

## Summary of Steve Schlissel's Refutation of the Regulative Principle

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Rev. Steve M. Schlissel (SMS) has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He and his congregation were in the Christian Reformed Church where he was a well-known conservative spokesman until his separation in the late 1980s due to the departure of the CRC from her Biblical and Confessional commitments. He has written a number of books and pamphlets and has become quite a significant voice in Christian Reconstruction (Theonomic) circles. He conducted the funeral service for R. J. Rushdoony. SMS is a regular contributor to the *Chalcedon Report* and has written for a number of other Journals. His series on Worship, which we are considering here, appeared in the *Chalcedon Report* as well as in his congregational magazine, *Messiah's Mandate*. It is available online in a number of places.<sup>1</sup>

This series of articles "All I Really Need to Know About Worship...I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle" runs nearly fifty pages of single spaced 10-point font. It is probably the most accessible and influential critique of the RPW available today from within the Reformed camp. Rather than a chronological summary of SMS' IX individual articles as found on the *Chalcedon* web cite<sup>2</sup> I will give an review of the leading arguments advanced and themes discussed throughout the series.

### II. OVERVIEW

SMS unequivocally affirms *Sola Scriptura*, while denying the RPW because he does not find it in Scripture. His understanding of the RPW is based upon his reading of the Westminster Standards and the standard apologetical works for the RPW by men such as Bushell, Schwertley and Williamson, as well as his interactions with men like Ray Joseph, and other regulativists, whom he counts as beloved brethren. These articles come from a change in his own thinking:

As Paul McCartney once pleaded, "Try to see it my way." These articles against the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) if it is not commanded, it is forbidden, are written by one who had been taught the RPW, who had tried to believe the RPW, and who had sought to defend it. But the testimony of the whole Bible is stubborn and would not yield. Its evidence made it quite clear that the RPW, however salutary, however convenient, however helpful, is simply not scriptural. It is a tradition of men. I have been seeking to demonstrate why I have been overtaken by that conviction seeking in such a way as to retain what is best from the tradition. I am no enemy of RPW worship. But where there is a claim to Biblical authority that rests on a series of faults, it's best to let those who build their homes along that line know that their domiciles are vulnerable to earthquakes. (VII)<sup>3</sup>

He advocates a view he calls the Informed Principle of Worship (IPW), which is his new name for the classic Continental Reformed approach, sometimes called "Covenantal Worship." He sees the RPW as one stream of the Reformed worship tradition, to be contrasted with the High Church Principle (HCP) of Rome and some Anglicans, and with the Continental Reformed approach. He quotes H.O. Old:

We take it as a basic principle of our inquiry, then, that it is to Scripture, first of all, that we must go when we would try to find an answer to our questions about the meaning of worship. That our worship should be according to Scripture is obviously one of the principles that we have inherited from the Protestant Reformation. Early in the Reformation it was expressed by Martin Bucer in his *Grund und Ursach*. It was developed with particular clarity by John Oecolampadius, who distinguished the principle from a naive biblicism. There had been those who felt that worship was biblical as long as nothing was done that

was expressly forbidden in Scripture.[HCP-TC] On the other hand, there were those who insisted that for worship to be biblical, only that could be done which was commanded in Scripture [RPW-tc]. As Oecolampadius saw it, neither of these approaches is satisfactory. He developed the principle that our worship should be "according to Scripture." To be sure, we do not find a ready-made liturgy in the Bible, but we do find many teachings about worship. In the sacred pages we find all kinds of examples of worship that was genuine, true, and spiritual. We discover general principles for doing things "decently and in order" that we should follow in our worship. That our worship should be according to Scripture is a sound principle.

[Footnote<sup>14</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 10. Old adds, "For a detailed study of how Oecolampadius developed the principle of 'reformed according to Scripture,' see my study, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 119ff.]"<sup>4</sup>

SMS's style involves good humor and some deal of irony. It is easy to be put off if you don't like his style or, if you don't sympathize with his point of view. Like many, I find his style engaging and enjoyable, even when it hurts.

He starts with the Scriptures. The Biblical texts used to support the RPW do not do so. They are twisted and taken out of context. The RPW is read into them, not out of them. He emphasizes the Temple as a place highly regulated (by the strictest standards). This Temple worship regulation carries over into the NT in the strictness of the truth of the Gospel, but not as a principle of regulating corporate worship. The Synagogue is a major counter to the RPW: A whole institution of worship without any revealed pattern. SMS also reveals internal inconsistencies in the Westminster standards, and in the logic of RPW apologetics. RPW advocates distort Scripture, history and confession to uphold their shibboleth. They attack others as not reformed, as idolaters, and as confessionally apostate for their failure to uphold the RPW and its applications. Strong medicine to counter hard assertions. Now to the details.

### III. Exegetical Problems with the RPW - Scripture Twisting

The RPW arose as an extreme reformation reaction against tyrannical impositions

SMS is so unrelenting in his attack upon the RPW that it is hard to remember that he is *not* "arguing against the sort of worship found in RPW churches...it is vastly superior to most other extant worship forms. The RPW is a mistake, but if you have to make a mistake, this is a very fine one."<sup>5</sup> He accounts for the RPW as a reaction against Roman tyranny and has good things to say about it in that context. However SMS is "arguing against the regulative principle of worship *per se*, I'm sorry to say that I part company from many of my colleagues. Most of my compatriots tend to embrace *the principle*, choosing only to argue whether it is too rigorously or loosely applied in this or that circumstance. No, my argument is not with the application of the principle: it is that the RPW itself is *not* Biblical."<sup>6</sup> Before noting his Biblical case against the RPW, we must find SMS's definition.

#### • A MATTER OF DEFINITION

**What is the Regulative Principle of Worship?** ...the Regulative Principle of Worship: *If it is not commanded in Scripture to be performed in worship, it is forbidden in worship.* It is sometimes said in other words: Only that which God has commanded is permitted. SMS notes the qualifications involved in more nuanced definitions of the RPW and while Brian Schwertley accuses Schlissel of too narrow a definition (*vide infra*), I think SMS is not attacking a straw man. He is simply quoting RPW advocates in his definition(s). While SMS wants to argue for a *third way*, he admits that this radical reformation reaction had positive results - accessible, soul-saving, edifying Word-centered worship. Sadly, the RPW took on a life of its own in certain Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Many took it to be not merely a *good* word on worship but the last word, in fact, *God's* last word on the subject....

**Schlissel feels that the manner in which so many redefine the RPW, both in principle and practice, is dishonest:**

I happily stand squarely in the tradition of RPW-style worship, but I stand here on grounds other than those advanced by regulativists. I propose that there is more consistency in worshipping in the RPW-style while rejecting its arguments than in paying lip-service to its arguments but rejecting the style of worship to which it leads. Some who call themselves believers in the Regulative Principle of Worship, believe a version of it that is so elastic as to make it truly unrecognizable as the RPW to any *honest* observer.

A close colleague of mine, for example, a man I love and respect, proclaims, "All Protestants must believe in the Regulative Principle." But he defines "regulate" so broadly as to make his principle completely at odds with the historically received RPW. "God regulates in different ways," he says, arriving at an understanding of "regulate" which makes his theory indistinguishable from those who reject the RPW outright. Why doesn't he just say he doesn't believe it?<sup>7</sup>

#### • EXEGESIS vs. EISEGESIS

The case for the RPW is weak, argued badly and misuses the Scriptures employed to support and define it.

SMS's believes the case for the RPW is weak and poorly argued: The regulativists typically isolate the alleged "proof" texts from their larger contexts. This use of Scripture is questionable at best, deceitful at worst. Rather than providing a firm

foundation for their principle, this very selective method suggests that it is built on sand....the same texts are appealed to over and again, nearly always, it seems, without an honest consideration of their contexts....Leviticus 10, *especially verses 1 and 2*. Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them, added incense, and offered unauthorized, strange, "outside" or foreign fire before Jehovah, who then turned them into strange fire. This verse is beat to death by regulativists as somehow proving "if it's not commanded, it's forbidden." A consideration of cross-references shows the true character of their sin:

Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon (Exodus 30:9)

...Nadab and Abihu did not *simply* do something not commanded, *they did something expressly forbidden*. You see that even the principle which the regulativists *reject* takes care of Nadab and Abihu. ...It was forbidden, therefore it was not permitted. Simple, eh? No need for the RPW here

.... Likewise with the texts regulativists cull from the Prophets. ...Isaiah's indictment of hypocritical Israel, for example, ...in chapter 1 is (amazingly) pared down to a mere particle that seems to support their view. "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand?" (v.12) Well, let's try to answer that question: *Who did* require what Israel is said to have been doing? If we are going to find the regulativist's principle here, we ought to expect the prophet to read a bill of particulars brimming with condemnations of man-made innovations. So just what *does* the passage say Israel was doing?...When God asks, "Who hath required this at your hand?", if the emphasis is on "Who required," the answer is, "God!" But if the emphasis is on "*your hand*," ah!, we now find the meaning of the indictment. The sin of Israel ...did *not* consist in an error in religious form, *i.e.*, in their bringing into worship something he did not command. On the contrary, their sin was that they brought it with wrong hands...yet they thought that mere religious ceremony would cleanse them! ....Isaiah does not fault Israel for violating the RPW, but for their stinking, *hypocritical* formalism. They did all the things God asked for *except* be converted!...God is saying just the opposite: "To appear before me with just the right form and just the right regulations, but to leave your heart at home, is not to appear before me at all." ...God *denigrates* his own appointed forms to drive home his concern. ...It is as if he is saying, "Who asked for your sacrifices? Me? No. I asked for your hearts!"

And moving on to Jeremiah: Perhaps their most offensive redaction occurs with Jer. 19:5.... The edited verse ("They offered worship *which I never commanded nor spoke, no, neither did it come into my mind*") leads readers to believe that God's disapproval of what Israel did is rooted in this: they did something, however innocuous, which he had not commanded, thus violating the RPW<sup>9</sup>....The same texts are carted out and mishandled in similar ways in virtually all their works ....So firmly in the grip of this principle is one minister presently in their ranks that he actually--in all seriousness--asserted that *singing Scripture choruses in worship is the moral equivalent of child sacrifice in the sight of God*. He used Jer. 19:5 as *proof*. I cannot but wonder if his is the same religion as mine, so different are our approaches to Scripture! Anyway, that's number one: Regulativists consistently ignore the Biblical contexts of their cited passages. One might say that they have, by sheer force of will, domesticated their pet verses.

Treatment of the Second Commandment and Deuteronomy 12:32 [and Chapter 4], follow in section IV.

#### IV. Biblical-Theological Problems with the RPW:

There is a Biblical RPW, but it is limited to the Sacrificial service of the Tabernacle / Temple. Its New Testament application is orthodox doctrine - the Gospel. The Synagogue was unregulated (beyond general Scriptural rule). Instruments were not limited to the Temple, but the RPW was.
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- Deuteronomy 12:32

...What might truly be called the RPW in Scripture is altogether missed by regulativists: The locus classicus...for the RPW is Deuteronomy 12:32: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." ...By isolating this particular verse from its context, its beauty is marred, its force is neutralized, and its power compromised.

Deuteronomy 12:32 appears in an epoch-marking context: we have here a major step in the progress of the religion of the covenant. Before this, covenant-keepers could offer sacrifice wherever they felt like it. Henceforth sacrifice would be severely restricted. It would be restricted...in regard to place, in regard to people, and in regard to particulars.... The atoning path of blood was laid out by God.... The matter of sacrifice...was clearly set forth by God as the norm. ...from the Fall until the entry to the Promised Land, even this sacrificial worship was largely unregulated. Noah offered sacrifices, as did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These were offered perhaps in a general conformity to a pattern received from Adam or another. Indisputable, however, is the fact that the offerings were decentralized. ...They could be-and were-offered anywhere.... However, once Israel would enter the land and God would make known the place where his name would dwell, sacrificial worship would no longer be decentralized. It would be absolutely centralized at one place... lawfully offered only by authorized persons.... if he did not meet the Levitical qualifications, he could not serve at that one authorized location (cf. Uzziah's sin in 2 Chr. 26). And

the many particulars of the service were to be strictly adhered to, without addition or subtraction. This is the context of Deuteronomy 12. We need only quote some of the chapter for this to be clear: See verse 8-14.... To what service did this refer? Clearly it was not worship *per se*, but the sacrificial worship of Jehovah, that is, the Tabernacle/Temple service.

- **Temple/Synagogue**

This conclusion is firm when viewed in the light of Leviticus 23:3 where we read of unregulated, no-instructions- recorded, bloodless, incenseless, non-piacular worship services: There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. Why, one naturally asks, was God so lenient concerning sacred assemblies-forbidding to them only what was forbidden in all circumstances-yet so very strict about the Tabernacle/Temple worship? The correct answer is not elusive.

It was because in the Tabernacle/Temple God was displaying, "preaching" Christ, his Person and work, prior to his incarnation. The rigors surrounding Tabernacle/ Temple worship reveal to us the passion, the diligence of our God in protecting the absolute exclusivity of salvation through the work of his Son, our Lord; they demonstrate God's sovereign determination to guard the glory which belongs exclusively to his beloved Son.

...Israel is poised, in Deuteronomy 12, to bring about a pre-incarnational explication of that work which would abound with Christ-significance in every element, every ordinance, every article, every order, every day, every month, every year; an explication that would reveal, in a manner fit for that period of history, the gospel. God was not fussing over an abstract principle: He was guarding the honor of his Son!...The Temple worship was strictly regulated because the Temple worship was the gospel of the Messiah. Thus, when we come to the Scriptures composed after Messiah completed his earthly work-fulfilling the service of types (Col. 2:17)-the rigors we read in the New Testament concern the gospel and sound doctrine. ... The New Testament application of the Tabernacle/ Temple Regulative Principle is discovered in its intolerance to false doctrine. The RPW becomes the RPD: the Regulative Principle of Doctrine! .... [W]hen someone fiddled with the content of the gospel, Paul would write:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

It is in zeal for sound doctrine that you find the so-called Regulative Principle in the New Testament: don't add to it, don't take away from it. Worship forms, however, are not the subject of such rigor (beyond, as we hope to demonstrate, general insistence upon good order, proper decorum, propriety, etc.). This is because worship forms in the new administration -the universal administration of the covenant- will vary. The truth, however, will not vary, cannot vary, must not vary. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. ...This does not mean that any and all things are permissible in worship, or that all manner of worship is equal! I only insist it means that the Biblical RPW is alive and well in orthodoxy, and there only. Irony: "Strict Regulativists" do not permit musical instruments in worship because, they say, that sort of thing belonged to the Temple order, not the New Testament order. And since we are not commanded to bring instruments into worship in the New Order, and since we may not introduce anything not commanded, New Order worship services must be without instruments.

The irony is this: it is not instruments which belong exclusively to the Temple order, but the Regulative Principle of Worship itself! That's the sort of thing that happens when your exegesis becomes controlled by abstractions.

- **The RPW Violates Itself...**

Another irony: First, as a colleague in a "Covenanter" communion pointed out<sup>10</sup>, the regulative principle adds a distinct characteristic which differs from our general obligation to obey God.... The RPW...adds another requirement pertaining to worship, saying that in worship, if God does not command it, it is forbidden. Second, the regulativist boasts that this principle frees the people of God from having their consciences violated by unscrupulous leaders who might impose non-Biblical worship forms on the congregation. Third, when we look for Biblical evidence to support the unique third requirement which the RPW adds to our legal obligations under God (reminder: 1 is: doing what he says, 2 is: not doing what he forbids, 3 [peculiar to the RPW] is: if he hasn't commanded it for worship, if he is silent concerning it, it is forbidden)-when we look for Biblical proof of this we find none. Most of their alleged proofs are fragments put forth without context: when the context is supplied, the "proofs" evaporate. (Cain did not do what God commanded; Nadab and Abihu did what he had forbidden; the Israelites in Isaiah did what God commanded as far as the elements of worship were concerned but failed to perform worship with clean hands; Jeremiah is condemning the performance of things God forbade: idolatry and child sacrifice; etc.) Lastly...the real regulative principle guarded...the sacrificial system as the revelation of the Gospel of Christ, the only path to God. The New Testament bears abundant witness to this in having no regulative principle of worship at all, but an extremely rigorous regulative principle of the gospel: don't add to it, don't take away from it. Consequently, we find our irony: The Regulative Principle of Worship, said to guard the people of God from the inventions of men, is itself an invention of men and therefore an imposition upon the consciences of those forced to accept it. [emphasis added]

- **SYNAGOGUE: Model of the Church**

The New Testament is beyond clear in teaching that the organizational model for the worshipping communities called "churches" was the synagogue, not the Temple. This is recognized and acknowledged in every standard work on Presbyterianism. For example, John Macpherson, in his excellent volume, Presbyterianism, writes: "In general, the Christian forms of worship were modeled on those of the Jewish synagogue, and so where any customs in worship or office in the Christian church are spoken of without explanation, we may reasonably look to the arrangements of the synagogue for enlightenment." And, "the earliest Christian congregations . . . in Palestine were for some time known as Christian synagogues."... In saying that our model is the synagogue, we do not overlook temple-like features metaphorically ascribed to the church and/or its service. These are many. Yet these apply to, and are found ascribed to, individual Christians as well. But when we look for the organizational and liturgical antecedents of the church, we find them in the synagogue.

In light of Aaron Goerner's paper and how central this question has been in our Committee's thinking, I add this long endnote from later in the series:

It is strange to be in a position of having to prove to Presbyterians the proposition that the church in the New Testament is built upon the synagogue model, seeing that this fact is ordinarily employed by them as a justification for their system of government! In 1873, Dr. Marcus Dods wrote a book entitled, Presbyterianism Older than Christianity, by which he meant that the synagogue system (which he regarded as identical to Presbyterianism) predated the New Testament. Rev. John MacPherson, in his excellent handbook, Presbyterianism, writes, "In general, the Christian forms of worship were modeled on those of the Jewish synagogue, and so where any customs in worship or office in the Christian church are spoken of without explanation, we may reasonably look to the arrangements of the synagogue for enlightenment." And Dr. D. Douglas Bannerman, in the book most commonly received by Presbyterians as the standard work on the subject, The Scripture Doctrine of the Church, devotes considerable space to the establishment of the fact that New Testament church organization and worship is predicated upon the synagogue model. He, too, equates Presbyterianism with the synagogue form, and acclaims the latter as the providentially ordained mechanism by which the true religion was sustained in the world: "It was by this Presbyterian organization, on a broad and popular basis, which united strength with elasticity and capability for adaptation to varied circumstances, that the Diaspora were enabled to hold their ground everywhere throughout the Empire in the face of general dislike and frequent persecution. But in its worship and polity the Hebrew Christian Church [read: New Testament Church] was conformed in all essential respects to the model of the Hebrew synagogue." This holds true, insists Bannerman, in regard to its worship, and "unmistakably with regard to its organization. The form of polity which had been universally established for centuries in the Jewish Church . . . was 'simply accepted and perpetuated by the apostles.'" In this last clause the writer is quoting Dr. Marcus Dods, from the book noted above. We will conclude this section (explaining why we feel so strange in defending the synagogue model of church government to self-described Presbyterians) with the Dods quote in its original context: "This, then, is the reason you do not find distinct traces in the New Testament of the creation of the Presbyterian form of Church government. The apostles could not create what had been in use some hundreds of years before they were born. They themselves were all of them Presbyterians before they were Christians. And these are the two facts, the knowledge of which makes us intelligent Presbyterians: First, that the form of government in the Church before Christ came was Presbyterian; and secondly, that this form of government was not abolished or altered, but simply accepted and perpetuated by the apostles. It was extended to all groups of people who received Christ." (Extended, I must add, with the same features extolled by Bannerman: a solid core with a flexible, elastic, and adaptable exterior.)

- **SYNAGOGUE: Undermines RPW**

The very existence of the synagogue, however, undoes the regulativist's position! For he knows that synagogues existed. And he knows that Christ and the apostles regularly worshipped at synagogues without so much as a breath of suggestion that they were institutionally or liturgically illegitimate. And he knows that he cannot find so much as a sliver of a divine commandment concerning what ought to be done in the synagogue. And, according to his principle, if God commanded naught concerning what ought to be done, then all was forbidden. And if all was forbidden then the whole of it -institution and liturgy-was a sinful abomination. But that brings him back to Christ's attending upon the service of God there and Christ's following its liturgy: did he sin by participating in an entire order of worship that was without express divine warrant? The thought is blasphemy!

But for us the synagogue presents no problem at all. We find that it is sacrificial worship only, from Deuteronomy 12 on, that is absolutely restricted in regard to place, performers and particulars. Such restrictions never governed common sacred assemblies. First, sacred assemblies were held all over the place: everywhere, "wherever you live" (Lev. 23:3), wherever covenant people dwelt. Every Sabbath there would be one centralized sacrificial service, but there would be an untold number of sacred assemblies throughout the land. ...Lastly, sacred assemblies, which evolved into synagogues, grew liturgically out of covenant consensus within the general bounds of the word of God. [my emphasis-TC]

- **Schlissel does see a Synagogue-Temple Link in NT:**

Old Testament worship from Sinai forward was bifurcated. There was a rigidly controlled, centralized, Levitically administered worship at the Tabernacle/Temple, and there was a less controlled, decentralized, democratically administered worship throughout the land in what would evolve into synagogues. To be sure, New Testament worship is anchored to the Tabernacle/Temple in heaven: "Now

this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:1-2). However, while it is anchored in the heavenly Temple, it takes place on earth in Christian synagogues. "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, (the Lord) of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing..." (Jas. 2:1-2 [ASV]). We worship in Christian synagogues. The only blood we have is Christ's, made known through the gospel. It is the gospel, therefore, which is heir to the strict regulations which governed the Tabernacle/Temple service. The synagogue was never so regulated and is not now. That the synagogue was the model for the organization and worship of the apostolic church is disputed only by two groups: Romanists (and their stepchildren) and regulativists (when it suits them).

In a footnote towards the end of his series, SMS makes an important point about the Church/Synagogue connection<sup>11</sup>:

Some have suggested that what the synagogue did/ offered was not properly called "worship" at all, thus thrusting us back to the Temple as our only legitimate model for "worship." I would ask those entertaining such a notion: Is your church ruled by priests or by elders? Are these assisted by Levites or by deacons? Is the order of service built around recurring sacrifices and ceremonial washings or around the reading/ preaching / hearing of the Word of God? Is there an altar or a pulpit? Is there an area into which no one ordinarily may enter? Is there a separate section for women? A separate section for those outside the covenant? What's that you say? You have elder-supervised, deacon-aided, Word-centered, family-oriented and inviting worship? Well, welcome to synagogue "worship"— or whatever you care to call it. For in the last analysis, suggesting that the synagogue and Reformed church services are not "worship" leads to little more than word-wrangling. On that, see 2 Timothy 2:14. It is also worth noting that Scripture reading itself was not part of the Temple service at all before the Babylonian Period, and is not commanded to be an element of Temple service in Scripture, as far as I know. Note further that prayer was, at best, a very minor part of the Temple service, and what was commanded was given in the form of rote, liturgical—not spontaneous—prayer. The Temple doesn't really help in the quest for a stand-alone Biblical worship model for the church.<sup>12</sup>

- **What about Human Traditions?**

Some very important texts in RPW advocacy have been Matthew 15:9 Matthew 15:9 "But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as *their* doctrines the precepts of men." (ASV Cf. Mark 7:7 ) along with Colossians 2:22 "... (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?" Schlissel does not ignore these passages:

Without doubt, our Lord condemned any human tradition which obscured, nullified, set apart or contradicted the Word of God (e.g., Mk. 7:9 and context). But there is no indication that He opposed traditions which supported, magnified or drew attention to the Word and works of God. It is not, for us, a question merely of whether an observance can be traced to "human tradition," but it is also a question of fidelity to Scripture, propriety in worship, and profitability to the people of God.

Christ attended Synagogue, though The standards for establishing one, administering one or disestablishing one were all derived from "human tradition." Jesus read from Isaiah, even though according to the Regulative Principle of Worship, that reading of Isaiah by our own Lord in worship might have been called an act of presumptuousness-what they call "will worship." ...The only Scripture we find God commanding to be read in public worship is the law (Dt. 31:9-13). It is the law, or portions of it, which you find publicly read throughout Israel's history whenever any liturgical readings are referred to. Even in Nehemiah 8:2... a scene which most regard as revelatory of the synagogue order of that day, the Scripture read is the law.... Who, then, has the authority to introduce into worship the public reading of the prophets? If we may that do what God explicitly commands, we'd need a command to legitimate the reading of anything besides Moses in public worship. An OT-regulativist need not have discounted the prophets' inspiration to argue that an obedient people, following the RPW, would simply trust that God had His reasons for commanding only the law be read in public assemblies, and that to add even inspired prophetic books was nothing but effrontery. That, in fact, is the very argument advanced today by regulativists for singing only Psalms! ...Regulativists ...overlook an abundance of Biblical evidence that human tradition is not *necessarily* evil. It certainly *may* be evil -- there is no shortage of historical evidence proving that possibility. But human tradition is not necessarily evil. The Regulative Principle of Worship itself serves as proof of that.

- **The Second Commandment**

Several regulativist brethren have sought to teach me that the critical point in this debate is the Second Commandment, which is "an eternal rule for the worship of the church." .... How then does this command support the Regulative Principle of Worship? Perhaps he is thinking of the exposition of the Second Commandment in the Heidelberg Catechism? There we read:

Q. 96. *What does God require in the Second Commandment?*

A. 96. That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.

So far so good. The question then becomes, "Just how has God commanded in His Word that He be worshipped?" I answer, "He has forbidden certain things, as this commandment, among other texts, proves. He has also commanded that He be approached only through His own provided atonement. He has also given us many principles which serve as borders within which we may freely employ faithful, covenantal sense, taking into consideration always the general rules of the Word." That is how He has commanded that He be worshipped. The regulativist, however, answers by saying, "God's will is that if He has not commanded a thing, it is forbidden." But where does he find that in the Second Commandment? He does not. He has obviously first assumed it and then imposed it.

- **V. b7 bParticular Applications of the RPW Considered**

A. Exclusive Psalmody (Hymns Forbidden) B. Instrumental Music Forbidden C. Holy Days Forbidden
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We respect the earnest adherents of the RPW, and we treasure the sort of worship God has providentially allowed to flourish in their courts. We would adopt and maintain that worship—indeed, we'd even propagate it—we'd just do so on other premises.

And so, among some, the RPW means not only no Christmas and no Easter, but no musical instruments, no singing except Scripture texts--oops! Scratch that! Only *certain* Scripture texts, namely, the Psalms, may be sung in worship (some said in *or out* of worship). Not a few reject the use of creeds in worship, and some even frown upon the corporate praying of the Lord's Prayer in

worship.... while infinitely to be preferred to the problem it was designed to combat, the Regulative Principle of Worship falls short of conveying all that God in Scripture would have us know about regulating worship.<sup>13</sup>

- **A. b7 bExclusive Psalmody (Hymns Forbidden)**

We have no quarrel with singing Psalms exclusively, in corporate worship, if the practice is defended on proper grounds and recognized as a tradition. Unfortunately, regulativists regard it as anything but. Beginning with their "principle," they go through the New Testament looking for commanded elements. And at Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, according to one RPW authority, "the difficulty begins."<sup>14</sup> I don't think they've even *begun* to consider the difficulty. ... which typically revolves around the triple designation, "psalms and, hymns, and spiritual songs." The "strict" regulativist argues, not without power, that these three words all refer to the Psalms, the Psalter as contained in our Christian Bibles. Their evidence for this is that the Septuagint Bible, in common use in the days of our Lord and His apostles, and known to the recipients of these letters, had these three Greek words variously serving as headers over respective psalms: some would say "A Psalm . . .," others would say, "A Hymn . . .," others might be denominated as a "Spiritual Song." We will grant, for argument's sake, the regulativist's contention here.

- **Reductio: No Singing Commanded for Public Worship**

What he hasn't proved, however—whatever these songs might be—is that they are to be sung in Christian worship services at all, *on his principles*. For what we do *not* find in the Ephesians or Colossians passages is evidence to suggest that Paul is giving instructions for what is to take place in a Christian worship service. *The fact that a command is found in a letter to a church is no proof that its fulfillment was to take place in a worship service.* (Cf. conjugal duties)... The contexts of both the Ephesians and Colossians verses indicate that public worship was *not* in view. The contexts of both citations are *general* rules for covenant-keeping *in all of life*. ...In both Ephesians and Colossians the commands are immediately followed by sets of commands for domestic life and vocational life. Nothing suggests that these are rules governing worship services. ...In those contexts where we do find Paul's explicit, inspired will for what is to take place in worship, we find no command to sing. See, for example, 1 Timothy 2-3 or Titus 1-3....Yes, Jesus sang at Passover, but that was a) during the pre-Pentecost administration, b) in the home, not the synagogue, and c) after the required elements of service had been performed. (I'm not being any sillier in explaining things away here than regulativists ordinarily are; I just beg you to bear in mind, this is *not* my position!) Paul and Silas sang in prison, not a church service. And even Paul's dictum, "I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind," though found in a context dictating worship order, is not normative because (it could be argued) it was regulating the *charismata*, gifts which most regulativists agree have run their ordained course. We are no more to sing (it could be said) than we are to speak in tongues. That leaves us with *no clear command to sing in Christian worship services*. In fact, Conrad Grebel, in his "Letter to Thomas Muntzer," Zurich, 5 September, 1524, argued along similar and other lines that singing may not be introduced into Christian worship. Behold! The consistent regulativist!<sup>15</sup> So, on the regulativist's professed principle, we would not say he has gone too far in advocating a *cappella* psalmody exclusively. Rather, we'd insist that he has not followed his professed principle far enough. He should insist upon no singing *at all* in corporate worship. *Then* he would approach consistency.

Schlissel concludes:

In all this we have let alone other weighty, oft-lodged arguments which point out the embarrassing twists regulativists put themselves in: 1) Their "Psalms-only" position results in the exclusion from worship of other divinely-inspired hymns (*1 Sam. 2:1-10; Ex. 15:1-18; Lk. 1:46-55; not to mention Dt. 32!*) and other singable Scripture portions. 2) They are opposed to hymns and so must ignore the presence of hymns or hymn-fragments in the New Testament itself (*e.g., Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16*). 3) They are opposed to "man-made hymns" in worship but (most) allow them outside worship. Yet the passages they rely on to justify exclusive Psalmody, as we have seen, cover *life* outside of corporate worship. 4) They oppose "man-made hymns" but accept man-made prayers and sermons, an amazing tension! 5) They say, "Psalms alone are permitted in worship," and so, if consistent, would ironically have Christian worship characterized as that where the words "Jesus Christ" would never be sung, for that matchless Name is not found in that form in the Psalter. We'll leave it at five.

- **Hymn Singing In Scripture & History**

Whatever one might make of Schlissel's *reductio ad absurdum* regarding the warrant under a strict regulativist framework for *any* singing in worship, SMS demonstrates that there is a positive history of Hymnody in the Reformed, even Puritan, movement. He notes a prominent Puritan Divine of the Westminster Assembly who did not hold to EP as a necessity:

Thomas Manton.... In his commentary on James, p. 442, wrote: "I confess that we do not forbid other songs [beside Psalms]; if grave and pious, after good advice they may be received into the Church. Tertullian, in his apology, showeth that in primitive times they used this liberty, either to sing scripture psalms or such as were of a private composure." So much for the oft-heard claim that subscription to the Westminster Standards requires a commitment to exclusive psalmody.

He further reports on some of the history of Hymn singing in the Reformed Churches, his main concern being here to refute the accusation that Hymn singers are not reformed and violate the reformed confessions:

The regulativist has ...sought to impose ....the rather audacious assertion that no one can honestly call himself "Reformed" unless he subscribes to the RPW. ...they feel compelled to revise history. ....Such a charge...viewed against Continental (and other) Reformed history, leaves one breathless. ....Let's begin with the man who supervised the writing of the Heidelberg Catechism. Frederick III was...he a regulativist? ...by 1567 the first Palatinate hymnal was in circulation...The musical section of the hymnal is separated into three divisions: Psalter, Canticles, and Hymns. This German Reformed Hymnal had 44 Psalms and 66 Hymns. ...So much for exclusive Psalmody being a condition of Reformed-ness. As van Popta has written, "A careful reading of [the] data demonstrates that throughout history the Reformed Churches had a thread that allowed for hymns. One might dispute the validity of hymn singing, but one cannot dispute that the Reformed churches have sung hymns in church for centuries."

## • B. ~~tababb~~Instrumental Music Forbidden

SMS also treats of the non-instrumental position. Here we do not detect as much sympathy as with EP. Those who regard themselves as the most regulated of all regulativists, let's call them "super-regulativists", typically disallow two elements of worship commonly found in other church services, viz., the singing of anything other than Psalms and instrumental music. Hymns and instruments are variously labeled as carnal, inventions of sinful men, intrusions, wicked devices of Satan, and on and on. Here is a paragraph from one RPCNA minister<sup>16</sup> explaining why instruments must not be used:

Since the New Testament teaches that all the ceremonial aspects of temple worship have been abolished, the passages that speak of the use of musical instruments in public worship, under the old covenant, do not provide biblical warrant for the use of musical instruments in public worship today. Jesus Christ rendered the whole ceremonial Levitical system obsolete with the perfect sacrifice of Himself on the cross (cf. Heb. 7:27, 9:28). The inferior (Heb. 9:11-15), the shadow (Heb. 10:1; 8:4-5), the obsolete (Heb. 8:13), the symbolic (Heb. 9:9), and the ineffectual (Heb. 10:4) have been replaced by Jesus Christ and His work. Christians have no more business using musical instruments in public worship than using priestly vestments, candles, incense, altars, and a sacerdotal priesthood.

In a footnote he continues, noting his disagreement with Calvin on this point:

Rev. Schwertley cites John Calvin as concurring: "I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music, which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile [i.e., immature] instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to disserve their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him" (Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol. 1, p. 539). It might be a shock to some, but John Calvin was often wrong. There -- I said it.

SMS has an interesting polemical point to make at this juncture:

Notice, the regulative principle (a principle derived from the very order here acknowledged to be defunct!) disallows instruments because they belonged to the Levitical shadows (and, they add, instruments are not commanded to be used in the New Testament, leaving Revelation aside). Of course, we pointed out in a previous installment that this method of argument should lead "super-regulativists" to the conclusion that no singing at all be permitted in worship. When this argument against singing was reiterated to the above-quoted minister, this was his response (Here we are anticipating RPW Rejoinders):

...the objection that there is no biblical warrant for singing in public worship is rather astonishing. Once again, if we are using the biblical, broad definition of the RPW, this assertion is ludicrous. There are many examples of singing praise in public worship (e.g., 1 Chron. 16; 2 Chron. 5:13; 20:21; 29:30; Ez. 3:11) and there are many commands to praise Jehovah with the singing of psalms (e.g., Ps. 95:1-2; 81:2; 98:5; 100:2; 105:2). Once again the opponents of the RPW have resorted to straw-man arguments.

Schlissel comments, Do you see why I feel quite at a loss? First, we see in this response special pleading, for our correspondent is anything but a "broad-definition" regulativist. When he is asked to be consistent with his narrow rhetoric, he responds that we should be broadminded. OK, I'm all for broadmindedness. But when he is prodded further, he ends up using the very argument, the very texts! He had elsewhere utterly rejected as baseless and irrelevant to the question at hand. If one appeals to the Levites' use of instruments to justify their use today, he is accused of imposing shadows on the people of the New Testament. But when told how this very method is part of a chain of reasoning that leads to a songless church, the reply is, "Nonsense! Astonishing! How could you say such a thing! Look! The Levites sang!"

## • C. ~~tababb~~Holy Days Forbidden

Holy Days discussed - RPW argument contra Holy Days dissected & dismissed - moderate observance allowed by consistent reformed thinking (Dordt 1619). Galatians and Esther (Purim) discussed.

A strict stance against Holy Days is not predominate in the RPCNA today. However, it was central in the debates between Anglican and Puritan.<sup>17</sup> The prominent defenders of the RPW today regularly treat Christian Holy Days as unwarranted and illegal. Schlissel treats this at some length. I refer you to his argumentation. For the sake of brevity, I summarize: 1. Christ honored Jewish holy days which were instituted by men apart from direct revelation: Hanukkah (John 10:22ff.), Purim, the Fasts and later Feasts referred to in Zechariah 7, etc. 2. Christ honored the historical developments of the Passover celebration, e.g., the various cups of wine, added foods, prayers, etc.<sup>18</sup> 3. Christ preached and offered himself in the context of Jewish traditional observances in connection with the feast of Sukkoth/Tabernacles (Water ceremony in John 7:37ff.), etc. But, if Jesus were a consistent regulativist...

Now, our Lord Jesus comes upon this addition made by men, this tradition, this ceremony added to the prescribed Temple rites. We know He never pandered or catered to man's prejudices, never pulled any punches. We know He did not hesitate to overturn tables at the Temple on two occasions. What does He do now? Does he upbraid them for their "wickedness"? Does He throw the water out, thrash the golden vessel, interrupt the celebration?

No. He applies it to Himself and His work. He says, "Water? You want water? Let him who thirsts come to Me and find water!" Compare this to John 6:35: Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." He makes the same use of a human addition, a tradition, as He had of an historical miracle...

SMS gives extensive documentation to demonstrate not only the ease the Lord Jesus (and the apostles) has with human tradition, and innovations regarding Holy Days and religious observance, he makes sure to prove that Presbyterian and Puritan dislike of such things was an innovation contrary to the Reformed confessional consensus:

The Second Helvetic Confession "was adopted, or at least highly approved by nearly all the Reformed Churches on the Continent and in England and Scotland." [13] Its author, the esteemed Henry Bullinger, exerted "a commanding influence throughout the Reformed Church," second only to Calvin. He was "in friendly correspondence with Calvin, Bucer, Melancton, Laski, Beza, Cranmer, Hooper, Lady Jane Grey, and the leading Protestant divines and dignitaries of England."

"As to theological merit, [the Second Helvetic] occupies the first rank among the Reformed Confessions."

Have you ever read it? It's marvelous! Here is an excerpt from Chapter XXIV. Reading it will make it plain that the Reformers were by no means of one mind concerning "special days," and hence, they were not of one mind concerning the RPW. Thus it is spurious to make the RPW a determinative factor in deciding who may be called Reformed. Listen to how balanced the Reformed faith is:

If in Christian liberty the churches religiously celebrate the memory of the Lord's nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection, and of his ascension into heaven, and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, we approve of it highly. But we do not approve

of feasts instituted for men and for saints. Holy days have to do with the first Table of the Law and belong to God alone. Finally, holy days which have been instituted for the saints and which we have abolished, have much that is absurd and useless, and are not to be tolerated. In the meantime, we confess that the remembrance of saints, at a suitable time and place, is to be profitably commended to the people in sermons, and the holy examples of the saints set forth to be imitated by all.

...the religious celebration of Christmas, etc., is justified with an appeal to the First Table, home of the Second Commandment! Moreover, the church is seen as exercising its "Christian liberty" in choosing to celebrate such events, whereas regulativists claim they are guarding Christian liberty by forbidding such celebrations. Hmmm.

Bullinger picks up the theme of liberty again in Chapter XXVII: If different rites are found in churches, no one should think for this reason the churches disagree. Socrates [not the Greek philosopher; the church historian, surnamed Scholasticus, 380-405] says: "It would be impossible to put together in writing all the rites of churches throughout cities and countries. No religion observes the same rites, even though it embraces the same doctrine concerning them. For those who are of the same faith disagree among themselves about rites" (Hist. ecclesiast. V.22, 30, 62). This much says Socrates. And we, today, having in our churches different rites in the celebration of the Lord's Supper and in some other things, nevertheless do not disagree in doctrine and faith; nor is the unity and fellowship of our churches thereby rent asunder. For the churches have always used their liberty in such rites, as being things indifferent. We also do the same thing today.

Schlissel proclaims: It is an indisputable fact of history: the churches which have employed the Three Forms of Unity as summary statements of their Biblical convictions have not heard them say what regulativists force them to say. The books in which the Three Forms of Unity were bound were Psalter-Hymnals. The Church Order to which subscribers were bound included the requirement that "Worship services shall be held in observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost, and ordinarily on Old and New Year's Day..." The men who adopted these Confessional statements and the church order were not schizophrenic, and neither are their sons. They knew very well that there are no commands to worship on the days indicated. Nor is there a command to worship twice on the Lord's Day. Yet they felt, and continue to feel, no contradiction between these practices and sincere subscription to the Three Forms.

The Westminster and Scots rejection of Holy Days may be warranted, but it was never a matter of Reformed consensus. SMS concludes: "...that special days are not necessarily the evil ...Israel was not allowed to add Tabernacle/Temple-dependent feast days, it is true, just as we are not allowed to add to the gospel. But outside of that "OT gospel" system, they were free to appoint for themselves days to remember extraordinary deliverances by their God. No harm done, no offense taken by God.

SMS recognizes the fact that Farel, Viret, Calvin, and Knox were all in favor of rejecting all special days sanctioned and revered by Rome<sup>19</sup>. Undoubtedly, this served a good purpose in its time. It immediately distinguished the Reformed, both on the Continent and in Scotland, from Rome, whose calendar was blanketed with such days. So the Reformation was well served in its early days by such a clear line of demarcation. But, he counters: "...Are we to take a position which was manifestly adopted in and due to unique historical circumstances and enshrine it as if it were the Word of God itself on the subject? I think not. In this I stand with the sons of the Reformation from the Netherlands and elsewhere.

What of the Biblical argument from Galatians? The alleged Biblical basis for rejecting all days but the Lord's Day is in two parts: 1) the Lord's Day is (supposedly<sup>20</sup>) clearly commanded, and 2) the observance of special days is supposedly forbidden in Galatians 4:10. .... the disapproval of "day observance" in Galatians was, like the same disapproval during the Reformation, historically conditioned and not necessarily normative. For the problem Paul was fighting in Galatians was not the observance of days per se. It could not have been! A reading of Acts 20 and 21 finds our beloved Apostle eager to get back to Jerusalem for Pentecost and more than willing to observe Jewish customs, even ritualistic/ Temple-centric customs. ...Paul did not tell Jews they must reject those practices which formerly set them apart, but rather that they must accept Gentiles as coequals without imposing upon them the obligation to keep Jewish ceremonial distinctives. ...The problem at Galatia, then, could not have been the observance of days per se because Jewish Christians were never told that they must not celebrate their distinctive calendar. Rather, the problem was that some were teaching that Gentiles could not be saved unless they, too, observed all the Jewish ceremonial distinctives. That Paul was addressing only Gentile believers in this passage, and was concerned to dissuade them from adopting "Sinai distinctives," is glaringly evident from the fact that Paul warns, "Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all." But it was only Gentiles who could have considered becoming circumcised: the Jewish Christians already were! Remember, remember, remember, the issue in New Testament polemics was this: Must Gentiles become Jews in order to become Christians? Keep that issue front and center and difficulties evaporate....

Consequently, there is nothing in Paul's argument in Galatians which would lead us to believe that the observance of days per se was wrong, evil, unacceptable. What he was battling for was a gospel which held out to the whole world a free and accessible salvation, one not tied to Jewish distinctives.

One might even justly say that Paul was, in effect, arguing that the Regulative Principle of Worship does not apply to the Gentiles. That is, he was arguing on the assumption that the Temple system in its entirety had been realized in such a way in Christ-realized for all nations-that to impose the Sinai worship strictures on the Gentiles would be untrue to the gospel. The reign of Christ from heaven makes those strictures irrelevant to Universal Judaism.

Therefore, Galatians 4:10 is seeking to keep the Gentiles-not from "day-observance," as if they'd offend God by honoring Christ's birth (for example), but rather-from being caught up in a system which could easily cause them to overlook the very core difference of the New administration: the gospel is now global, not local. You do not have to become a Jew to become a Christian. That's the issue. None other. ...He was fighting against an imposition which threatened the universal character of the gospel....I trust that seeing the Galatians argument in this light is helpful. It makes the Reformers' appeal to legitimate within bounds. If their intention was to deliver the people of God from having "holy days" imposed upon them by the dozens, they were being true to the text and its meaning. But if they would go further and say that the observance of days is essentially sinful, they would be going too far. The community of Faith has always been free to corporately adopt a day or days to honor God's great works in history on behalf of His covenant people.

#### ● Holy Days & Human Traditions in Moderation

...The knee-jerk reaction of some of my brethren, recoiling at the thought that God would countenance "human additions," is uncalled for. We have found our God putting a non-Mosaic, non-prophet-authorized feast (Purim), into the Bible. We have found our Lord celebrating Chanukah, a holiday the antecedent of which occurred between the Testaments. We have found Him celebrating the Passover according to non-Scriptural, covenant tradition, even down to the use of wine (never commanded). We find Him worshipping in the synagogue, an institution whose liturgy arose apart from any recorded express divine command. And now we see Jesus participating in commemorative traditions of human origin. How much do we need to read before we ask ourselves if there might not be a better principle—or set of principles—given in this Word to govern worship, a set of principles which might reasonably account for all the evidence of Scripture, that would allow us to read the Word without subjecting its texts to torture? Schlissel's alternative is given anon, but now let us consider....

## VI. RPW Rejoinders Discussed & Regulist Inconsistencies Asserted

Now that we've discussed the RPW and some of its particular applications re: EP, a capella singing and Holy Days, it is appropriate to pause to hear some of the answers given to Schlissel, and see how he deals with them. Remember, once more, that Schlissel's service is 90% Psalmody and his practices generally conform to the RPW as taken by most OPC and PCA defenders thereof. But, defenders of the RPW see its abandonment as dangerous:

We estimate that our arguments have been sent to well over 11,000 ministers, elders, churches, and Reformed families. Yet the only feedback resembling an argument against the position taken in these pages was received independently from two men from the same church. We'll let the minister of that church be the spokesman. A proud-to-be-strict-RPW brother, a good and well-loved man whom I rejoice to call my friend<sup>21</sup> (though we certainly disagree on this issue!)—expressed in a colorfully worded question what we suspect is on the minds of many: If there's no RPW, then "rock 'n' roll bands, longhaired hippies, dancing in the aisles, 'slain in the Spirit,' incense waving, smoking peyote, singing of my latest poem I wrote two weeks ago, are all OK in worship?" .....the sort of argumentation which insists that chaos is the alternative to the RPW ...is an argument of identical construction to that which has ever been waged against the Reformed doctrine of justification, a doctrine regarded by many as residing at the very heart of the true Christian faith. ..."If you tell people they are justified -- declared forensically righteous by God -- *apart from their own works*, sin will know no restraint, chaos will abound!" ...Such a sort of argument, then ("The bogeyman will get you!") is weak.

How to quiet these fears? By considering just where each position actually leads.

#### ● Contrasts for Context - Synagogue again...

It is a fascinating issue. If we hold to the necessity of a divine command for every element of worship, What do we do with the Synagogue? Two options have arisen. 1. Deny that the Synagogue is worship, or the model for the Church's worship; 2. Assert that there were uninscriptured commands to establish the details of Synagogue worship.<sup>22</sup> In order to maintain the traditional RPW apologetic, the second option is taken by Brian Schwertley (and he is following John Owen here, if memory serves). The dangers of this reasoning: In order to preserve the RPW we may be destroying *Sola Scriptura!* Schlissel takes this issue quite seriously.

- *Sola Scriptura* in Danger

If, as the regulativists claim, sacred assemblies may do only what God has commanded to be done, and if there are no discernible inscriptured commands telling Israel what they may do in sacred assemblies, then Israel (if RPW-compliant) was permitted, in fact, to do nothing in the synagogues. Feeling the weight (if not the power) of this argument, regulativists, unable to find inscriptured commands governing the elements of synagogue worship, resort to assumptions. Their response has been uniform: Since we cannot find where God has commanded what was to take place in sacred assemblies, but since the RPW must be true no matter what, therefore God must have told some prophet how to organize the worship in the synagogue.

Now just hold on to their assertion a moment and add to it another. Regulativists have argued that "the regulative principle grows out of the *sola scriptura* rule of Protestant theology." ...the RPW and *sola scriptura* are organically linked.

Those who hold to the Informed Principle of Worship - if it is not commanded, it might be permitted: it depends - account for the synagogue without resorting to sleight of hand. IPW-ists find no command, other than one which requires synagogues, or decentralized sacred assemblies, to exist (Lev. 23:3). The elements employed therein would and did develop within the bounds of revealed scriptural principles as understood by the covenant community.<sup>23</sup> No explicit command was required. *Sola scriptura* stands firm.

But when regulativists ... argue that the synagogue elements must have been revealed in some non-inscriptured source...they ...negate the doctrine of "Scripture alone" by making their system dependent upon an uninscriptured word. They postulate a word which was supposedly given to govern the synagogue service, a word we know nothing about, a word that is merely assumed to have been. And clearly the only reason they insist that it must have been given is because, as always, they start out with their principle, not the Bible, as the unchallengeable given and then seek to force the Bible to conform to it. If it's not in the Bible, they'll invent an authoritative tradition that surely must have said what they think should have been said in the Bible.

This whole line of reasoning is hauntingly familiar to me. Let me tell you where I've heard it: In the Jewish "proofs" for the necessity of the Oral Law. SMS then details how Rabbinical Judaism (Cf. Romanism) posits secret revelation given to the patriarchs and Moses, passed down through the Rabbis (or through the Roman magisterium). He retorts:

It seems never to have occurred to those who hold this Jewish view that God's mind might, in deed and in fact, have been adequately revealed in the very generality of the prohibitions and that He has neither requested nor required such detailed supplementation.

In effect, regulativists treat the Word of God as insufficient when they introduce the idea of uninscriptured commands as a *deus ex machina*. But by so doing, they undermine their own principles while they beg their own questions. And, instead of supporting *sola scriptura*, they lead us to ask if what we have now might best be regarded as a Vestigial Bible, those former revelations having somehow falling away....So, too, the regulativist sifts through his artificial grid any element of worship for which he can find no authorizing command. "No 'man-made' hymns!" he cries, suggesting that the corporate singing of "All Glory Be to Thee, Most High" is unmitigated effrontery. "No musical instruments!" he demands, calling their employment in any form indulgent sensuality and carnality. "No this, no that, no the other. God approves only what we say He approves, no matter what He might say to the contrary!"

- Were the Westminster Divines Consistently RPW? No, Says Schlissel...

SMS finds inconsistency between the profession of the RPW in the Westminster Confession and the manner in which the Directory for the Publick Worship of God of the Westminster Assembly<sup>24</sup> we discover numerous requirements which can claim justification neither by express command nor by necessary consequence. (5) One can account for this anomaly by suggesting that the Westminster Divines did not intend to teach the Regulative Principle, or that they found it inconvenient or impossible to apply. In any case, there is certainly "room" for those who subscribe to the Westminster Standards to challenge the proposition that subscription requires strict adherence to the rule: if it is not commanded to be performed in worship, it is forbidden.

For in the preface to the Directory for Publick Worship, the divines use the language of the Informed Principle, stating that their "care hath been to hold forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance; and other things we have endeavored to set forth according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the word of God."

SMS then goes on to note various requirements of the Directory which cannot stand up to the RPW standard: 1. All baptisms must be done in public worship assemblies by ordained ministers<sup>25</sup>; 2. Women at the Lord's Supper; 3. The *lectio continua* for Scripture reading; 4. Prohibition of Tongues Speaking... the list could go on<sup>26</sup>. He actually agrees with the wisdom of the Directory, but feels it does not comport with the "strict" RPW, but expresses rather, the IPW.

## VII. The Informed Principle of Worship - A Positive Alternative

If the RPW posits a false solution what is the Alternative? At least one other possibility presents itself... "What is not commanded *might* be permitted. It depends upon other considerations." Informed Principle of Worship (IPW).

The Informed Principle of Worship is Schlissel's proposal to replace the RPW. It is really just a new term (IPW)<sup>27</sup> for what some call the "broad" approach to the RPW. As we have seen, SMS finds this a redefinition of the RPW which is incoherent and dishonest.

The Informed Principle of Worship, based on a covenantal view of things, rejects both extremes and insists upon considering worship in the light of *tota scriptura*. All parties agree that what is forbidden must be excluded. But for the rest, what? High-churchers say, "Not forbidden, then fine." Regulativists say, "If it is not commanded, it is forbidden." Both propositions fail to meet the test of *tota scriptura*. We propose the IPW: What is not forbidden *might be* permitted. It depends. Biblical worship is in harmony with the whole of Scripture and keeps a focused eye on Christ's covenantal achievements in history and the impact of His completed work on worship in the New Order. We'll consider some particulars of the IPW momentarily. First, let's see why the church is to be addressed as bound by principles which approach her as mature. For in capturing this we can see how our appeal on behalf of Reformed worship is more like this: "You should not worship in a manner which is *beneath* your calling," than this: "You abominable, idolatrous wretches! God hates you, and your worship too!"

- The Psalms, a model or not?

Another inconsistency in regulativist thinking has to do with how warrant is decided. This is fruitful for understanding the IPW by contrast. The issue is really hermeneutics. How we let the Psalms speak to worship is a fruitful example (think of instruments, clapping or dancing):

Super-regulativists dismiss, out of hand, appeals to the Psalms for worship elements with which they are not comfortable. They do this by saying, "Well, the Psalms also call for sacrifices (e.g., Ps. 50:14; 66:15; 107:22; 116:17). Therefore we cannot say, 'It's in the Psalms, therefore it's OK.'" This, from men who insist that Psalms alone may be sung in worship.

- Shall We Dance?

In providing an example of how the IPW differs from the RPW, SMS considers whether or not dancing is still warranted. The net conclusion seems reasonable: But there might well be occasions when dancing is most fitting: the end of a gruesome war comes to mind, or the provision of food after famine. Not your everyday events, but should they happen, don't let the regulative principle frighten you. "Praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp." Yes, "praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute." Say to the Lord, "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Because there is "a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ps. 30:11; 149:3; 150:4; Ecc. 3:4).

What we've written thus far in this installment has been written only to demonstrate the difficulty we encounter in having fruitful discussions with regulativists who make the RPW into the "indispensable presupposition of all intelligible predication" concerning worship. Can't we let the whole Bible speak?

SMS asserts that his approach is really in line with the following confessional paradigm: We are here simply insisting that the Westminster Confession's admission concerning "circumstances" of worship "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" is, in truth, a far more comprehensive statement of God's will for New Order worship than is recognized in some quarters.

These "general rules" or, as I've labeled them, the elements of the Informed Principle of Worship, are adequate guides precisely because the Confession is correct when it says that "under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected." In fact, he finds that ... the Regulative Principle of Worship, as found in the Bible, belongs to the ceremonial law.

● Regulation for All of Life, or Just Worship?

Here SMS enters into another discussion of the meaning of Deut. 12:32 in context. He explains its implications in terms of the IPW, *contra* the RPW approach, and shows how Deut. 4:2 and 12:32 mutually relate and explain one another. If the regulativist would bring this passage (4:2) to bear on the question of worship, he has gone even further from the path leading to the light. For this passage refers to all the law of God, not simply to laws governing worship. Very few regulativists would seriously argue that God's intent here is to forbid Israel from doing anything whatsoever in any area of life that is not specifically commanded in the law. ... Yet that is precisely the conclusion which cannot be evaded if 4:2 is cited as supportive of the regulativist's reading of 12:32. Deuteronomy 4:2 is a general rule, requiring a life that conforms to God's disclosed will in its entirety. The NIV Study Bible note is to the point: "The revelation the Lord gives is sufficient. All of it must be obeyed and anything that adulterates or contradicts it cannot be tolerated."

God did not intend that the recipients of this verse (4:2) would literally do nothing not mentioned therein (e.g., no skateboarding, using electricity, driving automobiles, or eating lemon ices). Thus, 4:2 as a parallel demonstrates that 12:32 is not to be taken in an absolute sense. If you find a similar phrase used by the same author in the same book, you need to justify applying a radically different sense to each. If it is agreed that 4:2, referring to the whole law, was not to be taken absolutely when it forbids additions and subtractions, neither is 12:32 to be taken as an abstract and absolute rule. Both are to be interpreted in terms of the whole Word of God, a Word that simply does not teach: if it is not commanded, it is forbidden.

... Try to see what our regulativist friends have done [with 12:32]. They've taken a "principle" and yanked it from its context wherein sacrificial worship, and that alone, was being regulated. Nevertheless, these same folks, recognizing that the system was to be observed only until the Christ, abstract the principle and then absolutize it. They themselves no longer practice the things the verse was (in context) given to guard, yet they continue to regard the verse as having an independent existence! Regulativists don't ... do any of the things demanded in the verse's immediate context! And all this is well and good. They see in so many ways that all this must be interpreted in light of the whole Word of God. But when it comes to the principle which was part of the same package which terminated upon Christ's sacrificial work... The gospel declaration today is guarded precisely the way it was then: it is forbidden to add to it or take from it (Galatians 1:8 makes that reasonably clear!).

● What Makes for a Good Tradition, Like the RPW?

On the other hand, traditions which are obscure, contradict or contravene God's Word or express will, or traditions which exploit covenant occasions for personal gain—gain in coin or prestige at the expense of others—such traditions are forbidden.

... If we'd only say, "We've found the RPW helpful in keeping our communion free from Roman excesses," for example, all well and good. And if someone found another route to the same end, no harm done. But at least we'd be able to talk about worship in categories that hold promise for agreement, categories like "good/better/best," rather than "I'm faithful and acceptable and you're a papist pig."

● GROWN UP WORSHIP

The IPW is a principle of Covenant Maturity, for the Church has reached Pentecostal adulthood:

This difference of approach is evident if we examine how the Apostle reasons with God's people... Simply compare any standard regulativist tome with St. Paul's admonitions to, say, the Corinthians. To the Corinthian mantra—"Everything is permissible for me"—Paul responds thus: "But not everything is beneficial." And again: "But I will not be mastered by anything." And once more: "But not everything is beneficial." And lastly: "But not everything is constructive." Paul spoke to his beloved churches as if they were adult entities; *he always spoke to them in terms of their calling*. He knew that the nurturing and development of Christian character would yield the desired results: the living out of a God-glorifying life in all spheres.

When Paul devotes several "chapters" to dealing with worship irregularities, he does so without once suggesting that the Corinthian problem was soluble simply by forbidding whatever was not expressly commanded. He could have saved himself a lot of effort! But then, he was constrained by God's *actual* will. There are Biblical arguments to govern our behavior and restrain excess which appeal to simple principles, e.g., "Nobody should seek his own good but the good of others." There are also "arguments" which rely on mere authority. When God has spoken on a subject, mere authority is a good form of argument! But when He has not—as is the case with many New Order worship details—one must pursue other avenues of argumentation.

Schlissel conducts an extensive discussion and elaboration upon his view of the IPW. IPW Worship is Word Centered, Doctrinally Driven, God Glorifying. He contrasts it with both High Church worship and with modern Evangelical "no rules" worship. Teaching the truth will lead to right worship.<sup>28</sup> Church reflects the Synagogue emphasis on teaching, Scripture reading, prayer and singing.<sup>29</sup>

The High Church embraces mystery. Evangelicalism embraces comfort. IPW emphasizes teaching. The church, like the synagogue, exists as a teaching center. Teaching God's Word is both an act of worship and a demand for worship. Teaching is what distinguished the early Christian church (Ac. 4:18; 5:28; 5:42; 11:26). Teaching is what established each early Christian church (Ac. 15:35; 20:20; 1 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 4:21-22; Col. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:9; etc.). Teaching is what continues to identify each Christian church as Christian!... The Informed Principle of Worship insists that New Order worship be heavy on instruction.

Since Christ has fulfilled the pre-incarnational Sinaitic order, it is impossible to return to that order. Any attempt to return to that hieratic order will necessarily involve pagan or semi-pagan practices. God put an exclamation point after this truth when He allowed the destruction of the earthly Temple. ...

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.messiahnyc.org/>, also: <http://www.chalcedon.edu> & <http://www.caledonianfire.org/caledonianfire/Chalcedon/RPW/L.htm> which is the first in the nine part series of Schlissel, rejoinders by Brian Schwertley -<http://www.worship.nu/pcedm/documents/schwertley/schlissel.html> and a re-rejoinder by Brian Mattson [http://www.messiahnyc.org/a\\_reply.htm](http://www.messiahnyc.org/a_reply.htm) also there. G.I. Williamson's review is also linked there, with Mattson's further re-rejoinder.

<sup>2</sup> and the final portion of the argument, found on Messiahnyc.org, but not in Chalcedon, appears as part V, starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of 13 pages.

<sup>3</sup> All citations are to the Chalcedon version of the papers, when possible. If otherwise, it will be so noted.

<sup>4</sup> This quotation is found in the Fifth installment on the Messiah's web site and is not on the Chalcedon web site.

<sup>5</sup> My comments are in Times New Roman, whereas SMS's writings are in Arial Narrow, *including his italics*. Sometimes quotations dispensed with [my editorial comments are bracketed thus]. Occasionally **emphasis** is added by me without note usually longer bold sections are my emphasis, not SMS.

<sup>6</sup> Had Schlissel taken another course, and tried to argue for a redefinition of the RPW, along looser lines, fewer would have been offended, but the issues would not have become as clear.

<sup>7</sup> SMS may be quoting Joe Morecraft. There are reasons one may make this case, confessional reasons. See the letter, "Response to Rev. Milne" by New Zealand Reformed Church member, Berwyn Hoyt, and his review of Schlissel's IPW. Hoyt tries to defend Schlissel as confessional.

<sup>8</sup> 1) They were bringing offerings (*as God commanded*) 2) Burning incense (*as God commanded*) 3) Observing New Moon festivals (*as God commanded*) 4)

Observing Sabbaths (*as God commanded*) 5) Observing appointed feasts (*as God commanded*) 6) Offering prayers (*again, as God commanded*)

<sup>9</sup> The RPW author who conscripted Jeremiah, says, (re: Jer. 19:5) "Israel's apostasy from true worship, can be summed up in these words: 'which I did not command them.' Because they were not satisfied to do what God commanded, and only what God commanded, they were condemned." This is patently false to the text. Israel was there condemned--and that explicitly--not for failing to follow the RPW but for doing what God had forbidden. They worshipped *idols*. That's what *God* says they did. But what God says is edited out by RPW advocates to conform to a conclusion they have determined in advance must be reached....

<sup>10</sup> This is probably Bruce Hemphill. SMS has a copy of Hemphill's paper and liked it. We've been in correspondence since 1992-3.

<sup>11</sup> Whatever the relation between Temple and synagogue and we certainly recognize a relationship they remained quite distinct institutions. And it was the synagogue which became the model for New Order worship. Some seek to argue against the normativity of the synagogue model for the church by asserting that "the temple rather than the synagogue is the ultimate source of a number of the most important aspects of Christian worship." (Bushell, *Songs of Zion*) I'm from Missouri. Show me any element of early Biblical Christian (or current Reformed!) worship which can ultimately be traced to the Temple alone or which came to the church in any way other than via the synagogue. Sermons? Nope. Benedictions? They predate the Temple by at least half a millennium (Gen. 14). Corporate prayer? Uh-uh (Gen. 4). Singing? Don't be silly (Ex. 15). Circumcision was not Temple-dependent. Nor could baptism, as practiced by the Jews, by John, or by Jesus be ultimately traced to the Temple. No, my friends, the above assertion is mere legerdemain. The Temple was not the liturgical mother of the church. Wandering down that avenue will lead you to an Italian address. The distinction of the Temple was this: God there demonstrated that He was to be found among the people who had the atoning blood which He alone could provide. In that sense we agree, all covenant communities are little Temples.

<sup>12</sup> We are in danger of special pleading if we remove the Synagogue from *worship* along the lines of Aaron Goerner's paper, or "Which Regulative Principle? A Response to Steve Schlissel and Brian Schwertley," by Peter J. Wallace (which is what SMS here addresses). Cf. "The Church is now the Temple (not the synagogue!) of God." In "Worship Committee Report on Paper 99-2." A much debated point in current liturgical research should not become a

central plank in our overview of Covenantal worship or our apologetic for the RPW. Aaron Goerner gives the following footnote: Donald D. Binder, [Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1999], hypertext edition. <<http://www.smu.edu/~dbinder/Intronotes.html>>

<sup>13</sup> At this juncture, frequent in SMS' articles, the RPW advocate is frustrated, for he does not see the RPW as whole picture. However, it is seen as the central regulative crux for discovering legitimate worship practices. Remember SMS sees the Westminster Divines as practicing a broader approach than a rigid RPW would allow. Definitions and boundary issues abound and we need to read SMS and his opponents sympathetically to grasp what they are saying as a whole., even when we feel we are being misread. The literature by Schwertley, e.g., does muddy the waters here!

<sup>14</sup> G.I. Williamson, *The Singing of Psalms in the Worship of God*.

<sup>15</sup> For the sake of the argument, I give you the details of Grebel's position. For a time Zwingli's service had no song.

We understand that you have translated the Mass into German and composed new German Hymns. This cannot be good, because we find in the New Testament no teaching or example about singing. Paul scolds the Corinthian scholars more than he praises them for murmuring in the congregation, as though they were singing, just as Jews and Italians pronounce their liturgy in the manner of songs. Second, because singing in the Latin language arose without divine teaching and apostolic example, and has not brought about anything good, it will edify still less in German and will create an external, specious faith. Third [watch this one!— sms], Paul most clearly forbids singing in the fifth chapter to the Ephesians and in the third chapter of his letter to the Colossians. He does this by saying that people should talk and instruct one another with psalms and spiritual songs; and if one wants to sing, one should sing and give thanks in one's heart. Fourth, what we are not taught with clear sayings and examples should be as forbidden to us as if it were written: "Do not do that: do not sing." Fifth, Christ tells His messengers to preach only the word that is in the Old and New Testaments. Paul also says that the speech of Christ, not song, should dwell among us. Whoever sings poorly is frustrated; whoever sings well is arrogant. Sixth, we should not add to the word what we think good, nor should we subtract from it. Seventh....

<sup>16</sup> Schlissel's footnote here: Many articles defending the RPW, by Rev. Brian Schwertley and others, can be found at [www.reformed.com](http://www.reformed.com). This quote was taken from his work against instruments in worship, posted there under /pub/music.htm. I should note that there are other, fine articles, on this site. ...

<sup>17</sup> See Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (Unwin Hyman, Winchester, Mass., 1988). An essential study of the origins of the Puritan Presbyterian movement in the Elisabethan period.

<sup>18</sup> I will ask that we be concerned here with none of the other elements save the wine. Where is the command of God to use wine in the Passover service? It is not there. Commanded were the pesach, the matzoh and the m'rowr, i.e. , the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. Yet by the time of our Lord we find not only the introduction of wine into the Passover service, but the organization of the entire Seder around four discrete cups of wine, every one of human origin. If Jesus our Messiah was a regulativist, I tell you, He would have turned over that Seder table that night! Instead, He took the cup of wine called "Thanksgiving" and said, "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood: do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." The RPW -- if it is not commanded, it's forbidden -- is not Biblical. If it were, we wouldn't have our Savior approving of the predicate of what He made into the Lord's Supper, the very emblem of Christian worship.

<sup>19</sup> A CRC church order commentary notes that the Synod of Dordt, 1574, held that the observance of all days except the weekly Sabbath should be discouraged. Again, in 1578, the Synod of Dordt declared the desirability of observing Sunday only. Yet concessions were made almost immediately until, at the great Synod of Dordt, 1618-19, Article 67 was adopted which called for the churches to "keep," beside Sundays, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and other days. Now, since Calvinism has historically, in no small measure, been defined by that Synod, can we glibly assert that it is unreformed to observe special days? We cannot. For though the Bible does not command us to observe them, the Reformed Synod said, "Go right ahead-in moderation." Therefore it is perfectly just to affirm that holding to the Reformed Faith does not require adoption of the RPW.

<sup>20</sup> Without getting too far afield, let me just say why I inserted "supposedly" ... It modifies the word "clearly" not the word "commanded." I do believe we have more than adequate Biblical justification for observing the first day of the week. But I can see why some have suggested that the church, if it was to continue to have a Sabbath, would have done fine with keeping it as Saturday. There may be more than an ounce of truth to the suggestion that the church eagerly embraced Sunday to distinguish itself from the Jews. Be that as it may, we have apostolic example as well as Christ's own resurrection and appearances to justify a change of day, not to mention great theological reasons. And beyond that we have the nearly universal practice of the church from earliest times, something which should really help settle the matter for those with lightweight objections. So, we accept [the Lord's Day]. Happily, the Bible requires a Lord's Day rest in our Creator-Redeemer-Sanctifier.

<sup>21</sup> Context would indicate this to be Raymond Patton Joseph.

<sup>22</sup> The option we explored in an earlier version of the Theology of Worship was to assert that the Synagogue order was developed by way of extrapolation from other revelation, especially the Temple. SMS' own answer is not far off from this approach. But this does not follow the RPW method as he sees it, for unless you have direct divine command, under the RPW, extrapolation is unwarranted.

<sup>23</sup> My emphasis. Note the similarity in reasoning to our Committee's approach in the earlier edition of the paper.

<sup>24</sup> - a perfectly lovely order of worship, on our principles -SMS.

<sup>25</sup> The Directory's rule is that baptism must be performed by a minister. Yet this does not comport with Scripture. Thus its origin is in man, i.e., in a human tradition. The Old Testament antecedent, circumcision, did not require the rite to be performed by someone specially called. Zipporah's circumcision of her and Moses' son was valid. God Himself approved of it and accepted it (Ex. 4:25, 26).

<sup>26</sup> And what about men being commanded to "lift up holy hands" in prayer? This, of course, they reduce to a "circumstance" that does not have to be obeyed. And what about greeting one another with a holy kiss? Here we find a command issued four times over to the churches of Christ. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26.) Do regulativists obey it? Their principle becomes very flexible when it causes them social discomfort, it seems. Or else their principle is extremely arbitrary, wouldn't you say?

**Meticulously excluding what they can't find commanded, while excluding much that is commanded.**

<sup>27</sup> I ought to mention that I preferred calling it The Reformed Principle of Worship, but passed on it for two reasons. One, while the IPW certainly is indicative of the principle employed by many Reformed, as opposed to Presbyterian, churches, it would plainly be untrue to say that the IPW is identical to the Reformed philosophy of worship. There is more than one Reformed version of worship, in my judgment. I have no wish to even breathe the suggestion that my brothers who disagree with me are not Reformed. Second, the initials would be the same, making shorthand difficult.

<sup>28</sup> An inversion, perhaps of "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" which mirrors Calvin's *Necessity of Reforming the Church* as noted in Jeffrey J. Meyer's essay, "Trinitarian Worship and Confession" in *Christendom Essays*, ed. James B. Jordan (Transfiguration Press, Niceville, FL, 1997), pp. 11-28. An appendix in *The Lord's Service: Worship at Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church*, (Providence R.P. Church, St. Louis, MO, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> A pre-A.D. 70 inscription found on the Ophel hill in Jerusalem reads in part: "Theodotus . . . built the synagogue for the reading of the law and for the teaching of the commandments. . . ." Please note that "Scripture reading was not part of the services in the Temple before the Babylonian exile," while "[t]he primary and seminal element in the synagogue was . . . Scripture reading." It was the elements of the synagogue service, not the Temple, which were appropriated by the early, Biblical Christian church. A look at Acts 2...There we read how, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." If we take "[t]he breaking of bread" to be communion, we find its antecedent source not in the Temple but in the Passover, a covenant meal celebrated in covenant homes. The other elements are manifestly synagogal. Interestingly, though they "continued to meet together in the temple courts every day," they there engaged in practices which marked synagogue, not Temple, worship. In fact: "It is thought that there was a synagogue even within the precincts of the Temple." Thus, alongside the sacrificial rites of the Temple, "there were arrangements for divine service along the lines of what was done in the synagogue, with prayers and Scripture reading." The apostolic church in Jerusalem, even when gathered in the Temple precincts, also is described as engaged in synagogal and familial rites, not Temple rites. This is why we might find the Apostle liberally employing Temple terminology as metaphor, but never enjoining the practices of the Temple on the church. What we find him doing in the churches is straight out of the synagogue: reading Scripture, explaining Scripture, teaching how to apply Scripture, and praying.