

Love for Christ and Scripture-Regulated Worship

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Two streams concerning worship diverged from the headwaters of the Protestant Reformation. For Luther, a church may worship with any element not forbidden in Scripture. This is typically called the “Normative Principle of Worship.” Besides Lutherans, Anglicans and many evangelical congregations hold to the Normative Principle. Such churches would permit for extra-biblical acts such as incense, drama, or dance as part of their liturgies.

Calvin and Zwingli advocated for a second approach to the elements of sacred worship. They and their heirs have argued that Scripture alone must regulate our worship. The expression was *Quod non jubet, vetat*—what he (God) does not command, he forbids.² That is, it is not enough to avoid those parts of worship that the Scriptures forbid, but believers may only include in their worship those parts of worship that Scriptures command. This understanding of the relationship of Scripture and worship is often called the “Regulative Principle of Worship.”

The so-called Regulative Principle can be found articulated in several Reformation confessions, including the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) and *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689). Consider the latter’s articulation of this belief at chapter 22.1:

The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, 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 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 wor-

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² Horton Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans, 1629–1730* (Morgan, PA.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), 17.

shipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.³

Many authors have argued for Scripture-regulated worship.⁴ In this paper, I will summarize some key reasons why Scripture-regulated worship is both right and wise. My primary contribution, however, is to show and develop the relationship between Scripture-regulated worship and the believer's love for Christ. That Scripture-regulated worship is necessitated from love for Christ is too often lacking in contemporary defenses for the Regulative Principle. This paper will both advance and explore the necessary relation between love for Christ and Scripture-regulated worship.

³ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 280. The Scriptures the *Second London Confession* cited in defense of this article are Jer 10:7; Mark 12:33; Deut 12:32; and Exod 20:4–6. The Baptist statement is almost identical to the one found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The differences are small. The Westminster divines had “with” before “all the soul” and “imagination” rather than “imagination.” Compare WCF 21.1. For a closer comparison and contrast of Baptist and Presbyterian understandings of the Regulative Principle, see Scott Aniol, “Form and Substance: Baptist Ecclesiology and the Regulative Principle,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 15 (2018): 23–32.

⁴ See, for example, Davies, *Worship of American Puritans*, 16–19; D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002); J. Ligon Duncan III, “Does God Care How We Worship?” and “Foundations for Biblically Directed Worship,” in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship: Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 17–73; Derek W. H. Thomas, “The Regulative Principle: Responding to Recent Criticism,” in *Give Praise to God*, 74–93; Kevin T. Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012), 24–35; and Kevin T. Bauder, Scott Aniol, et al., *A Conservative Christian Declaration* (Religious Affections Ministries, 2014), 44–49.

Arguments for Scripture-Regulated Worship

Christians have advanced many reasons to regulate Christian worship according to Scripture. What follows is a brief sketch of these arguments.

In a Festschrift honoring James Montgomery Boice, J. Ligon Duncan III suggests several arguments for the Regulative Principle.⁵ He argues from God's own nature; as God, he controls worship. Further, the Creator-creature distinction is too great a gap for men to approach God other than how God himself commands.⁶ Duncan argues that God's revelation guides worship because biblical worship is a response to God's revelation. He also cites the Second Commandment, which is, properly understood, not a prohibition of false gods (see the First Commandment), but forbidding any image of the invisible covenant God who revealed himself to Israel with his covenant name Yahweh.⁷

Duncan continues. He argues that faith, which is necessary for true worship, can only respond to revelation, and "where God has not revealed himself, there can be no faithful response to his revelation."⁸ Moreover, given God's utter holiness, we should be

⁵ See "Foundations," in *Give Praise to God*, 51–73.

⁶ Horton Davies states, "Thus the all-sufficiency of Scripture and the radical inadequacy of man through original sin clarified the necessity for dependence upon the creative, providing, and directing omnipotent adequacy of God the Father and Creator, Christ the Savior and Exemplar, and the Holy Spirit the Inspirer and Enabler, all revealed in Holy Writ" (*Worship of American Puritans*, 19). Hart and Muether are characteristically blunt on this point: "Calvinists believe that depravity extends beyond the reprobate, and includes even the regenerate who still bear the corruption of sin. For this reason, those who are in Christ are incompetent to devise by their imaginations, even devout ones, any sort of worship that is appropriate or pleasing to God" (*With Reverence*, 83).

⁷ Hart and Muether observe, "[T]he authority of Scripture in worship is a logical consequence of the Ten Commandments. This is, in fact, the place where the Reformed confessions and catechisms derive the doctrine of the regulative principle of worship" (*With Reverence*, 78). I agree that the Second Word was at the very least the "Regulative Principle" for the nation of Israel under the Sinai Covenant. The moral principle of the Second Commandment should surely inform the church's understanding of the Regulative Principle. Yet below I show that there is a *better* foundation for arguing for the scriptural regulation of *church* worship than the Second Commandment.

⁸ Duncan, "Foundations," in *Give Praise to God*, 56.

careful and conservative rather than taking liberties in our worship.⁹

Furthermore, Duncan suggests that Scripture-regulated worship protects believers' freedom to worship Christ according to their conscience and not by the whims of church leaders who impose on them invented ways of worshipping God.¹⁰ Churches should also use God's Word to regulate worship because God often states his delight with those who keep his Word. Scripture-regulated worship can best protect saints from their own heart's perpetual race toward idolatry. Duncan raises the problem of church history; church history teaches that Christianity has been at its best when she worshipped simply, according to the Bible. Church history also teaches that worship invented by men not only violates this very command, but it is often patently blasphemous. Positively, Duncan adds that Scripture-regulated worship is "simple, biblical, transferable, flexible, and reverent."¹¹

Duncan's article helpfully illustrates many of the arguments for limiting the elements of church worship services to those pre-

⁹ Jeremiah Burroughs remarked, "In the matters of worship, God stands upon little things" (*Gospel Worship, or the Right Manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in General*, ed. Don Kistler [Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996], 17).

¹⁰ Restating an argument by T. David Gordon, Hart and Muether make this point as well: "When the elders of the church call the people of God to worship, they are necessarily and unavoidably binding the conscience of worshipers (because Christians are forbidden to forsake the worship of God). This is not a problem if the church is worshiping biblically because the elders of the church are binding consciences according to the Word of God, as they are called to do" (*With Reverence*, 84).

¹¹ Duncan, "Foundations," in *Give Praise to God*, 69. Hart and Muether also highlight the simplicity of biblical worship: "Because of the regulative principle, simplicity has characterized Reformed worship" (*With Reverence*, 79). William Kiffin (1616–1701) wrote, "Mans Nature is very prone to be meddling [*sic*] with things beyond his Commission, which has prov'd the very pest and bane of Christianity; for notwithstanding that dreadful prohibition, *Rev.* 22.18, 19. Of *adding to*, or *taking from* his word, is not *Europe* full of pernicious Additions and Subtractions in the Worship of God, which are imposed as Magisterially as if enstamp't with a Divine Character, though in themselves no other than (as Christ himself calls them) the *Traditions of men: Matth.* 15. 3. It is a superlative and desperate piece of audacity for men to presume to mend any thing in the Worship of God; for it supposes the All-wise Law giver capable of Error, and the attempter wiser than his Maker" (cited in Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive*, Monographs in Baptist History 3 [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014], 121).

scribed in the New Testament. I want to focus and develop another important argument, the argument from Christ's authority. While recent discussions of Scripture-regulated worship have included Christ's authority, it has been less emphasized. Christ's authority in the church is a necessary foundation for the later discussion of love for Christ.

The Argument from Christ's Authority

The Regulative Principle cannot be understood as a mere novel approach to worship, or even as the preferred method of worship among Reformed theologians. Scripture-regulated worship is best understood as the right and consistent application to worship of a biblical understanding of the relationship of the church to Christ and the apostles.

Christ's Authority through the Apostles

The case for NT authority begins with the authority of Christ. Christ alone has authority over the Church. The "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18–20 is one classic passage teaching Christ's authority. Jesus begins that passage, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus is speaking to his followers, the soon to be church, before his ascension, and God the Father has given to Christ authority over all creation. Christ's body, the church, ought to recognize that authority.¹² As Paul says in Ephesians 2:20, Jesus Christ is the Church's *cornerstone*. In Luke 9:35, the Father says of his son, "This is my Son, my Chosen one; listen to him." Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church, and thus churches are to

¹² J. Ligon Duncan III similarly argues for Scripture-regulated worship from the "Church's Derivative Authority": "The Bible's teaching on the derivative nature of the church's authority limits its discretionary powers in worship and enjoins its observance of the regulative principle" ("Foundations," in *Give Praise to God*, 57). Likewise, Hart and Muether argue, "There is no other authority for the church—including her worship—beside the teaching of Christ, who in his office as prophet reveals God's will for our salvation by his Word and his Spirit" (*With Reverence*, 82). Also see Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives*, 28–32.

obey Christ when he tells them how to live, what to believe, what a church is, and what a church is to do.

Yet relatively few individuals in history ever saw Jesus or heard him speak. So how does Christ exercise his authority in his church? The Great Commission answers this question. Christ gave his authority to the apostles, represented by *the eleven disciples* (Matt 28:16). After claiming authority for himself, Christ said to his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus commands his disciples to take his authority to all nations, and they do this by proclamation of the gospel and bringing men to confess Christ is Lord—they *make disciples* and *baptize*. Then they teach Christ’s commands to his followers. Christ’s commands certainly apply to daily conduct, but they also inform the practice of Christ’s gatherings (cf. Matt 16 & 18). Christ wants his disciples to obey *all* his commands. While every believer must obey the Great Commission, the original context is significant. Christ gives to *the eleven* this sober responsibility of handing down his commands that they received directly from him. They are the “*Quelle*” (source) of Christ’s authority.

This leads to an important conclusion: Jesus Christ sent delegates (apostles) to teach his churches his will for them as churches. This is not only taught in the Great Commission, but in Ephesians 2:18–22 as well:

¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (ESV)

God has brought Jews and Gentiles (*both* in v 18) into one new body, the *household of God*. Those who believe in Christ are adopted in Christ as sons and have been given full standing in God’s family

as his children. The church is God's household.

Of greatest interest is vv 20–21: “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” Paul says the church is built upon two things: a foundation and a chief cornerstone. A foundation is the base or ground of a building; foundations give buildings form and stability. The foundation for the church is *the apostles and prophets*. The prophets are clearly New Testament prophets (see Eph 3:5; 4:11; 1 Cor 14:5, 6, 24–25, 29–31), and Paul means *apostle* in the technical sense here.¹³ Apostles are of a higher rank and more significant than prophets, something we can deduce simply in the order they are named (cf. Eph 4:11ff).

In what sense is the church *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*? First, consider the nature of the ministry of these offices. In both cases, apostles and prophets were given a *revelatory* ministry. They speak God's Word.¹⁴ In Galatians 1:11, Paul says, “the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel” (cf. 1 Thess 2:13–14). Both apostles and prophets had the extraordinary

¹³ Apostles (in the technical sense) are those who (1) were witnesses to the risen Lord Jesus (Acts 1:21–26; 9:40–41; 1 Cor 9:1); (2) were called by God and Christ (1 Cor 1:1); (3) proclaimed God's revealed Word (1 Cor 2:7; Gal 1:11; 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3); and (4) performed great signs and wonders (Acts 4:29–30; 2 Cor 12:12). They included the twelve less Judas, Matthias his replacement, Paul, and possibly Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14). Compare I. Howard Marshall: “Apostleship is associated with founding churches and conveys authority over them in terms of imposing discipline and also in terms of receiving and transmitting authoritative revelation, so that apostles, along with prophets, form the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28–29; 2 Pet. 3:2)” (S.v. “Apostle,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000], 40).

¹⁴ As Calvin explained it: “*Foundation* unquestionably here refers to doctrine; for he does not mention patriarchs or godly kings, but only those who held the teaching office, and whom God had appointed to build his church” (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 154). Jonathan Edwards observed, “The apostles had something above what belonged to their ordinary character as ministers: they had extraordinary power of teaching and ruling that extended to all the churches, and not only all churches that then were but all that should be to the end of the world, by their ministry. And so the apostles were, as it were, in subordination to Christ, made foundations of the Christian church” (*A History of the Work of Redemption*, vol. 9 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John F. Wilson [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 364).

spiritual gift of receiving and proclaiming God's revelation. This stewardship of receiving special revelation was essential to these two offices. So apostles and prophets serve as a foundation for churches in Ephesians 2:20 through their God-given role to speak Christ's revealed word to his churches.

We see a testimony to this important role in the apostles' own statements, in passages like 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 15:3. Consider the first of these: "for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you." Paul's ministry in Corinth included a transmission of authoritative teaching. Before the canon was complete, those whom Christ called to fill these two offices authoritatively spoke God's revealed Word to churches. Christ later preserved that foundation through the inspiration of the Spirit in the New Testament canon (more on that below).

How is this revelatory ministry foundational? The apostles and prophets spoke authoritatively on Christ's behalf what Christ wanted churches to believe (doctrine) and to do (practice). The Lord wanted to leave his churches a specific testimony as to faith and conduct. Jesus did not want his followers to dream up their own understanding of God and Christ and salvation and church life. So he taught the apostles during his earthly ministry and, after his ascension, revealed to them and the prophets his Word. This foundation is the divine form and gracious stability for all Christ's churches.

This is related to how Christ is the chief cornerstone in Ephesians 2:20. The cornerstone was the greatest stone set for buildings, providing support and a reference point for all other stones. Cornerstones came to symbolize stability and prominence. So any stability given to churches through the foundation of the apostles and prophets itself rests upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ.¹⁵ For Paul, the point that Christ is the cornerstone means that his doctrines are the message proclaimed by the apostles and prophets, that through that message Christ gives his church stability, and that Christ receives the glory in his church.

To summarize, Paul teaches that the foundation of the church in what it believes and practices comes from the authorita-

¹⁵ To call Christ the cornerstone was not a mere analogy, but one that testified to the prophetic significance of our Lord as the Christ in Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22.

tive revelatory ministry of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the substance and stability of that foundation.¹⁶ This foundation (like all foundations) was laid once and only once; it does not keep growing or building. Thus the foundational ministry of these men does not continue through some kind of apostolic succession or revelatory magisterium of the Church.¹⁷

In fact, Jesus told the apostles that they would have such a revelatory ministry. In the hours before he died, Christ told his disciples that the coming Holy Spirit would bring his words “to your

¹⁶ Gregg Allison states, “Positively, evangelical theology understands apostolicity to refer to the church’s focus on preaching, hearing, believing, and obeying the teaching of the apostles, written down in the canonical New Testament writings. Promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit for this very task, the apostles’ memory were aided by the Spirit as they wrote, rendering them and their writings bona fide witnesses of Jesus Christ (John 14:26). Importantly, the apostle Peter himself underscores the manner in which he sought to ensure that the teachings that he had received from Christ would be transmitted to the church after his death (‘departure’). . . . (2 Peter 1:12–15). . . . If he, the chief apostle, considered Scripture to be the sure, divine instruction for the church in the post-apostolic era, it is hard to see how apostolic succession could add to this already-certain foundation. Accordingly, evangelical theology embraces apostolicity as the logocentricity, or Word-centeredness, of the church that is focused on the writings of the apostles” (*Roman Catholic Theology & Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014], 183–84).

¹⁷ It also means that, since the extraordinary gifts (like tongues and healings; 1 Cor 12:27–31) of the early church are explicitly associated with the revelatory ministry of the apostles and prophets (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:1–4), those extraordinary gifts themselves ceased when the apostles passed off the scene. B. B. Warfield observed that the only non-apostolic miracles recorded in Acts were performed by those upon whom the apostles had laid hands (*Counterfeit Miracles* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995], 21–25). He adds, “It is of equal importance to us, to teach us the source of the gifts of power, in the Apostles, apart from whom they were not conferred: as also their function, to authenticate the Apostles as the authoritative founders of the church.” He cites a Bishop Kaye who held that only those who had hands laid on them by apostles ever enjoyed miraculous gifts. Another cessationist Richard Gaffin, Jr. does not believe that only those who had received the apostolic laying on of hands performed miracles in the early church, but he does note that “On balance, the overall picture seems to be that the apostolate is the immediate nucleus or source in the church of the gifts given by the exalted Christ in this period” (*Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979], 101). Gaffin’s insights were crucial to the forming of my own position on extraordinary gifts, and I owe him much thanks. Also see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word: A Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues & Prophecy Today* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993).

remembrance" (John 14:26). The Spirit, he later added, would lead them into his truth. John 16:13–15: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Christ's words are exclusively for the apostles. He indicates that they will have a preeminent gift through the Holy Spirit to remember and receive the doctrines of Christ as special revelation from God the Father. As people receive and believe their doctrine, they in turn are led into Christ's truth, but to receive *all the truth* in this manner is only for New Testament apostles.

As Christ's official delegates, apostles and prophets serve as the foundation of the church in this revelatory ministry. They guide the church's faith and practice. This is especially true of the apostles, who were regarded as the *primary* office for transmitting Christ's teachings. The New Testament's record of primitive church history, especially in the book of Acts, shows the apostles preaching the gospel and setting up leaders in the churches, but any establishment of a line of apostolic authority from one generation to another is altogether absent.¹⁸ In fact, by the late stages of the apostolic era, the apostolic foundation is recognized as a solidified body of teaching (Col 1:6–7, 25–26; 2:7). Paul calls this teaching "the good deposit" in 1 Tim 6:20 and tells Timothy to guard it. Jude calls it "the faith once for all delivered for the saints" (Jude 3).¹⁹

¹⁸ Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 181. John Wesley put the matter simply: "the *uninterrupted succession* I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove" (cited in I. Howard Marshall, "Apostle," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 40).

¹⁹ We find other allusions to the doctrine that apostles are the foundation of the church elsewhere. The foundation of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:15 are "the twelve apostles of the Lamb." In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul lists the different spiritual gifts the Spirit has given the church. Interestingly, he ranks them. What two spiritual gifts are first and second? "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles." The same pattern is in v 29. F. F. Bruce also ties 1 Corinthians 12 to Ephesians 2:20 (*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 304).

Christ's Authority through the New Testament writings

This leads to further implication. The inspired writings of these men serve today as the foundation of Christ's churches. This fairly straight-forward implication of the above is worth stating explicitly. Paul himself draws a direct parallel between the ministry of the Old Testament Scriptures and New Testament apostles and prophets in Ephesians 3:4-5: "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." In context, the mystery that Paul refers to is that Gentiles who believe the gospel are members of Christ's church in full standing with Jewish believers. Yet he references the Ephesians *reading* his letter (cf. v 3), as he alludes to the *revealed* message in the holy writings of the *sons of men in other generations*. Consider another example: shortly before his death, the Apostle Peter himself *wrote* to the churches. He tells them why: it is so that, when he has departed his *tent*, or died, they would *recall the truth* (2 Pet 1:12, 15). His writings were the way his apostolic message was to be passed down.²⁰

The apostles expected churches to submit with universal obedience to their teachings, whether oral or written, as the Word of God and commandments of Christ (2 Thess 2:15). Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." Paul regarded his teaching to be God's Word. In 1 Corinthians 14:37-38, Paul is much more severe with the Corinthian leaders who were allowing the women to teach in the churches: "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is

²⁰ See Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology*, 183-84. Paul indicates the importance of apostolic writings in his letter to the Colossians, a church that had never seen him face to face. He wrote that letter to exercise Christ's authority over the church (see Col 1:1), one fruit of his *sufferings for their sake* (Col 1:24; cf. 2:1, 5). Paul regarded the fact of his personal face-to-face ministry inconsequential to the question of his apostolic authority over churches.

not recognized." A Christian church's legitimacy is in part in its submission to the authority of Christ handed down to us in the teachings of his apostles.

New Testament Authority for Christian Churches

These truths lead to an important conclusion: The church must submit to the whole inspired Word of God, but it is the New Testament that governs the church's faith and practice.²¹ Given the foundational role that Christ gave the apostles for the church in their teaching ministry and, given the New Testament is the inspired record of that teaching, it is the New Testament in particular that governs the church.

In Ephesians 2:19–22, Paul says that the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the *church*. He is explicitly speaking of Christ's church (not that there is any other).²² The church as a unique new entity, and not the nation of Israel, is clearly in view. The church is a New Testament institution (see Eph 2:15). Even those who see more continuity between Israel and the church should concede that, even if the church began before Pentecost, the ministry of Jesus Christ has dramatically altered the organization and operation of the church (see, for example, Col 2:17). The church's nature, mission, and order are divinely revealed in the New Testament. Consider the distinction laid out in the opening verses of Hebrews 1: "Long ago . . . God spoke to our fathers by the

²¹ This is an admittedly distinctively Baptist teaching. In his influential *New Directory for Baptist Churches*, the American Baptist Edward Hiscox wrote, "The New Testament is the constitution of Christianity, the charter of the Christian Church, the only authoritative code of ecclesiastical law, and the warrant and justification of all Christian institutions" (Edward T. Hiscox, *New Directory for Baptist Churches* [Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1894]; repr. *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980], 11). Also see Ward, *Pure Worship*, 110–18.

²² Paul refers to the church with those two metaphors in Ephesians 2:19: "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." In v 16, Paul speaks of what Christ has done for Gentiles and Jews: that Christ "might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." This *one body* also refers to the church.

prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”²³ Put another way, the church is built upon the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone.²⁴

A note of caution: the principle of universal obedience does not apply to everything we read in the New Testament. Some matters addressed there clearly pertain only to the given congregation or individuals addressed for that time period. Several generations ago, the American Baptist preacher William Williams put it helpfully:

Whatever can be clearly shown from Scripture, either by precept or example, to have been instituted by the apostles, *and which cannot be shown to have had its origin in the temporary and peculiar circumstance of their time*, is binding on us and for all time. Whatever can be shown to have had its origin in the peculiarities of that time, is not binding, the same peculiarities no longer existing. Upon this principle, deaconesses, a plurality of elders, and the ‘holy kiss,’ are omitted now.²⁵

Do not be distracted by the particulars of Williams’s list; his princi-

²³ As Kevin Bauder has observed, “Only the New Testament tells us what the church is. Only the New Testament tells us what the church is supposed to be” (*Baptist Distinctives*, 20–21).

²⁴ This does not in any way mean that we reject the teaching of the Old Testament inspired by the Holy Spirit. I cannot stress this enough. On the contrary, we affirm the testimony of Paul: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17). The Old Testament teaches us who God is, who we are, who Christ is, the centrality of God’s glory, the exactness of God’s wrath, the richness of God’s grace, the character of a life of faith, the future glory of Christ and his people, and even the shape of right and wrong. Its teaching is absolutely authoritative as God’s Word. But when we want to know who we are and what we are to do, Baptists have gone to the New Testament. For examples from history to show that Baptists have held this, see Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives*, 20–24. Bauder cites not only the non-Baptist Ulrich Zwingli, but J. M. Carroll, Francis Wayland, W. H. H. Marsh, and B. H. Carroll.

²⁵ *Apostolic Church Polity* (1874), in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life: A Collection of Historic Baptist Documents*, ed. Mark E. Dever (Sheridan Books, 2001), 537. Also see John Owen, *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (East Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth, 2009), 15:465–67.

ple still stands. Today's deacons probably do not focus on delivering food to Greek-speaking Jewish widows, as in Acts 6. When believers read a permanent mandate from the apostles, they must obey. Churches should look for two things: evidence of the practice and a clear command from the apostles. Yet when we find first-century circumstances, the underlying principles often apply indirectly to contemporary ecclesial communities. Saints may not greet with a holy kiss today, but Christian assemblies must have warm affection. The bottom line is that churches must obey the apostles. Today, this means obeying the commands of the New Testament.

New Testament Authority and Scripture-Regulated Worship

What does the New Testament govern in a local church? The apostles' teaching governs local churches' doctrine and practice. The church's practice includes its moral conduct and spiritual obedience to Christ in believers' daily lives. A church's practice also includes her worship. In other words, if churches are to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ himself as our chief cornerstone, they must also conform their worship to the apostles' teachings in the New Testament. As John Owen observed, "The worship of God is of that nature that whatsoever is performed in it is an act of religious obedience."²⁶

Most Christians (especially those in Protestant denominations) already acknowledge this, at least to some degree.²⁷ They agree that churches must conform to what the Scriptures teach concerning aspects of worship like baptism and the Lord's Table. Yet I would suggest that if an assembly would be a New Testament church, it must submit to the New Testament in *all* matters of its worship, not simply in the baptistery and at the Table. If one be-

²⁶ John Owen, *A Discourse Concerning Liturgies*, in *The Works of John Owen*, 15:43.

²⁷ The number of Baptists abandoning Scripture-regulated worship is especially lamentable. Baptists believe that the NT alone governs the mode and recipients of baptism. Likewise, New Testament governs how Baptists practice the Supper. Yet, more recently, many Baptists have denied the conviction that they must conform *all* their worship to the New Testament.

believes that the Scriptures are *sufficient*, this is a necessary consequence. The Bible in God's providence was given to address everything that a church needs for faith and practice and worship.²⁸

Paul warns churches not to depart from Christ in their worship. In Colossians 2:16 he insists, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." The "Colossian Heresy" was clearly influenced by Judaism, probably mixed with some kind of proto-gnosticism.²⁹ Importantly, Paul regards all human inventions in worship to be contrary to Christ. Those who add *asceticism* or *the worship of angels* likewise undermine the authority of Jesus Christ, "the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God" (v 19). Paul recoils against the heretics who were trying to bind Christians with slogans like, "Do not taste, Do not handle, Do not touch." His response is most telling: he calls such "human precepts and teachings." Then he adds in v 23: "These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." The first thing these things *promote* is *will worship* or *self-made religion*, which Paul clearly rejects. The indictment is stunning. When people introduce their own ideas into the Christian faith, they invent their own religion, which is tan-

²⁸ Commenting on Hebrews 8:5, John Gill puts it this way: "[W]hatever is done in a way of religious worship, should be according to a divine rule; a church of Christ ought to be formed according to the primitive pattern, and should consist, not of all that are born in a nation, province, or parish; nor should all that are born of believing parents be admitted into it; no unholy, unbelieving, and unconverted persons, only such as are true believers in Christ, and who are baptized according as the word of God directs; the officers of a church should be only of two sorts, bishops, elders, pastors or overseers, and deacons; the ordinances are baptism, which should only be administered to believers, and by immersion, and the Lord's supper, of which none should partake, but those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and this should be performed as Christ performed it, and as the Apostle Paul received it from him; the discipline of Christ's house should be regarded, and all the laws of it carefully and punctually in execution; and a conversation becoming the Gospel should be attended to" (*Exposition of the Whole Bible*. Compare Kevin Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives*, 24–28).

²⁹ See F. F. Bruce, *Epistles*, 17–26.

tamount to idolatry.³⁰ This teaching of Paul is the basis for the Regulative Principle of Worship.³¹

Saints are not left to their own ideas about worship. They have a clear idea from the New Testament what elements of worship are to be present in their worship services, for Christ and his apostles command believers to include several worship practices in their gatherings.³² Both precept and example mandate that the proc-

³⁰ See G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 249–50. John Calvin says of this term, “εθελοθρησκία literally denotes a voluntary worship which men choose of their own will, without a command from God. Human traditions, therefore, please us because they accord with our own mind, for anyone will find in his own brain the first outlines (*idea*) of them” (*Epistles*, 343). Also see his remarks on Ephesians 2:20 (*Epistles*, 154). Also Bauder: “This passage contains two enduring lessons. The first is that Christians do not have the freedom to make up moral rules for other Christians. If a requirement is not revealed in or cannot be soundly inferred from the Word of God, then it cannot be a matter of binding authority. The second is that Christians do not have freedom to make up their own doctrines, order, or worship. If a doctrine or practice is not revealed in or cannot be soundly inferred from the Word of God, it must not be introduced as an aspect of the Christian faith” (*Baptist Distinctives*, 31).

³¹ Baptists have historically embraced the Regulative Principle. The *Second London Baptist Confession* affirmed, “The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath Lordship, and Sovereignty over all; is just, 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 all the Soul, and with all the Might. But the acceptable way of Worshipping the the [*sic*] 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 representations, or any other way, not prescribed in Holy Scriptures” (22.1). Likewise, the General Baptist *Orthodox Creed* confessed, “The light of nature sheweth there is a God, who hath sovereignty over all, but the Holy Scripture hath fully revealed it; as also that all men should worship him according to God’s own institution and appointment. And hath limited us, 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 representations whatsoever, or any other way not prescribed in the holy scriptures” (40). In recent years, many have forgotten this doctrine, but it is historically Baptist. In fact, the logic of Baptist churches is really built upon a consistent adherence to the Regulative Principle. For more, see Ward, *Pure Worship*. Ward argues “that everything we find distinctive about [early English Baptists], including their hermeneutic, their ecclesiology, and their soteriology, was driven by their fundamental desire to worship God purely” (xii). According to Ward, Scripture-regulated worship is *the* distinctive of early English Baptists.

³² See Bauder, Aniol, et. al., *A Conservative Christian Declaration*, 44–49.

lamation of God's Word is to be present as Christians gather.³³ Paul tells Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). The church is to read the Scriptures publicly in their assembly.³⁴ Likewise, Christian churches are commanded to pray and sing. Paul tells the Ephesian church that they ought to be "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." Then again he tells them to be "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints."³⁵ Apostolic churches also regularly practiced giving, as is plain in Philippians 4:18 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. Paul tells saints in 1 Corinthians 11 to observe the Lord's Supper, and Jesus commands his followers in Matthew 28:19 to baptize. To these elements, Christian churches have no authority to add ways of worshipping God. To do so would be to depart from the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Worship that is not regulated by Scripture is tantamount to teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, something Christ denounced in Matthew 15:7-9. In that passage Christ calls invented worship vain or pointless. Inventing some new way of worshipping is not so different from requiring Christians to believe some new doctrine that humans have invented.

In sum, the Christian religion is subservient to Christ's authority. Christ gave that authority to his apostles and prophets, and he sealed that authority in the New Testament, which the apostles regarded to be both authoritative and inspired. This body of teaching is sufficient for the faith and practice of Christians today. If persons claim to follow Christ, they must not only conform their beliefs to Scripture and their personal lives to God's Word, but the practice and worship of their churches must also conform to the New Testament.

³³ The New Testament commands churches to preach and teach in passages such as Matt 28:20; 1 Pet 4:11; Acts 6:2; 14:7, 21-22; 15:35; 18:24; 1 Cor 1:17; etc.

³⁴ 1 Tim 4:13; Col 4:16.

³⁵ The New Testament commands churches to pray and sing in passages such as Eph 6:18; cf. Acts 2:42; Col 3:16; also see Acts 1:14, 24; 3:1; 4:31; 6:4; 12:5; 13:3; 16:25; 20:36; etc.; 1 Cor 11:4-5; 14:15-16; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17; James 5:13; Eph 5:17-20; James 5:13; cf. 1 Cor 14:26.

Love for Christ, Christ's Authority, and New Testament Authority

The idea of Christ's authority can be developed in other ways. More than being about the so-called "worship wars," Scripture-regulated worship is really about the believer's love for Christ. All people are obligated to submit to Christ's authority (Phil 2:9-10; Col 1:18; Rev 5:12-13). To disobey the New Testament is to disobey Christ himself (1 Cor 11:1). If one confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 2:10), that person is obligated to obey him. When people believe the gospel, they receive Christ Jesus *the Lord* (Col 2:6).³⁶

The force of this must rest upon the consciences of church pastors and workers and even theologians. Christ is Lord of all. He is the head of the body (Col 1:18), and the church's faith, polity, and worship are all received from Christ himself. Every Christian's obedience is not merely a matter of submission to a supreme authority; the believer's obedience is a matter of authority mixed with love. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (cf. Exod 20:6). A believer's submission springs, not as a prisoner toward a violent guard, but out of love for the Lamb once slain.

This is why believers want the New Testament to govern their churches. Though they have not seen the Lord Jesus Christ, they *love him*. They "believe in him and rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and filled with glory" (1 Pet 1:8-9). The saints' desire to obey the Scriptures flows out of love for the Savior.

True religion is very much a religion of love or affection for Christ. Jonathan Edwards observed, "That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull and lifeless wouldings, raising us but a little above a state of indifference: God, in his Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fer-

³⁶ As John Davenant remarked on Colossian 2:6, "The Colossians, and so all true Christians, received *Christ the Lord*, both of their faith and their life: nor will they suffer rules of faith and Christian life to be imposed upon them by any one else. . . . He is a Christian in vain, nay, to his great loss, who resolves not to direct both his faith and his life by the rule of Christ" (*An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport [London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1831], 1:379-80).

vent in spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.”³⁷ Believers, according to Paul, are those *who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible* (Eph 6:24).

The reasons to love Christ are innumerable. The Son of God himself is the reason why the Son of God is to be loved.³⁸ John taught us, “We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Looking at Revelation 5 alone, Christ is due our love, for he is the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (v 5), the “Root of Jesse” (v 5), the “Lamb who was slain” (v 12), the one who opens the seals of divine judgment (v 5), the object of angelic worship (v 8, 11), the one who has “ransomed people” from the entire globe “for God by his blood” (v 9), and the one who has made those who believe in him “a kingdom, priests to our God,” giving them a right to “reign on the earth” (v 10).³⁹

American Baptist John Leadley Dagg wrote a book on church practice called the *Manual of Theology*, in which he connects a church’s obedience to God’s Word and their love for Christ: “To love God with all the heart is the sum of all duty. . . . Love to God produces obedience; for it impossible to love God supremely without a supreme desire to please him in all things. Hence this one principle contains, involved in it, perfect obedience to every divine requirement.”⁴⁰ Again: “The true spirit of obedience is willing to

³⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 99. For more on Edwards and the affections, see Ryan J. Martin, *Understanding Affections in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

³⁸ As Bernard of Clairvaux beautifully expressed it: “You wish me to tell you why and how God should be loved. My answer is that God himself is the reason why he is to be loved. As for how he is to be loved, there is to be no limit to that love” (“On Loving God,” trans. Robert Walton in *Treatises II*, vol. 5 of *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, Cistercian Fathers Series 13 [Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications, 1974], 93).

³⁹ For an exceptional, brief treatment of Christ’s glory, see Edwards’s sermon, *The Excellency of Christ* (Boston: Thomas Dicey, 1780). In his preface to a 1780 edition of Edwards’s sermon, John Ryland observed that “The Excellence of Christ . . . is the first grand truth of divine revelation in point of dignity, beauty, and usefulness; and therefore it demands and deserves the utmost regard and affection from every true Christian on earth” (*Ibid.*, 3).

⁴⁰ John Leadley Dagg, *Manual of Theology, Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1990), 9.

receive the slightest intimations of the divine will.”⁴¹ Love for Jesus Christ, our dying Savior and risen Head, is the fertile ground out of which the fruits of good church doctrine, practice, and worship springs.

We insist on Scripture-regulated worship because we dearly love our Lord Jesus Christ. Worship is not only the vehicle whereby we express our love for Christ (more on that below), but that love also controls our worship.

The Regulative Principle of Worship is not, consequently, a matter of turning the Bible into a lawbook. The *reasons* for New Testament authority show its significance. To disobey the New Testament is to disobey Christ himself. To add to or alter the New Testament is to modify Christ’s instruction, for there is no gap between Christ’s teaching and the apostles’ teaching for the churches.

Love for Christ and Loving What He Loves

Love for Christ leads to Scripture-regulated worship another way. To review: if Christ’s authority regulates church practice, and if that authority is mediated through the apostles and prophets, now finished in the canon of the New Testament, then believers should only worship with those elements Christ has given them.

Moreover, if believers love Christ, they not only willingly submit to his authority, but in that submission they learn to love what he has prescribed for them. As John tells us in 1 John 5:3, Christ’s “commandments are not burdensome.” Unglorified humanity, however, *does* find God’s commandments burdensome. Natural human beings have evaluated New Testament worship and found it wanting, either technologically, visually, or in relevancy. Our love for Christ, however, should teach us to love what he loves. If Christ loves (or wills) a certain kind of worship, his authority should draw believers’ love away from their own preferences and interests.

What folks love is very often taught to them by others. This principle is powerfully at work in popular culture. A social dynamic influences what people love. People are easily swayed by trends.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

One respected art critic can spoil one's love for this or that composer or painter. When Christ gave his church the elements of worship, he as it were said to her, "These are the ways of worshipping that I delight in, that I find beautiful." In fact, Holy Scripture compares prayer to the sweet aroma of *incense* (Rev 8:3-4); it describes the Word of God as "better . . . than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Psa 119:72); and says that those singing to the Lord are *radiant* (Jer 31:12). If Christ, the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8) declares that such worship is beautiful, his body ought to find it beautiful as well. Believers have the mind of Christ, so they should agree with his aesthetic judgment, and love what he loves. As Petrus van Mastricht argued, Christ alone is the one "who understands perfectly the method of worshiping God (John 1:18)."⁴² Too often people are drawn away from what is good and holy and beautiful, and toward that which God has never willed that people use to worship him (Col 2:23; cf. Jer 32:35).

Love for Christ through Scripture-Regulated Worship

Believers ought to submit willingly to the worship principles given to them in Scripture because they love Christ and because they love what Christ loves. In at least one other way is a soul's love for Christ connected to Scripture-regulated worship. The New Testament way of worship is the surest means by which believers *grow* their love for Christ. The primary reason Christ through his apostles gave churches the elements he did was he in his wisdom ordained that those elements would be blessed by the Holy Spirit to nurture and grow true spiritual love for Christ.

The believer's love for the Incarnate Christ is a very unusual thing. She loves this Lord and Savior sight unseen. As Peter says in 1 Peter 1:8-9, "Though you have not seen him [Christ], you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." We love

⁴² Petrus van Mastricht, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 73 (§ 1.1.1.XI).

Christ *though we have not seen him*. The believers addressed in 1 Peter not only loved Christ, but they loved him in a most splendid and joyful way. Clearly, love for Christ is very different from most other earthly loves. The great majority of Christians throughout history love a Savior they have never touched or seen or heard first hand. Moreover, the Son of God is holy, so a saint's natural, depraved love struggles to love him as she ought. Thus believers' love for Christ is supremely spiritual, both in the sense that they have not seen him, and that the Spirit of God must generate this love for God in their natural hearts (1 John 4:1-6; Col 1:3-5; Rom 5:5).

God ordained and designed saints' love for Christ to grow with the Spirit's grace through the elements of worship he gave in the New Testament. Indeed, preaching, praying, singing, and the ordinances are the only ways of growing Christians' love for God that God has explicitly blessed. Table the question of *how* one uses these elements as forms, which is also an important matter in expressing and cultivating love for God. With the elements of Scripture-regulated worship, the unseen Christ is presented to believers' understanding and moral imaginations in the ordinances and preached Word of God. Perhaps this is why Paul says to the Galatians, "It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (Gal 3:1). According to Ephesians 4, the ministry of the Word (given through apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) furthers believers' *knowledge of the Son of God* and Christian maturity (v 13), with the ultimate goal that the whole church *builds itself up in love* (v 16). The love mentioned above, that Peter so beautifully described in 1 Peter 1:8-9, was itself born in the believers "through the living and abiding Word of God . . . , the good news that was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:23, 25).

In *Religious Affections*, Jonathan Edwards makes the point that truly gracious affections are cultivated through such means.⁴³ In prayer, saints declare their own "meanness" and God's perfections, so that "such gestures, and manner of external behavior in the worship of God, which custom has made to be significations of humility and reverence . . . affect our own hearts, or the hearts of oth-

⁴³ Edwards's original point was to prove that gracious affections are essential to true religion. To do so, he showed how the Scriptures hold up the "ordinances and duties, which God has appointed," which nurture our holy affections, and are "means and expressions of true religion" (*Affections*, 114).

ers." Likewise, Christian singing "seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections." The "sacraments" too are "sensible representations" of the gospel and Christ's redemption so as "to affect us with them." Finally, "the impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men, is evidently one great and main end for which God has ordained, that his Word delivered in the Holy Scriptures, should be opened, applied, and set home upon men in preaching."⁴⁴ Edwards is arguing that the very nature of these elements are such that they grow Christian affections.

John Owen makes a similar point about preaching in *The Grace and Duty of Spiritually Minded*:

It must be observed, that the best of men, the most holy and spiritually minded, may have, nay, ought to have, their thoughts of spiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed by the preaching of the word. It is one end of its dispensation, one principal use of it in them by whom it is received. And it hath this effect in two ways: (1.) As it is the spiritual food of the soul, whereby its principle of life and grace is maintained and strengthened. The more this is done, the more shall we thrive in being spiritually minded. (2.) As it administereth occasion unto the exercise of grace; for, proposing the proper object of faith, love, fear, trust, reverence, unto the soul, it draws forth all those graces into exercise.⁴⁵

Owen would certainly view the other elements of gospel worship in a similar light.⁴⁶ His point concerning the ministry of the Word is that it is particularly appropriate to engender spiritual affections. Later in the book, he insists, "This is the first reason and ground whereon affections spiritually renewed cleave unto ordinances of divine worship with delight and satisfaction,—namely, because

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Affections*, 115.

⁴⁵ John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, in *The Works of John Owen* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 7:283.

⁴⁶ Elsewhere Owen stated, "The next and principal ends of all instituted worship, in respect of believers, are, in the increase of the grace of God in them, their edification in their most holy faith, and the testification of the good-will of God unto them" (*A Brief Instruction*, 15:460–61).

they are the means appointed and blessed of God for the exercise of faith and love, with an experiences of their efficacy unto that end."⁴⁷

Arguably, there are other ways of growing the saints' love for Christ in the natural world apart from church worship. The love a believer has for the Triune God ought to grow as she goes about her daily life, whether while explicitly worshipping or not. A Shakespeare sonnet or a good meal or marriage can and should increase love for Christ (see 1 Tim 4:1-5, especially v 4). Yet it is hard to imagine this love coming into being and being sustained over time, apart from the means God has given in New Testament worship (see Rom 10:17). Further, it seems that the way of worship prescribed for churches in the New Testament was designed to facilitate the growth of believers' affections for the Triune God. In sum, Christ gave his church the elements of worship he did in order that he might graciously grow its love for him through the Spirit.

Conclusion

This paper is an argument for Scripture-regulated worship. I began looking briefly at some of the traditional arguments for this understanding of worship. I have argued that the so-called Regulative Principle springs foremost from the Scripture doctrine of the relationship of Christ's authority and the New Testament apostles, now preserved in the New Testament canon. Then I showed how this authority is related to the believer's love for Christ. First, believers submit to Christ's authority because they love their Lord Jesus. They should also love the worship Scripture prescribes because it is what Christ loves. Finally, following the Regulative Principle in their worship services is God's primary way to grow their love for Christ.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 437.