is not,

were held in the evening (cf. Rordorf 1968:196-205, 232f., 238-253) after the day's regular work – yes, Sunday was a working day for all people in the whole Roman Empire (cf. Moule 1964:29; Rordorf 1968:154, 203).⁵ From the beginning of the second century on, supposedly because they were forbidden to assemble in the evening (cf. Rordorf 1968:251f.), they gathered together early in the morning, before daybreak, and only after that they went to their work (cf. Rordorf 1968:238, 253-265).⁶ Religiously, Sunday was for them solely a day of *worship*, “for the Christians were not aware of any command to rest on Sunday” (Rordorf 1968:154; cf. Turner n.d.:135; Lincoln n.d.:215f.).⁷ Rordorf (1968:157) affirms: “Until well into the second century we do not find the slightest indication in our sources that Christians marked Sunday by any kind of abstention from work” (cf. Solberg 1977:11f.). Bauckham

however, the reason why the Christians in general gathered together in the temple of Jerusalem, as seen in note 4, p. 42. We must distinguish between “double engagement” and conscious witness.

⁴ There are some indications that the Supper took place on Sundays and every Sunday in the early churches. According to the apostle John, Jesus appeared to his disciples on the Sunday on which he resurrected (20:19). Luke tells that on that day the risen Lord appeared first to and had a meal with two men in Emmaus village (24:30). And John says that the Lord appeared again to the disciples on the following Sunday (20:26). Now the apostle Peter reports that the disciples ate and drank with the Lord after he rose from the dead (Ac 10:41; cf. 1:3f.). These meal meetings can naturally be associated with Sunday appearances. And it was only to be expected that, in the mode of continuity, the Christian community celebrated the Supper on Sundays from then on: “On the first day of the week we came together to break bread” (Ac 20:7). Rordorf (1968:303) put it so: “The first repetition of the Last Supper took place on Easter evening, that is to say on a Sunday evening; the primitive community subsequently celebrated the Lord’s Supper regularly on Sunday evening.” First, this does not seem a reference to a gathering among others of the same kind in a week time. Second, this, on the other side, does not appear to allow for a meeting of the same time in a time longer than a week. Acts 20:7 refers to a weekly practice rather than to an eventual happening which took place on that Sunday. As Moule (1964:28) says, the gathering on the first day of the week to break bread is mentioned in this verse “as though it were a matter of course.” Then he states: “We must be content to say that it is likely enough to have been a weekly practice” (:29). After analyzing some passages, Cullmann (1953:29) concluded: “We have found a convincing argument for the view that as a rule there was no gathering of the community without the breaking of bread . . .” He adds: “The Lord’s Supper is thus the basis and goal of every gathering.” The Lord’s Supper, as Rordorf (:275; cf. also :303) phrased it, became “the centre of the early Christians’ act of worship on every Sunday.” He is strongly convinced that the Supper is essential to the dignity of Sunday: “in the ancient Church it was unthinkable for a Sunday to pass without the local church gathering for a celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Sunday was absolutely nothing without the Lord’s Supper; the Lord’s Supper formed the focal point of the worship around which all the other parts of the service found their place” (:305). Sunday and Supper became interdependent, representing the essence of the Christian message. The Supper represented Jesus’ vicarious death, while Sunday represented his resurrection. The Supper reminds us that he “was delivered over to death for our sins” and Sunday, that he “was raised to life for our justification” (Ro 4:25). According to Didache (14:1), the Supper was celebrated every Lord’s Day.

⁵ The meeting “to break bread” described in Ac 20:7ff. happened in the evening. The “Lord’s Supper” (1Co 11:20) most likely took place every Sunday (cf. note 4) and, as supper, obviously in the evening. And the Christians could hold only one meeting on Sundays, as “they had to work” (Rordorf 1968:203).

⁶ Rordorf (1968:255, note 2) remarked: “There is nothing in itself surprising in the early hour of this observance; the Jews also held their service of prayer before dawn.”

⁷ Jesus’ resurrection and appearance(s) on Sunday led the early churches to see it naturally as the main day of collective worship, but the idea of sabbatical rest was not attached to it. However, as time went by, Sunday began to be identified with the Sabbath and physical rest gradually came to be prescribed and, when possible, put into practice. Tertullian wrote, sometime around AD 200, that the Christians ought to refrain from all work on the day of the Lord’s Resurrection – *omni anxietatis habitu et officio cavere debemus* (*De Oratione*, XXIII). Robertson (quoted in Hessey 1880:47) considered this to be the first evidence of cessation of worldly affairs on the Lord’s Day.

(n.d.a:281) rightly says that “in Christian thought the idea of Sabbath rest had been so consistently reinterpreted that physical rest from work was precisely what it no longer meant.”

The fact that Paul rejected any theological distinction of days (Gal 4:9ff.; Ro 14:1, 5f.; Col 2:16f.), at the same time that he assimilated Sunday as the main day for church gatherings (Ac 20:7; 1Co 16:2), implies that it was not considered at all a “Christian Sabbath” – a day holier than the others, to be kept on the ground of the fourth commandment. Hessey (1880:36) made a fortunate comment about the relation of the Lord’s Day to the Sabbath: “In no one place in the New Testament is there the slightest hint that the Lord’s Day is a Sabbath, or that it is to be observed Sabbatically, or that its observance depends on the Fourth Commandment, or that the principle of the Sabbath is sufficiently carried out by one day in seven being consecrated to God.” His conclusion: “Whatever the Lord’s Day had, was its own, not borrowed from the Sabbath, which was regarded for religious purposes as existing no longer.” And Schmemann (1963:35) stated that the true meaning of the “fixed day”

was in the transformation of time, not of calendar. . . . The week was no longer a sequence of “profane” days, with rest on the “sacred” day at their end. It was now a movement from Mount Tabor into the world, from the world into the “day without evening” of the world to come. Every day, every hour acquired now an importance, a gravity it could not have had before: each day was now to be a *step* in this movement, a moment of decision and witness, a time of ultimate meaning. Sunday thus was not a “sacred” day – to be “observed” or “kept” apart from all other days, opposed to them.

The motive for the choice of Sunday was significant, namely, the resurrection and appearing of the Lord. We can even say that it was not properly a choice, but a matter of spiritual fact. But this does not entail that the day was made a “holy” day on which working is sin. Sunday was the regular day of worship in early Christianity, but it was not related to the Sabbath commandment. Though the apostle Paul adopted Sunday as the special day of corporate worship, he did not replace the law of Sabbath observance by the law of Sunday observance (cf. Cotton 1933:45). It was a chief point in his thought that the law was replaced by the freedom of grace, which did not bring with it its own laws, but only the “law” of love.

5.2. SUNDAY BECOMES A “CHRISTIAN SABBATH”

Sunday was to the early churches the special day of worship, not being however “a holy day separated for the Lord” in the formal way of the Old Testament and not having any idea

of physical rest attached to it for any theological reason.⁸ But this understanding changed gradually in the following centuries, receiving a dramatic impulse in AD 321, when emperor Constantine instituted Sunday observance for rest.⁹ It was a civil initiative that had a remarkable doctrinal and practical impact upon Christianity: in due course Sunday rest got explained by the Sabbath commandment, quite legalistically.¹⁰ It is now “a holy day separated for the Lord,” though, as Schmemann (1963:35) affirmed, “this was not at all the original meaning of the ‘fixed day.’”¹¹ Sunday was made the “Christian Sabbath,” a term which “early

⁸ Rordorf (1968:220f.) observes: “It certainly does not mean that Sunday as a day (i.e. as a period of twenty-four hours) belongs in some special way to the ‘Lord’ Christ and is for this reason hallowed.”

⁹ The decree (quoted in Hessey 1880:58) reads:

IMPERATOR CONSTANTINUS AUG. HELPIDIO.

Omnes iudices urbanæque plebes et cunctarum artium officia venerabili die Solis quiescant. Ruri tamen positi agrorum culturæ liberè licenterque inserviant, quoniam frequenter evenit ut non aptius alio die frumenta sulcis aut vineæ scrobibus mandentur, ne occasione momenti pereat commoditas cœlesti provisione concessa. Dat. Non. Mart. Crispo II. et Constantino II. Coss.

Translation (Hessey 1880:58):

THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE TO HELPIDIUS.

On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in the work of cultivation may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost. Given, the seventh day of March. Crispus and Constantine being Consuls each of them for the second time.

This was one of the emperor’s benefits to the Christians, though his inner motives and convictions may be questionable. It has been alleged, for instance, that Constantine promulgated also, in the same AD 321, an edict of clear heathen character, that the auspices should be consulted regularly.

Rordorf (1968:162f.) argues that the new Sunday law had nothing to do with the Old Testament, since the former permitted agricultural work on Sabbath, what was especially forbidden by the latter. Bauckham (n.d.:281), in turn, states that “while it is probable that at least some Christians desired the status of an official holiday for Sunday, there was scant theological justification for this and even long after Sunday rest had become a fact in the Roman Empire it had little theological backing.” Also: “It is also possible to detect a desire for Sunday rest before Constantine on purely pragmatic grounds. It cannot have been easy for many Christians to find adequate time for worship on a day which for their pagan neighbors was an ordinary workday” (:285). Accordingly, Bradshaw (1992:65) wrote: “The so-called Constantinian revolution served as much to intensify existing trends as it did to initiate new ones.”

¹⁰ Hessey (1880:14f.) notes that “in the two centuries after the death of St. John the Lord’s Day was never confounded with the Sabbath, but carefully distinguished from it, as an institution under the law of liberty . . . it was exempt from the severity of the provisions which had been the characteristic of the Sabbath in theory, or in practice, or in both.” He goes on to say that “after the first three centuries, a new era in the history of the Lord’s Day commenced; tendencies towards Sabbatarianism, or confusion of the Christian with the Jewish institution, beginning to manifest themselves” (:15). Bauckham (n.d.a:287) refers to a mid-fourth century sermon which may contain the first reference to the Sabbath commandment applied to the Lord’s Day. To Solberg (1977:13), the Lord’s Day had not yet been made dependent upon the fourth commandment at the end of the fifth century. The Second Council of Macon, AD 585, is an example of what was made of Sunday, by enjoining that “no one should allow himself on the Lord’s Day, under plea of necessity, to put a yoke on the necks of his cattle; but all be occupied with mind and body in the hymns and the praise of God. For this is the day of perpetual rest; this is shadowed out to us by the seventh day in the law and the prophets” (quoted in Hessey 1880:87).

¹¹ We hold, as Hessey (1880:50) wrote, though he is just describing a view that he rejects, that “there is a wide difference between ‘keeping a day holy,’ and simply *commemorating* an event upon it, yet that the latter easily degenerates into the former idea; and that therefore, though we admit that the primitive Christians commemorated the Resurrection of Christ on a given day, and even called it the Lord’s Day, that day was not necessarily kept holy by them.” Hessey contends that the celebration of Christ’s resurrection is not “‘simply

Christians would have found self-contradictory” (Solberg 1977:14), with the legalistic features of the Jewish Sabbath plainly transferred to it.¹² The old Sabbath and Sunday are thus compared to each other in an isomorphic way or, as Parker (1988:17) says, it is given “an analogical explanation, with theologians applying the sabbath laws of the Old Testament to the Christian Sunday.”¹³

It is worth noting that other features were eventually introduced into the Christian churches together with the observance of a sacred day: the temple as a sacred place, the priesthood of special and powerful men, solemnity and ritual, and the unique sense of presence of the Holy in the “cult.”¹⁴ Solberg (1977:15) affirms, accordingly: “The Christian Sabbath was one of many non-scriptural elements present in late medieval religion, and it thoroughly obscured the original meaning of the Lord’s day.” Peterson (1993b:71f.) analyses well the general change:

In the argument of Hebrews, sanctuary, sacrifice, altar and priesthood all find their fulfilment in the saving work of Jesus Christ, not in some ongoing activity in the Christian congregation. When Christians throughout the ages have failed to grasp this teaching and its implications, clergy, buildings and objects within those buildings have been invested with a special sanctity. This has obscured the true focus of the New Testament, leading to a preoccupation with ritual and ceremony, wrong views about Christian ministry and a simplistic application of Old Testament texts to what goes on in church.”

Is there any application of Sabbath rules to Sunday in the New Testament? Would those rules not be incoherent with the New Testament spirit of (responsible) freedom? But if Paul speaks against the religious observance of days, this is assumed to address only the Sabbath,

commemorating an event” (:52). Did he think that the adverb “simply” makes the event commemorated something of lesser importance? That adverb is there to emphasize the theological status of Sunday: not a holy day to be observed but a day made special *simply* because a great event is commemorated on it. Hessey continues: “Such a celebration is not ‘a degeneration into keeping the day holy on which it is commemorated:’ of itself, and in right of the ideas which it involves, it makes the commemorative Day a holy one” (:53). But what is a degeneration is just and only making the day on which the event is commemorated a holy day to be kept sabbatically.

¹² Alcuin (quoted in Hessey 1880:89) affirmed at the end of the eighth century that “the observation of the former Sabbath had been transferred very fitly to the Lord’s Day, by the custom and consent of Christian people.” After an extensive investigation of the Christian authors to the end of the fifth century, Hessey (1880:86) declared: “In no passage is there any hint of the transfer of the Sabbath to the Lord’s Day, or of the planting of the Lord’s Day on the ruins of the Sabbath, those fictions of modern times.” Sunday understood in a sabbatical way definitively does not come from the New Testament, but from medieval Christianity. Petrus Alphonsus (quoted in Hessey 1880:90), in the twelfth century, called the Lord’s Day “Christian Sabbath,” for the first time according to Heylin (quoted in Hessey 1880:90): *Dies Dominica, dies, viz. resurrectionis, quæ suæ salvationis causâ exstitit, Christianorum Sabbatum est.*

¹³ Hessey (1880:19) wrote that the Sabbath passed away and that though neither the apostles nor the early Christian writers allude to it or to its commandment “as a precedent or as the ground for observing the Lord’s Day, we may conceive the analogy of them to have been among the reasons which determined the proportion of time which should be the Lord’s.”

¹⁴ With the introduction of the priestly class and cultic rituals, in the course of time “the people busied themselves at best with their individual meditation and prayers or listened to the complicated choral singing that covered the real action” (Wainwright 1992:64). The worshiping people, the doers of the work, became the “watching” people. Klauser (quoted in Wainwright 1992:64) calls that separation between ministers and people

as if the *sabbatical observance* of Sunday was a different kind of problem. Truth to tell, it is commonly assumed that observance of Sunday does pertain to the apostolical doctrine. Watts (1738:31), for instance, even supposed that there was a real, yet unrecorded, commandment of the Lord in this regard:

Is it not also unreasonable to suppose, that the Apostles, who received their Commission from Christ, *to teach the Nations to observe whatsoever he commanded them*, Matth. xxviii.20. should so zealously pronounce all the *Jewish Sabbaths* abolish'd, in so many Places, and such express Language, as St. *Paul* does; and that they should so frequently practise and encourage the assembling together on the first Day of the Week, as a Day of Christian Worship, if they had received no Hint of any Order, or particular Commission, or so much as a Direction from *Christ Jesus*, their Lord, for both these Things?

Hughes (1826:25) wrote likewise that the laws of the gospel are “those which it adopts from the original moral laws or positive ordinances of the Creator,” which “are recognized by the Gospel, even in its silence respecting them.” Watts assumed that the apostolic and early churches’ practice are together a good and sufficient guidance if we have no further evidence of a commandment: “*Apostolical Practice, and the Custom of the primitive Churches, when joined together, are in themselves a good Direction to the Conscience of Christians under any Difficulty. . . . And why should not apostolical and primitive Custom be a sufficient Direction for our Practice in regard to a Sabbath, where clearer Discoveries of Duty are wanting?*” (:30) He also added the arguments of cumulative evidence and the use of reason:

I grant also, that all these Considerations here proposed, do not amount to a direct and plain *Institution* of the Lord’s-Day; but the united Force of them all go so far toward the Proof of such an Institution, that renders it highly probable: And where Inferences and Probabilities are so many and weighty, they must determine our Conduct in a thousand Affairs of human Life, if we would act like reasonable Creatures” (:32).

But the truth is that the New Testament says nothing about the sabbatical status of Sunday, either by instruction or by examples. What we are explicitly taught is instead that observance of days is a misconception of the new dispensation. Fox (1659:9) wrote finely that, according to the apostle Paul,

the body is Christ, the Sabbath a sign: So the good things being come, Christ, he ends the shadow, the signe (*sic*), that is the substance; and rose on the first day on which the Saints met, and the Apostle doth not call that a Sabbath, nor doth not (*sic*) establish the other Sabbath among the Christians, nor bid them keep it, that ye read of no where; . . . for those things that were observable was (*sic*) often spoken in the Law and Gospell, and this being no where spoken of . . .

“the dissolution of the liturgical community.” The common Christian became spiritually dependent on the priest, believed to have a special connection with God and uncommon spiritual powers.

Watts (1738:65f.) argues unconvincingly that insistence on observation of one day could give occasion to legalism: “Many of the weaker Disciples would scarce have known how to distinguish between the strict ceremonial Holiness of Days imposed in *Judaism*, and the Appointment of religious Worship, under the *Gospel*, with a merciful Release from the Labours of Life on the Lord’s-Day.” This is not an acceptable allegation. Confusion and deviation call for instruction, not for avoidance of the truth.¹⁵ Is it reasonable to suppose that we have been left *preventively* to inferences and probabilities in so relevant a religious matter like a holy day to be kept, as if it were? Why should we think that a commandment of the Christian Sabbath might cause confusion while the correlative practice would not? This *theory of prevention* is untenable. Be that as it may, Watts (1738:80f.) talks about the Lord’s Day as a day to be observed in the mode of the fourth commandment, “of which we have not a plain and uncontested Proof by way of divine solemn Institution in the New Testament.”

Let us conclude this section with the findings of a group of scholars who wrote *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, which Carson (n.d.:16) summarized in the introduction to the work:

First, we are not persuaded that the New Testament unambiguously develops a “transfer theology,” according to which the Sabbath moves from the seventh day to the first day of the week. We are not persuaded that Sabbath keeping is presented in the Old Testament as the norm from the time of creation onward. Nor are we persuaded that the New Testament develops patterns of continuity and discontinuity on the basis of moral/civil/ceremonial distinctions. However useful and accurate such categories may be, it is anachronistic to think that any New Testament writer adopted them as the basis for his distinctions between the Old Testament and the gospel of Christ. We are also not persuaded that Sunday observance arose only in the second century A.D. We think, however, that although Sunday worship arose in New Testament times, it was not perceived as a Christian *Sabbath*. We disagree profoundly with historical reconstructions of the patristic period that read out from isolated and ambiguous expressions massive theological schemes that in reality developed only much later.

5.3. TOWARDS RECOVERING THE EARLY STATUS OF SUNDAY

The understanding of the theological status of Sunday depends on the interpretation of the Christian significance of the Sabbath. In principle the more the Sabbath is viewed as a pre-figure of spiritual rest, the less one feels that it must have a Christian equivalent in the category of time, and the less Sunday is understood sabbatically. In fact several Christian authors have, since the first centuries, interpreted the Sabbath spiritually, the commonest view

¹⁵ Cf. Chapter 3, on the supposed preventive reasons for the New Testament authors to avoid cultic terminology for corporate worship.

being that to “keep the Sabbath” is to be idle in respect to sin or refraining from evil. Yet this spiritual understanding of the Sabbath did not mean in practice that Sunday was not seen in most cases as the new Sabbath, a holy day to be kept. The greater moment of the non-sabbatarian interpretation of Sunday came with the sixteenth-century Reformers. For Martin Luther the Sabbath commandment means to the Christian devotion to the Scriptures.¹⁶ He said that “by the very nature of things” one must “rest, celebrate, and keep the Sabbath on whatever day or at whatever hour God’s word is preached” (n.d.b:93). The teaching and preaching of God’s word is “the true, genuine, and sole meaning of this commandment” (:92). Insisting on this approach, he wrote in the *Large Catechism* (n.d.a:21): “Indeed, we Christians should make everyday a holy day and give ourselves only to holy activities – that is, occupy ourselves daily with God’s Word and carry it in our hearts and on our lips.” He also says: “At whatever time God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it . . . Accordingly, I constantly repeat that all our life and work must be guided by God’s Word if they are to be God-pleasing or holy. Where that happens the commandment is in force and is fulfilled.”

For the Reformers, the Christians have to keep no day – even the Lord’s Day – as far as the *external formality* is concerned. Luther (n.d.a:19) claimed that “as far as outward observance is concerned,” the Sabbath commandment was only for the Jews. Hence, “according to its literal, outward sense, this commandment does not concern us Christians” (:20). He held that “we keep holy days so that people may have time and opportunity, which otherwise would not be available, to participate in public worship, that is, that they may assemble to hear and discuss God’s Word and then praise God with song and prayer.” He goes on: “This, I say, is not restricted to a particular time, as it was among the Jews, when it had to be precisely this or that day, for in itself no one day is better than another. Actually, there should be worship daily; however, since this is more than the common people can do, at least one day in the week must be set apart for it.” Luther argues that as Sunday has been appointed for this purpose since the early Christian times, “we should not change it. In this way a common order will prevail and no one will create disorder by unnecessary innovation.” In his thinking, “the observance of rest should not be so narrow as to forbid incidental and unavoidable work.”

In the *Confession of Augsburg* (1530), which incorporates Luther’s discernments, we find that those who judge that the Lord’s Day was instituted as a day to be necessarily observed, are far erring – *longe errant*. According to the document, the church appointed the Lord’s day as it was necessary to appoint a certain day that the people might know when they should

¹⁶ It ought to be remembered that a return to the Scriptures was a central preoccupation of the Reformers,

come together, though people ought to know that the observation, neither of the Sabbath, nor of another day, is of necessity.¹⁷ And regarding those who argue that the observance of the Lord's Day is not *juris divini, sed quasi juris divini* – not of the law of God but almost of the law of God – and prescribe how far it is lawful to work on holidays, the Confession asks what else such disputations are but snares for consciences.

Luther (quoted in Hessey 1880:166) so opposed the ascribing of holiness to the day – Sunday – itself, that he stated: “If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, – if anywhere any one sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian liberty.” He asseverated too: “Moses is dead and buried by Christ, and days and seasons are not to be lords over Christians, but rather Christians are lords over days and seasons, free to fix them as they will or as seems convenient to them” (quoted in Primus 1991:100).

For Calvin (1816:418), rest on the seventh day was a figure of the spiritual rest, so that the commandment, which “contains the external observance of the day,” “was abolished with the rest of the figures at the advent of Christ.”¹⁸ He explained it further: “For he is the truth, at whose presence all figures disappear; the body, on the prospect of which all the shadows are relinquished. He, I say, is the true fulfilment of the sabbath” (:421). He referred to “some unquiet spirits” that had been “raising noisy contentions respecting the Lord's day,” complaining that “Christians are tinctured with Judaism, because they retain any observance of days” (:422f.) He replied that “the Lord's day is not observed by us upon the principles of Judaism . . . For we celebrate it not with scrupulous rigour as a ceremony which we conceive to be a figure of some spiritual mystery; but only use it as a remedy necessary to the preservation of order in the church” (:423).¹⁹ As regards the allegation that the apostle Paul rebuked observance of days, Calvin pointed out when separating days is a problem and when it is not:

But who, these furious zealots only excepted, does not see what observance the apostle intends? For they did not observe them for the sake of political and ecclesiastical order; but because they retained them as shadows of spiritual things, they were guilty of obscuring the glory of Christ and the light of the Gospel. They did not therefore rest from their manual labours, as from employments which would

expressed in the motto *sola scriptura*.

¹⁷ *Nec Sabbati nec alterius diei observationem necessariam esse.*

¹⁸ See Gaffin (1998:141ff.) for a summary of Calvin's views on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. Gaffin criticizes Calvin's findings (:144-163), regarding the Lord's Day as a Sabbath, a day which Christians are bound to keep by resting from work.

¹⁹ Calvin (1975:24) had put it so in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*: “To sum up: it is not by religion that we distinguish one day from another, but for the sake of the common polity.”

divert them from sacred studies and meditations; but from a principle of superstition, imagining their cessation from labour to be still an expression of reverence for the mysteries formerly represented by it. This preposterous distinction of days the apostle strenuously opposes; and not that legitimate difference which promotes the peace of the Christian Church. For in the churches which he founded, the sabbath was retained for this purpose. . . . Now whereas it was expedient for the destruction of superstition, the day which the Jews kept holy was abolished; and it being necessary for the preservation of decorum, order, and peace in the Christian Church, another day was appointed for the same use (:423).

Calvin says that he was also wrestling, on the other side, with the current trend originated with the “false prophets, who in past ages have infected the people with a Jewish notion, affirming that nothing but the ceremonial part of this commandment, which according to them is the appointment of the seventh day, has been abrogated, but that the moral part of it, that is the observance of one day in seven, still remains” (:424). He replied thus: “But this is only changing the day in contempt of the Jews, while they retain the same opinion of the holiness of a day; for on this principle the same mysterious signification would still be attributed to particular days, which they formerly obtained among the Jews.” The choice of a particular day for church gatherings is an issue of practical character, to preserve the order and good functioning of the churches’ activities. “Unless there be stated days appointed for them [the assemblies of the church], how can they be held? . . . so far is it from being possible to preserve order and decorum without this regulation, that if it were abolished the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin” (:422). The essence of the question is not the day, but what is done on it, that is, teaching and worship: “But the principal thing to be remembered is the general doctrine; that, lest religion decay or languish among us, sacred assemblies ought diligently to be held, and that we ought to use those external means which are adapted to support the worship of God” (:424f.).

Calvin accepted that the practice of daily gatherings might avoid the sensation of keeping particular days, but he argued also that we should be merciful so as not to require of the majority more than they are willing to do in their weakness:

But why, it may be asked, do we not rather assemble on every day, that so all distinction of days may be removed? I sincerely wish that this were practised; and truly spiritual wisdom would be well worthy of some portion of time being daily allotted to it: but if the infirmity of many persons will not admit of daily assemblies, and charity does not permit us to require more of them; why should we not obey the rule, which we have imposed upon us by the will of God? (:422)

Like Luther, Calvin even said not to make question of Sunday itself:

For since the resurrection of the Lord is the end and consummation of that true rest, which was adumbrated by the ancient sabbath; the same day, which put an end to the shadows, admonishes Christians not to adhere to a shadowy ceremony. Yet I do not lay so much stress on the septenary number, that I would oblige the Church to

an invariable adherence to it; nor will I condemn those churches, which have other solemn days for their assemblies, provided they keep at a distance from superstition. (:424)²⁰

Ulrich Zwingli (quoted in Hessey 1889:352f.) thought likewise:

If we would have the Lord's Day so bound to time that it shall be wickedness, *in aliud tempus transferre*, to transfer it to another time, in which resting from our labours equally as in that, we may hear the Word of God, if necessity haply shall so require, this day so solicitously observed, would obtrude on us a ceremony. For we are no way bound to time, but time ought so to serve us, that it is lawful, and permitted to each Church, when necessity urges, (as is usual to be done, especially in harvest time), to transfer the solemnity and rest of the Lord's Day or Sabbath to some other day; or on the Lord's Day itself, after finishing of the holy things, to follow their labors (*sic*), though not without great necessity.

The early English Reformers were also anti-sabbatarian. John Frith (quoted in Parker 1988:34) believed that the intention of the change from Sabbath to Sunday was to emphasize that "we are free and not bounde to any day, but that we may do all lawful workes to the pleasure of God and profite of our neighbour."²¹ William Tyndale (quoted in Parker 1988:33f.), supporting the ideas of Luther, denied that Christians have compromise with a particular day:

As for the Saboth, a great matter, we be Lordes over the Saboth and may yet chaunge it into the monday or any other day, as we see neede, or may make every tenth daye holy daye onely if we see cause why, we may make two every weeke, if it were expedient and one not inough to teach the people. Neither was there any cause to chaunge it from Saterday then to put difference betwene us and the Jews, and least we should become servauntes unto the day after their superstition. Neyther needed we any holyday at all, if the people myght be taught without it.

We can assume that Sunday was freely chosen by the early Christians, as they understood the liberty inherent to the new covenant. But it must be a responsible liberty, so that the free choice of Sunday was also a conscious and responsible choice, as they took into account the appearances of the resurrected Lord on Sundays and the eschatological meaning of the day. The Christian liberty is the liberty of overcoming the will to do what the human mind illusorily thinks to be better, so that we are free to will and to do what is really better, namely, what the Lord wishes and indicates. Human freedom is truly freedom when it is experienced under the lordship of Christ and kingdom of God.²²

²⁰ In the 1536 edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin (1975:24) had thus spoke of "the Lord's Day which we now observe," that "it was not established for us to hallow it before all others, that is, to count it more holy."

²¹ But it was not, as Frith suggested, merely to highlight the point of the Christian freedom that the change from Sabbath to Sunday was made. This was a secondary aspect of the issue. The motive was rather Jesus' resurrection and appearing, which had great eschatological meaning.

²² Is this non-dialectical thought why Calvin (1816:422) held Sunday was a free choice at the same time that he affirmed that Sunday was set apart because "our most provident and indulgent Father hath been no less attentive to provide for our necessity than for that of the Jews"? Is it also why he says both that another day can replace Sunday and that Sunday is God's provision, so that if Friday, for instance, is eventually chosen, it can be evenly

We may esteem Sunday for its eschatological meaning, but we must be aware that it is not a “Christian Sabbath” in the law sense, so that we will not, for instance, be cursed for working on it. What believers must be taught is that they should attend the assemblies of the church for communion, mutual edification and preparation for witness in the world. And the principle remains that the Christians are not bound to worship God more on Sunday than on other days, since for the Christian, as Robert Barnes (quoted in Solberg 1977:23), another of the early English Reformers, wrote, “every day is a Sabbath day and a festal day and not only the seventh day.” Instead of talking about “keeping” Sunday, we should talk about keeping *worship*. What is holy is not the day but the praise. Observance of the day has no value in itself. Conversely, worship has intrinsic value, whatever day it takes place, Sunday being the central point nevertheless, as far as corporate worship is concerned. Can Sunday be replaced by another day? Jenkins (1962:77) wrote that the practice of Christians to meet on the first day of the week “has now the authority of long-established custom behind it and the onus of proving the need to change from it rests upon those who might wish to do so, but as a decision it does not differ in kind from other secular decisions.” The original choice of Sunday was due to the resurrection and appearance(s) of the Lord. This does not seem to be a mere “secular decision,” unless we assume that the apostles did not relate so intimately those events to the day when they occurred, so that Sunday had not necessarily to be chosen for the sake of them. But the fact is that the apostles choose just the day when those events occurred. Though the apostles do not teach that Sunday is a holy day to be kept in the manner of the Sabbath, that day was visibly their choice for communion of the churches. To choose another day means by the least to bypass their practice and motives.

Despite all those fine insights from the Reformers about the theological status of Sunday, that day generally gained in Protestant circles the status of a holy day to be kept legalistically.

said to be God’s provision? A further question: Did God provide, with Sunday, something lesser than “truly spiritual wisdom would be well worthy of,” namely, a *daily* devotion? Calvin’s thought on the appointment of Sunday either is plainly contradictory or wisely articulates God’s sovereignty and human freedom, the later being exerted not apart from but *under* the former, as a perception of it. Be that as it may, we must assume that a free choice is not a choice apart from God’s orientation. Human freedom cannot stand and succeed outside God’s sovereignty, which is disposed towards human happiness as no human freedom allegedly free from it can conceive of.

The only reason we can discern for the adoption of Sunday as the Christian central day of worship was the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday and his appearance to his disciples on the same day and on one more Sunday at least. But why did he appear to them on Sundays? On the first, obviously, because it was the day of his resurrection. But why only on the next? Did the disciples not assemble in between the first and the second Sunday? Or because it had to be a Sunday, like the day of Lord’s resurrection? Hessey (1880: 29f.) surmises that the Lord appeared on Sundays “to render that day especially noticeable by the Apostles, or it may be because they had already determined to meet on that day.” It does not seem that Jesus reappeared to the disciples on the following Sunday merely because *they were assembled* and the day was a Sunday, but rather because they were assembled and *the day was a Sunday*. And if the disciples gathered together again on that Sunday just because of

In this regard, Bauckham (n.d.c:312) notes: “The first Protestant Reformers broke with the Sabbatarian tradition of late medieval theology in such a way that at first sight it is surprising to find most of its characteristics later readmitted to Protestant theology by the back door.” He alleges, however, that “we should not exaggerate the extent to which the Reformers broke with the *premises* of scholastic Sabbatarianism. To some extent the repudiation of Sabbatarianism was rather superficial; the Reformers retained a number of theological principles from which medieval theologians had derived their Sabbatarian doctrine.” In fact, whereas the general truth that we “keep the Sabbath” any time by attending God’s Word can be coherently maintained along the particular truth that, for convenience, a given day should be elected for public service, the calling of Sunday “the holy day to be kept” takes us to re-reaching the original sabbatarian point and vitiates the whole anti-sabbatarian argumentation. Is the expression “Lord’s day” not commonly used in a sabbatarian way? People indeed say: “All days are the Lord’s, but Sunday is the special day of the Lord, to be dedicated to Him.”

Bauckham (n.d.c:317) held that though Calvin is not properly a sabbatarian, the *practical* results of his reasoning is remarkably similar to the thinking of medieval scholastic theology. Primus (1991:108) is of opinion that Calvin, “in his more detailed emphasis on Sabbath keeping [in relation to Luther], verges on what might be labeled a ‘practical Sabbatarianism.’” Solberg (1977:19) in turn notes: “The Sabbath is one of the few subjects on which the Swiss reformer significantly revised the *Institutes*.” A saying, for example, which appeared in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, which spiritualizes the Sabbath, does not occur any longer in the final 1559 edition: “But if we drink that Word wholeheartedly (as is fitting) and through it mortify the works of the old man, not only on festal days but every day continuously do we hallow the Sabbath . . .” (1995:24) The truth is that it has always been very difficult to sustain a non-sabbatarian approach to Sunday and esteeming it highly for its eschatological meaning and apostolical adoption. Shepherd, Jr. (1963:140), for example, says, on the one side: “If the Church later consecrates the first day of the week . . . it is to remind Christians that all days are holy.” On the other side, he states: “Unlike the sabbath, Sunday is not a taboo day, separate and sacrosanct from all other days . . .” (:142). But what is the theological sense that something “consecrated” is not something separated and sacrosanct?

5.4. A MISSIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SABBATH

what happened on the former Sunday, we have that they chose Sunday because Sunday, the day of the Lord’s resurrection, “chose them” – human freedom intelligently following God’s movements.

Jesus insistently healed sick people on Sabbath days. Why? Fox (1975:328) claims correctly that “Christ’s and the apostles’ going into the synagogues and temple on the sabbath days, was to fulfil, and show the fulfilling of the types, and figures of him, and to bring to the substance of the signs, types, and shadows; not to hold up days, times, and offerings, but to bring them to the body, Christ.” By healing people on Sabbaths, the Lord was fulfilling and teaching what the Sabbath is all about. Sabbath is thus *for* healing or *a day of* healing. See, for instance, the statement of Maurice (1853:24) that Jesus “was carrying out the very purpose of the Sabbath when He healed on that day. He was proclaiming it to be a day of healing and of blessing to the weary, heavy-laden children of earth; He was declaring that they were not children merely of earth, but children of His Father in heaven, those whom He was inviting to do His work and to share His rest.” Maurice was a sabbatarian whose concern was then to investigate “what is the most exact and scriptural way of keeping the holy day” (:74). We should ask, however, whether the Sabbath rest should not disappear as a religious institution since it pre-figured the relief Jesus brought about. He invited to Himself tired and oppressed people, promising to alleviate them from their burden (Mt 11:28ff.). This is not simply an occasional calling, but an essential aspect of his fulfilling of the law. It announces the fulfillment of the Sabbath (which has, of course, an eschatological dimension remaining). It is not without reason that Jesus’ invitation to rest in Him is followed by two pericopes which record exactly discussions about the Sabbath. “The discussion of the fulfilment of the sabbath by Jesus is anticipated by the introduction of the notion of rest in a Christological and eschatological setting” (Yang n.d.:161). It is also noteworthy that, while those controversial pericopes occur in both Mark (2:23-28; 3:1-6) and Luke (6:1-5, 6-11), only Matthew included Jesus’ invitation to spiritual rest (as fulfillment of the Sabbath), possibly for the sake of his special interest in showing to Christians converted from Judaism that Jesus is the core fulfillment of the Old Testament institutions and prophecies.

Since the Sabbath pre-figured relief in Jesus Christ and such relief came in, it is more appropriate to say that “relief is Sabbath” than “Sabbath is a day of relief.” Sabbath was a symbol of relief, so that relief is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. If Jesus healed sick people especially on Sabbath days, that was to reveal the salvific meaning which the Sabbath always guarded as a pre-figure of Himself. He did not heal people on Sabbaths in order, so to speak, to confirm the holiness of the day or to indicate what the day, as such, is for. The very same logic applies to the temple: Jesus went there in order to reveal to be Himself the temple, that is, the “place” where people encounter God, not to confirm that role for the temple. Accordingly, Fox (1975:328) wrote that “Christ’s and the apostles’ going into the synagogues

and temple on the sabbath days, was to fulfill, and show the fulfilling of the types, and figures of Him, and to bring to the substance of the signs, types, and shadows; not to hold up days, times, and offerings, but to bring them to the body, Christ.”²³ By healing people on Sabbath days Jesus was revealing Himself to be the Messiah, the Lord (not the servant) of the Sabbath, the Lord who was implicitly announced by the Sabbath. As A. Cole (n.d.:13) well put it, “the Sabbath controversy is not merely an isolated struggle against one aspect of Jewish legalism, nor was it by chance that the Lord challenged Pharisaic Judaism on this point rather than another. The whole doctrine of the manner of God’s presence amid His people is ultimately at stake.”

But is the Sabbath, meaning spiritual rest in Christ, only *passive*? Does it not have an *ethical* dimension? Can we not say that engaging in the work of salvation is very part of “keeping the Sabbath” in the Christian dispensation? Braun (n.d.:129, emphasis added) states praiseworthily: “True service to God is service to people, people in their need. *That is true sabbath observance, that is true worship.*” And Rordorf (1968:71f.) remarked well that “the primitive Church also understood that Jesus’ healing activity was, in fact, in the truest possible sense of the word a ‘sabbath’ activity: in him, in his love, in his mercy and his help had dawned the messianic sabbath, the time of God’s own saving activity.”

Is that ethical dimension of the Sabbath contained in the Old Testament? It is more clearly revealed in the institution of the Sabbath year, which “naturally originated by analogy with the seven-day week and its day of rest” (Rordorf 1968:16). It was a year of liberation to the poor and the foreigner (Ex 23:11f.; Dt 15:12ff.). The Jews were called to remember their time as captives in Egypt, that they could be merciful to their servants both regarding the weekly Sabbath (Dt 5:15) and the yearly Sabbath (Dt 15:15). The Sabbath involves rest and mercy.²⁴ But is the Sabbath for God or for man? It is really said to be of or to *God* (Ex 16:23, 25; 20:10; 31:13; Dt 5:14). But is it not for *human* rest? This problem is artificial. We do not have here an issue of conflict (either/or) but rather of perspective (one by means or in terms of the other). The Sabbath is for humans and as such it is for God. There is seemingly a succession

²³ Similarly Peterson (1993a:100) remarked: “John 5-10 is dominated by Jesus’ actions and discourses on the occasion of several Jewish festivals, suggesting that in some way he offers a replacement for them all. On the Sabbath feast (Jn. 5), as he exercised the powers of life and judgment entrusted to him by the Father, he made available the blessings of the new age to which the Sabbath pointed.”

²⁴ *The Examiner*, New York, November 16, 1873, volume LXXXI, No.46, noticed that in a ministers’ conference in New York, when a paper by E. T. Hiscox on the transference of the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday was being debated, Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist who led the Social Gospel movement, intervened so: “Suppose the Lord Jesus to come into this conference today, would he prefer those who kept the seventh day of the week, to those who observe the first day? There are greater questions than one of days for us to be agitated about – as that, for example, of the condition of the outcasts and poor of this great city.” When highlighting the ethical responsibility of the church, Rauschenbusch only did not say, at least explicitly, he was exactly touching upon an aspect, the active one, of the Sabbath: helping people to find rest in Jesus.

of emphases regarding the motive for Sabbath observance in the Old Testament: humanitarian concern first, devotion to God later. Rordorf (1968:11f.) proposed that in the oldest stratum of the Pentateuch (Ex 23:12 and 34:21) the Sabbath is seen as a social institution. He also says:

Important support for the contention that the sabbath was originally a social institution is to be found in the deuteronomic tradition. Here we find fully preserved the connection with the oldest tradition about the sabbath as it appears in the Book of the Covenant and in the J decalogue. We find clear evidence for this in the motivation which Deuteronomy provides for the sabbath commandment. First it repeats almost word for word the motive which is to be found in the Book of the Covenant, '(Observe the sabbath,) that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you' (Deut. 5.14c). Then it adds, 'You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm' (Deut. 5.15a). Here it is plain that social and ethical requirements are intimately associated with the Yahwistic covenant, with the character of the covenant God as protector of all the afflicted and oppressed (:15).

He believed that a new development took place, that "the sabbath was given prominence above the other days no longer merely for the sake of slaves and cattle, but for God's sake. . . . its social and ethical orientation seemed to be forced into the background and to yield ground to a purely theological evaluation of the day" (:17). And Dressler (n.d.:24) sustained that the saying that people rested on the seventh day (Ex 16:30) "does not give the impression of a Sabbath celebration indicated in verse 23 by the phrase 'to Yahweh,' so that one is led to the conclusion that at this stage the emphasis is not on the cultic aspect but on the humanitarian side by way of preparation." But if the Sabbath was said to be for humans, it was not less for God. It is exactly by being for humans that it is for God. And it can only be for God if it is for humans. We commonly separate the religious interpretation from the ethical one. See, for example, that Calvin (1995:24) wrote in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that the Jews "had another task to see to in sabbatarianism, not one having to do with religion but with the preservation of equity among men. This means, actually, to remit the labor of servants and animals, lest inhuman taskmasters by persistent urging press them beyond due measure." But "religion" refers to the whole of the Christian experience, including both the spiritual exercises and the ethical commitment.

If we have found spiritual rest by believing in Jesus, we are responsible for calling others in His name to the same amenity. As Bonhoeffer (1955:69) wrote, "the first demand which is made of those who belong to God's Church is not that they should, for example, set up some religious organization or that they should lead lives of piety, but that they shall be witnesses to Jesus Christ before the world." What is expected from us is not an introverted religious life, but love, nurtured by the study of the Scriptures, communion and prayer – active, sacrificial, missionary love. Rauschenbusch (n.d.:105) reminds us that what we draw from the eternal

reservoirs is for use and that “any mystic experience which makes our fellow-men less real and our daily labour less noble, is dangerous religion. A religious experience is not Christian unless it binds us closer to men and commits us more deeply to the Kingdom of God.” To be merciful like our God signifies extending our Sabbath, that is, our peace in Christ, in order to embrace others. My Sabbath is also for my neighbor, hence the search for my neighbor belongs to my Sabbath. If my Sabbath is to mean actually rest for myself, I should work for the salvation of others – for rest and the sin of selfishness are incompatible.

Conclusion

In the New Testament worship is not only adoration in the gatherings of the church. It includes also holiness in all circumstances of life and every act of love and mercy. We receive this from Jesus and His apostles through ethical-missionary use of cultic terms – such as “liturgy” (leitourg^a), “cult” (latre^a), “sweet-smelling aroma” (smⁿ eⁿwd^a) and “religion” (qrjske^a) – and explicit teaching (e.g., “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” the parable of the so-called good Samaritan, “. . . I urge you . . . to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice . . .” and “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is . . .”). This use of the cultic vocabulary is due to the *universalization of holiness* brought about by Jesus Christ. The holy was related to the cult, but now it relates to all aspects and circumstances of life. This implies that, in the Christian dispensation,

worship is not just one element amongst many in the life of believers; it is rather an attitude or orientation that should characterize the whole of it. So, in the New Testament there is no essential distinction between worship and life: man’s existence is not split into two areas, one where Christ is honoured and the other where man is more or less independent – everything should stand under the Lordship of Christ. Consequently cultic terms can be applied to daily life . . . (Davies 1966b:57).

The requirement of a cultic holiness was replaced by the exigency of an all-embracing holiness, so that worship takes place whenever and wherever a believer pleases God by witnessing to His power, holiness and love in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is not a paradox that God is served when we serve people. There is a logic to it, which we have dissected and sum up thus: (a) God defines how He wants to be worshipped – “God’s will” is a liturgical category, so that evangelization, expressly commanded by the Lord, is worship; (b) There is a constitutive factor, namely, faith in God’s Son – That service to people is service to God does not mean that we approach God on the basis on our merit of works. It depends on our relation of faith to Jesus. Service to people counts as service to God because we serve them in obedience to Him, in the name of His Son and in the power of His Spirit. It is not a free initiative of ours; (c) Worship supposedly “direct to God” does not prove our salvation from selfishness – the essence of sin – and that we have been enabled to love. Faith cannot operate or show itself but through works. Worship by words alone is a disembodied spirit. We are saved for love, so that our worship needs to be substantiated by acts of love; (d) Love to God entails love to everything He loves – Worship includes pleasing God by taking care of His beloved ones. This makes the proclamation of the salvation He offers through His Son and help to the needy in His name an act of worship; and (e) Evangelization is worship because it

is glorification of God among people (for their salvation). Also because it is the “priestly” work of showing Jesus’ vicarious sacrifice to people, that they may offer it to God by faith in order to have their sins pardoned and be entitled for eternity.

But this comprehensiveness of worship was forgotten mainly from the fourth century on. Worship was reduced in Christian consciousness and practice to cults, life in general falling into the category of “secular life,” having little or nothing to do with religion. “God’s will” and “pleasing God” were no longer viewed as worship categories, becoming only ethical categories that have nothing to do with worship. The outcome of such a situation has been for centuries that witness to the world, as obedience that pleases God, no longer regarded as part of our worship of Him, remains relegated to a secondary place – if in fact to some place. However the New Testament’s broad conception of worship was not to become hidden forever. Thanks to God, it came to be rediscovered by scholars, more substantially in the twentieth century. Truly it is still far from being widely known and accepted, as it is not significantly taught in the churches – not even in the theological schools. Indeed after centuries of worship understood in that reduced way, “missionary worship,” together with the concepts of “priesthood of all believers” and that Christianity has no sacred times and places, is viewed with suspicion, regarded as opposition to the formal cult, confusion of religion with activism and a dissolution of the concept of worship. As we make an effort to re-learn to think about worship in the comprehensive way of the New Testament, such prejudicial criticisms must be refuted. They may be expressions of the instinct of self-preservation of a conception of worship that has eyes only for God, as if the second commandment of love, to people, had not been given by God Himself. We must, nevertheless, admit that sometimes this criticism has a point, denouncing a religiosity that has eyes only for people, as if Christians could be relevant to the world apart from their communion with God and with each other. Therefore we should be warned, in challenging overestimation of collective worship at the expense of witness to the world, against the opposite error, that of underestimating it. One-sidedness must be replaced by balance, not by the opposite one-sidedness.

Christians should be told that Christian thought and practice were not always as we know them nowadays. The understanding of worship today is considerably different from that of the apostolic age, especially regarding these issues:

- (a) *The theological status of Sunday* – Though Sunday was in early Christianity the main day of worship because of Jesus’ resurrection on a Sunday, it was not, like a Sabbath, a holy day to be kept, when work was forbidden. It was a common day of work until the

fourth century. The New Testament equivalent of the Sabbath is not Sunday, the supposed “Christian Sabbath,” but spiritual rest in Christ.

- (b) *The theological status of the church buildings* – The New Testament does not allow for sacred places. There is no apostolical prescription of temples. Buildings appropriate to collective worship are needed from a practical viewpoint, not a theological one. What is emphasized as holy in the New Testament is the communion of the believers, their worship of God and the teaching of God’s word, not the place where these things take place.
- (c) *The (missionary) priesthood of all believers* – All Christians, not only their pastors, are the priests of the New Testament. Like the priests in the temple of Jerusalem, Christians worship God by working in order that people may have their sins forgiven. But while the old priests received from people the animals to be sacrificed to God on their behalf, the new priests *give* Jesus’ sacrifice to people, that they may offer it to God for their sins. The new priests are missionaries and evangelization is worship.
- (d) *The free “law” of giving* – In the New Testament, the law of the tithes is replaced by the “law” of responsible freedom, which is a law of the conscience, by which the Christians react liberally to the needs of the poor and those in charge of the proclamation of the gospel. What they give to God, they give to Him by giving to those in need of help and support. We can include also giving to cover the natural expenses related to the activities of the church. There may be a regular scheme for giving if the congregation finds it better or necessary. Troublesome is the requirement of tithes on the basis of the law.

The worship of the gathered Christians is the center of the whole worship they should address to God – not less than the center, but only the center. On the one hand, our effort to call the churches’ attention to the liturgical dimension of their mission in the world can in no way mean a depreciation of spiritual devotion and corporate worship. However, on the other hand, if the Christians are not committed to holiness in all things and witness to the world, their collective worship is the head of no body, the center of nothing. Can it thus be really anything worthy? Does God accept partial commitment? We affirm, with König (1982:117), that “a concern with one aspect is not half the truth. In the biblical view it is all or nothing.” Unless we worship God as He wills, we are not worshipping Him at all. He is not pleased by hymns and prayers from unmerciful worshippers, who have no *active* passion for the suffering and lost. Nothing pleases Him more than to see His children committed to the *liturgy of witness*, calling others to their same position as God’s children. The highest worship is

working in the risky – but rewarding – mission of rescuing others from sin and death. It is thus that God’s children resemble most His First Son, Jesus Christ, who saved them.

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