Liturgical Minimisation
In the
Presbyterian Church of Australia

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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The University of Newcastle
June 2009
Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the copyright Act 1968.
Acknowledgements

The preparation of this thesis has not been a simple project that takes a mere three or four years. The content of the thesis is in a real sense an accumulation of knowledge and experience with in the Presbyterian Church in N.S.W. and Victoria for over 44 years. The thesis would have never seen the light of day but for the radical change in worship practice that I have seen and experienced in the Presbyterian Church in Australia over those years as a minister of the gospel.

I am forever in debt to my two supervisors. **Professor Ronald Laura, DPhil. (Oxon)**, Professor of Education within the University of Newcastle. I am grateful for his philosophical understanding of the issues arising in this thesis and his outstanding wisdom and advice. The intellectual challenges that he posed I will never forget.

**Emeritus Professor John Ramsland PhD.** Professor of History within the University of Newcastle. His outstanding historical scholarship will be forever valued. I was grateful for his hospitality at any time I so desired, even though he was busy with the writing of other histories and supervising others.

In 2006 I met with the **Rev. Professor Duncan Forrester DPhil, DD.** in Edinburgh whilst attending the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The meeting was brief but the outcome was significant, as his kind advice and the gift of one of his books enabled me to clarify important issues that made this thesis more coherent.

I would be remiss in not acknowledging my two wonderful friends who encouraged me in this study every step of the way: The Rev. Douglas Murray and the Rev. Robert Willson. They may feel that they did little but they did so much.

Special thanks to Meg Barcan and the kindness of members of my congregation at Scots Kirk, Hamilton especially Bill Burns and Leone Barnett who proof read the thesis and offered valuable suggestions and Alison Davies who graciously provided technical advice and help on many occasions.

John Webster
Pentecost 2009
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The Presbyterian Church in Australia, and in particular in the State of New South Wales, experienced a major disruption in 1977 with the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia. Since that time, under the influence of a revival of Puritan theology, the historic liturgical practices of the Church have been minimised to the point that older people such as myself no longer recognise many of the contemporary worship practices as Presbyterian. John Calvin’s notion of worship in which the worshipper is confronted with God’s unspeakable Majesty and Otherness, the divine transcendence of which leaves the soul awestruck and in a deep sense of humility has given way to informality and the absence of symbol.

In what follows I shall argue that given this monumental paradigm shift the Church is facing a monumental crisis in its theological and philosophical assumptions. The awful tragedy is that there are many current ministers who are not aware that there is anything wrong. The crisis I allude to is changing the very nature of traditional Presbyterianism. Future generations will see this crisis as the watershed that changed the nature of the denomination and its institutional politics.

In order to investigate the concept of liturgical minimisation, I will place the thesis in a historical context and then make explicit the implicit philosophical and theological underpinnings of this transitional period in the Church’s history.

The liturgical minimisation process will be shown to have direct links to a specific epistemology that has its origins in the Enlightenment period. The application of an empirical based epistemology into the theological realm by scholars such as Thomas Chalmers, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield and Broughton Knox opens the door to theological distortions. This thesis argues that the Church needs to continue to develop and practise a specific Christian epistemology that is grounded in the love of Jesus Christ in order to move ahead with a coherent Gospel which brings real connectivity with God, nature, historical Christianity and with one other.
Apprehending the philosophical and theological underpinnings I will argue that it is necessary to consider a serious reconstruction of Theological Education in which the conceptual framework is located in a specific Christian epistemology, engendering the Lordship of Christ and encouraging a spirit of transformative love and connectedness. It is only in this context that the theology of worship and the beauty and usefulness of liturgical forms can be appreciated.
Introduction

Liturgical Minimisation within the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales.

In the thesis that follows I shall argue that the role of theological education in the professional development of clergy for the Presbyterian Church in Australia is at a critical point in its history. **Liturgical Minimisation** which I define as, the process of removing from a liturgy\(^1\) anything that is theologically unacceptable or anything that is indifferent which has no direct command in holy Scripture, has been a process that has been evolving in the Presbyterian Church, and in New South Wales in particular, and represents a microcosmic template for understanding a crisis which confronts the Presbyterian Church at the broader macrocosmic level throughout Australia and which impacts on its theology and institutional politics. Liturgical Minimisation is the principal theme of this thesis and it impacts upon theological education because the minimisation process is a reflection of how the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Church are understood, doctrines that should be taught in detail in a student’s formative years in College.

I shall show that this crisis in the liturgy of the Presbyterian Church is another example of how “a pattern of conflict” can emerge within the Church whether it emerges in the early colonial Church of the nineteenth century or resurfaces in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, in other forms. I shall also argue that the liturgical minimisation process

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\(^1\)“Liturgy” is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as “…forms of public worship, formularies for this”;

is seriously flawed as it relies upon a scientific methodology that is epistemologically inconsistent with Biblical Christianity.

I will argue for a consistent Christian Epistemology which will provide a better means upon which to develop a liturgical practice that is consistent with the Church’s Reformed heritage.

The role of theological education is of critical importance as it is the provider of the professional development of clergy for the Presbyterian Church in Australia. A critical assessment and a possible reconstruction of its curriculum will become a necessity.

The crisis which faces the Church has not occurred in a vacuum, not unlike many other public institutions which find it difficult to adjust to a rapidly changing social climate and a major philosophical shift from a modern to a post-modern paradigm. In a very poignant article, Charles Colson, of Watergate fame, points out how accurate George Orwell’s 1984 and Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World, have been. He writes:

“Orwell foresaw a Communist government that would ban books; Huxley foresaw a Western government that wouldn’t need to ban them – because no one would read serious books any more. Orwell predicted a society deprived of information; Huxley predicted a society oversaturated by information from the electronic media – until people lost the ability to analyse what they saw and heard. Orwell feared a system that concealed the truth; Huxley feared a system where people stopped caring about truth and cared only about what made them feel good… It is Huxley’s book that opens a window on our own society - where the Christian message is not forcibly suppressed; instead it is swamped by triviality.”2

The crisis the Church faces is serious as the postmodern context in which it struggles to survive is by its very nature antithetical to the religious world view, impacting in turn on its theological teaching and its consequent practices of worship. One serious expression of concern has been voiced that some worship services of the Church seem to be more a reflection of modern pop culture than the doctrinal foundations of the Church that demand a deep reverence and awe of God, characteristic of the Calvinistic

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mode of worship. N.R. Needham has expressed the construct of contemporary worship in terms of “the human subject - human experiences, feeling and responses - rather than in terms of the divine object, God, the blessed self-revealing Trinity, and his will, word and activity”\(^3\). The crisis the Church faces impacts on the Church’s role as a provider of higher education, as the cultural paradigm in which the evangelical faith of the past was explained, proclaimed, and defended has come to an end. With the emergence of a new paradigm, we see that the old wineskins are collapsing. It is not the faith that needs to be changed but the paradigm in which Christianity is communicated.\(^4\)

Theological Education is of prime importance to the Church’s expression of its theology and worship practices.

Throughout this thesis I will be developing the idea of Liturgical Minimisation as a radical departure from the theology of worship advocated by the protestant reformer John Calvin.

I will argue that there has been a radical departure from Calvin’s notion of worship in which recognition is given to ‘God’s unspeakable Majesty and Otherness, and the nothingness and simplicity of man.’ In the service of worship, the worshipper is confronted with the divine transcendence of a Holy God. Calvin’s paradigm has given way to a new and disturbing paradigm whereby worship has capitulated to the desires and whims of a culture that is imbued with a postmodern philosophy. I have laboured to explain this paradigm shift and the unfortunate outcomes, by incorporating two fundamental themes: one of which is minor while the other constitutes the major theme of the thesis.

I begin my investigation by providing the minor theme of the thesis, a *pattern of conflict*, in which the major theme of liturgical Minimisation is considered. Liturgical

\(^4\) Robert E. Webber *The Younger Evangelicals* Baker Books Michigan 2002 P. 15
Minimisation must be placed within the historical context of Australian Presbyterianism as I will labour to show in this minor theme that the founding of Presbyterianism, in New South Wales, by the Rev. Dr John Dunmore Lang, was so turbulent in the harsh political, social and economic environment, that a *pattern of conflict* emerged within the Church, and this characteristic has resurfaced from time to time in its history up to the present day. The evolution of socio-political factors and the associated theological considerations in the developing ‘patterns of conflict,’ are often overlooked in favour of expedient resolution. Let me now turn more determinately to the way in which I shall elaborate this task. I do so by briefly outlining the chapters of the thesis.

**Chapter One, Socio-Political Patterns in Early Presbyterianism in New South Wales.**

I will endeavour to show that the rise of Presbyterianism, especially in the colony of New South Wales, began as the result of Scottish immigration to Australia. The Scots naturally brought with them their passions and ideals of life. Their world view of life focused upon a Biblical interpretation of the whole of life. The influence of the famous Dr Thomas Chalmers was profound. Chalmers held the chair of Divinity at Edinburgh University and was one of the leaders of the Disruption in the Church of Scotland in 1843. Chalmers breathed new life into evangelical Christianity long before he was installed in the prestigious chair at Edinburgh. Stuart Piggin has encapsulated the influence and importance of Chalmers’ teaching whilst he was professor of Moral Philosophy at St Andrews University. Chalmers sought to establish a Godly Commonwealth where Education, the Sciences, Commerce, Social welfare and Ethics were all part of a comprehensive Christian world view. There had always been a close connection and commitment between Church and school and it is no surprise that this gave rise to the founding of educational institutions, such as the Australian College, established by the first Presbyterian minister to the Colony, the Rev. Dr John

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Dunmore Lang. The Scots also brought with them the theological foundations of their Church. The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms were foundational for the Church which they established, reflecting the theology of the Protestant revolt of the sixteenth century.

The Presbyterian Church in N.S.W. began with humble beginnings very early in Australian history. It was in 1809 that an honorary catechist conducted worship according to the customs of the Presbyterian Church. The worship was marked by simplicity and the awe of the presence of the Creator. The fundamentals of worship were expressive of “Reformed Worship” which was grounded in the theology of Jean (John) Calvin, the sixteenth century reformer. For Calvin, a worshipper is confronted with God’s unspeakable Majesty and Otherness and the nothingness and simplicity of man.6 Evelyn Underhill notes that this type of worship is the result of a great religious experience – the impact of the divine transcendence on the awe struck soul – and the efforts towards a response is conditioned by a deep sense of human limitation.

The immigration of the Scots was promoted by the Lang, who arrived in Sydney on 23 May 1823. Lang soon concluded that the Church and society had a limited future unless there was a significant immigration of people who could provide expertise in every facet of society and promote the Protestant ascendancy in the Colony. In 1831 he persuaded the British government to assist 140 Scottish workers and their families to settle in Australia, so that they could build a Presbyterian school.7 The scheme was successful. He urged that monies raised from the sale of crown land should be used to assist immigrants with their expenses. His many visits to his homeland of Scotland resulted in the immigration of free settlers who had expertise in agriculture, commerce, education, medicine, trades and other occupations. Australia was seen as a land of opportunity. Between March 1837 and January 1840, 5,263

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6 Evelyn Underhill *Worship* Collins Lon. 1936 P.287
7 A. Gilchrist & G. Powell *John Dunmore Lang, Australian Pioneer Republican* New Melbourne Press 1999 P.71
Scots migrated to Australia. Lang’s commitment to education was soon realised with the building of a school commencing in 1831 and classes commencing in the same year in rented premises. The College was established on the plan of the Belfast College. There was a Principal and four professors teaching English, Mercantile Education, Latin, Greek, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. The staff of the College came from Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities. James Cameron notes that many of the prominent colonists received their education at this institution. This illustrates how important immigration was for the founding of the Colony as builders and educators were needed to build and establish this important institution, some nineteen years before the founding of the University of Sydney.

Such was Lang’s influence in immigration policy, the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted in Lang’s obituary upon his death on the 8th August 1878, “Posterity will remember Dr. Lang as a hard working, enthusiastic labourer in the cause of free immigration, yeomanry settlement, popular government and national education.” Ultimately, the Presbyterian Church became the third largest Christian denomination behind the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

The foundational basis of Presbyterianism was written into the “Enabling Acts” of Parliament in all Australian States soon after federation. Specifically the New South Wales Act says,

> “From the twenty Fourth Day of July 1901, the basis of Union and Articles of Agreement set forth in this Schedule to this Act, shall have the full force and effect of law, and except as therein provided, nothing done in accordance with the provisions of the said Basis of Union and Articles of Agreement shall have the effect of divesting the Presbyterian Church of N.S.W., the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, the Presbyterian Church of South Australia, or the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, or any congregation, body or person, of any property situated within the Colony of NSW or subject to the jurisdiction of that colony, which is or shall be held in trust for any of the Churches, or for any congregation or body in connection therewith.”

This Act may be cited as “The Presbyterian Church of Australia Act, 1900”.

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8 Iain Murray *Australian Christian Life from 1788* Banner of Truth Trust 1988 Edinburgh. P.113
9 Gilchrist & Powell P. 89
10 James Cameron *Centenary History of the Presbyterian Church in N.S.W.* Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1905 P.6
11 *The Sydney Morning Herald* 8th August. 1878
The Scots brought with them their high educational ideals. The Scots became a dominant force in the founding of the University of Sydney in 1850. The first professors of medicine, chemistry, physics, geology, philosophy, modern literature, education, economics, zoology, veterinary science, agriculture and mathematics were all Scots. The central importance of philosophy in Scotland was reflected in the fact that three Scots held the chair of Philosophy for a total of sixty six years, between 1890 and 1963.

It comes as no surprise that the high value of education was also reflected in Theological Education. The Scottish Theological tradition was embraced by the NSW Presbyterian Church when it appointed its first professor, Andrew Harper from Glasgow. Andrew Harper came with a wealth of academic experience. He trained at New College, Edinburgh, and the University of Berlin. He became the Principal of St. Andrews College, Sydney, and held the chair of Oriental Languages within the Sydney University. The Church in NSW set up its Theological Hall within St. Andrew’s College. This arrangement continued by the grace of St Andrews until 1977.

The rules and regulations governing theological education specified that each applicant should be a graduate in another faculty or its equivalent other than theology. The courses of study ideally were to lead to the University’s post graduate Bachelor of Divinity, although a certificate course was also in place for non graduate students.

Theological Education played a very important role in the life of the Church and the broad educational attainments of its ministers. In the twentieth century the Church appointed two outstanding professors who had a great appeal and who were to exercise a powerful influence upon the Church at large. Professor Samuel Angus from Princeton and Professor John McIntyre from Edinburgh brought with them world- class scholarship that had a lasting influence upon the Church’s intellectual life.
In 1977 the Uniting Church was formed. This was a union between the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and the Methodists. Not all the Presbyterians entered the union. Broadly speaking there were about 53% of the membership joined the new Uniting Church. The other 47% remained within the continuing Presbyterian Church, as the Articles of Agreement were never withdrawn, so preserving the legal identity of the Church. The formation of the Uniting Church created just another denomination, its ideal of “uniting” various denominations into a single entity was never realised. The remnant of the Presbyterian Church was theologically very conservative, and was anxious to uphold its confessional standards. It was generally thought among the conservative elements of the Church that the theological basis of the Union document was not only deficient but represented a radical departure from the historical foundations of Presbyterianism.

It was primarily the adherence to its Confessional standards that defined the worship practices of the Church as Calvinistic in character. Evelyn Underhill notes that in worship, Calvin sees “God’s unspeakable Majesty and Otherness, and the nothingness and simplicity of man”. It is in worship that man experiences the “Divine Transcendence on the awe-struck soul”. This becomes the bedrock of ideal worship. If the Church’s practice of worship is reflective of its historical and theological heritage the practice of worship with its theological foundations becomes an important aspect of Theological Education just as the theory of the practice of education is in any faculty of education. In this chapter I have not only given a brief outline of the founding of Presbyterianism in New South Wales, but I will show the extent to which the commitment of the Church to education has been regarded as a priority. As part of its commitment to education, the Church established a faculty for Theological Education in the eighteen seventies. The establishment of the theological faculty should not be underestimated as it is in the process of Theological Education that the doctrinal basis of

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12 Evelyn Underhill  *Worship*  Collins London 1936  P.286 -287
the Church is inculcated and given expression in the life and function of the Church. Theological Education is of critical importance for the future direction of the Church, as its theological adherence and practical outworking of its theological perspective is passed on to succeeding generations of clergy. It is therefore necessary to define the practice of worship and its connection with the Church’s theological perspective. That is to be teased out in chapter two.

**Chapter Two. Defining the Practice of Worship in the Presbyterian Church.**

It is in chapters two and three that I begin the major theme of this thesis: *Liturical Minimisation.*

I will seek to show in this chapter that the practice of worship needs to be ‘Trinitarian’ in which belief systems are given one of their most poignant forms of expression. There are many contemporary and independent Churches whose worship practices give expression to a theological foundation that is vague and lacking in biblical and historical substance. To a “traditionalist” within a mainline denomination, these modal expressions of worship seem chaotic and, from a theological perspective, dysfunctional. This may well be true of any number of independent Churches but it is also true of many congregations within the Presbyterian Church in recent years. This immediately raises serious questions of theological importance. For example, the worship patterns have been changing rapidly especially in the past ten years. It has been suggested by some members of the Church that a hurricane has hit the Church as the old patterns of worship have been torn apart. The worship patterns of the twenty-first century stand in stark contrast to the pre-union Church. The traditional form of worship with its pronounced liturgical and Calvinistic tenor is now retained only by a handful of parishes.

- The solemnity of worship has given way to a jovial atmosphere.
• The sense of God’s Majesty and Otherness has given way to a Lutheran idea of worship as liberation and assurance.

• The sense of God’s Holiness has dissipated to a shadow of the past.

• In the most part, liturgical forms and symbol are no longer evident, as they are deemed to be unnecessary. Such forms and symbols are viewed by many as a capitulation to Roman Catholicism or as an unnecessary part of Reformed worship practice.

• The Davidic line, “Be still and know that I am God”, is replaced by the noise of amplified contemporary band music which leads the singing of chorus type songs instead of hymns.

• Clerical attire of cassock, collars, preaching scarves etc. has given way to lounge suits, sportswear and in some instances even jeans, as being more relevant to modern society.

• It is claimed that the new styles of worship patterns are consistent with “Reformed” and Biblical principles, the focus of which is the “exposition of Scripture” or “Bible talks”.

Congregations are encouraged to reject all matters that conflict with the simplicity and evangelical ardour. One writer has coined the phrase “pop gospel Churches”, where the worship is characterised by “subjectivity and informality”. Worship formats found in Books of Common Order or Books of Common Prayer are dispensed with and replaced with anything that will appeal to those living in the secular age. Most contemporary worship has now lost what Robert Webber notes as the idea of mystery, “God was the Terium tremendum”. The contextualisation of the Church’s ministry at the present time may well

13 Robert E. Webber Ancient Future Faith Baker Books Grand Rapids 1999 P.14 -17
express an empathic concurrence of the new Spirituality which claims that modern people, (I assume “baby boomers”), feel alienated by institutional authority and dogmatism.

It would seem that the fundamental motive for change in the worship practices of the Presbyterian Church is an earnest desire to be “relevant” in a postmodern world. David Tacey in his book *The Spirituality Revolution*\(^\text{14}\) notes that there is a desire currently among young people to be free, and to seek a meaningful spirituality without reference to outside authority or dogma. This seems to be a reaction from the strictures of rationalism which gave little or no place to artistic expression and meaning and purpose in life. There is now the acknowledgement that there is more to human life than being a mere scientific object. If in the context of popular opinion, the changes in the worship practices of the Church have been affected by the idea of relevance, then I would claim that they are flawed, as the authority and the parameters of worship are no longer located in the Scriptures\(^\text{15}\) but rather in the authority of the self that expresses itself in the culture of the day. In other words the worship is no longer “Trinitarian”. The authority of the Scriptures has been discounted in favour of popular expediency by the very people who claim to uphold the principles of the Reformed Faith. Relevance in this context can only mean the re-categorization of Biblical principle to popular opinions which have little Biblical foundation. This may give the impression among young people that there can be freedom of worship without the strictures of dogma and traditionalism, but such an impression is misleading as the constitution of the Church states categorically that the Church is a doctrinal entity. Adherence to the confessional statements of the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms are essential for admission into office in the Church. The idea of ‘freedom’ of worship without reference to doctrinal statements cannot exist for any length of time without causing fragmentation and ultimately self destruction as the two viewpoints are mutually exclusive.

\(^\text{14}\) David Tacey *The Spirituality Revolution* Harper Collins Australia.

\(^\text{15}\) It is written into the constitution of the Presbyterian Church that “the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is the supreme rule of faith and practice”.
The influence of the Robinson/Knox debate on the doctrine of the Church has also been an important ingredient in promoting a contemporary Christianised spiritual revolution within the Church context, as this view removes traditional institutional authority and relocates the authority in the local fellowship. This is certainly a paradox for both Robinson and Knox as they belong to the famous traditional institution called the Anglican Church of Australia which is light years away from independency. Nevertheless the spirit of independency that this view promotes has effected enormous change in worship patterns in both the Anglican Diocese of Sydney and the Presbyterian Church of NSW. Considering the profound changes in the liturgical practice, any comparison to the practices of contemporary Pentecostalism shows many similarities. It may well be argued that Pentecostalism and other similar independent type Churches may be more consistent with the premises of popular secular belief:

- They are thoroughly independent in structure.
- They embrace contemporary spirituality in a Christian context.
- There is little commitment to systematics and historical theology.
- There is little evidence of any theology of worship.

This means that change will always be a necessary part of these Churches as they will always be in a state of flux as there is no serious and detailed theology to govern its life.

If the theology of the Reformed Standards invokes what Underhill calls “God’s unspeakable Majesty and Otherness” and if contemporary worship deprecates the awe, majesty and holiness of the Divine, it then can then be asked, “What areas of reformed theology have been under valued or conveniently glossed over in the interest of pragmatism, within the theological education process?”.

It will be the burden of this chapter to show that the doctrinal formulations of the Presbyterian Church need not only dictate the parameters of worship, but also express its
theology. It will be necessary to provide an outline of a conceptual framework which will reflect the Church’s Calvinistic foundations. Providing such a framework gives opportunity to examine any departures from the Calvinistic tradition. It may well be in the contemporary era, if liberties are being invoked for expediency, that the question would need to be asked whether the Calvinistic foundations for worship are being pushed to such extremities that the Calvinistic theological foundations of Presbyterianism are becoming an icon of the past. It could then be argued whether or not such Churches are really ‘Reformed’!

At this juncture in the research it will be necessary for me to show that worship needs to be “Trinitarian” in nature. It is this that gives expression to Calvin’s theology. Trinitarian worship finds its focus in the priesthood of Christ. Christ by the Spirit enables our participation in the triune life of God. He takes our faults and failures, sanctifies them by his own atoning work on the cross and offers them perfectly to the Father. He gives the perfect worship to God that we fail to give.16 In this model, worship is not so much our activity as it is the activity of Christ. John Armstrong makes the point that it is disturbing to know that there is no discussion about the doctrine of God in the midst of all the contemporary changes in the Church. He says, “We have actually come to think that the Bible is primarily about us. We then reason that the Church is also about us. Surely the future is also about us. Indeed, everything finally relates to us. We are the consummate me generation. God is there for us!”17 This resonates with Descartes cognito ergo sum. A theology of worship that is consistent with the doctrinal formulations of the Presbyterian Church, I submit, has necessarily its focus on Christ. This is the essential focus of John Calvin and the early Church Fathers. It will be argued in a later chapter that this focus shifted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the focus on the “Word”.

16 James Torrance Worship, Community and the Triune God Inter-Varsity Press 1966 P. 20
17 John Armstrong ed. Reformation and Revival Carol Stream, Illinois Vol.10 No.3 P.11
In Chapter Three special reference will be made to the influence of the Rev. Alan Dougan, principal of St Andrews College within Sydney University, as he sought to preserve the awe, mystery and dignity of Trinitarian worship.

Alan Dougan held the lectureship in “Liturgics’ for many years and had the reputation as the Church’s authority on liturgical practice. He was greatly admired and had considerable influence in the Church at large. Unfortunately, Alan Dougan died over twenty years ago. Considerable work has been given to the collection of writings and papers of Dougan by his Anglican friend the Rev. Robert Willson. It will be shown that the very basis of Dougan’s approach was truly Calvinistic and Trinitarian. It stands in stark contrast to much of what passes for Presbyterian worship today that seems to be strongly Zwinglian in character. It is due to the influence of Dougan that the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales reached its high point in Trinitarian liturgical practice.

Dougan was misunderstood by a wide section of the Church and was dubbed a ‘high churchman’. I will show that this attitude which prevailed for many years was unfortunate as it reflected the Church’s neglect of John Calvin’s theology of worship.

This chapter is unique in that it is the first time that any one has produced a serious article on Dougan’s theology of worship since Robert Willson gathered together all known primary resources relating to Dougan’s life and ministry. For Dougan, worship was the Church’s supreme task.

Chapter Four. It is my intention in this chapter to provide A Historical and Theological Aetiology of ‘Liturgical Minimisation’. This provision will reveal the theological polarisations within the Reformed tradition which impinge upon theological education.

It is in this chapter that I define the meaning of ‘liturgical minimisation’. I trace the minimisation process from the Reformation period. I argue that the Scots did not approve of everything in the ‘reformed liturgy’ found in the English Prayer Book, and chose to exercise
liberties in the usage of the Prayer Book. However there were many Puritans in the English and Scottish Church who believed that the reforms in the liturgy did not go far enough. I make specific reference to the influence of Zwingli, John Knox and the Puritans. I examine the liturgy of John Knox and show how it was minimised and argue that in its usage the liturgy was not ‘fixed’ and it was not intended to be a mere directory. In order to show the impact of the minimisation process I compare Calvin’s Strasbourg liturgy of 1540 with Knox’s 1564 Calderwood and Henderson liturgies. I discuss the radicalisation of the minimisation process by the Scottish Parliament and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when they approved the Westminster Directory of Publick Worship. The Scots regarded the prescribed prayers, set forms and ceremonies of the English Prayer Book as an offence. This chapter also discusses how this minimised liturgy came to be accepted in the Australian Presbyterian Church and contextualised the change in liturgical direction from the rich liturgical heritage and ideals of Alan Dougan to the impoverished liturgical mishmash that is perpetrated upon the contemporary Church.

The final section of this chapter examines the philosophical basis of the minimisation process. I argue here that just as theology in the medieval era came to a standstill because of the impregnation of Platonic and Aristotelian ultimate and primary causes, so with the legalising of a minimised liturgy, the theology of worship also becomes frozen, unable to advance due to the imposition of a theologically laden theory of worship. It is what Professor Ronald Laura calls the ‘paralysis of the intellectual imagination’.

Chapter five discusses liturgical minimisation since 1977, the year that Church Union took place. I make an in depth analysis of the revision of the Book of Common Order, ordered by the General Assembly of Australia that met in 1991. It is from this analysis that I argue that liturgical minimisation since 1977 has been progressing at a rapid rate. The 1985 revision of
the Book of Common Order, published in 1990 was a revision that adhered to the principles of worship found in the Scottish Book of Common Order of 1954. The changes that were to take place in the 1998 revision were so radical that the Assembly approved a resolution that forbade the use of the 1990 publication.

In this chapter I argue that the change in direction in the theology of worship has resulted in:

- the removal of many of the specific ‘orders of service’ from the 1990 version of the Book of Common Order. I argue that this change is motivated by the idea that ‘ministry to people’ is the important issue not things such as buildings and memorials.
- The removal of symbols
- Change in architecture
- The content of the sacrament of Holy Communion has been changed in favour of a simplified kind of Zwinglianism. All suggestions of ‘sacramentalism’ in the previous Books of Common Order’ were removed.

In all these changes I argue that the liturgical changes are not ‘neutral’, as all liturgies, minimised or not, embody our theology of belief in God, ourselves, redemption and the chief end of human existence.

My critical analysis is made in the context of the change in the theological direction of the Church post Church Union, and the significant role that theological education played in the lead- up to the ‘minimisation’ of the Church’s liturgy.

The complex causes and influences need to be understood within the context of the Church Union debates of the 1970s and the division that occurred in 1977. One of the complex factors was the revival of Puritan literature. During the late 1960s and all through the 1970s and 1980s the works of Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones were popularised as were the republications of many Puritan works. The Banner of Truth Trust journal had a wide circulation among
Presbyterian ministers. *Banner of Truth* conferences were held annually receiving widespread patronage. The editor of the journal, the Rev. Iain Murray, who had been the assistant to the famous Martyn Lloyd Jones for some years at the Westminster Chapel London, became an endearing and engaging speaker at these conferences. Murray was a fascinating speaker and his presence guaranteed a crowd. Murray was an authority on the history and theological thought of the Puritans. His publications had a wide appeal and adorned the book shelves of most evangelical Presbyterian ministers. The influence of “Puritan” thought was cemented into the Presbyterian psyche when Iain Murray was inducted into the pastoral charge of Hurstville, in Sydney. This gave great impetus to the Reformed cause in Australia.

“Theological Education” became a major factor in the complexity of change. The theological college is the cradle wherein the new generation of ministers is nurtured. It is my conviction that there is a real connection between the theological college and the current practice of worship in the Church.

When Church Union became a reality in 1977, theological education as the pre-union Church had known it in N.S.W. was swept away. A new process of theological education had to be formulated. To this end the Presbyterian Theological Institute was born. The name was to change in the 1980s to the Presbyterian Theological Centre, which was to reflect the Church’s commitment to theological studies and research. The Church, through its new College, implemented a multistrand course of studies. Students would elect one of the following strands:

- A diploma course which met the criteria for ordination.
- A B.Th. degree through Moore Theological College, an Anglican foundation within the Diocese of Sydney.
- A postgraduate B.D. from Sydney University, or the Melbourne College of Divinity.
The theological emphasis of the Moore College course was Biblical and Evangelical in its thrust, but was a concern among some Presbyterians as Presbyterian students were being exposed to the peculiar doctrine of the Church promoted by the Knox/Robinson regime. Drs Broughton Knox and Donald Robinson, both well-known international scholars, had developed a distinctive doctrine of the Church, which is basically congregational in nature. Knox and Robinson argued that the Greek word for Church, *ekklesia*, means no more and no less than “assembly” and in the New Testament it is only used for

- Local assemblies of Christians on earth
- The great assembly of all believers in continuous session in heaven.\(^\text{18}\)

This challenging doctrine of the Church is an oddity coming as it does from within the Anglican Church. Using this doctrine as a premise meant that the term “Anglican Church” is a misnomer as no earth-bound association other than local congregation may be called the “Church.” This spirit of “independency” fits very well with the Puritanism expounded by John Owen, a Puritan with strong independent convictions. This particular view gives understanding to the “independency” of many of the younger ministers within the Presbyterian Church. It also gives a rational understanding to the view that “office” does not matter.

This was not the only concern, as there were issues in respect to the sacraments. It is my intention to show that the theology of the sacraments was not that of Calvin but rather that of the theology akin to Zwinglianism. This outlook tends to promote the view that worship is something we do, rather than engaging in the perfect worship of Christ before the Father, which is more in keeping with a Trinitarian viewpoint. By way of contrast the Zwinglian view sees the Holy Communion as a memorial supper. This stands in contrast to the strong sacramental overtones of Calvin’s view of the sacrament. This Zwinglian teaching has had an

\(^{18}\) See Kevin Giles *What on Earth is the Church?* Dove. Blackburn Australia 1995 P.13 -14
enormous influence within the Presbyterian Church. It gives explanation to the resistance or the horror of using set forms as outlined in the *Book of Common Order*. Orders of liturgy in the *Book of Common Order* preserve the Calvinistic view of the sacraments.

Not only were many ministers trained at Moore College but up to 2005 many of the lecturers at the Presbyterian Theological Centre were also trained at that institution. It can only be assumed from a theological and educational perspective there is a natural continuity that co-exists between the two colleges, even though there is liberty of opinion in theological matters.

**Chapter Six.** I argue that the underlying epistemology of the ‘minimisation process’ is faulty. I have therefore titled the chapter *Towards an Epistemology of Worship*.

In chapter five I expound the view that the rich liturgical Calvinist tradition expressed in the *Book of Common Order* of 1929 and 1954 as well as the “provisional” *Worship Book* of 1991, was displaced in favour of a through going Zwinglianism. The revised *Worship Book* of 1998 saw revolutionary changes in the liturgy of the Church, in which symbols were removed together with large sections of the liturgical content. I also argue that the change in the liturgical perspective was generated largely due to the theological perspective of those who were in sympathy with the mien of Moore Theological College. I also argue that the influence of Dr Broughton Knox, in particular, was very evident among those who sought liturgical change. Critical to Knox’s theological perspective was the notion of “Propositional Revelation.”

The publication of the *Worship Book* of 1998 signalled far reaching consequences. Ten years on, “worship” in most Presbyterian Churches has degenerated to the point where the beauty of the Calvinistic forms that sustained the idea of the majesty and holiness of God, has largely disappeared. Special services of the Church, such as ordination and induction of ministers into pastoral charges, the ordination of elders and the celebration of Holy
Communion and other services were always conducted according to the set forms contained in the *Books of Common Order*. In this way the dignity and the theology of worship was preserved. In recent time this practice has all but disappeared. Special services are now conducted without the aid and guide of set forms. It is at this point that I want to argue that there exists a serious philosophical explanation as to why the current liturgical minimisation has had such a detrimental impact upon the Church. I wish to argue that the contemporary liturgical outcomes to which I have alluded admit of a richer theological force, when they are understood in terms of philosophical principles of the Enlightenment which covertly served to inform them.

I am arguing in this chapter that it is essential to develop a Christian Epistemology. Foundational to my argument is the theology of Cornelius Van Til. The contemporary theologian John Frame claims that Van Til’s contribution is comparable in magnitude to that of Immanuel Kant in non-Christian philosophy. The foundation of Van Til’s system and its most persuasive principle is the rejection of the autonomy of man, since Christian thinking, like all of the Christian life, is subject to God’s lordship. Van Til specifically rejects the traditional epistemic methodology as it is offered in Thomas Aquinas in its Catholic form and in Joseph Butler in its protestant form, as it is based upon “the assumption that man has some measure of autonomy, that in the space-time world is in some measure contingent and that man must create for himself his own epistemology in an ultimate sense.”

From Van Til’s perspective I argue that the framers of the *1998 Worship Book* are caught in a time warp. While upholding a Reformed theology, they seek a reconstruction of the liturgy by arguing univocally, and in doing so, they superimpose a secular epistemology upon the interpretation of the Scriptures. Their conclusions become highly reductionist.

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Chapter Seven argues for the Reconstruction of Theological Education.

Nineteenth century rationalism found itself in a philosophical straightjacket after David Hume brought philosophy of the day to a logical conclusion. Reid and Stewart, fellow Scots, chose to reject the rational conclusions of Hume and to launch out into “Common Sense” philosophy. Perhaps a similar movement needs to occur today sustained by the recognition that the destruction of the Church’s heritage has occurred because of a reductionist epistemology with its blood child the Regulative Principle.\textsuperscript{20} The Regulative Principle is actualised as an efficient tool of analysis only within a through-going paradigm of modern thought with its attendant characteristics of individualism, rationalism and factualism. Outside of this paradigm the outcomes are too diverse to provide meaningful insights for community. In other words it becomes a tool for personal opinion.

I will argue that it is of paramount importance to opt for a reconstruction of theological education. The need is great as the principles of theological education are locked into a methodology that has not progressed for hundreds of years. Ronald S. Laura has argued that priority is given to scientific knowledge and it is this form of knowledge which we value as a culture for the purposes of power and control. This particular form of knowledge, says Laura, has been institutionalised in our educational institutions. “It is our insatiable appetite for power that drives us to a form of knowledge which covertly stipulates that the only knowledge worth having is that which allows us to reorder the world and our relationships to each other in ways that suit our own ends and presumed interests, no matter how selfish or destructive those ends and interests are.”\textsuperscript{21} Such is the influence of this epistemology of

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\textsuperscript{20} I put forward the suggestion that the valuable work of R.S. Laura and C. Van Til are possibly the modern counterparts of Reid and Stewart. Both are seeking a new way forward to overcome the perils of transformative subjugation. Both see that there is a greater dimension to truth than the strict adherence to an empiricist methodology. This thesis is not the place to research this concept. Possible starting points for future research would be to consult the works of Reid and Stewart as well as:


\textsuperscript{21} R. Laura, T. Marchant & S. Smith *The New Social Disease* University Press of America Maryland
power that “it has become an elemental facet of our physical existence”.\textsuperscript{22} The nature of the epistemology of power and subjugation in Laura’s work is necessarily divorced from belief in a creator God and takes for granted that the space and time world is immanent in itself and man is the ultimate interpreter of the world. This particular form of knowledge has been institutionalised in our schools and is shaped by our obsession with power. Laura claims that “western culture has lured generations of school children into the false belief that scientific knowledge and the technologies deriving from it are the ultimate tools of social and even personal salvation.”\textsuperscript{23} Laura also suggests that this type of epistemology is so entrenched in our educational institutions that we think that we cannot survive without it. It follows then that if Laura is correct in his analysis his penetrating analysis is also true of a theological institution. In common parlance it is a matter of students carrying their baggage to whatever institution they decide to enter, be it a university or a theological institution. I will therefore argue that in the reconstruction of theological education, cognisance must be given to the theories of R.S. Laura and C. Van Til, as a way of developing a distinctive Christian Epistemology.

Ideally this could be achieved if the students for the ministry were required to study the history of philosophy over a period of two years with specific studies in epistemology at year three or four. This would expose a student to the development of the systems of rationalism and the corresponding trends in theology. To omit such studies is to deny a student of theology the essential background that explains why certain theologies developed as they did. The traditional understanding of the Roman Catholic Church’s view of the Mass, for example, can only be understood in terms of the Aristotelian metaphysic which is foundational to the specific doctrine. The Reformers could be critical of Thomas Aquinas and the theory of the mass only because of the collapse of the Aristotelian metaphysic which no

\textsuperscript{2008 P.6-7}
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. P.7
\textsuperscript{23} R. S. Laura & M. Cotton \textit{Empathetic Education} Falmer Press Philadelphia 1999 P. 2 -3
longer provided an adequate explanation of reality. In other words there was a major shift in the paradigm which had far reaching consequences not only for theology but also for the progress of scientific endeavour. The reconstruction which would refocus the Church on the “Centrality of Christ” would raise a number of issues:

- The rationalist epistemic needs to be shown that it is inadequate as an interpretive tool in theological education. Science has accepted the fact that the rise of quantum mechanics has been forced to take the human subject into theoretical account in the development of its explanations. The rationalist approach forces an unnecessary distinction between subject – object. It is precisely this distinction that regulates beauty, art, mystery and the idea of the holy, moral and spiritual responsibility as being unimportant. It is in this environment that dogmatism prevails. This means that the “Reformed Theological Perspective” can be enforced by the Regulative Principle, and for some within the denomination it can dominate, subjugate and suppress every other theological perspective. It is fascinating to note that John Calvin in the 16th century saw that theology beginning with actuality cannot abstract itself from the subject – object relation as theological science starts with the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves because they are already found together in a profound mutuality

- The spirit of “empathy” in the pursuit of theological education needs to be acknowledged. The idea of empathetic connectivity in theological education must be to educate “the sensibilities of moral and spiritual conscience”. In the words of Koestler, it is the “stepping out of one’s skin, as it were, and putting oneself into the skin of the other”. 24 This would only be made possible by embracing the “Centrality

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of Christ” as the interpretive principle with all its flexibility and common sense, unencumbered with the epistemic rational of the Enlightenment.

- The recovery of the doctrines of God, the Church and the Sacraments, by expressing them in terms of the centrality of Christ.

Until the above occurs the Presbyterian Church will continue to lean towards Congregationalism and continue to deny its Calvinistic heritage. Until a reconstruction takes place the practice of worship will continue in what Evelyn Underhill describes as Free Church worship. She offers this description:

The small company of keen believers ready to press the teaching of the Gospel to its logical conclusions: ruthlessly rejecting all that conflicts with evangelical ardour and simplicity, demanding personal consecration, downright costly conversion of the whole life to God’s purpose, repudiating all substitutes for the offering of the self. It restores to their original position of importance the charismatic and prophetic characteristics of primitive Christianity: and hence is suspicious of set forms, and demands a spontaneous worship which shall be the devotional expression of a personal and subjective relation to God. The responsibility and capacity of each soul, the priesthood of all believers, the universal call to sanctity, are the central truths governing real Free Church worship.  

This is a brilliant summation of what Free Church worship is, but it is a very apt description of what some sections of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales have embraced and ruthlessly apply in the contemporary era.

Although Calvin would not disagree with the transformed nature of human life bearing the Godliness and holiness of Christ, he would object to modern rational thought that obliterates the mystery and awe of a Holy God in the life of the Church and especially in the celebration of the sacraments. The present Church is something less than its Calvinistic heritage would demand. Whilst saying this, it is true to say that there are pockets of resistance that seek to preserve the theological and liturgical heritage of Calvin.

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25 Evelyn Underhill op.cit. P. 299
Most of the issues contained in this dissertation are not new. What is new is the attempt to provide a more comprehensive perspective in which to assess the theological, socio-political and educational complexities which serve to advance our understanding of the crises of worship patterns within the Presbyterian Churches in New South Wales in the twenty-first century.