HOW SHALL WE NOW WORSHIP?
APPLYING THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE

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In our time, this idea of the regulative principle is claimed by so many, and used by so many of different persuasion and practice, that its worth in the general discussion has become obscured. In a day of creativity most ideas of any kind of limitation or regulation are greeted with hostility. This has always been true. Calvin encountered it:

I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do, has in itself, a sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honor of God.¹

I’d like to explore the issues of what is permissible activity in worship, and how the Scriptures control such activity. What obscures these issues is the binding relevance that we give to our cultural preferences. But perhaps objectivity is beyond any of us, so let us submit to the Scripture.

This article will try to establish first the limits and extent of the discussion, defining ideas for our examination. Then I will discuss, in general, the biblical data on regulation. Then I hope, by God’s grace, to examine an actual working out of this regulative principle. I believe I am hoping for too much, but I will be satisfied if you are edified and encouraged.

The Idea of Worship

The importance of this whole matter is, I believe, stated most directly by Calvin in the same treatise quoted above:

If it be inquired, then, by what things the Christian religion has a standing existence among us, and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity: that is, a knowledge, first, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly, of the source from which salvation is obtained.²

Consider with me that Calvin gives a high view to this matter of worship and regulation. Most of us would have reversed the order of Calvin’s statement and put a knowledge of salvation first — if we included the idea of worship at all. Although I’m reluctant to assert this as a listing of priority for Calvin, we can assert the true primary importance of both parts.

What is worship that is regulated by God? The most useful definition is one that will
describe worship as obedience in a general sense. So then, for our purposes, *worship is an activity in response to God’s Lordship*. This is a definition of worship in its broadest and most general biblical sense.

Beginning with this elementary idea is necessary, because worship cannot be separated from regulation. We must become accustomed to this worship as always regulated. This is something to which all should agree. It is the *extent* of this regulation that brings disagreement. There is a common distinction made between a Lutheran principle that permits any worship not forbidden, and a Reformed principle that forbids any activity not prescribed. But both positions contain a form of regulation, with differing conclusions of biblical mandate. We might state a principle here something like this: *No activity of worship should be immoral*. This is a basic Christian principle with which we all must agree, although our interpretation of what actually is immoral might be different. This kind of principle is basic biblical teaching.

This general idea of worship is the thinking of passages like Romans 12:1, where the idea of *latreia* is this broad. Here the idea of worship becomes another way of understanding and describing “the whole of obedience for the believer.” The language of Romans 12 is full of allusion to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, and all of life is viewed as an offering. We could, perhaps, stop at this point, working out a general program from the framework of Christian obedience. But somehow we seem to have diluted the force of Calvin’s idea of the importance of worship and its mode.

There does seem to be an idea of worship, containing a more specific idea of regulation, which strikes more at the heart of our question. This idea takes shape in Christ’s words in John 4:24, and explains the judgment which Aaron witnesses on his sons in Leviticus 10. It is an idea which takes form historically in the Westminster Confession of Faith 21:1,

I. The light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doeth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.

This paragraph begins with the general nature of faith and obedience as discoverable by the light of nature. Worship, on the other hand, in the sense which the confession describes here, is to conform to a more restrictive biblical prescription. A question arises at this point: *Is all worship the same, or is some type of worship more regulated than others?*

The confession continues to be a helpful guide in 21:4,

... God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself; so more solemnly in the publick assemblies.

This is a sensible distinction, for we do naturally distinguish between private or secret
worship and public. Some activities may be proper in the private sense that would be improper publicly and vice versa. In more general categories, private family worship and secret worship are part of the believer’s spiritual life. The public, corporate worship of the church is legitimately distinguished from general or private worship. The point here is the application of some regulation that is proper to one and not the other.

Consider the nature of private worship:

1. Private worship is universal, that is to say that it covers all of life. In this sense it is unceasing in its prayer, doing all things to the glory of God, a doxological offering of all life. This is worship as a quality or description of obedience.

2. Private worship is personal. This is to say that it may be a secret worship, confined to the most private life of the individual, or it may also be personal in the family sense of immediate intimacy with others. In this sense the general activity of intimacy in a prayer meeting could be included.

Contrast private worship with public worship. Public worship should be understood as another type of worship, and not as some different kind or species. Public worship is built indispensably on the practice of private worship, and is part of the fruit and practice of that worship. Public worship, because it involves individuals, could be diagrammed as a subset of the larger set of general or private worship.

1. This public worship is distinguished in its own subset as being particular. It is a worship activity set aside and appointed as such. It does not and cannot happen at all times, but happens as an intentional event.

2. Public worship is also corporate. It is the activity of worship as carried out by an assembly of God’s people. It is the joint activity of that group, met as it were, as one person with one faith and mind. It is the proper activity of the church. Public worship adds a dimension beyond our general definition. Public worship will be defined as a corporate activity of particular response to the proclamation of God’s Lordship.

As believers in Jesus Christ we meet as the family of God on many occasions: e.g. Bible Study, Prayer Meeting, Evening Service, or Evening Gospel Hour. Sometimes, even when the intention is to have a worship assembly, a further distinction is introduced. Some Christians claim that it is also proper to distinguish between a formal worship assembly and one that is informal. Really? Doesn’t such a distinction infer differing standards of biblical regulation between different worship assemblies?

Perhaps this distinction describes a common occurrence of human society rather than Biblical mandate. There are social occasions for “form” and occasions that do not demand such “form.” But when the intention is to publicly worship, we always assemble for the same reason, to worship God, who is the same, whenever we come to Him. It seems strange, given a unchanging reason and object of worship, that we should think we could change the nature of our approach, sometimes respecting the regulation of that God and sometimes not. Usually, this
formal/informal distinction is culturally driven and doesn’t have a place in our consideration. An “informal” worship service is the subject of God’s regulation.5

The Regulative Principle

21:1 of the Confession is a clear definition of the regulative principle, and we have narrowed the scope of application to the worship assembly. Some of the most lucid thinking on this subject is from William Cunningham,

... there are sufficiently plain indications in Scripture itself, that it was Christ’s mind and will that nothing should be introduced into the government and worship of the church, unless a positive warrant could be found in Scripture.6

So now we are directed to the Scriptures to discover the regulation of the worship assembly. But several questions are to be asked as a guide in our discussion.

- Is this idea of exclusive regulation taught? If so, how and where?
- Are we to then receive the instruction from the Old Testament in this regard?
- Is the practice of the New Testament to be prescriptive when it is descriptive?
- Is this a general rule to guide us in principles and elements or does it to bind us to the utmost detail?

Is this idea of exclusive regulation taught?

The first two questions I will answer together. I believe, in the question of worship regulation, there is a consistent biblical expression of regulation. This comes in the form of God-centered reasoning. It is rather simple logic: “God is B, therefore we must do C.” Dr. Rayburn informs us that a basic structure of theological and biblical ethics moves from the attributes of God to the consequent activities of obedience.7 In the subject of worship, this reasoning becomes remarkably explicit.

1. Exodus 20:4-5. This is the second commandment, which although it is explicitly forbidding idol worship, is a model for carrying out the regulative principle.8 This is seen in the reasoning of the command. God is jealous, therefore you must worship according to his prescription and not make idols.

2. Exodus 25:40. This is the pattern of the tabernacle made after a pattern to Moses in the mountain. The tabernacle pictures the redemption of Christ. The logic goes like this, God is the God of orderly pattern, and therefore you will worship according to this pattern.

3. Leviticus 10:3. Often we focus on the harsh judgment that falls on the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They violated the pattern established in Ex. 25:40. They rejected the pattern of redemption, i.e., Christ himself. But what is most telling is what Moses says about God’s
character. God is holy, therefore those who approach him in worship must show that He is holy. See also Leviticus 22:32.

4. **John 4:24.** The question of the Samaritan woman is about regulation of worship, and whether it was true what the Jews required for worship. Christ says it was worship according to knowledge, and then he grounds the idea of worship and its regulation on God’s attributes. God is spirit, therefore you must worship in spirit and truth.

5. **1 Corinthians 14:33.** In the most practical sense the character of God regulates worship. God is a God of order, therefore we must be orderly in our worship.

Another doctrine contributing to the exclusive nature of worship is the sufficiency of Scripture. The doctrine of sufficiency puts forward the Scriptures as the rule of what God requires of us, including how we shall worship. The Westminster Confession of Faith 1:6 reads:

> The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

It remains, of course, to establish what such a teaching of Scripture is. This doctrine teaches that we ought to be able to carry out a program of knowing what God’s will is. Scripture contains within itself all of the basic principles which we need to rightly celebrate in Christ and His worship. The words “temple,” “priest,” and “sacrifice” remain in the language of the New Testament, although fulfilled in Christ10 (Rom. 12:1, 2; 15:16; Phil. 2:17; 4:18; 2 Tim. 4:6; Heb. 13:16; Rev. 1:6, 10). We must be wary of so separating the relevance of the Old Testament so that it becomes a feeble shadow.

As we consider the Old Testament statements and examples of regulation, we understand that they are true and binding in this sense: as they applied in principle to the older ceremonial practice, so they also apply in principle to the Christ and His worship as He fulfills and replaces them.

By doing so we recognize that the Scriptures speak with one voice, and the Old and New Testaments are incomplete without one another. We also represent worship as a covenant activity, regulated by the covenant making and keeping God.

May I borrow a figure from mathematics? We have this ruling set of worship as obedience. As a subset of that set, we have public worship. Now, as a subset of public worship we have the ceremonial system. What we are saying is that the rules and principles of the Scripture that are sometimes attached expressly to the subset of ceremonial circumstances are principles that guide the whole subset of public worship. But notice that the ceremonial system as a subset is not identical with its larger set of public worship. Its circumstances have been realized in Christ, the center of our worship. Consider the following diagram:
Is the practice of the New Testament to be prescriptive when it is descriptive?

This is, I believe, a dangerous question in its vagueness, capable of absurd generality or application. There are appeals made to Christ’s and the apostolic practice for all sorts of strange customs. There are many practices limited to the nature of the apostolic age, for the building and establishing of the church which are not normative for today.

The regulative principle is not concerned with the details of worship’s circumstances in the early church. It is concerned with establishing what parts of worship make the worship assembly what it is. Cunningham says, “It is a caricature of the regulative principle to paint it as effort to dictate the vagaries of New Testament worship as normative.”

At the center of our discussion is Christ. His idea of regulation is outlined in his answer to the Samaritan woman about the place of worship (John 4:1-24). He asserts for her that the regulation that the Jews taught, which was from the Scripture, was according to knowledge (v. 22). It was not wrong, it was incomplete and inadequate. The temple would be superseded by worship everywhere in spirit and truth (v. 23,24). Notice that Christ does not simply announce an unbounded freedom.

Let’s make this point while we are in John 4. True worship is fundamentally spiritual. True worship is a matter of the heart. As such, true worship is, in a sense, beyond external regulation. It is the Spirit of God who works in us and brings us to a place of true worship. We might engage in this whole discussion, reach many right conclusions, practice them somewhat diligently, and still not worship. Each person must examine himself, to see what sort of worship goes on in his heart.

In this passage Jesus has already spoken of knowledge. Knowledge, in this sense, means true facts. When Jesus uses “truth,” it contains the idea of wisdom as applied knowledge, of being ultimately true. In John this word is loaded with references to Christ Himself (John 14:7) and His words from the Father (John 17:17), and the work of the Spirit in the disciples (John 16:13). Although this idea is broad in one sense, in its context in John 4 it is directly related to the regulation of the worship assembly in the temple. So in this question, Christ binds us to himself and His Word. As Rayburn writes,
Worship “in truth” means to worship God in a manner thoroughly consistent with His revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. God has made known His will; He expects His children to be knowledgeable about what He has said, to believe His Word, and to be obedient unto it.\textsuperscript{12}

Christ Himself was active in the practice of worship, still operating under the framework of the Mosaic economy. It is interesting to see what is left of Christ’s public worship activities after we remove the temple. Jesus went to the synagogue frequently and participated in teaching there (Luke 4:16; 6:6; Mark 1:21; 3:1; 6:2; John 18:20). The synagogue worship was, as far as can be known, the simple activities of reading the Scripture, teaching, praise, and prayer.\textsuperscript{13} Christ commanded preaching (Matt. 28:20; Luke 24:47) as well as modeling it (Matt. 4:17), also modeling and teaching on prayer (Matt 6:9), commanding baptism (Matt. 28:20), instituting the Lord’s Supper even with Paul (I Cor. 11:23), and singing (Matt. 14:26; 26:30).\textsuperscript{14}

A similar list is easily compiled from the apostolic practice. We are first introduced in Acts to a basic formula like the synagogue: preaching, praying, and breaking of bread (which I take to be the Lord’s Supper; Acts 2:42; 20:7ff). In addition there is the reading of Scripture (Acts 13:15; I Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16), baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:36; 10:47), singing hymns (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), offerings (Acts 4:32-34; Romans 15:25-26; 1Cor. 16:1-3), confession of Christ (Romans 10:10; 1 Cor. 12:3), confession of sin (James 5:16), and numerous benedictions and doxologies (Heb. 13:20-21; Jude 24).

We began this section by looking at the basic proclamation of Christ in New Testament worship, where worship is described as “in spirit and truth.” The public worship activity of Christ and apostles, as we have biblically established, becomes prescriptive to our worship. Here we find not only truth, but only with this truth, will we also find spiritual worship.

The regulative principle limits us to the description and practice of Christ and His apostles. These parts of worship are generalized as we see them in the New Testament. What emerges is a simple structure, which became obscured in the Roman church. It is to this simplicity that Calvin desired to return the Church, to rest on this “invariable custom.”\textsuperscript{15}

This brings us to the foundational Reformed principle of simplicity. Have you ever attended a Roman Catholic baptism or funeral? I have. What immediately struck me was how complicated the affairs are. Layers of ceremony preceded and followed the baptism, all done with the same care and “spirituality” as the baptism itself. Regarding the funerals, the elaborate processions and the conduct of Mass generates the illusion that something almost magical is taking place. It brought into sharp focus the repulsion of the Reformers for the Roman rite, which was doubtless much more elaborate. By looking back to the Scriptures, the Reformers saw the picture of a simple pattern, simply exercised.

The earliest complete report of post-apostolic worship has the same character, as described by Justin Martyr in his Apology to the Emperor Antonius Pius, around A.D. 140. It is marked with clear simplicity.\textsuperscript{16} It resembles in detail the worship outlined in the Scripture, in an organized pattern. In the third and fourth centuries we begin to see the accumulation of new worship parts, sometimes as “elaborations,” or developments of basic elements, now with prayer.
for the dead and the elevation of the host.\textsuperscript{17}

In reading Calvin’s preface to his service book, it is striking how similar his description of worship is to Justin’s in structure and simplicity, an observation obviously intentional, so that he says,

This, therefore, is the whole order and reason for its administration in this manner; and it agrees also with the administration in the ancient Church of the Apostles, martyrs, and holy Fathers.\textsuperscript{18}

In his treatise, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” Calvin simplifies the parts of worship even further. He boils true worship down to an acknowledgment of God united with an adoration and praise, to which we respond with self-abasement. This is our worship in simplicity, in spirit and truth.\textsuperscript{19}

This simplicity is a biblical principle, described in the idea of the covenant dialogue.\textsuperscript{20} God speaks, and we, as His people, respond to Him. Here we have a simple framework of conversation. I would describe this back-and-forth conversation as the \textit{elemental structure} of the worship assembly. The elements of worship, which the Scripture describes, spring from this basic structure. I’m not sure it would not be proper to call the two parts of this dialogue the elements of the worship assembly, they simply are worship itself. The elements are divided between them:

\begin{itemize}
  \item **God speaks to us in:**
    \begin{itemize}
      \item Preaching
      \item Reading of Scripture
      \item The Lord’s Supper
      \item Baptism
      \item Benediction
    \end{itemize}
  \item **We speak to God in:**
    \begin{itemize}
      \item Singing
      \item Praise
      \item Prayer
      \item Offering
      \item Confession & Doxology
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

Notice that this basic covenant dialogue is also the structure of our basic definitions. The worship assembly is a corporate activity of response to the proclamation of God’s Lordship, and worship is an activity of response to God’s lordship. Our definitions were generalizations of this dialogue, and properly so, since this is the life of faith, knowing the Master’s voice.
The regulative principle, how general or specific is it?

Finally our discussion comes to the actual principle itself. Again, Cunningham is to the point:

The principle is in a sense a wide and sweeping one. But it is purely prohibitory or exclusive; and the practical effect of it, if it were fully carried out, would just be to leave the Church in the condition in which it was left by the apostles.21

It is important to highlight this point, that the regulative principle is a principle or guide. As a principle it may be erroneously used to justify or forbid a particular activity. But it is limited in its use. We earlier quoted the first part of the Westminster Confession of Faith 1:6 on the sufficiency of the Scriptures, here is the second part of that paragraph:

…there are some circumstances concerning 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.

In 20:2 of the Confession this area is again addressed as a part of Christian liberty,

II. God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

Here we come to an important historical distinction in the application and understanding of this principle. In the worship assembly there is a distinction between the elements, the parts determined by Scripture; and the circumstances, those parts attendant and necessary to the activity of the elements and governed by the light of nature. Preaching is an element, preaching at 11:30 in a pulpit is a circumstance. The division is best put by James Bannerman as a division of worship into what he calls in sacris, that is, “in worship as an element of it;” and that which is circa sacra, that is, “circumstances around worship.”22

Bannerman makes his most important observation on the distinction between element (that which is simply to be obeyed as an ordinance in the worship assembly) and circumstance (that which is negotiable as worship activity). He says that an activity is said to move from a status of circumstance to element, when such an activity has attached to it some kind of “spiritual meaning, a sacred significance.”23

Here is the glory of Christ! The idea of limiting the elements, the parts in sacris, is because only they have a proper biblical mandate for spiritual meaning. Only those elements prescribed by Christ in Himself and His apostles bear the spiritual meaning and content which satisfies Christ’s command to worship in spirit and truth. Rituals added to the worship of God
are not in truth, and therefore have no spiritual meaning. To say that some humanly devised activity does have spiritual meaning is a distraction and draws attention from Christ as the central focus in worship. The regulative principle then, is radically Christocentric.

What creeps up into worship is the attributing to certain expressions and circumstances a spiritual significance that they cannot have. Here we have the very kernel of the principle open to us, giving us a powerful kind of discretion in our evaluation of worship. **No new elements can be added because they do not have this spiritual meaning that comes from being a prescribed element.** It also gives us the ability to judge particular expressions or circumstances in worship, to see if we are guilty of misusing them. Misuse, according to the regulative principle, is when we begin to attach a spiritual significance to an expression, and then make that expression normative. This is a movement from *around* worship to *in* worship. This could happen in circumstances ranging from kneeling to using only a collection of favorite hymns, from the activity of lit candles to the time of worship.

Even armed with this principle, confusion arises between a proper and an improper circumstance of the elements of the worship assembly. There is still an area of expression that remains controversial, into which the regulative principle is sometimes introduced as a blunt instrument.

**The Expression of the Elements**

The Scriptures teach that they are the rule for what our worship should include. Under the authority of Scripture we come to a set number of ways in which the worship assembly is to be conducted. We find that the regulative principle keeps us to this limited list of elements by denying that any new element cannot be spiritually powerful, because it has no truth apart from the Truth Himself.

On the other hand, we have general rules and reason which also guide us in what expressions of these basic elements are permissible or wise. Here there is some liberty, and some responsibility. The elements are not really up for debate, but regarding circumstances debate is necessary to come to godly discernment about our expressions.

A reason for this complexity is the wide range of activities that the idea of circumstance covers. This includes the pews of the sanctuary and the time of our services; but it also includes whether we use modern or older songs, whether we raise hands, and how long the sermon is. Any of these can have an exalted importance in the eyes of a church member. Some of them are simple questions of wisdom and propriety, while others are far more difficult. It is to these expressions that we direct our attention.

Let us look at some specific examples, and try to work out some responses. In the past decade, some churches have included “liturgical” dancing in the church. How does our understanding of the regulative principle help us? The idea and practice of *ritualistic* dance in worship, because of its activity or special position as a part of worship, is categorically forbidden. Any elevation of body movement, or procession, to any position of ritual, thereby
attaching spiritual meaning to it, is abhorrent and idolatrous.

On the other hand, what if we have a generalized corporate expression that is spontaneous and voluntary and does not lead worship nor is led in worship, but is a simple gesture of praise before God? This might be defensible, but the Church would be obliged to censure it if it began to represent anything inappropriate, became disruptive, or was offensive in any reasonable sense. There could be any number of good reasons to forbid such activity and all of them would be sufficient for the Church to control it. The Church has a right to such a censure.

Though the raising and clapping of hands could be set to the same standards and arguments as dancing, I would deal with the issue of drama differently. I believe we are obligated to a biblical understanding of each of the elements. It could be first asked if drama in any way can be supported as a mode of preaching, which I believe it cannot. We must remain biblically guided in our understanding of the nature of a particular element, which will set the expression of that element within limits.

I believe there is reasoning behind the idea of drama that condemns it. In the whole structure of the elements, and in our larger understanding of them as established by Christ, they are never performed or done in the sense of performance. Any kind of performance is really the introduction of a new element, a false element in sacris. The very idea of performance, which is appropriate to representation of life in human society, has no place at all in our idea of covenant dialogue of worship. Dialogue is between persons. All of the elements have this characteristic in common, they are activities directed toward someone, either God to us, or us to God. Human agents are involved, but they are speaking directly for God, or to Him on our behalf as we join in our hearts. This is not performance. The idea of drama is like a violent attack on this very structure in the worship assembly, for in the assembly no one is performing at any time. Or at least no one should be! We cannot judge when men do perform for us and do not talk to God. But I think it outrageous that we would ever actually begin to make it a part of the worship assembly.

The regulative principle has opened for us a way of confronting the many corruptions from which I believe our worship is suffering in this day. It will only get worse, for men will accumulate as much as they can in their worship services in order to no longer feel or remember their emptiness.

On the other hand, let us hesitate from quick judgments that find their origin not in the Word, but in the dispositions and tastes of our society or class culture. We should be slow to bind consciences as well, unless we can speak with certainty about a particular circumstance. I recommend no leniency regarding drama. Perhaps if people do clap hands we should not despise them too quickly. We should guard our hearts against the sin of Michal (2 Sam. 6:16).

In all of this we should remember this quote from John Owen,

The principle that the church hath power to institute any thing or ceremony belonging to the worship of God, either as to matter or manner, beyond the observance of such
circumstances as necessarily attend such ordinances as Christ Himself hath instituted, lies at the bottom of all the horrible superstition and idolatry, of all the confusion, blood, persecution, and wars, that have for so long a season spread themselves over the face of the Christian world.²⁴

² Ibid., p. 15. This particular treatise is the clearest statement of Calvin on worship and its regulation, see also his *Reply to Sadolet* and *The True Method of Giving Peace*, and *Reforming the Church* in John Calvin’s Tracts and Treatises Vols. I and III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958).
³ As far as I understand it, this is John Frame’s program for the regulative principle. As our further discussion will bear out, this is not only unbiblical, I believe such a program is de-regulatory. A further paper is now available from Mr. Frame, which I have not seen. See his “Some Questions about the Regulative Principle,” *WTJ* 54 (1992), p. 357, and David T. Gordon’s response “Some Answers about the Regulative Principle,” *WTJ* 55 (1993), pp. 321-29.
⁴ A more worked out program for this division is not within the scope of this paper. There may be room for further divisions of that area of worship that is not public, outlining the distinctions between family and personal worship. But these have not been the domain of the regulative principle historically.
⁵ In the article already mentioned, Frame makes a case for a class of unregulated assemblies in the Old Testament festivals and feast weeks, p. 365. I do not know what criterion Frame requires to establish a biblical regulation, but following the prescriptive power of what the Scripture describes for the Old Testament worshippers in the Psalms we have a large guide for the limiting of worship. The psalms were the manuals not only for the temple, but for all assemblies and feasts. See Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* Vol. 1, (Abingdon Press: New York, 1962), p. 94-95, and Hughes O. Old, *The Psalms as Christian Prayer, A Preface to the Liturgical use of the Psalter*, unpublished, 1978, p. 54-60.
⁸ This is the Westminster Confession of Faith’s understanding in its explication of the law in the Larger Catechism Q. 109.
⁹ Frame, p. 365-6.
¹¹ Cunningham, p. 39. See Ernest C. Reisinger, “Thoughts on The Regulative Principle in a Reforming Situation,” p. 8, as an example of this misunderstanding.
¹² Rayburn, p. 114.
¹³ Martin, p. 24.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 17ff.
¹⁸ Ibid., p. 116.
¹⁹ Calvin, p. 16-17.
²¹ Cunningham, p. 38.
²³ Ibid., footnote on p. 355. I believe it is proper to understand the word *significance* here in its older sense of signification.
²⁴ As quoted by Cunningham, p. 40-41.