
MOPC Sunday School – 2010-2011 – *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*

Q49: Which is the second commandment?

A49: The second commandment is. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...*

Q50: What is required in the second commandment?

A50: The second commandment requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his Word.

Q51: What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A51: The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his Word.

Q52: What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A52: The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship.

Exploring Why We Do What We Do in Public Worship

Scripture sets forth all acceptable ELEMENTS to be included in our worship.

These elements are not to be added to or taken away from. God alone has instituted how He is to be worshipped (Matt. 15.9; Deut. 12.31-32). It is the responsibility of the Session of the Church to be clear on what elements constitute this Biblical worship from the Scriptures. The Westminster Confession of Faith 21.3-5 contains an apt summary of the Bible's teaching here.

We can distinguish between that which is *ordinary* and that which is *occasional* in our worship, and in fact the WCF does just this. That which is *ordinary* needs no special occasion to call it into use. That which is *occasional* requires a specific occasion to be called into use.

Ordinary: WCF 21.3 - "**Prayer**, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue." WCF 21.5 - "**The reading of the Scriptures** with godly fear, the sound **preaching** and conscionable **hearing** of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, **singing of psalms** with grace in the heart; as also, the due **administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments** instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God..." We could also include the giving of **monetary offerings** as part of the ordinary public worship of God (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Occasional: WCF 21.5 "...beside 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." By definition **baptism** (in contrast to the Lord's Supper) is also occasional. The Scriptures would also include the exercise of **public Church discipline** as another occasional element in public worship (1 Corinthians 5 and 1 Timothy 5:20).

Christ has indwelt the Session with His Holy Spirit to prudently determine and order the CIRCUMSTANCES surrounding the worship of God in each particular congregation.

This distinction between elements and circumstances is taken for granted in the Scriptures and is acknowledged by the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1.6, "...there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." These circumstances include answering such questions as: What time? What place? When to stand, sit, kneel? Do we use a microphone? What tune do we sing to? etc.

Two Questions which Have Arisen:

What about musical accompaniment in public worship?

A. Historical Theological Arguments of the Reformed Churches

The progress and unfolding of redemptive history excludes musical instrumentation now that Christ has come. This is due to the fact that Christ has fulfilled the Levitical order of the OT.

B. Arguments from "Circumstantial" Nature of Accompaniment

The tune is circumstantial (and we can sing it), why can't we play it to help us sing on key?

What about the use of a choir or “special music” in public worship?

A. Arguments from "Circumstantial" Application of Singing

1. One illegitimate argument

2. One possible argument

B. Arguments from 1 Corinthians 14 (prove too much)

C. Historical Theological Arguments of the Reformed Churches

We must charitably recognize the reality of “intramural” debate within the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches on how to apply the principles of the second commandment to these issues.