

THE WESTMINSTER DIRECTORY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP (1645)

Alan Clifford

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Introduction

...It would appear that in some respects, current confusion in the realm of worship is more difficult to cure than more theoretical theological differences. While it is ultimately true that faulty theology lies behind faulty practice, not all those who have abandoned traditional Reformed worship have rejected Reformed theology, at least notionally. What a former FIEC president has recently written in his church magazine gives us a measure of the problem:

Within the service of worship we are also trying to proclaim God's truth, and here too there is room for variety. The sermon as we think of it, is a relatively modern invention. There is room for all kinds of ways of reading the Scriptures, and also, I believe, for testimonies, interviews, and drama. We have to distinguish very honestly between what dishonours God, and what annoys our sensibilities.¹

And all this in a magazine which happily, in the same issue, quotes — as a SOP for traditionalists? — from Matthew Henry and Thomas Watson! Without pursuing our subject in pure academic and historical isolation, we may surely ask if the Westminster divines can help us nearly three hundred and fifty years on? At least they might help us to understand our confusion a little more clearly!

The Regulative Principle and Its Limits

...Unlike the drafting of the Confession of Faith, the Directory's passage in committee and debate was often stormy.² For the most part, differences of opinion concerned matters which the Scriptures shed no specific light on. ... The task is made no easier when one learns, in the words of Dr. Horton Davies, that the Directory was in fact 'a compromise between the three parties, the English Presbyterians, the Scottish Presbyterians and the Independents.'³

... Apart from certain leading principles, adopting the 'regulative principle' found the various parties at considerable odds where the Directory of Worship was concerned. It is easy to discern from the Scriptures that preaching, scripture reading, prayers and the singing of God's praise are the main elements of Christian worship and that the two divinely instituted symbolic ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Undergirding this is the New Testament stress

that all worship should be both ‘orderly’ and ‘spiritual.’ But concerning the precise form of sermons and prayers,’ the structure of a service of worship, the number of psalms (and/or hymns) to be sung, the frequency of the Lord’s Supper, the conduct of marriages and funerals, such matters are not determined in the New Testament. In short, what exactly does it mean to be biblical in the details as well as the principles of worship?

The Westminster divines soon realized that their attachment to the regulative principle did not solve all their problems. It was relatively easy to detect the unbiblical elements in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), but not so easy to replace them by valid alternatives. Hence the Preface states that in laying ‘aside the former Liturgy, with the many rites and ceremonies formerly used in the worship of God ... our care hath been to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance; and other things we have endeavoured to set forth according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the Word of God.’ Whereas these criteria were sufficient to ban the sacerdotal and superstitious overtones of the BCP — and still are sufficient to ban drama and dance as well as women preachers and priests of either sex, areas of potential disagreement still remained. This is hardly surprising, for three distinct outlooks faced one another in the Assembly. The English Presbyterians were ex-Anglican Puritans, who, in their ‘nonconformity’ had been used to ‘reformed’ editions of the BCP. The Scottish Commissioners had used the Book of Common Order, the so-called ‘Knox’s Liturgy,’ which reflected the forms of Calvin’s Genevan liturgy. These two groups both accepted the validity of liturgical worship. And then there were the ‘proto-charismatic’ Independents who were opposed to any kind of service book. Such was the rather ominous lament of Robert Baillie, one of the Scottish Commissioners: ‘While we were sweetly debating on these things, in came Mr. Goodwin, who incontinent assayed to turn all upside down, to reason against all directories... I hope God will not permit him to go on to lead a faction for renting of the kirk.’⁴

The History and Development of Worship

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Calvin and Cranmer: The Character and Priorities of Worship

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Puritan Worship: the Westminster Directory

To return to the Directory itself, the in-built ambiguities of Elizabethan Anglicanism, the constant threat of Romanism and the Romanizing measures of Archbishop Laud form the immediate backdrop to the Westminster Assembly. With political Puritanism in the ascendancy, the scene was set to complete the English Reformation. ...

If the text of the Directory tends to obscure differences over alternative preferences, the Preface justifies the replacement of the BCP in no uncertain terms. While its virtues are not ignored, it had become an ‘offense’ to many of the godly at home and abroad. ‘For, not to speak of urging the reading of all the prayers, which very greatly increased the burden of it, the many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies,’ e.g., wearing the surplice, the sign of the cross at baptism, confirmation, bowing at the name of Jesus, etc., ‘have occasioned much mischief’ by troubling the consciences ‘of many godly ministers and people.’ Many good Christians have been ‘kept from the Lord’s Table’ and ‘able and faithful ministers’ have been debarred from their ministry. The bishops had virtually insisted that use of the BCP was the only acceptable way of worshipping God. Preaching had been ‘jostled out as unnecessary, or at best as far inferior’ to the reading of the service. In short, the Prayer Book had become ‘no better than an idol by many ignorant and superstitious people.’ Accordingly, the ‘Papists boasted that the book was a compliance with them in a great part of their service; and so were not a little confirmed in their superstition and idolatry, expecting rather our return to them, than endeavouring the reformation of themselves.’ Furthermore, exclusive use of the BCP had promoted ‘an idle and unedifying ministry,’ which contented itself with reading ‘set forms’ composed by others ‘without putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office.’ These were the ‘weighty considerations’ which led the Assembly to ‘lay aside the former Liturgy.’

A Liturgy for Life

Before we focus particular attention on the public worship of the Lord’s Day, it should be remembered that ‘worship’ embraced the whole of life in the minds of our forefathers. God was to be acknowledged, loved and obeyed in all the experiences and decisions of daily life. Accordingly, the BCP — in keeping with centuries of Christian tradition — made provision for the great and momentous occasions in life from the womb to the tomb. What we immediately think of as ‘worship’ was a special instance of communal Lord’s Day worship, where the Lord is pleased to ‘command the blessing’ (Ps. 133:3). Thus against a background of common Sabbath desecration, even in less secular times, the Directory supplied practical spiritual guidance on ‘the sanctification of the Lord’s Day.’ While this concern was justified, it was recognized that in the vast majority of English parishes, then as now, the only certain contact people had with the church was through ‘hatchings, matchings and despatchings.’ Here the Directory is so unlike the Prayer Book in dealing with the problems posed by nominalism in a territorial conception of the church. ...

The Sacrament of Baptism

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The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

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The Public Worship of the Lord's Day

A combination of radical simplicity and reverent spirituality characterizes the Directory's recommendations for the worship of the Lord's Day. The order of service is as follows:

- Call to worship
- Prayer for grace and enlightenment
- Scripture reading:
 - OT chapter
 - NT chapter
- Metrical Psalm
- Prayer of confession and intercession
- Preaching of the Word
- Prayer of thanksgiving and petition
- Lord's Prayer
- Metrical Psalm
- Benediction

The Pastor and the People

The Directory urges that the people prepare their hearts before assembling for worship, and that they meet 'not irreverently, but in a grave and seeming manner, taking their seats or places without adoration, or bowing themselves towards one place or another.' If the divines were anxious to discourage idolatrous genuflections in worship, they were equally concerned to prevent casual familiarity. Hence there were to be no 'private wisperings, conferences, salutations, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in.' Likewise, there should be no 'gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour, which may disturb the minister or people' in 'the service of God.'

The Scriptures are only to be read by 'pastors and teachers,' and occasionally by ministerial students. Thus the office of reader, tracing its ancestry from an earlier Reformed tradition back to the synagogue,⁴⁹ was — with doubtful necessity — laid aside. Indeed, do the Scriptures support the Directory at this point? Unlike the Prayer Book lectionary, readings from the Apocrypha are forbidden, but 'all the canonical books' are to 'read over in order, that the people may be better acquainted with the whole body of the scriptures.' Occasionally, part of what is read may be expounded, after the reading, for clarification. However, 'regard is always to be had unto the time' so that the rest of the service, and especially the preaching is not 'rendered tedious.'

The Priority of Preaching

Thus the major concern of the Assembly was to restore preaching to a place of prominence in public worship. Here one detects the great difference in priorities between Anglican and Puritan worship. ... As the Prayer Book became more established, the sheer length of the liturgy left little or no time for a sermon. Practice rather than intention thus justifies Dr. Kenneth Brownell's observation that 'Anglican worship is primarily priestly' whereas 'Reformed worship is primarily prophetic.'⁵¹ ... The Westminster Assembly was determined to ensure that 'good trumpets' would have plenty of time to preach. Accordingly, the Directory declares that 'Preaching of the word, being the power of God unto salvation, and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel, should be so performed, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him.'

Whatever our former FIEC president means by saying that the sermon is a 'relatively modern invention,' we have the Puritans to thank for reasserting its importance. When the centrality of preaching is attacked by those ostensibly in the Puritan tradition, it is high time to remember our roots. For all that is best and most enduring in the history of evangelicalism has been due to the God-honoured, Spirit-anointed preaching of Christ and him crucified. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices. He is always opposed to preaching. The introduction of drama and dance among so-called evangelicals gives him — as well as others — great pleasure, for the gap between truth-obscuring 'dramatic worship' and the truth-corrupting theatricalism of the Mass is no great chasm!

One trusts it is not necessary in this conference to labour these points. But, for us to be self-critical for a moment, a thorough study of the Directory's excellent pronouncements on preaching would not only complete a preacher's education; it would help us to avoid the sometimes valid criticism one hears about modern Reformed preaching. For instance, the preacher should not simply dish up dull, undiluted systematic theology. Truth must be made to live. After all, doesn't the prince of darkness prefer dull, dark sermons too? So 'illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light.' ... If preaching is to be the highlight of Reformed worship, powerless preaching is all the excuse our detractors need to go elsewhere and do something different! May we heed the words of the greatest preacher Puritanism ever produced, Richard Baxter: 'Nothing is more indecent than a dead preacher, speaking to dead hearers the living truths of the living God.'⁵⁴

To be practical, the Westminster divines didn't expect that every preacher should conform to a rigid Puritan equivalent of the Anglican stereotype with his sanctimonious grin and parsonic voice! They weren't out to crush individuality. As surely as Cranmer's style was not Calvin's, so Bunyan was not to ape Baxter, nor was Goodwin to duplicate Gouge. So, the Directory's 'method is not prescribed as necessary for every man...but only recommended, as being found by experience to be very blessed of God.' But whatever our homiletic method, our ministry should be 'Painful' rather than negligent, 'Plain' for all to understand, 'Faithful' in seeking Christ's honour alone, 'Wise' in the use of reproof, without personal passion or bitterness, 'Grave,' so as not to make preaching appear contemptible — there must be no attempt to entertain — and 'Loving' or 'affectionate,' that our hearers may see our only concern is 'to do them good.' Lastly, he who teaches others must be seen to be 'taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart, that all that he teacheth is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock, as an

example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labours to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself, and the flock whereof the Lord hath made him an overseer.’ If preaching was in need of reformation according to these criteria 350 years ago, God forbid that we should say anything less today!

The Practice of Prayer

If the prominence given to preaching distinguishes the Directory from the Prayer Book, so does its policy with regard to public prayer. While the divines retained a fixed liturgical framework, they did not prescribe set forms of prayer. Hence their recommendations were called a ‘directory,’ i.e. the subject matter for prayer is set down for the minister’s guidance in prayer. ...

The debates of the Westminster Assembly have a relevance for us today, not least where the content of so-called ‘open worship’ and sometimes of pulpit prayers are concerned. Indeed, as I heard on one occasion, is it spiritual to thank God for ‘sending the Holy Spirit to lick us into shape’? The framers of the Directory would never have called such undignified rubbish Spirit-directed prayer! As A. F. Mitchell makes clear: ‘Nothing was further from their intentions than to encourage unpremeditated or purely extemporary effusions, or to represent any fluency in these as the stirring up of that gift which is given to all the children of God in some measure.’⁵⁷ Even the Independent Philip Nye admitted there was a middle way between set forms and extemporary prayers when he said. ‘I plead for neither, but for *studied* prayers.’⁵⁸ Surely, as Nye argued, public prayers require no less preparation than sermons. If the ‘open-your-mouth-wide-and-I-will-fill-it’ policy is irresponsible where preaching is concerned, why should we imagine it is acceptable in the case of prayer? If notes — and even written-out sermons in the case of Jonathan Edwards — are admissible, then why not written-out prayers? And let us not forget that if the minister prays *extempore*, what he utters becomes a pulpit-prescribed form for the praying congregation!

Once the idea of prepared prayer is admitted, the objection to liturgical forms has to be treated with considerable reservation. Indeed, the Psalms may be regarded as liturgical documents, and did not the apostles weave part of Psalm 2 into their prayer in Acts 4:24-30? The Puritans and others objected to *imposed* liturgies — this being the major objection to the Prayer Book — but they were not altogether opposed to the use of precomposed forms. John Owen granted this later, even though he argues for Christ’s gift of prayer to ministers.⁵⁹

Of course, as the preface to the Directory makes plain, the mere reading of fixed prayers could be a totally unspiritual exercise. That said, it is arguable that the Independents tended to be unnecessarily ‘ultra.’ They were understandably over-reacting to the mechanical abuse of an imposed liturgy. Indeed, had the Church of England adhered more closely to Calvin’s policy of a simpler, more flexible liturgy (including set prayers) from the beginning, this over-reaction would have been avoided. As it was, the Independents helped produce a Directory which cut the Reformed Churches adrift from a tradition of discretionary liturgical worship.⁶⁰ Our current free-for-all policy really dates from this time. But surely, may not fixed forms be freely chosen by spiritually minded men alongside their own premeditated prayers? The all important point is

the state of the heart. A man may be as unspiritual in his proud opposition to a liturgy as one who slavishly follows it.

It was quite wrong to write the Prayer Book off completely, and later in the century, the Presbyterian Matthew Henry had occasion to rebuke the excessive criticism of it by another minister.⁶¹ ... True, as the preface of the Directory states, the Prayer Book had become an idol to some, but Cranmer's prayers had helped create a genuine piety among many Englishmen. And who would question the theology and the unction of the prayer of humble access in the communion service:

We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy:...

Surely Cranmer still has something to teach us today about public prayer....

The Privilege of Praise

To the Westminster reformers, public worship consisted of proclamation, prayer, and praise. Thus the Directory concludes: 'And because singing of psalms is of all other the most proper ordinance for expressing joy and thanksgiving, ... It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing of psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the family.' Time and propriety forbid a lengthy discussion of the exclusive psalmody versus hymns debate. This was simply not an issue for the Westminster Assembly, and the era of English hymnody had hardly dawned. However, the hymns of Watts and Wesley made their impact on exclusive psalm-singers during the following century throughout the English-speaking world. In the United States, the 1788 Presbyterian Directory enjoined the singing of 'psalms *and* hymns.' Forty years earlier, Jonathan Edwards had reacted to the new fashion with moderation. After preaching away from home, he found that his Northampton congregation had been using Watts' hymns to the exclusion of the Psalter. He 'disliked not their making some use of the hymns; but did not like their setting aside the Psalms.'⁶⁷ However, this moderation is not enough for Michael Bushell whose reactionary *tour de force* in favour of exclusive psalmody nonetheless deserves the attention of chorus and hymn singers alike!⁶⁸ Certainly psalm singing deserves a much higher profile in modern worship. After all, are the psalms not the heritage of New Testament children of the covenant?

However, one wonders if Bushell has not overstated his case. It is simply not that obvious that the Apostle excludes the possibility of post-apostolic hymns in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Without denying that the 'word of Christ' is found in the psalms, surely New Testament Christians are expected to sing the 'word of Christ' in the language of fulfillment as well as prophecy. It seems strange that our understanding, preaching, and praying may be expressed in NT language when our praise should remain in OT language. This may be illustrated from Calvin who was no exclusive psalm singer⁶⁹ even if he did not write that beautiful hymn attributed to him.⁷⁰ The Reformer says 'As for public prayers, there are two

kinds: the one consists simply of speech, the other of song.⁷¹ Now if *spoken* prayers may use NT language, why should *sung* prayers be confined to OT language? Is the praise of Christians to be no different from the Jews? And is the issue to be settled by a tune?

Bushell argues that ‘uninspired praises,’ i.e., hymns not found in the Bible, have no place in Christian worship. But this could imply the most rigid kind of liturgical worship, with all our prayers and sermons taken *verbatim* from the Bible, for what Christian could be content with uninspired worship at any point in the service? It is surely sufficient to ensure that every part of worship is consistent with scripture truth rather than a *verbatim* copy of it. If the psalms, unlike our sermons, are ‘untouched by human hands,’ where does that leave the Anglo-Scottish Psalter which, in the words of Sir Richard Terry, ‘groans under the weight of the monotonous ‘Ballad Metre,’ i.e. 8.6.8.6.⁷² Did the Holy Spirit reveal them to David and Asaph in such a straitjacket, sometimes producing embarrassing if not amusing results? The regulative principle could overthrow the entire Presbyterian tradition of metrical psalms in favour of the Anglican chant! The answer is, of course, that literary form is a thing indifferent, and that it is the divinely-inspired truth-content that makes them acceptable. Quite! And is it not an insult to the Holy Spirit to describe a hymn which is orthodox and full of Christ ‘uninspired’? This is not to supplement scripture, but to acknowledge that a hymn may *reflect* revelation as in a mirror. Just as the Westminster Directory was concerned that preaching and praying should faithfully reflect the Word of God, so hymns fulfilling the same requirement may surely be admitted. Consistent with Calvin’s actual position, later Presbyterians like Charles Hodge⁷³ and Albert Barnes⁷⁴ endorse the use of post-apostolic hymns. As for modern choruses, our forefathers would probably say that *some* of them are useful teaching aids for very young children. But for adults, they can only be the effusions of immature Christians reared on superficial preaching. Where there is a healthy appetite for the Reformed Faith, nothing less than the psalms and hymns of the Reformed Faith will be suitable vehicles of praise.

It is unfortunate that English-speaking psalm-singers usually end up pleading for one rather unpoetic, seventeenth-century version of the Psalms. This is not to forget some glorious and justly famous individual psalms, nor do I wish to appear ungracious in my remarks. But there are other versions which could convince those brought up on the eloquence and energy of Watts and Wesley that psalms should not be so neglected. The *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*,⁷⁵ with its tasteful translations of Marot’s and Beza’s paraphrases, employing varied metres and set to the majestic and glorious tunes of Greiter and Bourgeois, meets this requirement. Here are the psalms which inspired the heroic-Huguenots in their sufferings for Christ. There was nothing drab about Reformed worship at the beginning, judging by the experience of a student passing through Strasbourg in 1545 where Calvin had published his first psalter just six years before:

You would never believe what a happy thing it is and what peace of conscience one experiences in being where the Word of God is purely proclaimed and the sacraments purely administered. Also when one hears the fine Psalms sung and the marvellous works of the Lord... At the beginning when I heard the singing I could scarcely keep myself from weeping with joy. You would not hear one voice drowning another. Everybody holds a book of music in his hand. Every man and woman alike praises the Lord.⁷⁶

Conclusion: Worship in Spirit and Truth

I would like to conclude on this note of joy in true worship. After all, the psalmist declared ‘In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore’ (Ps. 16: 11). One wonders if this was always the dominant note during the seventeenth century. True, there were great theologians, mighty preachers, and occasional revivals. But there were also — to use the subtitle of Richard Baxter’s *Catholick Theologie* (1675) — the ‘dogmatical word-warriors,’ whose bitter disputings and ultra-orthodox contendings tended to drown the note of praise. Alas, the Puritans duplicated their confessions and their energies. It was a century which ended on the low notes of heresy, fragmentation, deadness, and secularism. And all this despite the faithful though formal attempts of the Puritans to complete the English Reformation. Do we not feel burdened by these things today? Do we not yearn for those seasons of revival and refreshment which would cure many — if not all — of our present ills? We dare not think that the mere reformation of worship will guarantee worship itself, any more than reformation itself automatically brings revival. There must be an earnest pleading with God and a humble dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Unlike the Westminster divines whose prescribed services — including solemn fasts and public thanksgivings — were quite formal, the Methodists of the next century restored the less formal love-feasts referred to in 2 Peter 2:13 and Jude 12, and known in the early church. Thomas Manton⁷⁷ doubted whether they had any permanent place in the fellowship of the church whereas Calvin is happy just to acknowledge that these ‘frugal’ and ‘restrained’ gatherings were ‘feasts which the faithful held among themselves, to witness to their brotherly concord.’⁷⁸ During the early days of the evangelical revival, something very remarkable occurred at a Methodist love-feast. As if to prove that God only meets with those who seek him with a whole heart, whatever forms they use, John Wesley recorded in *his Journal* for Monday, January 1, 1739:

Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love-feast in Fetter Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.’⁷⁹

May the Lord in his infinite mercy so visit us again in our day. Let us pray:

Grant, Almighty God, that we may ever be attentive to that rule which has been prescribed to us by thee in the Law, as well as in the Prophets and in the Gospel, so that we may constantly abide in thy precepts, and be wholly dependent on the words of thy mouth, and never turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, but glorify thy name, as thou hast commanded us, by offering to thee a true, sincere, and spiritual worship. Grant also that we may truly and from the heart turn to thee, and offer ourselves to thee as a sacrifice, that thou mayest govern us according to thy will, and so rule all our affections by thy Spirit, that we may through the whole of our life strive to glorify thy name, until having at length finished all our struggles,

we reach that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus so Christ. Amen.⁸⁰

The Rev. Dr. Alan C. Clifford pastors the Norwich Reformed Church in Norwich, Norfolk County, England. For more information about NRC, please see their website at www.geocities.com/nrchurch. —Ed.

Various editions of the Directory are available. The one used in this paper is included in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: Glasgow, 1973).

¹ David Middleton. 'Praise' in *Angle*. Surrey Chapel Magazine, Norwich. July, 1989.

² For a detailed account of the progress of the Directory, see W. A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church*. Longmans, London, 1900, i. 337-57; Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord*. T. & T. Clark. Edinburgh, 1987, 359-75.

³ Cited in J. M. Barkley, *The Worship of the Reformed Church*, Lutterworth, London, 1966, 31.

⁴ Cited in W. A. Shaw, *op.cit.*, 340.

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⁴⁹ *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland ... and the Directory for the Public Worship of God...*, with introduction and notes by George W. Sprott and Thomas Leishman, William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1868, pp. xxiii and 332.

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⁵¹ 'Worship and the Marian Exiles in Frankfurt,' in *Spiritual Worship*, Westminster Conference, London, 1986, 13.

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⁵⁴ Cited in Philip Doddridge, *Lectures on Preaching in Works*, eds. E. Williams and E. Parsons, Leeds, 1802-5, v.461.

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⁵⁷ *The Westminster Assembly, its History and Standards*, James Nisbet, London, 1883, 228.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵⁹ 'It is not about stunted forms of prayer in the worship and service of God, by those who, of their own accord, do make use of that kind of assistance, judging that course to be better than anything they can do themselves in the discharge of the work of the ministry, but of the *imposition* of forms on others who desire "to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free", that we enquire.' *A Discourse concerning Liturgies, and their imposition in The Works of John Owen, DD*, eds. W. H. Goold, Johnson, and Hunter, London, 1851, xv, 21). Agreeing with Owen in principle, yet also arguing in favour of traditional Reformed worship, James Bannerman writes: '...we do not deny that a form of words is not only lawful, but necessary, in social or public prayer. We do not deny that it is lawful ... for ministers, in conducting the devotions of public assemblies, to premeditate or precompose their prayers... We do not deny, in respect even to human compositions of prayer or formal liturgies... it may become necessary to make use of forms of prayer as helps to ministers and people....' (*The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church*, Banner of Truth, fac. London, 1960, i. 382.)

⁶⁰ Sprott and Leishman, *op.cit.*, 263.

⁶¹ J. B. Williams, *Memoirs ... of the Rev. Matthew Henry* (1828), p. 182, in *The Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry* (two volumes in one), Banner of Truth, fac., Edinburgh, 1974.

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⁶⁷ Cited in Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn*, The Presbyterian Board of Publication, Philadelphia, 1915, 163.

⁶⁸ Michael Bushell, *The Songs of Zion*, Crown and Covenant Publications, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1980.

⁶⁹ Judging by his Strasbourg and Genevan Psalters, Calvin was not exclusively committed to the OT Psalms, since they included metrical versions of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Song of Simeon and the Apostles Creed. Bushell admits that 'It is quite true that Calvin never, so far as we know, formally and explicitly condemned the use of any and all uninspired songs in worship.' (*Ibid.*, 140.) Indeed, this is explained by Calvin's unprejudiced exegesis of Colossians 3:16, so very different from Bushell's forced view. Bushell overstates Calvin's position when he says 'The Psalms in Calvin's view are so superior to human hymns that to place the latter alongside the

former could only be an act of impiety.’ (Ibid.) What Calvin actually said was: ‘...we shall find no songs better and more suitable for our purpose than the Psalms of David,’ which is rather different.

Barkley shows that civil interference in Geneva frustrated Calvin’s desires for weekly communion, and there is evidence that he preferred the worship of Strasbourg to that of Geneva, where hymns were sung as well as psalms. See *The Worship of the Reformed Church*, pp. 16-21. In 1545 Calvin prepared a third edition of his liturgy *La Forme des Prières* for the use of his former congregation in Strasbourg. His outline of the ideal Sunday morning service hardly suggests exclusive psalmody; it also says something about the warmth and breadth of Calvin’s ‘Calvinism’: ‘We begin with the confession of our sins, adding readings from the Law and the Gospel (that is, sentences of remission) ... and after we are assured that as Jesus Christ has righteousness and life in Himself, and that He lives for the sake of the Father, so we are justified in Jesus Christ and live in a new life by the same Jesus Christ ... we continue with psalms, hymns of praise, the reading of the Gospel ... and ... quickened and stirred by the reading and preaching of the Gospel, and the confession of our faith (that is, Apostle’s Creed) ... it follows that we must pray for the salvation of all men for the life of Christ should be greatly enkindled within us. Now the life of Christ consists in this, namely, to seek and save that which is lost...’ (Ibid., pp. 17-18).

The available evidence suggests that Calvin was really in sympathy with psalms and scripture-based paraphrases. Unlike earlier editions, the 1611 edition of the Scottish Psalter reflected Calvin’s position more closely. To say these hymns were acceptable for private rather than public worship is to rest a questionable argument on the mere size of the congregation! See Hector Cameron’s doubtful discussion of these points in ‘Purity of Worship’ in *Hold Fast Your Confession*, ed. Donald Macleod, Knox Press, Edinburgh, 1978, pp. 102-3. To say these ‘hymns’ were published in a *public* service book for only *private* use — when no such rule is indicated — is not very convincing.

⁷⁰ See the hymn ‘I greet Thee who my sure Redeemer art’ in *Christian Hymns*, Evangelical Movement of Wales, Bridgend, 1977, hymn 124; also *Hymns and Psalms*, Methodist Publishing House, London, 1983, hymn 391. The hymn first appeared in the 1545 Strasbourg Psalter, the very same year Calvin produced the new liturgy for his old congregation. Is it not possible that he wrote the hymn for them too? According to Philip Schaff, it was also discovered in ‘an old Genevese prayer-book.’ (*Christ in Song*, Anson Randolph, New York, 1869, 678). While external evidence might not be conclusive (see Bushell, op.cit., p.199, n. 56), strong internal evidence of style and piety — comparing the hymn with Calvin’s recorded prayers — arguably strengthens Schaff’s case for Calvin’s authorship of the hymn.

⁷¹ Cited in *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, Committee for the Publication of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, Hamilton, Ontario, 1971, p. v.

⁷² *Calvin’s First Psalter (1539)*, ed. Sir Richard Terry, Ernest Benn Limited, London, 1932, p. viii.

⁷³ *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Banner of Truth, fac., London, 1964, pp. 303-49.

⁷⁴ *Notes ... on the New Testament: Ephesians-Colossians*, Partridge and Oakey, London, 1850, p. 132.

⁷⁵ See ref. 71.

⁷⁶ Cited in Jean Cadier, *The Man God Mastered*, tr. O. R. Johnson, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1960, 98-100.

⁷⁷ *An Exposition on the Epistle of Jude*, Banner of Truth, London, 1958, pp. 273-4.

⁷⁸ *Comm. Jude 12*. (Calvin’s Commentaries, eds. D. W. and T. F. Torrance, *A Harmony of the Gospels ... and the Epistles of James and Jude*, tr. A. W. Morrison, Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1972, 330-1.

⁷⁹ *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, AM*, in *Works*, ed. Thomas Jackson, John Mason, London, 1840-2, i. 160-1.

⁸⁰ John Calvin, *A Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Volume 2: Joel. Amos & Obadiah*, Banner of Truth, fac., Edinburgh, 1986, 183-4 and 104.