

Shorter Catechism: Questions 49 & 51

The Second Commandment. Sins Forbidden Part 2: Violating the Regulative Principle

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." -Malachi 3:8

Word of God (Deuteronomy 5 - KJV)

⁶ I *am* the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

⁷ Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

⁸ Thou shalt not make thee *any* graven image, *or* any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the waters beneath the earth: ⁹ Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me, ¹⁰ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold *him* guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

¹² Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. ¹³ Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁴ But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. ¹⁵ And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

¹⁶ Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

¹⁷ Thou shalt not kill.

¹⁸ Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

¹⁹ Neither shalt thou steal.

²⁰ Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

²¹ Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any *thing* that *is* thy neighbour's.

Catechism

Shorter Catechism Question 49 – Which is the second commandment?

A: The second commandment is, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exod. 20:4–6)

Shorter Catechism Question 51 - What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A: The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, (Deut. 4:15–19, Exod. 32:5,8) or any other way not appointed in his Word. (Deut. 12:31–32)

Larger Catechism Question 108 – What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A: The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, (Numb. 15:39) counselling, (Deut. 13:6–8) commanding, (Hosea 5:11, Micah 6:16) using, (1 Kings 11:33, 1 Kings 12:33) and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; (Deut. 12:30–32) the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; (Deut. 4:15–19, Acts 17:29, Rom. 1:21–23,25) all worshipping of it, (Dan. 3:18, Gal. 4:8) or God in it or by it; (Exod. 32:5) the making of any representation of feigned deities, (Exod. 32:8) and all worship of them, or service belonging to them, (1 Kings 18:26,28, Isa. 65:11) all superstitious devices, (Acts 17:22, Col. 2:21–23) corrupting the worship of God, (Mal. 1:7–8,14) adding to it, or taking from it, (Deut. 4:2) whether invented and taken up of ourselves, (Ps. 106:39) or received by tradition from others, (Matt. 15:9) though under the title of antiquity, (1 Pet. 1:18) custom, (Jer. 44:17) devotion, (Isa. 65:3–5, Gal. 1:13–14) good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever; (1 Sam. 13:11–12, 1 Sam. 15:21) simony; (Acts 8:18) sacrilege; (Rom. 2:22, Mal. 3:8) all neglect, (Exod. 4:24–26) contempt, (Matt. 22:5, Mal. 1:7,13) hindering, (Matt. 23:13) and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed. (Acts 13:44–45, 1 Thess. 2:15–16)

I. Forbidden: Religious Worship not Instituted by God Himself

Larger Catechism teaches us that the Scriptures forbid: *“Devising, Counseling, Commanding, using and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself.”*

- **WCF Ch.20 “Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience” - IV.** And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, **upon pretence of Christian liberty**, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for the **publishing of such opinions**, or **maintaining of such practices**, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, **worship**, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; **they may lawfully be called to account**, and proceeded against by the **censures of the church**, and by the **power of the civil magistrate**.

II. Forbidden: All superstitious devices

What makes something superstitious? _____

- **Webster 1828 – Superstition - 1.** Excessive exactness or rigor in religious opinions or practice; extreme and unnecessary scruples in the observance of religious rites not commanded, or of points of minor importance; excess or extravagance in religion; the **doing of things not required by God**, or **abstaining from things not forbidden**; or the **belief of what is absurd**, or **belief without evidence**.
- **Colossians 2** - ²⁰Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” ²²which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in

self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

- **Thomas Watson** – "Superstition is bringing any ceremony, fancy, or innovation into God's worship, which he never appointed. It is provoking God, because it reflects much upon his honour, as if he were not wise enough to appoint the manner of his own worship."

III. Forbidden: Corrupting the Worship of God

- Worship is corrupted by adding to it, or taking away from it. We generally do this in the following ways, as listed by our Larger Catechism:
 - Through being invented and taken up of ourselves.
 - Being received by tradition from others.
 - Under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent or any other pretence whatsoever.

IV. Forbidden: Simony

- **SIM'ONY**, *noun* [from Simon Magus, who wished to purchase the power of conferring the Holy Spirit. [Acts 8:18](#)] The crime of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment; or the corrupt presentation of any one to an ecclesiastical benefice of money or reward.
- **Acts 8** ¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

V. Forbidden: Sacrilege

- **Malachi 3** – ⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.
- **SAC'RILEGE**, *noun* [Latin sacrilegium; sacer, sacred, and lego, to take or steal.] The crime of violating or profaning sacred things; or the alienating to laymen or to common purposes what has been appropriated or consecrated to religious persons or uses.

VI. Forbidden: The Neglect, Contempt and Hindering of Worship

- Neglect, Contempt and Hindering of Worship are ways in which we can break the Second Commandment. Both elders and laity are very often guilty of this even in extremely orthodox worship services.

VII. Forbidden: Opposing the Worship that God has appointed

- **1 Thessalonians 2** ¹⁴ For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, ¹⁶ forbidding us to speak

to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

VIII. New Testament Worship – Simplicity

- **2 Corinthians 3** - ¹²Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—¹³unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

IX. How to approach the Worship of God

1. **Worship must be spiritual.**
 - a. **Plumer states** “Its seat must be in the soul”.
 2. **Worship must be according to divine directions.**
 - a. **Plumer states** “It be free from ceremony, tradition, and will-worship” and so forth. This is what we studied today.
 3. **Worship must be offered in true faith.**
 - a. **Plumer states** [that unless we have true faith], “the most appropriate public worship will soon become a burden, and we shall cry out, “what a weariness it is!” We must draw near to God in faith when we worship.”
 4. **Worship must be offered to God through Christ.** Our worship has to be offered through the merits of Jesus Christ.
 - a. **Plumer states**, “The Saviour takes our imperfect services, puts them into his golden censer, sprinkles them with his own precious blood and presents them before God for a sweet-smelling savour”.
- **William Plumer**, ‘When someone spoke to Leighton of his very valuable library he said, ‘One devout thought is worth it all’’