

What You Really Need To Know About Worship - You Won't learn from Steven Schlissel

The Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) has been subjected recently to an assault by Rev. Steven Schlissel[1] in a series of articles entitled "All I Really Needed to Know about Worship . . . I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle"; published initially in his monthly newsletter, Messiah's Mandate and then reprinted in a slightly abridged form in the Chalcedon Report.[2]

These articles have been described by his supporters as "hard-hitting"; and "some of the most challenging material yet seen on the Regulative Principle of Worship";[3] However, others have described Schlissel's arguments as "false, unscriptural, and based upon poor exegesis and faulty reasoning";[4] Unfortunately, the latter is the more accurate description.

Schlissel portrays the RPW as an extreme view that developed at the time of the Reformation as a radical response to the excesses of Rome. At the time of the Reformation, the nausea induced in the godly upon their awakening to the sinful Romish excesses and superstitions in worship gave rise to a radical, but not fully thought-out solution, the Regulative Principle of Worship: If it is not commanded in Scripture to be performed in worship, it is forbidden in worship.[5]

Schlissel readily acknowledges that the changes that were ushered into worship at that time were welcome. This pendulum swing in the Reformers was certainly a breath of fresh air! Virtually overnight it cleansed the toxins out of the Reformed worship like two months of cold turkey cleanses the horse out of a junkie's veins. Way to go! Out went the relics, the Mariolatry, the adoration of saints, the indulgences, the novenas and the like; in came clear, accessible, soulsaving, edifying Word-centered worship.[6]

However, he restricts the value of the RPW to its historical context and rejects it as a principle having abiding value. Though most excellent and welcome in its historical situation, the Regulative Principle somehow loosed itself from its moorings and 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. And as men are wont to do, zealots - who saw in this principle the only way to acceptably approach God - began to extend and apply it more and more rigorously. Like the AA-inspired teetotaler who swears off not only liquor, wine and beer, but rum candy too, the strict regulativist searched for gnats and, not surprisingly found them abounding. Camels, however, they often overlooked.[7]

Schlissel maintains that his concern is not with the outworking of the RPW. Indeed, he applauds the nature of the worship to be found in churches where the RPW is practised. "I am not arguing against the sort of worship found in RPW churches. For my money, it is vastly superior to most other extant worship forms (of which I am aware). The RPW is a mistake, but if you have to make a mistake, this is a very fine one." [8] Schlissel magnanimously acknowledges that those who maintain the RPW have stumbled upon something that is worthwhile, but unfortunately for the wrong reasons.

In Schlissel's estimation: . . . 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. It posits a false dilemma which, astonishingly, has bamboozled battalions of my fellow soldiers.[9]

However, despite his concessive tones, Schlissel vehemently and at times abrasively, opposes the RPW contending that it is unbiblical.

By 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.[10] [Emphasis Schlissel]

One of Schlissel's fundamental criticisms of Regulativists, the name by which he designates those who maintain the RPW, is that they assume the RPW and then proceed to view all of Scripture in light of that assumption. He contends that Regulativists tend to reason as follows: Major Premise: The Regulative Principle of Worship.

Minor Premise: There are no inscripturated commands concerning the elements, order, or performers required for lawful synagogue worship services, and no full, explicitly normative examples of such prior to the appearance of the institution, but Jesus went to the synagogue. Conclusion: Therefore, there must have been unscripturated divine commands that we don't know about wherein God told someone what to do and how to do it.[11]

While attempting to demolish the RPW, Schlissel seeks to lay the foundation for what he styles the Informed Principle of Worship (IPW). His thesis is that as regards the regulation of worship, there are not simply two views available, namely the RPW and that which is adopted by the Church of Rome; that whatsoever is not forbidden is permitted. Rather, there is another alternative represented by his IPW: "What is not commanded might be permitted. It depends on other considerations." [12]

In developing his IPW, Schlissel argues that biblical worship must be in harmony with the whole of Scripture and it must keep a focussed eye on Christ's covenantal achievements in history and the impact of His completed work on worship in the New Testament dispensation.

He observes correctly that Pentecost was the covenantal equivalent of the church emerging into a new maturity. Consequently, he contends one aspect of Christ's completed work is that the New Testament church is to be approached having regard to this new maturity.

He argues that from Moses to the Messiah the architecture of the house of God was as strictly regulated, as the worship within it. However, the post-Pentecost church has not been given a blueprint for its architecture. Consequently, it enjoys a measure of freedom as regards its functioning and when it exercises that privilege, it is simply manifesting one of its many prerogatives as a mature entity in Christ.

Schlissel concludes: God treats us as grown ups; regulativists treat us as toddlers. Instead of basing their appeals for improvement on higher sensibilities and principles, as one would reason with an adult, they seek simply to "child-proof" every house with their "must nots". There are locks everywhere because God's covenant people, in their view are not to be trusted. [13]

This means, according to

Schlissel, that the New Testament church is "characterised by a universalism which forbids the imposition of Jewish - that is, Sinaitic - worship forms upon the Gentiles" [14] among which he includes the RPW. He argues: To impose upon the Gentiles now a principle (RPW) which regulated only the Temple service during a specific developmental phase of the covenant would be as improper, as covenantally anachronistic, as wrongheaded, as requiring Gentile males to be circumcised or to visit Jerusalem thrice annually. Such regulation belonged to another day. [15]

Schlissel continues: 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. From Passover (under Moses) until Pentecost (under Christ) God's instructions to Israel about Himself and His covenant included bold graphics, bright colors, and large letters. Since then all eyes are pointed to Christ enthroned, whom we behold by faith. This Christ is presented to the conscience by Word, not image! [16]

Schlissel describes the IPW as being Word centred. Word centered in that it self-consciously follows the synagogue pattern endorsed by Jesus Christ and His apostles. In support of his IPW, Schlissel reasons:

Major premise: There are no inscripturated commands concerning the elements, order, or performers required for lawful synagogue worship services, and no full, explicitly normative examples of such prior to the appearance of the institution.

Minor premise: Jesus, the perfectly righteous One, regularly - religiously - participated in synagogue worship, which had been pretty well codified before His incarnation. Conclusion: Therefore, the rule of righteousness in worship cannot be: if God has not commanded it, it is forbidden. [

From this reasoning flows Schlissel's IPW: "What is not commanded might be permitted. It depends on other considerations." [18] Those other considerations revolve around the maturity of the New Testament church and the direct encounter which occurs in the New Testament era between God and His people through His own Word. The people of God exercising their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law are able to determine what is permissible in worship in light of the express commands of the Word of God and Christian prudence. [19] They are to exercise faithful, covenantal sense, taking into consideration the general rules of the Word in determining what is permissible in worship; that is the practical outworking of the IPW. [20] A.Schlissel's Assault on the RPW

Schlissel puts forward a number of reasons as to why the RPW should be rejected as being unscriptural. [21]

- "Discover" it where it is not. They isolate words and incidents from their qualifying contexts.
- Miss it where it is. The Tabernacle/Temple system was indeed strictly regulated, but why? Because it was the gospel,

not because it was worship.

- Miss the humungous implications of the synagogue, a "man made" worship institution functioning alongside the Temple system.
- Fail to fairly account for the approbated celebration of the man-instituted; special days in Scripture.
- Fail to fairly account for approbated "man-made traditions, some of which modified even explicit divine instructions.
- Fail to be consistent with their own principle, upon which singing in New Testament-era worship services cannot be justified.[22]

The following are summaries of Schlissel's arguments: in their context

1. The Failure by Regulativists to view texts

Schlissel offers this general criticism of the exegesis performed by proponents of the RPW: The regulativists typically isolate the alleged "proof" texts from their larger context. 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. In virtually all regulativist literature the same texts are appealed to over and again, nearly always, it seems, without an honest consideration of their contexts. Such consideration would qualify the meaning of the chosen verses as to reveal that they lend no support whatsoever to the principle they supposedly prove. In short, the regulativist doesn't employ texts: he conscripts them into thralldom.[23]

To demonstrate his point, Schlissel selects out a number of texts called in aid by advocates of the RPW.[24]

By way of illustration, Schlissel contends that Leviticus 10:1-11 cannot be employed to prove that "if it's not commanded then it is forbidden." He argues that the true nature of the sin of Nadab and Abihu was not one of doing that which was not commanded, but one of doing that which was expressly forbidden. In support of his contention, he points to Exodus 30:9, "Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering: neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon" and concludes that the sin of Nadab and Abihu was one that was expressly forbidden of God in that text. Hence, no application of the RPW. 2. The Failure to Recognise that the RPW was confined to Tabernacle/Temple Worship

After designating Deuteronomy 12:32, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it", as the locus classicus for those who maintain the RPW, Schlissel argues that the proponents of the RPW overlook or ignore its context.[25]

In Deuteronomy 12, Schlissel finds a major step in the progress of the covenant. Prior to this time, Israel could offer up sacrifices, wherever she chose. However, the context of Deuteronomy 12:32 reveals that there was to be a significant change in those arrangements, in that sacrifices would be severely restricted, as regards place, and particulars.

Schlissel's contention is that Deuteronomy 12:32 regulates the sacrificial system of worship, not worship per se. He contends that there were sacred assemblies reference to which is to be found in Deuteronomy 23:3, but which were not covered by this principle of worship. In his judgment, such assemblies seem to have arisen from the covenant sensibilities of men, not from a known injunction from God.

These solemn assemblies, according to Schlissel stood apart from the sacrificial system. The matter of sacrifice was different. That was clearly set forth by God as the norm. We know this both from early Genesis and all subsequent Scripture. However, from the fall until the entry into 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 is the fact that the offerings were decentralized. There was no one place where God caused his name to dwell, where alone sacrifices could lawfully be rendered. They could be - and were - offered anywhere.[26]

He opines that there is no evidence or suggestion that there were divinely originating directives for the elements found in these public assemblies. Hence, for Schlissel, the true RPW was confined to Tabernacle/Temple worship.

Pursuing that line of argumentation, Schlissel continues: 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 Temple/Tabernacle worship? The correct answer is not elusive. It was because on the Tabernacle/Temple God was displaying, "preaching" Christ, his Person and work, prior to his incarnation. The rigours 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 the beloved Son.[27] 3. The Failure of Regulativists to Recognise the Implications of Synagogue Worship

Schlissel links this argument to the previous one by noting that it was only sacrificial worship from the time of

Deuteronomy 12 onwards, that was absolutely restricted in regard to place, performers and particulars. Such restraints never governed the common sacred assemblies.

He points out that in accordance with Leviticus 23:3, those sacred assemblies were held in a variety of locations; wherever the covenant people of God resided. Every Sabbath there would be one centralised sacrificial service, but there would be an untold number of sacred assemblies throughout the land.

According to Schlissel, those sacred assemblies evolved into synagogues, the liturgy of which grew out of covenant consensus within the general bounds of the Word of God. In turn, the synagogues and not the temple formed the organisational model for the New Testament church. Schlissel argues:

The very existence of the synagogue, however, undoes the regulativist's position! For 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 that 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 it's liturgy: did he sin by participating in an entire order of worship that was without express divine warrant? The thought is blasphemy![28]

4. Special days in Scripture

Schlissel also seeks to draw support from the celebrations of Purim and Chanukah. After referring to Esther 9:27, 28 "The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed"; Schlissel concludes: "There you have it. The covenant people themselves, quite apart from any divine precept or command, took it upon themselves and their descendants to observe a special holiday every year, forever. Quite a problem for the regulativists' interpretation of "You shall not add to it." [29]

He describes as truly pathetic the explanation offered by George Gillespie "that these days of Purim were only appointed to be days of civil mirth and gladness." Schlissel responds: "Consider where this rationale leads: the people of God and their descendants may remember, honor and celebrate miraculous interventions and extraordinary deliverances of them by their covenant God everywhere except in the churches which bear his name." [30]

Chanukah, the feast of dedication referred to in John 10:22, 23 is also enlisted by Schlissel. "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." This feast commemorated Judas Maccabeus' victory over Antiochus Epiphanes. Schlissel contends that by his presence, Jesus honoured Chanukah, a non-commanded feast.

5. Failure to account for man made traditions

Schlissel addresses the subject of the reading of Scripture other than the law in the worship of God. He comments: "If the RPW is correct, it was sheer temerity on the part of the Jews to allow non-Mosaic readings. That such readings were customary by the time of Jesus is obvious. That he took them up and hallowed them is also obvious. Equally obvious is this: they were contrary to the RPW." [31]

6. Inconsistency in Application of RPW

Schlissel also challenges the arbitrariness in the regulativist's application of the RPW. For example, he maintains that there is no clear command to sing in Christian worship services, and certainly not to sing psalms. He asks, "Where is the Scriptural warrant to sing psalms?"

He refers to Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"; and Ephesians 5:19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

He concedes that the reference to psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is referable to the Psalms. However, having done so, he maintains that there is no specific warrant to sing such songs in the worship of God. [32] "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 fulfilment was to take place in a worship service." [33]

B. The Regulative Principle of Worship

It is significant that while recognising that the origins of the RPW are to be found in the Reformation, Schlissel fails to examine in any detail, Reformed writings or formulations of the RPW. Surprisingly, he gives no detailed consideration to the views of John Calvin who was primarily responsible for ensuring that the church returned to the principle that the will

of God is determinative in matters of His worship.

Throughout his writings, Calvin repeatedly espouses the essential tenets of the RPW and in doing so not only provides a clear outline of the principle, but also grounds it in Scripture.

Writing on behalf of the Protestants of Germany in defence of their opposition to the worship of the Church of Rome, Calvin states: 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 honour of God. But since God not only regards as fruitless, but also plainly abominates, whatever we undertake from zeal to His Worship, if at variance with His command, what do we gain by a contrary course? The words of God are clear and distinct, “Obedience is better than sacrifice.” “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” (1 Sam. xv. 22; Matth. xv. 9.) Every addition to His word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere “will worship” is vanity. This is the decision, and when once the judge has decided, it is no longer time to debate.[34]

Commenting on Amos 5:26, Calvin writes: . . . for we ought not to bring any thing of our own when we worship God, but we ought to depend always on the word of his mouth, and to obey what he has commanded. All our actions then in the worship of God ought to be, so to speak, passive; for they ought to be referred to his command, lest we attempt any thing but what he approves. Hence, when men dare to do this or that without God’s command, it is nothing else but abomination before him.[35]

The Reformed confessions are also neglected in large part, by Schlissel.[36] The Westminster Confession of Faith contains one of the most comprehensive statements of the RPW. The light of nature showeth that there is a God who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in and served with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the might. But that 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.[37] (Emphasis mine)

But that portion of the Confession does not receive any analysis in Schlissel’s critique.

Instead, of consulting the writings of the Reformers or the Reformed confessions, Schlissel contents himself with an abbreviated and somewhat misleading description of the RPW. Throughout his articles, Schlissel repeatedly styles the RPW as being, “If it is not commanded in Scripture to be performed in worship, it is forbidden in worship” or “only that which God has commanded is permitted.”[38] The reader is left with the impression from Schlissel’s arguments that those who maintain the RPW contend that an explicit command of God must be found for everything in the worship of God.[39] Such an impression is inaccurate. This becomes transparent from a reading of chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession. 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 be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.[40] (Emphasis mine)

Michael Bushell accurately outlines the position of those who hold to the RPW when he writes: When we say that each element of worship requires a divine warrant, we do not mean that an explicit command in a single text is required in every instance. Commandment in the narrow sense is not necessary to establish divine prescription. Approved example or inference from relevant scriptural data is sufficient to determine the proper manner of worship. The Confession of Faith clearly operates on the assumption that principles derived from the Word by “good and necessary consequence” are every bit as binding upon us as those “expressly set down in Scripture.”[41]

While Schlissel would no doubt acknowledge that the RPW does not require an explicit command with respect to every element of worship, nonetheless, that is the impression that he leaves upon his reader, at least initially.[42] His failure to properly formulate the RPW impacts adversely upon the weight of some of his arguments.

Even more inexplicable is Schlissel’s failure to explore the fundamental bases espoused by the Reformers and the Reformed confessions for the RPW. If the RPW is so erroneous, one would have expected that Schlissel would have identified the foundations of the principle and attacked the principle at it’s roots, rather than flailing away at some of it’s branches. This is the fundamental weakness of Schlissel’s articles and consequently, he fails to address the issues central to the RPW, which in turn leads him to wrong conclusions.[43]

By the RPW is meant that God Himself regulates, or determines, the way in which He will be worshipped by His church. God determines the contents of public worship. This principle is based on the fundamental truth of God's sovereign right to determine not only that He will be worshipped, but also the manner in which He will be worshipped. God does not leave the question of how He will be worshipped to the wisdom of men. This principle accords with the nature and purpose of worship. In public worship, God fellowships with His people. There He meets with His people in the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is God that prescribes the manner of that meeting, not man. He is sovereign and therefore stipulates the "how" of worship, just as He dictates that He will be worshipped. A man's desires have as little to do with how he must worship, as they do with whom he will worship.[44]

Where do we find such a principle in Scripture? It is found in the law of God. The first commandment forbids the sin of having or worshipping any gods beside Jehovah, while the second commandment forbids the employment of images in the worship of God. The first commandment directs us as to whom we must worship or to the object of our worship, while the second commandment deals with how we are to worship God.

It is the second commandment which provides the biblical warrant for the RPW. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:"[45] When God forbids us to worship Him by means of images, He forbids us to worship Him in any way of our own devising whatever. In forbidding improper means of worshipping Him, God reveals that His people must worship Him only in the way that He prescribes.

The Reformers recognised that the second commandment was foundational to the RPW. Commenting on Isaiah 57:6, Calvin writes: "... the Jews chose their own method of worshipping God, and turned aside from the rule which he had laid down in his Law; and consequently that every kind of worship which they followed by their own choice was abominable and wicked; for in religion and in the worship of God it is only to the voice of God that we ought to listen. ... For idolaters commonly take delight in their own inventions, and imagine that God also is delighted with everything that they pursue with mad and furious eagerness. Nor is such a question superfluous; for men think that God is like themselves, and will approve of everything that is agreeable to them. On the contrary, he declares that nothing is approved by him, or is acceptable to him, but what agrees with his word.[46] (Emphasis mine)

Commenting on Ezekiel 20:28, Calvin asserts "But this passage, like many others, teaches, that not only is God's worship corrupted when his honor is transferred to idols, but also when men heap up their own fictions, and contaminate God's commands by the mixture. We must remember, then, that there are two kinds of idolatries; the one being grossest when idols are worshipped openly, and Moloch, or any Baal, is substituted for the living God: that is a palpable superstition, because God is in some sense cast down from his throne. But the other kind of idolatry, although more hidden, is abominable before God, namely, when, under the disguise of a name, men boldly mingle whatever comes into their minds, and invent various modes of worship; ... Not only does God wish worship to be offered to himself alone, but that it should be without any dependence on human will: he wishes the law to be the single rule of true worship; and thus he rejects all fictitious rites. ... We see, therefore, that men not only lose their labor when they decline from God's commands, and rashly fatigue themselves with their own superstitions, but they provoke God to a contest, because they snatch from him the right of a lawgiver: for it is in his power to determine how he ought to be worshipped; and when men claim this power to themselves, it is like ascending to the very throne of God.[47] (Emphasis mine)

John Knox also traced the manner in which worship was to be conducted to the second commandment.

All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without His own commandment is idolatry. ... Disobedience to God's voice is not only when men doeth wickedly contrary to the precepts of God, but also when of good zeal, or good intent, as we commonly speak, men doeth anything to the honour or service of God not commanded by the express word of God ... And that is the principal idolatry when our own inventions we defend to be righteous in the sight of God, because we think them good, laudable, and pleasant. We may not think us so free nor wise, that we may do unto God, and unto His honour, what we think expedient.[48] (Emphasis mine)

The location of the RPW in the second commandment is also taught in the Reformed confessions. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks in question 51, "What is forbidden in the second commandment?" The Catechism answers, "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word." (Emphasis mine)

Similarly, the Westminster Larger Catechism in identifying the sins forbidden in the second commandment declares: "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself; tolerating a false religion; the making any representation of God, of all or any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God,

adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.[49] (Emphasis mine)

Not only is this the teaching of the Westminster Standards, but it is also the position espoused by the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. Question 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What doth God require in the second commandment?" The Catechism responds, "That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than He has commanded us in His word." Stated positively, the Catechism teaches that God must be worshipped only in the way that He has commanded in His Word.

In his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacarias Ursinus, one of the authors of the Catechism, commenting on Q. 96 writes: "The end or design of this commandment is that the true God, . . . be worshipped under a proper form, or with such worship as it is right and proper that intelligent creatures should pay unto him - such as is pleasing to Him and not with such worship as that which is according to the imagination and device of man."[50]

He continues: "... a rule (is) given, that we sacredly and conscientiously keep ourselves within the bounds which God has prescribed, and that we do not add anything to that worship which has been divinely instituted, or corrupt it in any part, even the most unimportant; ... To worship God truly, is to worship him in the manner which he himself has prescribed in his word. This commandment forbids ... every form of will worship, or such as is false ... or with any kind of worship which he himself has not prescribed. For when God condemns the principal, the grossest and most palpable form of false worship, which is that of worshipping him at or by images, it is plainly manifest that he also condemns at the same time all other forms of false worship, inasmuch as they grow out of this. ... Hence all kinds of worship not instituted by God, but by men, ... are forbidden in this precept of the Decalogue.[51] (Emphasis mine)

Gijsbert Voetius, a delegate to the Synod of Dort writing some 100 years later wrote in similar terms in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism.[52] In his treatment of the second commandment, Voetius asked when does it happen that men worship in violation of the second commandment. His response was: "Whenever one wills to honour and serve (God) by means of images, or whenever one wills to worship him in such a manner as directly conflicts with God's word or that is apart from God's word, founded on the institutions of man, or on our own whims and fancies, as takes place under that of the papacy by means of its ceremonies and human traditions.[53]

Voetius pursues the subject further and asks, "What is here [in the second commandment] commanded us?" He responds, "That we must worship God according to the regulation of His Word." To the question, whether we may use such ceremonies as Rome has, Voetius responds in the negative, because "all such ceremonies are self-willed and arbitrary worship, contrary to Matthew 15:9, Galatians 1:8 and Colossians 2:18."

Abraham Kuyper, in his commentary on Lord's Day 35 of the Heidelberg Catechism concurs with the understanding of Ursinus and Voetius. "Completely rightly, therefore, have our fathers established the precept, that not man but God Himself alone can determine how we shall serve Him. And thus, (is established) that every form of worship which God had not commanded is excluded as self-willed service and arbitrary invention, and is forbidden.[54] (Emphasis mine)

The Belgic Confession also takes up the subject of worship in Article 32 while treating of the Order and Discipline of the Church. "In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the Church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the Church, yet that they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, has instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. (Emphasis mine)

Indisputably, the RPW is confessional for both Reformed and Presbyterian churches and is founded upon the second commandment. C. Schlissel's Archilles Heel

Given that the second commandment affords the fundamental Scriptural foundation for the RPW, one might have expected Schlissel to have mounted a vigorous attack upon the interpretation of the second commandment as found in the Westminster Standards and the Heidelberg Catechism. However, one looks in vain for a detailed analysis of the second commandment. It is not that Schlissel does not address the second commandment. He does. However, given the fundamental importance of the second commandment to the position of those who maintain the RPW, one might have expected that it would have received greater attention in Schlissel's critique.

The subject of the second commandment is first canvassed by Schlissel in an endnote to the fifth article in his series. There Schlissel summarily dismisses the relevance of Q. 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism and Article 32 of the Belgic Confession. "We are aware of those who would enlist in their RPW cause A. 96 of the Heidelberg (which teaches that

God's will for us in the Second Commandment is 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" and perhaps Article 32 of the Belgic ("... that they do not depart from those things which Christ has instituted"). But this is nothing but a grand case of question-begging, for the question remains as to just what God has taught us in His Word about worship, and just what Christ has instituted. We assert that it was God's will, revealed and recorded in His Word, that He be worshipped in a synagogue, for which He did not give "if I have not commanded it, you may not do it" - type instruction. We further assert that it is Christ's express will that the church pattern its worship along synagogal lines.[55] (Emphasis mine)

The subject does not arise again until Article X when Schlissel writes, nearly by way of postscript: Several regulativist brethren have sought to teach me that the critical point in this debate is the Second Commandment. "The Second Commandment," they claim, "is where the Regulative Principle is not only taught, but carved in stone as an eternal rule for the worship of the church."[56]

Having quoted the second commandment, Schlissel asks, "Where is the RPW here?" "I do not see it. It seems to me that discovering the RPW here is a bit ticklish."[57] And there is the problem! Calvin could see the RPW in the second commandment. So too John Knox. The Westminster divines could also see it! Ursinus, had no difficulty in seeing it! Voetius's spiritual vision was also sufficient to see it! Reformed believers, since the time of the Reformation have been able to see it! Unfortunately, Schlissel is unable to see it.

He pursues his treatment of the second commandment in this somewhat convoluted fashion.[58] First, the RPW claims to govern corporate worship. Would the regulativist suggest that this command's scope is limited to corporate worship, that it is okay to make idols for use outside of corporate worship? Of course not. But would the regulativist then ask that this command be applied exhaustively so as to exclude the making of any image whatsoever for use in any area of life? Would the regulativist then suggest that all sculpture, all painting, all photography, all image-containing adornment, is excluded by this command? Of course not. God Himself commanded various "images" and representations to be made, even for use in Tabernacle/Worship (Ex. 26:1; 28:33; 37:7ff.; etc.!).[59]

He continues: In the first case, the regulativist concedes that the command is not limited to corporate worship. In the second, he concedes that it does not absolutely prohibit images. Sounds IPW-ish so far. 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?[60]

He would be on the right track, if he did! After quoting Q & A 96, Schlissel continues: 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 it in the Second Commandment? He does not. He has obviously first assumed it and then imposed it.

Schlissel then offers this assessment of the second commandment: "In fact, what the Second Commandment does - and this might be a shock to some - is to forbid idolatry and the use of images as representations of God or as objects of worship."[61] (Emphasis mine)

Having reached that conclusion, Schlissel attempts to draw support for his analysis of the second commandment from Voetius's Catechism. He claims: Voetius nowhere discusses "the RPW," but rather focuses on why and for what purpose God forbade images of Himself as worship aids. In Voetius we find page after page about the idolatry of Papists, Jews, and Mohammedans, page after page about the superstitious ceremonies and rituals of Romanists, but no exposition about "what is not commanded is forbidden."[62]

That, as has already been demonstrated, is not true.

Schlissel is correct when he notes that the second commandment is concerned with "how" God will be worshipped. He is also correct when he asserts that the commandment forbids idolatry. But what does the commandment mean when it refers to idolatry? Ursinus comments: There are, ... two principal kinds of idolatry. The one is more gross and palpable, as when worship is paid to a false God, which is the case, when, instead of or beside the true God, such worship as that which is due to him alone, is given to some thing or object, whether imaginary or real. This form of idolatry is particularly forbidden in the first commandment, and also partly in the third. The other species of idolatry is more subtle and refined, as when the true God is supposed to be worshipped, whilst the kind of worship which is paid unto him is false, which is the case when any one imagines that he is worshipping or honoring God by the performance of any work not prescribed by the divine law. This species of idolatry is more properly condemned in the second commandment, and is termed superstition, because it adds to the commandments of God the inventions of men.

... This will-worship or superstition is condemned in every part of the Word of God.[63] (Emphasis mine)

Clearly Ursinus considered that the commandment excluded not only those things which God expressly forbade in worship, but also those things which He had not commanded. This is reinforced when Ursinus goes on to note the objections of some: There are some who object to what we have here said, and affirm in support of will-worship, that those passages which we have cited as condemning it, speak only in reference to the ceremonies instituted by Moses, and of the unlawful commandments of men, such as constitute no part of the worship of God; and not of those precepts which have been sanctioned by the church and bishops, and which command nothing contrary to the Word of God.[64]

To these objections, Ursinus responds: But that this argument is false, may be proven by certain declarations connected with those passages of Scripture to which we have referred, which likewise reject those human laws, which, upon their own authority, prescribe anything in reference to divine worship which God has not commanded, although the thing itself is neither sinful nor forbidden by God. So Christ rejects the tradition which the Jews had in regard to washing their hands, because they associated with it the idea of divine worship, although it was not sinful in itself, saying, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within ye are full of extortion and excess.” (Matthew 15:11; 23, 25). The same thing may be said of celibacy and of the distinction of meats and days, of which he calls “doctrines of devils,” although in themselves they are lawful to the godly, as he in other places teaches. Wherefore, those things are also which are in themselves indifferent, that is neither commanded nor prohibited by God, if they are prescribed and done as the worship of God, or if it is supposed that God is honored by our performing them, and dishonored by neglecting them, it is plainly manifest that the Scriptures in these and similar places condemn them.[65]

That the commandment should be construed in such a way is supported by Westminster Larger Catechism Q. & A. 99. In answer to the question, “What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?”, the Catechism responds in part, “where a duty is commanded the contrary sin is forbidden, and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded.”

Ursinus in dealing with general rules necessary for the understanding of the ten commandments comments: Negative precepts are contained in those which are positive, or affirmative, and contrariwise: for when the law enjoins anything, it at the same time forbids that which is contrary thereto; and when it prohibits any thing, it at the same time enjoins the opposite. In this way, the law enjoins the practice of virtue, in forbidding vice and contrariwise: for where any good is enjoined, there the evil which is particularly opposed to this good, is prohibited; for the reason that the good cannot be put into practice, without an omission of the evil at the same time.[66]

Thomas Vincent, commenting upon the Westminster Shorter Catechism’s treatment of the second commandment makes a similar point: Whatever sin is forbidden in any one precept, the contrary is commanded, and all sins of the same kind are forbidden; and not only the outward act, together with the words and gestures tending thereunto, but also all the inward affections to sin, together with all causes, means, occasions, appearances and whatever may be a provocation unto it, either in ourselves or others.[67]

Support for such an approach to the commandments is clearly evidenced in Scripture. Jesus Christ himself makes plain that the commandments are not to be interpreted as simply bald prohibitions, but that the underlying evil that is prohibited must be identified. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ teaches: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.[68]

That same approach to the commandments is evident in Matthew 5:27, 28, where Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Schlissel’s inability to see how that the second commandment provides the foundation of the RPW leads him astray and causes his criticisms of the RPW to fail.

The most apparently telling criticism that Schlissel raises against the RPW concerns his contention that the RPW cannot adequately explain the worship practices of the synagogue. His argument is that Christ and the apostles regularly worshipped in the synagogue. That cannot be refuted. Schlissel is also correct when he contends that there was never any suggestion that Christ’s attendance and worship in the synagogues was not legitimate. Let us also accept, leaving aside for the moment the Second Commandment, Schlissel’s contention that there is not “so much as a sliver of a divine commandment concerning what ought to be done in the synagogue” [69]

Schlissel argues, if God did not command what was to be done in synagogue worship, then according to the RPW what was done in the synagogue worship was forbidden. However, Christ worshipped there. Therefore, Christ participated in

worship that did not enjoy express divine warrant. Given that Christ was sinless, such worship must have been acceptable and consequently the RPW falls away.

In summary, Schlissel's argument runs as follows:

- The Synagogue had its origins in the sacred assemblies of Deuteronomy 23:3 and was the model for the church in the New Testament dispensation.
- There are no explicit Scriptural commands regarding Synagogue worship.
- Therefore, Synagogue worship was determined according to human invention or tradition.
- Jesus Christ participated in Synagogue worship.
- Jesus Christ was sinless.
- Therefore, Synagogue worship, for which there was no explicit command, must be acceptable to God.
- Therefore, the RPW is not Scriptural because the RPW provides that whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden in worship, whereas Jesus Christ placed his imprimatur upon Synagogue worship which was not commanded.

Such argumentation sounds persuasive. However, it's great weakness is that it fails to take into account the Second Commandment. If Christ's participation in Synagogue worship is viewed in light of the requirements of the second commandment, a different conclusion emerges.

Consider this reasoning:

- The Second Commandment forbids "all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself; all adding to (the worship of God) or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others."
- Jesus Christ was sinless.
- Jesus Christ kept the law of God perfectly.
- Therefore, Jesus Christ kept the Second Commandment perfectly.
- Therefore, Jesus Christ never "devised, counselled, commanded, used, and any wise approved, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself; nor added to (the worship of God) or took from it, whether invented and taken up of himself or received by tradition from others."
- Jesus Christ participated in Synagogue worship.
- Therefore, Synagogue worship must have been "instituted by God Himself" and not formulated by the traditions of men.
- Jesus' participation in Synagogue worship provides the New Testament church with a clear indication of worship that has been instituted by God Himself.

Synagogue worship did not grow "out of covenant consensus within the general bounds of the Word of God," as maintained by Schlissel. It follows that worship of a New Testament church which is modelled upon Synagogue worship also bears the imprimatur of God having been instituted according to His will.

Synagogue worship does not undo the Regulist's position. Rather, Synagogue worship provides the pattern which the New Testament church can follow and thereby be enabled to worship God in the way that He has instituted and approved. What You Really Need To Know About Worship - You Won't Learn From Steven Schlissel

The Second Part of a paper by Rev. Mark Shand

D. S Schlissel's Revision of History

Another matter raised by Schlissel ought not be let go unchallenged and that is his assertion that despite rejecting the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) one may still claim the designation of Reformed. To deny the RPW, is not consistent with the Reformed faith. The writings of Calvin, Knox, Ursinus and Voetius make that plain, and that view is only fortified when the relevant portions of the Westminster Standards, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession are taken into account.

Despite his rejection of the RPW, Schlissel is still keen to retain for himself the tag of Reformed. For the regulatist has imposed his RPW assumption not only on the Bible's history, not only on the Westminster Assembly's actual teaching, not only on the Second Commandment, but he's also sought to impose it on Continental Reformed churches. We now hear the rather audacious assertion that no one can honestly call himself "reformed" unless he subscribes to the RPW. With the stroke of a pen, a vast segment of the Reformed world is simply removed from the roster. It seems that some regulatists not only cannot abide Scripture's testimony against their tradition; they feel compelled to revise history too.[70]

While conceding for the sake of argument that "the hymn-writing Calvin was really a regulatist";[71] what Schlissel disputes "is the assumption that all ministers and churches in the Reformed tradition have regarded the RPW as an essential component of our Reformed confession."[72]

In an attempt to meet the contention that one cannot legitimately claim to be Reformed unless one holds to the RPW, Schlissel states, "I will hunt and peck for evidence to demonstrate that the above allegation is not merely

untrue, it is unbecoming.[73] Hunt and peck is an apt description of what Schlissel adduces in support of his position. It is evident from the support which he adduces, that he must have hunted and pecked for a considerable period of time.

Frederick III, the elector of the Palatinate who commissioned Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, to prepare the Heidelberg Catechism, is called in aid. Was he a regulativist, asks Schlissel? Schlissel then happily notes that when Frederick III came to power, the need for a hymnal was a high priority. Within a few years, a German Reformed Hymnal which contained 44 psalms and 66 hymns had been published. "So much for exclusive psalmody being a condition of Reformed-ness", Schlissel trumpets.[74]

Is that the most persuasive evidence that Schlissel can produce? With such compelling evidence, it is doubtful that Schlissel's opponents will be hoisting the white flag any time soon! Is that the best evidence that Schlissel can adduce? It should be pointed out that even if Frederick III authorised and promoted the publication of a German hymnal that contained songs other than psalms, that in and of itself does not establish that he rejected the RPW. There are churches today who inconsistently retain within their Psalters, a number of songs other than the psalms, but who are strong advocates of the RPW.

Thankfully, Frederick III is not all that Schlissel has to offer. He directs his readers attention to the Second Helvetic Confession authored by Heinrich Bullinger in 1563 and in particular to Chapter XXIV which reads: The Festivals of Christ and the Saints. Moreover, 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.

With reference to Chapter XXIV, Schlissel asserts: 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. . . . No man in his right mind could have written this while believing, "if it is not commanded, it is forbidden.[75] (Emphasis mine).

Here we have a crass attempt at sleight of hand. It is true that there was a divergence of views among Reformed Christians as to whether the church should celebrate special or holy days. That difference continues to the present day. However, it is wrong to imply, which is what Schlissel seeks to do, that those who advocated the observance of such days, were opponents of the RPW. All that chapter XXIV of the Second Helvetic Confession demonstrates, is that there was a difference of views among the Reformed, as regards the application of the RPW. It has nothing to say about the rejection of the RPW itself.

This becomes transparent when reference is made to Chapter V of the Second Helvetic Confession, which deals with the subject of worship. There the Confession reads: God Alone Is To Be Adored and Worshipped. We teach that the true God alone is to be adored and worshipped. This honor we impart to none other, according to the commandment of the Lord, You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (Matt. 4:10). Indeed, all the prophets severely inveighed against the people of Israel whenever they adored and worshipped strange gods, and not the only true God. But we teach that God is to be adored and worshipped as he himself has taught us to worship, namely, in spirit and in truth (John 4:23 f.), not with any superstition, but with sincerity, according to his Word; lest at any time he should say to us: Who has required these things from your hands? (Isa. 1:12; Jer. 6:20). For Paul also says: God is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything, etc. (Acts 17:25). (Emphasis mine)

This was the same sort of logic that Schlissel applied earlier in his series with respect to the treatment of "special days" by the Synod of Dort. Having noted that Synod of Dort (1618-19) in Article 67 of its Church Order called upon the churches to "keep, beside Sundays, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and other days", Schlissel argued: 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.[76] (Emphasis mine) p>

It is acknowledged that the celebration of "specials days" does not preclude a church from being entitled to the name Reformed, but it is quite a different proposition to maintain that those who deny the RPW are entitled to that same designation. Schlissel's proposition becomes even more novel when it is considered that the Synod of Dort (1618-19) adopted the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, both of which espouse the RPW.

Schlissel also revises history, if when he asserts that the "problem" as regards the RPW is not a Reformed one, but a Presbyterian one,[77] he means to indicate that the RPW was held by Presbyterians as

opposed to the Continental Reformed.

He pursues this assertion by reference to what he styles the different approach to worship between regulativists (presumably here Schlissel means the Presbyterians) and the Continental Reformed. This difference in approach, Schlissel contends, is to be found in the didactic character of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as compared to the experiential character of the Heidelberg Catechism. From this comparison, Schlissel extrapolates: The Regulative Principle of Worship - and I refer to it here as it is understood and pressed by its "strict" adherents - is expressive of what might be a fundamentally different way of looking at the law, the Bible, the Confessions, and in a very real way, expressive of a different way of looking at God. When the RPW (in the strict sense) becomes a core holding, a different character comes to inhabit the church. And that character is not compatible with the rich covenant legacy, as it has come down to us as is presently enjoyed in some of our Reformed churches.[78]

In support of this contention, Schlissel makes reference to a letter which he had received from a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Now that in itself is interesting. The PRC trace their origins back to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. They are clearly from a Continental Reformed background, as opposed to a Presbyterian one. They are staunchly Reformed. Furthermore, those churches have been at the forefront of the development of the covenant, advocating that the covenant be viewed not as a pact or an agreement, but as a living relationship of fellowship and friendship between God and His people.

However, those churches contend for the RPW! [79] What that reveals, is that those who hold faithfully to the Reformed faith, whether their standards be the Westminster Confessional Standards or the Three Forms of Unity, hold to the RPW. Such churches do so, not particularly because of their Continental Reformed or Presbyterian heritage, but because it is the Word of God! Those, who like Schlissel, reject the RPW, can take to themselves the epitaph of "Reformed", but what does that mean? They certainly do not hold to the teaching of the majority of the Reformers of the 16th & 17th centuries concerning the public worship of God. Conclusion

Despite his concerted and at times vitriolic attack on the RPW, Schlissel failed to cause any significant damage in a theological sense to the principle, though sadly such an assault may have occasioned significant collateral damage among professing Reformed and Presbyterian churches. His attack was never likely to succeed because he did not fully appreciate the RPW and so never seriously challenged the Scriptural foundation of the principle. To prove that the RPW is not scriptural requires that the interpretation given to the Second Commandment in the Reformed Confessions and by Reformed commentators be disproved.

Schlissel's articles, while disappointing in light of the departure today of many churches from Biblical worship, nonetheless, are not devoid of merit. They focus attention upon a much neglected principle.

They also draw attention to the need for proper exegesis of the Scriptures and issue a warning against the glib citing of texts without proper consideration for their context and consequently for their meaning.

Schlissel, because of his familiarity with Old Testament worship, sheds light on that worship and its relation to the work of Christ; that is valuable and thought provoking.

However, the most valuable aspect of Schlissel's articles is to remind those who hold the RPW, that the maintenance of the principle in and of itself does not mean that one worships God aright. Our worship must be in spirit and in truth. Worship must be from the heart. Reformed churches ought to maintain the RPW, but the application of the principle must be accompanied by hearts which love and desire to worship God. Otherwise, notwithstanding that our worship may outwardly accord with the RPW, it is vain.

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