

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THROUGH WORSHIP REFORM IN CALVIN'S GENEVA

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Spiritual renewal, spirituality, or related topics have been important for Christians around the world for over some decades. This overriding concern for spirituality among Protestants often tended to downplay or undervalue what had happened to the spiritual life through the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Based on such evaluation many Protestant scholars and pastors turned their attention to and further borrowed the ABCs of spiritual formation, or spiritual renewal, from the Catholic spirituality books and programs if not from some Asian spiritual gurus. Moreover, this interest led people to more individual or small-group-based spiritual direction or formation program, but often neglected the corporate aspect of spiritual renewal, that is, a renewal of Christian worship in which many early Protestant reformers found an answer to the spiritually sound Christian life.¹ A recent book, *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, which came out of a series of consultations on Reformed worship around the world, addresses efficiently this issue. It demonstrates that the sixteenth-century reforms in worship were an important factor for spiritual renewal not only in tune with the biblical truth but also with cultural contexts. This monograph also confirmed the fact that “an awareness of history is required to be freed for a creative future. In order to know where we are to go, we need to know where we have come from.”²

Out of several reformers in the Reformed tradition, John Calvin has a special place in various aspects of Reformed theology and practices today. In particular, the Geneva church model, which Calvin made conscientious efforts to create an ideal church reveals not only religious life in the sixteenth century but also provides some principal guidelines for worship and the Christian life. Robert Kingdon has claimed that

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¹John Witvliet paid special attention to congregational singing of the Psalms in Geneva and called it “liturgical spirituality.” His findings will be discussed more in the section on Geneva Worship in this paper. John Witvliet, “The Spirituality of the Psalter,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997): 297.

²Lukas Vischer, *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), xi.

there was a “revolutionary change in public worship, a change that affected in important ways the texture of daily life of the entire population” in Geneva in the time of Calvin.³ While Catholic Mass, as a form of worship, was mainly sacraments-oriented, visual and passive in terms of laity participation, Calvin’s worship was sermon-centered, auditory and active.

In this paper, Calvin’s understanding of true and proper worship as a way to spiritual renewal—or to use Calvin’s own term, piety (*pietas*)—and his implementation of right worship in the Genevan context will be examined in the first place, and then some principal aspects of Reformed worship will be dealt in order to make history more relevant to churches around the world today.

WORSHIP IN CALVIN’S TEACHING AND MINISTRY

Calvin’s criticism against Catholic worship was virtually its superstitious character and absence of understanding on the part of laity. Specifically, Calvin indicated that the kind of worship Catholics aspired and maintained for a long time was theologically wrong and spiritually not edifying. Therefore, such worship would not produce proper exaltation and glorification of God nor joy and peace of worshippers. Calvin vehemently and repeatedly attacked Catholic worship by calling it mere “external show,” “perpetual labyrinth,” “human inventions,” and “superstitions.” According to him, God did not accept nor endorse such worship replete with ostentatious rituals invented and fabricated by humans.⁴ Worship that God would fully accept is worship in spirit and truth. For Calvin, worship should begin from knowledge of God whom we worship or else it is “not God that we worship, but a phantom or idol.”⁵ In explicating John 4:22, “You worship what you know not, we worship what we know,” Calvin pointed out the importance of intelligibility of worship by criticizing absence of knowledge in Catholic worship.⁶ The lack of knowledge in Catholic worship made people turn “from the pure faith of the Gospel

³Robert Kingdom, “The Genevan Revolution in Public Worship,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 20 (1999): 264.

⁴John Calvin, “Necessity of Reforming the Church,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J. K. S. Reid, 191-193.

⁵John Calvin, *Commentary on John 4:22*.

⁶*Ibid.*

to their own inventions and the traditions of men.”⁷ Then where do worshippers acquire necessary knowledge for and in worship? For Calvin, the knowledge should be found and obtained from “His Word” in a form of preaching and it should be delivered to lay people in an understandable manner so that they may acquire true faith from the explicated will of God for life. Thus, preaching took up the central place in Calvin’s worship and the use of the vernacular was essential for laity to understand the Word and be edified by it.

If the matter of knowledge deals more with the objective or external part of worship, worship still requires the internal part. Calvin said, “The worship of God is said to consist *in the spirit*, because it is nothing else than that inward faith of the heart which produces prayer, and, next, purity of conscience and self-denial, that we may be dedicated to obedience to God as holy sacrifices.”⁸ His statement focused on the heart of Christians who come to worship God. Although there is a feast of the Word of God in easy and understandable language, it would be no use if worshippers were not prepared with the right attitude. For Calvin, a Spirit-filled worship begins inwardly with a mournful heart about his or her sins (self-denial). But it does not remain in such a lowly state, but boldly stands up to seek God with a pure conscience and a great expectation of God (prayer). To reiterate the point, true and spiritual worship requires understanding of God through the expounded Word and a certain attitude such as inward faith, purity of conscience and self-denial on our part. Then, what is the benefit of this worship? Calvin said that for example, congregational singing of psalms in the worship, an important part of Calvin’s worship, could “*incite* us to lift up our hearts to God and *move* us to an ardour in invoking and exalting with praises the glory of his Name.”⁹ The ultimate benefit of worship is to understand God and to establish and enjoy the right relationship with God in faith and with fear and love of God. Worship is the important way to be closer to God and to enjoy a relationship with the Lord as if we are in the presence of the Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, having a true and spiritual worship becomes the most important and effective path to spiritual renewal.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., verse 23.

⁹John Calvin, “Articles on the Organization of the Church and of Worship in Geneva,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed., J. K. S. Reid, 53-54 [emphasis mine].

Then, how are we able to worship God properly when the Word is difficult to understand and our hearts are so easily fancied with vanities and often so obstinate? Calvin ascertained that there are two kinds of pastors on our side to help and cure our souls: the external pastor who preaches the Word of God in an understandable language and the internal pastor, the Holy Spirit, who illumines us to understand the Word and urges us to live accordingly. Both ministers should function together in the preaching of the Word and in the administration of the sacraments, but have different offices. The pastor proclaims the Gospel through the vocal word and the Holy Spirit communicates the truth with worshippers and “effects this union by his [Christ’s] secret virtue by creating faith in us, by which he makes us living members of Christ, true God and true man.”¹⁰ The *Ecclesiastical Ordinance* of 1541 specifically regulated, first of all, about the duty of the external pastor as follows:

With regard to pastors, . . . their office is to proclaim the Word of God for the purpose of instructing, admonishing, exhorting, and reproof, both in public and in private, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise fraternal discipline together with the elders of delegates (*commis*).

Regarding the examination of pastors, it said,

The examination consists of two parts, the first of which concerns doctrine, to ascertain whether he who is to be ordained has a good and sound knowledge of Scripture, and then whether he is a fit and proper person to communicate it to the people in an edifying manner. Moreover, in order to avoid all danger of some false belief being held by the one who is to be received, he will be required to declare that he accepts and adheres to the doctrine approved in the Church. To ascertain whether he is fit to teach, it will be necessary to proceed by way of interrogation and by privately hearing him expound the teaching of the Lord.¹¹

However, no matter how great the preacher’s exposition and explication of the Word, it is the Holy Spirit, in fact, who makes the meaning and efficacy of the Word pertinent for our salvation and life.

¹⁰ John Calvin, “Summary of Doctrine concerning the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J. K. S. Reid, 173.

¹¹ *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 found in *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ed. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, 36 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966).

PUBLIC WORSHIP RENEWAL IN GENEVA

In 1537, Calvin proposed reforms in public worship in the *Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva*. Although it was not adopted immediately because of the opposition of the City Councils, it became the fundamental structure of Geneva worship reform that followed a few years later. He suggested three components necessary for a “well ordered and regulated church”: (1) the right and frequent administration of the Holy Supper, (2) singing Psalms in the form of public prayers, and (3) teaching of pure doctrine through catechism classes. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 specified time and place of different worships on Sundays and weekdays. Soon afterwards, *La forme des priers* was made available in 1542 in order to provide the liturgies for Sunday and weekdays worships.

Worship

Sunday Worship

There were four different kinds of Sunday worship, early morning worship at daybreak (at 4:00 AM in the summer, at 5:00 AM in the winter), morning worship at 8:00 AM, catechism at noon for children and others who needed doctrinal teachings, and afternoon worship at 3:00 PM or 2:00 PM in the winter. Early morning service was prepared for servants or others who might have some duties for the rest of the day. Mid-day catechism service was arranged mainly for children and those who could not give an accounting of their faith. In all three worship services, excluding the catechism class, sacraments were available and weddings were often held after the sermon. Calvin preached in the morning and afternoon services. Special occasions such as Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, and Ascension were celebrated on Sundays.

The standard liturgy for Sunday Worship with and without the Lord’s Supper was written out by Calvin, on the basis of the Strasbourg liturgy. Although there was a slight change in 1562 by adding more Psalms, the following 1542 liturgy became the basic form for the worship in Geneva.

Sunday Worship Liturgy¹²

(In 1562, comes first Congregational Singing: Psalm #55)

Invocation: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.

Confession of Faith: My brethren, let each of you present himself before the face of the Lord, and confess his faults and sins, following my words in his heart. O Lord God, eternal and almighty Father, we confess and acknowledge unfeignedly before thy holy majesty that we are poor sinners, ...

Congregational Psalm Singing:

Prayer: for illumination of the Word to be preached

Biblical Text and Sermon: Exposition of the Word:

Prayer: for reflection and application of the Word heard

(The Lord's Supper will be place here when available. The order is, Prayer, Confession of Faith, Exposition of the Word on the sacrament, Distribution of the bread and the chalice accompanied by Psalm Singing, Thanksgiving)

(In 1562 added Congregational Singing: Psalm #27)

Benediction: the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be merciful unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and keep you in virtuous prosperity. Amen.

Weekday Worship

As to weekday worship, the *Ecclesiastical Ordinance* of 1541 specified:

On work-days, in addition to the two customary sermons, there shall be preaching in St Pierre three times a week, namely, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and the bells are to be rung for these sermons, one after the other, at an hour such that they can be finished before one is started elsewhere. If there should be any extraordinary service for the necessity of the times, the order of Sunday shall be observed.¹³

¹²This form is drawn from Bard Thomson's *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 197-210, and Elsie A. McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 98-134.

¹³Philip Hughes, *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), 40

Although the above statement sounds as if there were worships only on three weekdays, it is known that preaching services were available in Geneva from Monday to Saturday.¹⁴ Among weekdays, Wednesday was next in importance after Sunday and held two preaching services. The ordinary order was as follows:

The Usual Weekday Worship Liturgy¹⁵

Prayer: for illumination

Biblical Text and Sermon:

Prayer: for reflection and application of the Word heard. Ended with the Lord's Prayer

Confession of Faith

Benediction

The sacrament of Baptism was available in weekday worships as well as in Sunday worships. The baptismal liturgy consisted of the following order:

Liturgy with Baptism¹⁶

Invocation

Question of Intent and Biblical Meaning of Baptism

Prayer

Recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the father and the godfather

Recitation of the Confession of Faith by the father and the godfather

Question: Do you promise, then, to take pains to instruct [this child] in all this teaching, and generally in all that is contained in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, . . .

¹⁴Elsie A. McKee, 135. She says that it was so from the beginning and others also said there were worships everyday in Geneva. However, John Leith said that from 1542, "in response to demand," Calvin began to preach everyday. John Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today," in *John Calvin & the Church: Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George, 206 (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

¹⁵The form is drawn from Elsie McKee, 136-53.

¹⁶The form is drawn from Elsie McKee, 153-57. The benediction was included although the words were not provided because any normal worship ended with a blessing.

Baptismal ceremony: after their promise, the minister asks the name of the baby and takes some of the water from a bowl brought forward and puts a little on the baby's forehead, saying, "[baby's name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

[Benediction]

What is noteworthy from the above liturgy is the absence of congregational singing that became one of revolutionary changes in Genevan worship. However, it is found in the liturgy for the weekly Day of Prayer services. The Day of Prayer service liturgies were basically identical with the Sunday worship by including Singing in 1562, Invocation, Confession of sin, Singing, Prayer, Biblical Text and Sermon, Prayer, Singing in 1562, and Benediction in order.

Characteristics of Worship Reforms

At least the following four aspects in Genevan worship reforms highlight Calvin's understanding of true and spiritual worship and also characterize its unique reform.

Preaching

Protestant worship was primarily characterized by preaching, especially expositional preaching. In the sixteenth century, "worship" was often replaced with "sermon" and in many Genevan documents, "sermon" referred to worship. In Geneva, preaching was available throughout the week as well as on Sundays. Calvin believed preaching to be *lectio continua*, continuous reading and exposition of the Bible, and substituted it for the selection of the lectionary or for the individual choices of the minister. He managed to follow the *lectio continua* pattern in weekday preaching except for one time.¹⁷ From his preaching schedule one can learn that he intended to preach the New Testament and Psalms (in the afternoon) on Sundays and the Old Testaments on workdays. His preaching was analytical of passage after passage, and word after word with little use of Church Fathers or illustrations. However, there are plenty of evidences where Calvin tried to reflect upon or address the current events.¹⁸

As we have seen in the section on the "examination of pastors" from the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, good preaching was one of the

¹⁷Calvin interrupted his weekday *lectio continua* on occasion of the Protestant victory in November 5, 1545. Elsie McKee, 158.

¹⁸Timothy George, 215-17.

most important qualifications for a pastor. Good preaching, for Calvin, is possible when preacher does not “make a parade of rhetoric, only to gain esteem for themselves, but that the Spirit of God ought to sound forth by their voice, so as to work with mighty energy.”¹⁹ Here, one can see that the Holy Spirit who is the internal pastor becomes manifest in the person of the external pastor who is preaching. This is good preaching. Unfortunately, this idea has been unduly abused in order to elevate the authority of pastors, but in Calvin’s theology and ministry, union or cooperation between preacher and the Holy Spirit is essential in two ways: for preachers to deliver rightly the will of God to people and for listeners to understand the message and apply it into their daily lives. Although preaching appears to be a one-way act, it is in fact a two-way act because preaching expects growth in faith and correction and changes in attitude. In this sense, Calvin required those who were excommunicated not to “omit coming to sermons to receive teaching, in order to prove whether it will please the Savior to touch his heart and turn him into the right path.”²⁰ Where there is no response from the listeners in terms of application of the message, it becomes indispensable for pastors to preach more to such people. Calvin said,

. . . the ungodly behave so boldly because they think that they have to do only with men. Therefore, Christ pronounces that it is by the preaching of the Gospel that there is revealed on earth what God’s future and heavenly judgment will be, and that we must not look elsewhere for certainty of life or death Let the ungodly ridicule the doctrine which is preached at God’s command if they like. They will feel at the last that it was really and truly God who was threatening them by the mouth of men. Finally, armed with this confidence, godly teachers may boldly be sureties to themselves and others of the quickening grace of God, and yet no less courageously threaten the obstinate despisers of their teaching.²¹

However, preaching is not just for correction of unholy ones, but also for holy ones. He writes that it is a “wonderful consolation to godly souls that they know that the news of salvation brought to them by some little mortal man is ratified before God.”²²

Confession of Sins

Like other reformers Calvin did not accept the confession as a

¹⁹Calvin’s letter to Protector Somerset in 1548 is from Timothy George, 209-210.

²⁰In the *Articles* of 1537 in J. S. K. Reid, 52.

²¹John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew* 16:19.

²²*Ibid.*

sacrament, but he laid stress on the fact that confession should be made voluntary, either privately or publicly. On the one hand, private confession included confession in order to recover one's own peace, and confession to make peace with the neighbor who had been harmed by one's own wrong. For the first kind of private confession, it was best be made to pastors who can rightly instruct and console afflicted souls. The second type of confession had to be made directly to the person with whom one is living in discord. On the other hand, public confession consisted of individual and liturgical public confession that most Reformed cities, including Geneva, practiced. For public liturgical confession, the same "Confession of Sin" was applied to all who participated in the worship, and hence there was no explicit distinction for specific sinners. Basically, it represented the whole community of sinners. It reflects something similar to Luther's general and intentionally brief formula for confession, which said, "Behold, all that I am, my life, all that I do and say, is such that it is mortal and damnable."²³ Luther feared that obsessive care to name every sin would lead to despair, as had been the case in late medieval confession. Like Luther, Calvin confirmed that no matter how different their outward sins, they were equally regarded as sinners and in need of confession and pardon from God.

As we have seen in the Sunday liturgy, the "Confession of Sin" in Geneva demands special attention in two aspects. First, the congregation was asked to follow the prayer of confession only "**in their heart**" when the minister said it **aloud**. Even though the congregation was following in their hearts, the important change here was that the prayers of ministers were said aloud and in the vernacular so as to be heard and understood by all gathered in the church. Previously, in the Mass, the congregation could only hear the individual confession of priests, said in Latin, which most of them were not able to comprehend. The second point is that, unlike the liturgy of Luther, Calvin used the plural form "**we**" in the confession. This alludes to Calvin's intention to make the liturgy not merely for individual comfort, but as a "corporate instrument" of the church.²⁴

For absolution, either private or public, Calvin acknowledged its necessity in order to strengthen believers' hearts and assure them the

²³ Martin Luther, "Sermo de poenitentia" (1518), WA, I, 322-23; idem, *Defense and Explanation of all the Articles* (1521), LAW, 32, 42-44.

²⁴ Bard Thomson, 194.

forgiveness of God already given. Public proclamation of absolution is enough for many.²⁵ However, for those who need extra attention to care for their individual souls, private absolution was given after private confession is completed. Calvin's idea of absolution is not identical to the priestly absolution in the Roman Catholic Church. He suggested that absolution must be the preaching of the Word of God:

. . . we must always beware lest we dream up some power separate from the preaching of the gospel. . . . There we shall see that any right of binding or loosing which Christ conferred upon his church is bound to the Word. This is especially true in the ministry of the keys, whose entire power rests in the fact that, through those whom the Lord had ordained, the grace of the gospel is publicly and privately sealed in the hearts of the believers. This can come about only through preaching.²⁶

Prayers

Calvin saw two types of prayer: one with words only and the other with song. According to the liturgy of Sunday worship in Geneva, prayer came after the sermon to respond to the Word preached. Another prayer for Calvin was singing psalms. In love and need of singing Psalms in public worship, Calvin published the French Psalter, *Aulcuns pseaulmes et cantiques mys en chant*, at Strasbourg in 1539 while he was in exile. It was the twenty-two texts prepared by Clement Marot and Calvin, and the tune was primarily drawn from the earlier German Psalters. The first Genevan Psalter, *La forme des prières et chantz ecclesiastiques*, appeared in 1542 and immediately adopted for use in all Geneva churches. This book became the standard manual for worship liturgies, including metrical psalms and canticles.²⁷ The Genevan Psalter of 1562, its final version, was not only important for the history of church music but also for the history of printing by being called "the most gigantic enterprise ever undertaken in publishing until then."²⁸ Congregational singing of psalms became an important part of

²⁵Calvin included public absolution in his Strasbourg liturgy, and wanted to use it in Geneva, but the Genevans did not allow it. Bard Thomson commented, "the people objected to this 'novelty,' illustrating their hostility by jumping up before the end of Confession to forestall an Absolution. Thus he yielded to their scruples." Thomson, 191.

²⁶John Calvin, *Institutes*, III. 4.14.

²⁷John Witvliet, 275.

²⁸Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976), 318. Recited from John Witvliet, 274. "Within just a few years, total copies of the Genevan Psalter may well have reached 100,000 in over thirty editions, in addition to the thousands of copies printed in translation in nine languages." (Witvliet, 274).

weekly worship in Geneva: psalms were sung once before 1562 and three times after 1562 at the beginning, and in conjunction with the confession of sin, after the sermon in the Sunday morning and afternoon services, Wednesday services, and most possibly on Sunday catechetical services and on other liturgical gatherings.²⁹ Unlike the Catholic worship where no congregational singing was heard, Protestant worship invited everybody, men and women, high and low, old and young (in fact children were the leaders of the song) to sing the praises and wonders of the Lord in their mother tongue. It is not difficult to imagine how ordinary lay people easily learned about and felt the presence of the Lord in their midst although we do not have any first-hand accounts of lay Genevan residents of their experience with renewed worship in the church.

Calvin believed that praying with songs as well as with words was biblical (Col. 3:6) and praises with psalms were the most effective and convenient form of worship because the Holy Spirit “exhorts us so carefully through the Holy Scripture to rejoice in God (Phil. 3:1, 4:4) and that all our joy is there.”³⁰

Sacraments

Sacraments were one of the most sensitive and divisive issues among Protestant reformers. Calvin, as other reformers, accepted two sacraments in opposition to the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church and considered the right administration of sacraments as an essential mark of the true church in addition to the preaching of the Word. Further, he associated the sacraments tightly with the disciplinary system within the church, establishing “sacramental exclusion” as the result of church discipline. Therefore, the administration of sacraments was not only a part of liturgy but also an instrument of judgment and control of ordinary Genevans. Calvin emphasized voluntary preparation for the Lord’s Supper, namely, self-examination, in order not to be found unworthy of the body and blood of the Lord. However, for those who are negligent or even immature to do it on their own accord, he insisted on utilizing the Consistorial disciplinary system as he resumed his ministry in 1541. The

²⁹John Witvliet, 277.

³⁰John Calvin, “The Preface to Psalter” in Elsie McKee, 95.

Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 required elders to make scrupulous observation of the daily lives of the people of Geneva. In this sense, excommunication as a final result of consistorial discipline should not be too horrendous in Calvin's intention although one cannot deny the shameful experience involved in this process. In theological principle, excommunication and restoration should be edifying for those who needed some guidance and warning for their salvation, and necessary to make the body of Christ more accountable for the glory of God. This principle was well applied to the work of the consistory of Geneva in terms of how to deal with the accused, and how to reach a final decision.³¹

As a part of liturgy Calvin wanted the sacraments to be celebrated as often as possible. He insisted on weekly observation of the Lord's Supper initially, but had to accept the decision of celebrating the Supper only four times a year on account of the Councils' opposition. When the appointed time for the Lord's Supper drew near, the Geneva Consistory made special efforts in two ways: first, by appointing members to serve at the time of celebration and second, by judging the faith and daily lives of Genevans to ascertain if they were worthy to take the Supper. According to my study on excommunication and restoration in Geneva, two things are clear. First, a great number of Genevans were not aware of theological and practical changes that Reformers brought forth into their faith and worship; second, excommunication prohibited partaking the Supper but required going to sermon (worship) more often. Especially, the latter draws our attention in relation to Calvin's emphasis on the word of God. In fact, many were called in to the Consistory for the lack of knowledge, for bad (superstitious) knowledge or their infamous life style. They were told to go and listen to more sermons through which their heart and life can be corrected.

Calvin's liturgy on sacraments also reflects his overall principle regarding worship, that is, intelligibility. Both in baptism and the Lord's Supper, Calvin expounded the meaning of the sacraments in the first place so that people understood not only the importance but also what was going to happen.

³¹ About "sacramental exclusion" as a result of excommunication, see chapter 2 of my dissertation, "Excommunication and Restoration in Calvin's Geneva, 1555-1556," Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997.

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY'S CHURCHES

Calvin differentiated the indifferent things [*adiaphora*] from the essential things in relation to worship. The details about how to perform ceremonies and how to organize church discipline were considered to be indifferent things that depended upon the time and place of the church. Provided that we have only general rules, Calvin stated that one had to allow “love” to become the guide and judge for delineating the details in order to make them not too rigid but more responsive to the cultural contexts of each region.³² However, Calvin had at least three principles he would not concede. The first was **explication and application of the Word**. He made the sermon the center of worship and it was mostly expositions from the Bible that followed the *lectio continua* pattern. For Calvin, the Word of God was the source of life and reason for worship, and hence it should be preached intelligibly so that ordinary people might understand and live accordingly.

Second, Calvin insisted on **singing Psalms**. To him, singing Psalms were praises of God and prayers to God. He found the words in the Psalms were different from other human literary works and most appropriate to extol and praise the wonderful work of God. He emphatically said that no songs were better and more proper to praise the Lord than the Psalms because they were made and spoken by the Holy Spirit.

Third, he asserted **the right and frequent administration of sacraments** in public worship. Although Calvin believed in neither the saving power of sacraments nor the real presence of Christ during the consecration of the Lord's Supper, Calvin still took the meaning of sacraments into serious account because through them believers could truly taste the heavenly banquet with the Lord in the Holy Spirit.

For Calvin, to reform the church is above all to reform church worship. Worship reform will bring forth spiritual renewal because the true teaching of the Word, prayers, and the right administration of

³²John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. X.30. Calvin said, “... here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given... because these things are not necessary for salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting to change and abrogate traditional practices as to establish new ones. Indeed I admit that we ought not charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, nor for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.”

sacraments in public corporate worship would rouse and incite people to love, fear, honor and glorify God. Furthermore, spiritual renewal through worship would not stay on the individual level, but overflow to neighbors and society. What Jane D. Douglass has said in her discussion of the pertinence of Calvin's teaching for today's church may sum up how Calvin understood spiritual renewal through worship reform. She writes,

... especially for Calvin worship always has the "double sense of liturgical service and also actual service in the world, doing the will of God, always in gratitude for God's saving work in Christ. The Holy Spirit's working in us permits us to trust that God loved us and through Christ has freed us from sin and freed us to pour our out gratitude in praise; but the Spirit also calls us to express our thanks in willing and active service, engaging ourselves to work in the world for the fulfillment of God's purposes."³³

If I might add to this, corporate experience in public worship is noteworthy because it makes worshippers acknowledge God as their same Lord whom they have to serve in spirit and truth, accept fellow worshippers as their neighbors whom they have to love as themselves, and work together for the coming Kingdom. Worship reform is at the heart of reformational spirituality because it enables us to move toward the right direction so that our spirit can be most revived to relate and serve the Lord and the world we live in.

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³³Jane Dempsey Douglass, "Calvin's Teaching What Still Remains Pertinent?" *Ecumenical Review* 39 (1987): 25.

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