

**THE
WESTMINSTER
DIRECTORY
FOR THE PUBLIC
WORSHIP OF GOD
IN MODERN ENGLISH**

**How to rightly
worship God in public**

EDITED BY KEVIN J BIDWELL



CONTENTS

Preface (Joseph A Pipa Jr)	1
1. Introduction (Kevin J Bidwell).....	3
2. Worship from Calvin to Westminster: Continuity or Discontinuity? (Terry L Johnson).....	11
3. Essays on Some of the Sub-directories in the Directory for the Public Worship of God	55
• Of the Assembling of the Congregation, and Their Behaviour in the Public Worship of God (George R Curry).....	57
• Of Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures (Timothy K Hoke)	63
• Of Public Prayer before the Sermon (Maurice J Roberts).....	73
• Of the Preaching of the Word (Joseph H Fowler).....	81
• Of the Preaching of the Word (Joseph A Pipa Jr).....	99
• Of Prayer after the Sermon (Johannes M Müller).....	115

- Of the Administration of the Sacraments:
Baptism (Chad T Bailey)..... 123
- Of the Celebration of the
Communion, or Sacrament of the
Lord’s Supper (Kevin J Bidwell) 129
- Of the Sanctification of the Lord’s Day
(Roland S Barnes)..... 147
- Of Singing of Psalms (Warren J Peel) 183

4. The Westminster Directory for the Public
Worship of God (in Modern English) 191

WORSHIP FROM CALVIN TO WESTMINSTER: CONTINUITY OR DISCONTINUITY?

DR TERRY L JOHNSON

Hughes O. Old in his groundbreaking book, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, posed a question of Calvin's *Form of Church Prayers* that no one, particularly liturgical scholars, had bothered to ask for a very long time.¹ Could Calvin's claim that the Genevan form of worship was, 'according to the custom of the ancient church,' be sustained? Old's answer was, 'we have every reason to take Calvin seriously.'² He proceeded to trace in the church fathers sources for *lectio continua* reading and preaching of Scripture, for a full diet of Scripture-based prayer, for psalm-singing, and for the regular administration of the sacraments understood as means of grace and 'visible words' of God.

A similar claim was made by the Westminster Assembly's divines upon the publication of its *Directory* (1645). Their

1 This essay was previously published in two parts: Terry L. Johnson, "Worship From Calvin to Westminster: Continuity or Discontinuity?" *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 38, no. 2 (2020), 118-137; and Terry L. Johnson, "Worship From Calvin to Westminster: Continuity or Discontinuity? (Part 2)" *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 39, no. 1 (2021), 24-35.

2 Hughes O. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975), p. xiii.

claim was not of continuity with the ancient church, which they assumed, but continuity with the first generation of Reformers. They explain in the 'Preface' to the *Directory* that they were 'persuaded' that 'our first reformers [...] were they now alive [...] would join with us in this work.'³ Moreover, they understood themselves to be answering 'the expectation of other reformed churches' for whom, along with 'many of the godly at home,' the Liturgy 'proved an offence.' Consequently, they argued, their work of 'further reformation' was required, bringing the churches of England, Ireland and Scotland into conformity with 'the reformed churches abroad.'⁴

A subcommittee of the Assembly was appointed on December 2, 1643, to draft a *Directory for the Public Worship of God*. It consisted of four English Presbyterians: Stephen Marshall, Charles Herle, Herbert Palmer, and Thomas Young; one very vocal and persuasive Independent: Thomas Goodwin; and four Scots: Robert Baillie, George Gillespie, Alexander Henderson, and Samuel Rutherford. This work was completed on December 27, 1644, and was approved by the House of Commons on January 3, 1645.

Did they succeed? Is the *Directory* a clear descendant of the *Genevan Psalter* of 1542 and its successors, with its 'Form of Church Prayers?' Our answer, like Hughes Old's regarding Calvin's claim of continuity with the ancient church, is yes. The *Directory*, along with the Waldegrave and Middleburg orders produced by the Puritans, and Richard Baxter's post-*Directory* Savoy Liturgy, are of 'the same lineage,' as Bard Thompson notes in his classic, *Liturgies of the Western Church*.⁵

3 The *Directory* cited is found in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976), p. 374. Likewise from the same publication we will cite the Parliament's call for an Assembly of Divines and the Solemn League and Covenant.

4 *Directory*, pp. 373, 374; Parliament's call for an Assembly of Divines sought liturgically 'nearer agreement with [...] other Reformed Churches abroad,' p. 13.

5 Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (New York: Fortress Press, 1962), p. 319.

‘Calvin the Liturgist’ is a title of which the great Reformer is worthy, given the extensive influence of his liturgical ideas.⁶ We will attempt to demonstrate that the *Directory* is unmistakably a part of the family of services produced by Reformed Protestantism, with strong lines of continuity in its principles, elements, order, and ethos. Movement may be discerned, yet this should not be understood as a *departure* from the tradition, but its faithful *development*.

The central principles governing the *Directory* easily may be traced back to their ultimate source in Scripture. Yet they may also be traced to their penultimate source in Geneva. ‘Puritan apologetics were filled with citations to the liturgical ideas of the Reformed divines,’ notes Thompson.⁷ The Assembly as a whole and the subcommittee in particular consisted of scholars of the highest order. The leading Puritans were participants in the international Calvinist movement. Continental and British Calvinists read each other’s books and often corresponded in the international academic language of Latin. Horton Davies’ suggests that ‘it is doubtful if the Puritans were aware of the cleavage between themselves and John Calvin’ and speaks of their ‘apparent unawareness of the radical nature of [their] changes.’ This claim cannot be sustained.⁸ Neither can William D. Maxwell’s charge that ‘a knowledge of liturgiology was not the field of learning in which the divines who composed the *Directory* excelled.’⁹ Shared principles and practices undergird both Calvin’s *Form*

6 See Terry Johnson, ‘Calvin the Liturgist’, in *Tributes to John Calvin*, ed. by David W. Hall (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), pp. 118-152.

7 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 319.

8 Horton Davies, *The Worship of English Puritans* (1948; Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997), p. 48. This charge was repeated by J. I. Packer in *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), p. 238.

9 William D. Maxwell, *John Knox’s Genevan Service Book* (1556; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), p. 45.

and the Westminster Puritan's *Directory*, suggesting direct dependence on Calvin's *Form*, adapted to the political and ecclesiastical realities of seventeenth-century Britain.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Continuity between Calvin and the Westminster Puritans can be seen first in the liturgical implications of their common Protestant doctrine. Both Calvin's *Form* and the *Directory* are based on the central principles of Reformed theology. These principles led not only to a revolution in the reading and preaching of Scripture, but also revolutions, or perhaps better, the restoration of ancient practices, in the administration of the sacraments, prayer, and church song. Certainly there are points at which theological and exegetical principles were applied differently. Yet, as sons of the Reformation, the Westminster Puritans embraced the Reformers' theologically derived liturgical reforms. This meant that services would be conducted in the language of the people; they would be purged of extra-biblical content; congregational singing would be restored; public prayer would be expanded by incorporating neglected genres; the eucharist would be administered in both kinds as a covenantal meal, not a mass; and the role of the clergy would be redefined as preacher rather than priest, pastor rather than mediator. We may use the Reformation mottos to demonstrate our meaning.

* *Sola Scriptura* was understood by all to require the reduction of the liturgy. From Zwingli to Bucer to Calvin to the Westminster Puritans, the consistent conviction of Reformed Protestants was that Scripture must determine the structure and content of divine worship. Some have attempted to drive

a wedge between Calvin and the Puritans, but we judge these attempts to have failed.¹⁰

Calvin is emphatic that there is ‘nothing obscure, nothing ambiguous’ in the warnings of Deuteronomy 12:32 and Proverbs 30:6 not to ‘add to’ or ‘take away’ anything from God’s word, ‘when the worship of the Lord and precepts of salvation are concerned.’¹¹ The church is forbidden ‘to burden consciences with new observances, or contaminate the worship of God with our own inventions.’¹² ‘I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His word,’ Calvin laments in his 1543 treatise on ‘The Necessity of Reforming the Church.’¹³ He calls ‘for the rejection of any mode of worship that is not sanctioned by the command of God.’¹⁴

Consistent with Calvin’s view, the Westminster Puritans insisted that the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any

-
- 10 See attempt by R. J. Gore, *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principle* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), especially pp. 53-89. For decisive rebuttals, see Derek W. H. Thomas, ‘The Regulative Principle: Responding to Recent Criticism’, in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, ed. P. G. Graham, et.al. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), pp. 74-93; T. D. Gordon, ‘Review Article: The Westminster Assembly’s Unworkable and Unscriptural View of Worship’ in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 65 (2003); W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), pp. 78-80.
- 11 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill, 2 vols, The Library of Christian Classics, Volume XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.x.17, p. 1195.
- 12 *Ibid.*, IV.x.18, p. 1197.
- 13 John Calvin, ‘The Necessity of Reforming the Church’, in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. by Henry Beveridge, 7 vols (1858; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1:128.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.¹⁵

The writers of the *Directory* were careful ‘to hold forth such things that are of divine institution in every ordinance.’ Yet they allowed for ‘other things’ which they ‘set forth according to the rules of Christian providence, agreeably to the general rules of the word of God,’ that is, what the *Confession* refers to as ‘*circumstances*.’¹⁶

This insistence was maintained through Calvin and the Westminster divines, their ecclesiastical descendants in Scotland, England, New England, and Princeton, and continues to the present day.¹⁷ The church, Reformed Protestantism has agreed, is only to do in worship that which Scripture enjoins by precept or example. Inherited practices which could be biblically justified were maintained and typically transformed, as in the cases of preaching, prayer, Scripture reading, singing, and the administration of the sacraments. Extra-biblical ceremonies, rituals, signs, images, symbols, decorations, and gestures were removed so as to allow undistracted focus upon the ministry of the word and the God-ordained signs of the Lord’s Supper and baptism.

The principle that worship must be ‘according to Scripture’ has sometimes been called the ‘regulative principle’ and has distinguished Reformed Protestantism from the less rigorous approach to the reform of worship pursued by the Lutherans and Anglicans. The discussion was refined over time, particularly by the Puritans. *Elements*, which were carefully limited (Scripture reading, sermon, prayer, sung praise, the administration of

15 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXI.1; cf *Larger Catechism*, #'s 108 and 109.

16 *Directory*, p. 374. *Confession*, I.7.

17 See the work of modern authors such as John Leith, Hughes Old, T. David Gordon, Richard Mueller, Derek Thomas, Ligon Duncan, and Robert Godfrey, among others.

the sacraments, and creeds) were distinguished from *forms* (types or shapes the elements might take) and *circumstances* (lighting, seating, building, time, etc.) where greater latitude was allowed.¹⁸ Still, ‘according to Scripture’ meant in practice that the reform of worship was based on biblical exegesis and careful theological formulation.

* *Solas Christus* was understood by all to require the reform of the eucharist. Because the atoning work of Christ is ‘finished’ (John 19:30); because his death is once for all; because his sacrifice is final and complete (Heb. 10:12; 1 Peter 3:17), and because the mediatorial office is exclusively his (1 Tim. 2:5), a sacrificial understanding of the eucharist was abandoned by Reformed Protestants. The Reformed held to a spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, a *true* presence of Christ rather than a *real*, that is rather than a physical, carnal, corporeal, or localized presence.¹⁹ Biblical exegesis led to the *understanding* of Communion as a covenantal meal. These theological and biblical insights demanded a new *manner* of administering the eucharist, as altars were replaced by tables, the minister faced the congregation from behind the table, with the host unelevated. These reforms further required an altered identity of the clergy, from priests to pastors and preachers. ‘All those things which smack of sacrifice’ had to be removed, as Luther said.²⁰ Reformed Protestants acted where Luther hesitated. The language of sacrifice as well as all gestures, garments, furnishings, and rituals that implied sacrifice were eliminated. Calvin said, ‘The Lord has given us a table at which we may

18 See Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, pp. 30-32; *Westminster Confession of Faith*; XXI.3-5; I.7.

19 See Johnson, *Worshipping With Calvin* (Darlington, England: EP Books, 2014), pp. 157-172; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX.5, 7.

20 Cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 111.

feast, not an altar on which a victim may be offered; He has not consecrated priests to sacrifice, but ministers to distribute a sacred feast.²¹ That is to say, the eucharist, Reformed Protestantism insisted, is *communal* not mystical, a *meal* not a mass, a *supper* not a sacrifice, administered by a *pastor* not a priest, on a *table* not an altar. All of this is reflected in the administration of the Lord's Supper in both Calvin's *Form* and the Westminster Puritans' *Directory*.

* *Sola fide* was understood by Reformed Protestants to require vernacular services and the reform of the reading and preaching of Scripture. Since believers are justified by faith alone and since justifying faith 'comes by hearing the word of Christ' (Rom. 10:17), it is necessary, Calvin and the Westminster Puritans agree, for Scripture in the language of the people to have a prominent place in the worship of the church.²² 'The chief and greatest aim of any service is to preach and teach God's word,' said Luther in his introduction to his *Deutsche Messe* (1526).²³ At the time of the Reformation, vernacular services replaced the Latin mass; *lectio continua* reading and preaching replaced *lectio selecta*, or even extra-canonical readings; congregational singing of vernacular Psalms and biblical hymns replaced monastic choirs singing incoherent 'versicles.' Both Calvin and the Westminster Puritans insisted that the reading, preaching, singing, and praying in worship all be rich in scriptural context, that the people might be sanctified by the truth (John 17:17). 'In contrast with either the Catholic or Lutheran church, Reformed worship was characterized by a particular single-minded focus on the sacred text of the Bible as preached, read, and sung,' notes

21 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV:xviii.12, p. 1440.

22 See Luther, 'Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation', cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 98.

23 Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 129.

Reformation scholar Philip Benedict, ‘and by a zeal to eliminate all unscriptural elements from the liturgy.’²⁴ Calvin’s *Form* and the Westminster Puritans’ *Directory* reflect this principle.

* *Sola gratia* was understood by all to require the reform of prayer. ‘Grace alone’ was emphasized by the Reformers beyond ‘faith alone’ in order to guard the gospel from any encroachments of works-based righteousness. The faith which saves is itself a ‘gift of God’ (Eph. 2:8, 9). Salvation is a product of the divine initiative beginning in eternity, accomplished in the person and work of Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit. Upon this principle all the Reformers agreed. The agent of application, the One who initiates redemption in the believer’s experience, is the Holy Spirit. Believers are born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8), confess Jesus as Lord (and are justified) by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9), receive the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 5:22–23), are sanctified by the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2) and are kept or preserved by the power of God the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:5). The application of the whole *ordo salutis* is a supernatural event. The *Shorter Catechism* produced by the Westminster Puritans affirms (Q 29):

we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

This understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit had a powerful impact on worship, leading to the above-mentioned

24 Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 490. Elsie McKee adds, ‘For Reformed Christians, as for Protestants generally, the exposition of the Biblical text, in the language of the people, became a central and necessary part of all right worship of God’ (‘Context, Contours, Contents: Towards a Description of Calvin’s Understanding of Worship’, in *Calvin Studies Society Papers 1995, 1997*, ed. by David Foxgrover [Grand Rapids: CRC Product Services, 1998], p. 82).

‘revolution in prayer’ as dependence upon God the Spirit came to be expressed through what Hughes Old has called ‘a full diet of prayer.’²⁵ The invocation, the congregational confession of sin, the intercessions, the prayer of illumination, and the benediction were restored to the regular worship of the church. Moreover, the internal and spiritual dimension of worship came to take precedence over the external and formal, simplicity over elaborate and ostentatious ritual and ceremony.

* Finally, *solī Deo gloria* led to reliance upon the ordinary means of grace. Carlos Eire argues that in the late Middle Ages, access to divine power was sought through the cult of saints, relics, images, and pilgrimages. In Eire’s terms, the transcendent was sought through the imminent, the heavenly through the earthly, the spiritual through the material.

Late medieval religion sought to grasp the transcendent by making it imminent. It was a religion that sought to embody itself in images, reduce the infinite to the finite, blend the holy and the profane, and disintegrate all mystery.²⁶

The Reformers protested with *solī Deo gloria*, to which might be added, urges Eire, the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti*, ‘the finite cannot comprehend the infinite.’ John Leith explains that ‘Reformed theology has resisted every effort to get control of God, to fasten the infinite and indeterminate God to the finite and the determinate whether it be images, or the bread and wine of the sacraments, or the structures of the church.’²⁷ Negatively this meant the elimination of

25 Hughes Old, *Worship that is Reformed According to Scripture* (1984; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 173.

26 Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols; The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 11.

27 John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, Revised Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 74.

everything in the church's external devotion that implied magic or the domestication of God: Marian devotion, the cult of saints, relics, images, pilgrimages, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Positively, it meant an internalizing of piety and a simplified approach to God through the ordinary means of word, sacraments, and prayer. The reforms of both Geneva and Westminster were theologically driven, arising from a shared Protestant theology.

MOTIVE, FORM, FREEDOM

Continuity between Calvin and the Westminster Puritans may be found not only in their concern for the right *form* of worship, but in their concern for the right *attitude* in worship. They were not content with proper form. They fully embraced the Old Testament prophetic critique of formal correctness disconnected from righteousness (e.g. Isa. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:4-7; Amos 5:21-24).²⁸ They insisted that true worship must flow from the heart. Contrary to the principle of *ex opera operato*, attitude and motive must be correct. God-pleasing worship must be both in 'truth' and in 'spirit' (John 4:24). Both Calvin and the Westminster Puritans took with the utmost seriousness the warning of Jesus of those who 'honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me' (Mark 7:6; Isa. 29:13).

Consequently, Calvin and the Westminster Puritans shared a concern for balance between correct form and the freedom that is necessary for heart religion. Since the publishing of Charles Baird's *Presbyterian Liturgies*, Calvin's letter to Lord Somerset often has been cited as evidence that Calvin demanded an

28 See Hughes O. Old, 'Prophetic Doxology' in *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology: Some Thoughts on the Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 91-110; and Old, 'John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship', in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. by Timothy Gearse (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 230-246.