

Participation and power. Opportunities for method and theory in liturgical research from a changing (Dutch Reformed) South African liturgical landscape

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to make a contribution with regards to method and theory in liturgical research. After a preliminary diagnosis of the Dutch Reformed South African liturgical landscape, and the challenges that this specific context pose to the study of liturgy, the role of liturgy in the need for social change in South Africa is expanded upon. Therefore it is being argued that the well known key liturgical research concepts of participatory research and liturgical inculturation should be expanded in order actively to take on the South African contextual challenges in the whole research design. In conclusion some suggestions are made.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will attempt to paint in broad brush strokes some of the liturgical trends and challenges that I can identify in my own church family and country.¹ The lens through which the liturgy and its context are viewed in this paper is shaped by the trends and challenges experienced in liturgical work conducted at Buvton² and by a National Research Foundation (NRF) project.³ In other words, this paper offers the limited perspective of a researcher and research groups who are reflecting on the actual liturgical practice of the Dutch Reformed family in South Africa, in the conviction that the way in which other churches world-wide are responding to similar challenges

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2 Buvton is the Afrikaans acronym for the Bureau for Continuing Theological Education and Research, situated at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University.

3 The NRF-funded research project is currently running under the overarching title 'Developing a Praxis of Mobilising Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) for Social Capital and Development in the Western Cape', and the author of this paper is, within the framework of this project, specifically focussing on the role of the liturgy in the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty.

can enrich our own efforts, and vice versa.

A brief description of the South African religious context in general (2) will be followed by a discussion of the current state regarding the study of liturgy by theologians from the Reformed tradition in South Africa (3). Then some trends and movements in the South African Dutch Reformed liturgical landscape are identified, after which I will expand in more detail on the challenges facing the South African context and the role of the liturgy in this regard (4). These contextual factors or challenges shape, more so than others, the agenda of theology in general and the study of liturgy in particular. I will expand on these factors and finally show how they have served or should serve as stimuli for the incorporation of the research method of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as well as the steering concept of liturgical *interculturalisation* along with liturgical *inculturation*, in the agenda of liturgical research in (Dutch Reformed) South Africa (6).

2. SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

This is not the place to make a broad contextual analysis regarding religion in South Africa. It is, however, necessary to make one or two general observations in order to situate the trends and challenges.

- According to Statistics South Africa a total of 79.8% of the South African population indicated during the 2001 census that they are affiliated to the Christian religion. This is an increase of about 5% since the 1996 census.⁴
- Of the above 79.8%, a total of 6.7% (over 3 million) are members of the Dutch Reformed family⁵ (excluding denominations such as the Presbyterian Church). The Dutch Reformed family is in actual fact in a slight decline, although some other mainline 140 churches are declining at a more rapid pace.
- The biggest churches are the Zionist Churches and African Independent Churches (in total more than 17%), and after them the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches (8.2%), the Roman Catholic Church (7.1%) and the Methodist Church (6.8%).
- According to certain statistics, as many as 91% of persons between the ages of 18 and 35 indicated that they attend worship services.⁶
- South African society has been described as a 'premodern-modernising-postmodern triad of simultaneous modes of existence'.⁷
- In 2004 we celebrated ten years of democracy in a free post-apartheid and post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission society, although the process of reconciliation is in many ways still incomplete. In many sectors and on national level multiculturalism is celebrated as a national value,⁸ but in others it is not.

4 Data obtained from Statistics South Africa 2004. Population Census 2001, Religion Report. Pretoria: SSA.

5 For an explanation of all the different churches within the Reformed family in South Africa, see C.W. BURGER: 'Reformed Liturgy in the South African context', in L. VISCHER (ed.): *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge 2003) 159-160.

6 This is information from CASE (Community Agency for Social Enquiry) research quoted by N. KOOPMAN: *Publieke Teologie in Suid-Afrika vandag. Die verhaal van die Beyers Naudé Sentrum vir Publieke Teologie* (Unpublished presentation; Stellenbosch 2005).

7 W.L. VAN DER MERWE: 'Philosophy and the Multi-Cultural Context of (Post)Apartheid South Africa', in *Ethical Perspectives* 3,2 (1996) 79.

8 See for example, J. DEGENAAR: *Die keuse vir 'n postmoderne viering van kulturele diversiteit. Contribution to a public debate during the Little Karoo Arts Festival* (Oudtshoorn 2000). For example, in South Africa we have eleven official languages.

- In connection to the previous point it can be mentioned that the Dutch Reformed Church family is in a painstaking process of church unification that is taking up a lot of energy.
- Although there are strong indications that the South African economy is in a period of growth, the country still faces many social challenges and issues.

3. THE STUDY OF LITURGY

In South Africa the study of liturgy has traditionally been seen as a 'luxury'. There are many reasons for this, such as the Protestant heritage in which Liturgy as a subject is still considered a subject within Practical Theology. Usually at seminaries it is also allocated to the professor of Homiletics, who is often not a trained liturgist, and who 'coincidentally' teaches the subject, but whose main focus often remains Homiletics.

In the last decade or so interest in the liturgy as a theological field has soared in South Africa. This is because researchers discovered the role of rituals and symbols within the process of identity formation and the need for such a process in South Africa; the role that worship played in the struggle against apartheid; the possible link between liturgy and life and the emphasis on this aspect within the Reformed tradition; the so-called worship wars in local congregations, etcetera.⁹ This interest has, however, not changed the status of the subject at universities, because often the research is conducted by academic tourists who come from another field, make some observations on and contributions towards the subject, without giving much reflection to the unique heuristics of Liturgy.

At several universities the Bureaus for Continuing Theological Education and Research (such as Buvton at Stellenbosch University) took up the challenge of teaching and researching the liturgy. Here I can elaborate briefly on the work done by Buvton. In 1995 Buvton formed a Liturgy research group, which has been hosting at least three meetings a year for the last decade, devoting their time to research on the liturgy¹⁰ and the creation of liturgical aids.¹¹ The work conducted at Buvton has a great influence on the liturgy of the Dutch Reformed Church. This research group's promotion of a fourfold liturgical structure for the liturgy (Gathering, Word, Table, Sending); their emphasis on symbol and ritual, active participation and responsory elements, to name just a few, has gained wide acceptance and brought a huge wave of liturgical renewal to the Dutch Reformed family in South Africa.

The liturgical renewal as proposed and propagated by the Buvton group has been confronted with various challenges over the years. First of all, there is the fact that the Dutch Reformed liturgical landscape is not a monolithic reality, but a space where various traditions, trends and cultures are accommodated, and as such also a site of struggle. Secondly, the South African context

9 See, among others, B.J. DE KLERK: 'Liturgiese identiteitsvorming as antwoord op die invloed van die verbruikerskultuur', in *In die Skriflig* 34,4 (2000) 451-468; H.J.C. PIETERSE: 'Die rol van rituele en simbole in die identiteitsvorming van 'n geloofsgemeenskap – 'n Gereformeerde perspektief', in *Skrif en Kerk* 19,2 (1998) 342-347; I.J. VAN DER MERWE: 'Die krag van rituele', in *Kruisgewys* 3,2 (2003) 19-21.

10 To mention just a few of the conferences hosted by this group: *Liturgie en die visuele* (2002), *Nagmaal tussen tradisie en vernuwing* (2002), *Rituele by geloofsverbintenisse* (2004), *Liturgie en vernuwingbewegings* (2004) and *Die erediens: Gereformeerde en/of vernuwend?* (2005). The group has also been visited in recent years by scholars such as Marcel Barnard, Jana Childers, Ben de Klerk, Joseph Small and Geoffrey Wainwright.

11 See M.H. HEYNS et al. (eds.): *Preekstudies met liturgiese voorstelle gebaseer op die leesrooster* (Stellenbosch 2004).

with its many social challenges and apartheid past poses a unique challenge to the celebration of the liturgy in our church. In the NRF project that was mentioned earlier, the challenge of mobilising Faith-Based Organisations to empower these communities and the role that the liturgy can play in this regard are the focuses of the liturgical research. I will now try to briefly describe and present systematically the main trends and challenges which the Buvton and NRF liturgical research groups came across, and then make some remarks on the way that they are trying to respond to the challenge.

4. TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN THE REFORMED LITURGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The liturgical heritage of the DRC family remained almost unchanged for the first three centuries on the continent. The liturgy of Petrus Datheen as formulated at the Synod of Dordt in 1574 was brought to South Africa and continued to function almost intact between 1652 and the first half of the twentieth century.¹² Certain movements and influences can be traced in the latter half of the twentieth century. Here I would like to elaborate on some of these trends as we experience them from the perspective of both the Buvton and NRF liturgical research initiatives.

4.1 Trends: Liturgical – Reformed – Charismatic

The Liturgical Movement reached the liturgy of the DRC by the 1950s.¹³ In subsequent years it was, as I have already mentioned, further developed with the adoption of elements such as a fourfold form, a more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper and the use of the Lectionary during the 1990s.¹⁴ Most of the participants at the Buvton group will be promoters of this tradition, which is also obvious from the annual publication with liturgical aids accompanying the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). In the study of liturgy in general the influence of the Liturgical Movement meant a renewed interest in the history of liturgy and the anthropological dimension of liturgy, among other themes. The influence of the Liturgical Movement can be detected in many congregations within the DRC family, but obviously not everywhere.

In recent years there have been some counter-movements within the DRC family. Voices are being raised for a reorientation on the liturgical reform of the Reformation, specifically with reference to Calvin, and a consequent criticism of the use of symbols, new rituals and the lectionary. Theron, for example, makes an appeal to the Dutch theologian Noordmans, quoting his well-known warning that the pro-Liturgical Movement reformers are busy with 'cultic smuggling over dogmatic boundaries'.¹⁵ Theron is not alone in his view and a number of theologians have

12 See A.C. BARNARD: *Die Erediens* (Pretoria 1982) 377-383; BURGER: 'Reformed Liturgy in the South African context' 161; H.D.A. DU TOIT: 'Die liturgie van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika', in *Jaarboek voor de Eredienst van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk 1965-1966* ('s-Gravenhage 1966) 28-42.

13 See BURGER: 'Reformed Liturgy in the South African context' 165, as well as C.J. WEPENER: 'Still 'because of the weakness of some'? – A descriptive exploration of the Lord's Supper in South Africa, 1948-2002', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 18 (2002) 139-158: 142.

14 The discovery of the lectionary also found its way into the everyday lives of individuals, where private worship in a family context, with a rediscovery of rituals accompanying the lectionary and seasons on the liturgical calendar, was encouraged and made a huge impact. See, for example, J.F.M. MARAIS: *Maak gereed vir die koms van die Koning! Advent en Kersfees vir gesinne* (Stellenbosch 1999), as well as J. LAMPRECHT & D. VAN NIEKERK: *Leesrooster vir lidmate gebaseer op die Christelike jaar* (Stellenbosch 2004).

15 See P.F. THERON: 'Dogmatiese besinning oor die liturgiese praktyk (in die NGK)', paper delivered at a meeting of the Buvton Liturgy research group (Stellenbosch 2004).

formulated Reformed principles for liturgical renewal, of which a reorientation on the theological core of the Reformed confession is used as orientation. This includes, among other things, the use of the Word (*sola Scriptura*) to direct everything that happens in the liturgy, that God in Jesus Christ (not man) be given the central place in the liturgy, the view of liturgy as an encounter between God and His people, and as such an encounter where the Spirit frees the participants to live as saved people, and that *lex credendi est lex orandi*, in as far as the liturgy is concerned, must be the expression of the confessional tradition, to name only a couple.¹⁶

The current (2005) use of the lectionary in the Dutch Reformed Church is in a way an expression of this liturgical tug of war between the developments from the Liturgical Movement and 'classical' Reformed liturgy. Currently (2005) the RCL is being followed from Advent to Pentecost, but then during Ordinary time it is interrupted by a choice of readings for the sermon based on the *lectio continua* principle as used by Calvin.¹⁷

However, in general, it would not be incorrect to note that the Liturgical Movement of the twentieth century is still gaining support in some sectors within the Reformed tradition in South Africa, amidst increasing critical voices. What is evident is that the ideal of a consolidation with regards to what we have gained from the Liturgical Movement is still underway, and that we are not beyond the Liturgical Movement, as Barnard¹⁸ claims the Dutch situation to be. With regards to the liturgy, the DRC family is now only at the beginning of a movement towards consolidation, with the newly elected 'Council for the compilation of a Service Book' as possibly being a sign of this position.

Despite the influence of the Liturgical Movement and our Reformed heritage on the liturgy, there is probably not one denomination in South Africa that has not experienced the influence of the charismatic/pentecostal movements in their worship service. In the DRC family Burger (2003) distinguishes between two liturgical developments. Firstly, a more evangelical 'praise and worship' line and, secondly, 'an enrichment of the traditional liturgy'.¹⁹ The latter trend has already been discussed, but the evangelical line is reminiscent of a strong pietistic evangelic heritage of the DRC, which came mainly from the influence of Scottish ministers in the DRC during the nineteenth century.²⁰ This line also has some charismatic characteristics in some congregations, with an emphasis on the visible working of the Holy Spirit in the worship service.

Today one could add a reappraisal of the classical Reformed liturgy as a counter-movement to both the Liturgical Movement and charismatic liturgical trends. So, for example, in Stellenbosch on a Sunday the DRC Moederkerk, whose liturgy is comprised of a more 'classical Reformed' pattern, is packed with students. These young people seek a liturgy comprised mainly of a sermon, hymns and elements such as the creed, the Ten Commandments and the confession and remission of sins.²¹

16 See in this regard A.C. BARNARD: *Die erediens* 486-492, as well as M. STRAUSS: 'Die verskil tussen 'n Gereformeerde en Charismatiese erediens', in *Vir die musiekleier* 26 (1999) 7-12.

17 See M. HEYNS et al. (eds.): *Preekstudies*. For more on Calvin and his use of the *lectio continua*, see E.A. MCKEE: 'Reformed Worship in the Sixteenth Century', in L. VISCHER (ed.): *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge 2003) 17-18.

18 See M. BARNARD: 'Overleven achter steen en staal. Liturgie voorbij de Liturgische Beweging', in *Eredienstvaardig* 20,6 (2004) 214-217.

19 See BURGER: 'Reformed Liturgy in the South African context' 167

20 See BURGER: 'Reformed Liturgy in the South African context' 160-167, for a discussion of this background and influence.

21 The exact reasons for this movement however remain open for debate.

With regards to liturgical movements in the DRC family, there are thus three distinguishable trends that can be roughly typified as liturgical, classical-Reformed and charismatic.²² This liturgical diversity in one church family is a value which is part of our unique Dutch Reformed liturgical heritage. But what are the enduring characteristics of all these lines lies on the level of performance and participation. In all these types of celebration there is definitely on the side of the celebrant a movement from formal to more informal, which seems to be the preference of most church goers. There is also a movement towards more participation on the side of the congregation, and in all these lines quality music is valued very highly. These trends and liturgical diversity that often exist within the confines of one congregation are also among the major challenges to the liturgist. This makes the development of liturgical aids by the Buvton group, which are intended for use in the whole DRC family, a great challenge. Two other South African challenges also deserve mention.

4.2 Challenges: Inculturation and (dis)continuity of political worship

The Dutch liturgical tradition that was brought to South Africa was also used in the so-called Reformed mission churches of black South Africans, without much regard to the local culture of the people. The European liturgies were in many ways forced on the people and promoted by the Western missionaries as the only 'right way' in which to celebrate the liturgy. In recent decades there has been a tendency in many African (black) Reformed churches, where the people are rediscovering and valuing their own tradition and culture, to embark on a process of liturgical inculturation. This is a process that has just started in some congregations and poses a major challenge to the Reformed family.²³ Liturgical inculturation is, however, not only necessary in black churches, but in the whole DRC-family where the temptation to conform to the demands of consumerism and the development of liturgical aids to meet only the needs of the people are very real issues.

A second challenge arises from the tradition of political liturgy as inspired by the apartheid context of the second half of the twentieth century. There is a strong continuity as well as discontinuity with that tradition. On the one hand, there is a discontinuity and the urge to free the liturgy from a certain prescribed agenda. The struggle is over and some liturgies have moved back from the public arena to the inner life of the churches. On the other hand, the political liturgy is continued, but with a new agenda, such as HIV/Aids, poverty, crime and the ever present and necessary need for reconciliation. These social factors from the South African context of the past pose a challenge to the liturgy not to be apathetic about the needs of the current context by focusing only on the individual, personal and spiritual dimensions of the liturgy, but to actively engage with them and to move out into the public domain. As a theologian I believe this should be

22 If one went into minute detail with regard to liturgical trends in the DRC family, it would also be possible to identify trends that could be termed 'liturgy in the open-air', experimental liturgy such as 'blended worship' services, the influence of the Missional Church movement on the liturgy, to name only a few. With regards to the latter, following the work of the North American 'The Gospel in Our Culture Network' and launching the so-called Partnership for Missional Churches in Southern Africa in 2002, there is a nascent movement in South Africa towards establishing a missional ecclesiology in the Reformed churches. Talk of a move from a Christendom to a post-Christendom paradigm, where the latter is comparable with the pre-Christendom period of the Early Church, has inspired their thinking. This movement has an impact on the liturgy and adjectives such as 'welcoming', 'hospitable', 'open' and 'friendly' help to describe the ways in which this movement seeks to reform the liturgy.

23 See B.J. DE KLERK: 'Liturgie, transformasie en Afrika Renaissance', in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 22,2 (2001) 273-291.

part of the agenda of the church and as liturgist I believe the liturgy has a vital role to play in this regard.²⁴ Some elaboration on the theme of liturgy and its social role can be of value here.

5. LITURGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In a recent article Post²⁵ positioned himself against “a clearly culture-pessimistic viewpoint, (where) liturgy is seen as an oasis of mystery and tradition that is out of, above or against the culture of modernity”, and makes a plea for “the current liturgical and ritual praxis and culture as the inevitable milieu of liturgy”. I would like to side with Post and argue that we cannot for one moment think about the liturgy apart from the (Dutch Reformed) South African context, and against individualising tendencies where the liturgy purely serves the personal religious needs of the participants, thereby making the liturgy a comfort zone of ignorance in a context with desperate needs.

All the above trends and challenges within the Reformed family are influenced in one way or another by the South African context. And some liturgists²⁶ are taking up the challenge of reflecting scientifically on how the Christian liturgy can positively engage with these realities, realities such as poverty and unemployment, the HIV/Aids pandemic, crime and violence, reconciliation and divided churches, and the moral crisis.²⁷ Despite the way in which the liturgy can have an impact on the context, the context is also having an impact on the liturgy. For example:

- 24 See in this regard C.W. BURGER, L. MEIRING, A. VAN NIEKERK & C.J. WEPENER (eds.): *Waar die kerk werk. Verhale van verandering waar gelowiges hulle roeping uitleef* (Wellington 2005).
- 25 P.G.J. POST: ‘Panorama of Current Ritual-Liturgical Inculturation and Participation in the Netherlands: Sketch and Perspective’, in *Questions Liturgiques (Studies in Liturgy)* 85,1-2 (2004) 31. Post also shows how the liturgy is often placed outside or above the cultural context in the Roman Catholic ‘Reform of the Reform Movement’. See P.G.J. POST: ‘Over de historische referentie in de room-katholieke ‘Hervorming-van-de-hervormingsbeweging’’, in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 20 (2004) 73-88.
- 26 See in this regard the five South African case studies presented at the 2005 *Societas Liturgica* conference *Liturgy as Transformation: To heal a broken world* in Dresden, Germany, which were all on the topics of HIV/Aids, Poverty and Reconciliation, and where four of the five liturgists were from the Reformed tradition in South Africa. See also the following recent articles from the (Dutch) Reformed South African context, J.H. CILLIERS & C.J. WEPENER: ‘Research on liturgy and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty in South Africa. A theoretical departure’ (Forthcoming) 1-18; B.J. DE KLERK: ‘Liturgie, transformasie en Afrika Renaissance’; B.J. DE KLERK: ‘Die erediensgebed en miv/Vigs’, in *In die Skriflig* 37,3 (2003) 375-393; B.J. DE KLERK: ‘Liturgiese antwoorde op geweld – ’n verkenning’, in *In die Skriflig* 38,1 (2004) 145-166; B.A. MÜLLER: ‘The role of worship and ethics on the road towards reconciliation’, in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 18 (2002) 27-44; B.A. MÜLLER: ‘Liturgical and Homiletical Revisioning to Generate Hope for a Just Society’, in J.S. DREYER & J.A. VAN DER VEN (eds.): *Divine justice – human justice* (Pretoria 2002); D.J. SMIT: ‘Liturgy and life? On the importance of worship for christian ethics’, in *Scriptura* 62 (1997) 259-280; D.J. SMIT: ‘Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi? Oriënterende inleiding tot liturgie en etiek’, in *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif (NGTT)* 45,3-4 (2004) 887-907; C.J. WEPENER & J.H. CILLIERS: ‘In herinnering aan die kinders ... wat aan honger en koue moet sterf. Liturgie in ’n konteks van armoede’, in *NGTT* 45,2 *Poverty Supplementum* (2004) 364-372; C.J. WEPENER & B.A. MÜLLER: ‘“Liturgiese kitsch?” – liturgiewetenskaplike verkenning van ’n Gereformeerde ritueel’, in *NGTT* 42,3-4 (2001) 480-493; C.J. WEPENER: ‘Liturgie en versoening vóór die Reformasie: 60-312AD, 312-600AD, 500-1550AD’ (Parts 1-3), in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika (PTSA)* 18,1 (2003a) 231-256, 18,2 (2003b) 194-210, and 19,1 (2004a) 137-152; C.J. WEPENER: ‘Versoeningsrituele: tipologieë en prosesse. Insigte vanuit ’n beskrywende verkenning van die rituele mark’, in *NGTT* 45,3-4 (2004b) 763-773; C.J. WEPENER: ‘From fast to feast. Insights into the process of reconciliation from South Africa’, in *Reformed Worship* 72, Theme Issue: *Worship in Difficult Times* (2004c, June) 20-22.
- 27 In the book *Waar die kerk werk* (2005) we worked with six challenges which came to the fore in discussions with a range of South African leaders from diverse sectors. These challenges are morality,

- The Aids pandemic is influencing the core African ritual, namely the funeral, in dramatic ways. Too many deaths cause people to organise smaller funerals and there is not always enough time to conduct all the prescribed rituals that accompany a funeral. Even some of the ground water is currently being polluted in areas such as Cape Town because of the number of corpses in the ground!
- In some services the liturgy is sometimes coupled with meals offered to the poor or the collection of articles (apart from money) for the needy.²⁸

I will now further reflect upon the trends and challenges from the South African context and the challenges that they pose to the Buvton and NRF liturgical research. In order to take on these challenges, I will explore two key concepts in liturgical research, namely participatory research and liturgical inculturation. Firstly, I will look at the need for a new research methodology as experienced in the NRF research, and secondly, at the need for a process of liturgical interculturalisation as experienced by the Buvton group.

6. THE ADVANTAGES OF PAR AND LITURGICAL INTERCULTURATION

The above description of the South African context should give some insight into the challenges that the country and inevitably also the liturgy face. This social context as described above, along with our unique South African apartheid history, is forcing liturgists to rethink some concepts. My aim will be to show how the expansion of these concepts within a liturgical research design from participatory research and liturgical inculturation to participatory action research and liturgical interculturalisation can help liturgical research to make a positive scientific contribution to theology as well as contributing towards helping South Africans take on the challenges that face us. There is thus an acute consciousness of the integral relation between liturgy and its cultural context, and that the liturgy can and should also influence its context.

6.1 From participatory research to participatory action research

There is currently a small but emerging line of research on the liturgy being conducted in South Africa which follows the ritual-liturgical line from the Netherlands, by studying the enacted ritual in its multiple contexts.²⁹ And in order to do so many arguments can be made for the use of participatory research.³⁰ Participatory research is needed in order to obtain a good description of both the ritual and its contexts, but also to ascertain the appropriation of the ritual by the participants.

human development, poverty, crime and violence, HIV/Aids and reconciliation. The South African Christian Leaders Association (SACLA) identified several massive problems that South Africa faces which are similar to the latter challenges, although unemployment, family in crisis, racism and sexism can be added from their list.

28 So, for example, after the evening service in the congregation in Cape Town where the author is a part-time minister, the members serve on average 50 people a plate of food during the worship service on a Sunday evening.

29 See P.G.J. POST: 'Liturgical movements and feast culture. A Dutch research program', in P.G.J. POST, G. ROUWHORST, L. VAN TONGEREN & A. SCHEER (eds.): *Christian feast and festival. The dynamics of Western liturgy and culture* (Leuven 2001) 3-43, as well as: IDEM: 'Introduction and application. Feast as a key concept in a liturgical studies research', in *Ibidem*, 47-77.

30 Stringer states that "The first thing that any anthropologist will be interested in is a detailed study of what actually happens during the rite itself", and later, "(...) this has now become common, almost obligatory, to start any analysis of a rite with a very detailed account of what actually happens", see M.D. STRINGER: 'Liturgy and anthropology: the history of a relationship', in *Worship* 63,3 (1989) 511-512.

In a general sense participatory research entails a researcher actively engaging in the everyday activities of a group. A distinction is often made between participant and non-participant research. The difference rests in the fact that, with participant research, the researcher also takes part in activities, such as the liturgy, while this is not the case with non-participatory research. According to Bernard,³¹ a researcher observes in participatory research in such a way that people will carry on with their daily routine, and that the researcher is also able to withdraw him/herself often in order to intellectualise and write up the research. And according to Babbie and Mouton,³² the participant researcher is both member of the group being studied and researcher doing the study. All in all this is a good method for studying the enacted ritual or liturgy in its cultural context. Action research, in contrast to participatory research, is conducted in order to find a solution to a specific problem. Action research is, in other words, aimed at problem solving and not at theorising.³³ The liturgical research conducted within the framework of the NRF project, which looks at the link between poverty and liturgy, experienced these shortcomings, namely research actively serving the needs of the local community, and therefore there is a need for an alternative research methodology. In the event PAR is being applied to liturgical research.

Both participatory research and action research are good methods for studying the liturgy, depending on the aim of the research. However, participatory research is not specifically directed at problem solving and action research is not a method that studies the liturgy as an enacted rite in its original context. In PAR both problem solving and active participation of the researcher are imperative, although it goes further by also actively involving the respondents in *all* the phases of the research.³⁴ And all these qualities are important to incorporate into a research methodology, when rituals and their relation to social issues such as poverty are being researched. But what exactly is meant by PAR?

Hendriks³⁵ quotes De Vos, who describes “participatory action research as an alternative system of knowledge production, based on the subjects’ involvement in decisions regarding the questions asked”, and also as “a research process where people involved in the situation being studied, are enabled (in partnership with researchers and other role-players) to become actively involved in collective efforts to address and solve their social problems”. PAR thus recognises that there is no value-free and neutral research possible. “A neutral universal methodology that gives rise to neutral theories regarding humans is non-existent”.³⁶ Therefore PAR is a methodology which invites involvement of the people who are being studied and who act as partners in the research which is managed as an open process and in which planning occurs bottom-up (inductive) from the people in the style of enabling and empowering people.³⁷ Babbie and Mouton quote Whyte’s

31 H.R. BERNARD: *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Newbury Park / London / New Delhi 1988) 148-179. “If you make up a questionnaire in your office, send it out and wait for the mail to bring your data in, that’s not field research. If you take a random sample of a community, go door to door, and do a series of face-to-face interviews, that is field research – but it’s not participant observation. If you go to a native market in a community that you’ve never visited before, and monitor the behavior of patrons and clients as they go through their transactions, that too is field research, but it isn’t participant observation.” See also, A. STEWART: *The Ethnographer’s Method* (Thousand Oaks / London/ New Delhi 1998 = Qualitative Research Methods Series 46) 6.

32 See E.R. BABBIE & J. MOUTON: *The Practice of Social Research* (Cape Town 2001) 293.

33 See G.K. HUYSAMEN: *Methodology for the social and behavioural sciences* (Halfway House 1994) 176-177.

34 See also H. STRYDOM: ‘Participatory action research’, in A.S. DE VOS et al. (eds.): *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions* (Pretoria 2002) 419.

35 H.J. HENDRIKS: *Studying congregations in Africa* (Wellington 2004) 217, 219.

36 HENDRIKS: *Studying Congregations in Africa* 215.

37 See HENDRIKS: *Studying Congregations in Africa* 216, and *ibid.* the table on the positivist and humanistic paradigms.

definition of PAR, namely: “[PAR] involves some members of the subjects of study participating actively in all phases of the process from the design of the project, through its implementation, and including the actions that come with or follow up the research”.³⁸ But with all these descriptions of PAR in mind, what implications can the use of PAR have for liturgical research in the South African context? I list a couple with regards to the NRF-project:

- The respondents gain a voice in the research process and therefore power is distributed between researcher and subjects. It is, however, not just the researcher who participates and the respondents who gain a voice, but a real **collaboration between respondents and researcher** from the question formulation and identification of social issues in the specific context, to the implementation of strategies for change. There is a continuous reciprocity at play, so that one could state that all the research is being conducted in a dialogical mode in which the respondents become active agents in the research process and both parties are equally involved.³⁹
- The end product of PAR will firstly be that the problems being solved are those that the subjects themselves also view as problems. It is thus not only a methodology for science, but also for productive work. The researcher is thus a facilitator for change and problem solving, but in close collaboration with respondents. Respondents help to generate knowledge and are involved in solving their own problems along with the researchers. The local people are thus empowered to scrutinize at their liturgy and on that basis change what they deem necessary. In this way the research becomes liberating for disempowered people, which is important in the South African Dutch Reformed context, where many congregations are still enslaved by a Western liturgy with its concomitant values imposed on the participants, but which is a liturgical heritage that some deem as untouchable. Liturgically speaking, a process of PAR can help local congregations towards a process of **liturgical empowerment**. They will through such a process not only own the whole process, which in terms of the liturgy will mean that they will appropriate the rituals and will cooperate in the making of new ones, but they will in a ritual-liturgical sense be able to free themselves from the liturgical heritage handed to them during our apartheid and colonial past, and replace it with a ritual system through which the Holy Spirit can empower them. There is thus a double liturgical empowerment at work here: firstly, the community is empowered to improve their own liturgy themselves, and secondly, such an improved liturgy can in turn empower the people to live as God-liberated people. Such a process of liturgical empowerment through a process of PAR will help communities to become more self-reliant and assist them in building their capacity.
- According to Hendriks,⁴⁰ the **validation** of PAR will be whether the research outcomes leads to sustainable communities, the eradication of poverty and health pandemics, reconciliation, etcetera. I am convinced the slight alteration of the liturgical practice in South Africa (and the DRC family) can have a huge impact on the whole of South African society in general. As we have seen in the statistics, almost 80% of the South African population belong to the Christian church. And a good way in which this change can be achieved is by the use of PAR in liturgical

38 BABBIE & MOUTON: *The practice of social research* 60.

39 See STRYDOM: ‘Participatory action research’ 421, 422.

40 See HENDRIKS: *Studying Congregations in Africa* 221 and 219-221 for a list of 15 features that are important when using PAR in faith-based organisations. STRYDOM: ‘Participatory action research’ 422, also states that “The ultimate goal of the PAR model is that the community becomes independent and empowered to help its members to overcome the impairments in the community”.

research through which local communities are mobilised and the whole of the research process, not only the findings but the research process itself, will benefit human well being in general.

Within the framework of the NRF project we cannot afford to do research on the liturgy just for interest's sake and thus let only our personal interests dictate the choice of our research topics. We work with an open agenda on the church's role in empowerment and justice, here specifically the role that the liturgy can play to generate social capital with regards to poverty, and the research methodology should serve that purpose. And for this purpose the method of participatory research can be expanded to that of participatory action research. Liturgy striving to engage actively in the social challenges such as poverty will thus have a better chance to address the problems that the people who are participating in the liturgy are convinced are actually the problems, and not what outsiders and academic liturgists think the problem is. Furthermore, can a process of PAR move with a spiral movement back to the actual practice and help people to implement strategies for change in and through their liturgy themselves. When these central characteristics and benefits of PAR are being discussed for use in liturgical research, the well-known concept of liturgical inculturation starts to resonate.⁴¹

6.2 Liturgical inculturation and liturgical interculturalisation

Our specific multicultural context and apartheid past of social division make it imperative not only to work with the notion of liturgical inculturation,⁴² but interculturalisation. Interculturalisation is a term I borrow in the first instance from the South African missiologist David Bosch, but which has also been used by other theologians such as Shorter with regards to the liturgy.⁴³ And according to Blomjous the preferable term is in fact interculturalisation "in order to express that the process of inculturation must be lived in partnership and mutuality".⁴⁴ In these paragraphs I would like to develop this concept with regards to the experiences and challenges that the Buvton group has to address.

Liturgical inculturation should always be an ongoing process because, as Bosch correctly indicates, cultures aren't static, and the church can still discover unknown mysteries of the faith.⁴⁵ "The relation between the Christian message and culture is a creative and dynamic one, and full of surprises. There is no eternal theology, no *theologia perennis* which may play referee over 'local theologies'".⁴⁶ Theologies all over the world need each other, "they influence, challenge, enrich,

41 The above sketch of the advantages of PAR for liturgical studies can create a one-sided picture. The implementation of the PAR model does have some potential disadvantages that researchers must be aware of, such as the possible exploitation of disadvantaged groups; value orientation can lead to subjectivity and bias; it could create utopian expectations; it takes longer to complete PAR than other forms of research. See H. Strydom: Participatory action research 433-434.

42 In the South African Reformed context De Klerk is one of the few liturgists who has conducted work on the topic of liturgical inculturation. See B.J. DE KLERK: 'Wisselwerking tussen liturgie en kultuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks – Enkele vertrekpunte', in *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 16,2 (2001) 57-75.

43 See D.J. BOSCH: *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll NY 1991) 455-456, and A. SHORTER: *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll NY 1988) 13-16, also P. PHAN: 'Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age', in K.F. PECKLERS (ed.): *Liturgy in a Postmodern World* (London / New York 2003) 64, 84.

44 J. BLOMJOUS: 'Development in mission thinking and practice 1959-1980: Inculturation and interculturalisation', in *African Ecclesial Review* 22,6 (1980) 393.

45 BOSCH: *Transforming Mission* 455-456, as well as P. RYAN: 'Developing a Theology of Inculturation', in P. RYAN et al.: *Inculturation in the South African Context* (Nairobi 2000) 7, and SHORTER: *Towards a Theology* 11, who describes inculturation as an 'ongoing dialogue.

46 BOSCH: *Transforming Mission* 456.

and invigorate each other – not least so that Western theologies may be liberated from the ‘Babylonian captivity’ of many centuries. In a very real sense, then, what we are involved in is not just inculturation, but *interculturalisation*’.⁴⁷

This so-called interculturalisation thus asks for multilateral traffic between theologies from all over the world, and in such a way that the West doesn’t remain the charitable giver and the Third World the needy receivers, but that everyone in the process gives and receives in order that everyone involved is enriched through it. As Ryan rightly remarks, “Mutual growth comes through learning from our differences and building on our commonalities”.⁴⁸ Such a process of interculturalisation can, according to Bosch, help to ensure that local incarnations of the faith do not become too local, and that one church does not become so self-centred that it cannot communicate with other churches. On the other hand, there is a need for caution so that differences aren’t celebrated to such an extent that every congregation, every minister and every member each develops a local theology.⁴⁹ Interculturalisation can help churches to let the faith take root in the local culture in such a way that the Scylla and Charybdis of total universalism or complete particularism can be avoided.

Just as there is no one eternal theology, so there is not such a liturgy. For the South African Reformed liturgical situation this means that churches such as the DRC and URC, amongst others, need one another, and that these churches’ liturgies also need each other. Shorter⁵⁰ also makes the point that in inculturation we must be open to learn from strangers. Contact, or rather liturgical interculturalisation, between the different liturgies can firstly help to free the Western liturgies in South Africa (which are also being used in predominantly black Reformed churches) from their Babylonian captivity in Africa. Dialogue and interaction between liturgies from different cultures and denominations in South Africa are needed. But even more than dialogue, there is a need for true interaction and exposure to one another’s forms of worship. This can help to guard us against liturgical arrogance and the absolutising of one liturgical form of expression as the ‘right’ form. Liturgical interculturalisation can help promote sensitivity to other people’s liturgies, and to make one’s own liturgy less exclusive and more inclusive. In this way the concept of interculturalisation can be of immense help to the liturgy in South Africa, because it will bring different groups of Christians together in such a way that they can mirror what they are liturgically doing in one another’s liturgical ways.

The point here is that the process of liturgical inculturation should not occur in isolation, but in the modality of dialogue and interaction with others.⁵¹ In the Buvton group we have been busy with a process of developing liturgical aids for almost a decade, but still we find it difficult to let the liturgies truly take root in African soil and to be open and inclusive so that all the different churches within the Reformed family in South Africa can truly use the material. Through a process of liturgical inculturation we can assist our liturgies to take root in the South African context and assist in an intercultural process between at least three cultures (the cultures of the Bible, the tradition and the local people), but this process can happen in such a way that the power is still not distributed equally and that the liturgy still preserves some kind of exclusivity. This latter description of liturgical inculturation is in a certain sense a description of what liturgical inculturation is not or should not be. The critical reciprocal interaction, or critical symbiosis,

47 BOSCH: *Transforming Mission* 456.

48 RYAN: ‘Developing a Theology of Inculturation’ 8.

49 BOSCH: *Transforming Mission* 13, 15.

50 SHORTER: ‘*Towards a Theology*’ 13, 15

51 PHAN: ‘Liturgical inculturation’ 81

between cult and culture should be steered in such a way that these forms of exclusivity are avoided. The point is, however, that an incorporation of the concept interculturalisation can enhance the process of liturgical inculturation and help to maintain a self-critical element throughout the process.

On a practical level this will entail that all participants in the liturgy should be empowered to take part in the process of developing liturgical aids, and that this participation will take place in conjunction with participants from other churches, especially the different churches within the Reformed family. This will help to truly inculturate the Reformed liturgy in South Africa and at the same time nurse mutual sensitivity to liturgical diversity, and help to distribute power evenly between all the parties involved.

7. CONCLUSION

We started by outlining the current state of affairs regarding liturgical research in Dutch Reformed South Africa; we then traced some liturgical movements and challenges, and ended with a consideration of the implications that these liturgical movements and our specific context have or should have for liturgical research. The conclusion is that the processes of PAR and liturgical interculturalisation could be of assistance in this regard. In summary, the main problem as experienced by both the Buvton and the NRF group is that of an uneven distribution of power with regards to the liturgy. The quest for processes that could assist liturgists in sharing the power in such a way that it could lead to liturgical empowerment led us to an exploration of the concepts of PAR and liturgical interculturalisation. In many regards these concepts overlap and in fact complement each other. In a sense a good process of PAR conducted by liturgists will imply that a process of liturgical interculturalisation is being implemented and, by the same token, a process of liturgical interculturalisation implies that the epistemological values of PAR are being incorporated into the process. PAR involves that both researcher and respondents are actively involved, and liturgical interculturalisation aims at taking this process further to also involve researchers and participants from other liturgies. The value of both concepts for liturgical research thus lies within the domains of participation and power.

KEY WORDS

Liturgy
Worship
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Participatory action research
Methodology

TREFWOORDE

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