

Constructing a Liturgical Theology of the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea (GAPCK: Hapdong)

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Introduction

This short article attempts to construct a liturgical theology of the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea (GAPCK). As a Reformed tradition, the GAPCK has two solid foundations for its theology and practice: the Bible and the theology of Calvin. The GAPCK frequently uses Calvin's theology as the primary hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible and applying it to ministerial practice and the Christian life. In this regard, a liturgical theology of the GAPCK should also be constructed within the frame of Calvin's theology in order to be effective for this ecclesial body. However, liturgical theology does not exclude the realities of worship services. Local worship services within the GAPCK do not follow any written text or rubric that can be applied to and required of all churches in the denomination. Given this complexity of liturgical theology, first and foremost, Calvin's ideal of Christian worship will be briefly defined as a standard for GAPCK worship services. Second, the liturgical reality of the GAPCK will be examined in order to see how much they follow and/or stray from their Calvinist theological confession. Third, based on the similarities and gulfs between Calvin's ideal of Christian worship and the liturgical practice of the GAPCK, a liturgical theology will be suggested for GAPCK to develop a Calvinist worship service that is appropriate for the Calvinist confession.

The Calvinist's Ideal of Christian Worship: A Standard of the GAPCK

As a theologian, Calvin had a Trinitarian understanding and practice of Christian worship. For instance, in *the Form of Church Prayers* (1542, Geneva), his Trinitarian approach to Christian worship is clear in the first section on "confession": "Deign, then, *O most gracious*

*and most merciful God and Father, to bestow thy mercy upon us in the name of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Effacing our faults, and washing away all our pollutions, daily increase to us the gifts of thy Holy Spirit.”*¹

According to Calvinist theology, the Trinitarian understanding of Christian worship is not just for a theological basis but also for the form and content: *lex credendi, lex orandi*. All forms of the worship service are reflections of Trinitarian understanding: Christian worship is “the meeting of Jesus Christ and His Church,” glorifying God the Father, and the “mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.” The core aspect of Calvin’s Trinitarian approach to Christian worship is the meeting of Christ and the church to glorify God the Father in the help of the Holy Spirit. By God’s (especially, the Holy Spirit’s) initiation, people can enter into or participate in the meeting. This meeting requires a formal ritual. Calvin stressed the Word and the Table as main elements of the worship service: “Whenever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, the sacraments [should be] administered according to Christ’s institution.”² Calvinist theology of Christian worship validates the service of the Word and the Table as the key ideal forms from Calvin. Further, Calvin asserted, “The Supper could have been administered most becomingly if it were set before the church very often, and at least once a week.”³ The meeting of Christ and his church is enabled through the Word and the Table in Calvinist understanding.

The Historical Development of the GAPCK Worship Service

The GAPCK is one of the largest denominations in South Korea that follows the Calvinist tradition. Over the 120 years of Christian history in South Korea, GAPCK worship services have dramatically changed in form and are still changing. Although the Calvinist tradition in South Korea has a short history, describing the liturgical facts of its worship services is not a simple task. First of all, it is very hard to find any clear *Ordo* in a GAPCK worship service. *Ordo* is understood as a rubric, rules, or prescriptions of liturgy. However, as Schmemmann said, *Ordo* may be “problematical both in scope and content, and that selectivity and judgment are required in its use; i.e., the application of criteria and premises which are not found within it in explicit form,”⁴ even in the Calvinist tradition. Finding any clear *Ordo* or structure of worship in the GAPCK is much more difficult than in any liturgies that follow rubrics or prescriptions. One clear thing about the GAPCK worship practice, in terms of *Ordo*, is that

except for the time of gathering and dismissal, the Word (reading and preaching) is the single element of Ordo that may be seen in its liturgical structure.

However, current GAPCK worship has amassed various strata in its historical development. The original worship service in the GAPCK was shaped by the first missionaries who came from the United States in the 1890s. Their liturgical training was influenced by the Free Church or Puritan patterns that were distinct from Calvin's Genevan liturgy. Calvin's Genevan liturgy was more liturgical than those of the Free Church or Puritan congregations. Both Calvin's liturgy and Puritan worship emphasized the Word in worship service. However there is a clear difference between them in that Puritan worship service followed a simpler pattern by eliminating some liturgical patterns such as reading the scriptures and confessing some written prayers. In the 1920s, many Presbyterian theologians and pastors in South Korea began to renew their liturgy according to Reformed liturgical traditions such as Calvin's liturgy.⁵ They began to apply Calvin's Genevan liturgy to the actual practice of worship services. However, the liturgical shape was not renewed as they desired, and instead they became more aware of liturgies that "were already familiar to them [i.e., Puritan and non-liturgical pattern]."⁶ Since then, no particular liturgical renewals have appeared until the late 1980s. They did not keep trying to renew the practice of worship. Instead, the central concern for many South Korean Calvinist theologians and pastors has been to carry out orthodox Reformed [Calvin's] doctrine and to develop their own solid theological confession in order to equip Christians with the Calvinist confession. More recently, new nonliturgical patterns of worship services, popularly referred to as "praise and worship," seekers' service, and "revival style of worship,"⁷ have spread quickly in the GAPCK.⁸ In this way, throughout its historical development, the exterior pattern of a typical GAPCK worship service has included a mixture of Puritan, Genevan, and current nonliturgical worship forms.

The Zwinglian Pattern of Worship Service

Intentionally or unintentionally, the GAPCK worship service has been characterized by the Zwinglian pattern of Word-centered worship. At the beginning of its development, the GAPCK strictly followed the Puritan missionaries' teaching of a Bible-centered faith and practice. This teaching naturally brought about a pattern of worship in which reading and

preaching the Word provided the main structure of their worship. This basic structure of the service of the Word has not changed through the history, although there have been various minor changes in the elements of worship. Still today, most worship begins with the Word in a “call to worship” or “invocation prayer.” The representative prayer in the worship service begins by reading a passage of the Bible, and then Bible reading and preaching are the main parts of the worship. The other elements of the worship before and after the preaching seem to be trivial elements. This preaching-centered pattern is essentially the same as that of the Zwinglian Zurich worship service of the sixteenth century. In the “Liturgy of the Word,” Zwingli omitted all other liturgical elements, such as confession and even singing, except prayer and the sermon.⁹

In addition, the Table is not included in every Lord’s Day worship service in GAPCK tradition. As for the frequency, most GAPCK churches have been following the Zwinglian custom of four times per year. Regardless of whether they have a liturgical or worship book, most local churches in the GAPCK do put the priority on the Word in designing and practicing their worship services. They directly or indirectly reflect this rule on their current liturgical ministries. This Word-centered worship service is a reflection of one of the Reformation principles—*sola scriptura* (“Scripture alone”)—which has been at the center of the Protestant tradition from its burgeoning stage in the Reformation. In this regard, GAPCK worship services may be certainly regarded as following the Zwinglian pattern of the Word-centered worship service.

The Gulf between the Theology of Christian Worship and Its Practice in the GAPCK

There is a gulf between Calvin’s theology of Christian worship and its practice in the GAPCK. Although the GAPCK confesses Calvin’s theology as a standard for Christian worship, their real practice reveals the pattern of the Zwinglian Word-centered worship service. For Calvin’s and Calvinist theology of Christian worship, the service of the Word and the Table is not only the primitive church’s model but also a Trinitarian pattern. This pattern has as its basis the Bible and Trinitarian theology.¹⁰ Yet despite its theological confession, the GAPCK pattern can be called the Zwinglian Prone worship service.

This gulf is not a simple issue that can easily be bridged by adding the Table element to every Lord’s Day worship service. Most of the worship services in the Calvinist tradition and

history over the past four centuries have followed a Word-centered liturgy, with the tension of not administering the Table every week. This Word-centered worship service has been shaping various liturgical patterns for each Protestant tradition, especially the Free Church tradition. By opening itself to various elements of Christian worship, the Word-centered worship service not only shows us a different theology in the Protestant tradition but also makes liturgical theology more complex because it leads us to consider various liturgical contexts as well as the doctrine.

The complexity of liturgical theology can be seen in the GAPCK. The Word-centered worship service pattern is a dynamic changeable phenomenon based on the Word in its form and content. This pattern is not simply nonliturgical but is a very dynamic worship service, because it includes or is open to including many liturgical elements, such as confession of sins, reading the Psalms, the Apostles' Creed, etc., according to each local worship pattern. At the same time, it is not a typical liturgical worship service such as the Roman Mass or Eastern liturgy but is still characterized by solid-structured worship. It is oriented toward Puritan individual piety, can be emotionally intense and sometimes have an anti-intellectual aspect, and does not celebrate the Table on every Lord's Day service of worship.

Although a satisfactory response to the service of the Word with infrequent administration of the Table has not yet been articulated, the importance of the service of the Word has been articulated and developed within an enduring structure yet including various phenomena in the GAPCK. This is a starting point for constructing our liturgical theology as a methodology to develop our own worship service. How can we bridge the gulf between Calvin's theology of liturgy and the Zwinglian practice of worship? Calvin's theology of liturgy strongly emphasizes the balance between the Word and the Table. However Zwinglian practice of worship just stresses the Word with infrequent celebrating of the Table. How can the service of the Word become the service of the Word and Table in order to be an appropriate Calvinist worship service?

Validation of the GAPCK Worship Service: The Zwinglian Service of the Word

Before criticizing the Zwinglian Word-centered service pattern with outside theological criteria, the theological meaning and value in that pattern should first be identified. One can find some Calvinist function and meaning in the service of the Word. In an article of in-depth

research on Reformed Calvinist liturgy, Nicholas Wolterstorff probes the genius of the historical and current Calvinist liturgy. His historical and theological analysis of Calvinist liturgy shows why Calvinist worship has been shaped into the current service of the Word.

Wolterstorff apologetically validates the Word-centered worship. First, Wolterstorff distinguishes the structure from the phenomenon.¹¹ Christian worship has an enduring structure that was shaped in the early church's worship and still continues among the current churches' worship. The enduring structure, for Wolterstorff, can be found in Justin Martyr's second-century liturgy: the liturgy of the Word and Sacrament. This structure has various phenomena in different times in history. In the medieval period, the service of the Table, or Eucharist, was the phenomenon showing the structure of the worship. In contrast, in the Reformed age, the Word was the phenomenon. Although the structure of the worship itself endures, the phenomenon is different in each age.

Wolterstorff also suggests that the Reformers' liturgical reforming idea was that "God is actively present or doing" in the liturgy, as opposed to "Christ's presence by the priest."¹² Worship is God's work, and God is actively "doing" in the worship service. People respond to God in faith and gratitude by the help of God (the Holy Spirit). This was realized or practiced in the Calvinist worship service by stressing the phenomenon of the liturgical structure in the Word, specifically in the sermon. The Calvinist tradition was inclined to see the reading and preaching of the Word as "a single liturgical unit" or "one inseparable element which Calvin called 'the incomparable treasure of the church.'"¹³ Wolterstorff emphasizes that the reading and preaching of the Word can be liturgically understood as God's work by saying that "God's voice resounds in the mouth and tongue of the preacher so that hearing the minister preach is like hearing God himself speak."¹⁴ Especially through the preaching of the Word, God works in the worship service: "by way of sermon God speaks directly to the contemporary situation of the church by means of one of its contemporary members."¹⁵ In this way, God is present through the spoken Word in the liturgy. People also respond to this active working of God by reflecting the proclaimed Word in the liturgy. In the liturgy, God acts; people respond. In this response, the congregants receive God's grace by faith: "God's action must be received in faith and applied by the Spirit."¹⁶

Limitations of Word-Centered Worship

Although the service of the Word in the GAPCK has validity in its historical development, accepting this worship pattern as the rule for the GAPCK today has some limitations. First of all, the Word-centered worship service, as Wolterstorff argues, was a reaction to the medieval mass. The historical context of the GAPCK is different from that of the Reformers; since we live in another context the object of our liturgical reaction is not the same as the Reformers. We cannot advocate applying and practicing our Calvinist worship service of the Word in every context. The GAPCK worship service may emphasize another aspect of Christian worship for its congregations. All the congregations of the GAPCK do not consist of only the baptized. They are a mix of the baptized and uninitiated people or new comers. Also, their cultural context is not like sixteenth-century European society. Thus, contemporary reforming of the worship service should be different from that of the Reformers.¹⁷

In addition, the Word-centered worship service, by stressing God's activity in the liturgy through the Word, is inclined to be inward and individually focused. Stressing God's action through the Word in the worship service leads people to an internal experience of God's action. The Calvinist service of the Word has a tendency to put the weight more on the intellectual response rather than on the physical or the whole body's participation. This inwardness as a response of Calvinist worship could be a strength and at the same time a weakness. The person's inner or spiritual response to God is at the core of his or her spirituality. However, whole-person response or participation should be attentively included. Because of its emphasis on the intellectual response, GAPCK Calvinist worship service may lose the physical or whole-person response.

Furthermore, the Zwinglian pattern of infrequent celebration of the Table may lose the crucial meaning of the Calvinist understanding of the presence of Christ. Zwingli emphasized the subjective aspect of the Table by rejecting the literal meaning of material change: "the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's death"¹⁸; to him, "faith springs not from things accessible to sense nor are they objects of faith."¹⁹ This emphasis of faith in relation to the Table can cause one to overlook the important objective meaning of the Table. Calvin and Calvinist tradition emphasize the human meeting or union with Christ through the worship service based on the Trinitarian definition of worship. John Nevin, a Calvinist sacramental theologian,

developed this mystical union aspect of Christian worship through the Word and the Table: “the last ground of all true Christian worship is the mystical presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist; all the parts of public worship are inwardly bound together by their having a common relation to the idea of a Christian altar.”²⁰ In this regard, the Zwinglian infrequent celebration of the Table and its emphasis of the memory rather than the real presence in the material could not fulfill the Calvinist ideal of more frequent administration of the Table and its sacramental meaning.

New Direction for GAPCK Worship

Although the GAPCK does not need to immediately give up its Word-centered worship service, when considering the limitations of the pattern, it is necessary for her to take a new direction for reforming worship service. Moreover, if the GAPCK intends to stick with Calvinist tradition in theology and church ministry, the Calvinist worship service should be suggested. As stated above, for Calvin and Calvinist theology, the service of the Word and the Table on every Lord’s Day reflects the Trinitarian understanding of Christian worship. Moreover, the service of the Word and the Table is an expression of Calvinist theology. Therefore, there are two key rules in the Calvinist worship service: a Trinitarian approach to worship (*Opus Dei*) and a liturgical expression of the economic theology of the Trinitarian God (*lex credendi est lex orandi*). For Calvinists, including the GAPCK, the worship service should be God’s work for people in and through the ritual and it also should be an expression of the theological conviction of the Trinitarian God. In conclusion, I would like to suggest three basic principles to help the GAPCK worship service become a more Calvinist worship service.

First and foremost, constructing a liturgical theology for the GAPCK should be focused on the Trinitarian approach to worship and its theological expression of worship. This work is not only to plant the pattern of the service of the Word and the Table but to take the Trinitarian principle of worship seriously. As the GAPCK confesses its Calvinist theology, the ritual pattern of worship should also reflect the Trinitarian understanding of God. The subject of worship is not the human being but God. God is working in and through the worship ritual pattern. The designer and leader of the worship service should consider the aspect of God’s active and subjective working in worship. Moreover, the worship leaders should seek to express their Trinitarian theology of God in order for worship practice to be consistent with their confession. For example,

the Trinitarian aspect can be reflected in the content of prayers and worship music as well as in the preaching.

Second, the traditional Calvinist pattern of the Word and the Table should not be ignored. For Calvin and Calvinist theology, both the Word and the Table are means of God's grace that enable us to encounter God.²¹ In the worship service, God is acting to lead the participants to encounter Jesus Christ through the Word and the Table. God speaks to the people through the reading and preaching of the Word and the Holy Spirit leads the people to be lifted up to Christ through the Table. In this way, Calvinist traditions have regarded the Word and the Table as crucial means for the worshippers' encountering the Trinitarian God. For the GAPCK, the issue is not the pattern of the Word and the Table but the frequency. The ideal is the service of the Word and the Table on every Lord's Day worship; "this can be done simply by increasing the number each year from four to six, or six to eight, or eight to twelve as the case may be."²² This will be more effective when several meaning dimensions of the Lord's Supper are reclaimed.²³

Third, a liturgical theology of the GAPCK should consider its present time and situation. Calvin and the Calvinist ideal of worship was a product of a response to medieval liturgy. This historical aspect of liturgical theology should be included in the liturgical theology of the GAPCK too. As a methodology, liturgical theology covers both theory (secondary theology/*lex credendi*) and practice (primary theology/*lex orandi*). The interrelationship between theological reflection and ritual practice should be considered in liturgical theology. Here the problem in the Free Church context, including the GAPCK, is that the practice is always changing. The ritual practice is influenced by not only its theological confession but also its various contextual situations. Moreover, it also does not follow any written worship text. In this regard, in order to have a more appropriate Calvinist worship service, the GAPCK should take up the burden of doing primary theology in liturgical reflection. For example, the contemporary cultural situation of GAPCK congregations could be an influential factor in changing the worship service.

Conclusion

Calvin approached Christian worship with a Trinitarian perspective: Christian worship is to meet Jesus Christ to glorify God the Father through the help of the Holy Spirit. In the worship service, God initiates and human beings respond to God's grace. This Trinitarian understanding

of Christian worship can be experienced in the pattern of the service of the Word and the Table, which is the Reformed Calvinist pattern of worship. Being within the Calvinist tradition, the GAPCK took Calvin's Trinitarian understanding of Christian worship. However, as we examined GAPCK worship practice, it reveals a Zwinglian Word-centered pattern that is different from Calvin's ideal. Although the Word-centered worship service can be validated, that pattern is not complete but limited in its capacity to be a fully Calvinist worship pattern. Taking its context seriously, this short article does not suggest that the GAPCK change the Zwinglian pattern of the Word-centered worship service to Calvin's ideal pattern of the Word and the Table on every Lord's Day worship service. Rather, more foundational and possible steps have been suggested for a Calvinist worship service: to take the Trinitarian principle in designing and planning worship services; not to ignore the Calvinist traditional pattern of the Word and the Table as a Trinitarian approach to Christian worship; and to consider the contemporary worship context in order to keep reforming the worship service. These suggestions cannot provide simple answers to the complex issues of constructing a liturgical theology for GAPCK. Yet if the GAPCK wants to continue to follow Calvinist tradition, the worship pattern should always be reformed according to Calvin's ideal both in its nature and pattern.

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Abstract

Title: Constructing a Liturgical Theology of the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea (GAPCK: Hapdong)

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Liturgical theology takes into account the theological aspect of liturgy since liturgy is not a work of people but a work of God for people. This liturgical task is also done in each liturgical context. The General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea (GAPCK) accepts Calvin's Trinitarian understanding of Christian worship which is composed of the Word and the Table as a standard. However, GAPCK worship practice reveals a Zwinglian Word-centered pattern that is different from Calvin's ideal. Although the Word-centered worship service can be validated, that pattern is not complete but limited in its capacity to be a fully Calvinist worship pattern. This article does not suggest that the GAPCK should change its Zwinglian pattern of the Word-centered worship service to Calvin's ideal pattern of the Word and the Table on every Lord's Day worship service. Rather, more foundational and possible steps have been suggested for a Calvinist worship service: to take the Trinitarian principle in designing and planning worship services; not to ignore the Calvinist traditional pattern of the Word and the Table as a Trinitarian approach to Christian worship; and to consider the contemporary worship context in order to continue reforming the worship service.

* Key words:

Calvin, Zwingli, Liturgical Theology, Korean Reformed Worship, Trinitarian Worship
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¹ John Calvin, “Forms of Prayer For the Church (1542),” in *Calvin’s Tracts*, vol. 2, trans. Henry Beveridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 100; italics added.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.9.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.17.43.

⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1966), 35.

⁵ Some Korean liturgical theologians would like to call this movement “liturgical renewal movement.” Cf. Seung-Joong Joo and Kyeong-Jin Kim, “The Reformed Tradition in Korea,” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainright and Karen Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 484-91.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The style of this worship service can be caricatured as “preliminaries,” “sermon,” and “a harvest of new converts.” Although this service looks like an evangelistic service, Korean pastors accept this pattern for the Lord’s Day worship service for both newcomers and the baptized.

⁸ Some people may call this movement a worship renewal. However, I would not like to call it worship renewal since they did not try to connect the pattern to their traditions.

⁹ Ulrich Zwingli, “Liturgy of the Word (1525),” in *Liturgies of the Western Church*, ed. Bard Thompson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 147-48.

¹⁰ A basic meaning of Trinitarian theology is a study of God’s being and acts as the foundation for ministry and life.

¹¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Reformed Liturgy,” In *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, edited by Donald McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 277.

¹² *Ibid.*, 286.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁷ How to reform the worship service in this century will be another issue; so I would like to defer that issue to my future research.

¹⁸ Ulrich Zwingli, “On the True and False Religion,” in *Commentary on True and False Religion*, ed. Samuel Jackson and Clarence Heller (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1981), 228.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁰ John Nevin, *Liturgical Question* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1862), 23; quoted in Howard Hageman, *Pulpit and Table* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 295.

²¹ Ronald Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and the Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 137: “though the sacraments are ineffective without the Word, nevertheless the bare word cannot have its full effect without the sacraments.” Thomas Long also stressed that there is a “reciprocal relationship” between the Word and the Table: “the sermon clarifies and anticipates the full apprehension of Christ’s presence; the meal enables and confirms that apprehension.” Long, “Reclaiming the Unity of Word and Sacrament in Presbyterian and Reformed Worship,” *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 16, no. 1 (1982): 13.

²² Hageman, *Pulpit and Table*, 116.

²³ Long’s reclaiming several dimensions of meaning in the Eucharist is a fascinating suggestion—over the simple understanding and practice of the Zwinglian pattern of “the remembrance of the Christ.” Long introduces James White’s seven theological meanings of the Lord’s Supper as a practical measure that we could develop in the church’s Eucharistic ministry. Those seven theological themes are thanksgiving, fellowship, commemoration, sacrifice, real presence, work of the Holy Spirit, and eschatological hope. Cf. James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 222-24. Hageman also suggested articulating several meanings of the Eucharist; cf. Hageman, *Pulpit and Table*, 116-17.