

Lecture 10- Historical Overview of Worship (III): English Puritans, Scottish & American Presbyterians

We have perfected and transmitted a Directory for Worship to both Houses of Parliament, which we hope will be to the joy and comfort of all our godly and dear brethren in all His Majestie's kingdoms and dominions. We have not advised any imposition which might make it unlawful to vary from it in anything ... And albeit we have not expressed in the Directory every minute particular which is or might be either laid aside or retained among us as comely and useful in practice: yet we trust, that none will be so tenacious of old customs not expressly forbidden, or so averse from good examples although new, in matters of lesser consequence, as to insist upon their liberty of retaining the one, or refusing the other, because not specified in the Directory; but be studious to please others rather than themselves. From the Acts of the Assembly as quoted in McCrie in Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland, (Blackwood: 1892)

Key Concepts

- Puritan view of worship
- American Presbyterian debates on worship

Lecture Objectives

- Complete historical survey by covering the Puritan and Reformed heritage into American Presbyterianism

Preliminary Questions

- Why do you think this issue of worship was so divisive among the different groups?
- In the quote from the Acts of the Assembly in the lecture (and above) the conclusion states the hope that those forming views on worship “be studious to please others rather than themselves”. How can we apply this to our present climate in American (or other) churches, where such a large mixture is evident?

Historical Overview of Worship (III): English Puritans, Scottish & American Presbyterians

I. Displaced English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians: Destinations and Influence

A. Frankfurt

1. Reform prayer book
2. Influential among Anglicans

B. Zurich

1. Eliminate liturgical forms
2. Influential among English (non-conformist) Puritans

C. Geneva

1. Worship reform with flexibility
2. Influential among Scottish Presbyterians

II. John Knox and His Return to Scotland in 1559

A. Scots Confession of 1560

1. Recognized variety applications
2. No one order appointed for all ages, times, and places

B. Centrality of elements: Word, prayer, singing, Lord's Supper

III. English Puritans and the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW)

A. Association of Lord's Prayer, Doxology, Apostles' Creed, and multiple scripture readings with Episcopacy

B. Two major views

1. Latitudinarians
 - a. Specific forms of worship not prescribed but left to man to decide
 - b. Vary according to circumstances and adapted place to place
 2. Brownists
 - a. Rejected all use of service-books and liturgies
 - b. Opposed to read prayers, use of Gloria Patri, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, and kneeling for prayer as enter pulpit
- C. Westminster Assembly 1643-1648
- "... 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]
1. Relationship to Calvin
 - a. Gore: Calvin's regulating of worship (as practiced by early Presbyterians) "provided essential parameters necessary for biblical worship while allowing for expression of freedom in matters not deemed essential"
 - b. Packer:
The English Puritan "idea that direct biblical warrant, in the form of precept or precedent, is required to sanction every item included in the public worship of God was in fact a Puritan innovation, which crystallized out in the course of the prolonged debates that followed the Elizabethan settlement...when the Puritans...challenged the principle that each church has liberty to ordain non-biblical ceremonies in worship where these seem conducive to edification and reverence; when they repudiated all set prayers; when they rejected kneeling in public worship, the Christian year, weekly Communion, and the practice of confirmation; they were not in fact reverting to Calvin, but departing from him, though...it is doubtful whether they realized this."
J.I. Packer, *The Puritan Approach to Worship*. 1963.
 2. Historical context
 - a. Fears of abuse of freedom produced minimalist approach
 - b. "Campaign to death" led to civil war and beheading of a king
 - c. "Bare bones" – In their zeal to not do more than commanded did they do less? Does RPW apply to actually doing all that the Bible does command and not just making sure don't do what doesn't command?
 - d. So concerned not to have imposed worship that imposed minimalist uniform form in order to be considered biblical?
 - e. Long sermon and lined out psalms became practice
 - f. Westminster Directory Worship allows more freedom than their actual practice:
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the other, because not specified in the Directory; but be studious to please others rather than themselves.”

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IV. American Presbyterianism

A. Pietistic Protestantism and traditional Protestantism

1. Anti-liturgical movement
2. Maintaining historical liturgies
3. Influence of revivals on corporate public worship: evangelistic preaching, popular music, and spontaneous prayer

B. Presbyterian changes in America

1. Rejection of exclusive psalm-singing and use of Watts and others
2. Use of organs and choirs

C. Resistance by old side/old school Presbyterians

1. Against influence of popular culture in name of biblical faithfulness
2. Doctrinal and aesthetic critiques of populist worship practices

D. 19th Century southern Presbyterianism

1. Greatest opposition to populist influence
2. Most strict and narrow formulation of RPW in America

V. The PCA Book of Church Order

A. Discussion of Book of Church Order

B. Discussion of church membership and the Sacraments

“Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source.” 47-1

“The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given His church a large measure of liberty in this matter.” 47-6