

# An Introduction to Reformed Worship

By [Gregory Rickmar](#)

## Abstract

This paper examines and defends some basic principles of Christian worship found in the Bible and in the creeds and confessions of the Reformed churches. It also suggests some ways that these principles can be implemented. Topics include the role of Scripture in regulating worship, what activities should be included in worship and the proper relation between preaching and the sacraments. This paper concludes that Scripture specifies that certain activities should be included in worship and the order that these activities should proceed. It also concludes that the Lord's Supper should be included in worship every Sunday.

## Introduction

Liturgy and worship are terms that describe two different, but similar, things. Our word liturgy comes from the Greek word meaning "service." In classical Greek, the term referred to special service that a wealthy Greek citizen might be called upon to do for his city/state. He, for example, might be called upon to furnish his city a warship - this was his "liturgy." The New Testament usage of this term carries forth this idea. In Acts 13:2 we read "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting . . ." <sup>1</sup> The Greek word that was translated here as "worshipping" is the word for liturgy and means here "serving" or "ministering." The idea is that it is the church's job to minister to God in worship. Liturgy, in its biblical sense, means giving God the service he demands.

The Hebrew term for worship carries with it a different, but related, idea. This word for worship means literally "to bow down." It implies that we are to humble ourselves. The biblical terms for liturgy and worship, however, are not contradictory but complementary. True worship often involves praise. Praise and worship are not, contrary to one popular interpretation of Psalm 95, two different things. Nor is it true that praise must always precede worship. In Psalm 66 the terms "praise" and "worship" are used interchangeably. <sup>2</sup> True service (liturgy) cannot occur without true humility (worship). For convenience, we will speak of both liturgy and worship as simply worship.

This essay will attempt to lay out the fundamental Reformed principles of worship. Matters such as the role of Scripture in regulating worship, the proper elements and order of worship, and the relation of Word and Sacrament in worship will be dealt with. Other matters, such as whether Psalms alone or hymns should be sung, whether musical instruments may be used, and whether a liturgical calendar should be used, will not be discussed at this time.

## **Characteristics of Christian Worship**

Worship, in the Bible, has several characteristics and can be described in several ways. The first characteristic is that worship is a dialogue between God and his people. God speaks and acts, and his people respond. Worship in the Bible is characterized by this dialogic character. "Yet the idea of dialogue has certain deficiencies. Dialogue is usually between equals. In worship God convenes the meeting and remains in charge through his appointed delegates. Like invited dinner guests, God's people attend worship by divine invitation. Dialogue may ramble. Worship does not; its exchanges are prescribed."<sup>3</sup>

Another characteristic of worship is that it is a covenant renewal between God and his people. God speaks, and his people promise their obedience. One biblical example of this aspect of worship is found in Nehemiah 9. There, Ezra and others taught the Law to the people, and the people confessed their sins and promised their obedience. Today's practice of reading the Ten Commandments during Sunday morning worship services, followed by a hymn of response, is one modern form of covenant renewal.

A third characteristic of worship is that it is regulated by the Word of God. God has instructed us in Deuteronomy 12:32, "See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it." We are not free to ignore God's instructions. Nor can we add anything we want to God's worship without God's instruction.

This principle of worship is sometimes, particularly in Reformed churches with Scottish roots (i.e., Presbyterian), called "**The Regulative Principle of Worship.**" This term is seldom, if ever, used in Reformed churches with Dutch roots. Some Reformed leaders, in fact, deny that Dutch Reformed churches have ever taught it. But this principle is taught in the Dutch Reformed creeds. This is an important point. The Regulative Principle of Worship is a historic position of John Calvin and all Reformed

churches, including the forebears of the [Christian Reformed Church](#).<sup>4</sup> Question 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism instructs us "That we in nowise make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his Word." (Italics added.)<sup>5</sup> As Zacharius Ursinus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, wrote in his commentary on it, "Hence all kinds of worship not instituted by God, but by men, as well as those which contain the same reason why they should be prohibited, are forbidden in this precept of the Decalogue."<sup>6</sup> Against the objection that this is too strict a rule, Ursinus wrote: Obj. 4. But certain of the saints have worshipped God with acceptance without any express commandment of his; so Samuel offered sacrifices in Ramah, Elijah in Mount Carmel, Manoah in Zorah, &c. (1 Sam. 7:17. 1 Kings 18:19. Judges 13:19.) Therefore there are certain works which constitute the worship of God, although not expressly commanded by him. Ans. These examples establish nothing conclusively in reference to will-worship; for, in the first place, as it respects these sacrifices, they were the worship of God, because they were works commanded by him. And then as it regards the place appointed for offering sacrifices, the saints of old were free before the erection of the temple. Samuel fixed upon the place where he lived as the one in which he would offer sacrifices, this being the most convenient. And the prophets knew very well that the worship of God did not consist in the circumstance of place, in respect to which the godly were left free, while as yet the ark of the covenant had no fixed place. And then, finally, as it respects the persons themselves who offered these sacrifices, they had extraordinary power conferred upon them, being prophets, as Samuel and Elijah were. And as it respects Manoah, the father of Sampson, he either did not sacrifice himself, but delivered the sacrifice over to the angel whom he supposed to be a prophet, to be offered up; or else he himself offered it, being commanded by the angel, so that nothing was done contrary to the law.

So we may also easily return an answer to the other examples which are adduced by our opponents. Abel and Noah, say they, offered sacrifices; (Gen. 4 & 8) but they did not do it without a command from God; for they offered their sacrifices in faith as Paul affirms in Heb. 11. Faith now cannot be without the word of God. But the Rechabites, say they, of whom we have an account in the 35th chap. of Jeremiah, abstained from the use of wine, and from agriculture, according to the command of their father, Jonadab, and were commended by God. But Jonadab did not design to

institute any new worship of God, but merely desired by this civil command to do away with drunkenness and such sins as accompany it. So it was not the kind of food and raiment which John the Baptist ate and wore, that commended him to the divine favor, but his sobriety and temperance, and worship of God. Nor was it the raiment, made of sheep and goat skins, nor their wandering in mountains, dens, and caves, that made the saints of old (Heb. 11) approved before God, but their faith and patience in enduring afflictions and trials.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Regulative Principle of Worship was also taught by John Calvin.**

Ronald Wallace, writing about Calvin's view on this, wrote: In Calvin's view, nothing could be more dangerous to the spiritual life of the Church than to open the door for the introduction of new ceremonies, however carefully calculated to appeal to the worshipper. He admits a certain amount of necessary ritual in connection with the sacrament. "I mean not to condemn the ceremonies which are subservient to decency and public order, and increase the reverence for the sacrament, provided they are sober and suitable," but to open the door too widely here is to stand before "an abyss without end or limit" which cannot be tolerated. On Jesus' words to the woman at Samaria, You worship what you know not, we worship what we know, Calvin comments, "This is a sentence worthy of being remembered, and teaches us that we ought not to attempt anything in religion rashly or at random, because unless there be knowledge, it is not God we worship but a phantom or an idol. All good intentions, as they are called, are struck by this sentence as by a thunderbolt; for we learn from it that men can do nothing but err, where they are guided by their own opinion without the Word or command of God." Later on in the same commentary, remarking on the folly of those who wished to make Jesus a King, he says, "Hence let us learn how dangerous it is in the things of God to neglect His Word, and to contrive anything of our own opinion; for there is nothing which the foolish subtlety of our understanding does not corrupt. . . . Modes of worship regulated according to our fancy, and honours rashly contrived by men, have no other advantage than this that they rob God of His true honour, and pour upon Him nothing but reproach."

To introduce such unnecessary modes of worship is to disfigure the true image by which God has revealed Himself so that we may worship Him. It is to alienate Christ from His Church and to violate the sanctuary of God. "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. I do not stop to examine the vain excuses which they plead, that many persons in the present day have as much need of these aids as the Jews had in ancient times. It is always our duty to enquire by what order the Lord wished His Church to be governed, for He alone knows thoroughly what is expedient for us." "We must take heed, lest we, while seeking to adapt our own inventions to Christ, transfigure Him . . . so that He should not be at all like Himself." "When I consider the proper end for which Churches are erected, it appears to me more unbecoming their sacredness than I can tell, to admit any other images than those living symbols which the Lord has consecrated by His own Word: I mean Baptism and the Lord's Supper, with the other ceremonies. By these our eyes ought to be more steadily fixed, and more vividly impressed, than to require the aid of any images which the wit of man may devise."<sup>8</sup>

Some may object that the Regulative Principle of Worship is too strict, too hard to conform to. It should not be. If we truly love God, we should be willing to worship him in any way pleasing to him.

Imagine a hillbilly war-hero, a man who led his troops victoriously in battle, who is going to be honored by his men after their return from the war. His fellow officers, however, are from Evanston, Illinois; Berkeley, California; and Short Hills, New Jersey; and they don't exactly understand their leader's tastes. As they prepare a great banquet in his honor, they think of how he enjoys listening to music, and eating, and drinking. So, they have the best chamber orchestra, caviar, and champagne that money can buy, all prepared for him and his wife whom they have flown in from Kentucky. What's wrong with this? Well, yes, he enjoys music, but he'd much prefer to stomp his feet to the sounds of a banjo, a guitar, and a fiddle. Yes, he enjoys eating, but what's this stuff called caviar? It's blackeyed peas, grits, cornbread, and venison or squirrel meat which are his pleasure. Yes, he enjoys drinking, but champagne? His specialty is "Mountain Dew" (and we don't, of course, mean the product from Pepsi-Cola). The point is that, if they had really wanted to honor their hero, they would have found out about those things which pleased him and provided those for him, rather than trying to please him their own way. Similarly, if we truly want to please the Mighty Warrior who has effected our salvation, we will find out which things delight Him, and perform those things for Him. Just as it is not simply the fact of a banquet, but also the content which is

important, so it is not just the fact of worship which is important. The content — the elements which comprise worship — is important as well.<sup>9</sup> To add something to God's worship, even if it has not been specifically prohibited, is to violate God's holiness, his "set-apartness." In the Bible, the holiness of God is often seen as his separateness. "Judging from the usage of the root qds, the basic idea conveyed by the holiness of God is His separateness, i.e., His uniqueness."<sup>10</sup> To add something to worship, even if it had not been explicitly prohibited, is to violate God's separateness or holiness.

Many of the Bible's teachings on worship are found in two places: the books of Moses (the first five books of the Bible, also called the Pentateuch), and the book of Revelation. Let us turn first to the books of Moses. There, we will examine the different types of sacrifices that God commanded for worship, their meaning, and the sequence in which they were offered.<sup>11</sup>

## **Old Covenant Worship**

Throughout the Old Testament we read that one form of true worship was the offering of sacrifices. For example, Isaiah 19:21 speaks of a time when the Egyptians "will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings."<sup>12</sup> Micah 6:6 also mentions a worshiper bowing down (in other words, worshiping) with burnt offerings and other offerings. In the books of Moses we see that God authorized many different types of sacrifices. At times more than one sacrifice was offered. When multiple sacrifices were offered, they were generally done in a specific sequence that God had commanded. We must, therefore, examine these sacrifices and their order to see what we can learn from them.<sup>13</sup>

There are at least eight different offerings mentioned in the books of Moses. These include the incense offering, the guilt offering, the sin offering, the whole burnt offering,<sup>14</sup> the fellowship (or peace) offering, the grain (or meal) offering, the drink offering, and the wave offering.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, there are approximately twenty-four passages in the Old Testament that mention the different types of offerings or sacrifices that were used. Most of these passages were instructions given through Moses, recorded in the Pentateuch. The remainders are historical accounts of various worship services. By looking at these passages we can learn what types of sacrifices were used and what order was used when more than one was offered.

From these passages, we learn that the grain and drink offerings were never offered alone, but always accompanied other offerings.[16](#) Moreover, the guilt offering was seldom used. It was only used to cover the sin of a leader of the people or for someone cleansed of a skin disease. It was not, therefore, ordinarily a part of worship. That leaves three offerings to examine: the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering. The types of offerings sacrificed, the order they were sacrificed and the occasions for the offerings were as follows:[17](#)

Sin and "other" offerings:

Dedication of the Second Temple: Ezra 6:17

Burnt offerings:

Isaac: Genesis 22:2

Sabbath: Numbers 28:9-10

Daily (Morning and Evening): Numbers 28:1-8

Firstfruits: Leviticus 23:9-14

Burnt, then Fellowship offerings:

Confirmation of the First Mosaic Covenant: Exodus 24:5

Ark brought to Jerusalem: 2 Samuel 6:17, 1 Chronicles 16:1

New altar after exile: Ezra 3:4,5

Burnt and "other" offerings:

Jethro: Exodus 18:12

Burnt, then Fellowship and "other" offerings:

Ark brought to Temple: 1 Kings 8

Sin, then Burnt offerings:

New Moon: Numbers 28:11-15[18](#), Ezra 3:5

Passover: Numbers 28:17-25

Trumpets: Numbers 29:1-6

Day of Atonement: Leviticus 16:3-25

Tabernacles (Booths): Numbers 29:12-38, Ezra 3:2-4

Purification after childbirth: Leviticus 12:6-8[19](#)

Ordination of Levites: Numbers 8:8-12

Guilt, Sin, then Burnt offerings:

Skin Diseases: Leviticus 14:10-31

Sin, Burnt, then Fellowship offerings:

Ordination of priests: Exodus 29:1-28, Leviticus 8

Dedication of Tabernacle: Numbers 7:10-83[20](#)

Priests begin their ministry: Leviticus 9:1-22

Burnt, Sin, then Fellowship offerings:

Weeks (Pentecost): Leviticus 23:15-22, Numbers 28:26-31

From all this, a pattern emerges. It is easy to see that, with one exception, the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost),<sup>21</sup> the order of the sacrifices was always the sin offering first, the burnt offering second, and the fellowship offering last.<sup>22</sup> Other offerings were sometimes added. A footnote to The NIV Study Bible summarizes this:

When more than one kind of offering was presented (as in Nu. 6:16,17), the procedure was usually as follows: (1) sin offering or guilt offering, (2) burnt offering, (3) fellowship offering and grain offering (along with a drink offering). This sequence furnishes part of the spiritual significance of the sacrificial system. First, sin had to be dealt with (sin offering or guilt offering). Second, the worshiper committed himself completely to God (burnt offering and grain offering). Third, fellowship or communion between the Lord, the priest and the worshiper (fellowship offering) was established. To state it another way, there were sacrifices of expiation (sin offerings and guilt offerings), consecration (burnt offerings and grain offerings) and communion (fellowship offerings - these included vow offerings, thank offerings and freewill offerings).<sup>23</sup>

How does this apply today? James B. Jordan gives us an answer: What is the general order of worship? You can remember it this way: Confession, Consecration, and Communion. In the Old Testament, this was the order of the sacrifices. First came the Sin Offering, signifying confession of sin. Then came the Whole Burnt Offering and the Meal Offering, signifying the dedication of the worshiper and of his gifts to God. Finally came the Peace Offering, which was a communion meal shared with the priest and with the Lord.

We see the same order of worship at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 - 24). The Word summoned the people together. The people separated themselves ceremonially from uncleanness, signifying confession and forsaking sin (19:10-15). God proclaimed His Word to the people, and the people consecrated themselves to obey it by means of a Burnt Offering (20:1 - 24:8). Then, God celebrated a communion meal with the representatives of the people (Ex. 24:9-17).

We don't do any of these things - confess sin, dedicate ourselves anew, or commune with God - except that God invites us to. Thus, God's Word always comes first, to instruct us or invite us to do these things.

Moreover, we never do anything without prayer, so prayer accompanies each of these actions. So, the general outline of biblical worship is this:

General Call to Worship

Call to Confess Sins

Response of Confession (Prayer)

Call to Consecration (Proclamation of Word)

Response of Consecration (Prayer & Offering)

Call to Communion

Response of Communion (Prayer & Lord's Supper)

General Benediction (blessing on the people as they leave)

Interspersed in this general outline are hymns, psalms, and prayers.<sup>24</sup>

## **New Covenant Worship**

We can now turn our attention to the book of Revelation. Revelation is a difficult book to interpret. Those who have studied it have come away with widely differing conclusions. But there are some things common to most interpretations of it. Most commentators have noticed that the heavenly vision that John saw was seen on a Lord's Day. Furthermore, what John saw in his vision was a heavenly Lord's Day worship service. Revelation takes place on the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), and on that Lord's Day, John is taken up into heaven and sees a worship service. The service has basically two parts: the blowing of trumpets (proclamation of the Word), and the pouring out of bowls (the negative side of the sacrament). The climax of the service is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (the Lord's Supper).

John sees worship around the Throne of God in Revelation 4 and 5. The worshippers are grouped in several choirs, and they speak (sing) in alternation with one another. They all speak the same words together, so they evidently have practiced what they sing. The alternation of different choirs in worship is called antiphonal worship . . .

Another feature of heavenly worship is responsorial worship. Responsorial worship is a dialogue. The leader (in this case, the King of kings) says something, and the congregation responds. Most churches have some responsorial worship when they read the psalms responsively . . .

Throughout Revelation, the heavenly congregation is seen singing "Amen" and "Alleluia" at various points in the service. We see various

physical actions, such as kneeling or prostration, taking place. Thus, we see that worship in heaven is organized, planned, prepared, and involves active participation from the congregation. Worship is public, before the throne of God. It is a command performance, which we do for His glory. All this means is that we have to learn to worship. But that is no surprise. Obviously, sinners need to learn to worship God. Learning involves effort, and that is no surprise either, because anything worth doing involves effort to learn. Worship is not always comfortable, but how can it ever be fully comfortable, as long as we are sinners?[25](#)

One purpose of the book of Revelation is to show us what occurs in heaven so that we can imitate it on earth. Jesus taught his disciples to pray "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10b). As God's servants, we are expected to bring, as much as possible, what exists on earth in line with what occurs in heaven. One reason God told us here what heavenly worship is like is so that we can imitate it. Our worship on earth should be modeled after the type of worship that occurs in heaven. As we have seen, heavenly worship is structured, planned, antiphonal, and responsorial. Heavenly worship includes the proclamation of the Word. It also includes the Sacrament. The worship we perform on earth should follow this model.

There is much more exegetical "juice" that we can squeeze out of Revelation. For example, we can discuss whether there is a prescribed order of worship taught in Revelation and whether that order matches the order that we found in the Old Testament. This is an important question, since we must first verify that there have been no New Covenant changes to the Old Covenant order of worship before we teach that New Covenant churches should follow the Old Covenant sequence.

Many scholars have studied the order of worship used in Revelation and found strong parallels between the Old Testament worship and the worship described in Revelation. One scholar who found parallels was the early twentieth century English scholar Philip Carrington.[26](#) According to Carrington, "I am astonished to find so few discussions on the temple ritual, not only in connection with the Revelation, but also in connection with the Palestinian background of the New Testament generally. The recent advance in this study has concerned itself with the eschatological literature, and the oral teaching of the Rabbis; it has neglected the temple, its priesthood, and worship. But in the New Testament period the temple system was central; after its destruction the Rabbis organized a new

Judaism on enlightened Pharisee lines. But it was a new religion, not the old. The old religion died in the year A.D. 70, and gave birth to two children; the elder was modern Judaism without temple or priest or sacrifice; the younger was Christianity, which was proud possessor of all three. What links Hebrews with Revelation is its insistence on this fact. Christianity is the true heir of the old faith. To it have been transferred the priesthood and the sacrifice."[27](#)

Carrington found that the worship described in Revelation was substantially the same as that taught by Moses, with some minor changes: God's throne replaces the altar, and the twenty-four elders on thrones are added.[28](#) He found that the worship in Revelation also included some elements of the worship described in Ezekiel 40-48.[29](#)

According to Carrington, the worship described in Revelation substantially follows the liturgy for the daily morning sacrifice. Revelation 1-3 describes the High Priest and Revelation 4 describes the temple ornaments. Revelation 5 describes the lamb that was killed and Revelation 6 (the fifth seal) alludes to the blood splashed on the altar. These parallels continue with the trumpets, the opening of the temple gates, the preparation of the sacrifice, the offering of incense, the burning of the victim, the psalms, and the feast on the sacrifice.[30](#) The only part of the Old Testament liturgy that was not repeated in its correct sequence in Revelation was the incense offering. However, Revelation mentions smoke at the point that incense would be offered (Revelation 15:8), retaining the proper sequence.

Another scholar who reached similar findings was Austin Farrer, a professor at Trinity College, Oxford in the early twentieth century. Farrer found that Revelation was a "continuous, hard-headed and systematic working out of Old Testament themes" and that "St. John's finished work exhibited an extremely elaborate and varied cyclic pattern, both in the regular recurrence of themes, and in the form of their visionary presentation."[31](#) Those who first read Revelation were "men of [St. John's] own generation, they constantly heard the Old Testament in their assemblies, and were trained by the preacher (who might be St. John himself) to interpret it by certain conventions."[32](#)

Farrer found that the entire book of Revelation parallels the Old Testament liturgical calendar. Beginning with Revelation 1, Revelation cycles through the Old Testament calendar beginning with Dedication, proceeding through Passover, Pentecost, New Year (Trumpets), and

Tabernacles, and returning to Dedication in Revelation 15.<sup>33</sup> "The seven unsealings are to represent the quarter with Passover in its first month and Pentecost in its third, just as the seven messages represented the quarter stretching from Dedication towards Passover." "The breaking of each seal brings us nearer to the point at which the book will be open: and when the seventh seal is broken, then and then only, the book is actually unsealed. So the unsealings represent a revelation which, having its root in Passover, is fulfilled at Pentecost."<sup>34</sup> The cycle is then repeated a second time, returning to Dedication in Revelation 22.<sup>35</sup>

This evidence suggests that New Covenant churches are required to follow the Old Covenant order of worship. After all, if the book of Revelation, which describes a heavenly Lord's Day worship service, repeats themes and ideas from the Old Covenant liturgy in the same order, it follows that New Covenant worship should follow that same sequence.

## **The Sacraments**

Let us now consider the sacraments.

The two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are additional elements that should be included in worship. But why did God institute the sacraments? Isn't the proclamation of the Word and the people's response to it enough?

The answer to this found in the very nature of what sacraments are. Our Reformed confessions summarize the biblical teaching when they tell us that the sacraments are "holy signs and seals for us to see" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 25).<sup>36</sup> The use of the sacraments is obligatory: "Protestants, on the other hand, teach that the sacraments are not absolutely necessary unto salvation, but are obligatory in view of the divine precept. Wilful neglect of their use results in spiritual impoverishment and has a destructive tendency, just as all wilful and persistent disobedience to God has."<sup>37</sup> This is consistent with the way God has revealed himself. In the Bible, whenever God spoke, he apparently always provided some kind of visible sign to accompany his spoken Word. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 tells us that true prophets are always authenticated by special signs. In the Garden of Eden, God provided evidence of his control of creation when he gave Adam and Eve the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:26-30). When he gave them the Sabbatical Mandate (Genesis 2:9-17), the two trees functioned as special signs. Other signs mentioned in the Bible include the clothing of Adam and Eve with skins, the rainbow to Noah and the sign of

circumcision to Abraham. Still other signs include the sacrifices of the Old Testament, ceremonial washings, the miracles and the setting up of memorial stones and pillars. During the early first century, the physical presence of Christ and his miracles functioned as signs. Miracles still function as signs today, but the usual signs for today to accompany the Word are the two sacraments.[38](#)

John Calvin recognized this. Ronald Wallace, commenting on Calvin's view of Word and Sacrament, wrote: The God who speaks in the events of the Bible is shown to be One who in His communication with men uses not only spoken words but also concrete signs calculated to appeal to the other senses in the experiencing subject than that of hearing. Calvin uses the term "sign" generally to cover all the visible and tangible means which God uses along with the word to convey His grace to men. This includes e.g. the miracles by which God spoke to Gideon, Ahaz and Hezekiah. "Our merciful Lord, with boundless condescension, so accommodated Himself to our capacity, that seeing how from our animal nature we are always creeping on the ground, and cleaving to the flesh, having no thought of what is spiritual, and not even forming an idea of it, He declines not by means of these earthly elements to lead us to Himself, and even in the flesh to exhibit a mirror of spiritual blessings." The Brazen Serpent comes under the category of a sign, so also the tree of life in the garden of Eden, the rainbow shown to Noah, and the cloudy pillar. Visions and dreams are signs. There are thus natural signs and "preternatural" or extraordinary signs. Signs need not be merely visible phenomenon. There are audible signs such as the earthquake. The Sabbath day, a purely temporal arrangement, is also a sign. Under the New Covenant we find Jesus using miracles and signs alongside the word He spoke, and we have the sacraments as permanent signs appointed for our use. Calvin makes much of the fact that when God speaks there is normally a sign attached to the audible word, so as to enforce and supplement that word.[39](#)

Since God has always spoken this way to humans in the past, today's common practice of preaching the Word in Sunday worship without any accompanying sign (sacrament) is apparently out of step with the biblical norm. The Reformed churches have always insisted, and rightly so, that the sacraments should never be administered without the preaching of the Word.[40](#) But the reverse is also true: God's Word should not be preached to his people without the sacraments to accompany it. The sacraments

function as a sign to illustrate God's grace to us in a way that we can see and feel. They, if administered properly, will not compete with the preaching of the Word but will strengthen the message in the hearts of believers. Again, quoting Ronald Wallace's analysis of John Calvin: When God, under the New Covenant, holds forth Christ to us, offering us in Him "the treasures of heavenly grace", He gives us not only the Word, but also, along with the Word, sacraments or signs, which seal the promise given in the Word and make it more vivid and sure. A sacrament of the New Covenant is a ceremony instituted by Jesus Christ to fulfill the same function as the various signs which were such a marked feature of revelation in the Old Testament. They replace the much more complicated ceremonies which God formerly commanded men to use so that He might make them sure of His promises. Calvin defines a sacrament as "an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promises of good-will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards Him, both before Himself and before angels as well as men". Calvin also gives with approval the definition of Augustine calling the sacrament a "visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace", with a warning that the brevity of this definition tends to make it obscure.[41](#)

## **Objections to Weekly Communion**

So far, we have seen that the sacraments should be administered whenever God's Word is proclaimed to his people in Lord's Day worship. But objections may be raised. For example, this line of reasoning argues that what is needed to accompany preaching is some kind of sign. But the sacraments are more than just signs: they are also seals of the covenant, in the same sense as a seal on an official document. The fact remains, however, that the sacraments are signs and that they function well as signs to accompany preaching. Their other role as seals does not interfere with their role as signs, but only makes them function as signs even better.

Another objection is that won't weekly communion promote sacerdotalism, i. e., a belief that the sacraments are so important that they are necessary for salvation?

Apparently the opposite is true. Many readers who have regularly attended a "Lord's Supper four times a year" Reformed church have, no doubt, noticed a large increase in attendance at worship on Communion Sundays. There are many among those who attend Reformed churches

whose attendance at worship on non-Communion Sundays is sporadic, but who always attend worship on Communion Sundays. Something about the Lord's Supper attracts them to a worship that they normally don't find attractive. If this is because they are seeking a "special grace" in the Lord's Supper that is not found in the preached Word, then their very souls are in danger.

Against this objection that weekly communion will send this wrong message (that the sacraments are necessary for salvation); the response is, only if the preacher allows that to happen. If such a situation ever arose, it could only occur through a failure on the preacher's part to preach sound doctrine.<sup>42</sup> The fault would lie with the preaching, not with the frequency of the sacrament. The biblical teaching on this is that the sacraments are signs and seals to the Word, much like seals on official documents. They have no effect apart from the preached Word and therefore can only be administered whenever the Word is preached.<sup>43</sup> But to deny the necessity of administering the sacraments whenever the Word is preached is to deny the twofold method of revelation (spoken Word and visible sign) that God has used in the past to reveal himself.

Still another objection is, granted all this is true. But weren't people back in the first century A.D. illiterate and in need of signs? Isn't it true that we moderns are more educated and we don't need these signs every week?

People back then were not generally illiterate. Many of the early Christians were converted Jews and were quite literate and, moreover, very familiar with the Old Testament. Moreover, as will be shown shortly in an historical survey of Christian worship, society in general at the time of the Roman Empire was quite literate and provided a great intellectual stimulus to the Church. Interestingly, it was the disruptions caused by the barbarian invasions that caused widespread illiteracy and the loss of weekly communion.<sup>44</sup>

It must be pointed out at this time that the Bible is supposed to be our only source of doctrine and practice. To suggest that we moderns are so highly educated that we no longer need these sacramental signs is to introduce another source of doctrine and practice, namely, our own opinions. The Pharisees used a similar approach when they ignored the explicit commandment "Honor your father and your mother" by teaching that it was okay to divert to God gifts that one's parents deserve. Jesus, in

Mark 7:9-13, condemned such a means of setting aside the authority of God's Word.

There is yet another objection to weekly communion that might be voiced by those with backgrounds in the [Christian Reformed Church \(CRC\)](#). The CRC has long insisted that the liturgical forms for the administration of the sacraments be limited to those forms approved by the CRC Synod. This was done to encourage uniformity throughout the CRC. More important, however, this was done out of a realization that any meddling with the church's liturgy would ultimately influence the church's doctrine. Therefore, the CRC Synod, which has the sole authority within the CRC to approve the adoption of creeds and confessions, also received the sole authority to approve liturgical forms. This situation may strike Presbyterians as strange, since Presbyterianism has traditionally left the adoption of liturgical forms to the elders of each local church.

Until 1981, all the approved CRC liturgical forms for the Lord's Supper were based on a form adopted by the Synod of Dort in the early seventeenth century. These CRC forms, prior to 1981, were long forms that were to be read word for word by the minister without any congregational response, other than the Lord's Prayer and perhaps some hymns. These forms were so long that it could take over twenty minutes for the minister to read aloud the entire text of one of these forms.

Most CRC people, upon hearing that perhaps they should celebrate the Lord's Supper every week, automatically think of having to sit through one of these twenty minute forms, hearing the same sentences spoken word for word every week. The CRC Synod, however, in 1981 approved a new Lord's Supper form that is not only shorter, but also includes much spoken and sung congregational participation. This new form can also be used with some optional seasonal variations to prevent its use from becoming repetitious.<sup>45</sup> This new CRC form was based on a form written by the Roman bishop Hippolytus in the early third century. Hippolytus' form for the Lord's Supper has been the main model for most churches, both Eastern and Western, for developing their own Lord's Supper liturgies. Interestingly, John Calvin was very familiar with Hippolytus' Lord's Supper form. Calvin, in fact, endorsed Hippolytus' form by recommending that the Reformed churches base their Lord's Supper liturgies on it.<sup>46</sup> The use of this 1981 CRC form would eliminate the problems that would be caused by using the older CRC forms every week.

One last objection that may be voiced to weekly communion would be that such frequent use of the Lord's Supper would make the self-examination that Scripture commands in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 impossible. This objection to weekly communion was once voiced at a Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. That Synod ruled that weekly communion did not prevent self-examination and therefore it would be permitted.<sup>47</sup>

### **Further Arguments in Favor of Weekly Communion**

So far, we have seen that God has in the past provided some kind of visible sign to accompany his spoken Word. Today's common practice of not administering the sacraments whenever the Word is preached to God's people breaks this pattern.<sup>48</sup> There are other arguments for weekly communion. Many Reformed theologians have given thought to the question of how often the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. Nearly all Reformed theologians who have studied this matter have concluded that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated every week.

One Reformed theologian, G. C. Berkouwer, discussed this problem of the frequency of the sacraments in one of his books. Essentially, he said that there are some very bad arguments for weekly communion, and some very good ones also. One bad argument he mentioned was this: That is why the problem regarding the frequency of the Lord's Supper can be solved only in the light of the meaning of the Supper. What, ultimately, is the reason for this frequency? It is possible that it [weekly communion - G.R.] is sought because of an incorrect interpretation of the Lord's Supper, if the Supper is seen as an actual communion with Christ which interrupts the life of the pilgrim, making it bearable by providing an oasis of remembrance of the Supper yet to be celebrated. In such a desire for frequency, the blessing of communion with the Lord is devaluated. The desire for frequency then begins to cast shadows which are caused by aridity of faith. Frequency can never be a blessing for the Church if the celebration of the Lord's Supper remains an interruption of spiritless life in which the purpose and the consequences of the Lord's Supper are not understood or experienced. There lurks here a form of mysticism which can only be harmful for the life of Christ's Church.<sup>49</sup>

But Berkouwer, from his writings, seemed in favor of weekly communion. After disposing of one bad argument for weekly communion, he then gives one good argument for it: But it is also possible to speak in

a different manner of the frequency of the Lord's Supper. Calvin did so when he said that the Lord's Supper has not been instituted to be celebrated once a year, but "to be frequently used among all Christians in order that they might frequently return in memory to Christ's Passion, by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith, and urge themselves to sing thanksgiving to God and to proclaim his goodness; finally, by it to nourish mutual love, and among themselves give witness to this love, and discern its bond in the unity of Christ's body" (Inst., IV,XVII,44). Here the seeking of frequency is not based on the contrast between desert and oasis, but on the significance of the Lord's Supper for the weakness of faith and for the communion of the Church and for the continual song of praise in normal life. The decision concerning what Calvin calls 'the frequent use' of the Lord's Supper lies in the nature of the seeking.<sup>50</sup>

We can expect God's Word to lose some of its impact when it is preached to his people without the sacraments being present. As John Calvin put it, "Other comparisons can be adduced to designate the sacraments more plainly; thus we might call them the 'pillars of our faith.' For as a building stands and rests upon its own foundation but is more surely established by columns placed underneath, so faith rests upon the Word of God as a foundation; but when the sacraments are added, it rests more firmly upon them as upon columns."<sup>51</sup> What does this mean for us? It means that churches should observe at least one of the sacraments every Lord's Day to accompany the preaching of the Word. This could be either baptism or the Lord's Supper. For practical reasons, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be celebrated every week.<sup>52</sup> Baptism can also be performed on the same Sundays as the Lord's Supper.

We must reject, however, the notion that the sacraments convey a special grace that is not found in the Word. As Louis Berkhof has noted "Some of the Lutherans claim that a specific grace, differing from that which is wrought by the Word, is conveyed by the sacraments. This is all but universally denied by the Reformed, a few Scottish theologians and Dr. Kuyper forming exceptions to the rule." To this Lutheran idea Berkhof objects "It should be borne in mind, however, that, while the Word can exist and is also complete without the sacraments, the sacraments are never complete without the Word."<sup>53</sup>

It should also be noted that every Christian believer is in need of the fellowship of other Christian believers and the nurture of the church. It is

the responsibility of church elders to discipline and correct church members who may be deficient in their life or doctrine. Those who fail to heed their elder's admonitions are subject to church discipline.

The strongest ecclesiastical sanctions available are suspension from the Lord's Supper and, if further sanctions are necessary, excommunication. The common practice of quarterly communion, however, interferes with Christ's mandate to church elders to maintain discipline. Why is this? If the Lord's Supper is celebrated only four times each year, the church is, in effect, placing all church members under the sanction of suspension from the Lord's Supper the remainder of the year. When the need arises to formally place a church member under suspension, this sanction has little effect if the members in good standing are also temporarily barred from the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, by failing to celebrate the Lord's Supper each week, the elders are (whether they realize it or not) telling church members that the Lord's Supper is neither important nor necessary.

The church can expect some positive changes resulting from a change to a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. By including the celebration of the Lord's Supper with the proclamation of the Word in worship every Lord's Day, God's Word will make a greater impression on the hearts of believers. This will in turn produce greater joy and faith within believers. It will also produce a greater willingness among believers to take up Christian service. And since the Lord's Supper can only be celebrated in corporate worship, individual believers will gain a greater appreciation of the body of believers through weekly Communion. Moreover, since the administration of the Lord's Supper to individual believers can be withheld by the elders, a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper will produce greater respect toward the elders and a strengthening of church discipline.

## **Recapitulation**

This concludes our brief survey of biblical teaching on worship. We have learned the following:

1. Worship involves humbling ourselves and performing service to God in the way he has prescribed. Worship often includes praise.
2. We are to do in worship all that God has commanded and not add anything to it. In Reformed churches, this is known as the "Regulative Principle of Worship."

3. The Bible prescribes an order, or liturgy, in worship: confession of sin, consecration and then communion (or fellowship with God). We do not do anything in worship that is not done as a response to God's call. Therefore, worship should begin with a call to worship.
4. Our worship on earth should imitate the worship practiced in heaven. This means that our worship on earth should be structured, planned, antiphonal and responsorial. Worship demands active congregational participation. Worship is done by God's people as a command performance for the King of kings. Worship should include the proclamation of the Word (preaching) and the sacraments.
5. The sacraments should be administered in worship every Lord's Day, to accompany the preaching of the Word.

## Historical Survey

Let us now conclude our study of worship with a short study of its history and development. This historical study will concentrate on the issue of form versus freedom (liturgical versus unstructured worship) and the frequency of the Lord's Supper.

Historians agree that early Christian worship was based upon, and similar to, synagogue worship.<sup>54</sup> The Bible gives a brief account of synagogue worship in Luke 4:16-30. We are told that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue every Sabbath. This one Sabbath, Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah to read. Jesus stood up to read a section from it, sat down, and then began his sermon. (By this standing up, then sitting down action, Jesus made a distinction between reading the Word and preaching the Word.)

We know from historical sources that synagogue worship also included praise (the reciting of Psalms) and prayer.<sup>55</sup> Synagogue worship thus had four components: prayer, praise, and the reading and preaching of Scripture.

The New Testament gives us additional information on early Christian worship. Acts 2:42 mentions that the disciples gathered daily for "the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." The "breaking of bread" mentioned may have been the Lord's Supper (it could also have been a fellowship meal). 1 Corinthians 11-14 gives instructions for worship. These instructions dealt with matters of prayer, the Lord's Supper and spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues and prophesying. Because of Paul's mention of charismatic gifts,

many today get the impression here that worship back then was free and unstructured. Paul's instructions concerning the Lord's Supper, however, hint toward some structure in their worship.

The Apostle John received the vision in the first century that became the basis of the book of Revelation.<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, the worship that he saw in heaven was very much structured and organized.

Therefore, there seems to have been some elements of both structure and no structure (both form and freedom) in New Testament worship. These two tendencies probably coexisted side by side. There is no evidence, however, that New Testament worship was entirely unstructured.

Historical records suggest that Christian worship was very much structured during the first several centuries after Christ: The suppositions that primitive is pure, and that life starts simple and complexifies, are evolutionary. Evolution says that chaos generates life. Therefore, the random state of matter must be achieved before new life appears.

In philosophy, we call this irrationalism. In psychology, the irrational is expressed in the emotional. Therefore, Wellhausen [Julius Wellhausen - a famous nineteenth century scholar who taught that religious worship always starts simple but becomes loaded with ritual over the years - G.R.] leads us to believe that the early church did not have any set forms. They depended on the Spirit, which is contrary to form, and had a purer expression of the whole man. He was able to pour forth an emotional response to God because there was no ritual to suppress him.

Records of early Christian practices do not confirm Wellhausen's presuppositions. Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan, "It was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god: and . . . they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. After this was done their custom was to depart, and to meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food; and even this (they said) they had given up after my edict, by which accordance with your commands I had forbidden the existence of clubs."

It is obvious that the early Christians were binding themselves in some kind of covenant ceremony. They used the Ten Commandments. Not

only does this tell us something about their view of the Law of God and its application for Christians, it points out a ritual in the early church.

Hippolytus, a Roman Bishop, wrote in A.D. 210 that he wanted the bishops to return to the form of worship that was observed in Apostolic times. He was bothered by new innovations entering the Church. He wrote a form which has been the main model for the church. The following is a section on the Lord's Supper.

Let the deacons present to him, the bishop, the oblations and let him, laying his hands on them with all the presbytery, give thanks and say: The Lord be with you.

And let all say:

And with your Spirit.

Bishop: Lift up your hearts.

All: We have, to the Lord.

Bishop: Let us give thanks to the Lord.

All: Worthy and right.

And let him continue thus:

We give thanks, O God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in these last days you have sent to us a Savior and Redeemer and Messenger of your will, who is your inseparable Word, through whom you created all things, and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of the Virgin, and who dwelt in her womb and was made man and shown to be your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin.

When he had accomplished your will and gained for you a holy people, he stretched forth his hands to suffer, that by his passion he might set free those who have trusted in you.

When he was betrayed to his freely chosen passion, that he might destroy death and break the chains of the devil and tread hell underfoot and enlighten the righteous and fix the limit and manifest the resurrection, he took bread and, giving thanks to you said: Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you.

Likewise also the cup, saying: This is my blood which is shed for you. Whenever you do this you make my memorial.

Remembering therefore his death and resurrection, we offer you the bread and cup, giving thanks to you that you have made us worthy to stand before you and minister to you.

And we ask that you send your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy church, that all who partake of these holy things being gathered into one may be filled with the Holy Spirit, for the strengthening of their faith in the truth, that we may praise and glorify you through your child Jesus Christ, through whom to you be glory and honor, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in your holy church, now and forever.

Amen.

Therefore, the early Church had ritual, and the notion that the early Church's worship was simple — that is — erratic, is pure mythology and wishful thinking. This kind of thinking grows out of a basic evolutionary presupposition that chaotic worship is the purest.[57](#)

The evidence suggests that second century worship was highly structured and organized. Hippolytus, writing as an old man in the early third century, wrote that he could remember as a child being taught to worship the way the apostles taught. If what Hippolytus wrote was true, apostolic worship also was highly structured and organized. By the way, the reader may note the similarity between Hippolytus' form for the Lord's Supper and the Christian Reformed form found on pages 973-975 of the 1987 edition of the [Psalter Hymnal](#).

Christian worship remained largely unchanged the next few centuries. The "normal" Sunday service during this period had both the preaching of the Word and the Lord's Supper. But after the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire, everything fell apart. We are still feeling the effects within the church today:

The barbarians followed their chiefs submissively into the fold of the church, which was thereby enabled to continue to work for a christian society. But that did not in fact make them responsible christians. Their mass-movements into christianity or from Arianism to orthodoxy did not betoken any sort of change of heart. Instead, many of them began to add the vices of the decadent provincial populations with which they were now mingling to the unthinking brutalities of the healthy savage. It is only when one has studied the depressing literature of the Penitentials or manuals for confessors; or the horrible domestic annals of the Merovingian princes with their monotonous record of parricides, adulteries, casual murders and unending civil wars; or the history of the Lombard wars; all of which present us with a practical view of the human material with which the church then had to work — it is only then that one understands the reason for the rigorist spirit in which the church of the dark ages approached the question

of preparation for communion. It may have been the wrong line to adopt, but the alternative is not easy to contemplate. The sordidness of conduct in those times has to be studied to be believed.

One may, of course, blame the church for accepting these mass-conversions in the fifth and sixth centuries. Certainly the standard of instruction and of sincerity required was much lower than it had been in the fourth. But again one must remember that the church's own resources for giving instruction had been immensely decreased by the very catastrophes which increased the need for it. The decline of the schools in the West was one of the first consequences of the barbarian invasions; there was no longer a large well-educated class from which an intelligent clergy could be recruited. Such intellectual life as remained the church had now to provide for the world, instead of — as in the fourth century — the educated world providing a constant stimulus and material for the church. The conversion of the barbarians could not, indeed, have been brought about by intellectual processes; it had to be the work of sheer faithfulness and goodness by men of God, like Martin and Patrick and Remigius and Boniface, who were wise but not learned. To have refused the mass-conversions when they came would have been not only impossible but wrong. The barbarians were everywhere the masters of the situation. To have excluded them from the church if they were willing to enter it would have been to close the only door to any bettering of the conditions.[58](#)

When the barbarians invaded, they wanted to be baptized and to join the church. Morally and spiritually however, they were just as depraved as before. The church was in no position to deny them baptism, but it clearly could not give them the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, weekly communion largely disappeared.

It is only when we bear in mind this situation of a very large proportion of the laity from the fifth century onwards that the history of lay communion becomes really intelligible. So we find in the sermons of S. Caesarius of Arles c. A.D. 500-530 a curious contradiction. He makes strong appeals to the laity to come more often to communion, but there are other indications that he really does doubt whether a lot of them ought to. He has vigorous denunciations of open evil living among those who do not come to communion; there is a continual firm insistence on the need of penitence before communicating — and it is a practical penitence which will do something towards amendment of life at once. The Council of Agde (A.D. 506) at which he presided, felt bound to be content with the statement

that those who will not communicate at least at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost 'are not to be accounted catholics'. Even this standard was found to be too high, and later Gallican councils are content with the rule of once a year at Easter. At Rome itself the tradition of a general communion of the people on all Sundays and great feasts persisted in the eighth century, and even in the eleventh century Roman clergy brought up in the urban tradition like Pope Gregory VII were still encouraging the laity to frequent communion. With the retention of the people's communion, Rome still retained the rite of the people's offering of bread and wine, and the general sense that the eucharist was a corporate rite.

Elsewhere in the West holy communion became practically a clerical and monastic monopoly after the fifth century. The position improved in the twelfth century, and frequent communion for all was at least recognized as theoretically desirable by thirteenth century theologians like S. Thomas and S. Bonaventura, though with some hesitation as to those for whom it is helpful. Again one feels the difficulty arising from the recognition of the great mass of nominal christianity which comes to church. From that time on, monthly, weekly and in some cases daily communion for devout layfolk is by no means unknown. But it is clear from a good many incidents in the lives of the saints that right down to the sixteenth century the mere fact of frequency was apt to arouse suspicion of extravagance or illuminism. It remained true, broadly speaking, of even later mediaeval religion, that the priest as such was normally the only communicant.<sup>59</sup> The lasting legacy of the barbarian invasion of the Roman Empire was the loss of weekly communion. This loss continued up to the Reformation and continues, within Protestantism, today.

This lack of weekly communion within Protestantism was not the intent of the Reformers. Almost all of them (Zwingli being the one notable exception) wanted to reinstate weekly communion. John Calvin, for example, firmly believed that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated every Lord's Day:

Most studies of Calvin indicate that he favored weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, even though he had to accept a compromise of monthly communion in Strasbourg and quarterly in Geneva.

It is ironic that on this issue most Reformed denominations that boast of their Calvinistic orthodoxy ignore Calvin completely. Usually the matter is not even discussed, and a false traditionalism dictates quarterly communion. Considering Calvin's weighty biblical and theological

arguments, his spiritual descendants would do well to follow the teaching of their master.[60](#)

And as another modern scholar has pointed out: Are Reformed churches Zwinglian or Calvinist in their understanding of the Lord's Supper? Ronald Wells, in a Banner article some years ago, argued convincingly that both understandings coexist within the Christian Reformed Church, but not without tension. Given limitations of space, it is impossible to discuss the differing viewpoints in any detail. In general, however, it may be said that Calvin's view of the sacrament was more exalted than that of Zwingli.

For Zwingli the Lord's Supper was neither a means of grace nor an integral part of the worship service. In fact, he recommended that it be celebrated only four times a year. His primary emphasis was on the Lord's Supper as a memorial feast, and if Christ were present at all, he was, as Locher puts it, present through the memory and in his divine nature only. In Zurich the sacrament was distributed to the communicants while they sat in their seats.

By contrast, Calvin viewed the Lord's Supper as a means of grace and as an integral part of the weekly worship service. In the sacrament the whole Christ, divine and human, was spiritually present among his people. Communicants in Calvin's Geneva came forward to receive the elements at the "holy table" and received them either kneeling or standing.

Calvin's plans for weekly communion, as we know, never received the approval of the Geneva city council. Rather, the council, clearly influenced by the Zwinglian practices of surrounding Reformed cities, allowed the Lord's Supper to be celebrated only four times per year. As William Maxwell puts it, Calvin was forced because of civic interference to accept "a practice he abhorred."

Little has changed since Calvin. Few Reformed churches today celebrate the sacrament weekly, as Calvin desired. Instead, infrequent communion, as recommended by Zwingli, seems to be the norm. It is equally rare in Reformed churches today for communicants to come forward to the "holy table" to receive the elements. The Zwinglian "sitting communion" has become the rule. As to the meaning of the Lord's Supper, I would venture that the memorial emphasis of Zwingli is more common, though not universal. It appears that on the whole the Zwinglian branch of the Reformed tradition has overwhelmed the Calvinist branch in the area of the Lord's Supper.[61](#)

The Reformers were largely unsuccessful in their efforts to restore weekly communion. This their goal violated centuries of tradition that the people had grown accustomed to and the people didn't want it. Curiously, the Roman Catholic Church was successful in reinstating a weekly Mass at this time, as part of the Counter-Reformation, an effort to lure Protestants back into the church of Rome.

The Reformers themselves therefore tried hard to retain a central importance and meaning for the eucharist in christian worship. But in every case they failed to carry their followers with them. Throughout the churches of the Reformation the eucharist rapidly assumed the position of an occasional addition to a worship which ordinarily consisted only of praises, prayers, exhortation and reading, somewhat similar to that which the primitive church had considered suitable for the catechumens at the synaxis [preaching service - G.R.].[62](#)

## **Conclusion**

Scripture tells us that Christian worship should be planned, structured, responsorial, and antiphonal. Worship should follow the sequence of (1) confession of sin, (2) consecration, and (3) communion, or fellowship, with God. This requires a set order of worship. Scripture also says that the sacraments should be administered every time the Word is preached in worship — that is, every Sunday. May the church worldwide see this and may it reform its worship practices along biblical principles.

## **Endnotes**

1 This and all subsequent Scripture passages are quoted from the New International Version.

2 Harry Boonstra, "With Reservations: A Review of three influential books on the Praise and Worship movement." *Reformed Worship*, Number 20 (June 1991), page 37. This method of interpreting Scripture argues that just because praise is mentioned in Psalm 95, and worship mentioned later in that same Psalm, that they are therefore two different things and that praise must always precede worship. This method breaks down, however, when applied elsewhere in the Psalms. Using this method, one could argue, based on Psalm 100:4, that not only are thanksgiving and praise two different things but that thanksgiving must always precede praise. Yet Psalm 69:30, according to this method, would teach that praise must always precede thanksgiving. Any method of interpreting Scripture that

results in contradictory conclusions when applied to different Scripture passages is not a valid method of interpreting Scripture.

3 James A. DeJong, *Into His Presence*. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1985, pages 14-15.

4 All Reformed churches, at least in their official written doctrinal statements, hold to the Regulative Principle of Worship. They often differ, however, on the proper application of it. For example, consider the [Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America \("Covenanter"\)](#). The RPCNA does not allow the use of musical instruments in worship, nor does it allow the singing of any songs in worship other than the 150 Psalms. It maintains that this alone is the proper application of the Regulative Principle of Worship. In contrast, the [Orthodox Presbyterian Church](#) permits both instruments and songs other than the 150 Psalms. Both churches profess adherence to the Regulative Principle of Worship, but differ on the proper application of it.

5 Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, [1931] 1983, vol. 3 page 343.

6 Rev. G. W. Williard, translator, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*. Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, no date, page 517.

7 *Ibid.*, pages 523-524. "Will-worship" is the worshipping of God in the manner we will, not the way God wills.

8 Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*. Tyler, Texas: Geneva Divinity School Press, [1953] 1982, pages 250-252.

9 Frank J. Smith, "What is Worship?" in David Lachman and Frank J. Smith, editors, *Worship in the Presence of God*. Greenville, S.C.: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992, pages 15-16. The author attributed this illustration to David Kiester, a minister in the [Orthodox Presbyterian Church](#).

10 E. F. Harrison, "Holiness, Holy." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, volume 2 page 725.)

11 Reformed scholars have ably defended the Regulative Principle of Worship and have ably defended our practice of including in worship the proclamation of the Word, congregational singing, the taking of offerings, prayer, and the sacraments. I believe, however, that many Reformed leaders are content to do nothing more than parrot what the Reformers and the creeds taught three and four hundred years ago. We should not be content with that: we should move forward and be a Reformed church that

is constantly reforming. We now have the fruits of over three hundred more years of Bible study than the Reformers had. We should be in a position to add to their teachings, while not contradicting them. This includes their teachings on worship.

To my knowledge, apart from James B. Jordan, whom I quote extensively in this paper, only one Reformed leader has ever examined the question of whether Scripture demands a particular order of worship. That leader is the Canadian Reformed writer G. Vandooren (*The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*. Winnipeg: Premier, 1980, pp. 21-22). Vandooren's study is a valuable contribution to an otherwise barren discussion of the proper order of worship. Unfortunately, I cannot recommend his work. Vandooren's most notable problem is his almost total lack of direct appeal to Scripture. Instead, he builds his arguments almost entirely on the Dutch Reformed traditions and the Heidelberg Catechism.

Speaking of the Catechism, it does not (despite what Vandooren may say) outline a specific order of worship but only the elements of worship. For proof of this, the Catechism's co-author, Zacharias Ursinus, discussed only the elements of worship, not the order of worship in his commentary on the Catechism (Williard, *op. cit.*, pp. 557-574). If the Catechism's authors had meant to include teaching on the proper order of worship in this Catechism, Ursinus surely would have mentioned it in his commentary on this Catechism.

We must look elsewhere for a proper biblical order of worship. Besides, some of Vandooren's conclusions (such as objecting to administering the Sacrament of Baptism before the sermon) are debatable.

12 As an interesting aside, Josephus recorded an incident where a priest during the intertestamental period constructed a temple in Egypt that was a copy of the Jerusalem temple and offered sacrifices. That priest cited this verse as a defense of his actions. This temple and its sacrificial ceremonies survived several centuries until finally destroyed by the Romans in the first century A.D. (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 13 Chapter 3, and *Wars of the Jews*, Book 1 Chapter 1 and Book 7 Chapter 10. Printed in William Whiston, translator, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, no date, pages 269-270, 429, and 603-604.) Whether that temple was a fulfillment of this prophecy is open to debate, but has no bearing on the subject of this paper.

13 Zephaniah 3:10 may be an Old Covenant prophecy of New Covenant worship. If so, here New Covenant worship is spoken of as making Mosaic

sacrifices and offerings. For evidence that Zephaniah 3:10 may be speaking of the New Covenant, verse 13 says "The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid." Such language sounds like New Covenant language. Many believe that Ezekiel 40-48 also speaks of New Covenant worship. For examples, see The New Bible Commentary Revised p. 684 or the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 2 pages 466-467. It is my opinion, however, that Ezekiel 40-48 is not referring to New Covenant worship, but to Hebrew worship between the Exile and Pentecost. On this point, I agree with James B.

Jordan's argumentation (Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World. Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1988, pp. 241-256).

14 The regular, daily morning and evening sacrifices were termed "burnt offerings" in Numbers 28:3, though they used lambs instead of the bull, ram, or bird customary for the burnt offering (Chart entitled "Old Testament Sacrifices," op. cit.).

15 It is possible to speak of one other sacrifice: Deuteronomy 16 speaks of the annual Passover meal as a sacrifice.

16 Numbers 15 specified that grain and drink offerings were to be added to all the other offerings as soon as the Israelites entered the promised land. The wave offering, likewise sometimes accompanied the other offerings.

17 Numbers 29:39 specified that, in addition to whatever offerings might be prescribed for each appointed sacred holiday; freewill, burnt, grain, drink, and fellowship offerings were to be added. The precise order, however, was not specified here. Presumably the same order was to be used as specified for other occasions.

18 Numbers chapters 28 and 29 do not say what order, if any, was prescribed for the sacrifices for the various feasts mentioned therein. These two chapters mention what sacrifices were to be used, but not their order. As mentioned previously, what the priests probably did was follow the same order as prescribed for the other occasions.

19 Likewise, this passage does not clearly indicate which sacrifice was to be offered first.

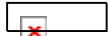
20 This passage, too, does not indicate the order the sacrifices were offered.

21 Just because there is one exception to what appears to be a pattern in Scripture does not necessarily invalidate that apparent pattern. The pattern

may be valid and the one exception to that pattern may be intended to teach us something else.

22 Why the Feast of Weeks followed a different order than the other occasions is a difficult question to answer. It may be that the Feast of Weeks was different in character than the other worship occasions. The Feast of Weeks was a festival of joy which included offerings of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. According to Samuel Henry Kellogg, the meal offering used during the Feast of Weeks was different than the meal offering ordinarily used: "It should be brought out of their habitations and be baked with leaven. In both particulars, it was unlike the ordinary meal-offerings, because the offering was to represent the ordinary food of the people. Accompanied with a sevenfold burnt-offering, and a sin-offering, and two lambs of peace-offerings, these were to be waved before the Lord for their acceptance, after the manner of the wave-sheaf (vv. 18-20). On the altar they could not come, because they were baked with leaven." (S. H. Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus*. Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, [1899] 1978, page 460.)

Keil and Delitzsch noted that the emphasis on the Feast of Weeks was consecration. This may explain why, on this one occasion, the burnt offering preceded the other offerings. "The circumstance, that not only was a more bountiful burnt-offering prescribed than in the offerings of the dedicatory sheaf at the commencement of harvest (ver. 12), but a sin-offering and peace-offering also, is to be attributed to the meaning of the festival itself, as a feast of thanksgiving for the rich blessing of God that had just been gathered in. The sin-offering was to excite the feeling and consciousness of sin on the part of the congregation of Israel, that whilst eating their daily leavened bread they might not serve the leaven of their old nature, but seek and implore from the Lord their God the forgiveness and cleansing away of their sin. Through the increased burnt-offering they were to give practical expression to their gratitude for the blessing of harvest, by a strengthened consecration and sanctification of all the members of the whole man to the service of the Lord; whilst through the peace-offering they entered into that fellowship of peace with the Lord to which they were called, and which they were eventually to enjoy through His blessing in their promised inheritance. In this way the whole of the year's harvest was placed under the gracious blessing of the Lord by the sanctification of its commencement and its close; and the enjoyment of their daily food was also sanctified thereby. For the sake of this inward connection, the laws



concerning the wave-sheaf and the wave-loaves are bound together into one whole; and by this connection, which was established by reckoning the time for the feast of Weeks from the day of the dedication of the sheaf, the two feasts were linked together into an internal unity. The Jews recognised this unity from the very earliest times, and called the feast of Pentecost Azereth (Greek, ), because it was the close of the seven weeks (see at ver. 36: Josephus, Ant. iii. 10). - Ver. 21. On this day a holy meeting was to be held, and laborious work to be suspended, just as on the first and seventh days of Mazzoth. This was to be maintained as a statute for ever (see ver. 14). It was not sufficient, however, to thank the Lord for the blessing of harvest by a feast of thanksgiving to the Lord, but they were not to forget the poor and distressed when gathering in their harvest. To indicate this, the law laid down in chap. xix. 9, 10 is repeated in ver. 22." (Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: Volume 1 The Pentateuch, Three Volumes in One. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, volume II, pages 443-444.)

One comment needs to be made concerning the available reference works consulted while writing this paper. I had no trouble finding reference works dealing with the meaning and symbolism and even the number of the various sacrifices prescribed for each occasion. I was, however, both surprised and appalled at the lack of reference material available concerning the order of sacrifices. And this includes material available in theological seminary libraries. This situation I believe betrays a lack of proper interest in biblical worship by church leaders and Christian scholars over the years. It is my opinion that if the organized church had a proper interest in conducting public worship according to biblical principles, a greater amount of research would have been done concerning the order of the Old Testament sacrifices. A thesis or dissertation on the prescribed order of the Old Testament sacrifices might make a good project for a bright graduate student in theology.

23 Chart entitled "Old Testament Sacrifices," The NIV Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985, p. 150.

24 Jordan, James B. Worship at Westminster. Tyler, Texas: Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1985, pages 12-13. This is a booklet that was designed to explain that church's worship practices to its members and visitors.

25 Ibid., pages 11-12.

26 Philip Carrington, "The Levitical Symbolism in Revelation," which appeared as an appendix on pages 593-611 in David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1987). This essay was first published in Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of Revelation*. (London: SPCK, 1931). Old Testament religion was highly ritualized (what we, today, might call "high-church"). To properly understand the Old Testament religion, and some parts of the New Testament that repeat Old Testament themes (such as Revelation), one must be familiar with the Old Testament rituals.

27 Ibid., pages 593-594.

28 Ibid., page 594. Carrington also noted that Revelation lays out an entire Lord's Supper liturgy. He noted that Revelation provides "a scheme or pattern for Christian worship. . . The 'Anaphora,' as the consecration prayer of the Eucharist is called in the East, follows the pattern he laid down. The 'Canon' of the Roman Mass and the Consecration Prayer of the English Prayer Book do so, though less faithfully." (Ibid., page 594.)

This helps us determine the legitimacy, based on the Regulative Principle of Worship, of the common practice of many churches of beginning the Lord's Supper liturgy with the phrase spoken by the minister, "Lift up your hearts" (in Latin, this is *Sursum Corda*). John Calvin recommended the retention of this phrase, which was present in the old Roman Catholic liturgy, for a proper biblical and Reformed understanding of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. This phrase, according to Calvin, would be a constant reminder that Christ's bodily presence, contrary to Roman Catholic and Lutheran teaching, will not be here on earth until his second coming at the end of history. This phrase will instead remind Christians that we must ascend to heaven to be bodily present with Christ. (Wallace, op. cit., pages 204-210.) In fact, Calvin taught that at this point in the liturgy, the church is caught up into heaven and joins the congregation worshipping around God's throne. "The minds of the participants in the Supper must be continually roused out of this fatal downward propensity [of fixing the participant's attention on the elements and not on Christ - G. R.]. That is why Calvin mentions with approval the custom of the ancient Fathers previous to the consecration of the elements of calling aloud upon the people to lift up their hearts - 'Sursum Corda' - so that the minds of the people should not 'stop at the visible sign'. 'It is a foolish and destructive madness to draw Him down from heaven by any carnal consideration, so as to seek Him upon earth. Up, then, with our hearts, that they may be with

the Lord!' It is obvious that Calvin feels that his doctrine is in line with true Catholic practice as embodied in the central act of the ancient liturgical custom." (Ibid., page 229.)

As Carrington has pointed out (Chilton, op. cit., page 611), the Lord's Supper liturgy present in Revelation starts with Jesus' instruction "Come up here" (Revelation 4:1). The minister's instruction "Lift up your hearts" is simply a paraphrase of Jesus' words "Come up here." This shows that the use of the Sursum Corda in the Lord's Supper liturgy has biblical warrant. All Christian Reformed liturgical forms for the Lord's Supper (as of early 1993) include some form of the Sursum Corda. These include forms based on the form developed at the Synod of Dort in the early seventeenth century. The Sursum Corda appears in the oldest of these English language Christian Reformed forms (the so-called "Form Number 1") as "That we, then, may be nourished with Christ, the true heavenly bread, let us not cling with our hearts unto the external bread and wine but lift them up on high in heaven, where Christ Jesus is, our Advocate, at the right hand of His heavenly Father, whither also the articles of our Christian faith direct us; not doubting that we shall be nourished and refreshed in our souls, with His body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as truly as we receive the holy bread and drink in remembrance of Him." ("Liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church." Psalter Hymnal. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1976, pages 146-147.)

29 Chilton, op. cit., page 597. As I stated in a previous footnote, it is my opinion that Ezekiel 40-48 describes worship in the intertestamental period, not New Covenant worship.

30 Ibid., page 610.

31 Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse*. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, [1949] 1970, page 7.

32 Ibid., page 21.

33 Ibid., page 349.

34 Ibid., page 103.

35 Ibid., page 349.

36 Louis Berkhof got more specific: "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God." (*Italics in the original*). (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic*

Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1939, 1941] 1979, page 616).

Interestingly, Berkhof recognized the value of the sacraments in helping believers express their faith and increasing their allegiance to God. Ronald Wallace offered still another definition: "A sacrament of the New Covenant is a ceremony instituted by Jesus Christ to fulfil the same function as the various signs which were such a marked feature of revelation in the Old Testament." (Wallace, op. cit., page 133).

37 Berkhof, op. cit., pages 618-619.

38 I am indebted to James B. Jordan for pointing this out. This was presented in an address he gave, and in an accompanying handout, at the first annual Geneva Conference held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tyler, Texas in January 1983. It was Jordan's opinion, as expressed in that handout, that this "word and sign" method (Jordan used the term "bipolarity") that God has used to reveal himself did not result from an effort on God's part to adapt his method of revelation to our weaknesses. Jordan stated his belief that this was simply an expression of God's triune nature. Since God is one God in three Persons, he has characteristics of both unity and diversity. Since God has a characteristic of diversity, it is not surprising that God has chosen this "bipolar" method of revelation and not relied solely on one channel, the spoken Word. But since God also has a characteristic of unity, the content of the message comes through only one of these channels. The second channel (sign) merely illustrates and reinforces the message sent in the first channel (spoken Word).

As the reader may notice in subsequent discussion on this topic in the main body of text, Jordan's view differs slightly from that of John Calvin. Calvin, too, believed that God revealed himself in this "bipolar" method. But Calvin also believed that this method of revelation resulted from an effort on God's part to adapt his method of revealing himself to our weaknesses, not from any characteristic of his triune nature.

39 Wallace, op. cit., page 71. Wallace also mentioned that the "symbol by which God signifies His presence need not be a concrete earthly object. God can symbolise His presence equally well by means of a vision or a dream." (page 5).

40 "It follows that a sacrament can never be celebrated without at least a clear repetition of the command of Christ to which it owes its origin, and of the promise of Christ in the hope of which the Church fulfills His ordinance. 'There is never a sacrament without an antecedent promise, the sacrament

being added as a kind of appendix, with a view to confirming and sealing the promise.' Calvin calls the sacraments 'appendages to the Gospel'. Apart from the Word, which must always be proclaimed alongside them, the sacraments are 'nothing in themselves, just as if seals of a diploma or a public deed are nothing in themselves, and would be affixed to no purpose if nothing was written on the parchment'. Calvin approves of the saying of Augustine that 'the elements only become sacraments when the Word is added', and himself adds the comment, 'Certainly if a man only brings his eyes and shuts his ears they will differ in no respect from the profane rites of the heathen'. Christ delayed His own Baptism till the day when His preaching began, so that it might not be imagined by anyone that the sign of Baptism could have any validity without the Word. 'This was also the reason why He delayed His Baptism till the thirtieth year of His age. Baptism was an appendage to the Gospel (*accessio evangelii*); and therefore it began at the same time as the preaching of the Gospel.'" Ibid., page 135.

41 Ibid., page 133.

42 Knowing what passes for preaching in some "Reformed" churches, it is quite possible for the scenario mentioned in the previous paragraph to occur.

43 This is why the Reformed churches have always insisted that only ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacrament may administer the sacraments. To allow the laity to administer the sacraments would all but guarantee that they would not be administered with the required preaching of the Word. Against the objection that the preached Word cannot have any effect in infant baptism (that is, the infant cannot understand the Word when he or she is baptized), the fact is that the parents and the congregation hear the Word during the baptismal service. Often, during such services, the parents and the congregation vow to bring up the child in a Christian manner and, in doing so, will influence that child's life.

44 One might argue that it was the loss of weekly communion that contributed to the sad state of the Church in the Middle Ages and a corresponding rise in superstition and magic. Here is another suggestion for a graduate research topic for a theological student.

45 This form, without the seasonal variations, appeared in the back of the 1987 edition of the Psalter Hymnal (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1987, pages 972-975) as the Lord's Supper section of the "Service of Word and Sacrament." The seasonal variations appeared in the Acts of Synod

1981 (Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981, pages 292-308) and the Service Book (Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981, part 3).

46 Calvin made numerous references to the phrase, spoken by the officiant, "Lift up your hearts" (in Latin, *Sursum Corda*) that began Hippolytus' Lord's Supper form. Calvin recommended the use of this phrase in any Reformed Lord's Supper liturgy as a reminder to the people that Christ is not bodily present on earth at this time and they therefore should not think of the sacramental bread and wine as being or containing the literal body and blood of Christ. (Wallace, *op. cit.*, page 229).

Hippolytus' Lord's Supper form appears within his book, *The Apostolic Tradition*. An excerpt from Hippolytus' Lord's Supper form follows later within the main text of this paper.

This criticism of the traditional CRC Lord's Supper forms is not to imply that they are inferior. They surpass Hippolytus' form in some respects, such as self-examination. However, their frequent use diminishes the impact of their distinctive message. Churches that adopt a policy of weekly communion may wish to use some form based on Hippolytus most weeks and use the traditional CRC Lord's Supper forms only occasionally (perhaps, four times a year).

47 The Synod of 1973 of the Christian Reformed Church received two appeals of a decision of one CRC classis. (A classis is a regional body, what some other churches call a presbytery or a district.) Earlier, a group of CRC people from various churches had asked one classis to recognize them as a distinct congregation. One reason they gave for their desire to organize as a new congregation was their desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper every week. Their old churches had refused to celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly. This classis granted their request and recognized them as a distinct congregation within the Christian Reformed Church.

Several groups had strong objections to that classis' action. They sent appeals to the Synod of 1973 asking Synod to overturn that classis' decision. Their main objection to the formation of this new congregation was their plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper every week. These groups claimed that such a frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper would make impossible the self-examination that Scripture demands and would also violate the Church Order.

Synod ruled on the appeals and ruled in favor of the classis. Besides stating that this classis was a better judge of the issues involved than

Synod, the Synod also ruled that there was nothing inherent in weekly communion that violated the Church Order nor the Scriptural command for self-examination. (Acts of Synod 1973. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1973, pages 49, 749-752.) Speaking on a practical level, a time of self-examination can easily be included within the liturgy of churches that celebrate the Lord's Supper every week. This can be done by including it within the Confession of Sins and the Assurance of Forgiveness that should be present near the beginning of every Lord's Day worship service.

48 Pentecostalism, in its various forms, holds a continued attraction for many in Reformed churches. This attraction might be from the "signs and wonders" the Pentecostals claim to exercise. By providing God's appointed signs, the sacraments, frequently in worship, the Reformed churches could probably slow or stop these defections to Pentecostalism.

49 G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Sacraments*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969, page 242.

50 *Ibid.*, page 242.

51 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, IV.XIV.6, page 1281. It would be incorrect, however, to conclude that the sacraments are indispensable: "the Word being indispensable, while the sacraments are not." (Berkhof, *op. cit.*, page 616).

52 John Calvin realized this (theological reasons), and he fought strenuously to have the Lord's Supper celebrated every Sunday in his church in Geneva. He was not the "dictator" or "Ayatollah" of his church, however, and he did not get his way. "The image of Calvin as the 'dictator of Geneva' bears no relation to the known facts of history." (Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*. Basil Blackwell. Quoted in Donald K. McKim, "Calvin and His Times", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 35 No. 12 (October 28, 1991), page 61.) Most Reformed churches follow the practice of the reformer Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich, who recommended that the Lord's Supper be celebrated only four times each year. To Zwingli, the Lord's Supper was nothing more than a memorial feast for an absent friend. The Reformed churches, officially, teach Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper (in their creeds), yet they in effect deny it when they follow Zwingli's advice on the frequency of the Sacrament.

Calvin himself wrote about the practice of observing the Lord's Supper only once a year, another custom common to his time: "Not unjustly, then, did I complain at the outset that this custom was thrust in by the devil's artifice, which, in prescribing one day a year, renders men slothful all the rest of the year." (Calvin, *op. cit.*, IV.XVII.46, page 1424).

53 Berkhof, *op. cit.*, page 616.

54 Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, pages 51-52.

55 *Ibid.*, page 51-52.

56 For a defense of a first century authorship of Revelation, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*. Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989.

57 Ray R. Sutton, "The Saturday Night Church and the Liturgical Nature of Man." in James B. Jordan, editor, *Christianity and Civilization IV: The Reconstruction of the Church*. Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1985, pages 182-184. The Emperor Trajan's reign began in A.D. 98. The letter to him here cited from Pliny the Younger is dated at A.D. 113 (Gentry, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 279, and 297). Hippolytus' form for the Lord's Supper is from his book, *The Apostolic Tradition*.

58 Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*. New York: Seabury, [1945] 1982, pages 595-596.

59 *Ibid.*, pages 597-598.

60 Harry Boonstra, "What Does Geneva Have to Say to the CRC?" *The Banner*. Vol. 119 No. 39 (October 29, 1984), page 13.

61 Frank C. Roberts, "Ulrich Zwingli, Father of the Reformed Churches." *The Banner*. Vol. 119 No. 39 (October 29, 1984), pages 9-10.

62 Dix, *op. cit.*, page 600.

## **Bibliography**

Acts of Synod 1973. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1973.

Acts of Synod 1981. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981.

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1939, 1941] 1979.

Berkouwer, G. C. *Studies in Dogmatics: The Sacraments*. Translated by Hugo Bekker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.

- Boonstra, Harry. "What Does Geneva Have to Say to the CRC?" *The Banner*. Vol. 119 No. 39 (October 29, 1984).
- . "With Reservations: A Review of three influential books on the Praise and Worship movement." *Reformed Worship*. Number 20 (June 1991).
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Two volumes. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- Chilton, David. *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1987
- DeJong, James A. *Into His Presence*. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1985.
- Dix, Dom Gregory. *The Shape of the Liturgy*. New York: Seabury, [1945] 1982.
- Farrer, Austin. *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse*. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, [1949] 1970.
- Gentry, Kenneth L., Jr. *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*. Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989.
- Jordan, James B., editor. *Christianity and Civilization IV: The Reconstruction of the Church*. Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1985.
- Jordan, James B. *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World*. Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1988.
- . *Worship at Westminster*. Tyler, Texas: Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1985.
- . *Doctrine of Revelation*. Handout at the first annual Geneva Conference held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tyler, Texas, January 1983, photocopy.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, no date.
- Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F. *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
- Kellogg, S. H. *The Book of Leviticus*. Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, [1899] 1978.
- Lachman, David and Smith, Frank J., editors. *Worship in the Presence of God*. Greenville, S.C.: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992.
- McKim, Donald K. "Calvin and His Times." *Christianity Today*. Vol. 35 No. 12 (October 28, 1991).

- Psalter Hymnal. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1976.
- Psalter Hymnal. Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1987.
- Roberts, Frank C. "Ulrich Zwingli, Father of the Reformed Churches." *The Banner*. Vol. 119 No. 39 (October 29, 1984).
- Schaff, Philip. *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes*. Volume 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, [1931] 1983.
- Service Book. Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981.
- The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Volume 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- The New Bible Commentary Revised. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- The NIV Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.
- Ursinus, Zacharius. *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*. Translated by the Rev. G. W. Williard. Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, no date.
- Vandooren, G. *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*. Winnipeg: Premier, 1980.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*. Tyler, Texas: Geneva Divinity School Press, [1953] 1982.
- Webber, Robert E. *Worship Old and New*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.
- Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Volume 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.