

# 7.

## The Mission of the Church

DONALD SENIOR, C.P.:  
BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION

The universal mission of the church is thoroughly grounded in the Word of God. The entire Bible, not just the New Testament, lays the foundation for mission.

*The Old Testament*—Even though we do not usually associate a formal sense of mission with Israel and the Old Testament, there are important aspects of the Hebrew Scriptures that relate to the universal mission of the church.

First and foremost is the consistent biblical conviction that the God of Israel is not merely a tribal God or simply the God of the Jews, but in fact is the God of the nations as well. The early chapters of Genesis portray God as the creator of the universe and of the human family. The patriarchal traditions assert that God's call—and the ultimate source of Israel's own unique destiny—begins among the nations with the call of Abraham and Sarah. The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12) has broad implications for the destiny of all humanity, as does the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9) which came before it. Even in its most ethnocentric periods, such as the post-exilic era, Israel knew that God's power extended beyond the boundaries of Judah and that, ultimately, all of the world and all humanity would be accountable to Yahweh. The God of Israel is a saving God, the God of Exodus, the God who is committed to bringing life to Israel and, ultimately, to all the world. The story of Jonah and the prophetic intuitions of Deutero-Isaiah that the prophet was called to be a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 49:1–6)—written during the post-exilic period—confirm that continuing tradition.

Another important point for mission is the fact that Israel drew much of its own culture and religious practice from the surrounding peoples. Even though election theology became an important vehicle for the self-identity of God's people and helped foster their undivided commitment to Yahweh, the Jews drew on Canaanite, Egyptian, and other impulses from their evolving cultural milieu for such essential realities as language, architecture, farming, government, and religion itself. At the same time that Israel was concerned to purify itself from what it considered the excesses of Canaanite nature religions, a prophet such as Hosea would use fertility images to describe the relationship of God and Israel. And in the development of its temple architecture and rituals, Israel borrowed heavily from other religious and cultural traditions of the Middle East.

Examples such as this can be multiplied. The importance of this for mission is that the story of Israel is, in fact, a dialectic between the covenanted people and the surrounding nations. While Israel itself was conscious of its unique destiny and jealously attempted to purify itself from corruption, at the same time it learned from other cultures and religious traditions and interacted with them in profound, if sometimes unconscious, ways. The mission of the early church was also subject to such a dynamic.

*The New Testament*—The sense of mission is profound and pervasive throughout the various books of the New Testament. Without doubt, the person and ministry of Jesus were the catalyst that made the call to a universal mission so important for the early church. But the New Testament also makes clear that a sense of that universal mission evolved only gradually in the post-resurrection period. Jesus himself seems to have confined his own ministry to Israel, with only occasional encounters with Gentiles. But the dynamic, inclusive cast of his own mission to sinners, outcasts, and occasional Gentiles, coupled with his proclamation of a God of exceptional compassion and forgiveness for the sinner, laid the foundation for the ultimate mission of the post-Easter disciples to the nations. Jesus' message proclaimed that the rule of the God of Israel was at hand (Mark 1:14–15), a rule that would be characterized by repentance and forgiveness.

That urgent eschatological message, given further impetus by resurrection faith, ultimately gave the early church its sense of being called to proclaim the good news of forgiveness to all the world.

There is no doubt that the mission to the Gentiles had many proponents in the early church. The Hellenistic Jewish Christians, already in close contact with Gentiles in the Diaspora, no doubt began early to proclaim the gospel to God-fearing Gentiles. Peter, as one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, seems to have played an important mediating role between the Palestinian Jewish Christian communities (who may have been much more hesitant about expanding the mission to Gentiles) and the Hellenistic Jewish Christian communities such as the one at Antioch where the mixture of Jews and Gentiles had led to early incursions among non-Jews (as, for example, Acts 10–15). Standing as a colossus over the entire scene is, of course, the figure of Paul whose letters elaborate a profound theology of mission. Paul was convinced that through the death and resurrection of Jesus the new age had dawned and the God of Israel was now extending salvation to all through Jesus Christ. Paul's own energetic mission in Asia Minor and Greece was testimony to his theological convictions. The tensions between Paul and the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem show us that the early church had differing views on how Gentiles were to be incorporated into the mystery of salvation and that creating a universal church where there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female" (Gal. 3:28) remained an ideal for the first generation of Christians as it does for us today.

Beneath the diversity of New Testament theologies of mission and the turbulence of the early church's own mission efforts, there remains a consistent point of unity. The God of Jesus, the God of Israel, is a compassionate, all-embracing God whose love for the world is profound and extends beyond the boundaries of race, economy, class, or gender. Jesus embodied that inclusive mission thrust in his own ministry of the kingdom, and the Gospels present that ministry as the model for the church's own call to mission (see for example, Matthew 9:35–10:42).

**DONALD KAMMERDIENER:  
SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONS**

The missions philosophy of Southern Baptists led in the earliest days of the Southern Baptist Convention to the creation of two mission boards. The Home Mission Board was charged with the missionary assignment in the United States and its territories. The Foreign Mission Board was chartered to “elicit, combine and direct” the missionary endeavors of Southern Baptists in all countries outside the United States.

This fundamental choice of a denominationally oriented and controlled mission program has resulted in the assignment of 6,860 career foreign missionaries, 3,379 of whom are currently at work in 112 nations. These missionaries have engaged in seed sowing and proclamation ministries on the one hand and in emphasis on harvesting through church planting on the other. From its beginnings in 1845 the Foreign Mission Board and its missionaries have attempted to respond to the educational, medical, and other human needs of people as a normal expression of Christian compassion. These efforts have intensified in the last generation.

The world context today has many implications for Southern Baptist missionary efforts. There is now, more than ever, a focus on the needs of the unreached and inaccessible peoples of the world. More than 3,000 such people-groups now challenge the world Christian family, and Southern Baptists share this pioneer spirit which intends to reach out to them. The Foreign Mission Board is initiating programs to assign non-resident missionaries to work in countries whose governments forbid Christian missionaries to take up residence; these will utilize the concepts of networking and research to open doors of ministry. A second development out of the contemporary context is to move toward more explicit partnerships with other Christians engaged in carrying out the Great Commission. The partnership approach responds to and helps initiate missionary activity by third world Baptists. It also finds expression in new and evolving relationships with other communions or denominations, often spoken of as Great Commission Christians.

Southern Baptist overseas mission efforts have historically been marked by steady but relatively slow paced growth in comparison to some other missionary groups. The last decade has been marked by a significant upturn in growth rates. It required 135 years for annual overseas baptismal totals to reach 100,000 for the first time. Only seven more years were required to cross the 200,000 mark in 1987. Southern Baptists today relate to over 2,000,000 overseas Baptists in more than 36,000 churches and mission congregations. In spite of this record of recent growth, a restless spirit of missionary challenge continues to evoke among Southern Baptists a desire to share a more effective witness concerning Christ among the peoples of the world.

**RITA FORBES, M.M.:**  
**MODELS OF COLLABORATION IN MISSION**

Missioners will be the first to testify to the necessity of Christian witness to the oneness of the body of Christ if their presence and action are to be credible. Diversity is not division, nor is unity identity. But the people to whom the missionary goes quickly perceive the contradiction of a message of love expressed in the language and actions of antagonism. The models of collaboration which have been developed in mission work are many and varied. The following are a few examples of the kinds of collaboration which now exists among missionaries.

*Common Prayer*—The World Day of Peace is a worldwide movement which has, from its inception, been led by women. Started by women of the church in the United States as a prayer day for missions, it has developed into a movement in which Christian people in over 170 countries in every region of the world engage together in “informed prayer and prayerful action”—the purposes of World Day of Prayer.

*Theology Schools*—The Ecumenical Christian Centre in Bangalore, India, stands for the promotion of ecumenism—the unity of churches and the unity of humankind. Established in 1963, the Centre has tried to keep the ecumenical vision alive through its involvement in the life of the church and the nation. From its early years the Centre has enjoyed the full participation of the

Christian churches and hopes to inaugurate the Indian School of Theology in 1988.

*Language Schools*—In many countries of the world there has been collaboration in language study with the opening of facilities to missionaries of many denominations. One example of this is the United Mission School in Katmandu, Nepal.

*Legislative Concerns*—One group established for vigilance in regard to legislative action is the Legislative Concerns Committee of the Hawaii Council of Churches. Their primary task is the review of bills coming before the legislature regarding relevant issues, including peace and environmental issues and human rights at home and abroad. Its recommendations are respected by legislators because they are based on sound research.

*Human Development*—Some basic forms of collaboration in mission have emerged in response to human needs. Frequently these have been spontaneous responses to calamities such as floods, famine, and war. But others have been more long-range through planning and joint financing. Coordination in Development (CODEL) is a consortium of forty-two Christian-related agencies that have programs in development assistance in Third World countries. The member organizations direct its work, and funds are granted for social and economic development projects under guidelines established by them. CODEL's focus is on ecumenical cooperation in the field and service to those people most in need of education, agricultural assistance, housing, health-care, water, and so forth.

*Ecological Concerns*—CODEL, among others, responds to the present-day need for education in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of actions which result in sustainable improvements in human conditions. It recognizes that such long-range projects depend on respect for a sound natural environment and for the traditions and mores of the local community.

Collaboration in mission can and will take many forms, depending on local situations as well as on the skills and interests of the missionaries. But above all, successful collaboration depends on human friendship and openness among persons and on their willingness to listen and to live a witness about which others will be compelled to say, "See how these Christians love one another."

(Persons who are interested in learning more about collaboration in missions may wish to contact Church Women United, Room 812, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10015. CODEL may be contacted at the same address.)

### **TOM STRANSKY, C.S.P.: MISSION AND MISSIONS**

In 1776, there were only 50,000 Catholics among the 3,500,000 new Americans. Whereas Baptists were increasing by means of very intentional evangelism of adults, including numerous Catholics, the United States Catholic Church began to grow almost exclusively through millions of European immigrants and their prolific cradle offspring.

Regarded by too many others as second-class citizens and, at most, second-class Christians, Catholics developed a strong tradition of defensiveness for the preservation of the Catholic faith and the avoidance of mass apostasy.

European Catholics judged the United States to be a foreign mission field. They sent their priests, nuns, and other church specialists and were generous with money, so that the young, unstable American Church could survive. They hoped that eventually Catholics in the United States could provide the bulk of personnel and funds and by themselves would carry out pastoral work, home evangelism, and foreign missionary activities.

In 1907, the Vatican organ for foreign missions, called the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, removed most of the United States from the list of mission territories. This meant that Catholics in the United States were on their own, so to speak, for home and foreign missions. In the next decade, the first American Catholic foreign mission societies were founded—the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Maryknoll Sisters.

Catholic overseas missionaries reached the peak number of over 9,300 in 1966. Because of the overall drop in the number of vocations to the priesthood and sisterhood in the United States, in 1988 the number was around 6,200, but with considerable increase in volunteer lay men and women missionaries, single and married.

Roman Catholic self-understanding does not accept the complete independence of any local church or of any national group of local churches. Each local church—the laity and clergy, with a bishop in communion with all other bishops, with and under the bishop of Rome—directly bears missionary responsibility not only for the unchurched at home but also for the unevangelized everywhere.

In many areas of the world (Africa, Asia, Oceania), the coordination of missionary responsibilities for personnel and funds is supervised by the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. In recent years more and more personnel from one local church in the third world are ministering in another third world area. As examples, Mexican missionaries are now in Africa, Nigerian missionaries are in other African countries, and Indian personnel are evangelizing in Thailand.

Most recent official Roman Catholic biblical understanding of mission tries to integrate three factors.

The first is explicit gospel proclamation, within and outside the borders of the church, so that everyone, everywhere, has a real opportunity to be challenged by the explicit gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, the one Lord and Savior of all.

Second is carrying out of God's works of justice and compassion by service to individuals, groups, and societal structures in temporal need, especially in the promotion of human dignity and in the fostering of human rights.

The third is the liturgical action of the church, so that individuals and communities are conscious that the kingdom of God is built up primarily by acts of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and petition before the Father, in the name of Jesus and in the Spirit.

# 8.

## How We Worship

E. GLENN HINSON AND GERARD AUSTIN, O.P.

Casual observation may cause you to wonder whether Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists have anything in common. You may conclude that unlikeness is especially true of their worship practices. You've heard the litany of differences, haven't you? Catholic worship is formal, liturgical, sacerdotal, and sacramental; Baptist worship is informal, non-liturgical, non-sacerdotal, and non-sacramental.

There may be a measure of truth in what you've heard, but there is also a considerable amount of distortion. For one thing, such characterizations describe more accurately what *used* to be rather than what *now* is true. Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists have both changed a lot in the past quarter century. To be quite fair, however, such views may never have been accurate. Catholic worship has never been so formal or Baptist so informal, for instance, that they could be seen as opposites. Catholics and Baptists both mixed formal and informal in style, liturgical and non-liturgical in form, clerical and lay involvement in leadership, and sacramental and non-sacramental in experience of grace.

This chapter is written in the conviction that Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist worship has more in common than we often recognize and that greater accuracy in describing what we do in worship, which is such a vital aspect of our Christian lives, will serve well the cause of Christ and Christ's church. In the past distortion, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation have erected

barriers and kept us apart. Thanks to the radically changed climate in which we live and work today, we have a splendid opportunity to break down walls that divide if we will seek to understand one another better.

We had better warn, by way of preface, that no one can fully depict the varieties, styles, and practice of worship which you may find among both Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics. Baptist non-conformism is so well known that it requires no further comment. What may surprise you, if you are a Baptist, is that Roman Catholics manifest a lot of diversity in their worship too. Far from being monolithic, as many Southern Baptists may assume, Catholics have always known different styles and approaches; today they have added to an already-present diversity.

### WHAT IS WORSHIP?

*Southern Baptist Response*—To begin our quest for understanding, it will be helpful first to define what we mean when we use the word “worship.” For this particular Baptist, worship is a response, a response to the love which God has poured out and is continuing to pour out on us in creation, redemption, and providence. “He’s got the whole world in his hands . . . He’s got you and me, brother (and sister), in his hands,” the grand spiritual says. To worship is to respond to such love, as the retina of the eye responds to the light. We love because God first loved us, the apostle says (1 John 4:10).

A love response can take different forms—a child’s cry of delight, spontaneous words of praise and thanksgiving, obedience in word and deed, selfless service. “As the hart pants after living streams,” confesses the psalmist, “so my soul pants for Thee, O God” (Psalm 42:1). “Praise him! Praise him! Jesus, our blessed Redeemer,” exults a favorite Baptist hymn. Like a babbling babe we cry out, trying to express the inexpressible, articulate the inarticulable, verbalize the intangible experience of grace.

Corporate worship supplies help in this. In the liturgy, on the one hand, we recite the mighty acts of God in creation, redemption, and providence. The recitation may take a variety of

forms—reading of Scriptures, hymns, symbolic acts, sermons, or others. However it is done, it serves ever to remind us that God's love has poured and is pouring on us. In the same liturgy, on the other hand, we lift up and act out our response to God's graciousness. Psalmists and hymnists and evangelists and saints assist us in our eager yearning to respond. The traditional dimensions of prayer—praise or adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition or intercession, and surrender—provide a structure for our effort to converse with a bounteous and beneficent God. We want, above all, to embody these in what we are and what we do.

*Roman Catholic Response*—A Roman Catholic could feel quite at home with what was just expressed, especially with the statement that worship is a response to God's love. Most Catholics tend to distinguish between their private, devotional prayer-life and worship as such. They would limit "worship" to corporate, church-approved liturgy such as what takes place at the Lord's Supper (which they call Eucharist or Mass) or at a baptism and so on, while their private, devotional prayer-life would cover what they do alone or with selected others, such as family members. Thus, they have a tendency to view saying grace at meals or reciting the rosary as prayer but not as worship. Worship is what is done in church. The highest form of worship for Catholics is the Eucharist.

#### WHAT IS ITS SETTING?

*Southern Baptist Response*—Baptists have often made light of the setting for worship. "You can worship in a barn just as well as you can in a cathedral," many have declared. Behind such statements lie the Puritans' insistence on simplicity and the conviction that ornate architecture and elaborate art stood in the way of authentic spiritual worship. For Baptists there was further encouragement in their origins among persons of predominantly modest socio-economic backgrounds who could not appreciate aesthetics as much as plain morality. On the American frontier especially, Baptists threw up simple buildings with whatever materials they had at hand—hewn logs, then clapboard, and,

eventually, brick, stone, or other materials. They scrupulously avoided art, even symbols such as crosses, lest they lapse into any "impure" practice of worship, for instance, that which did not *directly* communicate with God without media. When The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary finished its present Alumni Chapel in 1951, the switchboard lit up with anxious calls about what was thought to be a cross on the steeple. Callers were reassured when told it was not a cross but a weathervane.

Southern Baptist attitudes have changed dramatically since World War II, however. As Southern Baptists have moved up the social ladder, they have learned to appreciate art and architecture in ways their forebears did not. All over the South today, one can see Baptist churches which are fine specimens of architecture, predominately Georgian but sometimes neo-Gothic, neo-classical, or some modern style. Stained glass windows detailing some special moment in Christian or Baptist history, paintings in baptistries (usually located behind the choir loft at the front of the church) gold or wooden crosses (though never crucifixes), and other forms of art have become increasingly common.

In recent years Southern Baptists have given more attention to seating arrangements. Once rectangular style, like the basilica, dominated. Today many churches are arranged in circular, convergent styles to enhance the sense of participation and fellowship. Although the sermon still dominates Baptist worship, lay ability and desire to participate have increased enough to encourage greater attention to architectural styles which facilitate it.

*Roman Catholic Response*—In the earliest days Christians gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper not in special buildings, but in private homes, usually those of the well-to-do who put their homes at the disposal of the church. Scholars have disabused us of the romantic idea that the early Christians worshiped in the dark chambers of the catacombs. What was important for the early Christians was not the building, but the gathered assembly of Christians. One early Christian boasted in opposition to the pagans: "We have no shrines and altars." But the fourth century witnessed the building of churches, and ever since Catholics have placed a very high importance on them.

Before the Second Vatican Council most Roman Catholic church buildings were what we would consider today to be a bit cluttered. Statues, stations of the cross along the church walls, communion rails (often made of ornate marble), confessionals, baptistries, and so forth often created visual opposition or rivalry with what is considered today the chief architectural focus, namely, the altar. Many parishes have remodeled their churches since Vatican II, trying to highlight the role of the altar and the primacy of the assembly itself. Still there is far from unanimity on this point, and many Catholics today would argue that the recently built churches are far too stark.

### WHAT ARE ITS ELEMENTS?

*Southern Baptist Response*—Southern Baptist worship is usually simple with the sermon as the central feature. A typical service at Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky would include the following elements:

Musical Prelude  
Call to Worship  
Invocation  
Congregational Hymn  
(Apostles' Creed)  
Confession of Sin  
Scripture Reading (Old Testament)  
Thanksgiving Prayer  
Offertory Hymn  
Lord's Prayer  
Doxology or *Gloria Patri*  
Scripture Reading (New Testament)  
Choir Special or Solo  
Sermon  
Invitation  
Presentation of "Decisions"  
Benediction  
Postlude

Early Baptists followed John Calvin in chanting psalms and opposed the use of musical instruments or hymns. After a controversy over hymn-singing during the eighteenth century most Baptists began to put such reservations behind them. Among Southern Baptists music has become increasingly important in public worship. Baptist colleges and seminaries prepare highly qualified ministers of music who can train and lead choirs composed of various age groups. Training initiated at about age three not only assures good performance from choirs but also improves congregational singing and raises the level of appreciation for music. Skillful music directors may help to tie the entire worship service together, usually in a manner which complements the sermon.

Music in Southern Baptist worship ranges all the way from Bach cantatas to spirituals and pop gospel songs. Most congregations probably prefer gospel type hymns, but the level of appreciation varies widely and has moved upwards as Southern Baptists have become better educated in music. Southern Baptists are turning out a growing number of musical compositions embodying their own evangelistic and theological outlook.

Hymns are largely prayers, but they do not substitute for specially spoken prayers framing the service. From the beginning, Baptists have expressed a preference for spontaneous or impromptu prayers. In recent years, however, many have begun to realize the value of preparing public prayers in advance and either reading them or delivering them with careful notes in mind. Both lay persons and ministers may lead in prayer. Usually the pastor says the pastoral intercessory prayer, but other participants may sound a Call to Worship, Invocation, Thanksgiving, and perhaps even the Benediction. Where Southern Baptists pay careful attention to public prayer, they attempt to include all major forms or dimensions through song or prayer: praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition or intercession, and surrender.

Unabashedly "people of the Book," Southern Baptists try to base their worship on Scriptures and usually include generous readings from them. Not many congregations follow the lectionary, for Baptists traditionally have taken a "user-friendly" approach: Scriptures are usually chosen on the basis of the sermon

topic. This approach often means limiting the Scripture reading to the text chosen for the sermon rather than a balance of readings from the Old Testament, Epistles, and Gospels. The congregation sits throughout these readings.

Baptists have had strong reservations about the use of creeds from their earliest days and prefer the term “confession” because it sounds less authoritarian. Many Southern Baptist churches have recognized in recent years, however, that Christians need to articulate their faith in some regular way. Rather than using long and elaborate Baptist confessions in worship, those which reserve a place for confession of faith recite the Apostles’ Creed.

The sermon is the centerpiece in Southern Baptist worship, as important as the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist in Roman Catholic worship. Sermons ordinarily last from twenty to thirty minutes or more. Sermons styles vary widely. Popular preachers usually deliver them in an animated fashion, but you may also hear more subdued and scholarly sermons. Many pastors with limited education (about half of all Southern Baptist ministers have neither college nor seminary training) feed their flocks a steady diet of evangelistic sermons. College and seminary-trained ministers usually try to vary the fare in both style and content. In all instances, however, the sermon is regarded as the chief means by which people receive the word of God found in Scriptures. To be authentic, then, sermons must be “biblical,” whether by way of exposition or by drawing out insights found therein.

The invitation to make a public “decision” concerning a profession of faith or church membership or “full-time Christian service” has become a kind of sacrament among Southern Baptists. Seldom used by other Baptists, the invitation developed during the Great Awakening as some Baptists overcame a reluctance to use “means” to effect conversions. Since Southern Baptists have roots sunk deeply into the Awakening, they have retained and elaborated on this element. Some ministers make an art of “casting the net” to persuade the uncommitted to respond. The invitation aims directly to achieve the chief goal of virtually everything Southern Baptists engage in—that is, “winning the lost” to Christ.

*Roman Catholic Response*—The Eucharist (or Mass) is to the Roman Catholic worshiper what the sermon is to his or her Southern Baptist counterpart. The sermon is, of course, part of the Eucharist, and is becoming more and more important in Catholic piety. The Eucharist is made up of two principal parts, whose interdependence was described by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican II: “The two parts which, in a certain sense, go to make up the Mass, namely, the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship” (para. 56).

The Scripture readings are set in advance, and all Roman Catholic churches throughout the world follow the same cycle of readings. On Sunday there are three readings from Scripture: the first is always from the Old Testament (except during Paschaltide when the *Acts of the Apostles* is used): the second is from the New Testament letters (or from the *Book of Revelation*): and the third is always taken from one of the four Gospels. The set cycle of readings begins anew every three years, thus exposing Catholics to a greater number of Scripture passages than they had known in the past. The sermon is to be based on the biblical readings. There then follow a profession of faith (viewed as a re-commitment to the faith of one’s baptism) and a prayer of intercession for the needs of the whole church, the world, the oppressed, and the local assembly.

The liturgy of the Eucharist contains: the preparation of the gifts, the eucharistic prayer, and the rite of communion. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* lists the principal elements that constitute the eucharistic prayer: thanksgiving, acclamation, invocation of the Holy Spirit, institution narrative, memorial, offering, intercessions, and doxology (para. 55).

In recent years more and more Catholics are receiving communion at the Eucharist. Most of them receive under the form of bread alone, although reception under both forms, bread and cup, is considered the ideal.

Only an ordained priest may preside at the Eucharist, and in light of the increasing shortage of priests in certain areas, this is beginning to pose a serious problem. Many Catholics feel that the rule of mandatory celibacy for priests should be aban-

doned rather than have local congregations deprived of Sunday Eucharist.

### HOW OFTEN DO WE WORSHIP?

*Southern Baptist Response*—Southern Baptist churches usually gather three times each week for worship—twice on Sunday and once on Wednesday evening—although some churches meet less frequently and a few more frequently. The major worship service takes place on Sunday morning. It is usually fuller and more formal than the other services. Traditionally, Southern Baptist churches have kept their Sunday night services somewhat informal and often evangelistic in tone. Instead of carefully structured worship like that on Sunday morning, the congregation may be asked to select favorite hymns or to participate informally in other aspects of the service. Many Baptists will designate the Sunday morning service as a worship service and the Sunday evening service as an evangelistic service.

Wednesday services are still more informal. Usually called “Prayer Meetings,” they devote most of the time to prayers of intercession and petition, but they may also include the singing of a hymn or two and a brief meditation. Prayers are normally impromptu as the worship leader calls on different persons to voice them.

*Roman Catholic Response*—The vast majority of Roman Catholics worship together only on Sunday. Since apostolic times Sunday, the “Day of the Lord,” has held primacy of place. In recent years permission has been granted to have anticipated Sunday Eucharist on Saturday afternoon or evening. The justification for this is based on the early church practice of reckoning time in Hebrew fashion, that is, seeing the day as having begun from sunset of the previous day.

Most churches provide daily Eucharist during the week, but large numbers do not attend, except perhaps during the season of Lent which prepares for Easter. An even smaller number of churches provides devotional services or morning prayer or evening prayer. Finally, some Roman Catholic parishes have

prayer groups that meet, usually during the week at night, where Scripture is read, and prayers are shared, often including praying in tongues.

### WHAT OF THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR?

*Southern Baptist Response*—Southern Baptists have attached little importance to the calendar in the past, but that attitude is changing little by little. Major moments in the Christian year such as Easter, Christmas, and New Year's Day, to be sure, have always commanded attention in Baptist churches. For recent years many congregations have begun to observe Holy Week, Advent, Pentecost, and, in a few cases, even Lent. Often they give special emphasis to Maundy Thursday, footwashing included, and Good Friday. A few churches organize their worship around the lectionary.

Southern Baptists do not include saints' days or other special moments in the Catholic calendar. They have added a few observances of their own, however: a Lottie Moon Christmas offering for foreign missions, an Annie Armstrong Easter offering for home missions, and Thanksgiving services. Many churches now include a Peace Sunday on or around the dates of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 9).

*Roman Catholic Response*—Roman Catholic worship is intimately tied in with the calendar or the liturgical year. The foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year is the Sunday, the weekly observance. There is also the annual observance, the "Great Sunday" as one early church writer labelled it, which lasts for fifty days, namely, from Easter to Pentecost.

While Easter (with its accompanying Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies) constitutes the apex of the annual liturgical celebration, most Catholics hold a unique place in their piety for the celebration of Christmas.

Since Vatican II the liturgical calendar has observed fewer saints' days, in an effort not to obscure the important seasons of Advent (preparation for Christmas) and Lent (preparation for Easter), and to leave room for local churches to celebrate their own particular saints and patrons.

## HOW DO PEOPLE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP?

*Southern Baptist Response*—At one time Baptists in the South spent a considerable amount of time in private and family devotion—Bible reading, prayer, or meditation. Such disciplines have diminished in recent years, however, as the South and the Southern Baptist Convention have undergone a transition from a largely rural to a largely urban constituency. A few, but not many, families may still read the Scriptures listed for daily Bible readings in convention literature and brief devotionals from *Open Windows*, a small quarterly published by the convention, or other materials. A much larger number will offer thanks at mealtimes, though often in a perfunctory way.

Currently, concern for spirituality is on the upsurge among Southern Baptists just as it is among other Christians. Many are searching for ways to enhance their entire experience of worship. From other Christians they are borrowing ideas which may help. Icons, altars, and other private aids can occasionally be found in Baptist homes. Southern Baptists take retreats in Roman Catholic or Anglican centers and seek spiritual guidance from those who can offer it. They use prayer manuals and other aids.

*Roman Catholic Response*—The Roman Catholic response to this particular question is remarkably akin to the Southern Baptist response. Family devotions, such as the recitation of the rosary, seem to have declined in recent years. A fair number of Catholic families will offer thanks at mealtimes, but again, often in a perfunctory way.

Still, many Catholics, although not the majority by any means, are preparing for worship by Bible reading, especially by reading the Scripture designated for use at the Sunday Eucharist. Still more are trying to prepare for the next Eucharist by attempting to live “eucharistically” during the week by giving of oneself for others.

## WHAT ARE SACRAMENTS OR ORDINANCES?

*Southern Baptist Response*—Like other Baptists, Southern Baptists recognize only two sacraments or, as they prefer to call

them, ordinances: baptism and Lord's Supper. They observe both in a rather simple manner using biblical texts.

Baptisms may be performed at any time during the year when candidates are available. At one time many Southern Baptist churches baptized in creeks, rivers, lakes, or ponds. Since most churches have baptistries today, outdoor ceremonies are uncommon. Candidates may wear normal street clothes or robes designed for baptism. Normally they will receive instruction about the service prior to baptism. The baptizer, usually the pastor of a church, will stand in the water with each person being baptized. Sometimes an interrogation takes place, but it rarely involves a full creed. After this, the baptizer will immerse the candidate once, using a formula such as: "On the basis of your profession of faith in Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." The newly baptized proceed from the baptistry to a dressing room where they dry off and dress. Then they join the congregation. In some churches they will receive their first communion at this time.

The Lord's Supper or Eucharist is not accorded the importance in Baptist churches it receives in Roman Catholic churches. Normally observed about once a month, sometimes only four times in a year; in the past churches often tacked it onto the end of a service. Today, however, many churches attach growing importance to the Lord's Supper and take greater pains to do it with dignity. The typical service will be done simply using biblical formulas such as 1 Corinthians 11:23–25. Most Southern Baptists will interpret the Lord's Supper as a sign rather than as a means of grace. Churches vary, however, regarding whom they allow to partake. Some will restrict participation to members of that local congregation, others to persons "of like faith and order" (that is, other Baptists), and others to all believers in Jesus Christ.

*Roman Catholic Response*—Roman Catholics would add to the Southern Baptist sacraments (ordinances) of baptism and Lord's Supper five more: confirmation, penance, marriage, order, and anointing of the sick. These seven activities of the church are considered to be privileged moments in the life of Christians, and they would be considered to be both signs and

means of grace. Three can be received only once: baptism, confirmation, order (ordination of deacons, priests, and bishops). The most important of the seven is Eucharist, and while baptism is the gateway to all the other sacraments, Eucharist serves as the goal to which all the sacraments lead. The Eucharist can be presided over only by an ordained priest or bishop.

A major difference between Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists is that Catholics accept, and encourage, the baptism of infants of believing parents.

### WHERE IS WORSHIP GOING?

Looking back over what we have said in this chapter, one may see several lines of convergence at some future date. Since the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholics have accommodated their worship to the American setting more, while Southern Baptists have gained a greater appreciation for the Catholic tradition.

Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics will doubtless continue down separate roads in the prominence they assign to preaching or the Eucharist and in the role assigned to sacraments, but they are traveling toward one another in several ways: in their understanding of worship, in participants in the services, in appreciation for art and architecture as aids to worship, in basic elements of worship, in times for worship, especially the calendar, in preparation for worship, and in at least observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. Continuing conversations should encourage further exchange and sharing of ideas and practice which will lead toward genuine unity.