

## CALVINIST PENITENCE EVALUATED: RESTORATION OF CALVIN' S AND CALVINIST CHURCHES

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Euan Cameron pointed out that the Protestant reformation brought about “a more severe, rational and demanding code of conduct than had ever been expected of all Christian people in the Middle Ages.”<sup>1</sup> His argument seems to have been proved by scholars who studied early Calvinist churches in Europe.<sup>2</sup> According to studies on church discipline, the church in Geneva and Calvinist churches in other parts of Europe scrutinized the daily lives of their church members to see if they were living within the standards of comportment. These examinations were conducted through disciplinary institutions such as the consistory or its equivalent system (the Scottish Kirk). If someone were accused of impropriety by neighbors, elders or pastors, the person was obliged appear before the consistory. If found guilty, he would be excommunicated,<sup>3</sup> then restored. It is well expounded that

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<sup>1</sup>Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 417.

<sup>2</sup>Robert M. Kingdon said that the consistory of Geneva was “an effective tool for social and political control in Geneva.” Echoing E. W. Monter's observation, he also believed that the consistory of Geneva played a critical role in the transformation of Geneva into a socially ordered and morally advanced city within a relatively short time. Robert M. Kingdon, “Social Control and Political Control in Calvin's Geneva,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (special volume, 1993), 523. Mentzer and Parker both emphasized moral control as the most important function of the consistory. According to them, Calvinist discipline has made believers agitated with shame and alienation from the community when they were excommunicated. As a result, those excommunicated sought their restoration ardently and immediately in order to regain their honor in the society, which eventually served to create a cohesive Christian community. Raymond A. Mentzer Jr., “Ecclesiastical discipline and Communal Reorganization among the Protestants of Southern France,” *European History Quarterly* 21 (1991), 163-183; and “Notions of Sin and Penitence within the French Reformed Community,” *Penitence in the Age of Refomations*, ed. Katharine Jackson Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). Charles Parker, “The Moral Agency and Moral Autonomy of Church Folk in the Dutch Reformed Church of Delft, 1580-1620,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48 (1 Jan 1997).

<sup>3</sup>“Excommunication” could be a perplexing term. In Geneva and other Calvinist churches it meant a temporary exclusion from the Lord's Supper and some extent of

excommunication and restoration became an efficient means of moral and social control in the sixteenth Europe. However, it has not been fully discussed that the Calvinist disciplinary system was believed to have a spiritual and even a soteriological benefit for believers.<sup>4</sup> In Calvin's discussion and implementation of excommunication and restoration, spiritual and soteriological benefits seem to be his utmost interest. Those who were excommunicated from communion had to come to the consistory for hearing, then to wait for the consistorial decision. Once the person was excommunicated as a result of his impropriety or lack of remorse, he first had to abstain from taking the communion, and undergo a certain social chastisement while being excommunicated. The person could then seek restoration. He was then either restored upon evidence of contrition and explicit sign of repentance; or else he was denied based on a need for "good repentance" (*bonne repentance*) or "better repentance" (*meilleur repentance*).

Repentance was the decisive factor for restoration. But what are the signs of repentance? What constitutes good repentance? What is better repentance? How did the consistory distinguish true repentance from sham repentance? Were any rituals of repentance required? This article attempts to understand Calvin's theological understanding of church discipline and repentance, and then to observe Calvinist repentance in the restoration process. Finally, it evaluates the nature and characteristics of Calvinist Penitence.

### CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

If social or moral control is what would follow as a result of the adequate operation of a disciplinary institution, church discipline itself had a theological purpose in Calvin's mind. From the first edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin made it clear that excommunication has three

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social exclusion. Because of its temporary character, some scholars such as Parker do not call it "excommunication," but "censure," probably because it might be wrongly identified with the medieval excommunication which was a more permanent punishment.

<sup>4</sup>According to my study of the consistory of Geneva, Calvin and other pastors paid great time and attention to teach the Protestant faith and practice to the people of Geneva through the consistory. (Cf. See my dissertation chapter three). McKee emphasized that the consistory of Geneva edified and taught the people of Geneva the essentials of "their relationship with God."

purposes. Calvin's primary concern in church discipline obviously lay in guarding the honor of God. Although not present in other reformers, Calvin place it at the forefront of church discipline.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin's first purpose was the glory of God. If the church neglects discipline or executes it improperly, the reputation of the church will be easily jeopardized. Eventually it will cause great damage to the glory of God. In the 1559 edition of *Institutes* Calvin was also concerned with the preservation of "the order of the Lord's Supper" which could be profaned by indiscriminate administration to people of frivolous activities.<sup>6</sup>

The second and third purposes focus on the spiritual welfare of human beings at both the communal and communal level, that is, the protection of the congregation and the repentance of sinners. The communal benefit of church discipline is that excommunicating the transgressors from the Eucharist can protect the rest of congregation from committing the same kind of sins. By instilling the fear of punishment and causing practical disadvantage in life by means of excommunication, society might be more in control and less evil. The individual profit of excommunication is the sinners' remorse and repentance over their misconduct or ignorance, which will lead to seek reconciliation with God and the community. Through excommunication, excommunicants would learn to submit to the authority of the church and to the Commandments. In this process, they experience shame and guilt. Calvin believed shame and guilt resulting from discipline would assist sinners to repent quickly and bring them to the recognition that repentance can halt their anxiety and set their conscience free from guilt.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, church discipline is an essential part of Christian life. Christian life in Calvin's theology has a significant place because it is a result of regeneration. When Christ delivers us from sin and dwells in

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<sup>5</sup>Zwingli believed the chief purpose of discipline as the restraint of evil and for Oecomlampadius, the maintenance of the purity of the church. Bucer elaborated on this point, suggesting two further purposes, the protection of the congregation and the repentance of sinners. Bucer's two purposes are the same as Calvin's second and third purposes.

<sup>6</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, 1559 ed., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.12.5; OS 4, 216 (hereafter cited as *Institutes*).

<sup>7</sup>*Institutes*, 2.B.26 (1536), OS 1, 91; 4.12.5 (1559). OS 5. 215-216.

us, we are supposed to experience mortification of the old person and vivification of the new person. Denying the old way of life and participating in a new life is the reality of the Christian life. This new life should be arranged in accordance with the Word of God, more specifically with the Commandments, especially among Protestants.<sup>8</sup> For Calvin, although Christians are justified by Christ and geared to a new life, they remain more or less sinners until the end of their lives. Thus they have to fight against sins as long as they live and to be penitent about their sins all the time.<sup>9</sup> Calvin stated:

The children of God are delivered from the slavery of sin by regeneration, not at all so that they should have no quarrels with the flesh, as though they were already in full possession of freedom, but rather that this may remain a perpetual field of battle to keep them exercised, and not only to exercise them, but to give them knowledge of their frailty.<sup>10</sup>

The reality of our living in a ‘perpetual field of battle’ requires either self- or communal discipline in order to succeed in the fight. If the modern Protestant church depends almost solely on self-discipline, the sixteenth-century churches believed the communal disciplinary system more effective and, above all, more scriptural.

The necessity of church discipline is traced in Calvin’s discussion of the marks of a true Christian (*notae fidelium*). As marks of a true Christian, Calvin singled out three things: confession of faith, example of life, and regular participation in the sacraments. It is attested in my previous study that the consistory of Geneva may have used *notae fidelium* as a principal category to deal with various sins. In this sense, church discipline is designed to help Christians to maintain their Christian identity by confessing the right kind of faith, keeping exemplary life style, and (regular) participation in the sacraments. Thus, church discipline is a nurturing process and a pastoral care provided for the benefit of the people of Geneva.

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<sup>8</sup>The Decalogue, as opposed to the medieval concept of the seven deadly sins, became a moral standard for Protestant preachers, although interest had been increasing since the thirteenth century. What became new with Protestant reformers was their emphasis on the first table. John Bossy, “Moral arithmetic: Seven sins into Ten Commandments,” *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Edmund Leites, Cambridge, 1988.

<sup>9</sup>François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. by Philip Mairet, (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1987), 243.

<sup>10</sup>*Institutes*, 3.3.10.

In regard to Matthew 18:15ff, which had been the exemplary text for how and when church discipline should be applied, Calvin sought its logical connection with the previous passage. He found the grounds for the teaching about excommunication from the preceding parables. Chapter eighteen is composed of the synopses from Mark and Luke: the importance of little ones in the Kingdom of God (Mt. 17:22-23; 18:1-5; Mk. 9:30-37; Lk. 9:43-48), warning against causing little ones to stumble (Mt. 18:6-10; Mk 9:42-48; Lk. 17:1-2), the parable of the lost sheep (Mt. 18:11-14; Lk. 15:1-10), and the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). These were followed by the teachings on the discipline of believers (Mt: 18:15-20; Lk.17:3), and forgiveness (Mt 18:21-35; Lk.17:4).

When Calvin interpreted verses fifteen to twenty (several steps of church discipline), he began with a brief summary of the previous verses. By doing so, he affirmed the coherence of the whole chapter. He also made it clear that God's design for salvation was prepared for many, regardless of whether they are weak or strong, privileged or deprived. Therefore, Calvin understood that believers should do their best to bear with the sinner even in the process of discipline. For Calvin, church discipline/excommunication would be the last resort that the church could adopt to make sinners repent of their wrongdoings. However, church discipline cannot be rightly understood without proper consideration of its soteriological and pastoral concerns.

For Calvin, excommunication is a warning signal for sinners to be aware that their salvation is at stake, or a reminder of the future damnation for the unrepentant. Excommunication is for the cure for soul, hence the church should have control of it, not the state. Calvin's untiring struggle with the council of Geneva over the power of excommunication and restoration reflects his theological stance on this matter. His theological position is also clearly shown in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances, which required the excommunicants to "frequent the sermons more."

In Calvin's theological formulation of church discipline, excommunication is not the end. He believed the intention of excommunication is "not to drive men from the Lord's flock, but rather bring them back again when they have wandered and gone astray."<sup>11</sup> The excommunicants should come to the Lord and to the community

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<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on II Thessalonians* 5:15, CO 52, 216.

again. Alternatively, the community should make or help them come back to the Lord because we [i.e., Christians] are “to take care not to lose what God wishes to save”<sup>12</sup> Thus comes the significance of the restoration process in the whole disciplinary system.

### REPENTANCE IN CALVINIST DISCIPLINE

Restoration is the reconciliation with the church and with the community after the excommunicants endure a certain period of sacramental and social exclusion. In order to be restored, the excommunicants should display their repentant heart in explicit words and deeds to the church authority, the consistory. Therefore, restoration is composed of basically two parts: the repentance of sinners and the declaration of forgiveness or absolution by the consistory. Before the law regarding the Lord's Supper was enacted in Calvin's Geneva in November 1557, a low rate of excommunicants came to seek restoration.<sup>13</sup>

During the consistorial examination for restoration, penitence and a display of good repentance was always a critical matter. When the consistory denied the request for restoration, it would say one of the following expressions: (1) “Because he does not know repentance at all, the L[ord's] S[upper] will be defended even more;” (2) “The LS has been forbidden to him/her until we see other repentance in him/her;” (3) “The LS would be forbidden to him/her until he/she recognizes his/her fault;” (4) “The LS is forbidden to him/her until he/she has better repentance;” (5) “The LS will be forbidden until he/she is better instructed;” or (6) “One cannot receive the Lord's supper because he/she continues to have no sign of repentance.”

For those excommunicated for not being properly educated in the Protestant way (worship participation, knowledge of the Lord's prayer and of the creed), or for keeping Roman Catholic faith and superstitious practices, education or better instruction was necessary. Therefore, the

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<sup>12</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew* 18:12, CO 45, 505.

<sup>13</sup>See chapter four of my dissertation. The low rate of seeking restoration during 1555-1556 provided a plausible reason for the new law in 1557. Monter and Kingdon argued that the people of Geneva ardently looked for restoration, but my statistics have shown that it was not true before 1557. Later Calvinist churches in Europe seemed to be successful in making the people submit to the authority of the consistory in order to restore their honor and dignity as soon as possible, as the following discussion will present.

consistory did not require their repentance unless it was known that they were intentionally uneducated. There were many occasions when the registers of the consistory recorded absolution without mentioning the presence of repentance. However, for those who were guilty other than for educational reasons, the explicit recognition of their faults and visible sign of penitence were necessary.

### TEST OF REPENTANCE, RITUAL OF RESTORATION IN CONSISTORIAL DISCIPLINE

#### Calvin's Geneva

What is "better" repentance? What can be a sign of repentance? When the consistory approved the request for restoration, it usually said pronounced one of the following: (1) "Because he/she has the sign of repentance;" (2) "He/She is absolved because of the word that she would live more godly;" (3) "He/She has good repentance of his/her faults . . . and will not frequent with so-and-so whom he/she used to have a problem with;" or (4) "He/she is repentant of his/her fault. He/she is absolved with good admonition." It is not easy to sort out any systematic form or standards the consistory would have used for judging good repentance. However, at least two things are obviously taken as standards for the consistory to distinguish "good" or "better" repentance from "bad," or even true repentance from false. First, it was essential to acknowledge one's faults with a deep sense of responsibility and sorrow. Second, a certain sign of repentance was sought. It is not explicit in the registers of the consistory of Geneva what the consistory considered to be signs of good repentance. Most likely the consistory would examine whether the offenders kept the particular orders meted by the consistory. The consistory also observed the changes in the person's attitude and lifestyle through its regular house visitation, which was begun in Geneva in 1556. Since the consistory was a corporate body and always made a collective adjudication regarding punishments or restoration, it is assumed that it used various observations and reports of its members and other reliable sources. As aforesaid, Calvinist ministers and elders were able to hold house visitation after March 12, 1556. According to the regulation regarding general visitation, six ministers, twenty-five *dizeniers* and at least twelve assistants were available for visitation. During visitations

four *dizeniers* and two assistants were assigned to each minister.<sup>14</sup> It is very likely that elders and ministers in Geneva could have observed the excommunicant's life rather easily and closely, as was true in other Calvinist communities. Therefore, the possibility of pretending sorrow or lying in the consistory might not have been as easy as it would be today.

As a ritual of restoration, the public confession and reparation after worship was adopted in Geneva. The Geneva City Council adopted the public ceremony of confession and repentance as a restoration procedure beginning 1560.<sup>15</sup> However, it seems that before 1560 a certain degree of public restoration had already begun in Geneva. The Consistory of Geneva sometimes told the excommunicants to reconcile with the people against whom they had offended "after the sermon (*apres le sermon*)."<sup>16</sup> The phrase, "after sermon" could have meant after preaching during the worship, but also after the whole worship because the word "sermon" was also used as an equivalent to the Protestant worship.

Calvin said that repentance would be basically "an inward matter, which has its seat in the heart and soul," but it should be expressed outwardly by yielding appropriate fruits.<sup>17</sup> The fruits of repentance are essentially changes of life. Changes of life are specified in the duties of life toward God, charity toward men, and pursuit of holiness and purity throughout the whole life.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with Calvin's conviction on the fundamental nature of repentance, Calvinist consistories showed relatively little interest in secret sins, and left them between the individual and God. However, public sins which might become bad examples for other believers, or would do eventual harm to the offender, drew the attention of the consistories. Considering the contagious nature of sin, it was incumbent on the consistory to make sinners truly repentant of their infractions and to protect both the consistory and the sinner from having pretentious or sham repentance. Public confession

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<sup>14</sup>*Registers de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Geneve au temps de Calvin*, tome II, 1553-1564, Librairie E. Droz, 1962, 66.

<sup>15</sup>E. W. Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), 139.

<sup>16</sup>Robert M. Kingdon. *Transcription of the Registers of the Geneva Consistory During the Ministry of Calvin*, unpublished, XIII, 37v.; XIV.3, March 31, 1558 (hereafter cited as *Consistory*).

<sup>17</sup>*Commentary on Harmony of Gospels*, vol. I, 190.

<sup>18</sup>*Institutes*, 3.3.16.

and restoration could have been considered to be a useful and furthermore possibly biblically sound option for Calvin and Calvinists as we will see more from other Calvinist churches.

### Restoration in Other Calvinist Churches

To understand Genevan practice it is also useful to know what other Reformed churches have done with regard to the restoration process. In other Reformed churches, at least two differences are noticeable: the consistory enlarged to include deacons; and more systematized public admonition, confession and repentance rites. Overall it is understood that the public rituals of confession and restoration conduced to creating and enhancing the identity and solidarity of Christian community.

#### (1) French Reformed Church

Public pronouncement before the congregation was made for sins such as Catholic marriage or baptisms, and the criminal acts which required corporal punishment.<sup>19</sup> Otherwise, excommunication was arranged between the consistory and the sinner. As a restoration, “shaking hands among disputants” as a sign of reconciliation was commonly adopted. Occasionally in the consistory of Nîmes, “kissing on one another’s hands” was also used to affirm the recovery of the relationship between parties. For more serious sins, the consistory asked the offenders to fall on their knees and to cry for the forgiveness of God and the consistory.<sup>20</sup> However, it was also true that in the French Reformed Church, public rituals of repentance and reparation in front of the whole congregation was occasionally practiced. It had two functions: (1) To give the penitent an opportunity to prove his or her remorse and contrition; and (2) To offer an example for the others in the congregation, and also to pursue reconciliation between the person and the congregation after all.<sup>21</sup>

Since church discipline had a close connection with the protection of the Lord’s Supper from defilement, and with the protection of unworthy participants from being damned, a unique method of

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<sup>19</sup>Mentzer, “Notions”, 97.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

discipline was implemented in French Calvinist Churches at Mans. A piece of metal was distributed in advance to those who were eligible for the Lord's Supper. During the Lord's Supper people came to the table with the metal and left it on the table before they received the communion.<sup>22</sup>

Parker evaluated the characteristics of the French church discipline as "relatively *public* and unquestionably *collective* and *shared*" (emphasis mine), which helped to create a collective identity and solidarity of the Christian community.<sup>23</sup> According to Parker, by means of direct and indirect disciplinary experience, the people of Calvinist churches came to realize the contents of the Protestant way of spiritual life, and the moral standards by which they had to live. The public character of the disciplinary system promoted the idea of maintaining one's dignity and honor by the observance of the church regulations and by purity of life.

## (2) Dutch Reformed Churches

According to Charles Parker's study, the Dutch Reformed Church of Delft used public ritual of confession and repentance from its inception. To be restored, sinners had to write their confession and submit it to the minister, whereupon the minister would read it to the congregation before the communion.<sup>24</sup> A remorseful emotional state was a precondition for repentance, without such a disposition the ministers and elders would not even begin to discuss reconciliation. The secretary of the consistory made records "in almost every case whether or not a penitent member had displayed a satisfactory level of contrition for his or her sins." However, the record was tacit about how to distinguish full contrition from partial contrition.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Jean-Daniel Benoit, *Calvin: Directeur d'Ames*, (Strasbourg: Oberlin, 1947), 221-223. It is not a novel idea to use a token to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy. In Geneva, the secretary made a careful list of excommunicants and used it on the day of the Lord's Supper to identify the convicted. Later, in 1560, Calvin suggested giving bits of metal (*jetons*) to the worthy communicants, although his suggestion was not put into practice. E. W. Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 139.

<sup>23</sup>Mentzer, "Notions," 99-100.

<sup>24</sup>Parker, "The Rituals of reconciliation", 102.

<sup>25</sup>Parker, 112-3.

### (3) Scottish Calvinist Churches

Out of a few surviving early records of the kirk sessions and presbyteries, the kirk session in Saint Andrews gives a good picture of church discipline in Scotland in the late sixteenth century. There were several types of public confession and admonition, such as taking an oath before the whole congregation, rebuke from the pulpit during the church service, almsgiving (paying a fine into the “poor box”), and sitting on the church’s “stool of repentance” on successive Sundays.<sup>26</sup> Sinners sat at the stool, listening to a lengthy rebuke by the minister. Then they begged forgiveness of those they had wronged (often by shaking hands) and of the congregation at large. They also had to pay a fine.<sup>27</sup> As Geoffrey Parker said, the Scottish church excelled all other Reformed churches in the intensity of discipline and control exercised by the church courts.<sup>28</sup>

### CALVINIST PENITENCE, NEW OR RENEWED?

It is well known that Calvin rejected the whole idea of Catholic penance being sacramental, and the auricular confession which became a norm for the Catholic Church after 1215. However, Calvin’s vehement attack on the Catholic penance system did not aim to destroy all forms of confession and absolution. It is evident that throughout his ministry Calvin took the confession rather seriously, both on the individual and communal levels. Calvin used public collective confession in the Sunday worship liturgy of Geneva. In the consistory, those who were summoned and convicted of their infractions had to confess their sins in the collective presence of church authorities. Furthermore, confession in the presence of the whole congregation was occasionally demanded. Making confession in the community would entail a great sense of embarrassment and failing. Therefore it is

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<sup>26</sup>Geoffrey Parker, “The Kirk”, 180. “Stool” was a “high, four legged, backless chair, rather like a modern bar stool, sometimes cleverly constructed so that it would topple over if the sinner failed to sit bolt upright; but elsewhere it was attached to a scaffold with several settings (the higher the setting, the worse the sin). Sir William Brereton wrote in 1635, “The stool is a public and eminent seat erected about two yards from the ground . . . where the whole congregation may take notice of the offenders.” In some churches, he added incredulously, the stool was capable of holding “six or eight persons.”

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.

understandable that Calvinist churches were criticized for being too rigorous and acting beyond the scriptural boundary. It is not surprising that harsh criticisms against Calvinist churches evolved within the sixteenth century church community.<sup>29</sup> Was Calvinist penitence a mere recurrence of the Catholic penance in a slightly different outlook? One can say Yes for the following reasons: (1) Believers still have to confess their sins; (2) Sinners were told what to do and were punished by the church; (3) Sinners were not allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper; (4) Reconciliation was necessary; (5) Priests (pastors) still played an important role in admonition and absolution; and (6) Good repentance (contrition) was of critical importance in restoration.

However, there are clear differences between the two systems. Calvin and Calvinist churches made the following facts distinguishable from the Catholic system: (1) Individual confession to God was most important; (2) Daily practice of confession and repentance, not auricular confession, was emphatically underlined; (3) Punishment was more frequent, but no coercion was involved; (4) No systematic method or manual was invented or adopted for better confession or repentance; (5) The Priestly monopoly in the disciplinary process was eradicated. The corporate body of discipline, the consistory, which was characterized by the combined work of pastors and lay elders (and deacons), was established. However, some complained about the lack of privacy; (6) Instead of priestly absolution, corporate (pastors and laity) absolution was invented; (7) The consistory displayed little interest in examining one's conscience or investigating secret sins. Public sins drew the attention of the consistory, but secret sins were left between the individual and God unless they were known to others, and became a cause of public disturbance.

Then what did Calvinists try to accomplish through the consistorial confession and restoration system? Calvinist churches used public and collective rituals for repentance and reconciliation in contrast to the more individual and private character of confession in Catholic religious culture. As both Mentzer and Parker argued, this public and collective nature of the French reformed churches might have served to

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<sup>29</sup>In Geneva, people such as Jacques Changeou grumbled for the possibility of leaving the town because of premature enactment of the new law regarding oaths, blasphemies, cursing, denials of God, and acts of adultery. *Consistory*, XI:5, 83v. December 3, 1556. For some other examples of complaints and criticisms against the French Calvinist discipline, see Mentzer, "Notions," 94-95.

build “a sense of unity and solidarity within a religious environment that was by and large devoid of public participatory rites when compared, for instance, to Catholic confraternities, penitential processions and public fasts.”<sup>30</sup>

Building a strong sense of Christian community, and keeping one’s honor are interesting results of Calvinist discipline. However, one can still go back to Calvin’s threefold purpose of church discipline, that is, the glory of God, the repentance of the sinner, and the purity of the church. In addition, taking 1 Corinthians 11:30 almost at face value, he considered unworthy partaking of the Lord’s Supper a damnable offense. His understanding of the Lord’s Supper required much more serious participation than the Zwinglian position. Calvin regarded the church as essentially a “Eucharistic fellowship.”<sup>31</sup> Worthy partaking of the Lord’s Supper meant to Calvin, faith, repentance, and the pursuit of a godly life. A godly life, essential for communion with Christ in the Supper, necessitated a carefully worked out discipline.<sup>32</sup>

One can still wonder why Calvin and Calvinists had to pursue such public ritual of confession and repentance. Calvin stated:

That is, I now make no excuse; I do not try to avoid being judged by all to be a sinner, nor to prevent what I tried to hide from the Lord being revealed also even to men. Therefore, a *willing confession among men* follows that secret confession which is made to God, as often as either divine glory or our humiliation demands it. For this reason, the Lord ordained of old among the people of Israel that, after the priest recited the words, the people should confess their iniquities publicly in the temple [cf. Lev. 16:21]. For he foresaw that this help was necessary for them in order that each one might better be led to a *just estimation of himself*. And it is fitting that, by the confession of our own wretchedness, we show forth *the goodness and mercy of our God, among ourselves and before the world*. [emphasis mine]<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Parker, “Notions”, 85.

<sup>31</sup>Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 212. The best recent discussion on this topic is Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). In a shorter form is his article, “Calvin’s Eucharistic Piety,” in *Calvin and Spirituality: Papers presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Colloquium of the Calvin Studies Society, May 18-20, 1995, Calvin Theological Seminary*, ed. David Foxgrover, (Grand Rapids: CRC Product Services, 1998), 52-65.

<sup>32</sup>Maurice Eugene Osterhaven, “Eating and Drinking Christ: the Lord’s Supper as an Act of Worship in the Theology and Practice of John Calvin,” *Reformed Review* 37 (1983/1984), 90.

<sup>33</sup>*Institutes*, 3.4. 10.

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