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WORSHIP FROM CALVIN TO WESTMINSTER: CONTINUITY OR DISCONTINUITY?

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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. 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.'¹ 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 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.'² 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.'³

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 Decem-

¹ Hughes O. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975), p. xiii.

² 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.

³ *Directory*, pp. 373, 374; Parliament's call for an Assembly of Divines sought liturgically 'nearer agreement with [...] other Reformed Churches abroad,' p. 13.

ber 27, 1644, and was approved by the House of Commons on January 3, 1645.

Did they succeed? Is the *Directory* a clear descendent 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 of which 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*.⁴

'Calvin the Liturgist' is a title of which the great Reformer is worthy, given the extensive influence of his liturgical ideas.⁵ 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.⁶ The Assembly as a whole and the sub-committee 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.⁷ 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.'⁸ Shared principles and practices undergird both Calvin's *Form* and the Westminster Puritan's *Directory*, suggesting direct dependence

⁴ Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (New York: Fortress Press, 1962), p. 319.

⁵ See Terry Johnson, 'Calvin the Liturgist', in *Tributes to John Calvin*, ed. by David W. Hall (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), pp. 118-52.

⁶ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 319.

⁷ 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.

⁸ William D. Maxwell, *John Knox's Genevan Service Book* (1556; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), p. 45.

on Calvin's *Form*, adapted to the political and ecclesiastical realities of 17th 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.⁹

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

⁹ 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.

and precepts of salvation are concerned.¹¹⁰ The church is forbidden 'to burden consciences with new observances, or contaminate the worship of God with our own inventions.'¹¹¹ '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.'¹¹² He calls 'for the rejection of any mode of worship that is not sanctioned by the command of God.'¹¹³

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 visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.¹⁴

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*.'¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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

¹¹⁰ 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.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV.x.18, p. 1197.

¹¹² 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.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹¹⁴ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXI.1; cf. Larger Catechism, #s 108 and 109.

¹¹⁵ *Directory*, p. 374. *Confession*, I.7.

¹¹⁶ 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.

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 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 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.'²⁰ 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

¹⁷ See Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, pp. 30-32; *Westminster Confession of Faith*; XXI.3-5; I.7.

¹⁸ See Johnson, *Worshipping With Calvin* (Darlington, England: EP Books, 2014), 157-172; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXIX.5, 7.

¹⁹ Cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 111.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xviii.12, p. 1440.

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.²¹ '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).²² 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 Reformation scholar Philip Benedict, 'and by a zeal to eliminate all unscriptural elements from the liturgy.'²³ 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,

²¹ See Luther, 'Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation', cited in Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 98.

²² Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 129.

²³ 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).

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 'revolution in prayer' as dependence upon God the Spirit came to be expressed through what Hughes Old has called 'a full diet of prayer.'²⁴ 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, *Soli Deo Gloria* led to reliance upon in 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.²⁵

The Reformers protested, *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

²⁴ Hughes Old, *Worship that is Reformed According to Scripture* (1984, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 173.

²⁵ Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols; The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 11.

the bread and wine of the sacraments, or the structures of the church.²⁶ Negatively this meant the elimination of 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.

PROPER MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE

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).²⁷ 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).

FORM WITH FREEDOM

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 undeviating uniformity according to the wording of his *Form*. Rowland S. Ward, in his essay on '*The Directory*,' argues that his words, 'certain form, from which ministers be not allowed to vary' have to

²⁶ John H. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, Revised Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 74.

²⁷ 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. 230-46.

do not with the prayers, but the catechism.²⁸ The subsequent translation shortly after Baird's is clearer.²⁹ The prayers of the Genevan liturgy itself primarily were prescribed. Yet, according to the rubrics, the form provided 'is generally used,' which sounds like some latitude was expected.³⁰

There are other indications that room was made for freedom in worship. The form of the prayer before the sermon, the prayer of illumination, was 'left to the discretion of the Minister.'³¹ Also the public prayers of the weekday services as well as the afternoon service of the Lord's Day were free. The minister, according to the rubrics, was to frame 'the sort of exhortation to prayer which may seem suitable to him, adapting it to the times and to the topic of his sermon.'³² According to the rubrics of the Strasbourg edition of the 'Form of Church Prayers,' the minister prior to the absolution was to deliver 'some word of Scripture to console the conscience,' the content left to his discretion.³³

By allowing these areas of latitude, Calvin, according to nineteenth century church historian Philip Schaff, 'opened the inexhaustible fountain of free prayer in public worship, with its endless possibilities of application to varying circumstances and wants.'³⁴ Charles Baird sees the union of free prayer and prescribed forms in Calvin's service as the 'peculiar excellence of the Genevan worship.'³⁵

Whatever restrictions he might contemplate in the liturgy, Calvin is adamant respecting freedom in preaching. He complains to Somerset 'that there is very little preaching of a lively kind in the kingdom, but that the greater part deliver it by way of reading a written discourse.' Without discounting the possible abuse of fanatics, he insists that preachers be allowed to have 'free course,' that their preaching 'ought not to be lifeless but lively.' He appeals to 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25, urging that 'the Spirit of God ought to sound forth by their voice, so as

²⁸ Rowland S. Ward, 'The Westminster Directory', in Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation to the Directory for Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007) pp. 104, 105; he notes that both D. G. Hart and W. D. Maxwell have been misled.

²⁹ That of Jules Bonnet, in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, ed. by Henry Beveridge (1858; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 5:191-92.

³⁰ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 197.

³¹ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 199.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³⁴ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols (1910; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), VIII, 371.

³⁵ Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies* (1855, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), p. 24; Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 197.

to work with mighty energy.' Whatever the dangers, nothing ought to be allowed 'to hinder the Spirit of God from having liberty and free course.' If ministers were tied down to books of homilies and written sermons, he feared the Reformation would not make the progress in England that otherwise it would if 'this powerful instrument of preaching be developed more and more.'³⁶ The subsequent Reformed tradition moves beyond Calvin but not against him, in the direction of increasing latitude in worship, from Knox to the Westminster *Directory*, to the present.

The *Directory* likewise sought to strike a balance between form and freedom. It 'aimed at the merits of a prayerbook,' says Davies, 'without its attendant disadvantages.' It sought 'a marriage between order and liberty,' a middle way between prescribed liturgy and unguided freedom.³⁷

On the one hand, the Westminster Puritans were concerned with form and uniformity. They gathered on July 1, 1643, at the bequest of the English Parliament to settle 'the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England' as well as its doctrines.³⁸ Parliament ratified the 'Solemn League and Covenant' on July 15, 1644, the price required by Scotland for its military support in Parliament's war with Charles I. This agreement further informed the Assembly's work. The Solemn League and Covenant on the one hand required that Parliament join with the Scots in 'the *preservation* of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government,' and on the other hand 'the *reformation* of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.' The goal was 'the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechizing.'³⁹ By this means these three kingdoms were to be brought 'to the nearest conjunction and *uniformity* in religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship and catechizing.'⁴⁰ According to Scottish commissioner Robert Baillie (1599-1662), the intention of the post-Solemn League and Covenant Assembly was 'to abolish the great Idol of England, the Service Book, and to erect in all the parts of worship a full conformity to Scotland in all things worthy to be spoken of.'⁴¹ In other words, once the Solemn

³⁶ Calvin, 'Letter to Protector Somerset', *Selected Works*, 5:190-92.

³⁷ Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 129.

³⁸ Act of Parliament, 13.

³⁹ The 'Solemn League and Covenant' cited is found in the *Westminster Catechism of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976), p. 359 (my emphasis).

⁴⁰ Ibid. (my emphasis).

⁴¹ Cited in D. B. Forrester, 'Worship', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 896.

League and Covenant was adopted, the Westminster Assembly would be required to find forms of doctrine and worship which might be acceptable 'not merely to the Church of England, as promising to serve her internal peace, and efficacy,' explains B. B. Warfield, 'but also the Church of Scotland as preserving the doctrines, worship, discipline, government already established in that Church.' Warfield continues:

The significance of the Solemn League and Covenant was, therefore, that it pledged the two nations to uniformity in their religious establishments and pledged them to a uniformity on the model of the establishment *already existing in the Church of Scotland*.⁴²

This was the Scottish nation and church that had vehemently rejected a modified Prayer Book in 1637 and demanded a freer form of worship even than had been enjoyed under the regime of the 'Book of Common Order.' About this ('Knox's Liturgy'), Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), one of the Scottish commissioners had said, 'We will not own this liturgy. Nor are we tied to it.'⁴³ Read prayers and a fixed liturgy grew in disfavour among the Scots, throughout the 17th century. Rutherford said characteristically of his and succeeding generations, 'I could never see precept, promise, or practice for (read prayers), in God's word.'⁴⁴

Still, note the goal of 'uniformity' in worship. The *Directory* itself provides 'the general heads' of the service order, 'the sense and scope of the prayers,' as well as 'the other parts of public worship,' to which 'being known to all,' were meant to result in consensus regarding 'the substance of the service and worship of God.'⁴⁵ We have noted that the *Directory* provides 'some help and furniture' to assist ministers by providing a sample invocation; a sample pastoral prayer (as it later came to be called)

⁴² B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 26.

⁴³ Cited in Brian D. Spinks, 'The Origin of the Antipathy to Set Liturgical Forms in the English-Speaking Reformed Tradition', in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. by Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 79.

⁴⁴ Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (1664, 1891; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1984), p. 611. He continues, 'Our church never allowed them, but men took them up at their own choice. The word of God maketh reading (1 Tim. iv. 3) and praying (1 Thess. v. 17) two different worships. In reading, God speaketh to us (2 Kings xxii. 10, 11); in praying, we speak to God (Ps. xxii. 2, xxiii. 1.) [...] The saints never used [read prayers], and God never commanded them; and a promise to hear any prayers, except the pouring out of the soul to God, we can never read.'

⁴⁵ *Directory*, p. 374.

which includes confession of sin, assurance of pardon, intercessions, and illumination; a sample prayer after the sermon; sample words of instruction and exhortation prior to and for the administration of baptism; and sample words of instruction and exhortation prior to and for the administration of the Lord's Supper. Sample language is provided for the blessing of the communion elements, for the distribution of the elements, for the post-communion charge to communicants to walk worthy of the sacraments, and for the concluding thanksgiving prayer. Considerable direction is given on how sermons are to be preached.

All this to say, significant attention is given to form and uniformity. Ministers were not left to their own devices. The *Directory* itself explains that it was meant to provide 'public testimony' to the Assembly's 'endeavours for uniformity in divine worship,' which, they explain, 'we have promised in our Solemn League and Covenant.'⁴⁶ Their concern for uniformity, even catholicity, extended beyond the bounds of Great Britain, as we have seen, including the Reformed churches abroad. Their concern will reappear in the petitions and presentations of the English Presbyterians (e.g. Reynolds, Calamy, Case, Manton, Baxter, Bates, Howe) to Charles II upon his return to England in May 1660, when they will urge that a revised prayer book 'not be dissonant from the Liturgies of other reformed churches.'⁴⁷

On the other hand, there is considerable concern for freedom. The Assembly produced not a liturgy, but a *directory*. Uniformity was sought, but not word-for-word uniformity. Unity was the goal, but not a unity that stifled the work of the Holy Spirit. While not opposed to set prayers in principle, the concern for the exercise of 'gift of prayer' was paramount among the Westminster Puritans. We find this concern among their predecessors such as John Field and Thomas Wilcox in their *Admonition to Parliament* (1572), in William Perkins' *Art of Prophesying* (1592), in William Bradshaw's *English Puritanism* (1605).⁴⁸ We see this concern expressed in the preface to the *Directory* and again in the directions. George Gillespie (1613-1648), Scottish commissioner and author of *Aaron's Rod Blooming*, urged 'that man who stirs up his own gifts doth better than he that useth set forms.'⁴⁹ This is typical of the outlook of the Westminster Divines.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Timothy J. Fawcett, *Liturgy of Comprehension, 1689: An Abortive Attempt to Revise the Book of Common Prayer*, Alcuin Club Collections No. 54 (Southend-on-Sea: Mayhew-McCrimmon Ltd., 1973), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Spinks, 'Origin', pp. 66-82.

⁴⁹ Cited in Alexander F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: its History and Standards; Being the Baird Lecture for 1882* (1883; Still Waters Revival Books,

The concern for free prayer reappears years later in the Presbyterians' 'Exceptions Against the Book of Common Prayer' presented to the Anglican Bishops in May of 1661. They urged that in a revised prayer book the liturgy not be 'too rigorously imposed; nor the minister so confined thereunto, but *that he may also make use of those gifts for prayer and exhortation*' that Christ has given to the church.⁵⁰ When rebuffed and faced with the prospect of praying 'in no words but are in the Common Prayer book,' they bitterly complained of the 'brevity, ineptness, and the customariness' of those prayers and of their inevitable impact of taking 'off the edge of fervor with human nature' and of preventing the 'enlargedness, copiousness, and freedom as is necessary to true fervor.' They maintained that 'A brief, transient touch and away, is not enough to warm the heart aright; and cold prayers are likely to have a cold return.' The resulting uniformity would produce unity, but this would be 'to cure the disease by the extinguishing of life, and to unite us all in a dead religion.'⁵¹

Again, they were not opposed to liturgy or set prayers or fixed forms. The preface to the *Directory* complains of 'the reading of *all* prayers,' not just *some* prayers but all, having the effect of 'an idle and unedifying ministry,' with ministers failing 'to exercise the gift of prayer, which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office.'⁵² The models of prayer supplied by the *Directory* could and indeed were turned into actual prayers as early as 1645 with the publication of *A Supply of Prayer for Ships*, intended for circumstances when no minister, that is, no one with the gift of prayer, was available. Rather, they urged in their 'Exceptions' in 1661, 'we would avoid the extreme that would have no forms, and the contrary extreme that would have nothing but forms.'⁵³ The concern for free prayer reappears at the Savoy Conference in July 1661, and at subsequent attempts of toleration and/or comprehension from the mid-1660s to the 1680s. It was essential to the English Puritans throughout their history that place be given to free prayers and that the gifts of prayer be exercised.

Alexander Mitchell is right to clarify that 'nothing was further from their intentions than to encourage unpremeditated or purely extemporary effusions.'⁵⁴ Rather, 'they intended the exercise of prayer to be matter of thought, meditation, preparation and prayer, equally with the preach-

1992), p. 227.

⁵⁰ Cited in Fawcett, *The Liturgy of Comprehension*, p. 2 (my emphasis).

⁵¹ Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 154.

⁵² *Directory*, pp. 373, 374 (my emphasis).

⁵³ Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 154.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 228.

ing of the word.⁵⁵ Even the Independent Philip Nye urged a middle way between set forms and extemporary prayers: 'I plead for neither, but for *studied* prayers.'⁵⁶ Mitchell cites with approval the later sentiment of Queen Victoria: 'that the simple fervent prayer of a Scottish minister may touch a chord in the heart which the grandest liturgy had left unmoved.'⁵⁷

The Pastoral or Great Prayer provides what the *Directory* deems 'a convenient order, in the ordinary public prayer.' Yet 'the minister may defer (*as in providence he shall think meet*) some part of these petitions till after his sermon, or offer up to God some thanksgivings hereafter appointed, in his prayer before the sermon.'⁵⁸ Here again is latitude. In all the prayers the minister 'is left to his liberty, as God shall direct and enable him, in piety and wisdom to discharge his duty.'⁵⁹

The portion of Scripture to be read is 'ordinarily' to be 'one chapter of each Testament [...] at every meeting, and sometimes more.' Yet this 'is left to the wisdom of the minister.' His sermon subject is to be 'some text of scripture,' yet he is to choose which text 'as he shall see fit.'⁶⁰ They were careful to explain that their detailed instruction for preaching was 'not prescribed as necessary for every man, or upon every text, but only recommended.'⁶¹ Indeed we may regard concern for preaching to be the other major interest of the Assembly. The Prayer Book, the Preface argues, as imposed by the Prelates, had been a 'great hindrance of the preaching of the word, and (in some places, especially of late) to the jostling of it out as unnecessary, or at best, as far inferior to the reading of common prayer.'⁶² Freedom to preach, even encouragement to preach, was considered vital.

Further, the Lord's Supper is to be administered 'frequently.' Yet 'frequently' is left undefined. 'How often' is to be 'considered and determined by the ministers and other church-goers of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.'⁶³

Along the spectrum from unalterable form to liturgical anarchy, Calvin is to the right of middle favouring form, the Westminster Puritans to the left of middle favouring freedom. Yet there is continuity, the Westminster Puritans' differing emphasis driven by their 'long and sad

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 229 (my emphasis).

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 230, 231.

⁵⁸ *Directory*, p. 379.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 382.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 375.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 381.

⁶² Ibid., p. 373.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 384.

experience' of an imposed liturgy, as well as their desire for a religious settlement that would include the Independents.

Thompson considers the *Directory* 'a monumental effort to comprehend the virtues of form and freedom.'⁶⁴ Similarly, Horton Davies regards the *Directory* as 'a notable attempt to combine the spontaneity of free prayer with the advantages of an ordered context or framework of worship.'⁶⁵ Indeed, 'It aimed at avoiding the deadening effect of a reiterated liturgy as also the pitfall of extempore prayer – the disordered mean-derings of the minister.'⁶⁶ The *Directory* allows both types of prayers, and says Davies, 'is itself the direct lineage of the Calvinist liturgies.'⁶⁷

SIMPLICITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Calvin also insisted that worship be simple and spiritual, simple because spiritual.⁶⁸ 'Simplicity was the hallmark of Calvin's liturgical policy,' says Thompson.⁶⁹ All the 'shadowy symbols of the old dispensation,' all the 'lifeless and theatrical trifles' of the medieval church, as Calvin called those things, and all external forms that encumbered spiritual worship were removed, that the heart might be undistracted and the word might be heard unhindered.⁷⁰ Preaching was to be in a plain style. Ministers should handle the Scripture with 'modesty and reverence.'⁷¹ They 'must not make a parade of rhetoric, only to gain esteem for themselves.'⁷² Public prayers were to be offered without 'ostentation and chasing after paltry human glory.'⁷³ Baptism was to be administered in simplicity, omitting the 'theatrical pomp' of the Medieval service with its candles, chrism, exsufflations, spittle, exorcisms, etc., 'which dazzle the eyes of the simple and deadens their minds.'⁷⁴ No other ceremonies were to be allowed to distract the elect from those few ceremonies (i.e. baptism and

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 353.

⁶⁵ Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 141.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Godfrey, *John Calvin*, pp. 81-83.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Liturgies*, p. 194.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 195; Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xvii.43, p. 1421.

⁷¹ From Calvin's commentary on Luke 4:16, cited in Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1947), p. 119.

⁷² John Calvin, 'Letter CCXXIX – To the Protector Somerset', in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, V, 190.

⁷³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxx.30, p. 893.

⁷⁴ Ibid., IV.xv.19, p. 1319.

the eucharist) ordained by God. 'Everywhere there is too much of processions, ceremonies, and mimes,' Calvin complains. 'Indeed,' he says, 'the very ceremonies established by God cannot lift their head in such a great crowd, but lie as if crushed down.'⁷⁵ Only as much ceremony was allowed as was necessary for the conducting of the service. In keeping with this, the churches of Geneva were stripped of their pictures, statues, and symbols; clergy traded their priestly vestments for black robes; altars were removed and replaced by plain communion tables; the various anointings and exorcisms in connection with baptisms were eliminated; processionals, incense and extraneous gestures and postures were abolished.

The calendar also was simplified. Saint's days were eliminated and only the 'Five Evangelical Feast Days' were retained: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost. Otherwise, the weekly Lord's Day was to be the primary holy day of the Christian community.

Simplicity was closely associated with spirituality and internality. Focus was to be on the heart, not right formulas, right rituals, or right ceremonies. Prayers were to be offered with 'a single and true affection that dwells in the secret place of the heart.'⁷⁶ Singing was to 'spring from deep feeling of heart' and with care 'that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words.'⁷⁷ Simplicity facilitated the undistracted attention of the mind upon God's word, and undistracted devotion of the heart upon Christ.

Likewise the Westminster Puritans endeavoured to rid the public worship of the church of the Prayer Book's 'many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies' which had 'occasioned much mischief,' as the 'Preface' argues. Too many 'ignorant and superstitious people' were pleased with mere 'lip-labour' in their participation in the reading of common prayer, and as a result, had 'hardened themselves in their ignorance and carelessness of saving knowledge and true piety.'⁷⁸ Heart religion is the concern throughout the *Directory*.

The *Directory* provides 'help and furniture' for ministers, but not so much as to lead than to become 'slothful and negligent in stirring up the gifts of Christ in them.' Rather, they themselves are by meditation, carefulness and observation of providence 'to furnish (their) heart(s) and tongue(s) with further or other materials of prayer and exhortation, as shall be needful upon all occasions.'⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid., IV.xviii.20, p. 1448.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.30, p. 893.

⁷⁷ Ibid., III.xx.31, 32, pp. 894-95.

⁷⁸ *Directory*, p. 373.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 374.

Prior to the 'Great' or 'Pastoral' Prayer, the minister 'is to endeavour to get his own and his hearers' hearts to be rightly affected with their sins, that they may all mourn in sense thereof before the Lord, and hunger and thirst after the grace of God in Jesus Christ.' The confession of sin with which the Great Prayer begins is to be undertaken 'with shame and holy confusion of face.'⁸⁰ The prayers of illumination for the minister and people with which the Great Prayer concludes are further evidence of the concern for the spirituality of Christian worship, as opposed to mere form.

The minister is to prepare for preaching not only through theological and biblical education but spiritually. He ought 'to seek by prayer, a humble heart' to grow in knowledge. He is to be diligent in his 'private preparations.' He is to preach 'powerfully [...] plainly [...] faithfully [...] wisely [...] gravely [...] with affection [...] and, as taught of God and persuaded in *his own heart*, that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ.'⁸¹ Communion instruction, prayers and exhortations are to be performed 'with suitable affections, answerably to such a holy action, and to stir up the like in the people.'⁸² The people themselves are to come having had the sacrament announced the Sabbath day before that they might make 'due preparations unto.'⁸³ At every point in the public service, encompassing all participants from the minister to the congregation, nothing was to be undertaken in a rote, mindless, or mechanical manner. Spiritually correct aspirations were to inform and motivate participants throughout.

These spiritual concerns led the Westminster Puritans to the concomitant concern for simplicity as it did for Calvin, lest unnecessary ceremony or distracting activity undermine the spiritual goal of the public service. The minister is to preach 'plainly,' not drawing attention to himself through 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' so that 'the meanest may understand.' He is to shun 'all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.'⁸⁴ Baptism is to be administered 'without adding any other ceremony.'⁸⁵ Weddings are to be conducted 'without any other ceremony.'⁸⁶ Calvin's concerns, clearly, have been passed along to the Westminster Puritans.

The Westminster Puritans went beyond Calvin in eliminating the church calendar in its entirety in favour of the weekly Sabbath. 'There

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 376.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 381.

⁸² Ibid., p. 385.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 384.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 381.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 383.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 388.

is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath,' the *Directory* maintains.⁸⁷ Consequently, 'Festival days, vulgarly called *Holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.'⁸⁸ Here we find the Westminster Puritans going beyond Geneva.

REVERENCE

Finally, Calvin insists upon the attitude of *reverence* in worship.⁸⁹ The tone of the prayers and songs and sermons in Geneva was sober, serious and reverent. This can be illustrated by the language that he uses to describe the tunes which would be used in the singing of the psalms. The church's tunes, he says, should 'be neither light nor frivolous, but have gravity and majesty, as Saint Augustine says.' Further, 'There is a great difference between the music which one makes to entertain people at table and in their homes and psalms which are sung in the presence of God and his angels.'⁹⁰ The melody, he says, should be 'moderated' in order 'to carry gravity and majesty appropriate to the subject and even to be suitable for singing in the church.'⁹¹ What was true of the church's song was to be true of the entire service. Reverence is Calvin's 'first rule' of prayer, and he denounces 'levity that marks an excess of frivolity utterly devoid of awe.'⁹² The people kneeled for the confession of sin, the men with their heads uncovered.⁹³ Sermons were to be preached with dignity and humility.

Similarly, the congregation is called by the Westminster Puritans to 'enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner.'⁹⁴ The minister is to begin the service with prayer 'in all reverence and humility.' The tone of reverence is to be maintained, as the *Directory* explains:

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 394.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ See Godfrey, *John Calvin*, pp. 83-86.

⁹⁰ John Calvin, 'Foreword to the Psalter' in *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Theology*, ed. by Elsie Anne McKee (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), p. 94. This may also be found under the title 'Calvin's Preface to the Psalter' via the 'articles' page at <<https://sites.google.com/site/fpcrhomepage/>> [accessed 8 October 2020]; or 'Form of Prayers', in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, II, 100-12.

⁹¹ Calvin, 'Foreword', *Writings on Pastoral Theology*, p. 94.

⁹² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.4, 5, pp. 853-54.

⁹³ Baird, *Presbyterian Liturgies*, p. 27; *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. by Elsie McKee, 100; Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xx.33, p. 897.

⁹⁴ *Directory*, p. 375.

The public worship being begun, the people are wholly to attend upon it, forbearing to read anything, except what the minister is then reading or citing; and abstaining much more from all private whisperings, conferences, salutations, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in; as also from all gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour, which may disturb the minister or people, or hinder themselves or others in the service of God.⁹⁵

Those who enter late are 'reverently to compose themselves to join with the assembly.'⁹⁶ The sermon is to be preached 'gravely.'⁹⁷ The 'ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience' are to be warned to refrain from coming to God's 'holy table.'⁹⁸ Psalms are to be sung reverently, the voice 'tunably and gravely ordered.'⁹⁹

Behind all this is a high view of the Lord's Day. Worshippers are urged to so order the 'worldly business of (their) ordinary callings' that possible distractions may be 'timely and seasonably laid aside, as they may not be impediments to the due sanctifying of the day when it comes.'¹⁰⁰ Worldly recreations and employments are to be set aside. Even 'worldly words and thoughts' are to cease. Meal preparation is not to be allowed to interfere with participation in worship. Devotional preparation is urged:

That there be private preparations of every person and family, by prayer for themselves, and for God's assistance of the minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry; and by such other holy exercises, as may further dispose them to a more comfortable communion with God in his public ordinances.¹⁰¹

Worshippers are to arrive on time and remain until the end:

That all the people meet so timely for publick worship, that the whole congregation may be present at the beginning, and with one heart solemnly join together in all parts of the publick worship, and not depart till after the blessing.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 381.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 384.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 393.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 386.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

As in Geneva, congregations gathered both in the morning and evening on the Lord's Day. Consequently the Westminster Puritans even addressed the time between the services:

That what time is vacant, between or after the solemn meetings of the congregation in publick, be spent in reading, meditation, repetition of sermons; especially by calling their families to an account of what they have heard, and catechizing of them, holy conferences, prayer for a blessing upon the publick ordinances, singing of psalms, visiting the sick, relieving the poor, and such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy, accounting the Sabbath a delight.¹⁰³

Worship among the Puritans, as well as with Calvin, was serious business. External correctness was important, but of itself, insufficient. The heart must be right. The motive must be correct. Simplicity then, was insisted upon for the sake of spirituality. Was there development? Certainly.¹⁰⁴ Should it be understood as continuous with Calvin? Absolutely.

The second part of this article will appear in the next edition.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ On Calvin's view of the Sabbath and its compatibility with the subsequent sabbatarianism of Reformed Protestantism, see Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Fearn, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998).