

THE LORD'S SUPPER: FOUNDATIONS AND
PRACTICE IN PURITAN LITURGY

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The Lord's Supper, Eucharist, and Communion: over the centuries these terms have been used by Christians to name one of the two most fundamental worship practices inherent to Christian identity. For the greater part of church history, as well as in many modern worshipping traditions, this practice forms the heart of Christian liturgy. But which one is it: The Lord's Supper, Eucharist, or Communion?

The Lord's Supper connotes the final Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples and was recorded in all four gospels. As Jesus shared the cup of wine and the bread, he gave new meaning to the covenant meal of the Exodus. Jesus told his disciples that as often as they would drink the cup and eat the bread it would be in remembrance of him.¹ In 1 Cor. 11:17-34, the Apostle Paul points to the Lord's Supper as a memorial meal helping the church remember Christ's suffering and death. For churches that choose the focus of the Lord's Supper, this crucial expression of worship becomes a time for congregational confession, repentance, and personal identification with Christ's suffering.²

Eucharist is a word derived from the Greek *eucharistia* and is also found in 1 Cor. 11:24.³

¹Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 87.; Matt. 26:26-29, Mk. 14:22-25, Lk. 22:14-23 (ESV).

²Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 87.

³John S. Hammett, *40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel

Eucharistia means “thanksgiving,” and also contains roots of the words used for joy (*chara*) and grace (*charis*).⁴ Churches that choose to identify with the term eucharist focus on thanksgiving as a central part of their worship through Christ’s table.

The word communion comes from the King James Bible’s translation of the Greek word, *koinonia*.⁵ In Acts 2:42, Luke uses this word to emphasize the fellowship found when Jesus’ disciples broke bread together.⁶ Worship scholar Constance Cherry writes that the term communion conveys a deep sense of togetherness around Christ’s table in the spirit of Eph. 4:4-6, “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”⁷

For Puritans, worshiping around the Lord’s table was of crucial importance to communal and individual piety. Through which lens did the Puritans view this fundamental worship practice; Lord’s Supper, eucharist, or communion? Perhaps a case could be made that Puritan worship employed all three of these views in some form or fashion. However, through careful exploration, I hope to identify which of these positions most closely aligns with Puritan doctrine and practice.

Thesis and Methodology

In this paper, I will investigate the doctrines and worship practices defining Puritan

Publications, 2015), 185.

⁴Hammett, *40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*, 185.

⁵Hammett, *40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*, 186.

⁶Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 88.

⁷Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 88.

understanding of the Christian covenant meal. I will demonstrate, that the Puritans employed the Lord's Supper as their preferred model of Table worship. I will trace understanding of the Lord's Supper from Scripture, to the early church, to Calvin's Institutes, and finally to Puritan doctrine and liturgy. I will validate my thesis by consulting a number of primary and secondary sources.

The Last Supper and Early Christian Practice

When Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with the Apostles, he told them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."⁸ "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"⁹ The story of the Last Supper recounted in the gospels directed early Christians to "do this in remembrance"¹⁰ of Jesus. The Apostle Paul uses words for Lord's Supper (*kuriakos deipnon*) and the word for eucharist (*eucharistia*) when he instructs the Corinthian church concerning the practice of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11:17-33.¹¹

Apart from the teaching of the Apostle Paul, the *Didache* is the earliest Christian teaching on the Lord's Supper. The *Didache* teaches Christians concerning the cup:

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the holy vine of David your servant,
which you have made known to us
through Jesus, your servant;
to you be the glory forever.¹²

⁸Lk 22:15.

⁹Lk 22:19-20

¹⁰Lk 22:19-20.

¹¹Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 87.

¹²Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI:

And concerning the broken bread:

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the life and knowledge
that you have made known to us
through Jesus, your servant;
to you be the glory forever.¹³

The Didache, displays similarities to scriptural texts in the way it guides Christian churches to employ the Lord's Supper as a way to retell, remember, and rehearse the life, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Just after the Apostolic period, in approximately 150 AD, Justin Martyr wrote to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius giving a detailed description of the Lord's Supper.¹⁴ This letter, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr*, refers to the supper as *eucharistia* or eucharist. Although Martyr uses the word translated as eucharist, he still stresses Christian worship and formation through remembrance as he cites the Gospel of Luke 22:19, "Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, 'This do ye in remembrance of Me. This is My body;' and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, 'This is my blood;' and gave it to them alone."¹⁵ Justin Martyr writes in his letter to the Emperor, that "no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined."¹⁶ It is clear from Martyr's apology that the early church valued the Lord's Supper

Baker Academic, 2007), 357-58.

¹³Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 357-58.

¹⁴Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 105.

¹⁵Justin Martyr, trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr* (Greenwood, WI: Suzeteo Enterprises, 2012), 70.

¹⁶Martyr, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr*, 69.

as an instructive and formational liturgical practice, but the church also restricted those who participated as those who were baptized believing members. These two practices of keeping the Lord's Supper in memory of Jesus and restricting those who participated to being baptized believers were values shared by Puritan Christians over thirteen hundred years later.

Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

The first generation of Protestant reformers produced three distinctly different positions on the Lord's Supper. Motivated by the Reformation value of *sola Scriptura*, Martin Luther selectively changed the elements and order of the Roman mass.¹⁷ While softening the Roman church's understanding of transubstantiation to one of consubstantiation, Luther's Table liturgy retained the lens of eucharist. Ulrich Zwingli chose a liturgical model consisting mostly of a sermon and prayers.¹⁸ Zwingli unbendingly held the significance of Christ's Table to one of strict remembrance with a frequency of observance occurring four times per year: Easter, Pentecost, Autumn, and Christmas.¹⁹ Zwingli designed his worship liturgies exclusively according to what he observed in God's Word with little in the way of aesthetic consideration.²⁰ John Calvin also focused his doctrine of Table worship on God's Word, but he kept the basic liturgical contours of the Roman mass. Calvin could hold this position while simultaneously regulating his worship to practices found in Scripture because he "viewed the Word as more extensive than the sermon...borrowing from Augustine, he spoke of the Lord's Supper as a 'visible word...thus, in understanding Calvin's thinking, it is a grave error to replace the primacy of the Word with the

¹⁷Jonathan Gibson, & Mark Earney, ed. *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018), 80-1.

¹⁸R. J. Gore Jr., *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principle* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 73.

¹⁹Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 178.

²⁰Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 180-81.

primacy of preaching.”²¹

Calvin understood worship as a continuation of the covenant relationship described in Scripture. To Calvin, covenantal worship always involves Word and sign. Calvin believed God “tempers himself to our capacity.”²² Calvin understood that because God knows us better than we know ourselves, he “provides for the elect visible means to help them know God’s mercies.”²³ Calvin believed that the sacraments of Lord’s Supper and Baptism, “provided those visible signs of God’s love whereby God ‘imparts spiritual things under visible ones.’”²⁴ For instance, Calvin taught that the Lord’s Supper, as sacrament, was a mandate from Christ and also served as a sign that seals God’s Word on the hearts of his elect. Not only did Calvin believe the sacraments were seals used to confirm the Word, Calvin taught that, as sacrament, the Lord’s Supper served as a “true visible representation of the invisible spiritual things to which the Word directs us.”²⁵ Calvin identifies an example of this concept in the book of Acts, chapter two. Calvin writes, “in God’s action there is a correspondence between the sign and the reality. When the Spirit was given to the Apostles they saw cloven tongues of fire ‘because the preaching of the gospel was to spread through all tongues and was to possess the power of fire.’”²⁶

Calvin also knew that signs have limitations. Calvin taught that this limitation came in the sign’s need for connection to God’s Word. Calvin believed God’s revelation “never takes place without a word.”²⁷ Calvin writes,

²¹Gore Jr., *Covenantal Worship*, 72-3.

²²James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 64.

²³White, *Protestant Worship*, 64.

²⁴White, *Protestant Worship*, 64.

²⁵Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 140.

²⁶Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 140.

²⁷Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 72.

from the very beginning of the world, whenever God offered any sign to the holy patriarchs, it was inseparably attached to doctrine, without which our senses would gaze bewildered on an unmeaning object. Therefore, when we hear mention made of the sacramental word, let us understand the promise which, proclaimed aloud by the minister, leads the people by the hand to that to which the sign tends and directs us.²⁸

While Covenantal worship always involves Word and sign – for Calvin, God’s Word always takes prominence. Signs are essentially aids helping humans in our efforts to comprehend the divine.²⁹ Pastor and author Ronald S. Wallace writes,

God, through the signs, seeks to give man something earthly to lay hold of with his mind, not in order that man may drag God downwards to become one standing on man’s own level but in order that God may, by thus getting hold of the perverse and sluggish mind of his creature, raise him up from the earthly world to the heavenly mystery, and deliver him from small self-centered conceptions by giving him truly God-centered conceptions.³⁰

In Calvin’s Lord’s Supper, the table certainly functions as a sign, “which God ever commanded men to use, that he might make them sure and confident of the truth of his promises.”³¹ However, Calvin also calls the Supper a sacred mystery that consists of corporeal signs and spiritual truth.³² In partaking the Lord’s Supper, “a soul must partake of Christ truly and thoroughly, that by his energy it may grow up into spiritual life.”³³ Although Calvin calls the Lord’s Supper a sacrament, he does not believe the Lord’s Supper contributes towards one’s salvation, nor is the Supper Rome’s transubstantiation or Luther’s consubstantiation. Rather, the

²⁸John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in *The Library of Christian Classics: Vol. XX–XXI*, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 844.

²⁹Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 78.

³⁰Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 79.

³¹Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 852.

³²Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 901.

³³Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 898.

eating of Christ's body in the Supper is "nothing else than the eating of faith, and that no other eating can be imagined."³⁴ By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is truly present in the Supper, but his presence is spiritual; and Jesus' spiritual presence is no less real or efficacious. Calvin describes how the Lord's Supper, as a sacrament of the New Covenant, is a sign of union with the Body of Christ. Calvin believes the doctrine of union with Christ to be one of the most important for Christians that they may fully comprehend the faith, life, and ordinances of the church.³⁵ Calvin believes the natural mind cannot comprehend this mystery of the faith; spiritual communion with Christ through the Lord's Supper is only possible for the elect who have the indwelling Holy Spirit to aid them.³⁶

The concept of spiritual communion with Christ connects Calvin's Table liturgy beyond the anamnesis of a memorial meal and into the realm of communion. Calvin explains that this connection to Christ is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Calvin confirms this by writing in his commentary on Ephesians, "God acts by the sign in such a manner, that its whole efficacy depends on His Spirit."³⁸ Although Calvin does not agree with either transubstantiation or Luther's consubstantiation, his concept of Holy Spirit-aided communion presents a true gift of Christ. Wallace comments, "the whole Christ is really given in the sacrament."³⁹ In Institute Four, chapter 17, section 32, Calvin writes,

³⁴Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 898.

³⁵Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 143.

³⁶Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 168.

³⁷Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 169.

³⁸Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 169.

³⁹Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 201.

The truth of God, therefore, in which I can safely rest, I here embrace without controversy. He declares that his flesh is the meat, his blood the drink, of my soul; I give my soul to him to be fed with such food. In his sacred Supper he bids men take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I have no doubt that he will truly give and I receive.⁴⁰

Calvin redefines sacraments not as means to obtain God's grace, i.e. works salvation, but as signs – covenantal evidence of God's promises. In general, Calvin describes the limitations of signs through their lack of native power. Sacraments are not magic spells meant for mankind to wield, attempting to harness the power of deity. In the case of the Lord's Supper, the grace Christians experience from this sacrament is truly a gift and a product of the Holy Spirit's work.

For Calvin, the Christian's ability to receive the Holy Spirit's work in Table liturgy comes from the worshiper's spiritual preparation through self-examination. In this way, self-examination before receiving the Lord's Supper holds great importance. Calvin seriously regarded the Apostle Paul's admonition from 1 Cor. 11:27-32. In this passage, Paul warns the church about eating or drinking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Paul writes that flippant or ignorant consumption of the Supper's elements leads to judgement, sickness, and even death. Paul encourages Christians to scrutinize their own lives and spiritual connectivity to God rather than placing themselves in great peril. Calvin demonstrates his whole-hearted belief in Paul's teaching when he writes,

Wherefore the best and only worthiness which we can bring to God, is to offer him our own vileness, and, if I may so speak, unworthiness, that his mercy may make us worthy; to despond in ourselves, that we may be consoled in him; to humble ourselves, that we may be elevated by him; to accuse ourselves, that we may be justified by him; to aspire, moreover, to the unity which he recommends in the Supper; and, as he makes us all one in himself to desire to have all one soul, one heart, one tongue. If we ponder and meditate on these things, we may be shaken, but will never be overwhelmed.⁴¹

⁴⁰Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 919.

⁴¹Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 927.

With quotes from the writings of several Church Fathers including Tertullian, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom, Calvin articulates the Christian's deep need for self-examination prior to observing the sacrament of Lord's Supper.⁴² For Calvin, the Lord's Supper is not an unimportant or fringe portion of Christian liturgy. Because of their importance, Calvin holds deep convictions concerning the real (but spiritual) presence of Christ in the Supper, weekly observance of Christ's Table, and scripturally required self-examination of the participants. The Lord's Supper, for Calvin, is a remembrance, but his remembrance holds facets of a deep spiritual communion. Calvin always referred to Table worship as a sacrament – crucial for spiritual growth and nourishment, but not salvific. Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper would be remembered and highly valued by one of the next generations of Reformed Christians, the Puritans.

English Nonconformists

Puritans are part of a broader group of Reformed Protestants called Nonconformists, appearing in England during the sixteenth century. Professor and author Stephen Mayor comments that Puritanism “is what happens when you put the ideas of Calvin into the world of Elizabeth I.”⁴³ Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, appreciated the work of Luther, and Zwingli. However, like Martin Bucer, Cranmer never fully adopted their doctrines, instead he remained “simply Protestant.”⁴⁴ In his 1548 attempt to build ecclesial bridges to the Nonconformists, Thomas Cranmer borrowed elements from Lutheran sources and produced an order for Communion in Latin, but with prayers in English. Cranmer's action “gave satisfaction

⁴²Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 931.

⁴³Stephen Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1972), ix.

⁴⁴Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, xviii.

to militantly Protestant elements.”⁴⁵ Those militant Protestants were, for the most part, Puritans; their satisfaction with Cranmer’s *Via media* only lasted so long. As English Protestants who had broken their allegiance with Rome, Puritans determined they were also not satisfied with the reform measures adopted by Cranmer and the Church of England. The spiritual heritage of many Puritans may have come through the Anglican Church, but they remained most shaped by John Calvin in their theology, doctrine, and liturgy.

Puritans Around the Table

Puritan scholar Horton Davies conveys the significance of the Puritans’ choice to call their Table liturgy ‘The Lord’s Supper’ rather than ‘Communion’ or ‘Eucharist.’⁴⁶ Davies describes how the significance of this nomenclature comes in its consistency with Puritan views on the authority of Scripture, “It would be assumed that all Puritans would be unanimous in their criticism of tradition by Scripture.”⁴⁷ In the English translation of Scripture, the Table liturgy was never referred to as Communion or Eucharist, only the Breaking of Bread or the Lord’s Supper. Davies explains how Puritans rejected the Roman Catholic understanding of the Communion as a Sacrifice and how, in order to distance themselves from this doctrine, they also rejected the posture of kneeling. Because Anglicans retained the Catholic practice of kneeling in their celebration of the Table, the posture of kneeling became another point of division between Puritans and Anglicans.⁴⁸

John Cotton, Puritan author of the book, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England* in 1645, shared five identifying marks of Puritan Lord’s Supper: worshipers sit while

⁴⁵Mayor, *The Lord’s Supper in Early English Dissent*, xvii.

⁴⁶Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1997), 204.

⁴⁷Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 204.

⁴⁸Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 204.

being served, bread and wine are blessed separately, administration of the elements is restricted to ministers, the extemporaneous nature of prayers, and one's admission to the Supper was based on repentance and faith or by letters from other churches giving assurances of such.⁴⁹ An example of the differences in America between Puritans and their North American Anglican counterparts centers on this last point and can be observed in the testimony of Anglican Thomas Lechford:

Once a moneth is a Sacrament of the Lord's Supper whereof notice is given, usually a fortnight before, and then all others departing save the Church, which is a great deal lesse in number then those that goe away, they receive the Sacrament, the Ministers and ruling Elders sitting at the Table, the rest in their seats or upon forms; All cannot see the Minister consecrating, unlesse they stand up, and make a narrow shift. Then one of the teaching Elders prays before, and blesseth, and consecrates the Bread and Wine, according to the words of Institution; the other prays after receiving of all the members: and next Communion they change turns;...and the Ministers deliver the Bread in a Charger to some of the chiefe, and peradventure gives to a few the Bread in their hands, and they deliver the Charger from one to another, till all have eaten; in like manner the Cup, till all have dranke, goes from one to another. Then a Psalme is sung, and with a short blessing the congregation is dismissed."⁵⁰

Lechford goes on to express his befuddlement at both the simplicity of the Puritan service and the fact that he, as one not belonging to the "visible saints," was kept from joining in the Lord's Supper.⁵¹ Setting boundaries for who could partake of the Lord's Supper may not have been of significant importance to Anglicans, but it was quite a serious matter to Puritans.

Puritans in both England and America were strict in their fencing of Table fellowship. Not only were church members constrained by the Apostle Paul's admonishment in 1 Cor. 11:27-34, in Puritan congregations the "ministers themselves prepared with assiduity, both in extensive and unsparing self-analysis."⁵² Davies shares the account of Puritan minister Jonathan Mitchel,

⁴⁹Horton Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans, 1629-1730* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1999), 188.

⁵⁰Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans*, 186-87.

⁵¹Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans*, 187.

⁵²Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans*, 200.

“who spent a whole preparatory day every two months before each Lord’s Supper and began it with fasting.”⁵³ Puritan self-analysis carried the burden of demonstrating one’s repentance and faith. Demonstrating repentance and faith before the Lord’s Supper frequently meant sharing personal testimonies in the gathered assembly. This public sharing became a significant burden on many congregation members, especially those with more introverted personalities. Davies shares a note from Cotton Mather and his father, Increase Mather. The Mathers felt the experience of demonstrating one’s repentance and faith was so “severe” on “quiet and sensitive persons” that “some truly gracious Souls have been discouraged from “offering themselves to join in Fellowship.”⁵⁴ The heavy task of repeatedly testifying to one’s worthiness to partake in the Lord’s Supper may well have impacted decisions made setting the frequency of Table liturgy. There were disagreements in many congregations concerning the correct time interval for celebrating the ordinance. One complaint during a debate on this subject asserted that “when Communion was held fairly frequently elders were sometimes absent, even when they had agreed to the celebration.”⁵⁵ Despite passionate debate, it was resolved in this particular debate “that the lordes supper be celebrated euey first sondaie of every moneth.”⁵⁶

Matthew Henry’s *The Communicant’s Companion* in 1704 may provide the most complete explanation of the Puritan understanding of the Lord’s Supper’s meaning.⁵⁷ Henry writes of Puritan Lord’s Suppers, “It was appointed to be a commemorating Ordinance, and a confessing Ordinance; a communicating Ordinance, and a covenanting Ordinance.”⁵⁸ Henry

⁵³Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans*, 200.

⁵⁴Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans*, 201.

⁵⁵Mayor, *The Lord’s Supper in Early English Dissent*, 23.

⁵⁶Mayor, *The Lord’s Supper in Early English Dissent*, 23.

⁵⁷Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 212.

⁵⁸Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 212.

explains what he means concerning a communicating Ordinance when he writes,

Here are not only Gospel-Truths represented to us, and confessed by us, but Gospel-Benefits offer'd to us, and accepted by us...By the Body and Blood of Christ, which this Ordinance is the Communion of, we are to understand all whose precious Benefits and Privileges which were purchased for us by the Death of Christ, and are assr'd to us upon Gospel-Terms in the everlasting Covenant...so in this Ordinance we are Partakers of Christ.⁵⁹

As Henry continues, he makes it clear that Puritan Lord's Supper is not memorialism.⁶⁰ Horton Davies esteems Puritan Lord's Supper as a *sigillum Verbi*, "a Sacrament that seals believers to the benefits of the Redeemer's Sacrifice" ... "in the full Calvinist sense."⁶¹

Liturgical Comparison

Is the Puritan Table liturgy a replica expression of Calvin's Lord's Supper doctrine? Mayor writes that "it is certainly true that behind Puritanism stands the powerful figure of Calvin."⁶² Comparing the service orders from Calvin's 1542 and 1566 Geneva liturgies with the Puritan liturgy of Middleburg in 1586 can reveal many of the functional similarities and differences between Calvin's and the Puritan's beliefs concerning Table liturgy. In the Lord's Supper services that were not celebrated weekly, Calvin's Liturgy flowed like this: Psalm reading (as a *Votum*, or vow), Exhortation, Confession, Prayer for Forgiveness, Psalm (usually sung), Prayer for Illumination, Scripture, Sermon, Intercessions, Lord's Prayer, Prayer of Preparation, Apostles' Creed, Words of Institution, Long Exhortation, Distribution, Psalm (usually sung), Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Benediction.⁶³ The Puritan service at Middleburg

⁵⁹Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 212.

⁶⁰Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 213.

⁶¹Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 213.

⁶²Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, 2.

⁶³Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 681.

progressed in much the same way: Scripture and Psalms (usually sung), Psalm reading (as a *Votum*, or vow), Confession, Psalm (usually sung), Prayer for Illumination, Lord’s Prayer, Scripture, Sermon, Intercessions, Words of Institution, Exhortation, Prayer of Thanksgiving, Distribution, Scripture, Prayer of Thanksgiving, Psalm 103 or other Psalm of Thanksgiving, and Benediction or The Grace.⁶⁴ It is helpful to see the similarities of these liturgies when displayed in columns:

Table 1: Services of the Lord’s Supper (not celebrated weekly)

| Calvin (Geneva 1542, 1566) | Puritan (Middleburg 1586) |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Votum (Psalm 124:8) | Preparatory Scripture and Psalms |
| Exhortation (1566 only) | Votum (Psalm 124:8) |
| Confession | Confession |
| Prayer for Forgiveness | |
| Psalm | Psalm |
| Prayer for Illumination | Prayer for Illumination |
| Scripture | Lord’s Prayer |
| Sermon | Scripture |
| Intercessions | Sermon |
| Lord’s Prayer (paraphrase) | Intercessions |
| Prayer of Preparation | Words of Institution |
| Apostle’s Creed | Exhortation |
| Words of Institution | Prayer of Thanksgiving |
| Long Exhortation | Distribution |
| Distribution | Scripture |
| Psalm(s) or Scripture | Prayer of Thanksgiving |
| Prayer of Thanksgiving | Psalm 103 or another Psalm of Thanksgiving |
| Benediction | Benediction or The Grace |

⁶⁴Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 684.

Source: Data adapted from Gibson, Jonathan & Mark Earngey, ed. *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018) 681-84.

Within services of the Word where the Lord’s Supper was not celebrated weekly (Calvin referred to these services as ante-communion), more similarities and differences can be observed. Calvin’s liturgies from Geneva in 1542 and 1566 took this order: *Votum* or vow⁶⁵, Exhortation (from 1562 onward), Confession, Prayer for Forgiveness, Psalm (usually sung), Prayer for Illumination, Scripture, Sermon, Intercessions, Lord’s Prayer paraphrase, and the Benediction.⁶⁶ The Puritan Middleburg liturgy from 1586 held this sequence: Preparatory Scripture and Psalms, *Votum* or vow,⁶⁷ Confession, Psalm, Prayer for Illumination, Lord’s Prayer, Scripture, Sermon, Intercessions, Psalm Benediction or the Grace, and Dismissal.⁶⁸

Table 2: Services of the Word (where the Lord’s Supper was not celebrated weekly)

| Calvin (Geneva 1542, 1566) | Puritan (Middleburg 1586) |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Votum (Psalm 124:8) | Preparatory Scripture and Psalms |
| Exhortation (1566 only) | Votum (Psalm 124:8) |
| Confession | Confession |
| Prayer for Forgiveness | Psalm |
| Psalm | Prayer for Illumination |
| Prayer for Illumination | Lord’s Prayer |
| Scripture | Scripture |
| Sermon | Sermon |
| Intercessions | Intercessions |
| Lord’s Prayer (paraphrase) | Psalm |

⁶⁵Ps 124:8.

⁶⁶Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 671.

⁶⁷Ps 124:8.

⁶⁸Gibson, *Reformation Worship*, 674.

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| Benediction | Benedictions or the Grace |
| | Dismissal |

Source: Data adapted from Gibson, Jonathan & Mark Earngey, ed. *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018) 671-74.

It is worth noting that in all of these liturgies, where Psalm or Psalms are indicated, the normal mode of congregational expression for both Calvin and Puritan practice is for the Psalms to be sung. An example of this can be found in the detailed instructions for the Middleburg Liturgy of the English Puritans, “The action thus ended, the people are to sing the 103 Psalme, My soule giue laude, &c. or some other of thankes giuing: which ended, one of the blessings before mentioned, is to be recited, and so they rise from the Table and depart.”⁶⁹ Singing is also directed in Calvin’s notes on his liturgies: “And the deacon offers the cup, saying: This is the cup of the new testament in the blood of Jesus which has been shed for you. Meanwhile, the Congregation sings the Psalm: *Louand’ et Grâce*...After thanks has been given, the Cantic of Simeon is sung: *Maintenant Seigneur Dieu*.”⁷⁰ Puritan and Calvinist singing was unaccompanied by any instrument other than the bare voices of the congregation. Both then and now, acapella congregational singing serves as a demonstration of both God’s transcendence and his immanence. These qualities can be observed no better than in the translation of Psalm 124:8 used in the Bay Psalm Book, the first book printed in British North America in 1640: “The succor which wee doe injoye, is in Jehovahs Name: who is the maker of earth, and of the heavens frame.”⁷¹

⁶⁹Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015), 339.

⁷⁰Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 208.

⁷¹, Zoltán Haraszti, *The Bay Psalm Book: The First Book Printed in British North America 1640* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 2016), 124:8.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have investigated the doctrines and worship practices that define Puritan Table liturgy. I have demonstrated that the Puritans practiced the Lord's Supper as their preferred model of Table worship over the concepts of Communion and/or Eucharist. With the support of a number of primary and secondary sources, I have traced the practice of Lord's Supper from Scripture, to the early church, to Calvin's Institutes, and finally to Puritan doctrine and liturgy.

Clearly Puritan doctrines and Table liturgy came by way of significant Calvinist influence. Calvin's passion and calling to recover true and biblical worship inspired the Puritans. When Puritan churches expressed Calvinist theology, they marked it with their own lives and experiences, producing a lived theology – Puritan lives lived in worship. Puritan pastors and laymen provide the most tangible heritage of Puritan spirituality and the best evidence of Puritan theology within devotional and instructional writings. I conclude my paper with a beautiful and representational sampling of these works:

When you thus consider the blood of Christ in all those excellencies, O then be grieved that you have so long neglected it, that you did that which was the cause why this precious blood was spilt; that you should thrust your sin into his side, to fetch his blood from his very heart. O Lord, was I the cause this blood was shed! Was it my pride and vain glory that did set a crown of thorns upon this crucified, bleeding Christ!⁷²

The opinion that the sacraments are but bare signs and seals of God's promise and grace to us, does not a little hinder piety; whereas, indeed, they are seals, as well of our service and obedience unto God; which service if we perform not to him, the sacraments seal no grace to us. But if we receive them, upon the resolution to be his faithful and penitent servants, then the sacraments do not only signify and offer, but also seal and exhibit indeed the inward spiritual grace which they outwardly promise and represent.⁷³

Thy will is in all thy provisions to enable me to grow in grace, and to be meet for thy eternal presence. My heaven-born faith gives promise of eternal sight, my new birth a pledge of never-ending life. I draw near to thee, knowing thou wilt draw near to me I ask of thee, believing though hast already given. I entrust myself to thee, for thou hast already given. I entrust myself to thee, for thou hast redeemed me. I bless and adore thee, the

⁷²Thomas A. Doolittle, *A Treatise Concerning the Lord's Supper* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, University of Michigan Reprint, 1844), 130.

⁷³Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian how to walk, that he may please God 1611; rpt.* (Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1842), 83.

eternal God, for the comfort of these thoughts, the joy of these hopes.⁷⁴

At the Lord's Table Christ kisseth his spouse with the sweetest kisses of his lips, and ravisheth her heart with his warmest love. In other ordinances he wooeth her; in this he marrieth her. In other ordinances she hath from him the salutes of a loving friend; but in this the embraces of a husband; other duties are pleasant and wholesome food, but this is the costly, delightful feast. In this Christ bringeth his beloved 'into his banqueting house,' a storehouse of all sweet delights, of variety of delicacies, 'and his banner over her is love'⁷⁵

You will say that if you could have Christ crucified again before your eyes, if you could see the body of Christ hanging upon the cross and there behold Him crucified, and hearing Him cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," you would think that, if your hearts did not break for sin, they were desperately hard. Know every time that you have come to receive the sacrament, you came to see such a sight, and is it not as great an aggravation of the hardness of your heart if it has not broken at this sight as it would be if it should not break at that sight?⁷⁶

And, when I could no longer look,
I blest his Name that gave and took,
That layd my goods now in the dust:
Yea so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was his own; it was not mine;
Far be it that I should repine.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Arthur Bennett, ed. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (East Peoria, IL: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 164.

⁷⁵Stephen J. Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007.), 169.

⁷⁶Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Worship or The Right Manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in General* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), 255-56.

⁷⁷Kelly Kapic and Randall Gleason, eds. *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 260.

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