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Biblical Principles of Worship

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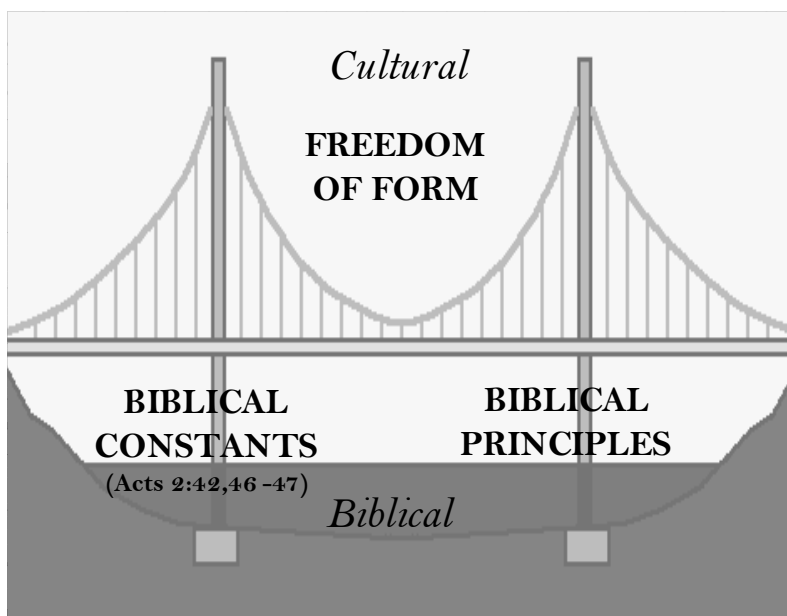
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Ron Man

Calvin Symposium on Worship 2014

Workshop B18 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP



INTRODUCTION

I. THE BRIDGE

A. BIBLICAL CONSTANTS (ACTS 2:42,46-7)

1. Word of God
2. Fellowship
3. Lord's Supper
4. Prayer
5. Praise
6. Christ- and gospel-centered

B. CULTURAL FREEDOM/FLEXIBILITY OF FORM

B. CULTURAL FREEDOM/FLEXIBILITY OF FORM

Pope Gregory I sent Augustine of Canterbury to England as a missionary about A.D. 596 with this advice: “It seems to me that you should carefully select for the English Church, which is still new to the faith and developing as a distinct community, whatever can best please Almighty God, whether you discover it in the Roman Church, or among the Gauls, or anywhere else. . . . From each individual church, therefore, choose whatever is holy, whatever is awe-inspiring, whatever is right; then arrange what you have collected as if in a little bouquet according to the English disposition and thus establish them as custom.” (James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, p. 44)

“And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.” (*Augsburg Confession* [1530], Article 7)

“The Master . . . did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended on the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages). . . . Because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 10, 30)

Article 34 - Of the Traditions of the Church

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word. . . . Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.

(Church of England, *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, 1563)

“In the New Testament, all the focus is on the reality of the glory of Christ, not the shadow and copy of religious objects and forms. It is stunning how indifferent the New Testament is to such things: there is **no authorization in the New Testament** for worship buildings, or worship dress, or worship times, or worship music, or worship liturgy or worship size or thirty-five-minute sermons, or Advent poems or choirs or instruments or candles. . . . [We are] free to find place and time and dress and size and music and elements and objects that help us orient radically toward the supremacy of God in Christ. . . . Almost every worship tradition we have is culturally shaped rather than Biblically commanded. The command is a radical connection of love and trust and obedience to Jesus Christ in all of life.”

(John Piper, “Our High Priest is The Son of God Perfect Forever,” sermon)

“The frightening freedom of worship in the New Testament is a missionary mandate. We must not lock this gospel treasure in any cultural strait-jacket. Rather let us find the place, the time, the dress, the forms, the music that kindles and carries a passion for the

supremacy of God in all things. And may our communion with the living God be so real and the Spirit of God so powerfully present that the heart of what we do becomes the joy of all the peoples we are called to reach.”

(John Piper, “Our High Priest is The Son of God Perfect Forever,” sermon)

1. Diversity & unity
2. History & tradition
3. Cultural context

4. *The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture*

- a. Transcultural
- b. Contextual
- c. Counter-cultural
- d. Cross-cultural

simultaneously!

C. **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES** (fuller version at www.worr.org and at <http://alturl.com/b5nos>)

1. **DOXOLOGICAL WORSHIP:** God’s glory, and our joyful celebration of it in worship, should be the focus and goal of all life and ministry.

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
(1Cor. 10:31)

2. **THEOCENTRIC WORSHIP:** Worship is first and foremost for God.

“Worship God.”
(Revelation 19:10; 22:9)

3. **DIALOGICAL WORSHIP:** Worship is a dialogue between God and His people, a rhythm of revelation and response.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.
(Psalm 96:4)

4. **WORD-SATURATED WORSHIP:** The Word must be central in our worship.

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
(Psalm 150:2)

5. **PARTICIPATORY WORSHIP:** Worship is the responsibility of all of God's people.

So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture will give thanks to You forever.
(Psalm 79:13)

6. **CHRIST-LED WORSHIP:** Our worship is acceptable in and through Christ our High Priest.

"In the midst of the assembly I will sing Your praise."
(Hebrews 2:12)

7. **SPIRIT-ENABLED WORSHIP:** Our response of worship is enabled, motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

*We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God
and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.*
(Philippians 3:3)

8. **WHOLE-LIFE WORSHIP:** Worship is the response of our entire lives to God.

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,
acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*
(Romans 12:1)

9. **HEART WORSHIP:** God is much more concerned with our heart than with the form of our worship.

“I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice.”
(Hosea 6:6)

10. **EDIFYING WORSHIP:** Worship should promote the unity and edification of the body.

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(Romans 15:5-6)

11. **TRANS-GENERATIONAL WORSHIP:** Young and old need each other in the Body of Christ.

Young men and maidens, old men and children: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted.
(Psalm 148:12-13; cf. Titus 2:2-8))

12. **TAUGHT WORSHIP:** These things must be taught and re-taught.

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.
(1 Thessalonians 4:1)