

Welcome to a Reformed Church

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Review

- As Protestants committed to the Bible alone as our ultimate authority, our primary criteria for choosing a visible church should not be our preferences, but what Scripture reveals as the defining marks of the church.
- From Scripture, the Reformation identified 3 essential marks of the church: *Word, sacrament, & discipline*.
- The “means of grace” refer to *the ways God works in us* – especially the *Word, sacraments, & prayer*.

Chapter 8 – “Worship: of God, by God, for God”

- Hyde begins the chapter with a famous quote on worship from William Temple, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 until his death in 1944:

“Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose, and all this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of human expressions of which we are capable.” (*Readings in St. John’s Gospel*)

- To say, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever” (WSC 1) is another way of saying that *worship is who we are*: “we exist not only to give God glory, as we speak to God in worship through prayer and praise, but also to enjoy Him as He speaks to us in worship through Word and sacrament.” (114)
- If worship is who we are, then *it is crucially important that we worship God correctly*. But how?
 - “Because Scripture is our ultimate authority, it defines not only our theology but our piety, what we believe about God and how we respond to Him.” (114)
 - “One aspect that distinguished the Reformed churches from their co-Protestant Lutheran churches was their zeal to engage in the worship ship of God only on the basis of what the Word of God commanded or implicitly required... In fact, Calvin was so adamant about this point that he said the entire project of the Protestant Reformation was about worshiping God in a way that was pleasing to Him.” (ibid)
- Based on the conviction that Scripture alone must be our final authority, the Reformed stream of the Protestant Reformation came to believe that *we must worship God only as he tells us to worship him*:
 - “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped 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.” (WCF 21.1)
 - This principle is historically called the “regulative principle of worship” – but we might better refer to it as the “revelational principle” – since God reveals how he is to be worshiped.
- The regulative/revelational principle is taught to us by both Scripture and common sense:
 - *Scripture*:
 - Exodus 20.4-6: Hyde rightly points out that the 2nd commandment not only tells us what *not* to do (worship God by images), but also emphasizes what we *are* to do (worship God according to his Word) when God promises that he shows steadfast love to “those who love me and keep my commandments.”
 - Leviticus 10.1-3: Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron and junior priests, were struck dead by God for offering “unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.”
 - Mark 7.6-8: Jesus criticized the Pharisees and scribes perversions of the ceremonial law with a citation of Isaiah 29.13: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”
 - John 4.24: Jesus tells the woman of Samaria that “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
 - *Common sense*: If God is the transcendent Creator and we are finite creatures – let alone sinners prone to worship ourselves! – how else could we know how to worship him correctly, unless he tells us?

- Thinking through this principle, theologians have developed *three categories for its application*:
 - Elements: the dialogical *actions* Scripture commands to be performed in public worship.
 - The OPC *Directory for Worship (DPW)*, chapter 2, recognizes 4 required elements to public worship:
 - Scripture Reading
 - Preaching of the Word
 - Public Prayer
 - Congregational Singing
 - The DPW also allows for the inclusion of 5 additional elements:
 - Call to Worship
 - The Sacraments (Baptism & the Lord's Supper)
 - Blessings (Salutation & Benediction)
 - Public Confession(s) of Faith
 - Bringing of Offerings
 - In addition to such 'ordinary' parts of worship, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* also speaks of "religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner." (21.5)
 - Circumstances: *how, when, where, and in what amount* to perform – how to facilitate – the elements:
 - How many hymns should we sing? Should they be accompanied musically?
 - How many Scripture readings should we include? How long should the sermon typically go?
 - How many times should we pray?
 - Forms: the precise *content* of particular elements:
 - Which hymns or psalms should we sing this particular week?
 - What passages of Scripture?
 - What matters for prayer?
- How did the Reformers derive these lists? They looked for the following:
 - Clear commands or particular examples in Scripture
 - Clear principles in Scripture which are applicable to worship
- The essential elements and principles are reasonably easy to discern:
 - Acts 2.42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
 - 2 Timothy 4.1-2: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."
 - Colossians 3.16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
 - 1 Corinthians 14.40: "But all things should be done decently and in order."
 - Hebrews 12.28-29: "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."
- Where do we find the non-essential, but important, elements of public worship in Scripture?
 - Call to Worship – Psalm 100.1
 - Sacraments – 1 Corinthians 11.17-34
 - Blessings – Romans 1.7, Numbers 6.22-27, 2 Corinthians 13.14
 - Confession of Faith – Deuteronomy 26.5-10, Psalm 136
 - Offerings – 1 Corinthians 16.1-2
- Hyde also emphasizes that we ought to *see public worship not as a hindrance, but a linchpin of life*:

"Instead of seeing the Lord's Day as a rule that stifles our "weekend," we need to view it as a gift from God that actually structures our lives. The practice of the Lord's Day is not legalism, but it is a part of our piety, providing us physical and spiritual tual rest. We sanctify the day because we belong not to this age that is passing away but to the glorious age to come. We need to acknowledge, edge, then, that Sunday is the Lord's Day and not the Lord's morning (or, sadly, the Lord's hour), just as the Sabbath was a day of rest." (126)