

THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

1. The Regulative Principle Defined and Established.
 - 1.1 Worship God only in the manner He prescribes. Whatever is not commanded is forbidden. (Some Lutherans say, whatever is not forbidden is allowed.)
 - 1.2 The second commandment, Exodus 20:4-6, tells us how not to worship and then says that God shows His love to those "who keep my commandments."
 - 1.3 Deut. 12:29-32: *Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*
 - 1.4 Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:2-8, *If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?* See also Hebrews 11:4, Cain did not offer in faith.
 - 1.5 Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire from the Lord because they, *offered strange fire . . . which he commanded them not.* Leviticus 10:1ff.
 - 1.6 2 Samuel 6:1ff Uzzah was struck dead for touching the ark when the oxen stumbled.
 - 1.7 Jeremiah 19:5 *they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind.*
 - 1.8 Mark 7:7 *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*
 - 1.9 See also John 4:24; Col. 2:20; and 1 Peter 2:5.
 - 1.10 The Bible teaches the elements of worship by command, precept, obligatory example and necessary implication. HC Q&A 103 describes the main elements of worship.
 - 1.11 If true worship is instituted by God, it is by that fact limited by God.
2. The confessions.
 - 2.1 The Heidelberg
 - Q96: What does God require in the second Commandment?
A96: That we in no way make any image of God,[1] nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.[2]
 1. Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18, 25; Rom. 1:22-24; Acts 17:29
 2. I Sam. 15:23; Deut. 4:23-24; 12:30-32; Matt. 15:9; John 4:24
 - Q97: May we not make any image at all?
A97: God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.[1]
 1. Exod. 23:24-25; 34:13-14; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:22; II Kings 18:4; John 1:18
 - Q98: But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?
A98: No, for we should not be wiser than God, who will not have His people taught by dumb idols,[1] but by the lively preaching of His Word.[2]
 1. Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-19
 2. II Peter 1:19; II Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 10:17
 - 2.2 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21.1
 - I. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

WORSHIP IS A MEETING WITH GOD

- A. God calls his people out to meet with Him.
 - 1. The Tabernacle was called the tent of meeting--"There I will meet with them" Ex. 29:43.
 - 2. The call to worship in the Psalms is always a call to come before God.
 - 3. I Cor. 3:16 "God's temple is sacred and you (plural) are that temple (singular)."
 - 4. Rev. 4 & 5 describe worship focused on the central presence of God.
 - 5. Heb. 12:22ff describes worship as coming to the heavenly Jerusalem, to angels in joyful assembly, to the church, to God, and to Jesus.
- B. Because worship is meeting with God, it must be characterized by dignity and reverence.
 - 1. Moses: Take off your shoes for you are on holy ground.
 - 2. Jacob at Bethel: "How dreadful is this place . . . house of God . . . gate of heaven."
 - 3. Isaiah: "Woe is me! for I am undone . . . for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord."
 - 4. John: "I fell at His feet as one dead." That same awesome Jesus is with us now.
 - 5. Heb. 12:28 "Therefore . . . worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." Of informality, levity and frivolity there should be none.
- C. Because worship is meeting with God worship has two basic parts – it is dialogical.
 - 1. Worship is a dialogue between parties, God and His people.
 - 2. God speaks to his people: call to worship, salutation, law, assurance, Scripture reading, sermon, benediction.
 - 3. God's people respond: hymns, prayers, confession of dependence, confession of creeds, offerings.
 - 4. In worship you either listen to God or reply to God and doing *both* is worshipping (i.e. you do not have to *lead* worship in order to *participate* in the worship service).