

James B. Jordan - An Appreciation:
Towards the Biblical Worldview in Worship,
by Anthony A. Cowley

As our committee has worked to discern the best counsel to offer the RPCNA Synod regarding how to respond to proposals to change our practice and theory of worship we have moved towards Covenant Renewal as the central Biblical-theological pattern by which we can shore up the shape of historic Reformed worship, as found in the liturgies of Calvin, Bucer, Knox, the Continental Reformed Churches and preserved the classic *Directory for the Publick Worship of God*¹. This has brought us to grapple with the question of the shape of the Liturgy. We have seen that the Reformation was as much about worship as it was about doctrine.² As radical as they were in many respects, the Reformers did not attempt to reconstruct worship *de novo* by raw Biblicism, but rather found their roots in the Patristic liturgies³. As we seek to preserve what is good and correct what is amiss we would do so in that same reforming spirit. There are only a few scholars presently working on genuine Reformed liturgics. Many of them are not soundly evangelical. There has also been a movement for liturgical renewal throughout Christendom (as well as a move away from all historic forms of worship). The field is massive. While there are reasons for a Reformed Presbyterian to wonder how safe a guide James B. Jordan is as we try to consider Liturgics, there is no doubt that he is close to us theologically, and denominationally and is someone who is sympathetic to our core concerns regarding the Psalter and the centrality of worship for the life of the world. Many of our pastors and seminarians are reading Jordan and the men influenced by him. This essay, written in the form of a personal appreciation, attempts to present an outline of Jordan's work and give a preliminary analysis of some of the things we can learn from him.

Although I've been reading and James Jordan since 1986, and corresponding with him almost as long, I still feel myself a novice to the totality of his thinking. There are many areas in which Jordan has deeply influenced my thinking. These internalized *Jordanesque* insights have become settled elements in my *own* worldview. I've found that some of his other thoughts have functioned rather like time-release capsules, suddenly coming to life at crucial junctures. Other aspects of his work I've simply noted without fully comprehending, or attempting to incorporate, into my own position. I suspect that I have been taking in many results of his thinking without appropriating much of his core methodology and concerns.

Jordan came into public view through his part in the Reconstructionist / Theonomic movement, in which his influence had been second only to that of its founders, Rousas J. Rushdoony, Greg Bahnsen and Gary North. The "Tyler" wing of the Reconstructionist movement, sponsored by Gary North, and promoted by David Chilton, Ray Sutton and a host of others was largely Jordan's thinking writ large. Jordan himself, and most kindred thinkers, have moved

¹ Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960).

² In his tract, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, "Calvin lists the two defining elements of Christianity which, in his words, constitute 'the whole substance of Christianity.' These two elements are 'a knowledge first, of the right way to worship God; and secondly of the source from which salvation is to be sought.'" (Carlos M. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986] p. 232, 244. Quoted in Terry L. Johnson, Ed., *Leading in Worship: A Sourcebook for Presbyterian Students and Ministers Drawing Upon the Biblical and Historic Forms of the Reformed Tradition* [Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1996], p 4).

³ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975).

beyond Theonomy, rejecting the Theonomic Thesis as expressed in Bahnesn's *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, in favor of a healthier and more nuanced form of pro-nomian Christendom. The heart of the matter for Jordan is grasping the Biblical teaching in terms of the centrality of Christ, the Church and the Sacrament, which then transforms all society (1986, 1).

Jordan has taught on a broad array of issues. His publications include tapes, newsletters, tracts and books. Bible commentaries, politics, international relations, feminism, evangelism, Biblical chronology (creationism), typology, hermeneutics, Covenant theology, systematic theology, parenting, history, ethics (e.g. Theonomy, birth control, etc.) and Christian apologetics and worldview material have all come from his pen and lectern. The bulk of his writing originally comes in the form of Sunday school series, his preaching, and especially his diverse series of newsletters. But, he has also written books that do not have their origin in such occasional settings. Much of his writing has been very sophisticated "thinking out loud," and has the flavor of something provisional, a work-in-progress. He is very collegial, laboring with an informal group of friends - scholars, pastors and laymen - as he tests his thoughts. He exemplifies the maxim, *in a multitude of counselors* there is wisdom. His ministry in lectures, seminars and writing has had significant influence on a burgeoning movement of Liturgical renewal within the conservative Reformed community. This appreciation must bypass his significant work in other areas and attempt to summarize his contribution in the area of worship and sacrament.

Those within Reconstructionism and the Reformed Churches who reject Jordan's approach generally do so because they cannot accept his *maximalism* in terms of Scriptural interpretation and liturgics. Jordan has been blamed because some who have appreciated his work have left the conservative Reformed world and joined Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or the High Church Anglican communions⁴. I believe that these persons have not appreciated that Jordan's deeply catholic theology is profoundly Protestant in its Biblicism, confessionalism and sacramentology. At least they have rejected it for themselves. While he calls for us to appreciate what is good in all the traditions of the church (1986, 11-23), and is in good fellowship with conservative Anglicans, Jordan is a convinced Presbyterian who affirms the Regulative Principle.

We turn to a series of quotations on the RPW from Jordan:

Theologians...give lip service to the regulative principle of worship, which says that our worship is supposed to be directed by and limited by Scriptural injunctions, but practically this has been interpreted and applied in an absolutely minimalist fashion. The psalter is not sung, let alone chanted. The patterns of worship seen in Scripture are ignored, and thus replaced either with nothing (the stoic deadness of much presbyterianism) or with the froth of modern

⁴ *The Liturgy Trap* is James Jordan's defense against the tug and pull of high church liturgy as found in Romanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Anglo-Catholicism upon the heart strings of Reformed Christians. Jordan is to be commended in recognizing the serious problem that exists in the trend toward Rome *et al.* on the part of some in Reformed churches, and also in confronting this serious error with biblical truth. Jordan also levels some well-deserved criticism against modern Evangelicalism which has severely weakened the worship of God within many Reformed churches. According to Jordan, the devastating effects of modern Evangelicalism upon Reformed worship is evidenced in the tendency to hear so little Scripture read, to sing so rarely from "God's Hymnal" (the Psalter), to celebrate so infrequently the Lord's Supper, and to see so scarcely biblical church discipline used to restore the erring brother. For all the faults of high church liturgy in Romanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Anglo-Catholicism, Jordan rightly demonstrates the equally devastating errors of Evangelicalism practiced in many Reformed churches. The sword Jordan wields is two-edged cutting in both directions: toward Romanism and toward Evangelicalism. Touché! (From review by Greg Price, pastor of the Puritan Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta. "Reviews of James B. Jordan's Views on Worship: Trapped in the Liturgy Trap," © 1996 The Blue Banner http://www.fpcr.org/blue_banner_articles/trap.htm)

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entertainment (the showy circuses so frequently manifest in baptist and pentecostal circles). In this way, again, the Word is rendered null and void, absent from the church. (1986, 10).

The Reformers taught that “nothing should be introduced or performed in the churches of Christ for which no probable reason can be given from the word of God.” (Martin Bucer, *Censura* [London: SPCK, 1974], p. 42f.) The general rule on this is that we must have Biblical warrant for what we do in special worship - warrant consisting of principle, precept, or example. Rather rapidly, however, this sound and salutary principle was reduced to the slogan “whatever is not commanded is forbidden,” a simplistic formula that is a long way from the principles of the protestant Reformers. There is a lot of difference between Bucer’s “probable reason” and “commanded.”

The simplistic version of the regulative principle is hard to apply. First of all, no one is able to apply it without modifying it, because we find no Biblical *command* for church buildings, pews, etc. Second, in its simplistic form the principle is almost always applied dispensationally, as if only the New Testament were allowed to teach us about worship. Another problem, which is obvious when one reads the literature coming out of such circles, is that the principle often leads straight to a form of legalism. Instead of finding the large, overarching principles of worshipping Scripture and noting particulars in that context (as the Reformers did), we are enjoined to find explicit detail statements to back up every little thing.

The “Puritan” approaches the bible with preconceived ideas of what constitutes evidence and what constitutes proof. He does not get his hermeneutics from the Bible, but from modern rationalism. If the Bible indicates something “indirectly,” or by way of example, this is not as good as if the Bible comes right out and says something “directly,” in terms of what modern man thinks is “direct.” Thus for traditional puritanism and Presbyterianism, the fact that the New Testament books nowhere explicitly command the use of musical instruments in worship, proves (for them) that it is forbidden to use musical instruments in worship. This is in spite of the overwhelming Biblical evidence in both Old and New Testaments that God wants musical instruments used in His worship. The point here is that the Puritan and Presbyterian traditions bring arbitrary and rationalistic canons of proof to the Word of God, and demand that the Bible submit to these modern notions of logic and proof. [He quotes G.I. Williamson here]

For instance, the Bible nowhere commands us to keep a feast of the Incarnation at the Winter Solstice; therefore, we are forbidden To do so. People who argue this way do not have a problem with Wednesday night prayer meetings, even though these are nowhere commanded in Scripture either. More importantly, they overlook the whole Biblical theology of worship, festival, and time. Actually, Biblical teaching as a whole is quite favorable to Christmas as an annual ecclesiastical festival. Too often one finds that, that real reason for doing away with Christmas is that “Rome does it.” In such a case the authority of Scripture is replaced by the authority of Rome, an authority that functions by way of reaction against whatever Rome says and does. [FN:...Puritans were correct in arguing against either state or ecclesiastical *imposition* of annual festivals, but they threw the baby out with the bath in rejecting *voluntary* observances.] (1986, 208-210).

.... The popular but erroneous view of the regulative principle of worship...:Whatever is not explicitly commanded in the New Testament is absolutely prohibited, in the area of worship. Not only is this version of the regulative principle utterly unBiblical, it is also unworkable, and has no foundation in the Reformation. The actual Principle is this: We are to do in worship only those things that can be substantiated from the whole Bible by precept, principle, or example. As arch-presbyterian Samuel Miller wrote in his book *Presbyterianism* (1835), “the Scriptures being the only infallible rule of faith and practice, no rite or ceremony ought to have a place in the public worship of God, which is not warranted in Scripture, either by direct precept or example, or by good and sufficient inference” [p. 65].

Note that Miller does not insist that every matter “warranted” in Scripture *must* be applied in all times and seasons, as if God had spelled out every detail for all time. Not at all. Rather, whatever we do should have Scriptural backing. Such is the regulative principle. Thus, the

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Bible may *indicate* ... [something is] a good thing, without *commanding* that the church must always use them.... (*ibid.*, 264).

As someone who was suspicious of liberal tendencies in the RPCNA when a committee reported back to the 1992 Synod that a cross might be allowed in the place of worship as long as it was not used superstitiously, such quotes used to infuriate me. After the 1992 Synod I read Jordan's *Liturgical Nestorianism*. He proved me guilty of the "sect" form of the RPW, and I was brought to tears of repentance for the spirit in which I had conducted myself at Synod, and the type of suspicion that at least I was driven to by my understanding of the strict form of the RPW. In short, I had been a judgmental Pharisee. I did not reject the RPW as a result of Jordan's writing, however. I did revise my understanding in a more Biblical direction.⁵

Students of apologetics often spend much more time debating the proper philosophy of apologetics (evidentialist or presuppositionalist?) than they actually employ doing evangelism and apologetics. Similarly, it is easy for us to constantly get stuck on the question of the Regulative Principle, and forget to actually look at the Bible to see what it says about worship!⁶ Usually the theoretical presuppositions are only really seen in the details. The proof is in the pudding! I trust our committee can get through this preliminary task far enough to move further into the details of doing liturgical theology⁷. Thankfully, this is exactly where Jordan cannot be faulted. While he gives careful attention to the theological foundations for worship, he spends even more time digging in the whole Bible to see how it teaches us to worship. This is where he is doing much of his research these days, working at his *Biblical Horizons* ministry in Niceville, Fla. (He is an ordained minister and a member of an Orthodox Presbyterian Church.) Thus far the prolegomena. We'll now consider a few special aspects of his thinking on the church and worship.

Something which comes out in all Jordan's writing is a consistent Covenantalism, which he applies in many ways. The full inclusion of all Covenant members in the life of the Church, including Communion, results in one of his favorite axes to grind: paedocommunion. The current debate on paedocommunion among conservative Protestants bears Jordan's fingerprints in many places (1986, 246-250)⁸. This is one clear manifestation of his willingness to challenge long-standing practice, and propose confessional revision where he sees the Bible demanding change. Such calls for change make him suspect among some strict subscriptionist Presbyterians and fundamentalistic evangelicals.

He is a Covenantal Reformed Presuppositionalist in the tradition of Cornelius VanTil, John Frame, Norm Shepherd and Vern Poythress. (1986, xi) He loves the Church Fathers, but is

⁵ I would still affirm the RPW in Jordan's sense, but I don't think that it fully measures up to the intended teaching of some parts of the Westminster Confession of Faith. If I am wrong in my understanding of the WCF, and Jordan's interpretation is correct, I shall rejoice!

⁶ G.I. Williamson wrote an excellent essay on the question of Theonomy in the *Covenanter Witness* around 1985, in which he called for us to set aside the debate over the definition of theonomy and look at how to apply the whole law of the Bible.

⁷ We have already begun in our major paper. Because it seemed that we were going to move forward assuming the WCF RPW, without having dealt with critiques like those of Schlissel, Hemphill and McCracken to the satisfaction of all committee members (me), we have turned back to look directly at the RPW.

⁸ Peter Leithart, a close friend of Jim Jordan, has written *Daddy, Why Was I Excommunicated?* And Mark Horne (<http://www.hornes.org/theologia/>) and a number of other *Jordanesque* thinkers have written extensively on the history and theology of paedocommunion. There is a new website devoted to the theme by Tim Gallant, the author of *Feed My Lambs*, <http://www.paedocommunion.com/>. Jordan's "Theses on Paedocommunion" was key to the thinking of many.

convinced that the progress of redemption includes the progress of doctrine⁹. Therefore, while there is a deep appreciation of Church history, Creedalism and Tradition (*ibid.*, 11, 20), traditionalism is not his bailiwick (*Liturgy Trap*, esp. 55-69). He is attuned to the history of philosophy and critical of "Greek thinking," which has led the Church into a number of long standing problems. His wholistic theological and anthropological perspective leads him to affirm the goodness of Creation. He rejects the requirement of exclusive acapella praise in public worship (*vide supra*) as a manifestation of Platonic influence, which runs contrary to Covenantal continuity, Biblical anthropology and the glory of God in public worship.

This Covenantal approach to the life ties into the centrality of the Church. "A true Christian social theory...means recognizing that the whole life of the church constitutes the nursery of the Kingdom of God. ...For there to be real reformation in our time, piety and social action must be integrated, and the Biblical way to do that is by a recovery of *corporate worship and life*, a recovery of the institutional church as a government and as a place of *public worship*" (1986, x). He holds to a very high view of the government of the Church, which corresponds to his high view of the sacrament which seals the Word read and preached. Jordan's views of kingdom issues are supportive of the work of R.P. William Symington, whom he cites. The rift between "Tyler" reconstruction and Rushdoony's was essentially over the centrality of the Church, which is not merely one sphere among many (*ibid.*, ix; On the Kingdom, see Leithart, 1993, *passim*).

A quick scanning of the table of contents of *Theses on Worship* will indicate somewhat the flow of Jordan's thoughts on worship:

God's house is a house of prayer; The faithful worship of the true God does not come naturally to fallen man; worship is a command performance; worship is family time; worship should be beautiful; there are both private and public worship events; the heart of worship is Amen to God's three Gifts¹⁰; worship must be saturated with the Word; the privacy of worship: Matthew 6, 1 Corinthians 14; Concluding thoughts on the Privacy of worship (vs. Evangelistic focus, it is "close" worship of the people of God, which unbelievers are welcome to visit); Love makes things beautiful; worship is praise¹¹; worship should be dramatic¹²; worship should have an element of play¹³; worship comes in a context of death; worship should honor the Word by using

⁹ [W]hile these men are in some senses the Church Fathers, in another sense and more important sense they are the Church Babies. The Spirit is growing the Church, and to cling uncritically to all the ideas of the first centuries is to reject maturity (*Liturgy Trap*, p. 66).

¹⁰ 1. The new person in the new community, 2. The new word of redemption and dominion, and 3. The new sacraments of life (31).

¹¹ Worship is an ascent of praise. A study of the Psalms will show that many are "low praise," by which we mean that they are addressed not to God not to one another. When we come to worship, heavy laden with sorrow and pain, we can use encouragement from one another. This is a means of grace.... That praise is central to worship dictates something out our ...music: It should in the main be rhymical and vigorous. Such was early plainsong. Such were the Geneva psalms. Such must be our music today... (55).

¹² Worship is drama....We don't need to have little skits during the sermon in order to have drama in worship! After all, what on earth is more dramatic than being called into God's presence, kneeling to confess our corporate sinfulness in Adam and our actual daily sins, being sealed again into his community by absolution, standing to praise Him with vigor, hearing the 'orders of the Day of the Lord' from the Commander in Chief, giving Him our gifts, sitting down to dine with Him, and being sent out, commissioned by Him to service? It shows great poverty of thought to imagine that we need to have skits in the sermon, when we have these dramatic treasures to employ! (57-58).

¹³ ...I'm not sure where the balance lies in this area. I know that some traditions are much too morbid in worship, and I am also convinced that much of modern worship is too light. I believe that the corrective comes (again!) from the psalms. If we make the psalms central to our praise, we shall be steered

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a precise and accurate translation, not the NIV; There is nothing wrong with Thee and Thou; The Psalter should be woven into the warp and woof of worship; worship takes place on the Day of the Lord; worship is sacrificial; worship is covenant renewal; worship is dialogue; worship is sermonic; Eliminate the divided service; A note on the Tabernacle and Liturgy; Questions and answers (4-5).

When I asked Rev. Jordan what I needed to have in order to do a good summary of his position, he told me that, in addition to the three-part series,¹⁴ I needed his *From Bread to Wine: Toward a More Biblical Liturgical Theology* and Jeff Meyer's *The Lord's Service: Worship at Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church*. Meyer's work¹⁵ is a wonderful resource which explains the details of worship and unfolds the liturgical reasoning behind each act and element. It is worthy of a fully paper on its own.

My copy of *Liturgical Nestorianism* was not in hand when working on this paper. To grasp his critique of minimalism this book is *sine qua non*. *Liturgical Nestorianism* deals at great length with Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church*¹⁶, and William Young's [Blue Banner of Faith and Life](#) treatment of "the Puritan Principle of Worship." He is not dealing with caricatures of our position, but classic sources. He argues against the "sect" version of the RPW¹⁷. He reaffirms the RPW as he understands it. One does not need to embrace Jordan's perspective to feel the power of his critique of some of our RP positions!

But, *Bread to Wine* is a very important work to see how Jordan applies the whole testimony of Scripture to the questions of the nature, order, sequence and various aspects of the worship of the church. Time and space constraints leave me unable to delve into this treatment in any detail. It is not a comprehensive Liturgical Theology. But it does move beyond "traditional evangelical and Reformed questions, such as whether we may sing hymns, whether musical

gradually into a proper balance between mourning and playfulness.... As John fell before Christ in Revelation 1, so we should come in fear and trembling. That is why we have to be called to come. Having been encouraged to come, we enter and kneel to confess sin. The confession of sin in worship is not an admission of personal guilt so much as it is a confession of the fact of sinfulness. It is "confession" in the sense that the Apostle's Creed is a confession. Still, the fact is that we are sinners, and this is affirmed at the beginning of worship against all Pelagianism and against all self-delusion. Tension begins to break with the absolution and breaks down more during the season of praise....rest and quietness...The ascent is over, and now we are on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. We hear the Old and New testament lessons. We sit down and have a meal with our Husband. Like Peter of old, we really don't want to leave, because it's good to be here. So, we have to be officially dismissed and sent out on our mission. This progression, which is both Covenantal and psychological, incorporates both the sober and the playful. It is not a formula for a quick resolution of the tension between these two aspects of worship, but it does provide a format for the gradual working out of the difficulty in practice. (59-60).

¹⁴ *Theses on Worship, Liturgical Nestorianism, and Liturgy Trap*

¹⁵ Along with the particularly *Jordanesque* work of Terry L. Johnson, Ed., *Leading in Worship: A Sourcebook for Presbyterian Students and Ministers Drawing Upon the Biblical and Historic Forms of the Reformed Tradition* (Oak Ridge, TN: The Covenant Foundation, 1996).

¹⁶ John L. Girardeau. *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* <http://www.fpcr.org/girardeau/Girardeau%20on%20Instrumental%20Music.htm> John L. Girardeau's book against instrumental music in public worship remains, even after more than 100 years, the standard reformed work on this subject, at least in the United States. The web edition follows the pagination of the only printed edition [*Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of The Church* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1888; Second Printing, Havertown, PA: New Covenant Publication Society, 1983)].

¹⁷ Which I am convinced is at least included in the Westminster Confession & the RP Testimony.

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instruments are fit for divine worship, whether or not a church calendar is a wise pastoral device, the matter of icons and images, whether 'ritual' is useful or bad, and the rites, elements, and meaning of the Lord's Supper. Here I'd like to move into something 'larger,' which is the whole question of the nature of liturgical action." (2001, 1). This is a more detailed application of his methodology to,

the order of the sacrifices, the sequence of the sacrifices, the ritual of covenant renewal, the biographies of individuals, and the course of human history. This series of essays reflects on aspect of some of the fundamental ways this basic contour of history is set forth in the Bible, and how it is encapsulated in Biblical rituals.

In short, what I am seeking to develop is a unified theological understanding of history, biography, and ritual.

The fundamental thesis that underlies these studies is that Biblical rituals are not something strange or different from the pattern of human life, but that those rituals move through the same steps as human life and thus are designed to key us in to God's way. His paths in this world. Sin has distorted the rhythm of human life, but the rituals in the Bible help restore our rhythm by duplicating human life in a small, short, compact, and stylized way. Just as the Tabernacle is a small, or microcosmic, replica of the whole cosmos, so Biblical rituals are short, or *microchronic*, replicas of (macrochronic) human history and of human biography. Comparing Biblical rituals with Biblical history and Biblical biographies should provide us with a better vision of how we can live our lives under God's guiding hand. (*ibid.* 1-2).

Finally, we should take note of another major book: *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (1988). This is not an exposition of a Christian approach to life in philosophical terms, but an attempt to "dig into the Bible and set out the Bible's own worldview, explaining the Bible's own language."

The Biblical worldview is not given to us in the discursive and analytical language of philosophy and science, but in the rich and compact language of symbolism and art. It is pictured in ritual and architecture, in numerical structures and geographical directions, in symbols and types, in trees and stars. In short, it is given to us in a pre-modern package that seems at places very strange. (1988, 1).

This work goes into interpreting the world design and purpose, deals with the primacy of symbolism. The world is God's house, the creation speaks of God in every way. Birds, beasts, men and angels are all discussed in terms of how the Bible speaks of them. In part III: The Transformation of the World, he treats the "breaking of bread" as the Rite of transformation. Worship is central and man, as prophet, priest and king is tasked to bring the world to fully image God. The final part (IV) breaks down Biblical history: The world of Noah, the World of the Patriarchs, the Mosaic world of the Tabernacle, the kingdom world of the Temple, the worlds of exile and restoration, and then the New world, heavens and earth. This work involves a reorientation from the world of our modern mindset to the Bible world. It is a wonderful overview of Scripture.

What is the "cash value" of James Jordan's thinking for our committee? Again I confess, I am only scratching the surface. What is important as I see it is that Jordan takes into account an enormous amount of information, both Scriptural, historical and theological. He is sensitive to how the Church has always worshipped, and to the various stages (Biblical and post-Biblical) of development through time. He moves us beyond the "worship wars" both within and outside of our Reformed circles and shows how the great contemporary liturgists¹⁸ have much to teach us. But

¹⁸ Roman Catholic, Louis Bouyer and Russian Orthodox, Alexander Schmemmann, as well as neoorthodox, Geddes MacGregor have provided much stimulus to his thinking, among others (1986, xi).

none of these men, nor the great Traditions of Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Rome and Orthodoxy are beyond criticism. All stand in need of reform, along with the Reformed.

The great encouragement to me, in all this, is that - as fragmented as we are in the Reformed Churches - there is a freedom to let Scripture act upon us in a way that is both catholic and ecumenical. Reading Hooker and other Anglicans, as well as apologists for our position, I sometimes get the feeling that all they (we) are about is defending our own status quo. This is the hidden blessing of the "worship wars" in contemporary society. Simplistic proof text approaches will not persuade. Only worship that is true to the Bible will endure and stand the test of time. Jordan has caused me to appreciate that the historic liturgies of the Church can only be improved upon by taking them back, repeatedly, to the touchstone of Scripture. Not just to show that they are "okay," but to let the life of the worshipping church develop through being broken down, sacramentally, intellectually, theologically, and reconstituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jordan does not claim to be infallible. His works are peppered with constant reminders that he is only beginning, making an attempt, to help bring all of life - especially the heart of life, Worship - into greater conformity to the revealed will of God in the Bible. He is not, however, just tinkering around. He is helping all those who have ears to hear and eyes to see to see through new eyes, Biblical eyes. He is a gift of God to the church who deserves careful consideration, especially by men tasked to help the visible church reflect God's glory more abundantly to our world.

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¹⁹ For a reasonable, critical appraisal of this book by one who holds to the strict Regulative Principle, see Richard Bacon's review at: http://www.fpcr.org/blue_banner_articles/nestor.htm. Reformed Presbyterian pastors need to be able to address the force of these arguments. If we cannot, then we need to make appropriate alterations.