

Less Outward Glory: An Examination of Calvin's Reformation of Worship

By Everett A. Henes

The Reformation was focused on three primary areas: authority, salvation, and worship. This is how I begin the second membership class at Hillsdale Orthodox Presbyterian Church as we survey the Reformation and its impact on church history. As those who have inherited the doctrines of the Reformation, I am sometimes convinced that we tend to forget about the third leg of the Reformation. We are faithful and quick to defend the authority of Scripture over the Papacy or private ideas that contradict God's Word. We are also quick—and have given a great deal of attention to—defend justification by faith alone. Whether this is on the Roman Catholic front, or balancing the creeping legalism and antinomianism tendencies in the church, we are sure to defend “the principal ground on which religion must be supported.”¹

What of worship though? Perhaps it has been the rounds of worship wars in the recent forty years, but it seems that this is an area where most Protestants have given up. A student of history might find recent worship trends troubling. After all, by the time of the Reformation worship had become more of a spectator sport with the congregation participating through the priest. The language of worship was unknown to the people, the songs unfamiliar, and the elements of the Supper withheld. In our own day, worship bands are known to do more performing than leading in worship and the people are left to serve as spectators. They are more lively spectators, to be sure, as they clap and move around to the beat, but they are effectively worshipping through the praise band. The topic of this paper, though, is not a polemic against the progressive worship movement. Rather, I am concerned with a different direction of worship.

The congregation I pastor is located near a small liberal arts college. Something peculiar has been taking place with increasing frequency over the last twenty years. Students from evangelical and even Reformed

backgrounds are converting to Roman Catholicism. There have been conversions to Anglicanism and even Eastern Orthodoxy, but with far less frequency. In speaking with some of the students, the issue often begins with worship. This is surprising since one would think that the primary questions ought to be about salvation. What must I do to be saved? These students, though, are seeking something else it seems. Without going into lengthy details, the liberal arts focus on what they call the *transcendentals*. These are The Good, The True, and The Beautiful. These transcendentals are conceived as universal, invariant, abstract entities. What's key to the discussions with worship is that beauty and truth are considered inseparable. Peter Kreeft, a highly visible convert and apologist for Catholicism (and recent speaker at Hillsdale College) sums it up in recounting his own conversion story:

What initially attracted me to the Catholic Church was, first, stepping inside St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York at about age twelve, feeling like I was in heaven (I had never been in a cathedral before), and wondering why, if Catholics got everything else wrong, as I had been taught, they got beauty so right. How could falsehood and evil be so beautiful?²

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1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), 3.11.1. Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845).

2. Carl E. Olson, “An Interview with Peter Kreeft,” *Peter Kreeft | Writing and Apologetics*. IgnatiusInsight.com, August 2, 2004 (accessed May 5, 2017).

This specific challenge by Kreeft will need to be answered. However, before doing so, I want to consider a defense of the simplicity of worship from both historic and Biblical sources. The focus of this paper will be on John Calvin's writings, specifically his Biblical commentaries, the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, and his tract, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*. Following this we will return to Kreeft's challenge and seek to answer whether falsehood and even evil can be so beautiful.

THE NECESSITY OF REFORMING THE CHURCH

In 1544, the Emperor, Charles V, called a Diet of the Holy Roman Empire to meet in the city of Speyer. Seeing an opportunity to defend the ongoing work of Reformation, Martin Bucer asked John Calvin to write a statement of the doctrines of and necessity for the Reformation. Calvin wrote, not on his own behalf, but for the whole church: "Receive what I say as you would do if it were pronounced by the united voice of all those who either have already taken care to restore the church, or are desirous that it should be restored to true order."³ In his introductory remarks, Calvin lays out his work clearly:

First, I must briefly enumerate the evils which compelled us to seek for remedies.

Secondly, I must show that the particular remedies which our reformers employed were apt and salutary.

Thirdly, I must make it plain that we were not at liberty any longer to delay putting forth our hand, inasmuch as the matter demanded instant amendment (Calvin, *Necessity*, 126).

While an examination of the entirety of the work would be beneficial, for our purposes we only need to focus on Calvin's discussion regarding the reforming of worship. While justification by faith alone has a primary role in the Reformation, Calvin actually gives worship the place of preeminence.

If it be inquired, then, by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing existence amongst us and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following

3. Calvin, "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," in *Tracts*, volume 1, *Relating to the Reformation*, ed. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844; repr. *Tracts and Letters*, volume 1, Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 124. Hereafter, Calvin, *Necessity*.

two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity, viz., a knowledge, first, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly of the source from which salvation is to be obtained (Calvin, *Necessity*, 126).

It's not hard to understand Calvin's thinking here. The worship of God is that which has been commanded, by God. It's that which his people are to engage in, faithfully, day in and day out. To get worship wrong is to get the Christian faith wrong. We are redeemed to worship the Lord. Calvin does not leave us wondering, long, exactly how to understand what worship is:

Let us now see what is meant by the due worship of God. Its chief foundation is to acknowledge Him to be, as He is, the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power, goodness, mercy, life, and salvation; in accordance with this, to ascribe and render to Him the glory of all that is good, to seek all things in Him alone, and in every want have recourse to Him alone (Calvin, *Necessity*, 127).

Preeminent in this matter of worship was to free it from all superstitious ceremonies. Paramount for Calvin was that "ceremonies are subservient, as helps or instruments, in order that, in the performance of divine worship, the body may be exercised at the same time with the soul" (Calvin, *Necessity*, 127). By doing this, Calvin argues that all forms of "fictitious worship" are to be refused in the church.

The way to ensure this, for Calvin, is to set in worship only what God has expressly commanded, "to give obedience only to his own voice" (Calvin, *Necessity*, 128). In this way, he argues, we are prevented from two clear errors.

First, it tends greatly to establish His authority that we do not follow our own pleasures but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and, secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions (Calvin, *Necessity*, 128).

Calvin learned—by both a study of church history and sacred Scripture—that when God's Word is disregarded, all manner of false worship will creep up in its place. *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* goes on to detail

the need to reform prayer, to shun the Roman Catholic use of saints and their so-called treasury of merit, and to properly understand and utilize the two true sacraments that Christ instituted. Some may consider Calvin's arguments to be over-the-top, as though these are matters indifferent. Clearly the Reformers thought differently, as Calvin writes, "A dog, seeing any violence offered to his master, will instantly bark; could we, in silence, see the sacred name of God dishonored so blasphemously?" All of this drives Calvin to argue for a kind of simplicity in worship, over against the Old Testament focus on the outward.

For, if we would not throw every thing into confusion, we must never lose sight of the distinction between the old and the new dispensations, and of the fact that ceremonies, the observance of which was useful under the law, are now not only superfluous, but vicious and absurd. When Christ was absent and not yet manifested, ceremonies, by shadowing him forth, cherished the hope of his advent in the breasts of believers; but now that his glory is present and conspicuous, they only obscure it. And we see what God himself has done. For those ceremonies which He had commanded for a time He has now abrogated forever (Calvin, *Necessity*, 152).

Calvin has a clear understanding of the truth that we find in 2 Corinthians 5:7 (we walk by faith and not by sight) Hebrews 12:22ff (that we meet not at Mount Sinai, but Mount Zion), and many other texts. There is a clear shift, from type and shadow to fullness and reality, when we move from the Old to the New Testament worships. The same God is worshiped, in Spirit and in truth, and even according to the same principle: by express command of God's Word. However, as our Confession states, there is now "more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy."⁴

Lest anyone accuse Calvin of disrupting worship that had been established by the early church, he shows great mastery of the church fathers. In this work alone he cites them often, referring to them as "the ancients," "the ancient Councils," "the ancient laws of the Fathers," "ancient Canons," "ancient Church," and the "ancient custom." He does not cite them for menial areas of agreement either. Calvin cites them when it comes to ordination of ministers, the form of worship,⁵ vows, repentance, and several other topics. His view can be summed up by his own words, "In short, we have no controversy in this matter with the ancient Church; we only wish, as we ought, to rid the necks of

believers of a modern tyranny of recent date" (Calvin, *Necessity*, 183).

BUILDING A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES

Calvin's commentaries cover nearly every book of the Bible. While he doesn't always go as in depth, his comments are always worthwhile. Most notable is his attention to the details of the text (grammatical-historical), the context, as well as a consistent reading from a Christian perspective. This latter can be considered a kind of redemptive-historical approach, even though it may not include as much of this as someone like Geerhardus Vos would. All of this, together, will be helpful in understanding Calvin's views of worship as they arise from the texts of Scripture. The goal of the Reformation, after all, was to examine all things in the light of God's Word. Due to space, only a brief examination of three Old Testament and five New Testament texts will be possible.

The First and Second Commandments: Exodus 20

These two commandments stand together, for Calvin. They are two distinct commands from God, but they are related insofar as the first tells us who it is we are to worship (and that we are to worship him alone) and the second tells us the definition of legitimate worship.⁶ Calvin writes, concerning the First Commandment,

In this commandment God enjoins that He alone should be worshipped, and requires a worship free from all superstition. For although it seems to be a simple prohibition, yet must we deduce an affirmation from the negative, as will be more apparent from the following words (*Commentaries*, II, 1, 417–418).

Calvin goes on to acknowledge that an important aspect of the First Commandment is the phrase 'besides me.' This doesn't mean that one can worship anything

4. The Westminster Confession of Faith, 7.6. Hereafter WCF.

5. "In none of these three things will it be found that we have made any change upon the ancient form, without attempting to restore it to the exact standard of the Word of God." Calvin, *Necessity*, 146.

6. John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 106. Cf. *Calvin's Commentaries* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–1856; repr. in 22 vols., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), volume II, second book, p. 106. Hereafter, *Commentaries*, volume number, book number if applicable.

else so long as God is also worshiped. No, it speaks of the absolute exclusivity of worshiping the Lord as the one true God.

[W]e know that when the Israelites worshipped their Baalim, they did not so substitute them in the place of God as to put Him altogether aside, and assign to them the supreme power; nevertheless, this was an intolerable profanation of God's worship (*Ibid.*, 417–418).

Regarding the Second Commandment, Calvin helpfully explains, “The former indeed precedes in order, viz., that believers are to be contented with one God; but it would not be sufficient for us to be instructed to worship Him alone, unless we also knew the manner in which He would be worshipped” (*Commentaries*, II, 2, 107). He immediately adds that the main thing to be learned from the Second Commandment is that the worship of God is to be spiritual, “that it may correspond with His nature.” This understanding of the Commandments will set the stage for how Calvin understands other passages where God condemns the Israelites' worship. It will also set the stage for why he and other Reformers repudiated the Roman Catholic emphasis on the sensual in worship.

The Golden Calf: Exodus 32

The Golden Calf incident is an extremely helpful Old Testament text for thinking about worship and the application of the first two commandments. One of the primary stated reasons for the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt was so that they could serve the Lord (Exodus 4:23). In fact, when Moses appeals to Pharaoh in Exodus 5:1 he says it in very clear terms: “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’ This feast is no ordinary meal. In Exodus 10:9, Moses will use emphatic language, “we must hold a feast to the LORD.” It is a feast that has to do with worship, a feast that has to do with redemption.⁷

Aaron, Moses' brother and the high priest, understood the importance of this feast. When the people give

him their gold and he fashions the Golden Calf, Aaron declares, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!... Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD (Exodus 32:4–5). The Hebrew makes clear that Aaron claims this is the very feast spoken of in Exodus 5:1. Calvin cuts right to the quick,

[T]hey cover their sin against Him under a deceitful pretext, as if they denied that by their new and unwonted mode of worship, they desired to detract from the honour of their Redeemer; but rather that it was thus magnified because they worshipped Himself under a visible image (*Commentaries*, III, 1, 334).

He just as easily moves to apply this situation to the Roman Catholic forms of worship that had developed through the Middle Ages and were so prominent in his day,

Thus now-a-days do the Papiſts boldly obtrude their fictitious rites upon God; and boaſt that they do more for Him by their additions and inventions than as if they merely continued within the bounds preſcribed by Himſelf. But let us learn from this paſſage, that whatever colouring ſuperſtition may give to its idols, and by whatever titles it may dignify them, they remain idols ſtill; for, however thoſe who corrupt the pure worſhip of God by their inventions, may pride themſelves on their good intentions, they ſtill deny the true God, and ſubſtitute devils in His place (*Commentaries*, III, 1, 334).

Nadab and Abihu: Leviticus 10:1–3

The setting of Leviticus 10, like Exodus 32, is important to understand its helpfulness for forming a theology of worship. Leviticus opens with instructions, regarding all the various sacrifices that Israel is to give on a regular basis. Some of these sacrifices are offered daily, while others are offered occasionally. Chapters 8–9 deal with the ordination and installation of the priests who would offer the various sacrifices. Aaron himself is anointed, according to God's instructions, and the various offerings are brought forward. Then we read at the conclusion of all the ceremony that “fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces” (Leviticus 9:24).

Once the offerings are accepted by the Lord, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu seek to make their own offering. The reason that the previous chapters are helpful is that they were also anointed to serve as priests before

7. Much later the Prophet Isaiah will speak of this sort of feast: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined” (Isaiah 25:6). That it has to do with redemption is clear from the context. Of course, notable in Isaiah is that the LORD will make this feast for the people. The mountain spoken of is none other than Mount Zion (Isaiah 2:2–3; 25:10) where God's New Covenant people gather for a feast every Lord's Day (Hebrews 12).

the Lord, with their father. In other words, it wasn't as though an ordinary Israelite grabbed a censor and placed incense in it. These were rightly ordained ministers. Nevertheless, when they approached God in a way that He had not prescribed, they were consumed by the same sort of fire that had consumed the sacrifices. Once more, Calvin makes the connection to both the reformation of worship and the Roman Catholic practices of his day.

Let us learn, therefore, so to attend to God's command as not to corrupt His worship by any strange inventions. But if He so severely avenged this error, how horrible a punishment awaits the Papiſts, who are not ashamed obstinately to defend so many gross corruptions (*Commentaries*, III, 1, 432.)!

Worship the Lord Only: Matthew 4:10

Jesus' temptations provide us with our first New Testament passage for consideration. Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, signifying a temptation similar to Israel's wilderness wandering. Moreover, He was tempted directly by Satan himself, signifying a repeat of Adam's test in the Garden of Eden. However, unlike Adam, Jesus was in a wilderness, alone, and with nothing to eat and not a Garden full of good food He could eat, with a God-made wife by His side.

The particular temptation under consideration is the third, and last, by Matthew's count. Satan had come to Jesus and offered him "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory." It's remarkable to consider if only for the fact that Satan was the ruler of the world. He could, in fact, give Jesus the kingdoms of this present world, what Paul called, this present evil age. He had only one condition for Jesus: "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." It was a simple trade that would be tempting, a crown without the cross. Once more Calvin connects the dots for us, showing how these words of Jesus reject any kind of manmade worship.

Papiſts deny that God only ought to be adored; and evade this and similar passages by sophistical arguments. *Latria*, (λατρεία,) they admit, is adoration, which ought to be given to God alone: but *Dulia*, (δουλεία,) is an inferior kind of adoration, which they bestow on dead men, and on their bones and statues. But Christ rejects this frivolous distinction, and claims for God alone προσκύνησις, *worship*; by which he warns us to attend more to the matter than to expressions, when we have to do with the worship of God.⁸

God is spirit: John 4:24

The context of this passage is helpful as it speaks directly to the question of faithful worship. When the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into exile in 722 B.C. there was a concern of the rebellious king Jeroboam. He feared that the people would want to return to Jerusalem to worship. This was Jeroboam's concern detailed in 1 Kings 12:26–27,

Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

The solution to this concern was for Jeroboam to construct alternative places of worship complete with gods as well as feast days,

So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites (1 Kings 12:28–31).

Over time the northern kingdom was assimilated by the Assyrians and came to be known as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:29). It was a Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at the well and with whom he speaks. Their discussion of worship and Calvin's comments are helpful as we consider the reformation of worship.

Jesus, speaking with the woman, makes reference to Himself as the one who has access to life-giving water (John 4:14). By this point in the conversation she begins to understand that Jesus is someone important. Her response to His words makes this clear, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." Consistent with many of Jesus' encounters, she misunderstands what he is saying. After a revelation, by Jesus, about her marital status (or lack thereof), she says, "Sir, I perceive that you

8. John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 221. Cf. *Commentaries*, XVI, volume first, 221.

are a prophet” (v. 18). From here the discussion turns to the issue of worship, particularly the worship of the Samaritans versus the worship of the Jews. In defending Samaritan worship, the women appeals to “our fathers,” which Calvin masterfully picks up on to argue against the Roman Catholic argument about tradition.

I acknowledge, indeed, that unsteady and thoughtless men are sometimes excited by foolish zeal, as if they had been bitten by a gad-fly, so that when they learn that any thing has been done by the Saints, they instantly seize on the example without any exercise of judgment.

A second fault is still more common, that they borrow the deeds of the *Fathers* as a cloak to their errors,—and this may be easily seen in Popery. But as this passage is a remarkable proof how absurdly they act who, disregarding the command of God, conform to the examples of the *Fathers*, we ought to observe in how many ways the world commonly sins in this respect.⁹

Calvin goes on to make a distinction between the worship of God under the Old and New Testaments. God always was to be worshiped “by faith, prayer, thanksgiving, purity of heart, and innocence of life” yet under Moses there were, what Calvin calls, “various additions, so that the *spirit and truth* were concealed under forms and shadows” (*Commentaries*, XVII, 1, 162). Once more he helpfully applies this distinction between Old and New to the Reformation discussions on worship.

Now in Popery this distinction is not only confounded, but altogether overturned; for there the shadows are not less thick than they formerly were under the Jewish religion. It cannot be denied that Christ here lays down an obvious distinction between us and the Jews. Whatever may be the subterfuges by which the Papiſts attempt to escape, it is evident that we differ from the fathers in nothing more than outward form, because while they worshipped God *spiritually*, they were bound to perform ceremonies, which were abolished by the coming of Christ. Thus all who oppress the Church with an excessive multitude of ceremonies, do what is in their power to deprive the Church of the presence of Christ (*Commentaries*, XVII, 1, 162–163).

The addition of ceremonies, then, is a kind of reversal to substandard worship, the sort shrouded by the Law. These comments confirm Bard Thompson’s summary of Calvin’s view of worship, “For Calvin, a profusion of external forms was an encumbrance upon the ‘spiritual’ worship of God, a service of the ‘heart.’”¹⁰ Rather than moving worship forward, through faith, the sensual ceremonies return us to the time under the law. To worship in *spirit and truth*, then, is to avoid these outward ceremonies, as Calvin goes on to say.

What it is *to worship God in spirit and truth* appears clearly from what has been already said. It is to lay aside the entanglements of ancient ceremonies, and to retain merely what is *spiritual* in the worship of God; for the *truth* of the worship of God consists in the *spirit*, and ceremonies are but a sort of appendage (*Commentaries*, XVII, 1, 163–164).

Worship Decent and Orderly: 1 Corinthians 14:40

The church at Corinth struggled with many problems. They had issues with pride, with some believing they were better than others, and this filtered throughout their entire community. So problematic was it that, when it came to what they called the Lord’s Supper, they had divided between the haves and the have-nots. Some overate and drank to drunkenness while others went hungry. It’s such an affront to Christian love that it is difficult for most Christians in our day to understand how they could have gotten to this point. As Paul works through this issue of the Supper (chapter 11) he also addresses their problems with unity (chapter 12) and love (chapter 13). After all of this Paul turns his attention to a direct discussion of the worship at Corinth.

While much of the chapter would be helpful, we will contain our comments to Calvin’s discussion of verse 40, “But all things should be done decently and in order.” This verse is sometimes called the “Presbyterian life verse.” It is true that Presbyterians care about order in worship, but it is not order for the sake of order. Corinth, along with Old Testament Israel, stands as clear evidence of what happens when the principles of decency and order are removed from worship. Once more, Calvin makes the connection between Corinth and Rome of his day.

Here we have a more general conclusion, which does not merely include, in short compass, the entire case, but also the different parts. . . . This passage, therefore, when duly considered, will show the difference between

9. John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 155. Cf. *Commentaries*, XVII, volume first, 155.

10. Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Fortress Press, 1980), 195.

the tyrannical edicts of the Pope, which oppress men's consciences with a dreadful bondage, and the godly regulations of the Church, by which discipline and order are maintained. Nay farther, we may readily infer from this, that the latter are not to be looked upon as human traditions, inasmuch as they are founded upon this general injunction, and have a manifest approval, as it were, from the mouth of Christ himself.¹¹

Sinai vs Zion: Hebrews 8:5

The entire book of Hebrews is a worthwhile study for the topic of New Testament worship, particularly how it relates to worship of the Old Testament. In the Old it was in the Tabernacle or Temple with sacrifices, a visible priest, and all the various regulations. The early church faced an attack from those who were Judaizers that wanted to bring the Gentiles under the rules of the Old Testament, particularly Moses.

The Apostle Paul gives a clear defense in Galatians as to why the Gentiles do not need to follow Moses. Though they are grafted into the True Vine, who is Christ, they are not grafted in under the Old Covenant, but the New Covenant. The book of Hebrews shows us that this impacts even how Christians worship. As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it, in talking about the sacraments, there is more simplicity and less outward glory in the New Covenant, "yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy" (WCF 7.6).

Hebrews highlights this by stating about the Old Testament types, "They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." They were a copy and shadow of God's presence in heaven, and of the worship that takes place there. The reality is that trying to push back to an overly sensual form of worship, according to Hebrews, is to exchange the spiritual and faith-based reality that we have now, *which is superior to the Old*. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). God does, indeed, give us the sacraments to take, touch, and taste, but these are still far simpler than the Old Testament sacraments, as the Confession points out.

Commenting on Hebrews 8:5, Calvin looks at the language of Moses building everything according to the instruction of the Lord.

we are here taught that all those modes of worship are false and spurious, which men allow themselves by their own wit to invent, and beyond God's command; for since God gives this direction, that all things are to be done according to his own rule, it is not lawful for us to do anything different from it.¹²

Calvin continues, bringing Roman Catholic forms of worship into the discussion,

let us hence learn that there are no true symbols of religion but those which conform to what Christ requires. We must then take heed, lest we, while seeking to adapt our own inventions to Christ, transfigure him, as the Papists do, so that he should not be at all like himself; for it does not belong to us to devise anything as we please, but to God alone it belongs to shew us what to do; it is to be *according to the pattern* shewed to us (*Commentaries*, XXII, 184).

While the survey of these passages has been too brief and there are surely dozens of more passages that could be added to the survey, what comes through clearly is that Calvin's view of worship was not shaped primarily by an opposition to Rome. There is an opposition to Rome, to be certain, but his opposition is based on exegesis of Scripture. For Calvin, worship is serious business and calls for clear reflection on both God's nature and the commands He's given in His Word. Moreover, New Covenant worship is different from Old Covenant worship at least in visibility of types and shadows. We are not called to replace the types and shadows of the heavenly reality with other types. Rather, we are to see that we gather as God's people at Mount Zion, in heaven and in God's presence, for worship each week (Hebrews 12:22ff).

ONE HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH:
THE INSTITUTES

The final part of our examination of Calvin's views of worship looks at his *Institutes of Christian Religion*. It is important to remember the audience for this work. Calvin wrote the preface to Francis I, the then king of France. The Protestant Christians in France were facing persecution, in part because of false teachings attributed to them, and so Calvin writes the *Institutes* in order to show clearly that the Protestants stood in the line of historic and Biblical Christianity. It was a big task to be certain, given the opposition from Rome. In fact, the reasoning in the *Institutes* is presented as a

11. John Calvin and John Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 473-4. Cf. *Commentaries*, XX, volume first, 473-4.

12. John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 184. Cf. *Commentaries*, XXII, 184.

polemic against Rome. This is a point that was mostly academic in my mind until the last few years. A large part of the defense, naturally, would be the worship of the Reformation. Citing the dedicatory epistle to the *Institutes* of 1536, Dr. Hughes Old makes the point well from Calvin's own words:

Moreover, they unjustly set the ancient fathers against us (I mean the ancient writers of a better age of the church) as if in them they had supporters of their own impiety. If the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of victory—to put it very modestly—would turn to our side.¹³

Old then follows up:

Calvin goes on to say that, in fact, many of the practices of the Roman Church were themselves in contradiction to the practice of the ancient Church. *The Fathers like the Reformers had opposed luxurious worship.*¹⁴

It is in the fourth book of the *Institutes* that Calvin comes to discuss the final part of the Creed, *Of the Holy Catholic Church*. This is not to say that worship is not addressed throughout the book at various parts, for it is, but our present discussion will remain in book four. It is here that Calvin addresses questions of church governance, the sacraments, and worship. Calvin begins by citing worship as a unifying factor in the church.

Often, too, by the name of Church is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ, who by baptism are initiated into the faith; by partaking of the Lord's Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, agree in holding the word of the Lord, and observe the ministry which Christ has appointed for the preaching of it (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.7).

Calvin goes on in the book to make the argument that the Papacy preserves a kind of perverted church: “a perverted government, compounded of lies, a government which partly extinguishes, partly suppresses, the pure light” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.2.2). Within the context of this perverted church comes a perverted worship, “deformed by a varied mass of intolerable superstitions” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.2.2). The point becomes clear.

13. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975; repr. Black Mountain, NC: Worship Press, 2010), 141.

14. Old, 141–142. *Emphasis mine*.

Roman Catholicism is not a different style of worship in church tradition. It is idolatry.

Scarcely can we hold any meeting with them without polluting ourselves with open idolatry. Their principal bond of communion is undoubtedly in the Mass, which we abominate as the greatest sacrilege (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.2.9.) ... churches where Christ lies half-buried, the gospel is suppressed, piety is put to flight, and the worship of God almost abolished; where, in short, all things are in such disorder as to present the appearance of Babylon rather than the holy city of God (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.2.12).

Perhaps no place clearer was the question of worship central, for the Reformers, than in the celebration of the Roman Catholic Mass. Making this central to worship usurped the place of the Word of God, in the understanding of the Reformers. Moreover, polluting the sacrament with superstitious idolatries destroyed the very constitution of the church. “In no name of religion, true or false, can men be assembled, unless united by some common use of visible signs or sacraments (August. cont. Faustum, Lib. 9 c. 11)” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.19). Sacraments are not secondary questions, when it comes to worship. They are primary, and what a church professes about the sacraments reveals a lot about the worship they espouse. For this reason the Reformers sought to reform the sacraments themselves. This included properly defining a sacrament and excluding any ceremony or rite that was not directly instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this it called for removing layers of superstition from the sacrament, including the notion that these worked in and of themselves (*ex opera operato*) as well the nature of the sacraments themselves.

A full examination of this is outside the scope of this paper, but the end result was to dethrone a kind of mystical experientialism that had come to reign in medieval worship. In its place, the Word of God was placed, both to be read and preached in the public worship of God. For this reason, Calvin returns time after time to the text of Scripture to substantiate the worship set down in the Reformation. “The object of these remarks is to lead pious readers to reflect how dangerous it is in matters of such difficulty to wander from the simple word of God to the dreams of our own brain” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.36).

Continued on Page 253.

Editorial. Continued from Page 2.

Glasgow cathedral Kirk. For *In Translatione*, we continue our custom of presenting short to medium length first time translations into English of material of interest to Confessional Presbyterians. This year's entry is a translation by David C. Noe of two important letters which John Calvin wrote to the ministers of the Reformed church in Montbéliard. The church there was facing the forced imposition of Lutheran worship practices by the civil authorities, including the reinstitution of a number of the old holy days of the church calendar which that church had rejected at its founding. A helpful background introduction covering Calvin's view of such observances is provided by Chris Coldwell.

Worship is the most important thing a Christian does. If the Reformation was only about reforming our doctrine of justification—as absolutely important as that is—then the Reformation would only have been a whiff rather than a raging firestorm that spread through Europe and beyond, changing the world forever. But Dr. Old has taught us that real and abiding significance of the Reformation takes place in our worship services. In a day and age of fog machines, praise bands and offertory ballet performances, that is no insignificant thing. For these reasons the editors of *The Confessional Presbyterian* journal are happy to present this issue in honor of 500 years of being Reformed according to the Scriptures.

THE EDITORS ■

Calvin the Pastor. Continued from Page 49.

to shepherding the flock. Pastors are not CEOs, they are under shepherds in the flock of Christ. Like Christ himself, every pastor should be able to say, 'I know my own (sheep) and my own know me' (John 10:14). Our Lord Jesus Christ knows his sheep 'by name' (John 10:3) and no less should the under shepherds he has appointed know the sheep he has committed to their care.

Calvin's example also speaks to the church's theological teachers. Is it possible for men who have never been proven pastor-teachers to help teach and mold men preparing for the gospel ministry? Calvin and his fellow Reformers were pastor-theologians. They ministered week by week in the churches committed to their care. Their theology was formed from the word of God and forged in the pastoral crucible of the church. This is why, if I can speak for myself, I would not have pastoral theology as a separate theological locus in a Seminary. Every subject, OT, NT, biblical languages, systematic and biblical theology and church history, should be taught pastorally, by proven pastors. I have little doubt these last few words will generate a measure of discussion and debate! ■

Less Outward Glory. Continued from Page 128.

KREEFT'S CHALLENGE AND CONCLUSION

Much more needs to be examined, including the rest of Calvin's writings on worship, an examination of more passages from his commentaries, and a more thorough examination of the entirety of the *Institutes* on the topic of worship. We have learned, though, that throughout his writings he makes clear that he believed the reformation of worship in the church to be essential. He found this on the basis of Scripture as well as looking back on the early church. One could say that no stone was left unturned as the Reformers sought to bring all things under the authority of God's Word. However, what do we make of Kreeft's challenge? Is it the case that, exegesis and history notwithstanding, the Reformers missed something? Do the transcendentals go together such that something cannot possibly be truly beautiful and false? Can something have the appearance of beauty but, at the same time, be evil?

What Kreeft seems to overlook is the fact that there is a clear Scriptural example where the good and the true are separated from the beautiful. Satan provides us with the answer to Kreeft's challenge. This is not overstating the case. To the contrary, Scripture presents him as one who was the most beautiful of God's creation, a guardian cherub (Ezekiel 28:12–18). Paul speaks of Satan as one who can even now disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Far from necessitating that the good, true, and beautiful always go together, the person of Satan shows that something can be presented as beautiful—exceedingly so—and yet be full of evil and lack all truth. Indeed, Scripture and history prove to us that the mind of man is always looking for ways to add to the commands of God. This is why worship must always be reformed, according to Scripture. ■

Family Religion: Adoption in the Reformation Tradition An Essential Element of the Gospel Message. Continued from Page 166.

While we are still servant-subjects in the kingdom of God, we are even more sons of "our Father in heaven." It is fitting then to close with these words from John L. Girardeau: "The servant, with hat in hand, stands at a respectful distance awaiting the orders of his master; the child of God, as Luther has graphically suggested, rushes into the presence of his Father, leaps into his lap, and nestles in his bosom" (Girardeau, "Adoption," 493). *Soli Deo Gloria!*

SUGGESTED READINGS

Thomas Boston. *The Complete Works of the Late Reverend*