

# Introduction

TODAY'S CHURCH IS VEXED with questions about worship: what it is, how you do it, what it accomplishes, to name a few. And there is no shortage of books offering answers to these questions. So where should one turn for insight on how to apply biblical principles to the local church's worship? This book attempts to offer a model of how both solid biblical understanding and effective practice of worship can be realized in churches today. And this model is anything but contemporary.

Matthew Henry (1662–1714) was a Presbyterian minister who interpreted the nature of Christian worship from within his Reformed tradition and applied it in his pastoral ministry. This book seeks to define Christian worship from this Reformed perspective and to explore how it can be a resource in our contemporary context of freedom of worship by exploring Henry's theology and practice of worship.

## QUESTION AND TOPIC

For contemporary Christian people, the question of how to worship God is one of the most significant issues we face. It relates both to our ecclesiastical activity and to our daily lives. During the nearly fifty years since the Second Vatican Council in 1962, Protestant churches have also attempted to renew their worship services according to their own beliefs, convictions, and theologies, resulting in a variety of responses.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Reformed

1. As John Witvliet clearly summarized in the syllabus for the seminar "The Transformation of Christian Worship": "the last four decades have witnessed remarkable changes in the practice of Christian worship across Catholic and Protestant communities. One notable feature of all the change is how diverse it is. Rarely has the church been reforming in so many different directions at the same time. The Charismatic Movement, Liturgical Movement, Church Growth Movement, Hymn Renaissance, the Ecumenical Movement,

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churches have engaged in this quest by updating their worship books and providing congregations with liturgical sources for various ecclesiastical, ethnic, and cultural contexts.<sup>2</sup> It might seem that the Reformed tradition could transform their worship services solely by supplying churches with copious liturgical resources. However, as churches in this tradition have found, an abundance of liturgical resources does not guarantee success in the transformation of the public worship service. In fact, there are many expectations of what success might look like. Worship renewal is not a process of simply adopting new styles and forms of worship. Rather, it is a complex pastoral work, requiring wisdom from the tradition, understanding of the congregation and the context, and careful engagement with the people at every step. For example, new but fixed forms or styles of worship could never serve as absolute models for Reformed churches, since Reformed churches (like most Protestant churches today) does not seek a single pattern for their worship services for all churches.

Therefore, the Reformed churches can serve as a model to negotiating the landmines of worship renewal: How can Reformed churches offer worship services that express the Reformed tradition while adapting to a rapidly changing world where often congregants are ignorant of that tradition, its values and practices? This is especially true in the midst of a marketplace that is overflowing with worship resources and liturgical expressions, to an extent that it might be called a time of a liturgical smorgasbord if not liturgical indulgence. For example, the Reformed tradition strongly holds the authority and authenticity of the Bible as the key principle and guide in every area of Christian faith, though this is not unique to that tradition. So the question can be asked in a more specific way: How in our present context of liturgical plenty do we discern an authentic biblical foundation for worship? Answering this question is significant for contemporary churches as they negotiate tradition of worship practice, while considering a plurality of options for liturgical innovation.

This book attempts to give a thorough and detailed answer to this question by articulating Matthew Henry's theology and practice of worship

and Postmodern cultural patterns have each transformed worship in many denominations and traditions.”

2. Refer to Presbyterian worship sources such as the *Book of Common Worship and Prayers for Sunday Services: Companion Volume to the Book of Common Order. The Worship Sourcebook* as an ecumenical Reformed worship book was published in 2004. The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has been leading in providing contemporary churches with abundant liturgical resources in various ways.

in his specific context, as a case study of Reformed Presbyterian worship and a liturgical resource for contemporary Christian churches.

Keeping the question above in mind, this work mainly deals with the context, theology, practice, and Reformed characteristics of Matthew Henry's worship. Through exploring Henry's worship as a whole, this book, on the one hand, seeks to give a fuller vision of Reformed Presbyterian worship as an example of applied Reformed theology. It is not enough to understand what English Presbyterian worship is by simply stating the "Puritan Regulative Principle"<sup>3</sup> or interpreting the *Westminster Directory*. By focusing on Henry's practice as a case study, this work will also demonstrate that Reformed Presbyterian worship in Henry's ministry is not a limited or exaggerated expression of Reformed worship,<sup>4</sup> but rather a good example of *sola scriptura*-based worship as a creative interpretation of a Reformed understanding of worship. On the other hand, this particular study articulates general principles for Protestant worship, then and now, that can serve pastors, liturgical ministers, and worship leaders in their service to Christ and church. By offering Henry's liturgical resources in relation to the theological and liturgical context of his day, contemporary churches may learn how to develop public worship according to the Scriptures in their own contexts.<sup>5</sup>

3. Simply put, the Regulative Principle states that true worship is only what is commanded by God; false worship is anything not commanded. This was the Puritans' view of worship. Hughes Old commented (personal e-mail, December 17, 2009) that "the regulative principle is more appropriately called the Anabaptist principle of worship. The Anabaptists, however, got it from Tertullian, whom most of the Reformers regarded as a rigorist. Bucer, Zwingli and Oecolampadius were fully aware that Tertullian ended his days in a Montanist sect. The Reformers were well aware of the dangers of Montanism."

4. See Gore Jr., *Covenantal Worship*, and Farley, "What Is Biblical Worship? Biblical Hermeneutics and Evangelical Theologies of Worship," presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, California, November 14, 2007. These two scholars contend that Puritan Regulative Principle is a limited and exaggerated form of the Reformed principle. They suggest a new approach to Reformed worship: the Covenantal approach to worship with reference to "adiaphora" (R. J. Gore Jr.); a more whole perspective of biblical theology without ignoring the Old Testament (Michael Farley).

5. For example, Korean Presbyterian churches can find liturgical resources in Henry because of their solid biblical foundation for church ministry. They began with the Bible in their worship even before shaping their theology. The liturgical foundation of Reformed Korean worship was founded on the principle of biblical worship in a simple style following the Nevius Method. Cf. Joo and Kim, "The Reformed Tradition in Korea," 484–91. For more detailed information on the Nevius Method of mission, see Nevius, *Methods of Mission Work*, and Allen, *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work*.

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Worship for Matthew Henry and his English Presbyterian community was not merely an adoption of theological doctrine in a ritual form from either Calvin or the Westminster Assembly. Culture and context also influenced the form and content of Henry's approach to worship. As such, this provides an example of liturgical inculturation, a crucial concept in a world of increasingly shifting cultural patterns. By studying Henry's work in his context, we have a helpful paradigm for contemporary churches to apply principles for integrating worship in their specific contexts.

## MAIN THEMES

In articulating Henry's theology and practice of worship, this book will address several themes, including the use and place of the Bible in worship, a Reformed and broadly evangelical vision and practice of worship, and the implications of Henry's practices for the creative contextualization of this Reformed worship. These three themes are relevant to all churches' contemporary ministry, as they seek to develop and implement fresh worship practices.

A consistent vision of the Reformation was that of the primacy of the Scriptures in confession, ecclesiastical ministry, and Christian life; the Bible as Word of God is believed to be at the center of the Christian faith. Christian worship as a liturgical rite, then, should also be under the guidance of the Bible. The issue in theology centers not on accepting the authority of the Bible but on how to interpret and apply it to every area of human life, including the rites of liturgy.

The English Presbyterian tradition sought to protect the primacy of the Bible in their worship services, as well as in life. They were convicted of the sufficiency of the Word of God, following Calvin and the decision of the Westminster Assembly, indicated in the *Confession*, *Catechism*, and *Directory*. Although specific situations differ, contemporary Protestant churches share this conviction as well: the Bible is sufficient and authoritative in all areas of human life, including the worship service. For example, Calvin emphasized the primacy of Scripture regardless of ministerial context, as well:

But if, without any regard to circumstances, you would simply know the character belonging at all times to those human traditions which ought to be repudiated by the church and condemned by all the godly, the definition which we formerly gave is clear and certain—viz. that they include all the laws enacted by men,

without authority from the word of God, for the purpose of either of prescribing the mode of divine worship, or laying a religious obligation on the conscience, as enjoining things necessary to salvation.<sup>6</sup>

This Reformation principle is still common currency in contemporary churches.

## METHODOLOGY

Liturgical studies uses three main approaches to the issues of worship: theology, history, and ritual study (practice). In order to understand the theology and practice of Henry's worship, this book uses the methods of these three disciplines. First, by delving into mainly his primary sources such as the *Bible Commentary* and treatises on the sacraments, the way in which Henry understood worship and the sacraments will be explored in detail. Second, regarding this work's approach to history, Henry's worship, as an English Presbyterian worship, will be interpreted as a case study of worship in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries by comparing and evaluating his worship with previous examples of Reformed worship. Third, in order to investigate how and to what extent Henry followed Reformed tradition in his worship ministry, this book will primarily look into his practice or ritual, considering related liturgical texts as necessary. This third method is especially necessary for understanding Henry's worship because he did not use a formulary for worship as a main text. Using these three methods, this book will discern how Henry understood and practiced English Presbyterian worship as an example of worship in his context and, further, will suggest how contemporary churches can appropriately develop and articulate their worship in their contexts based on the principles found in Henry's worship.

## OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In order to accomplish its objectives, this book will proceed according to the following outline. First, Henry's worship ministry came out of his own specific context. In order to understand Henry's emerging Reformed Presbyterian worship, it is first necessary to examine his liturgical context.

6. Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, 4.10.16.

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Chapter one will examine Henry's liturgical context, giving particular attention to the political situation out of which it emerged. The Act of Uniformity (1662) and the Act of Toleration (1689) were two important political enactments of the English monarchy; together they had profound implications for Henry's ministry. Henry was born in 1662, the year in which the Act of Uniformity was passed, and he began his ministry as a Presbyterian divine right after the Act of Toleration was passed. Henry began his ministry in a time of freedom of worship. Contemporary churches also function in an era of freedom of worship. In this regard, a period of freedom of worship as Henry's liturgical context was not much different from that of contemporary worship, though many other cultural shifts have changed the landscape of worship today.

Before delving into Henry's understanding and practice of worship, chapter two will investigate Henry's life and thought. It will do so by examining biographies, funeral sermons delivered on the occasion of his death, and critical analyses of his thought. Although he was influenced by Puritan theologians and ministered as a Nonconformist, this chapter will argue that it is more appropriate to identify Henry as an English Presbyterian divine. Moreover, Henry published many books concerning Christian piety in addition to the *Bible Commentary*. Most scholars have been interested in him only as a Bible commentator. However, in order to understand Henry's thought, it is also necessary to examine all other works by Henry. By looking at his other works besides his *Commentary*, this chapter will show that communion with God as a pattern of relationship between humanity and God lies at the core of Henry's thought.

Chapters three and four, the main body of this work, will examine Henry's theology of worship and sacraments. The premise of these two chapters is that Henry developed his understanding of English Presbyterian worship as an expression or realization of communion with God. This was at the heart of his understanding of worship. Chapter three will examine how Henry constructed his understanding of Christian worship as a liturgical pattern of communion with God based on his reading and interpreting the Bible. Chapter four will investigate his understanding of the sacraments as concrete guides for a Christian's communion with God in daily life as well as essential rites of the church. These two chapters will show readers to what extent Henry followed the Reformed tradition he received, which emphasizes the Bible and discipleship in everyday life in its understanding of Christian worship and the sacraments. To assess the

relevance of Henry's work to today's context, these two chapters will appraise Henry's strengths and weaknesses as a prelude to the application of his thought for contemporary churches.

Chapter five will examine the practice of Henry's public worship. The main focus of this chapter is not on the theological understanding of Henry's worship but on the practice of Henry's public worship. To state that Henry had a clear understanding of Reformed worship does not guarantee that he practiced public worship in accord with how he thought about it. Most Protestant theologians follow Geoffrey Wainwright's argument in his book *Doxology* for primacy of belief in worship: *lex credendi, lex orandi* (the rule/law of faith leads the rule/law of prayer).<sup>7</sup> However, regardless of specific issues on the debate of the relationship between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*,<sup>8</sup> the real practice of a given worship service must be examined and interpreted in order to find the underlying assumptions and beliefs that shape those practices. By comparing Henry's public worship service with previous Reformed worship services such as John Calvin's Liturgy, John Knox's Genevan Liturgy, the *Westminster Directory*, Richard Baxter's Reformed Liturgy, and Philip Henry's public worship, this chapter will show that Henry developed liturgical practices not by simply adopting previous patterns but by creatively applying them to his own context with permeating Reformed aspects.

Through this work, this book anticipates that contemporary churches can glean helpful insights from Henry's liturgical insights and practices. Henry inherited a tradition associated with Calvin, Knox and *The Westminster Directory*. Yet his work of receiving, honoring that tradition through the lens of Biblical primacy in his day, becomes a model for all churches today.

7. See Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: A Systematic Theology*.

8. Geoffrey Wainwright emphasizes theological reflection over the worship service in the relationship between each sphere; Edward Kilmartin looks into the dynamic inter-relationship between the worship service and faith. Cf. Wainwright, *Doxology*, 218–86; Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*. In contrast, Aidan Kavanagh and David Fagerberg established another paradigm in terms of liturgical theology: worship is the primary theology and theological reflection is the secondary theology; primary theology (*lex orandi*) establishes secondary theology (*lex credendi*), and so they emphasize primary theology over the secondary theology. Cf. Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*; Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima*.