

Lecture 19- Contemporary Issues

*Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp.
Psalm 149:3*

Key Concepts

- Dance in worship
- Drama in worship
- Film and power point in worship
- Examine one current debate in the PCA concerning worship
- Characterize worship that is biblical and reformed

Lecture Objectives

- Examine a number of contemporary issues in light of the regulative principle and the varied expressions of elements

Preliminary Questions

- If dancing is a valid expression of an element, yet is something foreign to your particular setting, what expression(s) might there be which parallels and fulfills the reason for dancing?
- Would an unbeliever be impacted by the love and faith expressed in your church? In your own attitude in worship?
- How do these issues relate to the regulative principle as discussed in the course (relationship of commanded elements to varied expressions)?
- Are there limits on the ways of expressing elements? If so, then why or how can we know them?
- What should we think about churches in the same city, with the same general beliefs, having very different worship services and styles? Should every church seek eclecticism in their music (as at New City)? Why or why not?

Contemporary Issues**I. Dance**

- A. Exodus 15:20, 2 Samuel 6:16, Psalm 149:3, 150:4
- B. Relationship between Old and New Testaments - continuity/discontinuity?
- C. Dance as stand alone element vs. manner of bodily expression during other elements

II. Drama

- A. Dramatic actions: Isaiah 7:3; 8:1-4; Jeremiah 13:1-11; 16:1-4; 19:1-2a, 10-11a; 32:7-15; Ezekiel 4:1-4
- B. Summary of position for those who advocate its limited usage connected to sermon (paper from PCA church plant in California in 1990's)
 1. Sound preaching is part of regulative principle worship
 2. Teaching logically deduced as an aspect of sound preaching
 3. Teaching implies application scripture to current society and culture
 4. Teaching in cultural context implies use of means common to that culture
 5. Therefore drama could be appropriate in a culture as part of preaching
- C. Drama of worship itself including sacraments!

III. Film

- A. Movie clips as illustrations- similar to II.B. argument above?
- B. Video clips for announcements, mission trips, and testimonies

IV. Power Point

- A. Facilitate congregational participation (especially in song)
- B. Does it fit well with style and aesthetics in local church context?
- V. Body Posture (referenced in the Bible)
 - A. Bowing the head (4)
 - B. Standing (6)
 - C. Lifting the eyes (9)
 - D. Kneeling (12)
 - E. Hands lifted (14)
 - F. Prostration (28)
- VI. Worship: For the Seeker or the Believer?
 - A. Is worship intelligible for young believers and children?
 - B. The impact of true love and faith in God upon the unbeliever in worship
- VII. Relationship to the Regulative Principle of Worship
 - A. Elements: commands, examples, and principles
 - B. Variety of valid expressions...where are the lines?
- VIII. Unified Reformed Liturgy (see Appendices H and I)
 - A. See pcanews.com article by Terry Johnson
 - B. Traditional Presbyterian worship
 - 1. Uniform from generation to generation
 - 2. Uniform from culture to culture
 - C. Conventional instruments – piano and organ
 - D. Exclusively ordained leadership
 - E. Emotional restraint
- IX. Contextually Relevant Worship
 - A. Every church is in a particular culture and usually with multiple sub-cultures
 - 1. Culture is not inherently good or evil
 - 2. Popular, classical, and ethnic cultures vs. mass culture
 - B. Draws together biblically valid resources of past and present
 - C. Adapt to particular ministry setting
 - D. Worship must be “contemporary” and “culturally specific”
 - E. Truth of content meaningfully expressed
- X. What Makes Worship Biblical and Reformed?
 - A. See pcanews.com article by Mark Dalbey

“This means that Reformed worship includes a deep reverence before our all-holy God that takes our sin seriously; overwhelming joy in the presence of our Father who loves, forgives, and adopts us by grace into His family and invites us to be seated as honored guests at His table; expository Christ-centered preaching that fills the mind with truth and transforms hearts and lives to the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit; Word-saturated worship filling our prayers, songs, creeds, offerings, and sacraments; re-presentation of the Gospel for justification and sanctification in multiple ways throughout the corporate worship; musical expressions that carry biblically sound content in songs that are an expression of heartfelt worship consistent with the words being sung and the context of the worshipping congregation; worship as dialogue between God and His people; and worship that is amazed over and over again at the grace of God for undeserving sinners appropriated and applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit beginning in the corporate worship service experience itself.”(Dalbey)

- B. “Gospel-driven biblical and reformed worship transcends style and yet at the same time is able to be expressed in local churches through a variety of valid worship expressions.”
- C. New City Fellowship Chattanooga on worship:

“Our worship seeks to be cross-cultural yet flowing out of our Reformed tradition. This means that we understand God to be the audience of our worship. We seek to please Him. Our understanding of the “Regulative Principle of Worship” is that all that we can do in worship must be biblical. We believe that we are to be courageous to use all of ourselves in worship, so we follow the teachings of the Psalms to use our bodies in such things as clapping, raising our hands, shouting and dancing. The Psalms teach us to use instruments and to call on everything that has breath to praise the Lord. We do not think that being truly Reformed means to only use a Northern European 16th century cerebral style and functional order to worship God. Our music is eclectic and often unique since many of our songs have been written here. We use James Ward songs, Black Gospel music, charismatic praise songs and traditional hymns. We value our Reformed heritage and see it as part of the treasure of the Kingdom of God. We use many different song leaders, and emphasize piano, electric instruments and drums. We use praise teams, ensembles, and the choir at various times. We are concerned about the racial and cultural mix of all of our worship services. We pursue a building momentum of the worship and seek strong Biblical preaching.”

“With each new age in church history, fresh musical forms have arisen spontaneously to give expression to the reviving work of the Holy Spirit in the church. No one style has been, or ever can be, sufficient to serve effectively as the sole and permanent church style.”

L. Roff, *Let Us Sing*, p.149.