Flows of worship in the network society: liminality as heuristic concept in Practical Theology beyond action theory

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Abstract

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In this article it is demonstrated why and how liminality has developed into a key concept in Practical Theology, in particular in Liturgical Studies.

Liminality began its voyage at the beginning of the 20th century as indication of the phase "betwixt and between" distinguished social and spatial stages in rites of passage (Van Gennep, 1960). Among its defining qualities were autonomy and instability. In the sixties it developed into a more permanent state, in which "communitas" could come into being as a marginal form of human interrelatedness (Turner, 1995). In the network society of the 21st century liminality has accomplished its journey by moving to the centre of society, pushing structured human interrelatedness to the "margin", or more precisely to the local, regional, national or categorical (religious, gender, sexual preference, etc.) domain (Castells, 2000a; 2004; 2000b). Human society is built around a centre of the stability of the unstable.

This also holds for Christian faith and for liturgy. Christian ritual is performed across (worldwide) networks and in independent groups and churches by anyone who chooses to do so. There is no liturgical elite anymore; it is principally a popular movement characterised by "plural authority structures". The academic heuristic power of liminality is finally demonstrated in two liturgical cases.

Opsomming

"Flows of worship" in de netwerksamenleving: liminaliteit als heuristische begrip in Praktische Theologie voorbij Actie Theorie

Dit artikel toont aan waarom en hoe liminaliteit zich heeft ontwikkeld tot een sleutelbegrip in de Praktische Theologie en in het bijzonder in de Liturgiewetenschap.

Liminaliteit diende aan het begin van de 20e eeuw als aanduiding van de fase "betwixt and between" onderscheiden sociale en ruimtelijke fasen in rites de passage (Van Gennep, 1960). Autonomie en instabiliteit waren toen belangrijke kenmerken voor het concept. In de jaren zestig stond liminaliteit voor een meer stabiele en permanente status, waarin communitas kon ontstaan als marginale vorm van menselijke relationaliteit (Turner, 1995). In de netwerksamenleving van de 21e eeuw is de ontwikkeling van het begrip "liminaliteit" voltooid. Structurele menselijke relationaliteit is dan naar de "marge" gemigreerd, of preciezer naar locale, regionale, nationale of categoriale (religieuze, gender, seksuele preferenties) domeinen (Castells, 2000a; 2004; 2000b). De menselijke samenleving is gebouwd rondom het middelpunt van de stabiliteit van het instabiele.

Dat geldt ook voor het christelijk geloof en voor liturgie. Christelijk ritueel wordt over wereldwijde netwerken gerealiseerd en in onafhankelijke groepen en kerken door iedereen die dat wil. Er is geen liturgische elite meer; liturgie is principieel een populaire beweging, die gekarakteriseerd wordt door "plurale autoriteitsstructuren". De academische heuristische kracht van de notie liminaliteit wordt tenslotte aangetoond in twee casus.

1. Introduction

Ben de Klerk was my threshold to Africa, for he was the first colleague to invite me to the Republic of South Africa, in March 2001, after he had visited me in the Netherlands the year before. It opened doors to real transcultural experiences and true border crossings for me; it was a threshold or liminal experience. As a result of our initial collaboration, Ben de Klerk contributed to a Dutch volume on the subject of liturgy, with an article about liturgy and the African Renaissance (De Klerk, 2002:50-62). The key concept in this article is *transformation* in a double sense. The notion describes the changes in which Africa has been captured in the postapartheid era, as well as the, at least potentially converting accomplishment of liturgy. Liturgy can help to stimulate the transformation of Africa by introducing and strengthening its concurrent values with Christianity, and

the African Renaissance can help the liturgy to be a truly African and relevant liturgy. De Klerk, in a rather optimistic tone, formulates the thesis that both transformations may empower each other under certain conditions which are sketched in the article. This mutual empowerment is conceptualised as liturgical inculturation, which is clearly distinguished from syncretism of Christian faith with African Traditional Religions. De Klerk sticks to Biblical lines of thinking; transgression towards (African) culture should not be unlimited, but should be halted by some borders. If I see it correctly, the article is typical of Ben de Klerk.

I will honour my now retiring friend by thinking over the word field that his article evokes and elaborating it further towards the 21st century global network culture.

Notions like transformation, transgression, transcultural and (crossing) borders lead us to the sphere of the concept of *liminality* – deduced from the Latin word *limen* or threshold, as it is coined by the anthropologists Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1995). In my view, liminality is currently very valuable as a heuristic key concept in Practical Theology and especially in Liturgical Studies. In this article I will demonstrate why and how liminality can be regarded as a key concept in Practical Theology, in particular in Liturgical Studies, by describing the journey that the concept made through the 20th century and developing it further for use in the 21st century; subsequently I will show its academic heuristic power in two cases. The author is an European, white, male academic professor. Inevitable, the article is written from a Western perspective, or, more personally stated, it is a contribution from my own perspective, to the debates with my South African colleagues and friends, among them Ben de Klerk in the first place.

The article is designed as follows. First, an overview of the development of the concept is sketched on the basis of the work of Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1995). Subsequently, the concept is discussed in the framework of a current theory concerning developments in the global network society (Castells, 2000a; 2004; 2000b). Then the significance of the concept for Practical Theology and especially Liturgical Studies is elaborated, after which this significance is demonstrated in two cases. As a conclusion, I will ask Ben de Klerk a question.

2. Development of the concept of *liminality*: Van Gennep, Turner and beyond

In his famous book, *The rites of passage*, Arnold van Gennep (1960) distinguishes a threefold pattern of rites of passage. They are constructed of a preliminal, a liminal and a postliminal phase, which function respectively as separation from transition to and incorporation into a social group. The liminary stages are "transitional periods which sometimes acquire a certain autonomy" and which are therefore to a certain degree unstable (Van Gennep, 1960: 192 ff.). Cases of this in a sense autonomous phase are the engagement and the novitiate.

Victor Turner extended the liminary phase in *The ritual process* (1995) sixty years later. He distinguishes two forms of "human interrelatedness" – liminality and "the status system" – that are characterised by a long list of opposing terms, e.g. transition/state, homogeneity/heterogeneity, absence of property/property, heteronomy/degrees of autonomy, humility/just pride of position, and nakedness or uniform clothing/distinctions in clothing (Turner, 1995: 106 ff.). In the liminal stage an alternative form of human interrelatedness can come into existence. Turner describes this form with the Latin word *communitas* (and not community, to distinguish it from "an 'area of common living'" (Turner, 1995:96). The development of the concept of liminality by Turner is expressed in this extensive quotation:

> What appears to have happened is that with the increasing specialization of society and culture, with progressive complexity in the social division of labor, what was in tribal society principally a set of transitional qualities 'betwixt and between' defined status of culture and society has become itself an institutionalized state. But traces of the *passage* quality of the religious life remain in such formulations as: 'The Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveller, with no place to rest his head'. Transition has here become a permanent condition. Nowhere has this institutionalization of liminality been more clearly marked and defined than in the monastic and mendicant states in the great world religions. (Turner, 1995:107).

Liminality and structured society presuppose each other and *communitas* is the condition of human society. One of Turner's two elaborated examples concerns the (early) Franciscan order of St. Francis and his fellow brethren; other liminal *communitates* are those of artists, of jesters, of prophets, et cetera. As a rule, symbols and beliefs of liminal *communitates* refer to the "marginal" (Turner,

1995:110) "the powers of the weak, or, in other words, the permanently or transiently sacred attributes of low status or position" and they have often "magico-religious properties" (Turner, 1995:108, 109) or represent "moral values … against the coercive power of supreme political rulers" (Turner, 1995:110). They challenge structure and its human interrelatedness that is built upon law, property, rank, et cetera and are at the same time always in one way or another related to structure. Sometimes liminal groups are highly valued and trusted. This holds for the jesters at the medieval courts, but also for the churches in present-day South Africa (HSRC, 2008; IJR, 2008). In short, structure and anti-structure belong together.

It is interesting that in his description and characterisation of *communitas,* Turner refers to Martin Buber's *Ich und Du* (Buber, 1977; Turner, 1995:126 ff.; 136 ff.; 142 ff.). Turner compares the essential and spontaneous relation which, according to Buber, results if the *Es* (it) becomes a *Du* (thou), and perhaps a *Wir* (we), to the *communitas* that he sees developing in liminality.

It will be clear that *communitas* as anti-structure cannot maintain itself for very long. It therefore soon develops a form in which "free-relationships between individuals become converted into norm-governed relationships between social personae", but that nevertheless still bears traces of its origin. In the quotation above he refers to the Christian community and its Biblical, Pauline assertion that a Christian is a stranger in this world. Turner distinguishes three kinds of communitas: the existential or spontaneous *communitas*, the normative *communitas* and the ideological *communitas* (Turner, 1995: 132). Examples of the second and third *communitates* have already been institutionalised and as a consequence have moved into the domain of structure.

As an example of the first communitas Turner refers to the hippies, in a book published in 1969. The "hippies" aimed at reaching "total communion" with each other through symbols and "liturgical actions" [sic!] that are borrowed from the religious domains, through drugs, music and "flashing lights" (Turner, 1995:138). This is an interesting observation in the light of what Tex Sample (1998) has called "[t]he spectacle of worship in a wired world" in our days. Sample sees the spectacle as a characteristic of the electronic culture of our days, especially in its use of three electronic means: "image, sound as beat and visualisation" (Sample, 1998:57). Sample, like Turner, observes ritual activities during these spectacles, through which people become related and engaged. Engagement through spectacles was for example shown in the pop spectacles *Live aid* in 1985 and *Live 8*

in 2005 against poverty in Africa. Praise concerts and – in the Netherlands – the yearly youth day of the Evangelical Broadcasting Company with 35 000 visitors are clear examples of these momentary, in the sense of Turner, *communitates*.

We will go further into the topic of liturgy in the electronic network society in the next section of the article.

3. Liminality in the network society

Ben de Klerk's (2002) article mentioned above led us into the word field of transformation, transgression, transcultural and (crossing) borders, in short of thresholds and of liminality, which Arnold van Gennep at the beginning of the twentieth century considered to be an in-between phase, temporal as well as spatial, and which Victor Turner sixty years later regarded as a more permanent state. It was demonstrated that liminal *communitates* in their symbols and beliefs refer to the marginal. Now we will develop the notion of liminality further by combining it with theories concerning a globalised world or the network society.

The thesis is that liminality has become the central notion and dominant state of our current world. The "information age" (Castells, 2000a; 2004; 2000b) is typified by constant flows of economic, financial, cultural, informational and human resources and means, by permanent transformation, border crossing, travelling, transgression, et cetera. Philosophy and cultural studies long ago paved the way for that insight. Decades before Van Gennep published his *Rites of passage*, Friedrich Nietzsche took up the maxim – inaccurately attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclites (?540-?480) – *panta rhei*, everything flows (Verhoeven, 1993:104-110). It thus became a central notion in existentialist and postmodern thinking and generated a great many analogous metaphors. In a selective survey of related terms in philosophy and cultural sciences after Nietzsche, Tweed (2006:55-62) mentions among others "ongoing flux", "élan vital" (Bergson), "chaos", "global cultural flows", "movement", "travelling", "translocal culture", "migrancy", "system", "network" (Latour, Taylor) and "trajectory" (De Certeau), to which "liquidity" (Bauman, Ward) may be added. It is important to note that these are indeed metaphors to describe the current global society.

Also Turner felt urged to use metaphors and not so much exact terms when he described *communitas*:

> I find myself forced to have recourse to metaphor and analogy. For communitas has an existential quality; it involves the whole man in his relation to other whole men. Structure, on the other hand, has cognitive quality; as Lévi-Strauss has perceived, it is essentially a set of classifications, a model for thinking about culture and nature and ordering one's public life. Communitas has also an aspect of potentiality; it is often in the subjunctive mood. (Turner, 1995:127.)

Economy, finance, information and people in today's society are primarily understood as captured in a flow, in a move, as migrating, travelling, et cetera. What Turner called marginal and weak, has moved to the centre; the spontaneous and momentary communitas has advanced to the centre of culture: everything is on the move. Liminality has become the central notion and dominant state of our current global culture. "Structure" on the other hand has moved into the margin – we will go into that further below.

Among the metaphors aiming at describing modern culture, *network* became the prevailing concept due to the dominance of multimedia technology and infrastructures, in particular the world wide web. Numerous network theories have been developed and are being developed. I limit myself in this article to the theories of Manuel Castells as he has expressed them in his trilogy *The information age: economy, society and culture* (2000a; 2004; 2000b). The existence of networks is not a new social phenomenon, says Castells, but "the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure" (Castells, 2000a:500). This material basis in information technology has caused a fundamental inversion: "the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power" (Castells, 2000a:500). The previous sentence is a far reaching analysis of modern culture. It claims that the flow, the flux, the movement itself is the ultimate power that controls the powers. Power in the network society is all about participating in networks and their flows. Society is structured in a way in which its form is more important than what is actually being done: it is "characterized by the pre-eminence of social morphology over social action" (Castells, 2000a:500). It happens in the networks, and the first commandment of the network society is: you must connect.

On the level of culture, values and ideas are being circulated through the world wide networks in which people participate interactively. This holds for politics, which is being exercised more and more in the media, as well as for other cultural phenomena (Cas-

tells, 2000a:507). One of the success factors of the election of US-president Obama has been his intelligent use of the modern communication means, such as the world wide web and short message services via cell phones. At the level of the arts the distribution of pop music via the internet illustrates the thesis that values are transported via networks.

That culture is being performed via networks also holds for religious phenomena. In the next section of this article we will elaborate this for Christian worship and liturgy. My hypothesis is that after the eras of beliefs and of practices, Christianity has now moved into the age of forms. That is not to say that *liturgical forms* have taken precedence over theology. Form is not taken here in its classical (reformed) meaning of *forma*, namely liturgical order, but in its meaning of social morphology, in short, as network. Until the sixties of the last century protestant faith was mainly communicated through beliefs, viz. doctrines, ideas and convictions, these being the shapes in which the reformers had forced Christianity. "Learning" had become a key word in faith experience in the Reformation. The choice of the reformers for a predominance of beliefs was caused, was made possible and became successful through the invention of the art of printing. A factor of the fast spread of the new faith in Europe was among others the availability of printing offices. In the sixties of the twentieth century the "anthropological turn" turned the attention to human actions, that is to practices of faith. Practical Theology – in its gradual development for over a century, starting from Schleiermacher's *Praktische Theologie* in 1850 – began its victory march, holding the banners of hermeneutics or of action theory high, also in South Africa (De Klerk, 2002:53; Pieterse, 1993; Vos & Pieterse, 1997:13, *passim*). The first decade of the 21st century has disclosed a new paradigm, that of the informational society, in which networks prevail over content as well as over action. To believe is to connect to Christian networks.

But this is only half the story. I once again turn my attention to Castells by extensively quoting what may be considered to be the main thesis of his trilogy:

> People increasingly organize their meaning not around what they do but on the basis of what they are, or believe they are. Meanwhile, on the other hand, global networks of instrumental exchanges selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, regions and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network, in a relentless flow of strategic decisions. There follows a fundamental split be-

tween abstract, universal instrumentalism, and historically rooted, particularistic identities. *Our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the Net and the self.* (Castells, 2000a:3.)

The world has become a village, but only a few inhabit it as such. The network society has generated new masses that are excluded from partaking in the flows that determine the world and its culture (for this and the following, Castells, 2004:6-12). There has evolved a dichotomy of those who connect and those who are connected. Castells poses that perhaps the most important mode of identity formation in the network society is resistance. People who in one way or another are excluded from the flows and fluxes develop an identity that is based on faith convictions, traditions and beliefs of a local, national, institutional, racial, sexual or gender nature. These "resistance identities" can develop into "project identities" if actors try to restructure society according to their views, convictions and behaviour. Castells elaborates two examples: fundamentalist Christians in the United States and Al Quaeda, two groups that are rooted in resistance against the global flows of money and economic and ethical liberalism, and that aggressively and violently or peacefully try to impose their ideas on others. Identities of gays in a predominantly heterosexual world, of Uighurs and Tibetans in China and Basks in Spain, of national states like Luxembourg or Switzerland in the sphere of the European Community, of Evangelicals and pro-life groups in the United States, of autonomous activists against world trade talks, and even environmental activists, all developed resistance identities, typified by *the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded* (Castells, 2004:9). The flows of networks, in which time and distance are reduced to zero and which are limitlessly open to everyone who shares the values and messages communicated in a network, have their pendants in local, national, et cetera, in short limited, fenced-off structures that exist miles apart from other worlds. The stability of a society is determined by the degree to which these resistance or project identities are connected to the network flows despite themselves.

We may conclude that in the network society the emancipation of liminality has been brought to an end. It moved from the margin into the centre and the metaphors describing and characterising it refer to the strong, the open, the dynamic, in sum the essence of society. Opposite this centre more structured and closed or even fenced-off groups and identities have been developed.

In summary, the notion of liminality made a journey through the last century. It began its voyage at the beginning of the century as indication of the phase "betwixt and between" distinguished social and spatial stages in rites of passage. Among its defining qualities were autonomy and instability. In the sixties it had developed into a more permanent state, in which *communitas* could come into being as a form of human interrelatedness that is opposed to structured forms of human mutual relations. Even though *communitas,* especially in its normative and ideological shape, has a more permanent state, it nevertheless exists in the margin of stable structured society and is characterised by symbols of weakness and moral values. As such – Turner would say: as anti-structure – it is also the condition of structure. In the network society of the 21st century liminality has accomplished its journey by moving to the centre of society, pushing structured human interrelatedness to the "margin", or more precisely to the local, regional, national or categorical (religious, gender, sexual preference, etc.) domain. Human society is built around a centre of the stability of the unstable. Liminality regained its main quality as passage, as flow, journey, movement, travel, trajectory, or – the dominant concept – network. As such it also maintained and augmented its qualities of autonomy and instability. In this network flow spontaneous *communitas* can come into existence, but also more permanent forms of *communitas*, mainly of a global elite that has access to the networks. In general there is a growing opposition between the networks and the self, and this antagonism originates from local, regional, national or categorical resistance identities.

4. The meaning of liminality for Practical Theology and especially Liturgical Studies

In the next section of our article we will think over the meaning of the completed emancipation of the concept of *liminality* in the network society for Practical Theology, in particular for Liturgical Studies.

Some years ago, I reformulated the research programme that is being carried out by researchers around my chair in Liturgical Studies (Barnard, 2006). We had started studying new developments in mainly protestant, liturgical-ritual domains. One of the phenomena that caught the eye, was the rise of evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic influences in liturgical performances, also, but not only, in established churches. The exploration of this field required the creative use of methods and concepts, and as a consequence the reformulation of the research programme also meant reframing the research design. We could no longer rely on official books, docu-

ments and brochures, or on the observation and description of services performed in established churches, because liturgical renewal in line with the Praise and Worship Movement makes use of global communication networks and mass meetings, in which the visual aspect, the beat rhythm and the use of particular images together create a total experience. The message is adapted to the possibilities of the multimedia technology used: the flow determines the message. The borders between ecclesial liturgy, concert liturgy (praise concerts), internet liturgy and telecommunication liturgy are fluid in this field. There are no longer clearly defined liturgical forms, spaces and times, or authority leaders such as clerics and ministers, nor is there any longer a clearly distinguishable institution such as a church. Instead we are dealing with a Christian ritual that is performed across (worldwide) networks and in independent groups and churches by anyone who chooses to do so. There is no liturgical elite in the Praise and Worship Movement, it is principally a popular movement characterised by "plural authority structures" (Held quoted in Castells, 2004:356) – although it may be considered as a new elite in the sense of the popular worship leaders and the companies that produce worship music, as well as the corporations that supervise the digital networks. As researchers we concluded that liturgy in its renewed shapes had become liminal.

In summary, we had to develop research designs into which the research of websites and the observation of worship (mass) events could be integrated, as well as services in independent and in mainline churches. This also required a rethinking of traditional concepts such as participation and community, music, performance, liturgical space and time, tradition, et cetera. These notions – often coined by the Liturgical Movement that dominated liturgical research for nearly a century (Barnard & Post, 2009) – had to be incorporated into completely new semantic fields.

The new fields to be explored in Liturgical Studies appeared to be complex, diffuse and not unequivocal and our concepts had to be open as well (cf. Barnard, 2008:179 ff.). In short, the dynamic flow of the new liturgical fields that we wanted to explore required open concepts and dynamic research designs.

Our approach was not met with enthusiasm everywhere. Especially devotees to the Liturgical Movement as it had developed in the twentieth century, were very critical. The same holds for some adherents to the classical reformed orders. They developed resistance identities, sticking to more or less fixed liturgical orders and to ideas and concepts that had been coined by earlier developments in

liturgy. In academic publications by scholars of these schools, facts and interpretations that are already well-known are constantly being repeated (Barnard & Post, 2009).

This article is an example of the rethinking of one concept, *liminality*, which was traditionally used to describe the threshold between the secular and the sacred space, or between phases in the life cycle that are marked by rites of passage. However, the old semantic potential of the concept no longer fits societal and ecclesial reality.

This holds first of all for what we now call life cycle rituals. Van Gennep pointed to the betrothal as example of a liminal state. But in the Western world relations, sexual activity, engagement, marriage and getting children no longer occur in the same order. For example, 40% of the childbirths in the first nine months of 2008 in the Netherlands were extramarital (CBS, 2009), i.e. the parents are not or not yet married. Becoming a family is often a phase that precedes the traditionally liminal phase of a wedding ceremony. Being a family as such is also in a flux: out of a thousand marriages nine are dissolved each year (CBS, 2006). Same-sex marriage excludes procreation from marriage. Feminism has changed traditional role-taking in families and societies. Relationships are in a flow and have become liminal. Churches have to make choices as to whether they will follow the flux and to what extent they will follow it. The field of gender, relations and procreation has shown the evolvement of resistance identities. Churches or parts of churches and church communities protested against homosexual clergy, same-sex marriages, sex before marriage, et cetera. Evangelicals often strongly defend the classical, patriarchal family.

Also, liturgical spaces and their use require a new concept of liminality. I will go into this aspect of liminality in the first case that I describe in the next section of my article.

5. Two cases

In this last section of this article the *type* of liminality as expressed above will be explored by means of two *cases* (for the methodological consequences of this process of exploring cases after having developed a type, cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:195-197). With an eye on *In die Skriflig* and its aims, I have chosen cases from the protestant, reformed and evangelical domains. Of course these cases need further elaboration, which, however, is beyond the scope of this article. So, necessarily, we will have to limit ourselves to very brief descriptions.

5.1 A youth day of an evangelical broadcasting company

We already referred to "the spectacle of worship in a wired world" (Sample, 1998) above. We will now go into an example of such a spectacle in more detail. It concerns the yearly Youth Day (Dutch: "Jongerendag") of the Evangelical Broadcasting Company EO (*Evangelische Omroep*). I describe some elements of the 35th version of the day, June 13, 2009, on the basis of observations of one of my students, Arnold van Campen.

Impressions of the day can be seen on the internet (EO Jongerendag, 2009); there is a hyves-site with more than 5 000 members (EO Jongerendag Hyves, 2009). The day was also planned via internet; one could e.g. get acquainted with the *preacher* Henk Stoorvogel. The day could be followed on one of the national broadcasting channels on television from the beginning until the end. Multimedia communication through television, radio and internet, and light effects and sound during the day via screens, form the material basis of the event. The mere use of multimedia as basis locates the event in the network culture.

The event was held in the provisional liturgical space of a sports stadium. The centre of the liturgical space as we know it in churches, traditionally occupied by the altar or the pulpit, is here a stage for the performances. A stadium that temporarily functions as a liturgical space is liminal as such: unlike a church building it is not built or designed for liturgy and the structure has a completely different symbolic programme than a church has.

Church attendance of younger people is declining. Yet, the EO Youth Day attracted some 35 000 young people. This group may be typified as a *communitas* that built up during the day and had a liminal quality as a result. Although the day is a yearly event, the community at least partly consists of different people each year. It is a momentary and in a sense a spontaneous community that comes into existence through the use of a popular musical idiom, light, stage effects (smoke!), an "anchorman" on the stage and performing artists and politicians (the prime minister), as well as through an enthusiastically (applauding, waving, dancing, singing, praying, yelling) participating audience. The *communitas* is dissolved immediately after the event. It does not proceed to a normative or ideological *communitas*, but we may assume that some, if not most, of the visitors belong to related communities, groups or churches with more stable forms. The spontaneity of the *communitas* may be questioned. The day has after all been meticulously prepared by profes-

sionals who know quite well how to steer effects. Participants, however, experience communion.

It is a well-known fact that such a *communitas*, like the earlier mentioned *Live Aid* and *Live 8* pop spectacles, can generate engagement: the offering is performed through sms-messages and within minutes €23 454 has been donated for a project to save children in Bangladesh from blindness. The Christian-democratic prime minister is received like a pop-artist, and there is the possibility to discuss societal, religious and ethical subjects with him and other politicians. The liminal quality of the *communitas* is in such acts attached to stable institutions of civil society like the government and parliament.

We will further focus on only one aspect of the day, the spectacular opening act, because it demonstrates how multimedia are introduced in this spectacle liturgy. In the opening performance, the audience is submerged in music, sounds, songs, words, pulsating light effects, images and smoke. The first text that appears in the midst of lights and other effects on the screen and that is read aloud is a paraphrase of Colossians 1. "In Jesus the invisible God became visible. He existed before all things. Everything has been created thanks to him. He wanted us to know the rich and beautiful mystery that he prepared for all nations. This is the mystery: that Jesus will live in your heart." A choir scans "Jesus, Jesus". Through a pink and beating heart – it reminded me of a Valentine Day heart – the contours of a really traditional Jesus-figure appear on the screen, with long hair, open arms, hands up. The contours fade away, and the heart and the pulsing line and tones of a heart machine are projected and made audible. The screen becomes dark, the line straightens, silence follows. A young female violinist in a cloud of smoke starts playing *O sacred head sore wounded*, later accompanied by a piano. The texts and voice reading the texts aloud restart: "When Jesus died, He revived. His heart now beats in me. He is my identity. Jesus told me the real truth: I am loved, I am sought after, I am free for ever." A singer sings a song, *The splendour of the King.* A band and singers, together with the violinist, continue the song: *How great is our God* (in English). Light beams move over the audience when the pink heart is once again projected with spouting firework fountains. The audience is yelling.

It will be evident that the EO Youth Day is a perfect example of the emergence of a flow of worship in a multimedia based network society.

5.2 A classical reformed resistance identity?

The second example is taken again from the Netherlands. The case is the Reformed Alliance (*De Gereformeerde Bond*) within the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, previously in the Netherlands Reformed Church. The Reformed Alliance accounts for the orthodox part of the church, previously also of the Netherlands Reformed Church. It may be said that the Alliance has nourished a resistance identity ever since its foundation in 1906, standing firm against liberal or supposedly liberal influences in the Netherlands Reformed Church. For a long time churches or congregations affiliated with the Alliance performed a uniform worship, in the sense that only psalms were iso-rhythmically sung in the rhymed version of 1773. A minister in Leiden was deprived of membership because he had given out hymns to sing, in 1962 (Van der Graaf, 2002:261). The stand of the Alliance was modified after the publication of a new hymnbook in 1973: a congregation may be called reformed as long as the preaching is reformed. The league was no longer against hymns, but in favour of the psalms (Vergunst, 2008:9).

The board of the Alliance is still involved in liturgical matters nowadays. It is interesting to see how the board of the league now tries to cope with the appearance of liturgical flows *within* its own circles. Not only do they identify heterotemporality concerning the liturgy, but also "uncontrolled growth" of hymnbooks and hymns that are being sung in reformed congregations within the protestant church (Vergunst, 2008:10). This uncontrolled growth does not so much concern the official hymnbook of the church (1973) any longer, with a newly rhymed version of the psalms (1968) and 471 hymns, but mainly evangelical songs. Balanced assessments of the hymnbook and evangelical songs were published (*De liturgie in hervormde gemeenten*, 2008). The liturgical identity of the orthodox reformed wing of the protestant church appears no longer able to withstand the flow. This may be intensified by the supposition of a strong influence of the evangelical movement on young people from orthodox reformed families and congregations. This does not mean that liturgy in the Reformed Alliance can be typified as liminal, neither can it any longer be characterised as expression of a resistance identity. It struggles to cope with liturgical shapes between liminality and resistance.

A strong liturgical resistance identity can be observed in the small Restored Reformed Church (Hersteld Hervormde Kerk), the youngest twig that has shot from the protestant trunk in the Netherlands (2004). It is a segregation from the Netherlands Reformed Church,

in fact of the Reformed Alliance within this church. Here the iso-rhythmical singing of psalms in the rhymed version of 1773 and even of the older Peter Datheen version is propagated. A spontaneous culture of singing with trebles has developed and is spread through concerts and compact discs (De schepping, 2008; Bovenstem, 2009).

6. To conclude: a question

Let us once more return to the above-mentioned article of Ben de Klerk. I have written my article from an European, Western perspective. I am convinced that one cannot describe and analyse the African context from behind one's desk in the Netherlands. So I offer this article as my contribution to the discussions with my colleagues and friends in South Africa. I hope that I have complicated Ben de Klerk's notion of inculturation: which culture is he speaking of? Should liturgy inculturate into the global network culture *or* into the regional, national, African or categorical cultures? He speaks of the necessity of inculturation: liturgy should connect to the transformational process in South Africa and thus participate in it as well as criticise it at the same time. Thus worshippers become critical participants in African church and society and the liturgy stays in touch with African reality. He asks for "the formation of a liturgical identity for countries and regions and for the whole continent as an answer to the dynamic cultural processes that are being performed at the moment" (De Klerk: 2002:53). Now my question is: What does this mean eight years after he had written the article, in 2010? Does it mean embarking on the flow, connecting to the networks of what Philip Jenkins has called "The next Christendom: The coming of global Christianity" (Jenkins, 2002), or does it mean developing local, regional and categorical liturgical identities of reformed, Lutheran and Anglican, black and white, Xhosa, Venda, Zulu, Afrikaans, et cetera, gay and straight Christians? Or perhaps both, without separating them? My preference would be the latter option, but that has big consequences as to how we look at liturgy in our churches. The 21st century is all about connecting and at the same time being rooted.

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Key concepts:

liminality
liturgical studies
network society
practical theology
worship

Kernbegrippe:

aanbidding
liminaliteit
liturgiese studie
netwerksamelewing
praktiese teologie