

Worship Questions and Answers (Part 3)
Colossians 2:16-23; Hebrews 1:1-4
August 26, 2007

I. Simplicity of Reformed Worship – Historical Argument

A. Relationship to the Regulative Principle

“Because of the regulative principle, simplicity has characterized Reformed worship. Without biblical warrant for many of the features of Roman liturgy, the Reformed tradition limited worship to the basics of the Word, sacraments, and prayer.”¹

B. Worship in Spirit and Truth

John Calvin: “wherever there is great ostentation in ceremonies, sincerity of the heart is rare indeed”²

C. Christian Liberty

“Reformed [churches] believe that church sessions and consistories must protect the consciences of worshipers by not requiring anything in worship beyond biblical mandate. Reformed worship, therefore, was simple, orderly, and reverent . . .”³

II. Simplicity of New Testament Worship – Redemptive/Historical Argument

A. Shadow and Substance – Col. 2:16-23

1. **The shadow of Old Testament ceremony**
2. **The substance of Christ Jesus**
3. **Externals – an appearance of wisdom (v. 18, 23)**
4. **Internals – true wisdom (v. 19)**
5. **Don’t return to the shadows**

B. The Final Word – Heb. 1:1-4

1. **Long ago – many times and many ways**
2. **These last days**
 - a. God’s final Word – His Son
 - b. Pattern of Hebrews – all prior speech fulfilled in Christ
3. **Shadow – Fulfillment**
 - a. the First Word – creator, radiance, and nature
 - b. Incarnation → the First Word becomes the Last Word
4. **Fulfills Old Testament worship – Heb. 9:11-14; also Jn. 4:21-24**

¹ D. G. Hart and John Muether, *With Reverence and Awe* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002), 79.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

³ *Ibid.*, 147-8.

C. What does New Testament worship look like?

- 1. church come of age – no more shadows**
- 2. fulfillment in Christ**
- 3. not more ceremonies – only God’s appointed elements**

D. Implications

1. The simplicity of New Testament worship

Terry Johnson: “[It is] simple because the New Testament does not prescribe a complex ritual of service as is found in the Old Testament; spiritual because when Jesus removed the special status of Jerusalem as the place where God was to be worshiped (John 4:7-24), he signaled the abolition of all the material forms that constituted the typological Old Testament system including not only the city, but all that gave the city significance – the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrificial animals, the incense; substantial because the God of the Bible is a great God and cannot be worshiped appropriately with forms that are light, flippant, or superficial; he must always be worshiped with ‘reverence and awe’ (Hebrews 12:28).”⁴

2. God’s appointed means (WCF 21.3-5)

3. What about banners, processions, or candles?

- a. what purpose do they serve?
- b. does God command them?

III. Participating and Leading in Worship

A. Dialogical Principle – covenantal character of Christian religion

- 1. conversational character of worship**
- 2. hear God speak – respond with God governed speech**

B. Who speaks for God?

- 1. The debate: pastor and elders?**
- 2. Ordination and office → function**

C. All active in worship

WSC 90: That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

WLC 167 and 174 – regarding baptism and the Lord’s Supper

⁴ Ibid., 157.