Introduction to Christian Worship

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A History of Christian Worship

James White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*

**A Chronological Chart**

Inter-Testamental period—E. C. & Edict of Milan—Vandalism &M. C.—Reformation

(6thCen. B.C.-1st Cen.) (315- ) (430- ) (1520- )

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Synagogue worship Worship as hearing Worship as seeing Worship as hearing

(similar to Synagogue worship)

—the English Reformation: the English Bible in the church (1538) and The Book of Common Prayer (1549)

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Worship as reading

—Pilgrims (Puritans and Calvinists) in Plymouth Colony in New England (1620-)

—Methodists (1735-)—the 1st Great Awakening (1730s-40s)—the 2nd Great Awakening (1790s-1840s)—the 3rd Great Awakening (1850s-1900s)

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Worship as reasoning (Traditionalists) vs. Worship as feeling (Revivalists)

--The World Council of Churches (1948)

--Vatican II (1962-5)

* 1. The Inter-Testamental period (6th Century B.C.-the 1st century):
     + The Second Temple (516 B.C.-70 A.D.) and synagogues
     + Synagogue worship: Nehemiah 8 (worship as hearing)
     + The worship of primitive churches: Acts 2:42
     + House churches, catacomb churches

1. The Early Church and The Edict of Milan (313)
   * + Documents: The *Didache* (1-2nd C.), The Apostolic Constitutions (4th C.)
     + The Early Church worshiped in similar ways to synagogue worship with exposition of biblical texts –Worship as “hearing”
     + Justine Martyr (2nd C.), Hippolytus (3rd C.), St. John Chrysostom (347-407), St. Augustine (354-430), etc.
     + The beginning of the process of inculturation in worship: the church calendar (time), vestments, cathedral (space: the Roman basilica), etc.
2. The Medieval Church after Vandalism (430) and Late Medieval Worship

* Clerical (or clergy-centered) worship
* The use of Latin language in worship (liturgical books, administration of sacraments, etc.)
* The individualization of the piety of the faithful
* Not the Word-centered but ceremony/event-centered: an excess of feasts by popular customs, superstitious practices; religiosity was expressed in the cult of the saints, particularly in the images and sacred objects and in the veneration of the Eucharist—worship as “seeing”
* Seven Sacraments: penance, baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, ordination, wedding, funeral/burial
* Exclusively focused on sacraments
* Preaching as optional
* The Eucharist: withholding the cup from the laity and the official formula for defining Christ’s self-giving in the Eucharist by the term “‘transubstantiation” (the inner reality changes but not the outer); laity received communion once a year while clergy did weekly or daily.

1. Lutheran Worship (1520 - ; Luther 1483-1546)

* Luther’s 1520 treatise, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, was a furious attack on the whole late-medieval sacramental system.
* For Luther, a break with the past could be justified only by the highest of authorities, the Word of God.
* Luther sought to preserve the ancient *cultus* (worship forms): “Misuse does not destroy the substance, but confirms its existence”; “Abuse simply calls for reform.”
* Lutheran worship is distinctive in sacramental theology and church music: For Luther, sacraments mean “both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness of sins.” Luther’s theology of salvation shapes his theology of the sacraments. Since salvation is a divine gift, not a human work, the sacraments are subject to the same order for humans and, like redemption, can only be received in faith.
* Two sacraments (baptism and the eucharist): salvation is a free and lifelong offer; Confirmation, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction (funeral and burial) are not based on God’s own promise.
* The Eucharist: Real presence of God in the consecrated bread and wine (the Ubiquity of Christ); Luther believed the literal meaning of the word “is” in “This is my body” (J. White, 59); controversies of Eucharist theology divided the Reformation movement into many denominations.
* Tolerance of late Medieval practices: Affirmation of infant baptism, Luther’s own devotion to Mary
* Luther’s reform in the mass: eliminating the canon, elevation, and vestments and delivering the bread into communicants’ hands and the wine weekly or daily, and using vernacular eucharistic rites (singing and praying together in the vernacular). For Luther, confirmation is a ‘graduation exercise rather than God’s giving of new grace.(45)
* The priesthood of all believers: No ranks of holiness. Through baptism, all became priests and assumed a priestly role in church and society.
* Musical liturgy: Luther developed a popular hymnody as a constitutive part of worship (47). He understood music as one of the means by which all could exercise their priestly ministry. Luther did not attack the prevailing penitential piety of his time directly. But Lutheran hymnody called attention not to the sinner’s misery but to God’s greatness and moved toward outpourings of joy on the part of those who had been saved. That means, Luther reshaped piety away from a penitential model to one that could rejoice in salvation as a free gift.
* Expository preaching rather than thematic, moralistic preaching (46)

1. Reformed Worship

* Debates on the real presence, “This is my body”: Luther (literal), Zwingli (symbolic: signifies), Calvin (spiritual).
* The first phase of Reformed worship by Zwingli: the elimination of music and images from worship; expository preaching.
* The second phase of Reformed worship by John Calvin (1509-1564):
  + The concept of sign: God uses material things to give us spiritual things. Through signs, humans relate to one another and to God.
  + The necessity of the church as a visible embodiment of God’s will to save the elect (the doctrine of predestination); the distinction between the visible church known to humans and the true but invisible church known only to God (64).
  + The Holy Supper came to be approached after a great deal of self-examination and introspection—highly penitential.
  + Singing only psalms.
  + Sitting around the Lord’s Table.
  + The early church was his model, not just the church of the New Testament but the church of the Fathers and martyrs (67).
  + Preaching as an inevitable part of worship. The use of lectionaries was abandoned in favor of continuous reading of Scripture (*lectio continua)* (68)
  + Calvin’s eucharistic theology stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in raising humans to feed on Christ (an epiclesis of the Holy Spirit—a building bridge between Luther and Zwingli) (69)
* Further developments of Reformed worship: the Kirk of Scotland (Richard Baxter, 1615-1691); Separatist, Puritan, and Presbyterian worship in the 16th and 17th century
* A high value on education in the ministry.
* The emphases on daily family worship.
* Worship in a heavily penitential atmosphere (even in modern times, in the Netherlands, Good Friday was observed as the highlight, rather than Easter, by celebrating the Lord’s Supper.)
* The centrality of preaching: Space for worship is designed to bring the largest number of people as close as possible to the pulpit.

6. Anabaptist Worship (1520- )

* + - Serious doubts about infant baptism
    - The Eucharist as a commemorative event, often called the “Lord’s Memorial,” a communal event of the visible church of saints gathered in the Lord’s name. By Recalling the Lord’s death and suffering together, there was a strong sense of the community’s identification with Christ’s suffering. (86)
    - The early Unitarians of Transylvania (1565, John Calvin and Michael Servetus’s death in 1553), Mennonite, Amish, etc.
    - Only the baptism of adult believers by immersion was administered: Baptism was postponed to an age of accountability in order to make baptism contingent on human preparation for it, rather than understanding it as a free gift offered by God indiscriminately to the children of believers. (84)
    - Free Church worship: They had freedom to reform worship exclusively on the basis of Scripture without any compulsion to dilute the purity of reformation by compromising it with human traditions.
    - Lay leadership
    - Suffering persecution: the three witnesses or baptisms of 1 John 5:8: “the Spirit, the water, and the blood.”
    - A cappella singing of hymns (Mennonites)

1. Anglican Worship

* The Book of Common Prayer is the readily identifiable form of Anglican Worship.
* Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) made the first BCP mandatory for all churches in England on Pentecost, June 9, 1549.
* In 1538 a royal injunction ordered that the English Bible be placed in all churches.

By the new literacy, an increasing number of lay people began to read and all began to hear the scriptures in their own tongue. (97)

* Daily morning and evening prayer.
* Publication of Book of Homilies (1547, 1571) provided a fall-back measure for non-preaching clergy and functioned as a source of authoritative doctrine.
* The removal of organs from the church (1562) to emphasize preaching.
* George Herbert (1593-1633)
* The 18th century (the force of the Enlightenment):
* The emergence of a series of sister churches (Nonconformists and Methodists).
* The Eucharist was purely in memory of Christ.
* Christian rationalism moved toward in the direction of deism in which the end of worship is not communion with God but social harmony.
* Ceremonial worship was dismissed as useless and became minimal.
* Visual symbols, even the cross, were lacking altogether; vestments were unknown; the use of incense in church unheard of; candles rare, and holy communion three times a year.
* The counter-Enlightenment movements: theologian Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), the Methodist movement with its strong emphasis on sacramental life, the Evangelicals with a Calvinistic theology and commitment to personal religion.
* The Catholic revival (1833-1928—the Victorian era): return to the period before the dissolution of the monasteries (1536-1539); strong elements of romanticism and a large dose of nationalism; distinct in refusing to adapt to prevailing frontier patterns
* The Eucharist as the normal weekly service.
* Sacramental theology with a new emphasis on Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist, on baptism as accomplishing regeneration, and on the value of sacramental confession.
* Keeping the yearly calendar, with much more emphasis placed on the seasons and feasts and with substantial visual and musical support, vestments and other textile arts.
* A new Anglican orthodoxy in church architecture with the ideal of a village Gothic church of the early 14th century in England; a large variety of medieval images with symbolic references.
* Daily family worship led by the father for the family and household servants.
* The 19th century preachers: John Henry Newman, F. W. Robertson, Phillips Brooks, et al.
* Modern Anglicanism (the 20th Century):
* The early church, rather than the medieval, came to commend itself as a model for modern worshipers.
* The rejection of the clericalism and expectation of more active roles for the laity.
* The ecumenical movement.
* Vatican II’s influence: the reinvigoration of preaching by new concern for the lectionary.
* Church music with new varieties of congregational song and folk and pop music during 1960s and 1970s.

1. Separatist and Puritan worship (known today as Congregationalist, Baptists, Unitarian-Universalists, United Church of Canada (1925), United Church of Christ (1957), Untied Reformed Church (1972))

* While the Anabaptists originated in Europe, the Separatists and Puritans, originated from the Reformed tradition in England and fully flowered in North America.
* A type of hyper-Calvinism or a rigorous biblicism (e.g., the Westminster Confession of Faith)
* Liturgical autonomy: the ingredients of the normal service were half an hour of prayer, an hour of sermon, and commentary on or dissection of the sermon by a lay person.
* The Separatists: The Pilgrims (Anglican clergyman, John Robinson (1576-1625), et al.); the Baptists (Thomas Helwys (1550-1616), Roger Williams (1604-1683), etc.).
* The Puritans: The origins of Puritanism goes back to the radical Protestants in Cranmer’s time. During the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558), 788 reformers were forced to flee to about eight locations in Europe, and after Mary’s death, they came back to England to shape the worship of the Church of England. For the next eighty-five years, there was to be guerrilla warfare to capture the soul of the national church. The real issue was neither polity nor theology, but liturgy (worship wars): How should the reformation of worship be? The first eruption was over vestments. The battle escalated in 1572 with the first “Admonition to Parliament” which attacked various objectionable practices, such as the use of wafer bread, kneeling for communion, admission of papists to communion, and vestments; the Puritans were the educated middle class of the time. They were literate people who were on their way up socially and economically and had learned that politics could serve their personal advancement. In modern terms, they were “pious yuppies.” In 1661, the failure of efforts at compromise led to the expulsion of over two thousand Puritan clergy when they refused to use the new BCP in 1662. The Puritan movement had been forced outside of the national church. Hopes of completing the reform of the national church according to the Puritan agenda were dead after 1689. Puritanism found its expression through the churches of nonconformity: Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. (129). The modern adherents of the Puritan tradition tend to be found in theologically rather liberal denominations such as the UCC, the American Baptist Churches in the US and the UU Association (131).
* Unitarianism in America in the 19th century tended to reflect East Coast sophistication and emphasis on the cerebral in worship; the reorientation of the meeting house to a church form which the pulpit opposite the main entrance on a short end; the development of Sunday schools (130).
* Common characteristics of seventeenth-century Puritan worship: congregational response to the preacher’s handling of Scripture; a penitential emphasis; the removal of the sign of the cross in baptism, the giving of the ring in marriage, and kneeling for the Eucharist; the emphasis on the Lord’s Day. Sabbath keeping became a Puritan hallmark; the season of Lent was criticized because the whole year was to be kept holy; confirmation as superfluous; weddings secularized; funerals were often discouraged because many eulogies presumed too much about the virtues and destination of the deceased; preaching was expected to be both biblical and relevant, and active participation was enhanced by inviting the congregation to comment on the preacher’s interpretation of Scripture; collects (printed prayers) were condemned because of their irrelevance and lack of flexibility; abolishing the church calendar and lectionary for the freedom to preach their way through the entire Bible in course (verse-by-verse expository preaching); Sunday afternoon services and family devotions were common.
* The emphasis on the unity of worship and justice by the influence of the social gospel (Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1919))

1. Quaker Worship (Spirit-led, egalitarian, unstructured worship: silent or singing and dancing)

* The Quakers were by-products of Anglicanism’s mature age, the Stuart period (the 17th century).
* No clergy, no service books, no outward and visible sacraments, no preaching, no choirs and organs, and virtually no ceremonial but rely on inward resources alone, because visible sacraments are simply not necessary when one can experience the Spirit directly in the community (135).
* Preaching was not a part of classical Quaker worship. But, the movement was spread by preaching in the streets of cities by what was called “threshing” meetings.
* The Shakers (“Shaking Quakers”): Mother Ann Lee(1736-84): “The faculty of dancing, as well as that of singing, was undoubtedly created for the honor and glory of the Creator; and therefore it must be devoted to his service in order to answer that purpose.” As converts decreased after the Civil War and the average age of community members advanced, older members became too feeble for such vigorous activity. As a result, dance was given up, “as it was considered necessary to maintain a perfect union among the members, a service in which all may participate as One” (145); the language of hymnody frequently used female imagery for God and balanced masculine images with feminine ones; music education was taken seriously.
* George Fox
* Egalitarian worship: If the Spirit can speak to all in worship, the logical implication is that all humans are equal (139). God speaks to the community through the voices of individuals.
* Scripture only declares the ‘Fountain”; it is subordinate to their author, the spirit (141).
* Acquire in lifelong communal discipline: humility, self-restraint, reticence, and meekness.
* Contemporary Quakers: Perhaps the larger number of American Friends today has clergy and services that are programmed with preaching, music, and prepared prayers, while the classical Friends, largely on the East Coast and in England practice unstructured worship. (148)

1. Methodist Worship

* Missional worship: The original reasons for the formation of the Methodist tradition in worship were missional, facing the problem of reaching unchurched masses in the new industrial and mining centers of England.
* John Wesley’s method of “Pragmatic Traditionalism”: Uses the methods of current practice where they work; otherwise, search the universal tradition for practices that have worked in similar situations—field preaching, the love feast, hymn singing, watch night (a new form of vigils).
* John Wesley (1703-1791) reintroduced some features of late-medieval and Reformation piety and practices:
  + The Eucharist as it implies a sacrifice
  + Frequent celebrations of the Eucharist
  + Vigils
  + Fasting: an early casualty in American Methodism
  + The Moravian phase of the Lutheran tradition—hymn singing with the first Anglican hymnal, *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*.
  + The Puritan tradition—no confirmation
  + Wesley’s Eucharistic doctrine is closest to that of John Calvin; encouraged weekly Eucharist.
  + The Anglican tradition: the virtues of “a solid, scriptural, rational Piety”; the revision of the BCP for America.
    - Worship structure: searching the scriptures, receiving the Lord’s Supper, and prayer; the preaching services were regarded as supplemental to worship in the parish church: the Anglican Sunday morning prayer, litany, and ante-communion with sermon; testimony was a spontaneous sharing by any individuals.
    - Methodist preaching was directed to the heart as well as to the head. It was a constant offering of a crucified Savior calling for conversion of life, a far cry from the tepid moral rationalism heard from most Anglican and Nonconformist pulpits of the time. More often than not, the preacher might be a neighbor or local man or woman who had received a call to preach and had been examined and licensed under careful supervision. The link between preaching and pastoral care was always clear. Wesley felt that simply making converts without careful spiritual direction afterward was breeding souls for damnation (157).
    - Hymnody: over six thousand hymns by Charles Wesley consist of doctrine written as poetry; hymns are the best source of Wesleyan theology. Music was a form for active participation by everyone rather than passive listening (158).
    - Eucharist theology: the emphasis on the Eucharist as sacrifice, the work of the Holy Spirit, and strong eschatological flavor; Thomas Welch (1825-1903) as a former Methodist preacher, sought a non-alcoholic sacramental wine (grape juice) (159).
    - Transformed by the nineteenth-century experience of the American Frontier and both shaped and assimilated the Frontier tradition of worship: Conversion was an exhilarating experience of justifying grace; itinerant preachers, illiterate people, simple songs, spontaneity and excitement, freedom rather than structures of worship, the alter call, the personal relation of the individual to God, songs related to contrition for sin, joy in salvation, hope of sanctification; revival preaching with an emphasis on repentance and conversion; revival music simplistic in wording, theology, and music, but capable of expressing the heartfelt yearnings of new converts (worship as feeling).
    - Provided the background for Pentecostal worship
* More than 50 other churches that have separated from Methodists at one time or another: The salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, and various Holiness churches of the non-Pentecostal variety, the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Richard Allen, 1760-1831).
* A countercultural movement in the midst of the English Enlightenment: The methodical emphasis on sacraments and daily prayer (hence called, Methodists or Sacramentarians); spirit-filled Christians rather than staid pew holders (Enthusiasts).
* Reached out primarily to the poor.
* American Methodism: Bishop Francis Asbury (1745-1816)—Asbury’s piety focused on preaching and disciplined life, not on sacraments and fixed forms for prayer. Wesley’s love for the BCP, the emphasis on frequent Eucharist, his affection for the church year did not survive in America (158); Thomas O. Summers (1812-1882) developed a standard order of worship based on Wesley’s *Sunday Service* and accepted the Gothic revival and some of the practices of the Catholic Revival (High Church Methodism).
* Twentieth-century Methodism (aestheticism and social activism) (165): As Methodist people became more affluent and educated, they became more middle class and more self-conscious. Emotional displays were discouraged, and spontaneity was relegated to the prayer meeting. The substitutes for emotionalism and spontaneity came to be aestheticism and new types of social activism; a tendency to use worship as a means of promoting peace and social justice. Advocacy of social reforms often replaced calls for conversion in the preaching of this period of liberal theology.

1. The Period of Pietism (1650-1800)

* A time of disenchantment with conventional church life and an attempt to find deeper roots in a warmly personal religion; a desire to find a stronger and more intimate sense of community within the existing church structure
* Moravians, the Methodist movement, the Hauge movement
* The prayer life of individuals and the Bible study were central concerns in pietism.
* Earlier pietism placed little emphasis on set liturgical forms and the sacraments (51)

1. The Enlightenment (18th century- )

* Consolidated the move from sacrament churches to preaching churches
* The individualism of pietism was reinforced
* With no expectation of supernatural action, all of worship became largely a means of teaching morality.
* Countercultural factors:
  + The first Great Awakening (1725-1760): A counterculture of the Enlightenment: introduced such novelties as itinerant preachers, lay preachers, preaching for the experience of conversion, and controversy about the admission of the unconverted to the Lord’s Supper; Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), George Whitefield (1714-1770).
  + Aestheticism: The revival techniques were not especially appealing to Puritans and Anglicans. But this tradition found new possibilities in aesthetic approaches to worship. Twenty years after the Anglicans, Congregationalists, on both sides of the Atlantic began building Gothic churches, instituting robed choirs, and installing many of the art items the Parliamentary visitors had smashed two centuries earlier; tendency to adopt fixed forms of prayer (133).

1. Frontier Worship (the Frontier-revival tradition or the 19th-century Second Great Awakening)

* Methodists, Southern Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Churches of Christ.
* Free Church worship: biblicism and local autonomy.
* The influence of Methodist tradition and a direct link to the Great Awakening of the previous century.
* A response to a practical pastoral problem: how to minister to a largely unchurched population scattered over enormous distances of thinly settled country.
* Sacramental worship rather than preaching service was workable. The Scottish Presbyterian practice of sacramental seasons of three or four times a year—an intensive period of examination of conscience and preparation for the Lord’s Supper, concluding with celebration of the sacrament itself; all over the course of several days became an outdoor communion season (173).
* The camp meetings: Ecumenical events originated in preparation for the Lord’s Supper.
* Pragmatism: Charles G. Finney (1792-1875; Presbyterian; *On Revivals of Religion*) and his associates represented a liturgical revolution based on pure pragmatism: Does it work: If so, keep it; if not, discard it (177). The test for worship is its effectiveness in producing converts in a largely unchurched nation. Despite current belief, the majority of the founding fathers and mothers of America were not “godly, righteous, and sober”; only about 5 % were church members. In 1960, that figure peaked at 70 percent. Revivalism was a most significant factor.
* The order of worship for normal Sunday services: three parts based on the technique of warming up (a song service or praise service sometimes caricatured as “preliminaries”), calling to conversion (a sermon), and reaping the results by the alter call (a harvest of new converts). The sermon should lead to immediate results; prayer on the Sunday morning in most churches of the Frontier tradition was monopolized by the pastoral prayer. It swallowed up most other forms of prayer, including confession, praise, thanksgiving, offering, intercession, petition and not infrequently, announcements; revival music functioned to create a sense of unity among worshipers, a powerful emotional stimulant. Except for the final hymn of invitation, the musical portion of the service was all before the sermon.
* Americans respect success, and this is a form of worship that has proven itself thoroughly successful in reaching the unchurched who happen to be present or have turned on the radio or television; attract fiercely independent persons who exemplified American self-reliance.
* Lay leadership; emotionalism; illiterate people; the Sunday school movement; the church meant very little other than as an organization to continue revivals; the graduation of Christian nurture was foreign to its ethos (180).
* The Mormons: Joseph Smith (1805-1844); the Lord’s Supper is celebrated each week, but water is used instead of wine (no grapes in the Utah Territory when the Mormons first settled in it).
* The Seventh-Day Adventist Church: William Miller (1782-1849).
* Christian Science: Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1919).
* The Unification Church (“Moonies”).
* Black preaching and worship.
* As the dormant tradition in American Protestantism, it continues to expand rapidly, almost every other part of the world—the Soviet Union, Central America, Asia, and Africa.

1. Pentecostal Worship

* Origins: On New Year’s Day, Jan. 1, 1901, at the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, by Agnes N. Ozman and Charles Fox Parham 1873-1929); the great Pentecostal explosion of 1906 on Azusa street at a former Methodist Church (the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission) with William Seymour (Black preacher)—the tradition that blacks have helped to shape from its very beginnings.
* Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944)
* Unstructured approach to worship, emphasizing the immediacy of the Spirit rather than Scripture; ability to cut across social distinctions—worship together regardless of color (The Spirit has no respecter of persons); requires sensitive worship leadership, that is, the willingness to go with the flow and to sense the movement of events.
* Pentecostal churches derived from Holiness churches (Wesleyan Church or the Church of the Nazarene. They emphasize the importance of sanctification. Baptism with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues are considered the observable manifestation of sanctification (evidence of salvation). Eschatological hope is manifest in many songs in Pentecostal hymnody. Foot-washing is considered an ordinance in the Church of God; baptism by immersion; yearly revivals; prayer is an important part of every service, democratic in that all participate in voicing it with no distinction of roles.
* Television evangelism: Oral Roberts, Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart.
* Spread quickly to developing countries—a struggle for justice and worship has become a form of empowerment.
* Erupted in mainline American churches (Neo-Pentecostals): the value of spontaneity, healing services, full democratization of participation have attracted mainstream American Christians.

1. Vatican II (1962-5) and Post-Vatican II

* Consideration of the significance of pluralism and local identity in worship.
* Shift the liturgical language from Latin to various vernacular languages of the world.
* The emphasis on preaching as a significant part of Sunday masses.
* Development of a three-year Sunday lectionary.

16. Ecumenical Era

* The World Council of Churches (1948): 349 churches (denominations), 590 million people from 150 countries.
* The Revised Common Lectionary (1992): The rise of the lectionary has probably been the most significant change in the last two decades.
* The use of Inclusive language is encouraged in worship.