

## Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 21:1-6 Of Religious Worship

### **Introduction: *The Centrality of Worship in Christian Spirituality***

We should “step back” for a moment and think about what we are doing when we “worship” something, even how “strange” it is that we would do it. What does it say about our spirituality that we “worship?” In so many words, our confession introduces it this way:

*The light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might.*

What are some of the ways that we discern the centrality of worship in Scripture?

1. *Worship is central to the church by definition of “church.”*  
Our English word “church” is a translation of the Greek word “ecclesia” meaning “assembly” in the New Testament. Our identity as “church” is that of one holy catholic and apostolic *assembly* that is organically united with the saints and angels in the glorious festal gathering in heaven according to Hebrews 12:22-29.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the church is exhorted to *assemble* together in Heb.10:19-25 which is no doubt a reference to our participation together in worship on earth as we await the great day of our joining with the heavenly courts anticipated in Hebrews 12. The consummation of church history is told with the jolting visions of heavenly liturgy in John's apocalyptic epistle. We are met there with visions of the glorified Christ in the company of worshippers. These liturgical visions are central to John's exhortation to the church in her mission to persevere in being a witness to the nations for the glory of God as revealed in Christ.
2. *Worship is central to our identity as “creature.”*  
We are never so right with ourselves than when we worship! Our worship defines us as those made in the image of God responding to God, our infinite, immutable and glorious Creator. As part of God's creation, we are told how we, like the heavens, “declare the glory of God.” (Ps.19:1) Our worship is “awe-full” and when we catch even a glimpse of the power of God in creation—like Elijah who was filled with awe at the awesome power of God in a hurricane. There is no more natural and true response to God than the responses to worship. *Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created...* (Ps.148:5) Lester Ruth observed, “if God is one of the reasons we offer worship, we can also point to ourselves. Worship is the ultimate original human vocation. People are not first of all *homo sapiens*, “knowing creatures,” but we were created by God to be worshipping creatures. What distinguishes humanity in relationship to God is humanity's ability to worship.” Again from the book of Revelation we discover that “worship fulfills our eternal destiny. It anticipates the quality of eternal life.”<sup>2</sup> Even the language we evoke when speaking of worship makes the case for our vocation of worship. The word “liturgy” is derived from the Greek words “laos” and “ergon” or “the work of the people.” It is our calling then to worship God.
3. *Worship is central to our identity as purposed in our salvation.*  
In God's redemption, we are shown the mighty acts of God to save his chosen people from their enemies- and most ultimately the last and final enemy of death itself. (1Cor.15) We respond in worship. Moses prostrated himself to the God full of grace and truth as exposed in Exodus 34:6. Christ meant his accomplishments for the salvation of the elect to “glorify thy name” according to John. (Jn.12:28) The exalted Christ is worshipped as the “lamb who was slain” for the sins of the elect in Revelation. And the assembly of worshippers sing forth, *worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!* And we are told that *every creature which is in heaven and earth and under th earth...* said, *Blessing and honor and glory and power to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!* (Rev. 5:12-13) This is to worship the God of salvation!

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Clowney, *The Church*, p. 118

<sup>2</sup> Lester Ruth, Lecture 1

As summarized by Lester Ruth, we are therefore called to worship because, "God is worthy of our worship and praise. It is meet and right to give God thanks and praise. It is suitable and appropriate. It is right because of the nature of God."<sup>3</sup> As someone else has observed, "God's worthiness ensures that God-centered worship could never be in vain."<sup>4</sup> It is the defining mark of our spirituality to be God centered versus "us" centered, and worship is the expression of this! (Remember WCF 3:1-2 and especially the conclusion: *to Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience he is pleased to require of them.*)

## CHAPTER 21

### ***Of Religious Worship***

1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped 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.
2. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and, since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.
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.
4. Prayer is to be made for things lawful; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter: but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.
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: 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.
6. Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by his Word or providence, calleth thereunto.

### **7 Fundamental Principles of "Christian" Worship In WCF:**

#### **Principle #1: The Doxological Principle (section 1)**

1. Why doxology?
  - a. Because God-Centered worship Glorifies God Among the Nations which is both worthy of God and is the ultimate purpose of salvation itself!

*"God's worthiness ensures that God-centered worship could never be in vain."*

*J.R. Neuhaus*

*...to Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience he is pleased to require of them..<sup>5</sup>*

*For my name's sake, I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, so that I may not cut you off.*

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from unpublished Lecture notes, *Foundations of Liturgical Study, Lecture 1 (9/2/99)*

<sup>4</sup> 1975 Harford Appeal, "We worship God because God is to be worshipped." (J.R. Neuhaus, *Freedom*, p. 122)

<sup>5</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter II, Sections 1-2.

b. Because Doxology IS Good Evangelism

Paul's observation concerning public worship and witness:

"IF therefore the whole church comes together... and if an unbeliever enters... " they are "called to account by all, the secrets of their hearts are disclosed and so, falling on their face, they will worship God and declare that God is really among you..."

Consider then this very interesting testimony:

*The world had not satisfied me the way it had promised, the way I had anticipated. The world's message and methods had hung me out to dry. I hungered desperately for something. Someone, "out of this world." (I was) broken and longing for something transcendent... I was very thankful when I walked into a church that was very different: A church where the otherness of God was sensed immediately. In the music, in the message and in the mingling afterward, it was clear that God was the guest of honor there... I had suffered the consequences of the modern world's emphasis on the individual and I was unbelievably refreshed to discover a place that took the focus off of me and put it on him... I was drawn in by the glorious mystery of it all. I was being evangelized, not by a man-centered show, but by a God-centered atmosphere... it was quite literally, "out of this world."*

W. Tullian Tchividjian

c. What are some of the "negative" directions regarding worship that are stated in WCF 21.2 What is being guarded against?

2. Doxology will be expressed in two ways:

- a) In what we do in worship—E.g. The regulative principle applied to elements
- b) In how we do what we do in worship—E.g. The directory principle applied to forms

**Principle #2: The Regulative Principle (read 21.1b)**

A Historical Survey: Ezekiel 20:27-32 compared to Dt.12:1-10, 13

1. Type of literature: Prophetic Court case  
"Divine Judgement Oracle"

2. Series of indictments based on the Deuteronomic covenant in contrast to Israel's history

**3.Main indictment: Covenant infidelity**

Purpose of Covenant: 20:14

Israel's unfaithfulness: v. 30 Spiritual Harlotry

4. Covenant Curse for breaking covenant stipulations: 33-39 (From Dt. 28)

5. Specific Problem: *Syncretism in Worship*

Key phrase: "on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree."  
(Compare to covenant stipulations in Dt. 12.)

As Calvin put it:

"Worship should be to God alone and without any dependence on human will... all mixtures by which the pure simplicity of lawful worship is corrupted are condemned." We are to follow in all simplicity what he has ordained by his Word, without adding anything to it at all" (*Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, p. 66).

Notice how this principle is stated by the Confession. Also note other confessional statements to this effect.

**Book of Church Order:**

**Preface:** Christ, as King, has given to His Church officers, oracles and ordinances; and especially has He ordained there in His system of doctrine, government, discipline and worship, all of which are expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced there from; and to which He commands that nothing be added, and that from them naught be taken away.

**Chapter 47 on *The Principles and Elements of Public Worship***

**47-1:** 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 form no other source.

The Scriptures forbids the worshipping of God by images, *or in any other way not appointed in His Word*, and requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word.

What are the five elements of worship according to the confession?

Worship, prayer, sacraments, word, and fellowship/collection

What is the apostolic foundation for worship as per the foundation setting role of the apostle as per Mt.16:17ff and Eph. 2:20? Consider then Acts 2:42 where we see four elements included in corporate worship:

**Acts 2:42**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Therefore, 4 Essential Elements:

Prayers

Spoken and Sung

Sacraments

Baptism-entrance

Lord's Supper- Renewal

Word (Apostolic)

Read and Preached

"Fellowship" (Collection and Mercy)

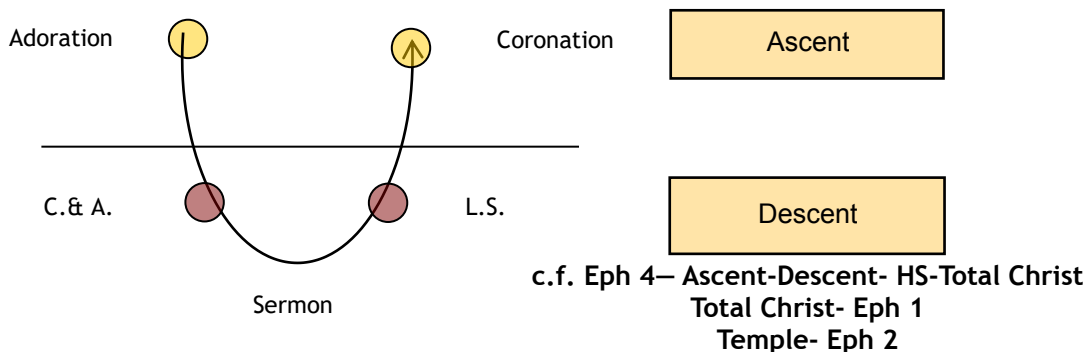
**Principle #3: The Covenantal Worship Principle—Gospel centered both in word and order (read 21.2)**

**The Covenantal Pattern in Worship— Dialogical Movements after the patterned Gospel logic.**

- 1.) God declares, "I am your God, you are my people" as then covenantally fulfilled in Christ.
- 2.) The people respond by rendering praise and thanksgiving to God, and by renewing vows of exclusive faith and commitment to God through Christ.
- 3.) Christ is present in, with and through covenantal worship to bring about his life-giving and salvific purpose to the praise of his glorious grace.

How then is the presence mediated, except by the Christo-centric logic of the gospel as entered into by worship?

- ◆ The Covenantal Movements In worship: From an emphasis on transcendence to imminence to transcendence again...



- ◆ The fourfold pattern after a "Gospel Logic:"

1. Movement of Praise and Adoration: "praise is the gateway to God's presence" (Hughes Old)

*We enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Psm.100:4*

- ✓ Call to Worship
- ✓ Doxology
- ✓ Hymns/Songs of Praise
- ✓ Prayer of Praise and Invocation

2. Movement of Confession and Absolution: "true knowledge of God leads to a true knowledge of ourselves." (Terry Johnson)

-- A familiar pattern in OT:

Moses (after seeing even the backside of God's glory) "made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship (Ex.34:8)

Isaiah (seeing a vision of God's glory in the temple) cried out "woe is me, for I am ruined, I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips." (Is.6:5)

-- A familiar pattern in the NT:

Peter (after he sees God's glory in Jesus following a miracle) calls out "depart from me for I am a sinful man." (Luke 5:8)

John (seeing a vision of God on the throne) described how "when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as a dead man." (Rev.1:17)

*As a consequence, we must infer that man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty."*

John Calvin, *Institutes...*

- ✓ Reading of the Law of God
- ✓ Confession of Sin
- ✓ Assurance and Absolution
- ✓ Entrance Sacrament of Baptism
- ✓ Pastoral Prayers
- ✓ Hymns/Songs of Thanksgiving

3. Movement Within the Mediated Presence of God in *Word* and *Sacrament*: "the means of grace"

*It is not merely a re-enactment or remembrance of God's work for our salvation. It is God present as mediated through his word and sacrament so as to transact his covenant to those who are being saved.*

Word:

*You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever."*

1 Peter 1:23-25

But what does it say? "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved... So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."

Romans 10: 8,17

Sacrament:

*While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.*

Mark 14:22-23

*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?*

1 Cor.16-17

- ✓ Reading from Scripture
- ✓ Prayer for Illumination
- ✓ Expository Sermon
- ✓ Renewed Faith in Christ
- ✓ Renewed Trust and Giving of Ourselves to Christ
- ✓ Sacrament of Lord's Supper and Spiritual Confirmation and Sealing into Gods' Salvation

4. Movement of Coronation of God by humanity and benediction for those being saved by God.

- ✓ Hymn of Coronation and Praise
- ✓ Prayer of Coronation, Praise and Thanksgiving
- ✓ Gloria Patri
- ✓ Benediction: The final Word is God's, and it is the promise of blessing, not curse, upon those being saved!

◆ Summary of the Covenantal Pattern:

The two beat rhythm of God's approach to us that meets with and evokes a reacting offering of ourselves to him seems basic to the Christian view of worship.

Ralph Martin

**Principle #4: Temple Worship vs. Revival Service**

**Heb 10:23-24**

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

**Heb. 12:19-24, 28**

*For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel... Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,*

*The organic concept of the church that appears in the New Testament... presents a more theological, Christ-centered, spiritual view of the church as defined not by one earthly hierarchal center nor by many earthly congregational centers, but by a heavenly center that requires multiform earthly manifestations. Earthly assemblies do not define but manifest the nature and the center of the church.*

*The picture of the church as a worshipping assembly is nowhere more powerfully presented than by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 12:18-29). He contrasts the worship of God at Mount Sinai with*

*the worship of the New Covenant. We do not come to Mount Sinai in our worship, but to Mount Zion. That Zion is not the earthly, but the heavenly Zion, the sanctuary of the eternal city of God. For the author of Hebrews, this is not a figurative way of speaking. The heavenly Jerusalem is not a Platonic abstraction. It is as real as the living God, as real as the risen body of Jesus Christ. In our worship in Christ's church we approach the throne of God the Judge of all. We enter the festival assembly of the saints and the angels. We gather in spirit with the spirits of just men made perfect. We enter the assembly of glory through Christ our Mediator, and the blood of his atoning death. For that reason we must hear and heed the word of the Lord, and 'worship God acceptably with reverence and awe!*

Edmund Clowney:

### **Theology of Worship Explained:**

- Corporate NT Worship is fundamentally to participate in the mediated presence of Christ “on earth as it is in heaven:-- Heb 12, Rev. 4-5, Eph. 4, etc.
- Fundamental to our theology of the church and worship is our theology of the ascended ministry of Christ being mediated by the Holy Spirit in/with/through common/unholy elements in order to become the holy/uncommon, life giving and redemptive presence of Christ in our midst. This mediated presence is executed via the Holy Spirit by means of the prescribed instrumentality of word, sacrament and community as then to become the “household of God” or “NC temple.”
- There is then in worship both a “transcendent” aspect of our being united to Christ in heavenly worship, as there is an imminence of Christ’s presence in our earthly context in worship. The ascending/descending theme as by Christ vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit in, with and through the elements of worship is essential to our theological understanding of worship. How then to convey this in our forms/circumstances? For instance:
  - The “body of Christ” then assume two dynamics—one prescribed in scripture and enlivened by the spirit, the other provided by the flesh/blood of the people (thus the vernacular principle) as also enlivened by the spirit—thus the miracle of sacramental presence working in, with and through the common/unholy for an uncommon and holy use. This is the mystery of the ascended ministry of Christ vis-à-vis history.
  - Moreover, this whole transaction is not just “rational” but holistic as to involve our reason, senses, emotions and relationships. A Biblical anthropology is to know ourselves as we are known by God (Calvin). That is to say that God knows us as living soul, even “body and spirit. We then commune with God in body, mind, emotions, affections, etc. Worship then is a whole person event involving the whole of our sensory and non-sensory being.

**Words alone cannot do justice to the reality of heavenly worship—thus the use of images in Rev 4-5 where we see an apocalyptic picture of this worship that we are even now participating in at 135 Whitney every Sunday morning!!!**

the scene of a throne room in a heavenly temple...

Patterned after Daniel 7:9-14 is a vision of a temple-throne room in heaven!

### **4 Heavenly Movements:**

#### Movement 1: Invitation, & Doxology

*After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here...At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne...*

*Revelation 4:1-2*

And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the

thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!”

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.”

Revelation 4:3-11

### Movement 2: Confession and Absolution

*Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

Revelation 5:1-5

### Movement 3: Ministry of Word, Response of Faith and Eucharistic Celebration

*And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,*

*“Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

Revelation. 5:6-10

### Movement 4: Coronation and Benediction



*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

*Revelation 5:11-14*

**Principle #5: The Vernacular Principle (read 21.3, esp. 3.b)**

In so far as it is a work of the people in response to the work of God, there is a "vernacular" component to true, dialogical, nature of worship. Therefore,

**Acts 1:19**

This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

**Acts 2:6**

And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

**Acts 2:8**

And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

**1Cor. 14:5**

I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive **edification**.

This all begs for a discussion about how to both "direct" and "vernaculate" (if I could make up a word here) at the same time. Our discussion would need to talk about the inter-relationship of message and medium. We would need to remember that no culture is "a-moral" such that each culture contains its hidden idols. And we would need to always remember what will be discussed next as the third theological aspect of covenant worship which is the dual ends of worship for both doxology and edification. That is to say, we will want our words, lyrics, and styles to BOTH glorify God and edify the elect.

Using the language of BCO

*Therefore, we are to determine what is "to the glory of God" and "recognizing that Christ is the Mediator by whom alone they can come unto God, when they honor Christ as the head of the church, who rules over public worship and when their worship is an expression of **their** faith in Christ and their love for Him. (BCO 47:5)*

*Again, "the forms for public worship have value only when they serve to express the **inner** reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion." (BCO 47:5)*

***Thus, if the regulative principle preserves the doxology of worship, the vernacular principle preserves the edification in worship.***

As directed to both the believing and unbelieving elect, the worship will be edifying, even as it is first and foremost doxological.

**1Cor. 14:12** Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the **edification** of the church that you seek to excel.

**1Cor. 14:26** How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for **edification**.

**And by “edification” it is not just meant “for believers” but “for the elect” (an important distinction... why?)**

Edification Principle Clarified:

NOT: As an appeal to the sympathies of the flesh...

RATHER: As an appeal to the sympathies of effectual calling in election

I.e. A message and vernacular that appeals to the sympathies expected of those being called by God vs. those sympathies of the "flesh" as related to the "natural man", albeit in a vernacular that is sensitive to both the "Unbelieving/seeker/unchurched" and "Believer/church" alike.

### **Principle #6: The Directed Principle—a Presbyterian Distinctive**

Note: Our *confession* DOES acknowledge that our response to God will necessarily include such things as are beyond the teachings of scripture and ordered by what amounts to "common sense." So for instance, after affirming the above "regulating" principle in Chapter 1.6, our confession also affirms a vernacular sensitive principle as follows within the same chapter and section:

WCF 1:6 Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: *and that 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.*

How then are these things to be ordered? Three traditional options:

Hierarchically driven *Formalism*:

Congregational *Formlessness*:

Presbyterially Directed Forms:

*our standards will clarify that... "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. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's word are observed and the spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness..." (BCO 47:6)*

E.g. Worship is then to be directed with a view toward 1) an order/content/style that is "according to the general rules of the Word" and 2) a content and style that is sensitive to the needs and "vernacular" of a specific congregation. Therefore, a self-consciously "directed" worship as determined by the general rules/values of scripture and circumstances common to the vernacular of a given society.

### **Summary of Westminster Convention**

*While the Assembly was united in its understanding of Reformed theology, it was divided on the matter of worship between the Scottish Presbyterians, the English Presbyterians and the Independents.* John Leith

Notice the concern again as stated by Leith quoting the Directory preface.

*"means... to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves<sup>6</sup> to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office.*

1. Concern for converted ministry
2. Concern for a gifted and spirit filled ministry

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<sup>6</sup> The recognition of "several" authority being expressed in worship by the minister

2. Why? Because it was believed that there is a "joint" AND several aspect to liturgical leadership
3. Ultimate concern was to avoid dead formalism on the one hand and licentious syncretism with the idols of the world on the other...

Thompson:

When their chairman... laid the first draft of the work before the full Assembly (May 1644) he reported that "many serious and sad debates" had taken place over the crucial issue of form and freedom.<sup>7</sup> To satisfy the desires and scruples of all the parties the subcommittee had found it expedient to produce a directory, as opposed to a liturgy, which outlined the main headings of worship and described the substance of each element in such a way that "by altering here and there a word, a man may mould it into a prayer." Where disagreement could not be overcome, the committee made compensation by allowing variety in practice or by using rubrics of lesser compulsion.

Completed in 1744, entitled A Directory for the Public Worship of God...

The preface commenced with a typical Puritan thesis: the Anglican reformation remains to be finished... The Book of Common Prayer, while commendable in its day, had become a burden upon the conscience of "sundry good Christians" causing ministers to be deprived and laity to be kept from the Lord's Table.<sup>8</sup> It produced prayer-book idolatry to the depreciation of preaching. **It confirmed the papist in their own superstition, rendered the clergy "idle and unedifying" and brought untold contention upon the church.**

1. It contained ordinances which were of divine institution (Prescribed elements)
2. It promised uniformity by setting forth the principle headings of worship and the sense and scope of the prayers
3. As a directory, it provided ministers "some help and furniture" without depriving them of the **gift of prayer**. (i.e. anointed leadership)<sup>9</sup>

Thus for example as related to the Lord's supper:

*First, he (minister) read the words of institution... which he could also "explain and apply" if it seemed appropriate...*

*The elements, having been "sanctified by the Word and Prayer"... the minister delivered bread and cup to the people who sat "about" the table or "at" it. (thus up-front or in seats-- the Scots preferred the people sitting at the table and handing the elements to one another, the Puritans preferred to receive the elements from the hands of the ministry...)*

Leith,

*The Assembly replaced the service book that contained the prayers and forms of worship with a directory that served as a guide... yet the Directory suggests an order of worship that is not very different from that of Geneva and the Scottish Book of Common Order.*

*The Directory presupposed that the minister was a converted man who could and would pray and lead worship out of his Christian experience. For a highly disciplined community and ministry such as practice was very effective. With the waning of discipline a voluntary liturgical order and free prayers became the occasion for much trivia, senseless repetition and personal idiosyncrasy.*

### **Principle #7: The Corporate Nature of Sacramental Worship:**

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

<sup>7</sup> OF which we do well to avoid by remaining true to that which the Westminster decided for us... rather than re-living them all over. Thus the value of denominationalism-- there ARE other church options for those who are not comfortable with the Scoto-Presbyterian tradition.

<sup>8</sup> Thus the call for a "regulative principle" as directed not to forms but to elements, so on the one hand to prescribe what scripture prescribes, nothing more and nothingless... etc.

<sup>9</sup> Notice then the "middle ground" between liturgy on the one hand and independence on the other-- thus a directory and between Anglican/prelacy and Independency... A regulated service albeit with freedom for inspired leadership...

- Corporate Participation:<sup>SEP</sup>*Even the language we evoke when speaking of worship makes the case for the corporate vocation of worship.*
  - The word "liturgy" is derived from the Greek words "laos" and "ergon" or "the work of the people." It is our calling then to worship God.

Note "Priesthood of Believers doctrine:

- Thus worship vs. Entertainment
- Instrumental "accompaniment vs. performance,
- Etc.

- Corporate Accountability:<sup>SEP</sup>*I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

1Cor.10:15-17

- Corporate One-anothering:<sup>SEP</sup>  
For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

- Corporate Universality:  
*The scriptural model in view is the "city-church"... these are seen as unified churches under one presbyterial government but including a number of congregations... They are members of the church of the city...*

*... a different concept of "the church of God which is at Corinth." Corinth is one place of manifestation (of the heavenly church manifest on earth) for God has "many people" in that city, but the church is not the church of Stephanas (16:15), or of Paul, Peter, or Apollos (1:12) or of Corinth. It is the church of God; therefore it includes those who are called to be saints and they are addressed with "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus in every place."*

## **Principle #8- Missional Principle**

### **Worship targetings the elect:**

- Appeal to sympathies that are prepared by Holy Spirit "effectual calling" and providence vs. natural/flesh sympathies.

*The world had not satisfied me the way it had promised, the way I had anticipated. The world's message **and** methods had hung me out to dry. I hungered desperately for something. Someone, "out of this world." (I was) broken and longing for something transcendent... I was very thankful when I walked into a church that was very different: A church where the otherness of God was sensed immediately. In the music, in the message and in the mingling afterward, it was clear that God was the guest of honor there... I had suffered the consequences of the modern world's emphasis on the individual and I was unbelievably refreshed to discover a place that took the focus off of me and put it on him... I was drawn in by the glorious mystery of it all. I was being evangelized, not by a man-centered show, but by a God-centered atmosphere... it was quite literally, "out of this world."*

W. Tullian Tchividjian

- Define "elect" as both churches and unchurched.

- Note Paul's advice concerning public worship:

*"IF therefore the whole church comes together... and if an unbeliever enters... they are called to account by all, the secrets of their hearts are disclosed and so, falling on their face, they will worship God and declare that God is really among you..." 1Cor.14:23ff*

#### Redemptive Historical Precedent:

Tim Keller: *Evangelism in Worship*.<sup>[1][2]</sup> God commanded Israel to invite the nations to join in declaring his glory. Zion is to be the center of world-winning worship (Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-8.) *"Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord...so the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord"* (Psalm 102:18.) Psalm 105 is a direct command to believers engage in evangelistic worship. The Psalmist challenges them to *"make known among the nations what he has done"* (v.1.) How? *"Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of his wonderful acts"* (v.2) Thus believers are continually told to sing and praise God before the unbelieving nations. (See also Psalm 47:1; 100:1-5.) God is to be praised **before all the nations**, and as he is praised by his people, the nations are summoned and called to join in song."

"Peter tells a Gentile church, *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (I Peter 2:9.) This shows us that the church is challenged to the same witness that Israel was called to—evangelistic worship. A key difference: in the Old Testament, the center of world-winning worship was Mt. Zion, but now, wherever we worship Jesus in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-26) we have come to the heavenly Zion (Heb.12:18-24.) In other words, the risen Lord now sends his people out singing his praises in mission, calling the nations to join both saints and angels in heavenly doxology. Jesus himself stands in the midst of the redeemed and leads us in the singing of God's praises (Hebrews 2:12), even as God stands over his redeemed and sings over us in joy (Zeph. 2:17.)"

#### Case studies:<sup>[1][2]</sup>

Corinthians 14:24-25.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Paul is addressing the misuse of the gift of tongues. He complains that tongues speaking will cause unbelievers to say they are out of their minds (v.23.) He insists that the worship service must be comprehensible to them. He says that if an unbeliever *"or unlearned one"* (an uninitiated inquirer) comes in, and worship is being done *"unto edification"*, *"he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all"* (v.24.) Of what does this conviction consist? *"The secrets of his heart will be laid bare"* (v.25.) It may mean he realizes that the worshippers around him are finding in God what his heart had been secretly searching for, but in the wrong ways. It may mean the worship shows him how his heart works. The result: *"so falling on his face, he will worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you'"* (v.25.)

Acts 2.<sup>[1][2]</sup> When the Spirit falls on those in the upper room, a crowd gathers (v.5) because a) they are hearing the disciples praising God (*"we hear them declaring the wonders of God"* v.11), and b) and also because this worship is *"in our own tongues"* (v.11.) As a result, they are first made very interested (*"amazed and perplexed they asked one another, 'what does this mean'"* v.11), and later they are convicted deeply (*"they were cut to the heart and said...'Brethren, what shall we do?'"* v.37.)<sup>[1][2]</sup> Note therefore: Keller,

Non-believers are expected to be present in Christian worship. In Acts 2 it happens by word-of-mouth excitement. In I Cor 14 it is probably the result of personal invitation by Christian friends. But Paul in 14:23 expects both *"unbelievers"* and *"the unlearned"* (literally *"a seeker"*—*"one who does not understand"*) to be present in worship.

Non-believers must find the praise of Christians to be *comprehensible*. In Acts 2 it happens by miraculous divine intervention. In I Cor 14 it happens by human design and effort. But it cannot be

missed that Paul directly tells a local congregation to adapt its worship because of the presence of unbelievers. It is a false dichotomy to insist that if we are seeking to please God we must not ask what the unchurched feel or think about our worship.

Non-believers can fall under conviction and be converted *through* comprehensible worship. In I Cor 14 it happens during the service, but in Acts 2 it is supplemented by “after meetings” and follow-up evangelism. God wants the world to overhear us worshipping him. God directs his people not to simply worship, but to sing his praises “before the nations.” We are not to simply

## Chapter 21:7-8 Christian Lord's Day

7. As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

### 1. Biblical background

Gen. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Ex. 20:8 *Remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

11 *For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*

Deut. 5:12 *Observe* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, *as the Lord your God commanded you.*

13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, *nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.*

15 *And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day*

Notice that the largest difference between the record given in Exodus and that given in Deuteronomy is that the Exodus version grounds the sabbath-observance in the original creation of the world, whereas the Deuteronomy version grounds the command in the creation of Israel as a nation by the Exodus from Egypt. This anticipates many of the later differences in understanding how to apply the fourth command. In what degree is the command a reflection of creational realities, and in what degree does it reflect the distinctive purposes for covenant Israel?

The data of the Westminster standards summarized.

1. The Sabbath command is a "creation ordinance," instituted at creation, and enfolded into the natural order, therefore binding all people at all times.

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him

LC

Question 20

Q What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created?

A The providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created, was the placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help; affording him communion with himself; instituting the sabbath;

2. The Sabbath command requires an observance of "one day in seven".

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him

Question 116

Q What is required in the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven;

3. The particular day to be observed has changed with the resurrection of Christ from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian sabbath.

Question 116

Q What is required in the fourth commandment?

A The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called the Lord's day.

4. The entirety of the day is to be expended in private and public exercises of religion, and in deeds of necessity and mercy.

WCF 21.8 This sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, *all the day*, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, *the whole time*, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

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Question 117

Q How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

A The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting *all the day*, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend *the whole time* (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship:

#### B. The Augustinian/Calvinistic View (The "Continental" View)

Both Luther and Calvin rejected *all* observance of days (even that of the Lord's Day), arguing that such observance was levitical. For expediency, they permitted such first-day meetings, and Calvin even encouraged people (on occasion, and somewhat inconsistently), "to lay aside our earthly affairs and occupations, so that we may be entirely free to mediate the works of God" in its observance. Nevertheless, Paul K. Jewett's comment is adequately descriptive of their position: "Neither he nor Luther looked upon observance of the Lord's Day as a moral imperative based on the fourth commandment" (*The Lord's Day*, 106).

**Calvin** understood the fourth commandment to be a moral law, but he understood it typologically, of our resting in Christ for our justification and salvation. Thus, its observance was entirely different in Israel than it is for Christians.

**Luther**, in his typically outspoken fashion, summarised his view this way: "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere anyone sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that will remove this encroachment on Christian liberty" (Luther's *Larger Catechism*, on the fourth commandment).

#### Calvin:

Besides, we must know that this is to be the common employment not of one age or people only, but of the whole human race. Afterwards, in the Law, a new precept concerning the Sabbath was given, which should be peculiar to the Jews, and but for a season; because it was a legal ceremony shadowing forth a spiritual rest, the truth of which was manifested in Christ... therefore, when we hear that the sabbath was abrogated by the coming of Christ, we must distinguish between what belongs to the perpetual government of human life, and what properly belongs to the ancient figures, the use of which was abolished when the truth was fulfilled. Spiritual rest is the mortification of the flesh, so that the sons of God should no longer live unto themselves or indulge their own inclination. So far as the sabbath was a figure of this rest, I say it was but for a season; but in as much as it was commanded to men from the beginning that they might employ themselves to the worship of God, it is right that it should continue to the end of the world.

[Calvin basically argues-- Lord's Day... in order to overcome superstition still aimed at Jewish practice, even though no day is now better than another day, the Christians changed the day from 7 to first in order to distinguish from the superstitions... Sunday was chosen from good reason-- for church order and because the first day was resurrection day of the week... ]

To sum up... was re to meditate throughout life upon an everlasting Sabbath rest from all our works, that the Lord may work in us through his spirit. secondly, each one of us privately whenever he has leisure is to exercise himself diligently in pious meditation upon God's works. Also we should all observe together the lawful order set by the church for the hearing of the word the administration of the sacraments and for public prayers. In the third place, we should not inhumanly oppress those subject to us. (i.e give our workers a rest...)

#### C. The Vosian, Gaffin, Klinian view...

Geerhardus Vos argued that God's seventh-day "rest" was not to recuperate from fatigue, but was to celebrate the completion of his creation of a royal dwelling, to enjoy his own enthronement. Had Adam obeyed, he would have also entered such a glorious rest/celebration (and the NT, especially Hebrews, teaches that we, through Christ, will do this very thing). **Vos calls attention to "the eternity-typifying value" of the sabbath, as a day which anticipates the Day of our rest/celebration.** He argues that the particular ordinance by which this eternal rest

was typified in the Sinai covenant is different from the ordinance in the New Covenant. Since the Sinai covenant depended upon the obedience of the people, and their enjoyment of the eternity-typifying "land flowing with milk and honey" was dependent upon their obedience, they could not enter that land, nor the typical ordinance, at the *beginning* of their week/existence, but at its *end*.

In the New Covenant, our federal and representative Head has already, by his resurrection, entered his rest and guaranteed ours, "sitting down" at the right hand of God. The ordinance moves to the *beginning* of our week/existence. **It still typifies our everlasting rest, and its position at the beginning of the week signifies that the fulfilment of our covenant and its blessings has already been accomplished in Christ:**

"Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labour to it came first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest" (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 141).

In Hebrews 4:9 then, the "sabbath rest" which "remains for the people of God," is a reference to the rest not achieved by Moses' and Joshua's generations, but which, achieved by Christ in his resurrection, **is still typified by a weekly rest.** Gaffin's point is that, throughout Hebrews 3:7-4:10, the word "rest" (katavpausi) is a different word from that in 4:9 (sabbatismov). In these other places, it is a reference to that heavenly rest which Christ has entered but which we have not entered. Thus, sabbath-rest is still future for us, as it was for the Israelites. Yet the determinative event which guarantees our enjoyment of that rest, the resurrection of Christ (the obedient Servant/Son), a first-day occurrence, warrants our moving the typical ordinance to the first day, and calling it by a different term than that employed for either the Jewish seventh-day ordinance (sabbaton) or the heavenly reality (katavpausi").

5. Notice Meredith Klines description of the Sabbath. What are some implications?

*In part, the blessing sanction of the Edenic arrangement was expressed in the sign of the Sabbath, and this may be singled out as of particular interest for the covenantal identity of the original kingdom order. For one thing, the setting of man's kingdom labors in a sabbatical framework imitative of the pattern of God's work of creation was an expression of man's identity as image of God and as such the sabbatical ordinance also served to identify man as a creature in covenant with God.... Also, the Sabbath ordinance appointed for man's observance celebrated the reality of the archetypal Sabbath of the Creator's seventh day, and in doing so highlighted aspects of the creation order that were distinctly covenantal. God's entrance upon his sabbath rest was an enthronement of the Creator, an assumption by him of his rightful position as Lord of the world, of all lands and peoples.*

6. Why do you think the concept of "sabbath" has been lost by many modern Christians?

- a. No eschatology which transcends creation in modern consciousness.
- b. No theology of time and place
- c. No real "holy" concept of life such that if we lose the one, we substitute with the many...

Peck, vol. 1, 97-98: So the resurrection of Christ was the only event of his history which God required to be commemorated by the observance of a day; but the church has gone on multiplying days, until the Sabbath and its peculiar significance has been lost sight of.

7. In practical terms, how do we "keep the sabbath holy" under the NC?

1. To receive Christ is to be admitted into the Great and consummate Sabbath rest!

REST IN CHRIST!

**Heb. 4:8**

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. **9** So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; **10** for those who enter God's rest **also cease from their labors as God did from his.** **11** Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

WHAT LABORS? THOSE RELATED TO A WORK DONE IN ORDER TO GAIN GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTANCE...

IRONICALLY, THIS MIGHT INCLUDE WORKING THE WORKS OF THE SINAI COVENANT AS PERTAINING TO THE SABBATH EVEN AS A BASIS FOR RELATING TO GOD...

So, then, according to Heb. 4:11, what does "disobedience" refer?

Note vs. 6.

**Heb. 4:1**

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. **2** For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. **3** For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"As in my anger I swore,  
"They shall not enter my rest,"

though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. **4** For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." **5** And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest." **6** **Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,** **7** again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts."

**8** For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. **9** So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; **10** **for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.** **11** Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such **disobedience** as theirs.

E.g., "disobedience" = failure to receive the good news (vs.6) = rejection of Christ (vs. 14ff)

How then do we remember the Sabbath?

**Under the OC**—Remember creation/redemption as accomplished by God.. and under a temporal covenant, this involved cessation from manual labor.

Likewise, to break the Sabbath was punishable by physical death even!!! (typological) (Neh... see above)

**Under the NC**—the "labor" that was typologically revealed by manual labor in the OC is shown to be the ultimate and and spiritual labor of thinking we can usher in the new creation/salvation/forgiveness of God by means of our own works righteousness.

E.g. we are to cease "striving" to gain God's approval..

To break the Sabbath by not receiving Christ—is punishable by spiritual death and eternal judgment...

Again, the principle is this—what was mere typology and shadows in the OC, becomes reality as fulfilled in christ...listen to Paul on this again!

**Col. 2:16**

Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. **17** **These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**

Remember the Sabbath therefore remember Christ by putting our faith in him, not ourselves!!

To rest means "believe in Christ!!!!

Therefore, If we could describe all of humanity as in an odd way suffering from Sabbath nearosis and the problem of from self-sensorship!

Rest = finding rest from guilt and sensorship by faith in Christ wherein *the machinery of self-censorship is truly shut down by Him!*  
*stilling the eternal inner murmur of self-reproach.*

When Christ said, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath" he meant not "I can do what I want" as some have I think falsely assumed—but that the Sabbath was ultimately for the purpose of directing all of humanity to that perfect rest that is gained by faith in Christ.

*We desperately need a day such as this—and yet no day will accomplish this apart from the ultimate "day of the Lord" wherein God overcame the penalty of sin and the curse of guilt associated with it by the cross of Christ!*

2. The Lord's Day is a weekly reminder that our Lord has already left earth for heaven, preparing for us there a place for us to rest from our labors and to enter into the eternal. It is provision in that it bring the finished work of Christ to us in a provisional way, awaiting the consumation of this kingdom when Christ comes again.

**Heb. 4:9** There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

Reminds you that this life is not the end-- there is more and this should impact the way we live now

Rev. 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their labors, **for their deeds follow them!**" Assembly with saints Thoughts on our everlasting rest.

Saturday-- that all this activity IS kingdom activity-- intended to be for the glory of God..

a. this teaches us to order our time so as to accomplish all three aspects of our weekly calling-- church, family and public service...

b. this teaches us to do our work as unto the lord-- so then, if we would lie to the lord, we wouldn't lie in our business. etc.

Question: Can you rightly celebrate your work as unto God on the seventh day? Did you make the world of your calling productive and accountable to God in every way possible? Is what you did worth celebrating!

4. Sabbath as "sign" to us all and to the world-- that there is a higher principle for life than merely survival-- perhaps this is what makes modern darwinianism/naturalism so horrible-- it reduces life to merely survival... when we all know in our hearts that life is somehow more than this... indeed-- our "Sabbath" is a reminder that we must at times stop and take note that life is more than survival.. our relationships, our work, our time-- they all count for something higher than mere existence-- they count for heaven!

Exodus 31:13-14, 16-17; Ezekiel 20:12

#### 4. What about Sunday's

Does "remembering" the Sabbath have anything to do with what we do then on a particular day of the week?? So, the million dollar question—what should we be doing/not doing on Sunday?

**On the one hand**, clearly there remains a "sabbath rest" in so far as this is according to the NC terms!

Is there a day set apart from other in the Scripture under the NC?

YES!

**Heb 10:21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **(reference to church) 22** let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **(reference to baptism rite and its spiritual meaning) 23** Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, **25** not neglecting to **meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Evidently, for the writer to even reference their “meeting together” assumes that there was already a general consensus formed that there was such a “day of meeting.”

Note as well.. the term in 4:9 is a different word for “rest” that is used elsewhere in Heb. To describe our spiritual rest in Christ!

In Hebrews 4:9 then, the “sabbath rest” which “remains for the people of God,” is a reference to the rest not achieved by Moses’ and Joshua’s generations, but which, achieved by Christ in his resurrection, **is still typified by a weekly rest.** Gaffin’s point is that, throughout Hebrews 3:7-4:10, the word “rest” (katavpausi) is a different word from that in 4:9 (sabbatismov). In these other places, it is a reference to that heavenly rest which Christ has entered but which we have not entered. Thus, sabbath-rest is still future for us, as it was for the Israelites. Yet the determinative event which guarantees our enjoyment of that rest, the resurrection of Christ (the obedient Servant/Son), a first-day occurrence, warrants our moving the typical ordinance to the first day, and calling it by a different term than that employed for either the Jewish seventh-day ordinance (savbbaton) or the heavenly reality (katavpausi”).

And so,

*Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was still looking forward to the performance of the Messianic work, naturally the days of labour to it came first, the day of rest falls at the end of the week. We, under the New Covenant, look back upon the accomplished work of Christ. We, therefore, first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ, although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest.*

Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 141.

*The Sabbath sign remains in effect for the church until the parousia, signifying that we live as pilgrims (Heb. 11:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:11) in this semi-eschatological age while we wait for the consummation, our eternal rest with Christ in glory (John 14:1-4; 17:24; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 21:3).*

Lee Irons

*The Lord's Day has been given to us as a means of grace, an opportunity to reflect upon our present spiritual rest in Christ, and in the future consummation of that rest in heaven, when all our earthly toil will be over. The primary thing that we do on the Lord's Day in order to enjoy this already/not-yet rest is to attend corporate worship with the saints, in order to enter into the heavenly sanctuary and fellowship with Christ. Weekly worship is a foretaste of our eternal worship. The early church gathered together on the first day of the week for the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (Acts 2:42; 20:7), because Jesus had first established the pattern during his post-resurrection appearances with his disciples.*

Lee Irons

### **On the other hand however,**

We should beware of “sabbath superstition” as Calvin called it-- where we continue in rigid practices and abstentions..

Two qualifications in comparison to Old Covenant:

- a) The day itself is changed to reflect the completed work of new creation as accomplished by Christ on the Jewish 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week when he was raised from the dead... (John 20:19, Acts 20:7, 1Cor. 16:2) But clearly there remained a day when the people of God were to “assemble” together... and that day when it is mentioned is always Sunday!!

### **John 20:19**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

### **Acts 20:7**

On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

**1Cor. 16:2**

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.

There can hardly be any dispute that for the early church at least—they gathered on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week and did things that were previously done on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, albeit with NC expressions and meanings..

And to be sure, Puritan Thomas Watson is right... six days are for work but the seventh day is for worship...

E.g. IT IS NOT A DAY FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL

It is, again in the words of the puritans, “a market day of the soul...” (quoted in Ryken p.105)

Does a Sabbath rest remain for us today: YES

What is non-negotiable—Corporate Worship!!!

- b) What we do on the day is also different.. and from what we can tell from the NT, the only sure requirement if you will was to set the day apart for the purpose of corporate worship especially at the Lord’s table—where we remember by faith the works of God for our salvation!!!

**Col. 2:16**

**Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. 17** These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Calvin: "for we are not celebrating it as a ceremony with the most rigid scrupulousness, supposing a spiritual mystery to be figured thereby. Rather we are using it as a remedy needed to keep order in the church. Yet Paul teaches that no one ought to pass judgment on Christians over the observance of this day, for it is only a "shadow of what is to come." Col.2:17

Lee Irons:

*"Is it okay to do X on the Lord's Day?" Instead of answering the question directly, I offer two tests which correspond to and flow from the two above-mentioned principles.*

*In the first test I teach people to ask themselves, Will the activity in question hinder me from participation in the corporate worship of God's people? Anything that interferes with my ability to worship the Lord with God's people and to benefit from the ministry of the Word and sacraments, is obviously unacceptable (with exceptions for emergencies, sickness, etc.).*

So when is it acceptable to “miss worship”

Works of necessity—what is this..?

Here we have a great problem living in modernity—

E.g. there are many vocations that are in themselves appropriate, but would ordinarily be inappropriate in themselves such as to require that we miss Worship. And yet, for you to remain in that job—you will need to work lest you are fired..

So. Work of necessity:

- 1) Anything that is “necessary” and at the same time as corporate worship... (emergency, etc)
- 2) Anything that is “necessary” in order to keep an otherwise proper vocation, even if improperly governed by those who do not hold to the Sabbath. BUT—all attempts should be made to work around it.

Examples: Is “travel” during the corporate worship really a work of necessity—probably not! E.g. even if you are traveling—what stops you from finding a church and going to it?

Etc. etc.

Vacations—not a vacation from Christ

Note as well—we underestimate the importance of corporate worship to be sure in so far as our own spiritual well being is concerned.

We say, what will one “meal” hurt us.. but after a time, like fasting.. we hardly notice that we are starving...

*The second test is to ask: Is the activity in question conducive to a spiritually restful frame of mind in which I am reminded that I am a pilgrim on the way to the eschatological Sabbath rest? There are many activities that we may engage in on the other six days, but if done on the Lord's Day might prove to be a spiritual hindrance. The new covenant Sabbath is to be observed not only by attending public worship, but by keeping a spiritually restful frame of mind throughout the day.*

Think again about Sunday neurosis—might it not be good for us, as an expression of our rest in Christ, to rest from our labors in so far as we have the opportunity to keep our various work idols in check?

Might it be good one day of the week, as an expression of our rest in Christ, to remember that we are completed not by what we do, but by who we are in Christ.

Might it be good one day in the week, to cease from the constant self-censorship that is associated with work.

I.e. if you suffer from Sunday neurosis—e.g. feeling guilty when you don't work, when you do relax and enjoy the fruits of Gods' creative labors, etc etc.—perhaps you need all the more to take the Sabbath!

Here, it is a bit more “gray” what you can and cannot do.

Notice however, I have said nothing about recreation, festivities, etc--- in fact, I suspect that of all days, this is the day to do it in so far as we are celebrating the freedom we have in Christ as to rightly participate in the joys of creation and redemption.