

Historical Overview, II: Reformation

Let us pray.

Father, we thank You for this day today where we can come together and learn more about worship. We pray that we would be open to receive the information and that Your Spirit would use it in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I have an introductory comment about church history. In thinking about the drama of redemption, the story of what God is doing, we live between Pentecost and the second coming. The unfolding drama of what God is doing now is being written in our very lives. There is an unfolding of the Gospel going to the nations in anticipation of the consummation and full restoration that is to come in the new heavens and the new earth. As we go through church history and get into planning and leading actual worship services, you will learn to really see yourselves as part of that unfolding drama in our time and place. This is helpful as we work with the people God has called us to serve and minister with. As we think of church history and the history of worship, sin has intermingled with it when doctrine was less than pure and when unity was less than full. The church is not yet fully what it one day will be in the consummation. It is headed toward that, though. We need to understand where we are and what that means for us regarding the parameters and the freedoms within those parameters for planning and leading worship well in our day. This is part of the goal of this course.

We came up to the time of the Reformation in our last time together. Today we will be looking at the Reformation. It had behind it an attempt to purify worship. That was one of the aspects of the Reformation. The Roman church needed to be purified in many ways, but we will be looking at the matters that relate to worship. These first three statements are meant to be broad generalizations. They help us see directionally what the different responses were to Rome at the time of the Reformation. We will see how those three responses have worked themselves out in Protestant church history up to the present time.

The first category is that of the Lutherans or the Anglicans. Their attempt, in the purifying and reforming of worship, was to continue to have fixed forms but to have the proper fixed forms. Like I said in an earlier lesson, Luther went back to the early Roman Mass as a model of fixed forms filled with biblical content that could be useful without the other things that got attached to it over the years. The radical reformation, which we will not spend a lot of time interacting with in this course, attempted to have Spirit-led worship without any fixed forms. The ultimate example of that would be the Quakers, where they gather and wait for the Spirit to move before they do anything. They sometimes have long periods of silence, and then someone will be moved to pray, say a word, read some Scripture, or sing a song.

Let me say something about both the fixed forms and the Spirit-led dimensions. I think it is appropriate to have some structure and forms. One of the blessings of this broader understanding of the Reformed regulative principle of worship is that we can use some of the best of those who have fixed forms and some of the best of those who do not. I can envision times in a worship service where we would allow the congregation to shape some of what happens over a period of time. We could ask someone to read a passage of Scripture, to pray, or to start singing a song that hopefully the congregation can join in with. We may do more of that in small group fellowship times than on Sunday morning worship, which is more formal and structured. The more radical reformation was anti-fixed forms. It was Spirit led. I am not against Spirit led, but I am also not completely against some forms.

The Presbyterian and Reformed attempt to purify worship at the time of the Reformation can be summarized as having fixed elements of worship with freedom of arranging and expressing them. It is a middle way without the goal being a middle way. It is a middle way that, in my opinion, is most reflective of the Scripture. I was born a Presbyterian; my dad was a Presbyterian pastor. I am ordained in a Presbyterian denomination. But I would like to think that I am a Presbyterian, not just out of heritage, but out of conviction from the Scripture. While there are other true expressions of the church, I think this is the best one. That is why I am going to advocate in favor of this Presbyterian and Reformed desire for fixed elements with freedom of arrangement and expression in a worship service.

The context of the Reformation is a time when the Roman church was, in some ways, at its worst. Certain reforms have taken place in the Roman church even in my lifetime, with Vatican II and following (I do not think Vatican II fixed all of the problems, but it certainly returned worship more to the people in the language of the people. It gave room for expressions that were more flexible from culture to culture and within a culture). But at the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church was practicing extreme abuses of things. There were indulgences and worship that was virtually separated from the congregation, which came to observe the priest worshipping. Some people are critical of stained-glass windows that have pictures of Jesus. I have some problems with that, too, because things that are sometimes meant to be an aid to worship can become an object of worship, and that can be problematic. I remember visiting the Chartres Cathedral in France. It is a glorious, beautiful cathedral. Many of the stained-glass windows tell the stories of Scripture. You can look at a pane if you are sitting in one part of the church and see the story of the prodigal son, for example. There are potential problems with stained-glass windows. But it is very likely that there were uneducated people at Mass who did not know Latin and did not understand what was going on up front. They might have gotten more out of a worship service by meditating on the story of the prodigal son by looking at the stained-glass windows.

One of the desires of the Reformation was to return the Gospel, the Scriptures, the worship of God, to the people of God. It was not just for the clergy to hoard it to themselves. Luther and Calvin felt that the reforming of worship would be a vital, significant, and central means that God would use to reform the church. This included the preaching of the true Gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The centrality of the preaching of the Gospel in the worship service was a new thing in this day compared to what the Roman Mass had become. This reformed worship included congregational participation. They had the Bible translated into the language of the people, and worship was spoken in the language of the people in the geographic region where worship was taking place. It included the right administration of the sacraments, a right understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This was an important part of the Reformation because it was a key worship component. Finally, it meant transformed lives lived to the glory of God in all of life. There are certain aspects of the protestant reformation where that is stronger than others. The Dutch reformation coming from Calvin had a much stronger strand of living to the glory of God in everything. This is from the Scottish Presbyterian branch of the Reformation coming from Calvin. But as it came to America, a merging of some of the strengths of both Scottish and Dutch Calvinism, it was more in keeping with Calvin than either one without the other. These are key aspects of biblical worship in the reforming of the church to be more the way God has designed it as revealed in the Scripture.

One of the early Reformers in Switzerland was a man named Zwingli. He was the leading pastor and Reformer in Zurich. One of the things that is different from various Reformers is what they did with music in worship. There is a book called *Te Deum: The Church and Music*, by Paul Westermeyer, that focuses on church music in particular. Westermeyer says, "Luther recovered congregational singing,

Zwingli denied it, and Calvin restricted it.” Zwingli believed that worship and prayer were essentially the same thing. As he studied the Sermon on the Mount, particularly Matthew 6:7, which says, “When you pray, go into your prayer closet in private,” he had a problem in general with corporate public worship. He saw prayer as the key way of understanding worship. How do you have corporate public worship if it is focused on prayer, which is supposed to be done in private? He should have seen that his interpretation of prayer in Matthew 6:7 was disconnected from other kinds of gatherings of the people of God. Some of these gatherings include prayer, like corporate public worship. It is so ironic because of the backdrop of the clergy doing everything in the Roman Mass. Zwingli was radically opposed to many of the things going on in the Roman church at that time. Yet he conducted worship by doing the preaching, reciting the Apostles’ Creed by himself, and praying the Lord’s Prayer by himself. There was no congregational singing, or any kind of singing. He felt corporate public worship was necessary and important, but he was trying to contain it. It became more instructional; the pastor was there to give instruction. Public worship was as much the silent hearing and meditating on the Word by the congregation as possible. There was no congregational singing. That had won the day in Switzerland at the time. Switzerland has cantons, which are like city-states that have a lot of self government. Zwingli’s practice in Zurich was the way worship was done in most places in the Swiss Protestant cantons of the day.

Butzer was a Reformer in Strasbourg, Germany. He developed a much more balanced liturgy with congregational participation. His influences came from both Luther in the German branch of the Reformation and from the Swiss branch of the Reformation as well. They celebrated the Lord’s Supper weekly in Strasbourg. The emphasis was on the Lord’s Supper as a fellowship meal. I think this is most right in understanding what Christ instituted and what it is meant to be for us. It is a corporate meal, a fellowship meal. We are at table with Christ Himself—present, leading, inviting, serving, strengthening, and sending us out to be His people. Butzer also had very lively singing of both psalms and hymns. These were some of the hymns of the German Reformation and Luther and others that came alongside of Luther. He began to do the work of putting some of the psalms into Western meter. This way they could be sung by people in the West. The psalms are in Hebrew, but the Hebrew meter is different from Western meter. What we have in Psalters today are sometimes called the metrical psalms. There are little numbers at the bottom of the hymnal that say 8.8.8.8 or “with refrain.” That is the rhythm or the meter of the notes in the song. *Amazing Grace* is common meter; that is why you can sing *Amazing Grace* to lots of different tunes. It can be sung to the tune of “Gilligan’s Island,” the “House of the Rising Sun,” and other songs. So Butzer began to do the work of putting Hebrew psalms translated into German into a metrical form that could be set to music and sung by the congregation.

Let us focus on Calvin for a little bit. I got a lot of this material from Charles Garside, Jr. in his tract *The Origins of Calvin’s Theology of Music*. In a visit to Geneva, Calvin was urged to stay and become one of the leading pastors and theologians in the church. When he got there he discovered that there was no music in the worship services in Geneva because of Zwingli’s influence. He began to say that the true worship of God incorporates the various elements of Scripture, including the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in the worship service. A worship service that does not have singing is incomplete in terms of what God has indicated He desires in a worship service. In 1537, he made a proposal to the elders at Geneva, saying, “It is a thing very expedient for the edification of the church to sing some psalms in the form of public prayers through which one may pray to God or sing His praise so that that hearts of all might be moved and incited to form like prayers and to render like praises in thanks to God with similar affection.” That quote from Calvin is saying that there is something glorifying to God and edifying to the gathered community of believers in corporate public worship that happens when we sing together. Calvin wanted to have the Psalms sung. They were the inspired hymnbook of Israel, and he saw it as the inspired hymnbook of the church. Many of them are prayers and praise, so we can form

notes and words and sing them together. There is something that God does as a means of grace in the midst that is edifying and glorifying. It is a vital part of corporate public worship that should not be left out. He felt strongly about that, and he wrote a lot about that. It was not just because of that, but this was one of the reasons that contributed to him being asked to leave Geneva. So Calvin went to Strasbourg in 1538 and came under the influence of Martin Butzer. He is a significant influence in Calvin.

You can look at the Lord's providence in the way He brings people into our lives to shape us at crucial times. This can happen in our grasp and understanding of key biblical truths and in modeling the practice of Christian discipleship, worship, evangelism, ministering to the poor and needy, etc. Whatever God wants to do next in our lives He often does through difficult circumstances that end up bringing us under the influence of His people. If a new pastor comes to our church, he may open up the Word of God in a portion of it that we have never studied before. All of a sudden our lives are transformed because God brought this man to be our preacher. We did not want our old guy to go. We loved him, and God used him in great ways to bring us along to a certain point. Sometimes through trial and difficulty God positions that next significant influence in a way He wants to grow us and shape us. It is important for us as ministry leaders to see ourselves that way. That is one of the reasons I love being at Covenant Seminary. The three men who gave devotions so far this week: Calhoun, Vasholz, and Williams, are very different from each other. They have different areas of study and expertise. The way God has designed the body of Christ is that we each have our place. None of us is the head, only Christ. Even Christ as the head makes use of all the parts of the body to accomplish His purposes. There is important ministry philosophy wrapped up in some of what I have been talking about. You can see this in church history as you look at the people there. Martin Luther was nearly struck by lightning, and it led toward his conversion. God does not just use people; He uses events and the creation itself.

Three years after Calvin left Geneva, they decided they needed him back. They convinced him to go back, but he negotiated a few things in his return. One of the things he insisted on in his return to Geneva was that there would be the singing of psalms and a few other Scripture portions in the worship services. They agreed to this. He felt that the gift of song the way God has made it to be used in worship had power. Calvin viewed song as a means that God could use. It could be used for great good or it could be used for great evil. Because it could be used for evil, he felt it had to be restrained. It is the principle we talk a lot about here at Covenant: the abuse of something does not negate its proper use. Just because music can be abused in worship does not mean that we should therefore have no music in worship. We should use it properly. All of us, on different issues that most touch our lives, sometimes correct abuses by swinging to another abuse on the other side. It is the Schaeffer pendulum that I talked about earlier. Calvin believed that song had the power to enflame our hearts to praise God. He wanted to have the singing of the Psalms, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and Simeon's song. Simeon is the man who held baby Jesus. He had been told he would not depart from the earth until his eyes had seen the Lord's salvation. He said now that he had seen Him he could depart in peace, for his eyes had seen the Lord's salvation. In that song he also talks about this little One being a light to the Gentiles.

Calvin viewed this incorporation of song into worship at Geneva at this time in the history of the church as part of the fulfillment of Psalm 98 of singing a new song to the Lord. He felt he was taking Psalm 98 and its application into Geneva, Switzerland by having the Psalms brought into corporate public worship in that way. Calvin had the same problem that Butzer had. The Psalms were translated into French, but they needed to be put together in a way that they could be put to music. This meant that you would find different words in the French translation in the Bible that would fit the rhythm. There was also a desire, like we do in the West, to have some rhyming of words at the ends of the phrases. So Calvin hired gifted poets who knew how to write things with the right meter, rhythm, and rhyming that was current and

relevant in Europe at that time. Most of these men were from France where Calvin was from. He also hired gifted musicians. He tried his hand at this himself first to see if he could write some of the music for the Psalms. But he decided to stick to the *Institutes*, for which we are eternally grateful. He let more gifted musicians write the music, and he kept writing theology. I would call Calvin's *Institutes* devotional theology even. You can read portions of the *Institutes*, for example on the Ten Commandments, and feel like you have entered into Calvin's private prayer closet. I am thankful that Calvin had such a high view of the place of song in worship that he found gifted men to put the Psalms into poetic and musical expression as well. He told the musicians to study this psalm that has now been metered into a poetic expression and think about capturing the emotion of the Psalm, the words and content, in the musical expression you give to it. We looked at Psalm 22 in the first lesson; the first half is a psalm of lament. The musical expression should express lament in that culture in that time. The second half is a psalm of triumph. You should not start singing about Christ standing in the congregation now arisen and glorified and still be using sad, lamenting music. If you do you are missing the emotion of the psalm, and your music has not captured it in that way. Calvin was not a great musician, but he had a sense of what music should sound like. It is a model for those of us who are or will be pastors to learn what we can about music even if it is not our gift and training. We should surround ourselves with people who understand music and its power, that it might be used effectively and properly in Christian worship.

Calvin felt that music for the church needed to be weighty and majestic and not light or frivolous. Music for corporate public worship needs to be appropriate to the occasion of worship. If it is someone's birthday today and we sing *Happy Birthday* to him, that song fits the occasion. We sing it in a more light and frivolous way than we would sing *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. We do not bring a birthday cake in and sing, "A mighty fortress is our God." It does not fit. Different occasions call for different types of music. When Calvin said worship is an occasion that should have music that is weighty and majestic, this does not mean without joy. Sometimes we think weighty and majestic must mean without joy. Joy is the emotion that some psalms capture that should be expressed in weighty, majestic, joyful music. He also felt that the power of music had to be restrained in worship or we would get carried away with singing wonderful music and miss the purpose of our gathering and the content of the particular song that we are singing. He felt that in corporate worship we should sing the metrical psalms in unison or octaves. That means we are all singing the same note on the same pitch or the same note an octave above or below. We might have the same note in three different octaves, singing in unison wherever your voice register fits that unison. It does not mean a monotone line. He also did not want to have the use of instruments. His case for non-instrumental singing of the Psalms was not a biblically based argument. He did not say that the Bible forbids the use of instruments. It was a practical argument. The main theological influencer in Calvin's life was Augustine. Augustine was very much against musical instruments. The main preacher influence in Calvin's life was John Chrysostom. He was also against the use of musical instruments. So Calvin was hesitant for that reason and did not have musical instruments. He did not have choirs, either. The purpose of singing the Psalms in worship was primarily for the congregational expression of praise and prayer.

Calvin did incorporate the use of children into worship. This is a fascinating thing I discovered several years ago. There were a growing number of psalms in Western meter with musical expression attached to them that were very singable for the congregation. The problem was the congregation did not know the songs. Many of the congregation could not read. There were no hymnbooks, overhead projectors, or Power Point slides. The congregation needed to learn the new songs, though. Calvin came up with an innovative and brilliant idea. Every day children would come to the day school. As part of the devotional time of the normal educating of the children in Geneva, he would teach them the new songs. Then on Sunday morning he would put them in front of the congregation, and they would sing them

over and over until the congregation learned them. It is amazing to me that people say, “We should do worship the way John Calvin did.” Usually they mean stern, by the book, and nothing outside of the box, however they have defined the box. But then I tell them how Calvin did worship. He brought song where there was none. He had new tunes written for the songs translated into French. And he used little children to help lead in worship. That is not what they mean by doing worship the way Calvin did, though. When it comes to matters of worship, sometimes we get the Bible wrong in making it more restrictive than it is. Several years ago I asked Dr. Chapell which was a worse sin—to be less restrictive than Scripture or to be more restrictive. He said they were equally wrong. Sometimes we think it is better to be more restrictive than Scripture because we are guarding the way against falling into less restrictive realms. The Pharisees in the Gospels tended to err that way, and I do not want to be associated with that.

Calvin believed that there was plenty of opportunity for fuller expression with instruments and harmony in our homes and other venues besides worship. He had a high view of Christians in the culture being artistic, gifted musicians who would shape the way the whole society would do music, to the glory of God. He had a bigger vision for music than is reflected in what he restricted it to within corporate public worship.

Calvin was a strong advocate of the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper. He never gained approval for this in Geneva. He worked it out, though, that at some church in Geneva, Switzerland every Sunday there was a congregation celebrating the Lord’s Supper. When they did celebrate the Lord’s Supper, they sang while the elements were being distributed. Some people are very against this because they want it perfectly quiet. They want “me and Jesus” privatized communion time. They do not want to be interrupted with having to sing or anything. They do not want the organ or piano music that is going on to be distracting to them. But corporate public worship is not intended to be “me and Jesus” time. Instead there is personal individual impact when we are together with the people of God. The Lord’s Supper is a fellowship meal with lots of God’s people gathered together around His table. One of the best things we can do to remind ourselves of that is to sing while the elements are being distributed. You may go to a congregation where they have never done that. It could be a very difficult place to get to given the history and tradition of a given church. I would not be willing to make that an issue the first time we have the Lord’s Supper in a church that I go to be the pastor of. But we should encourage and show the people the benefit of edifying one another and being together. Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 say to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as you encourage, exhort, and instruct one another in worship.

Calvin is a great example of the principle we talked about at the beginning of the course. He incorporated the richness of past biblical expressions of worship and the freshness of new biblical expressions of worship. There is a diversity of application in the Reformed principle of worship coming from Calvin and Butzer. It is elastic enough without changing its substance. It adapts to every culture to which the Gospel goes and every generation that follows the present one. The genius of the Reformed principle of biblical worship is that it is very transferable to new places and people. It does not take the heart of biblical worship out of it. We can learn a lot from Calvin in that regard.

Sometimes even after you teach the congregation about the nature of corporate public worship, people are still distracted by having singing during prayers or other aspects of worship. I pastored a church in which we introduced the singing of hymns and songs during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Part of what led to that was a more frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper. We went from monthly to twice a month. Now that church does weekly celebration of it. If you celebrate the Lord’s Supper every week, you have opportunity to bring out different aspects of it. One of the strongest arguments against

weekly celebration is that it would become routine and lose its special meaning. I have never heard anyone argue in favor of monthly sermons for that reason, though. A sermon is able to be fresh each week because it brings out different dimensions of God's revelation to us in the Scripture of the good news of the Gospel. There are lots of nuances in the Lord's Supper that can be brought out. You can celebrate it one week in a way that places a lot of emphasis on the Passover as being where the Lord's Supper is rooted. You could introduce what a peace offering is in the Old Testament. This included not only a sacrificial offering, but also the eating of a meal with the priest in the presence of God. You can, from week to week, bring in different things. You could go the other direction toward the marriage supper of the lamb. It is the way you lead into and celebrate the Lord's Supper. Some of the churches in Saint Louis get in a big circle and pass the bread and cup around as they look at one another. This emphasizes the unity, oneness, and fellowship of the Body. Sometimes churches that capture that aspect of it think that this is the only way they are ever going to do it. That is all right if you always do it that way. Part of my personality wants to show the richness in a variety of ways, though. Some week I may have people come forward to the table. Other times we might serve them in the rows. We may try the big circle idea. It may be completely quiet when the elements are being passed some time. Sometimes there may be special music or a congregational song. The pastor may read relevant Scripture passages while the elements are being distributed. There are fixed elements with flexibility; this gives us room to do a lot of different kinds of things.

At my previous church I did not implement the singing of songs during the Lord's Supper until we started celebrating it twice a month. I said that part of what the elders desired to do in more frequent observance of the Lord's Supper was to do it differently. We would not always do it the same way. One of the aspects of the Lord's Supper is that it is a fellowship and family meal. Part of what we would do even as the food was being distributed was to sing a song together, thanking God for His provision of this bountiful grace in Christ. It reminds us that we are together in His presence. Singing lifts us from an isolated focus on ourselves to hearing voices of people all around us. It brings a dimension of this fellowship covenant renewal meal of the Lord's Supper into that. We would not do that all the time, but we would try it that day. Then I selected music that was not out on the edge of the loudest, most boisterous celebrative singing. We could sing those songs after the Lord's Supper. But I had to be careful about the people for whom singing at all was going to feel distracting. So I picked a song that was more reflective and meditative at the beginning. The first time we did it I could have had the choir sing a song during the distribution of the elements. That might be less distracting than having to look at the words of a song, balance the elements and a hymnbook, etc.

Let us talk for a few minutes about planning a worship service. The benefit of having musicians, other worship leaders, assistant pastors, or elders spending some time every week with the preacher of that week on the things he is going to be preaching on enables things to come to mind as you plan a worship service. If I talk about the depth of my sin and God's grace in Christ reaching it, the hymn that pops into my mind is *Grace Greater Than My Sin*, which says, "Grace, grace, God's grace / grace that is greater than all my sin." You may want to use this hymn, or you may want to sing it to a new tune. It may remind you of another song, a prayer, or some other element of worship. Because that one would have fit but you choose not to use it, it may lead you to remember something else.

As you think about the passage that is being preached on, it may remind you of other passages that would be good to read with it during the service. Part of what you do is gather as much as you can and then figure out what to use and what not to use. It is not always the first things that come to mind that you may incorporate into worship. The brainstorming together out loud and asking God to guide a discussion around the key things that will be there in the sermon can help generate ideas and draw on people's experiences. The person I work most closely with in planning Covenant's chapel services

comes from six years of experience of being a worship and arts music director in a church in Virginia. She has a whole repertoire of things that she has been involved in with her pastor there. Covenant Seminary is the beneficiary of six years of the pastor there and Claudia working together planning worship services. When she and I sit down about how to structure and plan a service based on what this professor is going to preach on, the resources are multiplied from all of our worship life experiences. So you should find people in your church to gather with you and invite people to give ideas to you. This can help generate things.

As you think through music you may want to use in a service you need to think through the resources you have to execute it. Think about which musicians know how to play the music for a song. See if different musicians can come and help play a certain song. Deal with what resources you have in the congregation you have. You might love to have a full orchestra for the Hallelujah chorus in a service coming up, but you need to be realistic with the resources that you have and go for something other than your dream.

It would be helpful if you have 10 minutes with a pastor and hear some of his thoughts on the sermon that is not even done yet. You will better know how to plan songs, prayers, readings, or a testimony. For instance, it could remind you of a couple in the church who was on the verge of divorce over deep struggles in their lives. God has rescued and delivered them, and they are waiting to give testimony of praise to God's grace of how He has restored their marriage. It would be great to let them give a five-minute testimony of God's rescuing and delivering grace. Part of what you do is extend the boundaries of creative sanctified imagination when you sit with the pastor and discuss the passage of Scripture that is going to be preached on. You should ask what you could do this week as you creatively and artistically shape a worship service whose goal is to glorify God and see the people become more like Christ. Look at the boundaries and realize that you have a lot of freedom to draw on different ideas. At the end of the day you have to shape a service, get it into the bulletin, and actually lead a service. But first expand creative imagination of the various elements and how they could be used before actually shaping where you go for this particular worship service.