

# Rethinking the reciprocity between *lex credendi*, *lex orandi* and *lex vivendi*: As we believe, so we worship. As we believe, so we live

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The Catholics order is from the way they worship to the way they behave (*lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi*). Protestants, on the other hand, commence with the question, 'What are we to believe?' The Protestant order would therefore be *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi*. *Lex credendi* is the law of belief (what we believe). *Lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, literally means the law of prayer (the way we worship) is the law of belief (what we believe) or the law of praying (*lex orandi*) constitutes or establishes the law of believing (*lex credendi*). As we believe, so we live (*lex credendi*) forms the basis and foundation of both the Catholic doctrine and the Catholic moral life. *Lex orandi*, the law of prayer (the way we worship) has to do with the enactment of the liturgy itself. In this article, I argue that the liturgy of life (*lex vivendi*) makes apparent what we believe. *Lex vivendi* [the rule of life] therefore pertains to how one should conduct oneself in a specified way, especially in relation to others regarding the teachings of the church as well as to ethical and social questions. *Lex vivendi* has to do with the faithful living of the Gospel. This article will therefore attend to the following: the meaning of *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi*; expansion of adage to *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi*; justice and *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi*; interplay between *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi* in Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).

**Contribution:** From the perspective of Protestant dogmatics, this article aims to contribute to the reflection on the notion *fides quaerens intellectum* [faith seeks understanding].

**Keywords:** *lex orandi*; *lex credendi*; *lex vivendi*; *lex (con)vivendi*; liturgy; life and conduct; liturgy of life; prayer; preaching; worship.

## Introduction

The interconnectedness of prayer (*lex orandi*), belief (*lex credendi*) and morality (*lex vivendi*) is being highlighted in Christian ethics and liturgy. How we pray (*lex orandi*) and worship (*lex orandi*) is intrinsically linked to our life and conduct (*lex vivendi*). In this article, the notion of *lex vivendi* will be explored against the backdrop of the global discourse on *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, *lex vivendi*. Attention will be paid to the reciprocal relation between the way we believe (*lex credendi*), the way we worship (*lex orandi*) and the way we live (*lex vivendi*). In order to contextualise the discourse in the last section of this article, the interplay between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi* in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) will be underscored.

## The meaning of *lex credendi*, *lex orandi* and *lex vivendi*

Prosper of Aquitaine, disciple of Augustine and Gallican monk at Louvain (c. 390–c. 455) coined the idiom *lex orandi*, *lex credenda* (As we worship, so we believe). Worship reveals according to Fournier (2011) what:

[W]e truly believe and how we view ourselves in relationship to God, one another and the world into which we are sent to carry forward the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ. (p. 1)

The liturgy is the place where the identity of the Body of Christ is on display and acted out (cf. De Clerck 1994:178–200). Identity has implications both within and outside the life of the church. Accordingly, worship, like any other moral act, is situated, for Thomas Aquinas, in a richly ontological context: somehow, it has to do with the establishment of a right order in being (Barron 1959:60). Aquinas (1922:7) places what we call 'liturgy' or the formal public worship of God under the heading of religion which is further specified as one of the potential parts of justice. According to Aquinas, religion 'directs us also to our neighbour and not only to God'.

<sup>†</sup>, 1959–2020.

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Aquinas (1922:18) presumption is that devotion is nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God. *Lex orandi* has to do with the enactment of the liturgy itself. Fourier pronounces that 'liturgical worship is not an add on for a Catholic Christian'. According to Fourier (2011:1), liturgical worship is rather 'the foundation of Catholic identity'.

Worship exposes and safeguards what Christians believe and guide them to live their Christian life (*lex vivendi*). John Maxwell Johnson indicates that there is an interplay between *lex orandi* (saying grace, *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, reading and preaching the Word, intercession, participating in the holy communion, singing hymns and Psalms, baptism, confession, offering and praying, benediction) and *lex credendi* [believing] and *lex vivendi* [life and conduct]. *Lex vivendi* reminds us of the liturgical life of the Christian faithful. According to Bria (1996:1), the word liturgy (Latin *liturgia*) comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*, which is in turn derived from the words *leitōs* (public, from *laos*, people) and *ergon* [work].

Literally translated, *leitourgia* means 'work of the people or people's work' (Daniel 2013:1). In practice, it was understood to mean service for the good of the people (Adam 1985:3). According to Johnson, *laos* 'is a secular Greek term for a public work done not by but on behalf of the people by another person or group appointed to that task' (Johnson 2013: ix). Adam (1985:3) notes that 'the post apostolic period used *leitourgia* to mean both service of God and service of the community'. In early Christianity, it was reserved in the Greek speaking east for the celebration of the Eucharist by a local community, under the ministry of a consecrated priest, on Sunday. The word 'liturgy' describes how the worship service was conducted in the first century (White 1990:32). The word 'liturgy' (*leitourgia*) was used to refer to the 'work' of the faithful. According to Adam (1985:4), 'liturgy was introduced into the West only in the sixteenth century and was adopted by the churches of the Reformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth century'.

The phrase *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* [that the order of supplication determines the rule of faith] is borrowed from Prosper of Aquitaine (Geldhof 2010:165; Irwin 2002:57–69). This adage means that the law of prayer grounds the law of belief or the rule for interceding should establish the rule for believing (Jesson 2001:7). Johnson (2013:8) points out that 'the principle of *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* is a principle about the supplication for grace and the priority of grace in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation)'. *Lex statuat supplicandi* is an equivalent term for *lex orandi*. Johnson (2013) furthermore stresses that this principle is being enshrined in the:

[T]wenty-five canons of a local Gallican council, the Council of Orange in 529 CE, which, through ratification by Pope Boniface II in 531, became part of accepted doctrine in Western Christianity. (p. 8)

Aidan Kavanagh (1984) accentuates that:

[L]ex supplicandi is a law of praying and believing in early Christianity supplicatory prayer – not prayer or worship in

general, but of prayer which petitions God for the whole range of human needs. (p. 134)

Kavanagh (1984:134) concludes that the 'way Christians believe is constituted and supported by how Christians petition God for their human needs in worship'.

Marshall (1995) argues that:

[M]any writers strip Prosper's original *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* of 'ut' and ignore the function of *statuat* as the subjunctive of *statuere*, and so read the dictum as though it were an axiom. (pp. 139–140)

Marshall (1995:139–140) cautions that Prosper's 'dictum evolved into the simplistic equation, *lex orandi lex credendi*, and liturgical material is employed in a hierarchical and sometimes authoritarian manner'.

The linguistic ambiguity of the Latin tag corresponds to a material interplay which in fact takes place between worship and doctrine in Christian practice: 'worship influences doctrine, and doctrine worship' (Wainwright 1980:218). Wainwright (1980:251) indicates the difference in approaches to the adage *lex orandi, lex credendi* between the Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. According to Wainwright (1980:251), 'Roman Catholicism appeals according to *lex orandi, lex credendi* to existing liturgical practice for proof in matters of doctrine'. This principle grounds and shapes both the Catholic doctrine and the Catholic moral life. In Roman Catholicism, '*lex orandi, lex credenda* is taken to indicate what may and must be believed'. According to Pope Benedict XVI (2007:1), the 'Church's rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) corresponds to her rule of faith (*lex credendi*)'. He decreed the following (Pope Benedict XVI 2007):

The Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the *lex orandi* (rule of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. The Roman Missal promulgated by Saint Pius V and revised by Blessed John XXIII is nonetheless to be considered an extraordinary expression of the same *lex orandi* of the Church and duly honoured for its venerable and ancient usage. According to Benedict these two expressions of the Church's *lex orandi* will in no way lead to a division in the Church's *lex credenda* (rule of faith); for they are two usages of the one Roman rite. (p. 1)

The phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* ['the rule of prayer (is) the rule of belief'] played a critical role in the theological and historical debate concerning the place and importance of the liturgy in the life of the Church (Irwin 2002:57–69). Irwin's premise is that the liturgy of worship is a hollow formality if it is not combined with the liturgy of life. On the one side, the view is being held that theology (belief) establishes practice (prayer) and its opposite: that practice is actually determinative of belief (Irwin 2002:57–69). According to Bradshaw (1998:187), 'the Latin phrase, *lex orandi lex credendi*, should not be used as a kind of liturgical "proof text" in liturgical theology'. Wainwright (1980:8) convincingly argues that 'worship is the point of concentration at which the whole of Christian life comes into ritual focus'. Johnson contends

that *lex orandi [est] lex credendi* reminds us that 'what the church believes, teaches, and confesses will certainly be reflected and expressed within its worship' (Johnson 2013:22). Fundamental theological principles underpin the order of a Sunday worship service. In the Roman Catholic Church, the form of the Mass (*Ordinarium*) consists of five sections: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus* and the *Agnus Dei*. Roman Catholicism gives priority to liturgy as a norm for doctrine, while Protestantism typically gives priority to doctrine as a norm for worship (Wainwright 1980:218–219, 251–252). Kwasniecki (2014:1) points out that *lex orandi* is composed of texts, sacred signs, gestures and rites. She indicates that 'the liturgy itself (being the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the other sacraments, the Divine Office, and the various rites and sacraments found in the Church's official liturgical books)' is the Catholic Church *theologia prima* (Kwasniecki 2014:1). She furthermore argues that is in 'the liturgy and though it that the Church receives her primary theology' (Kwasniecki 2014:1). The reception of the sacraments commits Catholics to live a liturgical life. *Lex orandi [as we pray]* does not mean to attend church services, pray, read the Bible or belong to a church. It rather means that each and every day is meant to be a living out of what you believe. It is about being sent into life to be that which we become the Body and life Blood of Christ for the world (cf. *CSL Liturgy of life* 14). Kwasniecki (2014:1) highlights that the traditional Catholic and Orthodox approach to the Church's law and discipline is grounded in and 'shaped by her liturgy and her doctrine in this precise order: *Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*'. According to Kwasniecki (2014:1): 'the *lex vivendi* pertains to all that teaches men to live rightly, to every ethical and social question ...'. The adage *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* addresses the centrality of worship in the life, identity and mission of the Catholic Church.

### Expansion of adage to *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*

Wainwright (1991:193) argues that 'one of the emerging themes which is attending to the connection between liturgy and ethics is *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*'. According to Wainwright, the Latin tag *lex orandi, lex credendi* may be construed in two ways. The more usual way makes the rule of prayer a norm for belief: what is prayed indicates what may and must be believed. But from the grammatical point of view it is equally possible to reverse the subject and predicate and so take the tag as meaning that the rule of faith is the norm for prayer: what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed. Copious studies on liturgy and ethics, liturgical theology, liturgy of life, liturgical movement, *lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi* from different theological traditions, confessional traditions as well as from the ecumenical movement had been published during the past decades (cf. Bria 1996; Corriveau Raymond 1970; Irwin 2002:57–69; Johnson 2013; Saliers 1994; Smit 2004:887–907; Wainwright 1991:600–604, 1997; Wolterstorff 1992a:273–304, 1992b:311–317, 2011). According to Fournier (2011):

[T]he Latin adage, *lex orandi, lex credendi* is sometimes expanded to *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*, in order to further deepening the implications of this truth – 'how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live our lives'. (p. 1)

A Protestant order would be: *Lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi*. Protestants usually emphasise the triad of worship, doctrine and life. Wainwright influenced until this day hugely the discourse in Protestant circles on *lex orandi, lex credendi*. The core of Wainwright's theological work and Protestantism ordinarily underscores the pre-eminence of doctrine over the liturgy. This perspective is being put across in Wainwright's 1980 book, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*. He said this book should rather be titled *lex orandi lex credendi*. It is Wainwright's (1980:11) contention that liturgy and doctrine comprise 'correlative norms'. Wainwright (1980) notes that from a grammatical point of view *lex orandi lex credendi*:

[I]s equally possible to reverse subject and predicate and so take the adage as meaning that the rule of faith is the norm for prayer: what must be believed governs that may and should be prayed. (p. 176, 218, 293–294)

The aftermath of the Reformation has privileged doctrine (*credendi*) over experience (*orandi*), and diminished the reciprocity between the two demanded by the classical formulation (King 2014:33). According to Jesson (2001:2), the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* is 'not well known among Protestants'.

*Lex orandi, lex credendi* means according to Jesson (2001) in the literal sense:

[T]hat the law of prayer is equivalent to the law of belief would most easily take the dogmatic norm of belief as setting a rule for prayer, so that what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed. (p. 7)

However, South African scholars (see also Cilliers 2009:511–519, 2010:1–5; Naudé 2015; Smit 1997b:259–280; Wepener 2008:313–335; Wepener & Cilliers 2006:786–798) have already attended to the reciprocity between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*. Smit emphasises the reciprocity among *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* and *lex (con) vivendi*. In doing so, Smit (1997a:263) refers to an earlier work by Klaus-Peter Jörns, notion on *lex orandi – lex credendi – lex (con) vivendi*. Jörns later suggested the 'axiom *lex orandi – lex credendi – lex (con) vivendi* as paradigm for the renewal of the Christian church, Christian life, theology, education and training' (Smit 1997a:263). Jörns (1988), following Wainwright, added '*lex (con) vivendi*, to relate the whole of Christian life to liturgy and faith'. According to Smit (1997b), Jörns' suggestion to replace:

[L]ex *vivendi* with *lex (con) vivendi*, following Huber, Ritschl and Sundermeier's description of an ecumenical life-style, underlines the fact that the way Christian's worship, the way they believe and the way they live together, as faith-community, but also in and with the wider community, ought to be closely related, ought to influence one another, ought to be 'laws', prescriptions, rules for one another. (p. 263)



(*Con*) *vivendi* refers to *koinonia*. Smit's contention is that 'Christian worship, Christian faith and Christian life ought to be radically interrelated' (Smit 1997b:263). According to Smit, moral formation takes place in the church and especially in the liturgy. His take is that the liturgy is not merely an instrument to reinforce tradition, but plays also a pivotal role in the generation of values (Smit 2004:887). He further expounded that '*lex orandi lex credendi* has often been interpreted to show the close relationship between prayer, or worship, and life, or ethic' (Smit 1997b:263). According to Smit, 'there is a close but complex relationship between liturgy and ethics, between worship and ethics and between liturgy and life' (Smit 2004:887).

Reformers, inter alia John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, William Farel, Marie Dentière, Théodore de Bèze and Katharina Schutz Zell played a pivotal role in the development of liturgical theology. The Mennonite author, Alan Kreider, pronounces in the early church that worship 'was designed to enable Christians to worship God. It was not designed to attract non-Christians; it was not seeker-sensitive' (Johnson 2013:22; Kreider 1999:14). Worship was seen as an activity of the common life of the people of God. Mitchell (2000:557–58) underscores that the work of liturgy is primarily God's work. According to Mitchell (2000):

[L]iturgy is God's work for us, not our work for God. Only God can show us how to worship God – fittingly, beautifully. Liturgy is not something beautiful we do for God, but something beautiful God does for us and among us. (p. 558)

Mitchell (2000) juxtaposes public worship as the *opus Dei*, God's work with the work of the faithful as follows:

[P]ublic worship is neither our work nor our possession; as the Rule of St Benedict reminds us, it is *opus Dei*, God's work. Our work is to feed the hungry, to refresh the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to care for the sick, to shelter the homeless; to visit the imprisoned; to welcome the stranger; to open our hands and hearts to the vulnerable and the needy ... Liturgical art is our public gratitude that God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And there, perhaps, is where ethics and aesthetics together can begin to change the face of worship. In the Reformed tradition, liturgy is seen both as God's action (God speaks and acts) and as our faithful reception of that action (we respond). (pp. 557–558)

The theology of Martin Luther has bold and significant bearing on worship. Martin Bucer identified four elements from Acts 2:42 that are fundamental to Christian worship: (1) preaching and teaching, (2) fellowship, (3) breaking of bread (sacraments) and (4) prayers. These four dimensions laid the emphasis on the extension of worship into daily life. Saliers argues that the 'continuing worship of God in the assembly is a form of theology'. He sees it as 'primary theology' and as a 'theological act' (Saliers 1994:14–15).

*Lex orandi* cannot be separated from the Christian life (*lex vivendi*). Wainwright (1997:vii) enunciates that 'lip service of God is useless unless accompanied not only by faith in the hearth but also with matching deeds'.

His premise is that worship is a verb. Liturgy provides, according to Wainwright, a test case for faith and order, life and work, mission and evangelism. Wainwright (1991:604) 'continually emphasizes the integral relationship between worship and ethics, prayer and Word'. According to Wainwright (in Müller 2006:646), 'the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* remain incomplete without a corresponding *lex bene operandi*'.

Worship is, as Wainwright (1997:vii) rightly pronounces, 'intimately connected with doctrine, discipline, social organization, ethical conduct, charitable action, testimony to Christ'. True worship should call the church to action.

The idea of the 'liturgy after the liturgy' emerged according to Bria (1996:19) in the 'mid-1970s in ecumenical discussions of how the theology of mission (missiology) and the theology of the church (ecclesiology) are related'. At a consultation in Etchmiadzin, Armenia in 1975, it had been noted that 'Eucharistic liturgy has implications not only for the being and identity of the church but also for its mission in the world' (Bria 1996:19). A profound statement of the consultation was that prayer and Eucharist impel Christians 'to become involved in the social and political life of their respective countries' (Bria 1996:20). According to Bria, 'out of this idea of the extension of the liturgical celebration into the daily life of the faithful in the world came the concept of the liturgy after the liturgy'. Bria's (1996:25–26) premise is that the 'dynamics of the liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharistic assembly to serve the community at large'. The sixth assemble of the World Council of Churches (WCC) also highlighted the importance that 'Christian service to the world should be rooted in the service of worship' (Bria 1996:21). The significance of worship as means for evangelism was therefore emphasised by the seventh assembly of the WCC hosted in Canberra in 1991 (ed. Kinnamon 1991:119).

### Justice and *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*

There is an interplay between worship, doctrine in Christian practice (*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*) (Smit 1997). Doctrine shapes liturgy, especially its theological-textual content (Johnson 2013: xvi).

The understanding of the relationship between scripture and confessions in Protestant churches influences their interest to study theology. As Wainwright (1980:251) rightly says: '[S]o that what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed'. *Leitourgia* or worship is being emphasised in Protestant churches as a core facet of being a church in any context. As Smit (2004:887–907) proclaims, 'the congregation assembles publicly as a community to meet with God and one another to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to pray, to sing and to bring offerings, to care mutual and communal for one another, both spiritually and physically, to witness and to serve the marginalized and downtrodden. In worship the real human and spiritual needs of the church members and larger community are being addressed in a holistic way'. Common worship should lead to an appeal to be of service to

serve one another and the world and to humankind. Bria (1996:87) draws attention to the fact that Christians are being sent out into the world to witness faithful discipleship in the common round of daily life. The worship service should be (Bria 1996):

[S]een as a public gathering central to meeting with God and the fellowship of believers where ministry of the Word takes place, sacraments are shared, prayers are offered, hymns sung, and offerings brought. (p. 87)

My presumption is that:

[T]he congregation serves God, who in a particular way is the God of the suffering, the poor and those who are wronged (victimised), by supporting people in whatever form of suffering and need they may experience, by witnessing and fighting against all forms of injustice; by calling upon the government and the authorities to serve all the inhabitants of the country by allowing justice to prevail and by fighting against injustice. (cf. Articles 4.2 and 4.3, Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa [URCSA], 2016, *Church Order General Synod*)

I concur with Bria (1996), who maintains that:

[S]pirituality should unfold not only in the church assemblies but should unfold also amidst the people in the squatter camps, in the streets of the cities, the homeless, the refugees, the strangers in our midst. (p. 100)

Bria rightfully expounded that 'in our actions of service aimed to God's merciful will for the whole of humanity, we can become the liturgy of life' (Bria 1996:87). *Lex orandi* [worship] should assist the faithful to actively engage in social justice issues as the people of God on earth (*lex vivendi*).

Liturgy is therefore about God's action and the faithful reception of that action. Worship is not about an escapism away from social realities. Rather, the Church is drawn into God's mission (*missio Dei*) through its preaching (*kerygma*). Indeed, *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* remain incomplete without a corresponding *lex bene operandi* as Wainwright (1991:604) indicates. *Lex vivendi* [our conduct] is as important as *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*. Worshiping (*lex credendi*) is not, as Smit (2024) rightly says, 'our mere utterance of our lips in prayer, but has to do with our faith (*lex credendi*) and our conduct (*lex vivendi*)'. *Lex vivendi* has to do with how one conducts oneself in a specified way, especially in relation to others. Smit (1997a:5–25) petitions that '*Lex (con) vivendi* means that our faith should influence our conduct'. The faithful should send from the liturgy out in the marketplace amongst the poor and the marginalised and should embody the gifts bestowed on them in the liturgy. Müller's (2006) contention is that:

[T]he church should revert to the centre of the ministry, of Word and sacrament, enacting the central Jesus event, celebrated in the liturgy and in the life and mission of the Church. (p. 658)

Life and conduct should be seen as a continuation of the liturgy.

Bria (1996) indicates the connection between the church liturgical and diaconal functions as follows:

[T]he liturgy should reshape the social life of Christians with an emphasis on the sharing of bread, on the healing of brokenness, on reconciliation and on justice in the human community. (p. 21)

There is according to Bria a liturgy after the liturgy, because Christians pursue their witness and vocation outside the temple in the streets, in social halls, in the wider society. Wolterstorff (2011:20) emphasises the relationship between liturgy and labour, worship. Wolterstorff (2011:28) sees justice as a condition of authentic liturgy. For Nicolas Wolterstorff (2011:417), justice and worship belong together. His premise is that worship in assemblies is of deep importance, and doing justice and struggling for shalom when dispersed is of equal importance. Anyone he says: 'anyone who comes along and says the one is more important than the other or that the one just serves the other is in his judgement misguided'. As we believe, so we live (*lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi*) worship is not only about praising God with our lips but is also about embodying our beliefs (Smit 1997a:5–25). Smit emphasises that liturgy is 'the act by which we participate in the triune God'. *Lex (con) vivendi* means 'that our worship should influence our thoughts and our thoughts should influence our conduct' (Smit 2004:888).

### Interplay between *lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi* in URCSA

There is an interplay between worship, doctrine in Christian practice (*lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi*) in URCSA (*Acts of Synod General Synod URCSA* 1994:26–27; Smit 1997:5–25). URCSA is a confessional church, in that they believe that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, as well as the Belhar Confession. The confessional basis of URCSA shapes the liturgy and social economic engagement of the denomination. URCSA uphold a *quia* (Latin for 'because') rather than a *quatenus* (Latin for 'insofar as') subscription to confessions.<sup>1</sup> Ministers of the Word of God, lectures of theology and likewise the church council members of URCSA are obliged to subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity as well as the Belhar Confession. This predisposition of URCSA influences their understanding of *lex credendi* [the confessional basis, the authority of Scripture], *lex orandi* [worship] and *lex vivendi* (life and conduct). As Wainwright (1980:251) says is true of URCSA, '(S)o that what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed'.

*Leitourgia* or worship is being emphasised in URCSA as a core facet of being a church. (*Acts and Agenda of General Synod of URCSA* 2012:7–8). The church order of URCSA, for example, suggests that worship be ordered in terms of four major actions centred in the Word of God, namely reading, hearing, preaching and confessing. The reciprocity of *lex credendi, lex orandi, lex vivendi* is being emphasised in URCSA's church

1. *Quia* subscription (the confessions is adhered to because it is faithful to the scriptures) implies that the subscriber believes that there is no contradiction between the confessions and the scriptures. *Quatenus* subscription (the confessions is adhered to insofar as it is faithful to the scriptures) implies that the subscriber leaves room for the possibility that there might be a contradiction of the scriptures in the confessions in which case the subscriber would hold to the scriptures against the confessions.

order. Dingemans (1992:215), a Dutch church polity expert, once said church order is theology put into practice. Or more accurately, a church order is translating ecclesiology into church judicial rules and stipulations.

What a church community says about its own being and stature, her position in the world, governance, and liturgy is being translated into legal rules in the church order of the denomination. A church order is therefore according to Dingemans (1992:215) an organisational concept that attempts to unite different theological and ecclesiological principles. What a church community thinks about her identity, form and structure, position in the world and functioning in the community is being expressed in the church order in legal terminology.

A church order is according to Dingemans a theological compromise whereby the church tries to unify different theological and ecclesiological views. From a theological point of view, it is especially interesting when one looks at how the concepts *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi* prevail in one way or another in the church order of URCSA. The interplay of *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi* undergirds the order of a Sunday worship service of URCSA. The church order of URCSA emphasises the centrality of worship in the life, identity and mission of URCSA and in so doing embodies the principle *lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex vivendi*. The local congregation is being seen in URCSA as the locus where believers are called to live the kind of Christian life (*lex vivendi*) confessed in Belhar Confession – practising unity, reconciliation and justice in a world where these are daily denied and contradicted by the ideologies and realities of power. In the litanies of URCSA, based on the Confession of Belhar, the people of God are called up to unity, justice and reconciliation (*Agenda of General Synodical Commission* 2014:72). Word into the world and in doing so are embodying the Word of God in order to live a liturgical life (*lex credendi*) (Smit 2004:887–907).

URCSA is still struggling to become a multi-cultural church. Faith is the only criterion for membership in URCSA. URCSA implicitly rejects the claim that the Church belongs to a particular cultural group or any other human association (Smit 2008:326–327). The worship of URCSA reflects a resolute commitment to dismantle the apartheid structures the racial segregated churches in South Africa inherited from DRC (Dutch Reformed Church / NG Kerk) mission history (*Agenda of General Synodical Commission* 2014:72). A Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour in South Africa. We are still residing in racial demarcated areas construed by the apartheid government and people are attending the church building in their neighbourhoods. Due to demographic changes, for example, in squatter camps, informal settlements, new human settlements of the government) and in the inner city, people from different cultural and ethnic groups are forced to live next to each other. Large groups of people from the townships are now moving to the inner city. This

gives URCSA an opportunity to become a truly multicultural or ethnic denomination jointly engaging in *lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex vivendi*. URCSA, however, makes provision for diversity with regard to culture, language in expression of worship (*lex orandi*) in the respective congregations. Each congregation takes its own circumstances into account in determining the nature and scope of their worship. For URCSA, worship is a dynamic encounter between God and the congregation and involves the whole congregation. Worship is for URCSA about the presence of God with the people of God.

For URCSA, the liturgy after the liturgy is of utmost importance. The congregation's worship of God on Sunday continues and flows over into the worship of God during the week in the community, particularly by working for compassion, justice and reconciliation among people (Smit 1997a:259–280).

Therefore, the worship of the local congregation is being described in URCSA's Church Order as the heart of the life of the Church, in such a way that in and through this common worship, the believers are called to serve one another:

[T]here God is worshipped and praised, his Word listened to, the sacraments received, and all needs brought before him in order to strengthen the believers in their faith and to prepare them for their service to one another and the world. (*Church Order General Synod URCSA* 2016:Article 4.2)

In worship, the real human and spiritual needs of the church members and larger community are being addressed in a holistic way. Article 4 of the church order of URCSA emphasises the role of scripture in worship and life, daily reading and study of the Bible, congregational participation in worship and lastly with the sending out of the faithful.

In 2005, the URCSA approved a new ministry model based on the Confession of Belhar (*lex credendi*) which emphasises the mutual call to worship, equip (*lex orandi*), serve and witness (*lex vivendi*). The URCSA sees the worship service as public gathering central to meeting with God and the fellowship of believers where ministry of the Word takes place, sacraments are shared, prayers are offered, hymns sung and offerings brought (*Church Order General Synod URCSA* 2016:97). The congregation forms a community of believers in a particular place to serve God, one another and the world (*Church Order General Synod URCSA* 2016:Article 7). Service of God has a bearing on the whole life of the congregation and therefore includes service to one another and the world, service to humankind and the world. As Bria rightfully expounds: 'our actions of service aimed to God's merciful will for the whole of humanity we can become the liturgy of life' (Bria 1996:87).

Article 12 of the church order of URCSA deals with the church's public relationships and responsibilities. The premise of URCSA is that the church is drawn into God's mission through its worship, but the final destination of the God's mission (*missio Dei*), and therefore also of the *missio*



*ecclesiae*, is not only for the church but also for the entire creation. For URCSA, worship is not something the church does alongside her 'public' involvement. For URCSA, worship is not about an escape into the inner realm of prayer. URCSA refrains from a pious turn away from social realities. Rather, the understanding of worship under grids it that a church is drawn into God's mission through its preaching (*kerygma*). The congregation assembles publicly as a community to meet with God and one another to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to pray, to sing and to bring offerings, to care mutually and communally for one another, both spiritually and physically, to witness and to serve the marginalised and downtrodden. Typical of Reformed ecclesiology, URCSA sees the Church as part of the social structures of civil society, together with many other important institutions and social structures. URCSA feels a special calling to:

[E]xercise justice and to proclaim the demands of God's Word on church and society, to intercede for the government and society and to intervene for the suffering, the poor, the wronged, and the oppressed within this society, also by way of organised service. (Smit 2008:326–327)

Diakonia is therefore being seen in URCSA as a further result and actualisation of the church's celebration, embodiment and preaching of the good news (*Acts and Agenda of General Synod of URCSA 2012:7–8*). URCSA emphasizes in the liturgy that the faithful should be sent out in the marketplace amongst the poor and the marginalised and embodies the gifts bestowed on them in the liturgy. The liturgy therefore is reshaping the social life of the church members with an emphasis on the sharing of bread, on the healing of brokenness, on reconciliation and justice. These members pursue their witness and vocation outside the church in what Bria refers to 'in the streets, in social halls, in the wider society' (Bria 1996).

For URCSA, justice and worship belong together. For URCSA, worship (*lex orandi*) based on *lex credendi* [their belief] is of equal importance as doing justice (*lex vivendi*). For URCSA, worship and engagement in the public domain are inseparable parts of being church. Worship for URCSA is not only about praising God with their mouths, but is also about embodying their beliefs. For them, liturgy is the act by which they 'participate in the triune God' (Smit 1997a:5–25). '*Lex (con)vivendi* means that our worship should influence our thoughts and our thoughts should influence our conduct' (Smit 2004:888).

## Conclusion

There is an interplay between praying and believing and conducting oneself in a specified way, especially in relation to others, exhibiting behaviour especially in the public sphere. The responsibility of the congregation is to serve God, one another and the world in a particular place. The worship of the local congregation is the locus where believers are called to live the kind of Christian life confessed in the confessional basis of the church. The liturgy should bring hospitality,

concern for the poor and vulnerable, self-offering, and thanksgiving to the centre. True liturgy opens the door to the world. If the effects of the liturgy stop at the doors of the church, it is clear that we have not made our prayer and our faith part of our law of living. Worship should compel us to embody our beliefs. Our worship therefore should be in accordance with belief and a moral and ethical code and conduct reflecting it. There is a correlation between liturgy (*lex orandi*), theology (*lex credendi*) and life (*lex vivendi*). What we believe and how we worship should be consistent with how we live as Christians. The responsibility of the congregation is to serve God, one another and the world in particular. The worship of the local congregation and/or worship rituals (*lex orandi*) is as important as engagement in the public domain (*lex vivendi*). The confession of believers and or theology (*lex credendi*) is as important as their conduct (*lex vivendi*). The adherence to the confessional basis of the church (*lex credendi*) is as important as their embodiment of these confessions on a daily account (*lex vivendi*). The liturgy should bring hospitality, concern for the poor and vulnerable, self-offering and thanksgiving from the periphery to the centre of being church today. True liturgy, *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi*, should open the door to the world. Worship (*lex orandi*) should transform the faithful to live as the new people of God in communities with diverse challenges (*lex vivendi*). Our worship therefore should be in accordance with our belief and a moral and ethical code of conduct which reflect it. Our maxim should be *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, *lex vivendi*.

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