

If one thing is synonymous with the memory of James Boice, it is his passion for worship. Those who experienced firsthand the way he conducted worship in Tenth Presbyterian Church, as much as those who only saw it from a distance through his writings and tapes, could not fail to be struck by this dominant concern. Its impact was both God-exalting and soul-uplifting. That is worship at its best, and this volume is a fitting exposition of what it entails in its richest essence.

— MARK G. JOHNSTON

The church needs this book! A Reformed view of the various nuances of worship—its place in the Bible, the elements that give it legitimacy, the personal and affective aspects of worshipping God, as well as its place in the history of the church—has been lacking in the literature. This has finally been rectified with a volume that will stimulate discussion and inform the church.

— IAIN D. CAMPBELL

A worthy tribute of love and honor to the memory of James Montgomery Boice. In it a galaxy of his colleagues and friends address the theme that was the heartbeat of his life and ministry. The contributors offer important instruction, insight, and challenge on the grand theme of worship.

— SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

Any book dedicated to the memory of James Boice would have to be marked by sanctified scholarship, solid biblical content, and warm pastoral application. These essays from the pens of his friends and fellow soldiers in the cause of the gospel meet that standard. Reading this material I found my mind being stretched and my heart stirred.

— ALISTAIR BEGG

A significant contribution. As a theologian, I believe that worship must be at the heart and center of all that we are, all that we do, and all that we write. This volume helps us to focus on this fundamental priority while also reminding us that God is concerned with the form and content of our worship.

— A. T. B. MCGOWAN

GIVE PRAISE TO GOD

A VISION FOR REFORMING WORSHIP

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF
JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

EDITED BY
PHILIP GRAHAM RYKEN
DEREK W. H. THOMAS
J. LIGON DUNCAN III


P U B L I S H I N G
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To worship God we must know who God is, but we cannot know who God is unless God first chooses to reveal himself to us. God has done this in the Bible, which is why the Bible and the teaching of the Bible need to be central in our worship.

—James Montgomery Boice

FOREWORD

R. C. SPROUL

One of the great ironies of church history occurred in the sixteenth century in Paris. The very day that magisterial Reformer John Calvin completed his academic work at the university—the day of his departure from that place—was the same day that a young man arrived on campus dressed in the garb of a beggar, who then enrolled as a student. The young man was Ignatius Loyola, destined to become the founder of the Society of Jesus, known more commonly as the Jesuits. For the rest of the sixteenth century and into the future, the followers of Calvin and those of Loyola would be locked in fierce theological conflict as doctrinal and ecclesiastical adversaries.

James Montgomery Boice and I were hardly theological adversaries. But we did share a common twist of geographical proximity as experienced by Calvin and Loyola. We grew up about five miles from each other in the outskirts of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but to either of our recollections we did not meet until we discovered each other in Philadelphia when we were both in our early thirties, functioning as theological “Young Turks.”

Jim lived in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, a steel-mill town on the banks of the Monongahela River. McKeesport was directly across the river from Clairton, another mill-town in the Steel Valley, a town featured in the Hol-

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lywood movie *The Deerhunter*. I went to Clairton High School, where our Clairton Bears were the archrivals of the McKeesport High School Tigers. The athletic contests between these figurative carnivores were the stuff that fueled pep rallies, bonfires, and cheerleading squads.

I visited McKeesport many times to engage in contests of football, basketball, and baseball. My leg was broken on the goal line in McKeesport. I “ate leather” when I was stuffed in the lane by a McKeesport player who was 6'7". Our hopes of a national baseball championship died in Renzie Park where we lost to McKeesport by the score of 1–0. In a word, my memories of McKeesport are grim—so grim that I frequently wondered, “Can any good thing come out of McKeesport?”

But that was before I met Jim Boice, and before I realized that he had no part in the ignominy of my many defeats at the hands of the hated Tigers. Jim went away to high school in Stony Brook, New York, where he played his high school football.

If it is true that men are simply grown-up boys and that the man never sheds the boy inside, then it would seem to follow that what is in the boy will give a glimpse into what the man will be. The position a lad plays on a football team gives a clue to his personality and character. Given this axiom it would seem that Jim Boice must have been a quarterback or a deft halfback. Not so. Jim Boice played fullback. He was the player called on when it was third and short and the team desperately needed a first down. It was Boice up the middle; Boice with head down and legs churning to produce three yards and a cloud of dust.

In the model of the fullback, we see a person who must have courage, perseverance, tenacity, and character. These attributes were manifested with a vengeance in the life of James Montgomery Boice. He became a scholar, preacher, statesman, reformer, author, conference speaker, editor, and the voice of “The Bible Study Hour.” To accomplish these many and varied tasks he had to be gifted with an uncommon, nay uncanny, measure of discipline. But whatever the task, whatever the obstacle, Jim Boice lowered his head and went without fear into the middle of the line.

When I reflect on Jim Boice’s ministry, four things stand out to me—four accents—four passions that gripped his soul. The four may be distinguished one from the other, but they are all inseparably related and never functioned in isolation from each other. The four passions of Jim Boice’s

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Christian life and ministry were (1) the inspiration and authority of the Bible, (2) the doctrines of grace, (3) preaching via the exposition of the word, and (4) godly worship in the life of the church.

The first Festschrift I ever read was dedicated to my graduate-school mentor G. C. Berkouwer of the Free University of Amsterdam. Since Berkouwer sought zealously to build his theology on a biblical foundation, his Festschrift was entitled *Ex auditu verbi* (Out of the hearing of the word).

Surely Jim Boice was one who had an acute sense of hearing the word. Of course, he did far more than listen to it. He expounded it. He taught it. He preached it. He defended it. He lived it. As a follower of the sixteenth-century Reformers, Jim, like Luther before him, had a conscience that was held captive by the word of God. The captivity of his conscience by Scripture could be seen with facility in even a casual observation of the man. He wrote many commentaries on various books of the Bible. He preached through much of the Bible in his thirty-plus years in the pulpit of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

Dr. Boice's firm commitment to sacred Scripture may be seen in the service he rendered to the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. Jim was chairman of the council through its ten-year mission to restore the church's confidence in the divine origin, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. The council included such Christian leaders as Francis Schaeffer, J. I. Packer, Edmund Clowney, Roger Nicole, John Gerstner, and Norman Geisler. The highlight of this endeavor was the Chicago Summit that involved over two hundred scholars and leaders who drafted and adopted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

The second passion that grew out of the first was Dr. Boice's passion for the doctrines of grace that are central to Reformed theology. He saw in these doctrines, abbreviated by the *solas* of the Reformation, the crystallized essence of biblical theology. It was his love and passion for these doctrines that prodded him to launch the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, which expanded far beyond the confines of the City of Brotherly Love to be held annually at sites all across America.

One of my great memories of time shared with Jim Boice is in sharing the pulpit in many of these conferences, as well as in other conference events of like format. I remember one week-long conference where Jim and I were co-lecturers. We were lecturing on the classic five points of Calvinism to an audience that was almost monolithically Arminian in their theo-

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logical orientation. The experience for me was somewhat like antiphonal singing. I would give a lecture with some bold passion. Then Jim would rise to give his lecture with even greater boldness. His passion ignited me so that my next lecture was even more fiery. And so it went. If no one else in attendance was moved by what we were saying, we knew for certain that we were moving each other.

It was also his passion for the doctrines of grace that provoked Jim to found the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. The mission of the alliance is to call the church away from worldliness and back to its confessional roots. The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals held a major conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the shadow of Jim's alma mater, Harvard University. This convocation produced the Cambridge Declaration, with its reaffirmation of the *solas* of the Reformation.

The third passion of Dr. Boice's life and ministry was expository preaching. This was his trademark as a pastor. Jim had no time for using the pulpit to entertain people or to offer pop psychology for their felt needs. As the Old Testament priests were called upon to weep between the porch and the altar, so Jim Boice saw it as his duty to tremble between the study and the pulpit. He understood that what the people needed to hear was not the latest Christian fad or the private opinions of the pastor. They needed to hear a word from God—an unvarnished, unembellished, undiluted, accurate, and faithful exposition of God's very word. It was the word of God preached that stirred Jim Boice's juices and fueled his viscera. Of course, Dr. Boice loved the sacraments. But he always saw the sacraments as tied to the word, as the sign and seal of its teaching.

The fourth passion of Dr. Boice was his passion for godly worship. If he shared Luther's zeal for the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), so he also shared Calvin's zeal for the reform of worship (*solus deo gloria*).

Worship for Dr. Boice meant honoring God in spirit and in truth. It required giving the sacrifice of praise in a godly manner. He was deeply concerned about the encroachment of the world's methods into the sanctuary—methods used to entertain and justified by a misguided sense of evangelism. Just as word and sacrament belong together, so Jim Boice saw a necessary marriage between word and worship.

O how I loved to stand next to him on the chancel floor as we sang the great hymns of the church. Jim would put his right hand in the right rear pocket of his suit pants as he sang. He would rise and fall on his toes as he

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lifted his voice in exuberant praise. He was remarkable in his memory of all the verses of the classic hymns. I loved joining him without the use of the hymnal as we sang the strains of “A Mighty Fortress” or “Holy, Holy, Holy.” But after those two hymns I had to resort to peeking. When I fled to the hymnal to remember the words to great hymns Jim would look at me with a mischievous glint in his eye that instantly reminded me of my dereliction in failing to master all the verses.

Jim’s love of hymnody based on Scripture was not exhausted by the singing of traditional hymns. It also led to another contribution he gave to the church—the hymns that came from his pen. Those hymns celebrate the grand themes of the Bible and set forth in majestic language the doctrines of grace.

This book serves as a Festschrift in memory of James Montgomery Boice. As a “written celebration” it is designed not only to serve as a memorial to Jim’s ministry but also to provide a platform for continuing reflection on the great issues that absorbed his energy during his life and ministry. Were he still with us in this world, the contents of this book would yield a warm smile and radiant look, signifying his delight and pleasure with its themes.

INTRODUCTION

PHILIP GRAHAM RYKEN

James Boice loved to worship. One of the remarkable things about his public ministry was the obvious and intense pleasure he took in giving praise to God. Dr. Boice brought a special exuberance to the celebrations at Christmas and Easter, as well as to the many Bible conferences where he was a featured speaker. Then there was the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, for him the high point of the worship year. Those who attended will recall how he used to sing without his hymnal, rocking forward and backward to the music and grinning at the triumphant close of Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress."

His enthusiasm was not for show. James Boice always approached the weekly worship service at Tenth Presbyterian Church with the same joyous dignity, expecting God to gain glory for himself through the praises of his people. Worship—majestic, historic, logocentric, theocentric, christocentric worship—was one of his consuming passions.

A Life of Worship

In a *Festschrift* it is customary to give some account of the life of the person whose work is celebrated. This is not the place for a full biography. That

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would be somewhat unnecessary, since many of Dr. Boice's experiences and accomplishments are described in a special memorial magazine entitled *The Life of Dr. James Montgomery Boice, 1938–2000*.¹ This is the place, however, to trace his life of worship in the church.

Some of James Boice's earliest experiences of public worship took place in Philadelphia's historic Tenth Presbyterian Church. Not long after his first birthday, his parents moved to Philadelphia, where his father, Newton, was to study medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Newton's mother, Nettie, was an avid listener to "The Bible Study Hour," featuring Donald Grey Barnhouse, and she urged the family to attend Barnhouse's famous church in Center City.

The Boices ended up worshipping at Tenth Presbyterian Church for about two years. It was there that young Jimmy learned his first Bible verses, which are still preserved in a family album. It was also there that a famous encounter took place. One night shortly before Christmas, Newton dropped his wife, Jean, and son at the door of the church and went to look for parking. Once inside, they were met by the imposing figure of Dr. Barnhouse, who said, "What, may I ask, are you doing here tonight?"

Jean responded, "Isn't this the night for the Christmas party for the children?"

"No, it's next Sunday—you come back next Sunday."

"Suddenly," Jean remembers, "he picked Jim up, put his hand on Jim's head, and prayed silently. I didn't hear the prayer, but I always felt that the Lord used that prayer in a special way in Jim's life."²

Dr. G. Newton Boice eventually took up his medical practice in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, where the family made many lifelong friends at the First Evangelical Free Church. The minister there, Philip Hanson, preached clear, biblical sermons, and the Boice children were nourished by the church's Bible-based Sunday school curriculum. The family's oldest son was about twelve years old when he had his first opportunity to preach. His sermon received an encouraging response from the senior men in the congregation, and the boy was given his first confirmation that God was calling him to the gospel ministry.

James Boice left McKeesport not long afterward, shortly before starting the eighth grade. Dr. Barnhouse often traveled to western Pennsylvania on preaching tours in those days, and he was a frequent visitor to the Boice home. One evening in late summer 1951 he spoke with the Boices about sending their

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son to Stony Brook, a Christian prep school on Long Island. The younger Boice later recounted the conversation for an alumni magazine:

We had been talking about Stony Brook as we sat around the dinner table one Friday evening. As it turned out, this was the Friday on which the fall term at Stony Brook was beginning. In the course of the conversation he [Barnhouse] asked, “Jimmy, would you like to go to Stony Brook this year?” I said, “Yes.” So he answered, “All right.” And he got up from the dinner table—we were between the main course and dessert—went to the telephone and called Dr. Frank E. Gaebelein, who was the headmaster at the time. I was admitted by phone, and two days later on Sunday I was on Long Island.³

Stony Brook was a rich experience, not only for its academic, athletic, and dramatic challenges, but also for its godly role models and keen sense of Christian purpose.

From Stony Brook, James Boice went on to Harvard University. While there was no question about that school’s academic excellence, there had been some concern about its spiritual atmosphere. Yet Boice was active in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and attended the historic Park Street Church, where he sat under the expository preaching of Harold John Ockenga.

In the fall of 1960 James Boice began his graduate studies in divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary. Shortly after matriculating, he received word that Donald Grey Barnhouse had died suddenly from a brain tumor. Barnhouse had a profound personal influence on his eventual successor, and his death led Boice to recommit himself to God’s service. Remembering the request that Elisha made when Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1–14), Boice asked for a double portion of God’s Spirit.

At Princeton, James Boice was confronted by the neo-orthodox doctrine of Scripture, with its tendency to undermine biblical authority. His recollections of the struggle to clarify his own convictions are worth quoting in full:

I wrestled with the inerrancy of the Bible during my seminary years. It is not that I questioned it. My problem was that my teachers did not believe this, and much of what I was hearing in the classroom was meant to reveal the Bible’s errors so that students would not depend on it too deeply. What was

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a student to do? The professors seemed to have all the facts. How were professors to be challenged when they argued that recent scholarship has shown that the old, simplistic views about the Bible being inerrant are no longer valid and that therefore we should admit that the Bible is filled with errors?

As I worked on this I discovered some interesting things. First, the problems imagined to be in the Bible were hardly new problems. For the most part those problems were known centuries ago, even by such ancient theologians as Augustine and Jerome, who discussed apparent contradictions in their substantial correspondence.

I also discovered that the results of sound scholarship have *not* tended to uncover more and more problems, as my professors were suggesting, still less disclose more and more “errors.” Rather they have tended to *resolve* problems and to show that what were once thought to be errors are not errors at all.⁴

Resolving these issues was crucial for Boice’s future ministry, which was based on the exposition of the Bible as God’s authoritative word. Many years later, on the occasion of his twenty-fifth anniversary at Tenth Presbyterian Church, he summarized his doctrine of Scripture: “We believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice . . . and . . . we believe the Bible must be the treasure most valued and attended to in the church’s life.”⁵

James Boice’s commitment to the Bible compelled him to pursue further studies in the New Testament. By this time he had married Linda McNamara, and the couple traveled to Basel, Switzerland, where Boice studied for his doctorate with Professor Bo Reicke. The most obvious benefits of this time of preparation were academic: He received a first-rate education in biblical exegesis. But there was also time for significant involvement in Christian ministry. Sensing a greater need for worship and Bible teaching, a Filipino couple proposed beginning a worship service for English-speaking internationals. Soon a church began to meet in the Boice living room. Some friends rented a piano to accompany hymns, family members shipped thirty copies of the Inter-Varsity hymnbook, and Boice preached weekly from his own studies in the New Testament. Eventually the Basel Community Church, as it was called, also hosted a Monday night prayer meeting, a midweek Bible study for business people, and occasional congregational dinners.

James Boice later credited that small fellowship with teaching him what

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was essential for a true church. The participants in a weekly Bible study were the ones who asked, "Couldn't we meet for worship together, and for you to teach us, Jim?" The times of fellowship came from a recognized need for Christian community. Similarly, the weekly prayer meeting was established, not because of tradition, but because of the evident need for prayer. Later the church outgrew the Boice apartment and began to meet in a building owned by the Moravians. With the added space came the opportunity to start a children's Sunday school class. The church was small, but complete, with Bible teaching, prayer, worship, and fellowship. Furthermore, its international membership gave witness to the worldwide communion of the saints.

The story of this congregation in Switzerland makes this a logical place to mention Dr. Boice's lifelong interest in promoting Reformed theology among the Protestant churches of French-speaking Europe. Until the time of his death he served as vice president of the Huguenot Fellowship, which for many years met in his office at Tenth Presbyterian Church. In his honor, the fellowship has established the James Montgomery Boice Chair of Practical Theology at the Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence. The editors of and contributors to the present volume are pleased to donate their royalties to help fund this new academic post.

Upon his return from Switzerland, Dr. Boice served as an assistant editor for *Christianity Today*, where he served under Carl F. H. Henry, the evangelical stalwart and champion of biblical orthodoxy. Yet Boice had not abandoned his aspiration to serve as a minister of the gospel. He often preached on weekends, especially at McLean Presbyterian Church in Virginia. He also completed his requirements for ordination, which took place in April 1967 and was arranged by Robert Lamont, minister of First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. Henry preached the sermon, closing with these memorable words: "James Boice, you bear the name of a brother of our Lord. You cherish the message of all the apostles. May you share the momentum of the apostle to the Gentiles in matching the myths of our age with the timeless truth of the revelation of God's word."

The following spring, through a providential series of circumstances, James Montgomery Boice was called to become minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church. There he would have the opportunity to apply everything he had learned about Bible-based, God-glorifying worship in the context of a local church.

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The Worshiping Church

James Boice often taught on the subject of worship—from the pulpit, over the airwaves, and in print. Usually he began by emphasizing the priority of worship. This is what human beings were made for: to give praise to God. In the words that he loved to quote from the Westminster Shorter Catechism: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever” (Q. 1). Dr. Boice also quoted from John Stott: “Christians believe that true worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable.”⁶

What is worship? From his study of English literature from Chaucer to Shakespeare, James Boice knew that the word *worship* is derived from “worth-ship.” To worship God, therefore, is to assign him his supreme worth, acknowledging him to be the Creator and Redeemer revealed in the holy Scriptures. Similarly, the word *glory* (*doxa*) in the Greek New Testament means to have a good or right opinion of some illustrious individual. To worship God, then, is to have the correct opinion about him, properly recognizing his holy sovereignty.

God is to be worshiped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Dr. Boice often quoted these words of Jesus to the woman at the well, and they came to have a significant influence on his teaching about worship. Some of his comments are worth quoting at length:

Many people worship with the body. This means that they consider themselves to have worshiped if they have been in the right place doing the right things at the right time. In Christ’s day the woman (at Sychar) thought this meant being either in Jerusalem, at the temple there, or on Mount Gerizim at the Samaritans’ temple. In our day this would refer to people who think they have worshiped God simply because they have occupied a seat in a church on Sunday morning, or sung a hymn, or lit a candle, or crossed themselves, or knelt in the aisle. Jesus says this is not worship. These customs may be vehicles for worship. In some cases they may also hinder it. But they are not worship in themselves. Therefore, we must not confuse worship with the particular things we do on Sunday morning.

In addition, however, we must not confuse worship with feeling, for worship does not originate with the soul any more than it originates with the body. The soul is the seat of our emotions. It may be the case, and often is, that the emo-

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tions are stirred in real worship. At times tears fill the eyes or joy floods the heart. But, unfortunately, it is possible for these things to happen and still no worship to be there. It is possible to be moved by a song or by oratory and yet not come to a genuine awareness of God and a fuller praise of His ways and nature.

True worship occurs only when that part of man, his spirit, which is akin to the divine nature (for God is spirit), actually meets with God and finds itself praising Him for His love, wisdom, beauty, truth, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, power, and all His other attributes.⁷

Given the priority that he placed on honoring God in our worship, Dr. Boice understandably was troubled by the shift from God-centered to human-centered worship in the contemporary church. Particularly in the last years of his ministry, he believed that many (if not most) Christians had forgotten the meaning of true worship. In seeking to explain this unfortunate phenomenon, Dr. Boice observed the following connections between contemporary culture and the evangelical church: (1) Ours is a trivial age, and the church has been deeply affected by this pervasive triviality; (2) ours is a self-absorbed, human-centered age, and the church has become, sadly, even treasonably self-centered; and (3) our age is oblivious to God, and the church is barely better, to judge from its so-called worship services.⁸

In Dr. Boice's view, the result of God's dramatic disappearance from Christian worship could only be a catastrophic loss of divine transcendence, not only in our worship, but in every aspect of the Christian life. The Cambridge Declaration he helped to produce gave voice to his concern:

Whenever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing his work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.⁹

The only way to recover is to honor God in our worship. To that end, James Boice was a strong advocate of the order of service used at Tenth Pres-

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byterian Church, an order that has remained largely unchanged for a century or more and is still in use today.

The service begins with the call to worship. Dr. Boice often chose a text related to the theme of the sermon, but these verses from Isaiah 55, with their emphasis on the ministry of God's word, were a special favorite:

As the rain and the snow
 come down from heaven,
 and do not return to it
 without watering the earth
 and making it bud and flourish,
 so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
 It will not return to me empty,
 but will accomplish what I desire
 and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10–11)

The call to worship is followed by the doxology, the invocation, and an opening hymn of praise. Then comes a responsive reading from the Psalms. From week to week the congregation reads consecutively through the Psalter; upon the completion of Psalm 150, the cycle begins again with Psalm 1. Next the congregation stands to sing the *Gloria patri* as a response to the psalm and also to confess its faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed. These ancient liturgical elements serve to connect God's people with the communion of saints across time and space.

The service continues with the pastoral prayer—usually a long one. Dr. Boice abhorred perfunctory prayers and believed that public worship should include a comprehensive prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. At Tenth Presbyterian Church the pastoral prayer covers a wide range of personal, congregational, national, and international concerns.

Tenth Presbyterian Church has also revived the Puritan practice of including a regular Scripture reading in the service, preceded by five or so minutes of exposition. Although by Puritan standards the preliminary comments are brief, visitors sometimes mistakenly assume that they have already heard the sermon! The readings themselves are taken from consecutive passages in the New Testament. Late in Dr. Boice's pastorate, a segment called "Living Church" was added at this point in the order of

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service. Living Church is used for baptism, public reception of new members, ordination, installation, commissioning, missionary and other ministry reports, and public testimonies of God's work in the church.

Following the Living Church and prior to the sermon is another hymn and an offertory. Here perhaps something more should be said about music in worship. In keeping with his commitment to total excellence, Dr. Boice worked with a series of talented musicians to expand the music ministries of Tenth Presbyterian Church. His top priority was vigorous congregational singing of the great hymns of the faith. He loved to point out that among the major world religions, Christianity alone gave its followers something to sing about: eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dr. Boice also recognized the important role that instrumentalists, choirs, and soloists can play in moving God's people to prayer and praise and also in proclaiming God's word.

The high point of the service is the sermon. Indeed, everything else in worship builds to this point: the clear, careful exposition of God's word. Dr. Boice's vibrant yet serious demeanor when leading worship produced a strong sense of expectancy and gravity to what was about to happen when he entered the pulpit to preach. His commitment to systematic expository preaching is well known and is amply documented in his many books and commentaries. He often observed that the minister's primary purpose is simply to teach the Bible, and his ministry was characterized by serious Bible teaching. Over the course of his thirty-two-year ministry he sought to preach the whole counsel of God, working his way—passage by passage—through whole books of Scripture. His substantial preaching legacy includes many of the New Testament epistles, the gospels of Matthew and John, Genesis, the Minor Prophets, Psalms, and his famous sermons on Romans, as well as shorter series on books like Joshua and Nehemiah.

Six times each year, morning worship culminates in the reverent celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service always concludes with a hymn and a benediction. Here again, Dr. Boice often correlated the text to his theme, but he had a special fondness for the end of Romans 11:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of
God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

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“Who has know the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”
“Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?”
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Rom. 11:33–36)

James Boice’s commitment to a traditional order and style of worship is widely known. What is perhaps less widely known is his commitment to the participation of children in worship. He did not believe in lowering the content or quality of worship for their sake — “dumbing down,” as he called it. On the contrary, he believed in helping children grow into spiritual maturity by teaching them how to give praise to God. “The goal we should have with our children,” he wrote, “is to bring them up to the level of the adults — that is, to enable them to begin to function on an adult level in their relationships to God. . . . Even if they cannot follow what goes on at first, our task is to teach them so they both can and will.”¹⁰

Especially in the last years of Dr. Boice’s ministry, a concerted effort was made to help the children of Tenth Presbyterian Church glorify and enjoy God in their worship. A special children’s bulletin clarifies difficult words in the creed or hymns and provides questions to help the children understand the sermon. First and second graders are dismissed before the sermon to receive additional instruction in worship. The children sing hymns, study the Apostles’ Creed, and learn the sermon passage. But Dr. Boice himself introduced the most significant change. During the opening exercises of the children’s Bible school, he began to give a five-minute summary of the main points of his sermon. This enables the children to listen with understanding during worship; it also strengthens their relationship with their pastor.

Dr. Boice’s passion for worship never diminished. If anything, the last years of his ministry were characterized by a growing zeal for God and his glory. Perhaps this was fueled in part by his preaching through the Psalms from 1989 to 1997. These sermons were later published, and in the preface to the third and final volume, Dr. Boice notes:

What is particularly striking about these last psalms is that in one way or another they all deal with worship. All the psalms are intended for worship and have been used in worship throughout the ages, but these final psalms in par-

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ticular teach us what true worship is, who should worship, and when and how we should praise God. I can think of few points of Bible teaching that are of greater importance for today's church, when worship of God in so many of our churches is at a low ebb.¹¹

Like the close of the Psalter, Dr. Boice's ministry ended with a crescendo of praise. His final series of sermons came from Revelation. The sermons were memorable, and few in the congregation will ever forget their pastor's preaching on the worship of heaven. Speaking of the importance of confessing our faith by singing God's praise, he asked, "Can anything be more joyful and uplifting than that? Nothing at all, until we do it perfectly in the presence of our Savior and God." God was preparing Dr. Boice—and his church—for his entrance into glory.

Something else important happened during that last year in ministry. For the first time in his life James Boice was writing hymns—twelve of them in all, plus two songs for children. This too was part of his preparation for glory. It was also his last gift to the church. Dr. Boice had often expressed concern about contemporary Christian worship. His concern was not limited to the style of the music, but focused more specifically on the content of its lyrics, which he considered theologically shallow and biblically uninformed. But rather than merely complaining, he decided to do something constructive for the cause of a modern Reformation. The theme of his new hymns is perhaps best summarized in the first verse of the opening hymn:

Give praise to God who reigns above
 For perfect knowledge, wisdom, love;
 His judgments are divine, devout,
 His paths beyond all tracing out.
 Come, lift your voice to heaven's high throne,
 And glory give to God alone!¹²

About This Book

Give praise to God—that is both the theme and the purpose of this collection of essays. The book's title comes from Dr. Boice's first hymn. It expresses one of the Reformation slogans he loved to quote: *soli deo gloria* (to God alone be the glory). That Latin phrase and *sola scriptura* (Scripture

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alone) capture the essence of James Montgomery Boice's view of worship. The Bible is our only ultimate authority for worship, as it is for everything else. Scripture alone determines how we are to please God in our worship. *Sola scriptura*. All of our worship is dedicated to the greater glory of God, who alone is the chief end of all our praise. *Soli deo gloria!*

The first section of the book is called "The Bible and Worship." What is the Bible's own theology of worship? This section answers with a robust defense of what theologians call the regulative principle of worship. Stated briefly, this is the principle that human beings should offer to God only such worship as he has expressly commanded in his word. Although Dr. Boice did not often speak of the regulative principle, he agreed with its essential principle, namely, that our worship must be according to the Bible.

The second section of the book is also the longest: "Elements of Biblical Worship." Here the contributors address the standard elements of a worship service. Priority is given to expository preaching, because that was the heart of Dr. Boice's own ministry, yet without neglecting the other important aspects of public worship.

The third section of the book—"Preparing for Biblical Worship"—sets worship within the wider context of the whole Christian life, all of which is dedicated to the glory of God.

The fourth and final section of the book—"Worship, History, and Culture"—attempts to place Christian worship in its historical and ecclesiastical context. Dr. Boice was a keen student of church history and treasured the rich legacy we inherited from the fathers and Reformers of our faith. It was partly for this reason that he placed such a high priority on corporate worship and also sought its reformation in our day.

This book is for everyone who loves to worship God. Our hope is that it will help ministers who lead their congregations in worship, musicians who seek a deeper understanding of the spiritual purpose of their work, seminary students who are clarifying their commitment to biblical worship, and everyone else who sincerely desires to give praise to God.

All of the contributors have some connection to James Montgomery Boice. Most are his friends. Some were his colleagues in ministry at Tenth Presbyterian Church. Others worked with him in the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. Still others looked to his example from a greater distance. But all of us owe Dr. Boice a debt of gratitude for his encouragement in the

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worship of God—an immeasurable debt only partly satisfied by contributing to this book in his honor.

Worship can be a controversial subject. It is not surprising, then, that not all the contributors are in complete agreement about all matters pertaining to the worship of God. For one thing, not all of us are Presbyterians (which Dr. Boice would appreciate, given his tireless efforts to promote the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals). Nor would Dr. Boice necessarily have endorsed everything in these pages. Perhaps this point should be emphasized. We have not attempted to write the book that he might have written, although all the chapters bear the mark of his influence and imbibe the spirit of his attitude to God in worship. His own views on the subject are widely available and are generally consonant with the approach taken in these pages. We do not presume to speak for him, however, and have tried instead to write a useful book on worship—the kind that Dr. Boice might have enjoyed reading.

There was some debate among the editors as to whether this volume could be described as a *Festschrift*. According to proper German usage, a *Festschrift* is a collection of essays celebrating a significant scholarly achievement, such as a promotion to a distinguished professorship. Ordinarily the term would not be used to honor someone who is deceased. However, the term has come to enjoy a wider use, especially in America, and can now safely be applied to any commemorative anthology. According to the *Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, a *Festschrift* is “a collection of writings published in honour of a scholar.”

The term seems especially appropriate here. Although James Boice never accepted an academic appointment, he was a true scholar who set the highest intellectual standards for gospel ministry. Since he was not a professor, he never received an academic promotion. Instead, from the beginning of his ministry he served the church in the highest office it has to offer: pastor. Now, however, he can truly be said to have received his last and best promotion. He is in the presence of Christ, having been elevated from worship in this life, with all of its limitations and distractions, to the eternal worship of heaven. This collection of essays—this *Festschrift*—is presented in the memory of James Montgomery Boice upon the occasion of his promotion to glory.

One Saturday night, not long after Dr. Boice’s death, I went into the sanctuary of Tenth Presbyterian Church to pray and also to lament the loss of

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my late mentor and friend. When I was finished I went upstairs to my office, where I found a framed print propped up against the door. It had been left for me by Linda Boice, who had recovered it from her husband's office.

The print was a copy of a popular sign from colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. The small figure at the top, who was wearing a three-cornered hat, seemed weighed down by the cares of life. Apparently he was a shopkeeper, for the sign read: "Notice to all Patrons! I have been obliged by the sheer Weight of Fatigue to quit my Post, & repair to My Dwelling-house, until I have fully recovered My Usual Composure. All Patrons will find Me of a cheerful Demeanor, and in Readiness for Business or Consultation, upon a return." Printed in red at the bottom was the name of the owner and proprietor: James Montgomery Boice.

The sign captures the present situation perfectly: By the sheer weight of mortal fatigue, Dr. Boice has left his ministerial post and retired to his heavenly home, there to regain his customary composure. When we see him again we will find him of cheerful disposition, employed in the serious and joyous business of heaven, which is giving glory to the triune God. Then there is the pleasing ambiguity of the sign's final phrase: "upon a return." Who will return to whom? James Montgomery Boice will not return to us, but one day soon we will join him in giving praise to God, who reigns above. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. / To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

Part 1

THE BIBLE AND WORSHIP

*I*t seems almost an unnecessary question to ask, but we ask it nevertheless: Does the Bible tell us *how* we ought to worship God? Yes, the Bible tells us that we *should* worship God, that we were created *in order* to worship God. Worship, in one sense, is the natural response of our created nature: one way or another we respond to the Creator's self-revelation in worship. That we are fallen sinners means, as Calvin put it in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, that our hearts by nature are "factories of idols" rather than reservoirs of thanksgiving and praise to God. But, worship—whether true or false—is the natural instinct of the human heart.

A question then arises: Is there an acceptable way of worship? The answer is more complicated than at first appears. On one level, the answer is simple enough: *Yes*, of course the Bible tells us how we should worship! We are not free to worship God any way we please! There are ways that are acceptable and ways that are not. Just think of the elaborate way in which, under the old covenant, the sacrificial system was carefully laid out. It provided a regulative principle as to *how* God should be worshiped.

Another question then arises: Does this principle change when we move from the old covenant to the new covenant? Is New Testament worship devoid of a regulative principle? And still another question arises on the heels of the latter: Does the principle apply *only* to corporate worship rather than to private

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(personal) or family worship? Or does the principle apply to *all* worship, only *differently*.

These are the issues taken up in this section. Ligon Duncan seeks to address the fundamental questions: Does the Bible have a theology of worship? Is there such a thing as a regulative principle in the Scriptures and, if so, how is it formulated? Is the historic formulation of it outmoded for the church of today?

Derek Thomas takes this issue a step further, attempting to answer the criticisms of the regulative principle that have arisen in recent years, focusing particularly on those criticisms that arise from *within* the orbit of those who otherwise are committed to the historic understanding of worship.

Edmund Clowney, whose writings on worship and the church have been influential on several generations of Christians, addresses the importance of corporate worship as a means of grace. God designed corporate worship for Christians as *growing* ordinances. By reading the Bible, praying the Bible, expounding the Bible, and singing the Bible, God's people, Christ's bride on earth, grow into a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22 English Standard Version).

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James Montgomery Boice was, perhaps, the dean of North American evangelical/Reformed pastor-theologians for the last two decades of his life. No one could have been more worthy of a Festschrift in recognition of his ministry, though no one would have been quicker to deflect all praise to his gracious, sovereign God. This gift could not be given him during his life because of the wise but inscrutable providence of God. And so it is our desire to give praise to God in thanks for him and for his wisdom and ministry to us.

The subject of the volume is uniquely appropriate. This is so, first, because Dr. Boice had a passion for the corporate worship of the church—worship that was majestic and reverent, rooted in Scripture and history, God-intoxicated and Christ-exalting. Dr. Boice thought a great deal about corporate worship. It was a significant theme in both his teaching and writing ministry. We will not presume to speak for him, but it is our desire to speak in consonance with his voice on this vital issue. Second, this is an important issue to tackle in its own right. Indeed, it is a subject crying to be addressed. Confusion on basic issues is evident in both the theory and practice of the modern evangelical church. To be sure, many of us are helped by the research and writing of folks like Hughes Oliphant Old and Terry Johnson. These pastor-scholars lead us to a more intelligent appreciation

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of the biblical treasure bequeathed to us in the legacy of Reformed worship. They enlighten us to the guiding principles that for nearly four hundred years influenced in various ways the corporate worship of Congregational, independent, low-church Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches.

But this central Reformed Protestant practice of worship is facing new pressures and questions. It is time to hear the basic biblical principles again. Furthermore, there are significant cultural issues to consider. David Wells, Ken Myers, Gene Edward Veith, Marva Dawn, and many others help us greatly in approaching these matters Christianly and ecclesially. Still, a distinctively Reformed, full-orbed, biblically rooted, historically savvy, twenty-first century entry on this discussion awaits. We aim to begin that conversation. In doing so, we are simply following in the footsteps of James Montgomery Boice, who offered both diagnosis of and prescription for the corporate worship of the contemporary evangelical church and wrote, not long before his death:

In recent years, I have noticed the decreasing presence, and in some cases the total absence, of service elements that have always been associated with God's worship.

Prayer. It is almost inconceivable to me that something called worship can be held without any significant prayer, but that is precisely what is happening. There is usually a short prayer at the beginning of the service, though even that is fading away. It is being replaced with a chummy greeting to make people feel welcome and at ease. Sometimes people are encouraged to turn around and shake hands with those who are next to them in the pews. Another prayer that is generally retained is the prayer for the offering. We can understand that, since we know that it takes the intervention of Almighty God to get self-centered people to give enough money to keep the church running. But longer prayers—pastoral prayers—are vanishing. Whatever happened to the ACTS acrostic in which A stands for adoration, C for confession of sin, T for thanksgiving, and S for supplication? There is no rehearsal of God's attributes or confession of sin against the shining, glorious background of God's holiness.

And what happens when Mary Jones is going to have an operation and the people know it and think she should be prayed for? Quite often prayers for people like that are tacked onto the offering prayer, because there is no

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other spot for them in the service. How can we say we are worshipping when we do not even pray?

The reading of the word. The reading of any substantial portion of the Bible is also vanishing. In the Puritan age ministers regularly read one chapter of the Old Testament and one of the New. Bible students profit from Matthew Henry's six-volume commentary on the Bible. But we should not forget that the commentary was the product of Henry's Scripture readings, not his sermons. His congregation received those extensive comments on the Bible readings *in addition to* the sermon. But our Scripture readings are getting shorter and shorter, sometimes only two or three verses, if the Bible is even read at all. In many churches there is not even a text for the sermon. When I was growing up in an evangelical church I was taught that in the Bible God speaks to us and in prayer we speak to God. So what is going on in our churches if we neither pray nor read the Bible? Whatever it is, it is not worship.

The exposition of the word. We have very little serious teaching of the Bible today, not to mention careful expositions. Instead, preachers try to be personable, to relate funny stories, to smile, above all to stay away from topics that might cause people to become unhappy with the preacher's church and leave it. One extremely popular television preacher will not mention sin, on the grounds that doing so makes people feel bad. He says that people feel badly enough about themselves already. Preachers speak to felt needs, not real needs, and this generally means telling people only what they most want to hear. Preachers want to be liked, popular, or entertaining. And, of course, successful!

Is success a proper, biblical goal for Christ's ministers? For servants of the one who instructed us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him (Luke 9:23)?

Confession of sin. Who confesses sin today—anywhere, not to mention in church as God's humble, repentant people bow before God and acknowledge that they have done those things they ought not to have done and have left undone those things that they ought to have done, and that there is no health in them? That used to be a necessary element in any genuinely Christian service. But it is not happening today because there is so little awareness of God. Instead of coming to church to admit our transgressions and seek forgiveness, we come to church to be told that we are really pretty nice people who do not need forgiveness. We are such busy people, in fact, that God

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should actually be pleased that we have taken time out of our busy schedules to come to church at all.

Hymns. One of the saddest features of contemporary worship is that the great hymns of the church are on the way out. They are not gone entirely, but they are going. And in their place have come trite jingles that have more in common with contemporary advertising ditties than with the psalms. The problem here is not so much the style of the music, though trite words fit best with trite tunes and harmonies. Rather the problem is with the content of the songs. The old hymns expressed the theology of the church in profound and perceptive ways and with winsome, memorable language. They lifted the worshiper's thoughts to God and gave him striking words by which to remember God's attributes. Today's songs reflect our shallow or nonexistent theology and do almost nothing to elevate one's thoughts about God.

Worst of all are songs that merely repeat a trite idea, word, or phrase over and over again. Songs like this are not worship, though they may give the churchgoer a religious feeling. They are mantras, which belong more in a gathering of New Agers than among God's worshipping people.¹

The contributors to this volume share Dr. Boice's burden for the reformation of worship in the various evangelical churches today. And whatever differences we may have, we are united in the desire to see biblical worship restored and flourishing in the Bible-believing, Christ-exalting, gospel-preaching churches of today. This book is no less than an outline of a biblical program for the renewal of Christian worship in our time.

The Bible as the Key to Reforming Worship

If such a renewal is to be undertaken, on what principle will it be founded? If we are to live and worship together *solī deo gloria*, then what shall be the basis and pattern? The only answer for the evangelical Christian is *sola scriptura*. God's word itself must supply the principles and patterns and content of Christian worship. True Christian worship is by the book. It is according to Scripture. The Bible alone ultimately directs the form and content of Christian worship.

This is a Reformational emphasis, which came to fruition especially in the Reformed branch of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century (in contrast to the Lutheran and Radical Reformation traditions

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and in direct contradiction of the Roman Catholic tradition). It is found in Calvin and other first-generation Reformed theologians. It is found in John Knox and the Scottish tradition. It is found in the Puritan tradition of the Church of England, from the days of Elizabeth I to the Commonwealth and thereafter in English Nonconformity. It is firmly established in the Baptist confessions and in the Congregational creeds.

This strong and special emphasis on the corporate worship of God being founded positively on the directions of Scripture came to be known as the regulative principle. It is an extension of the Reformational axiom of *sola scriptura*. As the Bible is the final authority in faith and life, so it is also the final authority in how we corporately worship—but in a distinct and special way. Whereas all of life is to be lived in accordance with Scripture, Scripture does not speak discreetly to every specific component of our lives. There are many situations in which we must rely upon general biblical principles and then attempt to think Christianly without specific guidance in various circumstances.

The Reformers thought the matter of corporate worship was just a little bit different than this. They taught that God had given full attention to this matter in his word because it is one of central significance in the Christian life and in his eternal purposes. Therefore, we are to exercise a special kind of care when it comes to this activity—a care distinct from that which we employ anywhere else in the Christian life. He told us what to do and how to do it, in such a way that the prime aspects of worship are a matter of following divine direction; and thus the decisions that remain to be made by us—thinking in accordance with the general principles of Scripture and sanctified common sense, in the absence of positive scriptural warrant—are relatively minor. It is not difficult to find this axiom being articulated, in various ways, from the earliest days of the Reformed tradition to our own time—and in all the representative branches of the Reformed community.

For instance, Calvin said: “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.”² The Continental Reformed tradition, reflected in the Belgic Confession (article 32) and the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 96), asserts the same. The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 and the Philadelphia (Baptist) Confession of 1742 both say: “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 worshiped according

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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” (22.1). They also assert that “the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge . . . that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God . . . 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” (1.6). The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (1658), the Congregationalist emendation of the Westminster Confession (1647), affirms the same principles.

More recently, Anglican David Peterson defines worship as “an engagement with [God] *on the terms that he proposes* and in the way that he alone makes possible.”³ Even more specifically, Hughes Old, who does not employ the term *regulative principle*, nevertheless offers a description of this fundamental Reformed corporate worship principle that would have satisfied the Westminster Assembly:

Most things we do in worship we do because God has commanded us to do them. It is because of this that we preach the gospel, we praise God in psalms and hymns, we serve God in prayer, we baptize in the name of Christ. Some things we do in worship not so much because they are specifically taught in Scripture but because they are in accordance with Scripture. What is meant by that is that some of the things we do in worship we do because they are demanded by scriptural principles. For example we baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit because this is specifically directed by Scripture. It is on the basis of scriptural principles that before the baptism we offer the Baptismal Invocation asking the Holy Spirit to fulfill inwardly what is promised in the outward sign. The basic acts of worship we perform because they are clearly commanded in Scripture. The ways and means of doing them we try to order according to scriptural principles. When something is not specifically commanded, prescribed, or directed or when there is no scriptural example to guide us in how we are to perform some particular aspect of worship we should try nevertheless to be guided by scriptural principles.⁴

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What is being argued here is that there must be scriptural warrant for all we do. That warrant may come in the form of explicit directives, implicit requirements, the general principles of Scripture, positive commands, examples, and things derived from good and necessary consequences. These formulations of the Reformed approach to worship also acknowledge that lesser things about corporate worship may be decided in the absence of a specific biblical command but in accordance with faithful biblical Christian thinking under the influence of scriptural principles and sanctified reason and general revelation (e.g., whether to use bulletins, what time the services are to begin, how long they are to last, where to meet, what the ministers and congregation will wear, whether to use hymnals, how the singing is to be led, and the like). But the first things—the central elements, the principle parts, the essentials—have a positive warrant. The incidentals and accidentals will be guided by scriptural principles.

In order to sharpen this principle and make it more perspicuous and useful, Reformed theologians speak about the substance of corporate worship (the content of its prescribed parts or elements), the elements of worship (its components or specific parts), the forms of worship (the way in which these elements of worship are carried out), and the circumstances of worship (incidental matters that of necessity demand a decision but that are not specifically commanded in the word). Reformed theologians argue that the whole substance of worship must be biblical. Not that only words from the Bible can be used, but that all that is done and said in worship is in accordance with sound biblical theology. The content of each component must convey God's truth as revealed in his word. They also assert that God specifically commanded the elements he desired in worship (reading the word, preaching the word, singing, prayer, administration of the sacraments, oaths and vows, etc.). To and from these, we may neither add nor take away. As for the form of the elements, there will be some variations: different prayers will be prayed, different songs sung, different Scriptures read and preached, the components of worship rearranged from time to time, the occasional elements (like the sacraments, oaths, and vows) performed at various chosen times, and the like. There will be, of necessity, some human discretion exercised in these matters. So here, Christian common sense under the direction of general scriptural principles, patterns, and proportions must make a determination. Finally, as to circumstances—whether we sit or stand, have pews or chairs, meet in a church building or storefront,

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sing from a hymnal or from memory, what time on the Lord's Day services are to be held, and more—these things must be decided upon in the absence of specific biblical direction, and hence they must be done (as with the case of the forms above) in accordance with “the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word” (Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6; Baptist Confession of Faith 1.6).

Through the faithful implementation of this regulative principle, the various Reformed churches effected a renovation of Christianity, established a discipleship program unparalleled in Christian history, created a culture that survives to this day (albeit in a diminished scope and quality), and rejuvenated the apostolic norms of corporate worship. This chapter is a call for its deliberate reinstatement in the evangelical church as an indispensable axiom for and prerequisite to corporate worship as God intends it to be. This is a call issued by Dr. Boice himself when he said: “We must worship on the basis of the biblical revelation . . . [and] according to the doctrines of the Bible.”⁵ The key benefit of the regulative principle is that it helps to assure that God—not man—is the supreme authority for how corporate worship is to be conducted, by assuring that the Bible, God's own special revelation (and not our own opinions, tastes, likes, and theories), is the prime factor in our conduct of and approach to corporate worship.

Is the Regulative Principle Outmoded?

The regulative principle, however, strikes many evangelicals as outmoded. They see it as one historical expression of worship, but are not convinced that it is necessary or even applicable today. Of the more intelligent critics of this historic Reformed view of worship, some view it as a solely Puritan principle: characteristic of north European culture, invented by seventeenth-century scholastic theologians, narrower than Calvin's approach, and not embraced elsewhere in the best of catholic Christianity.⁶ We will have an opportunity to respond to some of these objections in this and the next two chapters. But I want to suggest that the main reason why many evangelicals have a hard time embracing the regulative principle is that they do not believe that God tells us (or tells us much about) how to worship corporately in his word.

Evangelicals have for a century or more been the most minimal of all the Protestants in what they think the Bible teaches us about the church

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in general and in their estimation of the relative importance of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). They do not generally believe that church government is established positively in the word; they often do not see the local church as essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission or to the task of Christian discipleship; they are suspicious of order as restrictive of freedom; and they generally juxtapose the priesthood of believers and local church autonomy over against the didactic authority of established church norms, confessional theology, and the testimony of the *communio sanctorum* through the ages (under Scripture). Consequently, since the doctrine of worship is a part of what the Bible teaches about the doctrine of the church, they are not predisposed in general to expect much in the way of important, definitive teaching about the conduct of corporate worship.

So, to say it again differently, the single greatest obstacle to the reform of worship in the evangelical church today is evangelicalism's general belief that New Testament Christians have few or no particular directions about how we are to worship God corporately: what elements belong in worship, what elements must always be present in well-ordered worship, what things do not belong in worship. To be even more specific, when we recall from our study of Christian ethics that every ethical action has a standard (a norm), dynamic (that which enables or empowers someone to do the action contemplated in the norm), motivation (that which impels someone to do the action), and goal (the final object[s] or purpose[s] of the action), we may say that evangelicals emphasize the dynamic of Christian worship (the grace of the Holy Spirit) and its motivation (gratitude for grace, a passion for God), but de-emphasize the standard (the Bible) and goal (the prime *telos* of glorifying and enjoying God).

Evangelicals do think that worship matters, but they also often view worship as a means to some other end than that of the glorification and enjoyment of God: some view worship as evangelism (thus misunderstanding its goal); some think that a person's heart, intentions, motives, and sincerity are the only things important in how we worship (thus downplaying the Bible's standards, principles, and rules for worship); and some view the emotional product of the worship experience as the prime factor in "good" worship (thus overstressing the subjective and often unwittingly imposing particular cultural opinions about emotional expression on all worshippers). Evangelicals believe these things about worship, but they do not think that

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there are many biblical principles about how to worship or what we are to do and not to do in worship.

In part, this may be the result of an understandable misunderstanding of the precise nature of the discontinuity between the worship of the people of God in the old covenant and the new covenant. Evangelicals have, by and large, gotten the point of Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament on the coming of Christ as the end of the types and shadows of the elaborate ceremonial worship of the old covenant. Thus they have, again rightly, rejected the approach of high-church traditions (whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Anglo-Catholic) that attempt to reimpose and reapply a christological version of the priestly ceremonialism of old-covenant worship or draw on the liturgical symbolism of Revelation (itself based on the worship practices of the old covenant) as normative for the church militant of the new covenant. Evangelicals know that this approach is not only confused, it is wrong and unbiblical.

Consequently, though evangelicals know that the Old Testament has instructions on what Israel was to do in worship, they tend to think that there are few if any abiding principles to be gained for Christian worship from the Old Testament, or they think that the New Testament emphases on the heart, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and worship-in-all-of-life displace these Old Testament principles, or they think that the New Testament has correspondingly little or nothing to say about the how of corporate worship, and some even think that the category of corporate worship disappears altogether in the new-covenant expression of the economy of God. But these assumptions are as wrong in one direction as high-church approaches are in the other. And, not surprisingly, these assumptions help an evangelicalism enveloped in a culture of individualism, relativism, and situationalism remain, in its approach to the gathered worship of God's people, strong on the individual, weak on the corporate; strong on the subjective, weak on the objective; strong on the heart, weak on the principles.

God's Pervasive Concern for How He Is Worshiped

God makes it amply clear, however, throughout the Bible that he does indeed care very much about how we worship. The Bible's answer to this query—does God care about the how of worship?—is an emphatic yes, not

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only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament. Where does the Bible teach this? Obviously one place is in the detailed provisions for tabernacle worship found in Exodus 25–31, 35–40, as well as in Leviticus. Exodus 25, for instance, in the middle of its divine instructions for the sanctuary and its furnishings, insists upon at least three aspects of the way that God’s people are to worship (thus touching the standard, motivation, and goal of worship and indirectly the dynamic). First, Israel’s worship was to be willing worship. It is to be “every man whose heart moves him” (25:2) who contributes to the sanctuary (note the contrast to this in the golden-calf incident in 32:2). If worship does not spring from gratitude for God’s grace, if it is not the heartfelt response to who God is and what he has done, then it is hollow. Second, true worship (like the goal of the covenant itself) has in view spiritual communion with the living God. God orders construction of the tabernacle that he “may dwell among” his people (25:8). That is God’s purpose in the old-covenant ordinances for worship, and so the people were to bear that goal in mind as they themselves built and came to the tabernacle. “I will be your God and you will be my people” is the heart and aim of the covenant—and the heart and the aim of worship. If worship aims for anything less than this, it is not worship at all but a vacuous substitute. Third, God’s worship is to be carefully ordered according to his instructions. God’s initiative is prime in the design of the tabernacle (again, in contrast to the golden-calf incident). God demanded that the tabernacle and all its furnishings be made “after the pattern . . . shown to you on the mountain” (25:40). God’s plan, not the people’s creativity, nor even that of the artisans who would build it, was to be determinative in the making of the place where his people would meet him (and indeed, in all the actions of the priests who would serve in this worship). This is, in essence, what the Reformers saw as a fundamental principle for Christian worship (an approach that came to be known as the regulative principle). This principle, in short, states that worship in its content, motivation, and aim is to be determined by God alone. He teaches us how to think about him and how to approach him. The further we get away, then, from his directions the less we actually worship.

But many fine evangelical theologians object at this point and say: “Yes, this principle was true for tabernacle worship, but not for new-covenant worship.” The idea behind this objection is that because of its unique typological significance, Old Testament tabernacle worship was guarded by unique requirements that God did not apply elsewhere in the Old Testa-

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ment or in the New Testament to the corporate worship of his people. So, they say, though our worship should be guided by biblical principles (in the same way as is the rest of life), it is not restricted to that which is positively warranted by the word (as was tabernacle worship).⁷

However, the Bible, the whole Bible, contradicts this position. The emphasis on God's concern for the how of worship (in its standard, motivation, dynamic, and goal) is pervasive, not only in the ceremonial code, but also in the moral law, not only in the Pentateuch but also in the Prophets, not only in the Old Testament but also in the New, not only in Paul but also in Jesus' teaching. Consider the following.

The Account of Cain and Abel

At the very beginnings of special revelation, integral to the postfall story of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, is found the account of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:3–8). Abel offers “the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions” and Cain offers “the fruit of the ground,” but the Lord “had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.” Why? Well, the narrative is sparse but suggestive of the answer. The Lord's rebuke (“if you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up?”) coupled with the stated contrast between the brothers' respective offerings indicates that Cain's offering was either deficient according the standard of God's requirements (and what they were is not spelled out for us, unless Moses expects his readers to think proleptically) or that his heart attitude/motivation in making the offering was deficient. In other words, Cain failed to worship in either spirit or truth or both. The how of worship was lacking in either its standard or motivation, and so God rejected his worship. Thus, at the outset of revelation, in a section of Genesis replete with emphases about the beginnings of worship and its importance, God sets forth a warning to every reader and hearer that he is very particular about how his people approach him in worship. It is before the moral law is expounded at Sinai. It is in no way connected to the tabernacle worship of Exodus or to the levitical system. It tells us before those things are ever announced that God cares about the how of worship.

The Story of the Exodus

Grounded in the great redemptive story of the exodus is another principle that shows the exceeding importance that God attaches to corporate

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worship and thus moves us to a concern for the how of worship. For instance, the whole exodus account, especially from Exodus 3:12 on, stresses that God's people are redeemed in order that they might worship him. Moses' very call emphasizes that God sends Moses to Egypt to deliver his people that they might worship him. Listen to the reiterated emphases of these passages: "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship" (Ex. 3:12); "let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God" (3:18); "let My son go that he may serve [or worship] Me" (4:23); "let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness" (5:1); "let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God" (5:3). Do not underestimate this repeated language. This is not merely a ruse to get Pharaoh to temporarily release the children of Israel. It is the primary reason why God sets his people free: to worship him. The primacy of worship in a believer's life is, thus, set forth. We are saved to worship! These passages, of course, reflect an interest in both worship in all of life and the specific activity of corporate worship. However, the highlighting of the specific activity of corporate worship in Moses' language and teaching about worship in the era of pretabernacle worship in Exodus (i.e., in his differentiation of the two types of worship [gathered praise and life service], in his description of the specific content of that gathered worship, in his interest in the initial location of that gathered worship [the mountain that God had shown], in the inclusion of stipulations on corporate worship in the moral law, in his heavily emphasized accounts of the subsequent abuse of corporate worship in the rebellion of the golden calf, and more) teaches us to be circumspect in our approach to corporate worship.

The First and Second Commandments

Grounded in the moral law itself and revealed in the first and second commandments (Ex. 20:2–6) is a fundamental indication that God is concerned not only with the whom of corporate worship, but also the how of corporate worship. No matter how these commands are numbered, the text still makes both points!

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on

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the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

God indicates here not only that he alone is to be worshiped, but also that he is not to be worshiped via images. Additionally, he stresses his extreme sensitivity about these matters. The very mention of the use of images anchors this passage in a concern for corporate worship (although, of course, it has implications for worship in all of life). This text, expressing the eternal and abiding moral law and not merely the ceremonial system of the tabernacle is the very foundation of the Reformed concern for “carefulness in worship.” Because God indicates that he is jealous about the whom and the how of worship, we are to be exceeding careful about the whom and the how of worship, and the best way to do that is to follow the regulative principle.

The ten words themselves are a disclosure of God’s own nature and not merely a revelation of temporary social, religious, and moral norms. The first command shows us a Lord who alone is God. The second witnesses to a God who is sovereign even in the way we relate to him (since there he teaches us that we may neither think about him nor worship him according to our own human categories and designs, but must rather know him and glorify him on his own terms and by his own revelation). Because these commands teach us first and foremost about what God is like, they also provide for us permanent direction on how we are to think of God, how we are to worship God, and that God cares greatly about how we think of and worship him.

Three points arise from a careful consideration of the second command.

God’s word must govern our knowledge of God, and thus its governance of worship is vital. Divine revelation must control our idea of God, but since worship contributes to our idea of God, the only way that God’s revelation can remain foremost in our thinking about God is if God’s revelation also controls our worship of God. God’s self-disclosure, his self-revelation, is to dominate our conception of him, and therefore God’s people are not to make images of God or the gods: “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the

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water under the earth.” An idol or graven image or carved image refers, literally, to something hacked or chiseled into a likeness. Thus the command demands that there is to be no image representation of God in Israel. The phraseology of Exodus 20:4 indicates that there is to be no image-making of God or gods for any reason. This prohibition clearly extends to images of other gods, as well as to images of the one true God. Deuteronomy 4:15–18 says:

So watch yourselves carefully, *since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you* at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. (emphasis added)

This moral law expressly teaches us that the Bible is to be our rule for how we corporately worship and even think about God. The Bible (God’s own self-disclosure and revelation)—not our own innovations, imaginations, experiences, opinions, and representations—is to be the source of our idea of God. By the way, this is why Protestant houses of worship have historically been plain, bereft of overt religious symbolism and certainly without representations of deity. The Bible is to be central in forming our image of God and informing our worship of him. And since the how of corporate worship contributes to our image of God, it is exceedingly important that we worship in accordance with the Bible. Jewish commentator Nahum Sarna expresses the force of the second command this way:

The forms of worship are now regulated. The revolutionary Israelite concept of God entails His being wholly separate from the world of His creation and wholly other than what the human mind can conceive or the human imagination depict. Therefore, any material representation of divinity is prohibited, a proscription elaborated in Deuteronomy 4:12, 15–19, where it is explained that the people heard “the sound of words” at Sinai “but perceived no shape—nothing but a voice.” In the Israelite view any [humanly initiated] symbolic representation of God must necessarily be both inadequate and a distortion, for an image becomes identified with what it represents and is

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soon looked upon as the place and presence of the Deity. In the end the image itself will become the locus of reverence and an object of worship, all of which constitutes the complete nullification of the singular essence of Israelite monotheism.⁸

But there is even more to be said about the underlying rationale of the second commandment. Again we ask, Why is there to be no image-making in Israel? Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum that "the medium is the message" sparks this interesting observation by Neil Postman:

The clearest way to see through a culture is to attend to its tools for conversation. I might add that my interest in this point of view was first stirred by a prophet far more formidable than McLuhan, more ancient than Plato. In studying the Bible as a young man, I found intimations of the idea that forms of media favor particular kinds of content and therefore are capable of taking command of a culture. I refer specifically to the Decalogue, the Second Commandment of which prohibits the Israelites from making concrete images of anything [as a representation of God]. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth." I wondered then, as so many others have, as to why the God of these people would have included instructions on how they were to symbolize, or not symbolize, their experience [of him]. It is a strange injunction to include as part of an ethical system unless its author assumed a connection between forms of human communication and the quality of a culture. We may hazard a guess that a people who are being asked to embrace an abstract, universal deity would be rendered unfit to do so by the habit of drawing pictures or making statues or depicting their ideas [of him] in any concrete, iconographic forms. The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking. Iconography thus became blasphemy so that a new kind of God could enter a culture. People like ourselves who are in the process of converting their culture from word-centered to image-centered might profit by reflecting on this Mosaic injunction.⁹

Thus, because Israel's view of God, its understanding of God was to be controlled by his self-revelation and by not human imagination or representa-

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tion, therefore its worship was to be aniconic—without images and visible representation of deity—because the how of worship contributes significant components to our conception of God. That means, of course, that Christian worship, too, is to be aniconic. We expand on this thought in a second point of consideration.

God's own character and word must govern our worship of God. God's nature and revelation are to control our worship of him, and therefore God's people are not to worship images of other gods or worship the true God through images: "You shall not worship them or serve them" (Ex. 20:5a). This phrase further specifies that graven images are to be neither worshiped or served. Yes, of course, false gods are not to be served/worshiped (which is obviously entailed in the first command), but even more to the point—the one true God is not to be served/worshiped through the use of images. This very point is driven home in the stories of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1–5) and the idolatry of Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28). This command is obviously directly relevant to the use of images in worship and devotion in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and even in branches of Protestantism (we must now sadly say). Still, we may venture that the greatest violations of this in our time are nonvisual, but rather mental and volitional. When people say things like, "Well, I know the Bible says that, but I like to think of God as . . ." they are no less idolatrous in their thinking, and thus worshiping, than was Israel at the foot of Sinai on that fateful day of spiritual adultery with the calf. In contrast to all human creativity and initiative, the Bible is to be our rule for how we worship God, because the Bible is our rule for how we are to think about God—and how we worship in turn impacts our concept of God. Put another way: how we worship determines whom we worship. That is why both the medium and the message, both the means and the object, must be attended to in true worship. So, the Bible (God's own revelation regarding himself and his worship)—and not our own innovations, imaginations, experiences, opinions, and representations—is to determine how we worship God. This reminds us that there are two ways to commit idolatry: worship something other than the true God or worship the true God in the wrong way. And the second word of the moral law speaks to them both. In fact, the second commandment disallows three things: making images of either false gods or the true God; using humanly initiated (un-

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warranted) images in worship; and, by extension, using means or media other than those by which God has appointed us to worship. Our Puritan ancestors called these innovations in corporate worship “will-worship.” Not surprisingly, then, the second commandment is one of the biblical sources of what the Reformers called the regulative principle. Terry Johnson puts it this way: “In prohibiting worship through images, God declares that He alone determines how He is to be worshiped. Though their use be ever so sincere and sensible (as aids to worship) images are not pleasing to Him, and by implication, *neither is anything else that He has not sanctioned.*”¹⁰

God’s seriousness about worship is displayed in his threats against deviation from his word. The importance of the manner and purity of our worship is seen from God’s nature, warnings, and promises as expressed in the second command, and so God’s people are to refrain from this because of who God is and because of what he warns and promises. Exodus 20:5b–6 reads: “For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” The character of God is presented here in a way shocking to our tolerance-drenched culture. He is jealous. He refuses to share his glory or his worship with anything or anyone else. The expression itself is an anthropathism (an ascription of human emotional qualities to God), but it is linguistically or philologically an anthropomorphism (an ascription of human physical qualities to God): the older meaning of the word behind the term *jealous* or *impassioned* is that God is “to become red.”¹¹ Alan Cole helps us appreciate the force of this kind of idiom in forming our understanding of the character of God:

Like “love” and “hate” in the Old Testament (Mal. 1:2, 3), “jealousy” does not refer to an emotion so much as to an activity, in this case an activity of violence and vehemence, that springs from the rupture of a personal bond as exclusive as that of the marriage bond. This is not therefore to be seen as intolerance but exclusiveness, and it springs both from the uniqueness of God (who is not one among many) and the uniqueness of His relationship to Israel. No husband who truly loved his wife could endure to share her with another man: no more will God share Israel with a rival.¹²

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The idiom, the expression, is obvious. God is calling to our minds the righteous jealousy of a husband wronged. Sarna puts it just right: “a jealous God” is “a rendering that understands the marriage bond to be the implied metaphor for the covenant between God and His people. . . . It underscores the vigorous, intensive, and punitive nature of the divine response to apostasy and to modes of worship unacceptable to Himself.”¹³ In other words, God is saying in this warning: “My people, if you commit spiritual adultery in your worship, I will righteously respond like the most fearsome wronged husband you have ever known.” The discontinuities between divine and human behavior are assumed and implicit in the idiom, but the point is crystal clear. Betray God by idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, and he will deal with you like a red-eyed, jilted spouse.

Here again, then, we see further grounds for the Reformed doctrine of carefulness in worship. The strictness of his justice mentioned here, that he punishes sin indefatigably, only adds to that concern for carefulness. It is fascinating to note the language: those who are idolatrous hate God and that those who worship according to his commands love him. The respective meanings of “hate” (to disobey) and “love” (to obey) need to be appreciated here. This all adds up to stress that the way we worship or, more specifically, the way in which we follow his commands for worship is a reflection of our knowledge of God and how seriously we take him. One reason that “Sing the Bible, pray the Bible, read the Bible, preach the Bible” is a motto for worship in my own congregation is out of respect for this command. We strive to be sure that all that we sing is scriptural, that our prayers are saturated with Scripture, that much of the word of God is read in each public service, and that the preaching is based on the Bible—in order that we might honor the one true God and not some idol of our own invention. The Bible supplies the substance of and direction for our worship and thus provides the surest way to know who God is and what he is like.

The Story of the Golden Calf

Grounded in the trauma of the incident with the golden calf (Ex. 32–34) is yet another testimony to the sheer importance of the how of worship. If there is any lesson here at all, it is that we cannot take the worship of God into our own hands, for Israel’s rebellion against the moral law’s commands regarding worship is presented here as a breaking of the covenant and a rejection of God. It is vital to remember that this is not a defection from the

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ceremonial law or the worship of the tabernacle—the people had not yet received these. Moses presents the actions of Israel as a contradiction of moral law. Hence, this story has special abiding significance. Several huge themes are operating at once in this section of Exodus. Among others, this whole section highlights the doctrine of sin. It is a “fall story”—the story of Israel’s covenant-breaking. We find a summary of this defection in Exodus 32:1–6:

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” Aaron said to them, “Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.” Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought *them* to Aaron. He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the Lord.” So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Israel, impatient at Moses’ long delay comes to Aaron not only looking for a visible representation of deity or of the divine presence, but essentially looking for a new mediator (there is a sense in which the golden calf and Aaron serve as their chosen replacements for Moses). The people’s request seems to be not a request for a different god, a god other than Yahweh, but rather a representation of him (or of the mediator). The people also speak disrespectfully and dismissively of Moses, God’s handpicked mediator. Ironically, without him and his subsequent intercession, they would have all perished here! Their demand of Aaron, to make a graven image (whatever interpretation is put on it with regard to its violation of the first or second commandments), is astonishing. Aaron facilitates their requests. Why he does so, we are not told, but he does not come out of this narrative favorably. Some of the spoils of the Egyptians are used to create the idol, and the rebellion was widespread (“all the people”). Aaron makes a golden young bull or ox idol (was it a shadowing of Apis or the Canaanite deities

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or a prophetic foreshadowing of the idolatry of Jeroboam?) and identifies it with or as the God who brought them up from Egypt. Some commentators suggest that the young bull was the pedestal on which the invisible God of Israel was standing, while others argue that it was a representation of deity. Either way, it is a violation of the second command! In some ways, the suggestion that the idol is a representation of the mediator even further strengthens the traditional Reformed interpretation of this passage and the second command.

Now that a “do-it-yourself god” or representation of him or material mediatorial object of his presence has been made, Aaron proceeds to make a do-it-yourself altar/sanctuary/place of worship and encounter. He still insists, however, that this is the worship of the Lord, that is, the true God, which suggests that Moses is highlighting a defection from the second command in this story. The feast day comes, the people worship their self-derived god in their self-derived way, and gross immorality results. Idolatry leads to immorality. This is the chain of connection in false worship: wrong worship, which is impiety, leads to immorality. Cole says: “This is not a casual incident: it is an organized cult, with a statue, altar, priest and festival.”¹⁴ One even wonders if this could have been a deliberate reaction against the aniconic worship announced in the ten words by those who had become accustomed to iconic worship through years in Egypt. Syncretism or pluralism or both was a part of what was going on in the camp of Israel. It was syncretism in that some in Israel wanted to worship the God of Israel in a pagan way (in this case, through visible representation), though God’s command made clear that Israel’s worship was to be exclusively aniconic. If there was pluralism at work in the incident, it involved worshiping someone or something alongside of or in addition to Yahweh, which is also idolatry.

Whatever the case, the whole passage points up (again) that how we worship is very important to God. Several applications flow from this principle and its violation in the golden-calf event: (1) impatience with God’s timing is an enemy of faith; (2) we cannot choose our own mediator; (3) we cannot picture the true God as we wish or will; (4) we cannot worship the true God and something else; (5) we cannot worship the true God except in the way he commands; and (6) false worship leads to false living and immorality. Cole perceptively notes: “It is because Israel is so like us in every way that the stories of Israel have such exemplary value (1 Cor. 10).”¹⁵ Terence Fretheim offers striking insights on the whole incident of the golden calf:

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At every key point the people's building project contrasts with the tabernacle that God has just announced. This gives to the account a heavy ironic cast. (1) The people seek to create what God has already provided; (2) they, rather than God, take the initiative; (3) offerings are demanded rather than willingly presented; (4) the elaborate preparations are missing altogether; (5) the painstaking length of time needed for building becomes an overnight rush job; (6) the careful provision for guarding the presence of the Holy One turns into an open-air object of immediate accessibility; (7) the invisible, intangible God becomes a visible, tangible image; and (8) the personal, active God becomes an impersonal object that cannot see or speak or act. The ironic effect is that the people forfeit the very divine presence they had hoped to bind more closely to themselves. At the heart of the matter, the most important of the commandments had been violated.¹⁶

God's verdict in Exodus 32:7–10 only reinforces this:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!" The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

God knows what is going on even though Moses does not, so he tells Moses to go see for himself. God uses the language of disownment here—"whom *you* brought up." It is also ironic in light of the people's disowning words about Moses in verse 1. God nails them in their crime accurately and specifically: They have (1) quickly (through impatience) (2) turned aside from the way (i.e., forsaken their covenant obligations of living in the Lord's way of life), (3) which he commanded them (i.e., they have broken the covenant directives); (4) more specifically, they have done this by making and worshiping an idol (in contradiction of the first and second commands) (5) and by claiming it to be the saving God of Israel (thus demeaning the one true God). It is important to note that, in his accusatory language ("they have

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quickly turned aside from *the way which I commanded them*”), God charges Israel not with departing from him, but from his way, his commands about worship (which consequently means a departure from God himself). Sarna notes: “Significantly, the text does not say ‘from Me’; they have adopted pagan modes of worship, but in worship of the God of Israel.”¹⁷ This whole indictment emphasizes the importance of the how of worship. Violation of God’s commands on worship is viewed as breaking the covenant and is cataclysmic in its consequences. Israel deserved to be disowned and cut off. That is why “before the Hebrews were allowed to erect the sanctuary and to worship in it, they had to repent of their sin and undergo a covenant renewal.”¹⁸

We have now seen four old-covenant examples of the Bible’s concern about the how of corporate worship. None of them are tied to the ceremonial code or to tabernacle worship. But Christians may be anxious to know if the New Testament really has testimony to this concern, and so we hasten on, leaving behind dozens of Old Testament passages that corroborate our claims, among them the following:

1. The story of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), who offer up “strange fire” to the Lord, that is, making an offering in a manner “which He had not commanded them” (10:1), and God strikes them dead (10:2). Moses records a thundering axiom in God’s verdict: “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy” (10:3).
2. The warnings of Deuteronomy (4:2; 12:32) that stress God’s demand that whatever he commands, especially in worship, “you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”
3. God’s rejection of Saul’s unprescribed worship (1 Sam. 15:22): when Saul offered a sacrifice out of accord with God’s instructions, he was rebuked with “to obey is better than sacrifice.”
4. The story of David and Uzzah and the ark, which explicitly indicates that David knew he had violated the regulative principle of worship (2 Sam. 6, especially vv. 3, 13).
5. God’s rejection of pagan rites in Jeremiah’s day “which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind” (Jer. 19:5; 32:35).

Jesus’ Rejection of Pharisaic Worship

Grounded in Jesus’ rejection of Pharisaic worship (Matt. 15:1–14), we find a dominical, new-covenant reassertion of the importance of the way in

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which we worship. Jesus cares about the how of worship. This passage is easily and often misunderstood, precisely because we live in an antitraditional age (where “new” generally means “good”). We tend to view the Pharisees as being overly scrupulous in their study and application of God’s law. Jesus, however, never makes that charge against them. His critique is always in another direction. It is their laxity about God’s law and their tenuous casuistry that undermined the prime force of moral law and drew his ire. Matthew’s text is a picture of the human-made ritual of the religion of the Pharisees:

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to *his* father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to *God*,” he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

‘This people honors Me with their lips,
But their heart is far away from Me.
But in vain do they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ”

After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. *It is* not what enters into the mouth *that* defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

In this passage, the Pharisees bring a charge against Jesus that he allowed his disciples to break the “tradition of the elders” regarding ritual hand-washing. This hand-washing was not hygienic, but religious. Note that it is Jesus who particularly applies the issue to the matter of the act of worship.

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Tradition in the New Testament can be either positive (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6) or negative (Mark 7:3, 9, 13; Col. 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18), depending on the context. Here it refers to the traditions of the elders, which involved (1) very high estimation of the specific interpretations and applications of the Torah by the elders, even approaching the point of these views and deductions being considered to be equally binding as the law of God itself; (2) not only applications of the law of God that went beyond what the law of itself taught, but often went beyond it in the wrong direction; and (3) interpretations and applications of the law that failed to do justice to certain central moral requirements of the law (focusing, rather, on the ceremonial/ritual). This exchange on the issue of the tradition gives Jesus the opportunity to discuss the important matter of ceremonial versus moral defilement and, ultimately, that of worship.

Jesus, using a phrase that precisely parallels the charge of the Pharisees, responds by charging them with breaking God's commandment. He then juxtaposes God's commandment with a practice that they have invented or endorsed: the rule of *korban*. Jesus' charge against them is that they have undercut the authority of God's word in preference for human-made rules. They have taken away from the word by adding to it. Their teaching is "subtraction by addition." Jesus illustrates that the Pharisees have a fundamental misunderstanding and foster a misuse of the ceremonial code in relation to the moral law (Matt. 15:3–6); and his verdict is that this misunderstanding/misuse stems from a hypocritical heart (15:7–9).

It is important to note that Jesus does not critique the Pharisees for being too tied to old-fashioned practices, caring about what the Torah says too much, or being too nitpicky about God's law. He charges them with ignoring God's law and attacking God's law by adding to it! Indeed, Jesus says that the words of Isaiah are perfectly suited to describe the Pharisees' worship: (1) it is lip service rather than God-honoring, in which their hearts are far away from him, rather than truly loving him; (2) it is empty worship, mere form; and (3) it is human-made, not based on the prescriptions of the word. Note then that Jesus' critique is internal and external: it pertains to both the heart and to the outward obedience of God's word. It has definite application to "all-of-life worship," but also to corporate worship. Indeed, the parallel account in Mark 7 makes explicit what is implicit in Matthew. Jesus' teaching here has enormous significance for Christian corporate worship in relation to the ceremonial law. Mark 7:19 tells us that Jesus' words

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meant the abolition of the ceremonial code's food laws for all new-covenant believers. The Book of Hebrews, based upon the underlying rationale of the abolition of the food laws (which was the dominical fulfillment of the totality of the ceremonial system), applies this same principle to show that we are no longer to worship corporately via the ceremonial/sacrificial forms of old-covenant corporate worship. Back to our immediate point though, Jesus makes it amply clear here that he cares about the how of worship, about the heart and obedience to the word, not only in worship in all of life, but in the corporate praise we bring.

Jesus' Words to the Woman at the Well

We find in Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman (John 4:20–26) an indication of the importance of the how of worship for new-covenant believers. In this deeply moving account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, after his uncovering of her hidden sin and shame, she asks him about a worship matter of long dispute between Jews and Samaritans and of great importance to them both:

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am *He*.”

Jesus' answer thunders with points of significance regarding the momentous redemptive-historical transition that he was effecting in his own life, ministry, death, and resurrection; but it also speaks specifically to numerous principles of corporate worship that remain essential for Christians today. We point to but three of them here.

Jesus indicates a redemptive historical shift regarding the place of worship. For hundreds of years, the divinely appointed site for sacrificial worship had

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been in Jerusalem. This was the only place where the acts of worship, originally authorized in the giving of the tabernacle structure and ordinances in Exodus, were to be done. It was the focal point of the manifestation of the presence of God with Israel. In response, however, to the woman's query whether to worship in this mountain or in Jerusalem, Jesus begins by stressing that "an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." In other words, in a sentence Jesus indicates a time not far in the future in which the old-covenant place for tabernacle/temple/ceremonial/sacrificial worship would no longer have relevance for the true believer. In that hour, which came through his resurrection and ascension and pentecostal affusion of the Spirit, the place of worship is no longer geographical but ecclesial. Wherever believers gather in his name will be the place of worship: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matt. 18:20). The house in which his presence is known is the house of his people, whatever physical structure they may find themselves in. This is one reason the Reformers shut and locked their church doors (outside of corporate worship times): to stress that no place or building held peculiar spiritual significance and value. This is a new-covenant principle of worship—it is not tied to any specific location. The Westminster Confession expresses this teaching of Jesus this way:

Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself, so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected or forsaken when God, by his word or providence, calls thereunto. (21.6)

Jesus stresses that worship is response to revelation and thus must be according to revelation. Jesus' answer "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem" was not all he had to say in response to what was, in effect, a query about the legitimacy of Samaritan worship. He went on to say, "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." In other words, the Samaritans were wrong to worship in their own self-chosen place. And because their worship was not in accord with God's revelation, they were also confused about whom they were wor-

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shipping. Jesus' words here are a confirmation that the Old Testament's teaching on the central significance of the tabernacle/temple worship had been rightly understood by Israel and that any departure from it (precisely because it would entail a departure from the commands of God's revelation) would lead worshipers, no matter how sincere, into confusion about God. Israel knew its God because it worshiped him according to his revelation; but because the Samaritans did not worship according to revelation, they did not know their God. This is a new-covenant example of the maxim "how you worship determines what you become." This is why Jesus later says that worship must be "in truth." True worship is impossible for the Samaritans (and for us) as long as they devise their own worship.

Jesus reemphasizes the importance of worship in the new-covenant era. He says: "An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." To glorify and enjoy God, to meet with God and engage with him, is so important to him that he himself is *seeking* us to become his worshipers. No higher commendation of the colossal importance of the activity of worship for new-covenant believers is imaginable. The plural *worshippers* indicates not only the scope of the future kingdom but also the corporate, congregational nature of the worship that God seeks. More, much more, could be said, but this suffices to show that far from being unconcerned about the how of worship in the new covenant, Jesus himself labored to stress the vital importance of how we go about worshipping God.

Paul's Rejection of the Colossian Heresy

Grounded in Paul's rejection of the Colossian heresy (Col. 2:16–19) is yet another reminder that in the new-covenant era the how of worship still matters very much. Without even considering his strong rejection of the ethical teaching of the errorists, it is obvious that Paul was responding to false teaching on worship in Colossae: "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Paul here emphatically calls on Christians not to allow people to judge them according to or influence them into following human-made or abrogated old-covenant rituals, even the old-covenant seventh-day Sabbath. Nothing he says here denigrates the

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new-covenant Lord's Day in any way; the religious activities he mentions in 2:16 are all parts of old-covenant worship, no longer binding on the new-covenant Christian. Paul is simply reminding Christians that they are not under the ceremonial law. And he sees that as vital for right corporate worship among new covenant Christians. His words still speak today to those who long for the elaborate liturgical and symbolical worship of the old covenant. Do not pass by the substance to return to the shadows, he says. So this response of Paul has to do with understanding the discontinuities of redemptive history.

Then Paul takes on angel worship and the false humility that accompanies it: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God." His critique is a rejection of the visions on which such worship is based and a condemnation of the insufficient view of Christ inherently entailed in such an activity. The criticism also clearly pertains to corporate worship, at least in part. It is hard to imagine such a thing as "angel worship in all of life" no matter what one does with the notoriously difficult phrase *the worship of angels!*¹⁹ Furthermore, the wrongheadedness of this worship has to do not merely with the internal and the subjective, but the external and the objective. Yes, Paul hints at heart insincerity in his comments about self-abasement juxtaposed with self-inflation, but his main points are that (1) the worship is not God-commanded but human-originated and (2) the worship does not do justice to the person and exaltation of Christ or our union with him. It is from this passage that the wise old Puritan divines got their phrase *will-worship*. Worshiping according to our ideas, however sincere, is an act of self-worship and specifically the worship of our own wills and wants. Here, once again, we find the New Testament far from unconcerned about the how of worship. For Paul it was vital, a fact even more apparent (if that is possible) in the next passage.

Paul's Directives for Corinth

Grounded in Paul's phenomenal directives for genuine charismatic worship in Corinth (1 Cor. 14) is an unparalleled expression of the new-covenant importance of the way in which we worship. Paul is perfectly

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willing to regulate the form and content of charismatic worship founded in the real and powerful working of the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit! Whatever we believe about the continuation of revelation, tongues, prophecy, and the like, this passage (in spite of its extreme interpretive challenges) yields crystal-clear teaching on numerous points relating to corporate worship, which are applicable to all Christians in all ages.

Paul places a premium on corporate worship that is understandable and mutually edifying. Hence, he values prophecy above uninterpreted tongues precisely because prophecy edifies the church:

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. . . . But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a [n uninterpreted] tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. (1 Cor. 14:2–5)

The edification that Paul contemplates is rooted in the mind, the understanding, and mature thinking. The vocabulary for this is apparent throughout. So edification, comprehensibility, the centrality of preaching, and the purpose in preaching to address the understanding and conscience, far from being cultural preferences derived from post-Renaissance, north-European rationalism, are instead apostolic principles or characteristics of new-covenant worship that trump even extraordinary activities enabled by God the Holy Spirit.

Paul describes apostolic-era corporate worship. Simply using Paul's vocabulary and phrases, we can build a description of the components and character of charismatic, apostolic-era corporate worship:

- ❖ spiritual gifts (1)
- ❖ prophecy (6)
- ❖ tongues (5 and elsewhere)
- ❖ edification, exhortation, and consolation (3)
- ❖ interpretation (26)

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- ✧ revelation, knowledge, and teaching (6)
- ✧ meaning (10)
- ✧ prayer and singing with the mind (15)
- ✧ knowing what you are saying (16)
- ✧ instruction (19)
- ✧ mature thinking (20)
- ✧ conviction (24)
- ✧ calling to account (24)
- ✧ the secrets of the heart disclosed (25)
- ✧ falling on the face and worshiping God (25)
- ✧ God among you (25)
- ✧ psalm (26)
- ✧ silence (28)
- ✧ learning (31)
- ✧ not a God of confusion but of peace (33)
- ✧ as in all the churches (33)
- ✧ the Lord's commandment (37)
- ✧ all things done properly and in an orderly manner (40)

These words and phrases point up central elements in corporate worship (preaching, singing, praying) in common with the people of God in all ages, key motivations and objectives in corporate worship (congregational edification, engagement with God, the by-product of witness to unbelievers), the heart aspects of true worship (consolation, conviction, disclosure, subjection), and concern for form and order (silence, subjection, propriety). But the overwhelming impression made by a review of this service is the cognitive stress of Paul: he wants people to understand what they sing and pray and what others say and preach; he wants instruction, teaching, learning, knowledge, and mature thinking. For those who parody the supposedly overcerebral corporate worship of the Reformed tradition, there will be utterly no comfort found for them in the description of the charismatic worship of 1 Corinthians 14!²⁰

Paul regulates the number and order of people allowed to exercise extraordinary gifts vested in them by the Holy Spirit during corporate worship! One cannot conceive of such a restriction on “worship in all of life.” Here are his rules: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be* by two or at the

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most three, and *each* in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church” (1 Cor. 14:27–28). “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” (14:29–32). Did you catch that? He said that no more than three shall speak in tongues or prophesy in a given service, and then only one at a time, even if God himself has granted one a prophetic revelation. There is no more astounding example of the sheer investment of dominical plenipotentiary authority in the apostles of the church in all of the holy Scriptures than we find here in this passage. If I could reverently suggest an imaginary dialogue. “But Paul, I have just received a prophetic revelation of God and I am constrained to disclose it.” “One at a time,” says Paul. “But Paul, God the Holy Spirit has given this word to me.” “I understand—let me repeat, it’s one at a time and if three have already spoken, remain silent,” replies Paul. “Paul, how can you? I am a prophet of the Lord!” “Because, my dear brother, what I speak is the Lord’s command for all the churches,” says Paul. Here we have the revelational regulation of corporate worship extending even to activity generated and enabled by the third person of the Trinity. The idea that order, or a concern for it, is inimical to the work of the Spirit and our response to it is dashed against the rocks by this new-covenant passage. The suggestion that applying the rule and order of Scripture will somehow quench the Spirit in corporate worship looks fairly ludicrous in light of this passage. Because God the Spirit who wrote the Lord’s command is the same Spirit who enables true worship, there can be no ultimate conflict between form and freedom, between the rules of Scripture and the heartfelt expression of praise, between the precepts of worship and unfettered engagement with God.

Paul puts restrictions on those who may preach the word in the corporate worship of the churches. He says: “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor. 14:34–35). Paul grounds this injunction not on some temporary cultural problem in Corinth but in the written word of God (“just as the

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Law also says”). There is no more easily observable example of the widespread rejection of the authority of Scripture in the worship of the church than in the ever-growing number of female preachers (however sincere, dedicated, talented, and otherwise orthodox they may be), even in ostensibly evangelical circles. Paul’s directive, however, is unmistakable. God’s word alone determines who may or may not preach in public worship.

Paul views his commands as requisite for the corporate worship in all churches, and not simply for Corinth. He says: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized” (1 Cor. 14:37–38). This comes in the wake of Paul’s declaring his rules on the ordering of tongues, interpretation, prophecy, preaching, and singing, as well as his prohibition of the teaching of women. Why must it be this way? Because, Paul says earlier, “God is not *a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints*” (14:33). God is not a God of bedlam, and since the same God is God of all his churches the same norms obtain: “All things must be done properly and in an orderly manner” (14:40). Once again we see that the major thrust of this whole passage is that God cares very much how we worship; he cares not just about our attitudes and motives, but about our actions and order. It is beyond debate that in the new-covenant era God continues to be concerned about how we worship, even though the specifics of the how of worship change from those of the old-covenant ceremonial system.

It is also apparent, even from this abstract of New Testament teaching pertaining to worship (without the benefit of exploring key texts like 1 Cor. 11), that the New Testament has a distinctive category of corporate worship and that it has a special concern about worship that is uniquely and distinguishably corporate. This is important to say because serious voices in the worship debate question whether a distinct category of corporate worship can be found in the new-covenant era. Some suggest that we need to rethink altogether why the church gathers in the first place. For worship? They argue: No, that is not the New Testament answer. The New Testament does not apply the corporate-worship language and terms of the Old Testament to the gathered activity of the local church, but rather to all of life. Therefore, the prime reason we come together is to fellowship, study the Bible, hear preaching, pray together, and the like, but not to worship

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God—that is what we do in our homes, communities, and vocations.²¹ So, in this view, the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament corporate worship is worship in all of life. This is a creative approach, to say the least, and it rightly stresses the New Testament's emphasis on worship in all of life (which is, of course, not without precedent in the Old Testament) and provides enough exegetical grounds and theological critique to prove fatal to any and all prescriptive high-church liturgical approaches to worship, but its word-study method does not do justice to the obvious continuities between the elements of Old and New Testament gathered worship (Bible reading, Bible exposition, singing, prayer, and sacraments). No matter what semantic designation is given in the New Testament for the general activity of the gathered people of God when it is engaged in reading, praying, preaching, and singing the word, it is clear that this constitutes corporate worship and that such a thing does exist even and especially in the new covenant. Only our modern tendencies toward individualism and reticence about distinctions blind us to this fact.

But the Bible does more than show us that there is such a thing as corporate worship and that God cares about how it is done. The Bible testifies, in both New Testament and Old, in its teaching about God and his enduring moral norms, by precept and example, that corporate worship is to be conducted in careful response to divine revelation. And thus we can say that the Bible itself provides us with what the Reformed tradition sometimes labels the regulative principle of worship. Much of what we have already learned substantiates this assertion, but in order to establish this point beyond the shadow of a doubt we will consider in the next chapter, not simply individual passages, but some of the broader theological themes of Scripture that provide the grounds for this distinctive approach to the form and content of biblical corporate worship.