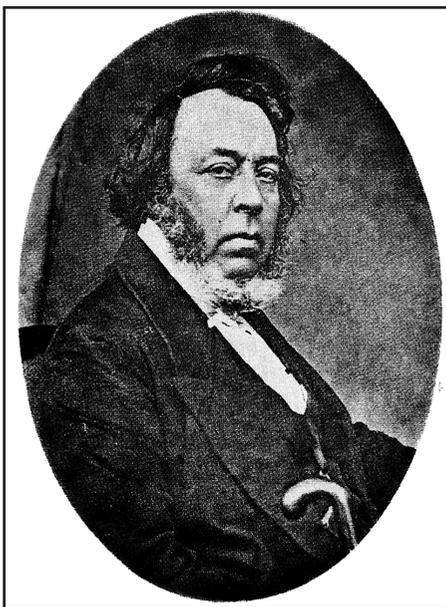


## Rites & Ceremonies in Public Worship

By James Bannerman

We have already considered the grounds on which we are prepared to argue that Public Worship—including as the proper and essential elements of it, prayer, preaching, praise, and Sacraments—is an ordinance of God fitted and intended to be permanent and perpetual in the Church. It is our duty now, in prosecution of the subject, to consider the office or function of the Church in connection with this ordinance, and the authority or power which it is given to her to administer in the matter. There is one question more especially opened up by such a consideration, which is of more than ordinary interest and importance in the department of ecclesiastical theology. I mean the precise office or power of the Church in reference to ritual and ceremonial observance in connection with the public worship



of God. The public religious worship of God is the dictate, as we have already seen, of natural religion—an ordinance for man binding and permanent even according to the law of nature. But viewed simply in this light, there is a considerably wide and unfettered choice allowed as to the manner in which men shall worship; natural religion not limiting or restricting to any great extent the liberty of men to worship God after the fashion they judge best, and not indicating very distinctly the precise form in which they shall do so. The social worship of God demanded by nature has not been very strictly

THE AUTHOR: This extract is taken from James Bannerman's *The Church of Christ* (1869; 1:335–375). Notes in square brackets were added by the author's son, D. Douglas Bannerman, in braces { }, by this editor.

regulated as to the manner of it by nature; and were there no other authority than the light of reason in this matter, it could not be said that men were strictly shut up to any

precise or unvarying method of it, or forbidden to adopt their own. But viewing the ordinance of public worship in another and higher light, regarding it as an appointment not of nature, but of revelation, looking at it as an institute founded upon the express command of God in His Word, the question arises: Is the same latitude as to the form and manner of it permitted as natural religion allowed, or are the worshippers tied up from exercising their own discretion and liberty of choice in the matter? In other words, taking public worship as a positive appointment of God in Scripture, enjoined on the Church as one of its standing and perpetual ordi-

nances, has the manner in which the duty is to be performed been enjoined in the Bible, as well as the duty itself? or has it been left open to the Church to use its own discretion in selecting, and its own authority in enforcing, a form and method of its own?

Of course there may be very different views adopted with respect to this power of the Church in regulating and determining for itself the form and service of public worship. It may be held that there are in Scripture express precepts, or particular binding examples, or general principles no less binding, sufficient to make up a proper directory for the manner of conducting public worship, leaving to the Church no liberty or office in the matter but to carry into effect the provisions so enjoined upon

it. Or it may be held that there is nothing in Scripture so definite and precise as to form a rule at all, and that the manner of public worship is a matter wholly and exclusively within the proper jurisdiction of the Church. Or it may be held, that while some specific institutions are appointed in Scripture in connection with public worship, yet very much of what is positive in regard to it is left for the Church by its own authority to regulate and enforce. And it comes to be a question of no small interest and moment to ascertain the true Scriptural principles which ought to rule in this matter, and to bring these fairly to bear upon the theories now referred to. What, then, is the office of the Church in the way of authoritatively regulating or prescribing the manner or services of public worship? We take it for granted that it is an ordinance designed to be permanent and of perpetual obligation in the Church. What is the extent and what are the limits of Church power in regard to it?

There can be no mistake as to the doctrine held and inculcated by the authorized standards of our Church with respect to the exercise of Church power about the public worship of God. In the twentieth chapter of the Westminster Confession, under the head of "Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience," the power of the Church not only in regard to matters of faith, but also in regard to matters of worship, is expressly excluded as not binding on the conscience, in anything beyond the limits of what is laid down in Scripture. "God alone," says the Confession of Faith, "is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship: so that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also."<sup>1</sup> The direct object of the Confession in this passage is no doubt to assert the right and extent of liberty of conscience; but along with that, it very distinctly enunciates the doctrine, that neither in regard to faith nor in regard to worship has the Church any authority beside or beyond what is laid down in the Bible; and that it has no right to decree and enforce new observances or institutions in the department of Scriptural worship, any more than to teach and inculcate new truths in the department of Scriptural faith. In entire accordance with this statement of the Confession, is the doctrine announced in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In the Larger Catechism, the answer to the question, "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" tells us that "the sins forbidden in the second commandment are all devising,

counselling, commanding, using, and in anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God Himself;" ... "all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever."<sup>2</sup> In answer to a similar question, the Shorter Catechism declares that "the second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or *any other way not appointed in His Word*."<sup>3</sup> The doctrine, then, in regard to the exercise of Church power in the worship of God held by our standards is sufficiently distinct. The Church has no authority in regulating the manner, appointing the form, or dictating the observances of worship, beside or beyond what the Scripture declares on these points,—the Bible containing the only directory for determining these matters, and the Church having no discretion to add to or alter what is there fixed.

The Church of Rome holds a doctrine in regard to the extent and limits of Church power in connection with the worship of God the very opposite of this. It assigns to ecclesiastical authority a right to regulate and enjoin to an unlimited extent the manner and the ordinances of Church worship,—making what additions it deems fit to the institutions, the observances, the rules enjoined upon the worshippers, without regard to the intimations of Scripture on the subject. Pretending as it does to be in possession of an unwritten word to supply the deficiencies of the written, and of an infallible authority to bind the conscience, it is in perfect harmony with its other claims that the Church of Rome arrogates a right upon its own authority to add to, and alter, and take from the ordinances and manner of worship appointed in Scripture. In virtue of this claim to dictate in religious worship, it has enjoined under pain of mortal sin numberless institutions and observances, not only unknown to the Word of God, but expressly forbidden there, adding to the service of the true God the worship of images; multiplying by means of alien inventions the number of Sacraments; superinducing upon the time of Divine worship appointed by God a host of fasts and holidays, pretending to equal authority; supplementing the discipline of the Church of Christ by penances, confession, pilgrimages; and corrupting the simplicity of Gospel ordinances by numberless frivolous or superstitious observances enforced as equally binding on the conscience. According to the theory of the Papacy, instead of the Church having

1. Conf. Chap. 20:2.

2. Larger Catechism, Q. 109.

3. Shorter Catechism, Q. 51.

no authority in public worship except to administer what the Scripture has already enacted, it has unlimited authority to multiply, alter, and repeal the regulations of Scripture on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

There is a third theory upon this point, intermediate between the doctrine laid down in the Westminster Confession, and the doctrine embodied in the pretensions of the Church of Rome. This third theory is held by the Church of England. It differs from the views of the Westminster standards, inasmuch as it ascribes to the Church the power to enact rites and observances in the public worship of God. But it differs also from the practice of the Church of Rome, inasmuch as it professedly limits and restricts the power of ordaining ceremonies to those matters which are not forbidden in the Word of

4. [Amesius, *Bellarmin. Enerv.* Amst. 1658, tom. iii. lib. i. cap. 8. Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. iv.] {William Ames, English Puritan divine (1576–1633) *Bellarmino Enervatus* (1630). Gilbert Voetius (1589–1676), *Politica Ecclesiastica*, 4 vols. 1663–1676.}

5. Burnet, *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Oxf. 1845, pp. 11, 14, 17, 223. {Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715)}.

6. [Hardwick, *History of the Articles*, 2d ed. Cambridge 1859, pp. 141–147. {Charles Hardwick (1821–1859), *A history of the Articles of religion: to which is added a series of documents from A.D. 1536 to A.D. 1615, together with illustrations from contemporary sources.*} After a careful summary of the evidence, in which he gives a list of the early manuscript and printed copies of the Articles in which the disputed clause does not appear, and then of those in which it does, Archdeacon Hardwick's conclusion is, that it could not possibly have been foisted into the Article "in defiance both of civil and ecclesiastical authority. It may possibly have issued from the Synod (*i.e.* the Convocation of 1563) at a later stage of their proceedings, and before the Articles had been submitted to the Queen; or else, which is more likely, it might afterwards have been interpolated while the document was in the hands of the Royal Council" (p. 146). Several other writers of the English Church who have discussed this point—as, for instance, Dr. Lamb in his *Historical Account of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Cambridge 1829 {John Lamb (1789–1850), *An historical account of the Thirty-nine articles: from the first promulgation of them in M.D.LIII. to their final establishment in M.D.LXXI. with exact copies of the Latin and English manuscripts, and facsimiles of the signatures of the archbishops and bishops*—have still more openly avowed their conviction that the clause never obtained the approval of the bishops, but was inserted by Queen Elizabeth, either with her own hand, as some maintain, or through her Council, and that with the express design of exalting her own prerogative as head of the Church of England, and making herself more completely the directress as well as the guardian of her people's faith. Compare Dr. McCrie's note on the "Sentiments of the English Reformers respecting the Government and Worship of the Church," *Life of Knox*, 5th ed. Edin. 1831, vol. i. pp. 400–405 {Thomas McCrie, *Life of John Knox* (1812; 2 vols., William Blackwood, 1831), "Note R, p. 107, Sentiments of English Reformers respecting the government and worship of the Church," 1.400–405.}. Archbishop Wake, *Authority of Christian Princes*, Lond. 1697, pp. 131, 136, etc. Append. vii {William Wake (1657–1737), *The Authority of Christian Princes Over Their Ecclesiastical Synods Asserted: With Particular Respect to the Convocations of the Clergy of the Realm and Church of England* (Printed for R. Sare

God. There is a curious and somewhat obscure question in regard to the authenticity of the twentieth Article of the Church of England, which declares the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in the worship of God. Bishop Burnet tells us, that the words asserting such a right are not found in the original of the Articles signed by both Houses of Convocation now extant.<sup>5</sup> And from this circumstance as well as some others, a suspicion is entertained by some that they were surreptitiously introduced, and were not agreed to by the Convocation of the Church.<sup>6</sup> But whatever truth there may be in this suspicion, the twentieth Article as it now reads must be held to be the authoritative declaration of the mind of the Church of England regarding the point before us. It is to this effect: "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith. And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written." There is a marked and obvious difference between this statement and the declaration of our Church's standards on the same subject. The doctrine of the Church of England is, that whatsoever is not forbidden expressly by the Word of God, it is lawful for the Church to enact by her own authority; the only restriction upon that authority being, that what it declares or enjoins in the worship of God shall not be contradictory to Scripture. Within the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there remains a very wide field indeed open to the Church, in which it is competent to add to the ordinances and institutions of religious service. The doctrine of the Westminster standards and of our Church is, that whatsoever is not expressly appointed in the Word, or appointed by necessary inference from the Word, it is not lawful for the Church in the exercise of its own authority to enjoin; the restriction upon that authority being, that it shall announce and enforce nothing in the public worship of God, except what God Himself has in explicit terms or by implication instituted. Under the limitation thus laid upon the exercise of Church power in matters of worship, there is no discretion or latitude left to the Church, except to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Scripture. In the case of the Church of England, its doctrine in regard to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree everything, except what is forbidden in the Word of God. In the case of our own Church, its doctrine in reference to Church power in the worship of God is, that it has a right to decree nothing, except what expressly or by implication is enjoined by the Word of God.

Now, keeping in view the various doctrines

entertained by different Churches in reference to this matter, let us proceed to inquire into the important principles that determine the place and function of Church power in connection with the public worship of God. The further question of the limits of Church power in this department, as excluding the right to add to or alter the positive institutions of Divine worship, and making it incompetent for the Church to decree rites and ceremonies, will be discussed afterwards.

SECTION I.—EXTENT OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

1. The fundamental principle that lies at the basis of the whole argument is this, that in regard to the ordinance of public worship it is the province of God, and not the province of man, to determine both the terms and the manner of such worship.

The sinner has no right to dictate, but must submissively learn from God both the conditions and the manner in which God will permit his approach for the purpose even of worshipping Him. The path of approach to God was shut and barred in consequence of man's sin: it was impossible for man himself to renew the intercourse which had been so solemnly closed by the judicial sentence which excluded him from the presence and favour of his God. Could that path ever again be opened up, and the communion of God with man and of man with God ever again be renewed? This was a question for God alone to determine. If it could, on what terms was the renewal of intercourse to take place, and in what manner was the fellowship of the creature with his Creator again to be maintained? This, too, was a question no less than the former for God alone to resolve. The sinner could not, from the very nature of the case, presume to dictate to God either the conditions on which his intercourse with God ought to be once more allowed, or the manner in which it might rightly and properly be continued. These were questions which could only be determined by a regard to the principles of God's moral government, and which none but God was competent to decide. Public worship is no other than the manner and the way in which sinners, associated together in a Church state, are permitted in their collective capacity to hold intercourse with God, to maintain in a right and befitting way their fellowship with Him, and to approach Him day by day in acceptable communion. The manner of such intercourse, as well as the conditions on which it was possible to renew it at all, is a matter in regard to which it was the province of God, and not of man, to dictate.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps a more free and unfettered intercourse with

God, without need of positive regulations to define the terms of it, and positive appointments to prescribe the manner of it, might have been competent to man, had man continued unfallen, and remained in the enjoyment of his first privilege of sinless fellowship with his Maker. Had the worship of God by men continued on the footing of their unfallen privilege, and been a duty and ordinance of natural religion, and no more, it might not have been necessary to tie down the manner of it by positive regulations, or to fetter the intercourse between men and their Maker by express enactments and arbitrary institutions. But it was necessary for Christ, *first*, to open up the way to the sinner for a renewal of intercourse between him and God after it had been once closed by sin; and *second*, to prescribe and direct by positive regulation the manner in which such an approach might be kept up. In regard to both the possibility of a renewal of fellowship, and the terms on which ever after it was to be maintained, it was necessary to consult for the honour of God's injured government, and the authority of His broken but unchangeable law. And both of these points were determined and regulated by principles arising out of God's unalterable and sovereign justice and grace. The *terms* were laid down on which sinners might return to God, and the way of approach be opened to them again; and these terms, we know, must have been regulated by a regard to the principles of everlasting righteousness and mercy. The *manner* also in which the intercourse of sinners with God, once renewed, might be kept up was also prescribed; and that manner, we know, must likewise have been regulated by a regard to the principles of

at Grays-Inn-Gate in Holborn, 1697).}. Strype, *Annals*, ed. 1723, vol. i. p. 335, etc., vol. ii. pp. 63–67. {John Strype (1643–1737), *Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion* (London: Printed by, and for, Tho. Edlin, 1725–31). The Edlin edition was published as noted; the typesetter likely picked up the 1723 from the next entry for Neal, which is also an error.} Neal, *Hist. of the Puritans*, Lond. 1723, vol. i. p. 267 f., vol. ii. p. 83, etc. {Cf. Daniel Neal (1678–1743), *The History of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837; repr., Klock & Klock, 1979), 1.176; 1.444.}

7. ["If we maintain the glory of God, let us speak in His own language, or be for ever silent. That is glorious in Him which He ascribes unto Himself. Our inventions, though never so splendid in our own eyes, are unto Him an abomination, a striving to pull Him down from His eternal excellency, to make Him altogether like unto us.... God's prescription hath been at the bottom of His acceptance of any duty ever since He had a creature to worship Him. So Socrates tells us in Plato (*De Legibus*, lib. viii.), that every God will be worshipped τῷ μάλιστα αὐτῷ ἀρεσκοντι τροπῷ—in that way which pleaseth best his own mind; and in Christianity, Hierome sets it down for a rule, that 'hones praeter mandatum est dedecus.'"—Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, p. 153, Gool'd's ed. {*The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gool'd, Edinburgh, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852) 153.}]

God's character as well as of ours. In other words, it was necessary, out of a regard to the principles of God's character as well as man's, that after the fall the manner of man's public intercourse with God should be regulated and prescribed by positive enactment, or that the ordinance of Church worship should be made a matter of express institution. Limiting our view to public worship as a mere ordinance of nature, no such necessity might have existed, or at least existed to the same extent. But regarding it as an ordinance of revelation and grace, destined to be the public and daily method of the intercourse of sinners with God, once lost and interrupted by sin, but now reopened and restored to them through a Saviour, it was necessary that the manner of worship as well as the possibility of worship at all, should be announced and fixed by Divine appointment.<sup>8</sup>

II. In the exercise of the power intrusted to the Church in reference to public worship, it is its office to administer and carry out the appointments of Christ.

8. Owen: a Discourse concerning Liturgies and their Imposition, *Works*, Goold's ed. vol. xv. Pp. 33–46 [*Works*, vol. 15 (Carter, 1851) 33–46]. Gillespie: Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies, *Presbyt. Arm.* Vol. 1. pp. 58–61, 133–136, 146–148 [cf. *Dispute*, rev. critical ed. (Naphtali Press, 2013), 129–138, 265–271, 289–293]. [Calvin, *Inst.* Lib. iv. Cap. x. 8–18, 23–26.]

9. ["Neque enim," says Calvin, arguing against the claims of the Church of Rome to the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies in public worship, "Neque enim (quod adversarii nostri ad faciendam. nobis invidiam inique mentiuntur) Ecclesiam. ludibrio habemus; sed obedientiae laudem, quā majorem nullam. agnoscit, illi tribuimus. Ipsi potius vehementer sunt Ecclesiae injurii, qui adversus Dominum suum, contumacem illam faciunt, dum ultra progressam fingunt quam per Verbum Dei licuerit: ut taceam insignem esse impudentiam cum pari malitiā conjunctam, assidue de Ecclesiae potestate vociferari: interim et quid illi a Domino mardatum sit, et quam Domini mandato obedientiam debeat, dissimulare. At si nobis, ut par est, animus fuerit cum Ecclesiā consentire, hoc magis ad rem pertinet, spectare ac meminisse quid nobis ac Ecclesiae a Domino praecipiat, ut illi uno consensu obediamus. Non enim, dubium est, quin cum Ecclesiā optime consensuri simus, si nos Domino per omnia obedientes praestemus."—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 18. {Cf. CR 30, col. 880. "For we do not scorn the church (as our adversaries, to heap spite upon us, unjustly and falsely assert); but we give the church the praise of obedience, than which it knows no greater. But grave injury is done to the church by those who make it obstinate against its Lord, when they pretend that it has gone beyond what is permitted by God's Word. I leave unsaid what infamous shamelessness—as well as malice—it is to harp continually about the power of the church, while at the same time to conceal what the Lord has commanded it and what obedience it owes the Lord's command. But, if, as is fitting, we are minded to agree with the church, it is more to the point to see and remember what the Lord has enjoined upon us and the church, that we may obey it with one consent. For there is no doubt that we shall agree very well with the church if we show ourselves in all things obedient to the Lord." *Institutes*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (The Westminster Press, 1960) 2.1196–1197.]

10. Colossians 2:23.

That there are positive institutions of worship appointed in connection with the Church, few will be disposed to deny. That there are ordinances of an arbitrary kind, framed and designed to express the homage of the collective body of believers in their act of worship to God, admits of no dispute. And it cannot be doubted that, since these ordinances cannot administer themselves, it is the office of the Church, in virtue of her authority, to dispense and carry them out for the benefit of the members. The office and authority of the Church in reference to the institutions of public worship, enacted by Christ for His people, are precisely parallel to the office and authority of the Church in reference to the doctrines He has revealed. It is simply and exclusively ministerial in both cases.<sup>9</sup> There is no more warrant in Scripture for the Church to add to the institutions, than there is for the Church to add to the doctrines of Christ. The very same principles that limit the authority of the Church in matters of faith, making its office declaratory of the truths before revealed, and not creative of new truths; not revealed, in like manner limit the authority of the Church in matters of public worship, making its office executive of ordinances and institutions previously established, and not invested with power to decree new observances not previously established. It is as steward and administrator of the mysteries instituted by Christ, and not as the inventor or framer of new mysteries of its own, that the Church is uniformly exhibited to us in Scripture. These mysteries can derive no authority from their appointment by human power; the ordinances which the Church administers are authoritative only in so far as, and no further than, they are ordinances of Christ. Their virtue as means of grace depends upon their being institutions not of men, but of Christ; and public worship, whereby sinners in their Church state approach to God, and hold intercourse with Him, is only lawful and only blessed when it can claim its origin not from ecclesiastical persons or authority, but from express Divine appointment. When the Church goes beyond the warrant of Scripture in devising ordinances or appointing worship, it trespasses into a province not its own, and into which it can carry with it neither the stamp of authority from on high, nor the virtue of a blessing from on high. Any worship beyond the limits of Scripture direction is an approach to God unwarranted and unblessed; any attempt at intercourse with God, except through the regulated channel and authorized manner of such intercourse, is presumptuous and unsanctioned. The worship of the Church's own invention or appointment is "will-worship" (ἑθελοθησκεία);<sup>10</sup> the addition to God's words or God's ordinances being as impious and unlawful as

any alteration or diminution. The command, “Thou shalt not add unto them,” when applied either to the truths or the ordinances of Christ, is as valid and binding as the precept, “Thou shalt not take from them.”<sup>11</sup> The proper walk of the Church in both cases is within the boundaries of what is expressly revealed in Scripture, and up to those boundaries. The sin of addition errs as decidedly as the sin of omission. Beyond the limits of what is expressly appointed for sinners in the way of institutions of worship, the Church can have no authority for its doings, and can expect no blessing from its Lord. Worship in a way not appointed and explicitly warranted by God can carry with it no authority as a Church appointment, and convey no blessing as a means of grace.<sup>12</sup>

III. In restricting Church authority in reference to the worship of God to the administration and application of those institutions and rules of worship expressly revealed in His Word, there is an explanation of the general principle—I do not call it an addition to it—which it is necessary to make. The one grand office of the Church in reference to this matter is to administer and carry into effect the directory for worship found in the Bible. But there is this explanation to be taken along with the general and fundamental principle now announced. It is competent and necessary for the Church, in carrying out that principle, not to devise or appoint new institutions of worship of its own, but to apply the directory for worship contained in Scripture to new cases or emergencies as they occur.

This is not the exercise of new authority on the part of the Church acting in its own name; it is no more than the application of the old authority, as Christ has regulated and declared it, to a new case. It was not to be expected, nor was it possible, that every new conjuncture of circumstances in public worship, demanding regulation and arrangement by the authority of the Church, could be specified and adjudicated on in Scripture, any more than it could be expected as a thing possible that every new controversy in doctrine that might occur would be specified and adjudicated upon in Scripture. But there is a sufficient directory in doctrine laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of truth which enable it to determine controversies of faith; and it does so on the occurrence of every fresh controversy, not by adding new doctrines to the Word of God, but by ministerially declaring and making application of the old in reference to the particular tenet in dispute. And so with regard to matters of worship. There is a sufficient directory for worship laid down in the Bible to furnish the Church with those principles of order which enable it to regulate every

new case occurring in regard to the outward worship of the Church which requires to be regulated; and it does so in this instance also, not by adding new rules or institutions to the service of the Church but by ministerially declaring and making application of the old to the particular matter of order to be settled or determined. It is a new application of the Scripture directory for Church worship, not a new directory, nor even a new addition to the old. A Scripture example will sufficiently illustrate and give distinctness to the argument; and I adduce it the more willingly, that I may rescue the case from the misapplication to which it has not unfrequently been subjected, when it has been alleged as countenancing the very opposite doctrine. A dispute, or at least a doubt, had arisen in the Corinthian Church in regard to the lawfulness of eating meat, part of which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, lest the doing so should imply, or be understood to imply, an acknowledgment of the idol. The question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating such meat had been referred to Paul; and what is his decision in regard to it? He declares that an idol is in itself nothing; that meat offered unto idols was neither the better nor the worse on that account; and that every man, in point of conscience, was to be free to eat, notwithstanding that it had been so offered. But because every man’s conscience might not see the matter in this light; because weak consciences might feel it to be a sin, and yet, because of the example of others who freely partook of the meat, might be emboldened to do the same, while yet they felt it to be a sin,—the apostle lays down the express injunction to refrain from it. Here we have the authority of Paul interposed to restrain a man in that which Paul himself declared to be indifferent and innocent; and upon this principle, that no member of the

11. Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Matthew 28:20.

12. [“Quod Christus debeat solus audiri Pater etiam de coelo testatur, dicens: ‘Hic est Filius meus dilectissimus, in quo bene sensi, Ipsum audite.’ Quare si solus Christus audiendus est, non debemus attendere quid alius ante nos faciendum esse putaverit, sed quid qui ante omnes est Christus prior fecerit. Neque enim hominis consuetudinem sequi oportet, sed Dei veritatem.”—CYPRIAN, *Epist.* lxiii. 14, *Opera*, tom. ii. p. 385, ed. Migne. On this passage Cardinal Turrecremata rather naively remarks: “Vocem ‘solus’ non excludere Papain, vel praelatos, vel alios doctores aut praedicatores bonos, sed tantum Antichristos, id est, contrarios Christo, qui contraria praedicant.”—Calvin, *Necessity of Reforming the Church. True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom*, etc., in *Traacts* relating to the Ref., Calvin Transl. Soc. Edin. 1844–51, vol. i. pp. 127–133, 151–154, 189, vol. iii. pp. 260–263, 270, 328 f. [Migne, *PL* 4, col. 385. Cf. Calvin, “Necessity of Reforming the Church,” *Selected Works of John Calvin: Traacts and Letters*, 7 vols. (1851; repr. Baker Book House, 1983) 1.127–133, 151–154, 189, 3.260–263, 270, 328ff.]]

Church had a right to be a stumbling-block or occasion of sin to another. “For,” says he, “when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”<sup>13</sup> And this Church regulation, laid down by the Apostle Paul individually, we find embodied in the decree of the apostles and elders met in synod at Jerusalem. It was authoritatively enacted as a rule of order for the Churches by that Council, that they were to “abstain from meats offered unto idols;”<sup>14</sup> and so it became a standing regulation for the whole Church in those days.

Upon what principle, I ask, did this exercise of Church power proceed in a matter of order appertaining to the Church? Was it an example of the power of the Church, to add new laws to the laws of Christ, or to make regulations of order for its members, which He had not made? To this effect the instance is frequently quoted. It is alleged to countenance the claim of the Church to the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies in cases indifferent. The very opposite is the true application of it. It is not an instance of the Church adding new regulations of its own to the laws of Christ; it is no more than an example of the Church ministerially declaring the law of Christ, previously revealed, and previously binding, to a new emergency, and making application of it to a fresh case that had occurred requiring to be regulated. The old law, binding before and enacted before, Paul distinctly enough announces when he tells the Corinthians in reference to the man, himself free in conscience to eat, who by eating became the occasion of offence to his brother: “When ye

sin so against the brethren, and wound so their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.” This was the law or the regulation which Paul individually, and the Council of Jerusalem collectively, did but apply to the fresh emergency that occurred, in order to determine the new case in the Church needing to be determined.<sup>15</sup> Neither Paul nor the Council made a new law; they only made a new application of the old law. They ministerially applied and carried out the former and standing law of Christ’s Church, to regulate a new point of order that had started up requiring their interposition. It was a standing appointment, known and binding long before in the Christian Church, that no member of it had a right, by doing what to himself might be lawful or innocent, to cause his brother to sin. The application of this permanent principle in the government of Christ’s Church to the point of order, raised by the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols, was direct and simple enough. “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.” And the embodiment of this general principle in the canon or regulation for order enacted by the Council of Jerusalem was not the decreeing by authority of the Church of a new regulation for its members, as has been often asserted, but rather the application to a present case of an old one.

It is not an addition, then, to the great fundamental principle formerly laid down in regard to the Church having authority only to administer and carry into effect the appointments of Christ, and not to make appointments of her own, when I say that the Church has power to apply the appointments of Christ to new cases of order and arrangement as they occur. The office of the Church is ministerial, to administer and execute the appointments of Christ in the department of the worship and service of God: but there is included in that office, from the very nature of it, the power to apply these appointments to every new case, as it arises, which demands to be regulated by them. The canon of the Synod at Jerusalem, held by the apostles and elders, with respect to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating meat offered to idols, is not an instance of the Church making decrees for the order and obedience of its members by its own authority, and beyond what had been decreed by Christ. On the contrary, it is an instance of the Church applying the decrees of Christ, previously binding on His people, to a fresh question of order that had arisen in the Christian society; and in so doing, acting strictly within the limits of what Christ had decreed.

There is one further explanation which should be made, in order that the office of Church power in connection with the public service of God in the Church

13. 1 Corinthians 8:12–13 [Cf. Calvin *in hoc*. {Calvin’s Commentaries (Baker Book House, 1981), volume 20, 284–286}. Hofmann, *Die heilige Schrift neuen Testaments*, 2ten Th. 2te Abth., Nördlingen 1864, pp. 177–183 {Johann Christian Konrad Hofmann (1810–1877), Lutheran theologian and historian. *Die heilige Schrift neuen Testaments / 2, 2, Der erste Brief Pauli an die Korinther* (Nördlingen: Beck, 1864).]

14. Acts 15:29.

15. [“Nec nova lex est ab apostolis lata,” says Calvin, speaking of the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, “sed *Divinum aeternumque Dei mandatum de non violandâ caritate*. . . . At certum tamen aliquid praescribunt: nempe quatenus pro tempore expediebat docent ac designant quibus rebus in fratrum offensionem possint incurrere, quo ab illis caveant: nihil tamen novum ad aeternam Dei Legem, quae fratrum offensionem prohibet, de suo afferunt.”—*Inst.* lib. iv. cap. x. 21. {CR 30, col. 883; McNeill/Battles, 2.1200. “This is no new law laid down by the apostles, but the divine and eternal command of God not to violate love. It takes away not one tittle from that freedom but only warns the Gentiles how to temper themselves toward their brethren so as not to offend them by abusing their freedom. Let this be the second point, that the Gentiles may enjoy a harmless freedom, without offending their brethren.”}]

may be distinctly understood. This further explanation is founded on a distinction which it is of great importance, in the argument as to the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies in religion, clearly to keep in view. There is a distinction between what is proper to Church worship as of Divine institution, and what belongs to it as of nature. There are certain things that belong to the practice of worship as being of Divine appointment and regulation; there are certain other things that belong to the practice of worship as being dictated and regulated by natural reason. The proper idea of public worship is the positive institution prescribed for the approach of sinners in their Church state to and their fellowship with God. In addition to this, there are circumstances of public worship, not properly or distinctively belonging to it as worship, but common to it with the proceedings of every civil or merely human society. What belongs to the public service of the Church as Divine worship, distinctively so called, is of Divine appointment, and is regulated by the positive command of Christ. What belongs to the public service of the Church, not as Divine worship properly and strictly so called, but as the circumstances common to it with any service or solemn transaction of human society, is not of express appointment by God, but is the dictate of nature, and left to be regulated by the law of nature. In other words, the distinction which it is necessary to keep in view, and which we have had occasion repeatedly to refer to in connection with the power of the civil magistrate about religion, must also be attended to here in connection with the office of the Church about the public service of God,—I mean the distinction between matters *in sacris* and matters *circa sacra*. There are matters not *in* religion, but *about* religion, over which the civil magistrate has proper jurisdiction. And so, likewise, there are matters not *in* the public worship of God, but *about* the public worship of God, in regard to which the law of nature comes in. The *ceremonies* and institutions of Church worship are properly and distinctively matters *in sacris*; the *circumstances* of Church worship, or those that belong to it in common with the ordinary proceedings or peculiar solemnities of men, are properly and distinctively matters *circa sacra*. The ceremonies and institutions of worship are matters *in* the public worship of God; the circumstances of worship common to it with civil solemnities are matters *about* the public worship of God. Upon the ground of this distinction, which is a most important one, there is a further proposition, additional to the three already enunciated, which it is necessary to the argument to lay down, when considering the question

of the office and power of the Church in connection with the public worship of God.

IV. Although the Church has no power in regard to the ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer and apply them, yet the Church has a certain power in reference to the circumstances connected with Divine service, and common to it with civil solemnities, to order and regulate them.

It is most important to remark, that, by the help of the distinction now adverted to, between the ceremonies or institutions of worship peculiar to it as a Divine ordinance, and the circumstances of worship common to it with other or civil solemnities, we entirely shut the door against the entrance of the Church, in its own discretion or authority, into the province of public worship properly so called. Within that province the authority of Christ alone is known or valid; and the institutions and regulations which He has prescribed are alone binding. In regard to what belongs to the worship of the Church properly so called, Christ claims the right to dictate alone, without rival and without partner in His office. But beyond that territory, and in the province of what is *circa sacra*, or not in the worship of God, but *about* it,—in the circumstances pertaining to it in common with the practice of any civil and well-ordered society among men,—the Church, by the aid of the light and law of nature, has authority to interfere.<sup>16</sup>

This office of the Church, not in the worship of God, but *about* it,—this power to regulate, not the ceremonies of Divine service, but the circumstances necessarily pertaining to it as well as to the services of any civil solemnity,—is defined by the Apostle Paul in the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The canon of Church order, which is there announced both in its extent and limitations, will be best understood by looking at it in the light of the circumstances that called forth the announcement. Indecencies and disorders of a peculiar kind had arisen in the Church of Corinth in connection with the administration and details of public worship. In the first place, in the abuse of the extraordinary gift of tongues with which the members of that Church had been endowed, the custom had become common, when the congregation met for public worship, for those so gifted to speak in languages unknown to the rest, and even to speak, as it would appear, two or three together, to the introduction of utter confusion and disorder in the worshipping assembly. In the second place, females, forgetting the restraints appointed by their sex, had been accustomed publicly to mingle

16. Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. vii. {*Dispute* (Naphthali Press, 2013) 254–271.}

in the deliberations of the Church, and sought to speak, if not to take part in ruling, in their assemblies. These were the public scandals to which Paul sought to apply correction and restraint, by announcing those principles of Church order which were applicable to such cases, and bringing them to bear upon the Corinthian offenders. And in what manner does the apostle proceed to do so? The offences to be put down although connected with the conduct and observances of public worship in the Church, were yet offences against nature; and accordingly it is by an appeal to the principles of nature that Paul seeks to correct and restrain them. He lays down the general rule, applicable not only to all Christian assemblies or Churches, but also to all civil assemblies, and equally binding upon both: “*Let all things be done decently and in order*” (παντα εὐσχημονως και κατα ταξι γινεσθω) Indecencies were forbidden by the light of nature, by reason itself, in all societies, whether Christian or not; disorder was to be put down even upon principles that applied to civil assemblies, not less than to assemblies of the Church. And there was enough in the dictates of nature and reason itself to condemn what was contrary to decency and order, apart altogether from any positive regulations established in the Church, or peculiar to it. And accordingly the Church, as a society, having all the rights which any civil or voluntary society has to maintain order and decency in its assemblies, was entitled and bound to exercise that power to the restraint and correction of such improprieties. Had it been, not in the assembly of the Christian Church at Corinth, but in the civil assembly of the people at Corinth, or in the council presided over by the proconsul of Achaia, that such scandals had occurred, they would have been repressed and punished upon the same principles. Had it been in a public meeting of the citizens or senators at Corinth that two or three had spoken together, or spoken in unknown tongues, or that females had sought to address the assembly, or to rule in it, nature itself would have supplied both the warrant and the law to restrain such disorders. And when these disorders and indecencies occurred in the Christian Church, the very same principles were applicable to their correction. But in applying such principles, it was the Church legislating or administering power not *in* public worship, but *about* public worship. In carrying out the general rule, “*Let all things be done decently and in order,*” the Church received no authority from the apostle to exercise jurisdiction within the territory belonging to the worship of God, but only authority to exercise jurisdiction in a territory connected indeed with the circumstances of worship,

but really belonging to reason and nature. The offences of the Corinthian Christians were offered against the dictates of nature, and would have been no less offences if connected with the solemnities not of a Church, but of a civil assembly; and the course of action prescribed to the Church for the purpose of correcting them, gave no power within the province of Divine worship, but only power about the circumstances connected with it. “*Let all things be done decently and in order,*” was a rule giving power to the Church in common with every civil society to guard itself against abuses that might be common to both and fatal to both, but nothing further.

It is plain, then, both from the nature of the rule itself, and from the circumstances in which it was given, that the general canon for Church worship, “*Let all things be done decently and in order,*” while it gives no authority to the Church in the matter of the rites and ceremonies and institutions of Divine service, except to administer them, does give authority to the Church in the matter of the circumstances of Divine service common to it with civil solemnities, in so far as is necessary for decency and to avoid disorder. There is a broad line of demarcation between these two things. In what belongs strictly to the institutions and ceremonies of worship the Church has no authority, except to dispense them as Christ has prescribed. In what belongs to the circumstances of worship necessary to its being dispensed with propriety, and so as to avoid confusion, the Church has authority to regulate them as nature and reason prescribe. On the one side of the line that separates these two provinces, are what belong to Church worship properly so called,—the positive rites and ceremonies and institutions that enter as essential elements into it; and here the Church is merely Christ’s servant to administer and to carry them into effect. On the other side of that line are what belong to the circumstances of worship as necessary to its decent and orderly administration,—circumstances not peculiar to the solemnities of the Church, nor laid down in detail by Christ, but common to them with other civil solemnities, and left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature; and here the Church is the minister of nature and reason, and her actions must be determined by their declarations. In regard to, not the circumstances of worship, but its ceremonies, the Church has no discretion, but must take the law from the positive directory of Scripture. In regard again to, not the ceremonies, but the circumstances of worship, the Church has the discretion which nature and reason allow, and must be guided by the principles which they furnish as applicable to the particular case.

That these circumstances of order and decency are left to be regulated by the dictates of reason and nature applicable to each case, is apparent from the statements of the apostle in writing to the Corinthians on this matter. In reference to the peculiar scandals that prevailed among them, he appeals to the principles of reason, and nature, and, common sense to put them down: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints." "It is a shame for women to speak in the Church."<sup>17</sup> And because the rule was previously binding by the dictates of reason and of nature, he lays it down as a standing and perpetual law in the Church, that all things within it were to be done "decently and in order,"—a law left open for the discretion of the Church to apply, as particular cases should require it, to the circumstances of public worship. But this rule, dictated by reason and nature in regard to the circumstances about worship, did not give to the Church any authority in regard to the ceremonies in worship. It did not permit the Church to carry its discretion or authority within the province already occupied by the positive institutions and express appointments of Christ. There the Church was already fettered by an express and positive directory for worship enacted by its Divine Head; and there the Church had no discretion, except to administer and apply it. In the circumstances of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of nature to carry into effect, according to the peculiarities of each particular case, the dictates of nature or reason, so that its solemnities, as well as those of any civil society, may be conducted according to order and decency. In the ceremonies of worship, the Church is the minister or servant of Christ, to carry into effect, according to His express directory, the rules for Divine service; in order that His rites, and ceremonies, and institutions, peculiar to the Church, and not common to it with any other society, may be administered in obedience to His authority, and in the way He has prescribed.

Such, then, is the office of the Church in regard to the circumstances of Divine worship, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies or institutions of Divine worship. In regard to the circumstances, as contradistinguished from the ceremonies, there is a discretionary power allowed the Church, such as belongs to any civil society, to be used, as other societies use it, at the dictate of reason and nature, and to be directed to secure in the solemnities of the Church, as in any civil solemnities, the blessing of decency and order. Beyond this it does not go; nor can it give any claim to interfere with, to add to, or alter the institutions of Church worship which Christ has ordained

in the Christian society. The assumption of such a power by the Church amounts to no more than this: that it has a right to exercise its own reason, like every other society, to guard itself against what is contrary to the dictates of reason in observing the positive institutions of Divine worship. It implies no authority to interfere by addition or alteration, or in any other way, with those institutions of worship. And yet I believe that it is from this quarter that the greatest danger is found to arise in the way of the Church arrogating to itself the power to decree rites and ceremonies *in* the worship of God. The acknowledged right that belongs to the Church, as it belongs to every voluntary society, to take order according to the dictates of reason and nature that its solemnities shall be conducted with propriety and without confusion, is interpreted as a right to add to or take from the positive institutions of worship according to the judgment or discretion of the Church. The rule of the apostle, as laid down to the Corinthian Church, plainly and undeniably included in it no power more than reason or nature would confer on any civil society in order to guard itself against those scandals or offences in the transaction of its business that are contrary to decency or order. This right, under the guidance of its own judgment and discretion, the Church has; but no more than this. Of course the difficulty is to draw the line between matters of decency and order, which it is competent to the Church to regulate in the circumstances of its worship, and matters of express appointment and command in the ceremonies of its worship, which it is not competent for the Church to regulate or interfere with. And yet I believe the difficulty of separating between these two things has been very greatly exaggerated. In the very acute and masterly treatise of George Gillespie, entitled *A Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies*, he lays down *three* marks by which to distinguish those matters of decency and order, which it is necessary and lawful for the Church at the dictate of reason and nature to regulate, from those parts or elements of public worship in regard to which she has no authority but to administer them.<sup>18</sup>

"Three conditions," he says, "I find necessarily requisite in such a thing, as the Church hath power to prescribe by her laws: *First*, It must be only a circumstance of Divine worship, and no substantial part of it—no sacred, significant, and efficacious ceremony."<sup>19</sup>

17. 1 Corinthians 14:20, 33, 35.

18. Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. vii. 5–7. [*Dispute* (2013) 259–263.]

19. So soon as you attach a spiritual meaning, a sacred significance, to anything connected with worship, it becomes *eo ipso* a part of worship. It stands forthwith on a like footing with the typical ceremonies of the Old Testament, many of which were quite as insignificant in

There is plainly a wide and real difference between those matters that may be necessary or proper *about* Church worship, and those other matters that may be necessary and proper in worship; or, to adopt the old distinction, between matters *circa sacra* and matters *in sacris*. Church worship is itself an express and positive appointment of God; and the various parts or elements of worship, including the rites and ceremonies that enter into it, are no less positive Divine appointments. But there are circumstances connected with a Divine solemnity no less than with human solemnities, that do not belong to its essence, and form no necessary part of it. There are circumstances of time and place and form necessary for the order and decency of the service of the Church, as much as for the service or actions of any civil or voluntary society; and these, though connected with, are no portion of, Divine worship. *When* worship is to be performed on the Sabbath, for example,—*where* it is to be dispensed,—*how long* the service is to continue,—are points necessary to be regulated in regard to the action of the Church as much as in regard to the action of a mere private and human society; and yet they constitute no part of the worship of God. And they are to be regulated by the Church in the same way and upon the same principles as any other society would regulate these matters; namely, by a regard to the dictates of natural

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themselves as a white surplice or a lighted altar candle. As the Prayer-book of the Church of England says, “These be neither dark nor dumb ceremonies, but are so set forth that every man may understand what they do mean, and to what use they do serve. So that it is not like that they in time to come should be abused as other have been.” Upon the correctness of this last statement, and the justice of the anticipation that good might arise from retaining humanly-devised rites in the worship of God to which a sacred meaning was expressly attached, the condition of the English Church in our own day furnishes a striking commentary. As to what constitutes a *part* of Divine worship, see Owen, *Discourse concerning Liturgies*, pp. 35–37. *Works*, Goold’s ed. vol. xv {*Works*, vol. 15 (Carter, 1851) 35–37}; Gillespie, *English Popish Ceremonies*, Part iii. chap. v. vii. 5, 8, 13 {*Dispute* (2013) 225–237; 259–261, 263–264, 268–269}. [The literature and the liturgical system of the English High Church party at the present day supply abundant illustration of the effective way in which this principle of religious symbolism may be worked in support of new doctrines. “To the Greek and Latin sister Churches,” says Mr. Perceval Ward, “she (the Church of England) seems to have lost the first principle of Christian worship—the Sacrifice of the Altar. We have to teach our teachers as well as our people this first principle of Christian worship. . . . I need not say that the best way to teach this doctrine is the adoption of a high and noble ritual,—a ritual that shall compel the dullest and most thoughtless to ask, ‘What mean ye by this service?’” *Difficulties of Re-Union*, pp. 93, 94, in *Essays on the Re-Union of Christendom*, edited by Rev. F. G. Lee, with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1867. Compare an Essay on the *Symbolism of Ritual*, p. 523, in *The Church and the World*, edited by Orby Shipley, Lond. 1867, and the same publication for 1866 and 1867, *passim*.]

reason, which have not been superseded, but rather expressly called into exercise in the Christian society for such purposes.

*Second*, The circumstances left to the Church to determine by the dictate of natural reason, and according to the rule of decency and order, “must be such as are not determinable by Scripture.” Of course, whatever in the worship of God is either appointed expressly by Scripture, or may be justly inferred from Scripture, cannot be left open to the jurisdiction of the Church, or to the determination of men’s reason. It is only beyond the express and positive institutions or regulations of Scripture that there is any field for the exercise of the Church’s authority and judgment. Within the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to public worship, the directory of Scripture is both sufficient and of exclusive authority; and the service of the Church is a matter of positive enactment, suited for and binding upon all times and all nations. But beyond the limits of what strictly and properly belongs to Divine worship, there are circumstances that must vary with times and nations; and for that very reason they are circumstances not regulated in Scripture, but left to be ordered by the dictates of natural reason, such as would be sufficient to determine them in the case of any other society than the Church. In addition to the test of their being merely circumstances and not substantial of worship, they are also to be distinguished by the mark that from their very nature they are “not determinable from Scripture.”

*Third*, The circumstances left open to the judgment of the Church to regulate according to the rule, of decency and order, must be those for the appointment of which she is “able to give a sufficient reason and warrant.” This third mark is necessary in order that the canon of Church order under consideration may not be interpreted so widely as to admit of the indefinite multiplication of rules and rubrics, even in matters that stand the two other tests already mentioned,—that is to say, in matters merely circumstantial, and not determinable from Scripture. Even in the instance of such, there must be a sufficient reason, either in the necessity of the act, or in the manifest Christian expediency of it, to justify the Church in adding to her canons of order, and limiting by these the Christian liberty of her members. There must be a sufficient reason, in the way of securing decency or preventing disorder, to warrant the Church in enacting regulations even in the circumstances of worship as contradistinguished from its ceremonies. Without some necessity laid upon it, and a sufficient reason to state for its procedure, the Church has no warrant to encroach upon the liberty of its members. And without

this, moreover, there could be no satisfaction to give to the consciences of those members who might scruple as to the lawfulness of complying with its regulations. Even in matters lawful and indifferent, not belonging to Divine worship itself, but to the circumstances of it, the Church is bound to show a necessity or a sufficient reason for its enactments.

All these three tests of George Gillespie's are combined in the singularly judicious and well-balanced statement of the Confession of Faith on this point. After laying down the fundamental position, 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 in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men," the Confession proceeds: "Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that *there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*"<sup>20</sup>

Every word in this brief but pregnant sentence has been well weighed by its authors, and deserves careful consideration from us. The things in connection with public worship which it is lawful for the Church to regulate must be "circumstances," not *parts* of Divine service; they must be *concerning* the worship of God, not elements *in* it; they must be common to *human* actions and societies, not *peculiar* to a *Divine* institution; they must be things with which reason or "*the light of nature*" is competent to deal; they are "to be ordered by *Christian prudence*," which will beware of laying needless restraints upon the liberty of brethren in the faith; and they are to be regulated in accordance with "*the general rules of the Word*," such as the apostolic canons referred to in the proofs to the Confession: "Let all things be done unto edification;" and, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

By such tests or marks as these, it is not a matter of much difficulty practically to determine what matters connected with the worship of God are, and what are not, within the apostolic canon, "Let all things be done decently and in order." They are the very things which reason is competent to regulate, which cannot be determined for all times and places by Scripture; which belong not to Church worship itself, but to the circumstances

or accompaniments common to it with civil solemnities, and which must be ordered in the Church, as in any other society, so as to secure decency and to prevent confusion. The power which the apostle gives to regulate such matters is no power to enter within the proper field of Divine worship, and to add to, or alter, or regulate its rites and ceremonies and institutions. It has often indeed been argued as if the apostolic canon gave such authority. It has been maintained that the authority ascribed to the Church to regulate all things according to the law of decency and order, is an authority to deal with matters *in sacris*, and not merely *circa sacra*. But it is clear, both from the nature of the apostolic rule, and also from the application made of it in respect of the scandals in the Church at Corinth, that no such peculiar authority to intermeddle with the provisions of worship set up by Christ in His Church was ever intended. It needed no supereminent power within the sanctuary of God, no priestly or infallible jurisdiction over sacred rites and institutions, no authority similar or equal to Christ's own over the order of His house, to tell the Corinthian believers that the circumstances connected with their worship of God must be regulated decently, and regulated without disorder. There is implied no power to add to or alter Christ's appointments for His Church, in the right to tell its members that they must not speak in the meetings of the Christian society in a way that would not be tolerated in any civil society; and that women were not to violate the restraints appointed to women, and respected and obeyed in every other public assembly. Ἐν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς κρινάτε. Οὐδὲ αὐτῆ ἡ φύσις διδάσκει ὑμᾶς; "Let them use their own sense, and judgment. Did not even reason and nature say the same?" And in assuming such an authority in pursuance of the apostolic rule, the Church was claiming and exercising no more than the right which reason and nature give to every lawful society, whether civil or sacred, to guard itself against those offences or disorders in the conduct of its affairs which

20. Conf. Chap. i. 6 [Cf. *Catechism of the Principles and Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland*, sanctioned by the General Assembly, ed. 1863, Qu. 33–38, 59–61, 136, 141, 179 {cf. <http://www.fpchurch.org.uk/2013/05/catechism-of-history-and-principles-of-the-free-presbyterian-church/>}. See also *Zwinglyi Articuli*, x, xi.; *Conf. Belg. Art. vii.*; *Catech. Heid.* 2, 96; *Conf. Helvet.* ii. cap. xxvii.; *Decl. Thorum. De cultu Dei*, 2, in Niemeyer's *Collectio Confess.* Lipsiae, 1840, pp. 5, 362, 453, 531, 677 {Cf. Hermann Agathon Niemeyer, *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis Publicatarum* (Lipsiae, 1840). See *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation*, 4 vols., ed. James T. Dennison (Reformation Heritage Books, 2008–2014) *Zwingly's Sixty-Seven Articles*, (vol. 1, p. 4), *Belgic Confession* (vol. 2, p. 427–428, Heidelberg Catechism (vol. 2, p. 771, 792), *Second Helvetic Confession* (vol. 2, p. 876–878) *Colloquy of Thorn* (vol. 4, p. 217)].]

even reason and nature condemn; nor in the right to exercise such an authority belonging to the Church is there the slightest ground for alleging that there is included a power to rule over the house of God in the solemn matter of worship, or to interfere to the smallest extent with the rites, and observances, and ceremonies which have been positively prescribed and regulated by the express directory found in Scripture for worship. In so far as regards the circumstances connected with the worship of God, in contradistinction to the worship itself, the Church is the minister of natural reason; and the rule for regulating such circumstances is the rule prescribed by natural reason, as interpreted by the canon of the apostle to the Corinthian Church. In so far as regards the ceremonies and institutions of worship, in contradistinction to the circumstances of their administration, the Church is the minister of Christ; and the rule to guide the Church in her administration is the express directory contained in the Scriptures. There is in the one case such a latitude of discretion allowed to the Church as nature and reason, interpreted by the apostolic rule, and applied to the changing circumstances of different times, and places, and nations, may permit. There is in the other case no latitude of discretion at all; the office of the Church being limited to the duty of administering the institutions of Christ, and carrying into effect the directory for worship which He has given in His Word.

The four propositions which have now been

21. [Edwards, *Antapologia*, Lond. 1644, pp. 81–91 {Thomas Edwards (1599–1647), *Antapologia, or, A full answer to the Apologeticall narration of Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sympson, Mr. Burroughs, Mr. Bridge, members of the Assembly of Divines wherein is handled many of the controversies of these times, viz. ... humbly also submitted to the honourable Houses of Parliament* (London: G.M. for Ralph Smith ..., 1644). Ames, *Suit against Ceremonies*, Part ii. chap. i. 4, 5, 16–19, ii. 1, 8–14, iii. 5, etc. {William Ames (1576–1633), *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship* (Rotterdam, 1633)}. Principal Rule, *The Good Old Way Defended*, Edin. 1697, pp. 275–290 {Gilbert Rule (c.1629–1701), *The good old way defended, against the attempts of A.M., D.D. in his book called, An enquiry into the new opinions, (chiefly) propagated by the Presbyterians of Scotland ... Likewise, some animadversions on a book called the Fundamental charter of Presbytery* (Edinburgh: heirs and successors of Andrew Anderson, 1697).]

22. ["Quod Dominus perfectae justitiae regulam traditurus omnes ejus partes ad voluntatem suam revocavit, in eo indicatur nihil esse Illi acceptius obdientia.... Omnibus enim saeculis haec irreligiosa religionis affectatio (quia humano ingenio naturaliter insita est) se prodidit."—Calvin, *Inst.* lib. ii. cap. viii. 5. {CR 30, col. 269. McNeill/Battles, vol. 1, p. 371. "On the other hand, the Lord, in giving the rule of perfect righteousness, has referred all its parts to his will, thereby showing that nothing is more acceptable to him than obedience.... In all ages this irreligious affectation of religion, because it is rooted in man's nature, has manifested itself and still manifests itself, for men always delight in contriving some way of acquiring righteousness apart from God's Word."]

announced and illustrated seem fully and fairly to indicate the extent of Church power in connection with the public worship of God. At the basis of the whole argument, and as the governing principle that rules every subsequent step in it, lies the grand principle that, as regards the manner of the approach to God of sinners in their Church state, it is for God alone, and not for man, to dictate or prescribe. Next, it is the primary office of the Church, as the servant of Christ, to administer and carry into effect the express institutions of worship and directory for Church service which he has enacted. Still further, as included in that office, it is the duty and right of the Church to make application of the directory for worship prescribed in Scripture to every new case connected with the public service of the Church which comes fairly under its application, and requires to be so regulated; and lastly, beyond the fair application of any positive directory for worship enacted in Scripture, there are circumstances of worship, as contradistinguished from worship itself, necessary to the orderly and decent administration of it, which fall to be regulated by the Church according to the dictates of nature and reason, interpreted more especially by the apostolic canon. All these general principles appear to be borne out by Scripture; and they serve pretty distinctly to indicate the office of the Church in connection with the public worship of God, and the extent of its authority in that department.<sup>21</sup>

Such being seen to be the *extent* of Church power in this matter, it is natural to inquire, in the next place, what are the precise *limits* assigned to it? To this subject—although it has been partially discussed in the preceding remarks—I shall now endeavour more specifically to address myself.

## SECTION II.—LIMITS OF CHURCH POWER WITH RESPECT TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

We have already dwelt at some length on the nature and extent of the power of the Church, in connection with the public services of the sanctuary. But there are certain limits to that power in this department of its exercise which it is most important to note, more especially considering the strong tendency of Churches to abuse their authority in the matter of the rites and ceremonies of worship. There can be no doubt that one of the earliest as well as most prevailing errors that found its way into the primitive Church, was the adoption of the unscriptural principle, that the Church was at liberty, under the plea of edification, to add to and regulate for itself the institutions of worship.<sup>22</sup> The Jewish converts

to Christianity in the early Church were permitted to bring along with them into its worship not a few of their own ceremonial and traditional observances; and the Gentile converts in like manner, when they abjured heathenism, did not altogether lay aside the superstitious practices of their ancient faith. The Christian Church, in its worship, was early accommodated and corrupted, to suit in some measure the tastes of both; so that within the period of the first four or five centuries, there were introduced into the field of religious worship the germs of most, if not all, of the mass of superstitious observances by which the Church of Rome is at present distinguished. Even the Reformation did not apply a full and effectual correction to this superstitious and sensuous tendency on the part of the Churches that were in doctrine and faith reformed. In our own country, both in the northern and southern divisions of it, the history of the sore contentings between the advocates and opponents of Church rites and ceremonies, of human invention and authority, forms no unimportant or uninteresting part of its ecclesiastical history. In England, the prelates who took a leading part in the reformation of the Church, succeeded in retaining in its worship not a few of those ceremonies which had been used in the Church of Rome, partly with the mistaken notion of conciliating the adherents of the old superstition, and accommodating for a time the religious service of the reformed Church to their prejudices and habits.<sup>23</sup> And it is one of the darkest pages in the history of the Church of England, which tells of the struggles of the Puritans

23. ["There is some truth in the pointed remark of Froude (*Hist. of Engl.* vol. viii. p. 270 {James Anthony Froude, *History of England*, vol. 8 (4th ed., London, 1866)), that the wish of the majority in the Church of England at the Reformation, was to have "something which would preserve to them the form of superstition, without the power of it." The testimony of three centuries of English Church history has sufficiently shown how strong and how inevitable the tendency is for the "power" to return again, wherever the "form" has been kept up. Principal Forrester, *Review and Consideration*, etc., Edin. 1706, pp. 277–284 {Thomas Forrester (c.1635–1706), *A review and consideration of two late pamphlets: 1. Queries to the Presbyterians of Scotland ... 2. A querie turn'd into an argument in favours of Episcopacy: to which are annexed Counterqueries offered to the prelatists of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Heirs of Andrew Anderson, 1706)}. Dr. Brown of Langton, *Letters on Puseyite Episcopacy*, Edin. 1842, pp. 40–51, 420–433 {John Brown, *The Exclusive Claims of Puseyite Episcopalians to the Christian Ministry* (Edinburgh, Bell and Bradfute, 1842)}.]

24. [A sentence in the hastily drawn up Scots Confession of 1560 (ch. xx.) has been appealed to by some Episcopalians as sanctioning the Anglican and Lutheran principle of Church worship. On this point see Dr. Cunningham's remarks, *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 252–3 {William Cunningham, *Discussions on Church Principles: Popish, Erastian, and Presbyterian* (1863)}. The statement of Calderwood, with which Dr. Cunningham there expresses his concurrence, that this sentence was not meant "to be so taken as if the Kirk had power to institute

against the imposition by ecclesiastical authority of its rites and ceremonies in worship, and of the final ejection from its pale of two thousand of the most godly of its ministers, in consequence mainly of the rigorous enforcement of such human inventions in Divine service. In Scotland, the advocates of the principle, that within the province of the worship of God no human authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, may enter, for the purpose of imposing its own arrangements, happily prevailed. And the Church of Scotland stands contrasted with the Church of England as well as with the Church of Rome, upon the ground of her assertion of the great truth, that the exercise of Church power in the worship of God is lawful to this extent, and no further, that it has a right to administer and carry into effect the express appointments of Christ, and no more.<sup>24</sup>

The limits set to the exercise of Church power in the province of Divine worship, are precisely the limits appointed to it in any other department of its exercise. The general Scriptural principles which, in respect to Church power viewed generally, we have seen to limit it, are the very principles which mark off the boundaries of its lawful exercise in connection with the worship of God. The power of the Church in reference to worship is limited in four ways: by a regard to its *source*, or the authority of Christ; by a regard to its *rule*, or the Word of God; by a regard to its *objects*, or the liberties and edification of the members of the Church; and by a regard to its own *nature*, as exclusively spiritual. We shall find that in each of these ways the power of the Church in

sacred rites, but only to make institutions (or appointments) of order and decency in the ministration of such rites and parts of Divine service as the Lord had already instituted," might be easily confirmed by reference to the unmistakable sentiments of John Knox, the author of the Confession of 1560, regarding this question. See, for example, his very graphic account of the public disputation between himself and Wynname, the sub-prior of St. Andrews, in 1547. Sub-prior: "Why may not the Kirk, for good causes, devise ceremonies, to decorate the Sacraments, and other Goddis service [Gottesdienst]?" Knox: "Because the Kirk ought to do nothing but in faith; and ought not to go before, but is bound to follow, the voice of the true Pastor." Sub-prior: "It is in faith that the ceremonies are commanded, and they have proper significations to help our faith; as the hardis in baptism signify the roughness of the law, and the oil the softness of Goddis mercy; and likewise every one of the ceremonies has a godly signification." Knox: "It is not enough that man invent a ceremony, and then give it a signification, according to his pleasure. For so might the ceremonies of the law, and this day the ceremonies of Mahomet, be maintained. But if that anything proceed from faith, it maun have the Word of God for the assurance; for ye are not ignorant that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." ... Sub-prior: "Will ye bind us so strait, that we may do nothing, without the express Word of God? What an I ask a drink? Think ye that I sin? And yet I have not Goddis word for me." Knox: "I would we should not jest in so grave a matter; neither would I that ye should begin to illude the truth with sophistry. And

regard to the worship of God is restricted; and that the exercise of it in imposing human rites and ceremonies, as part of that worship, is condemned.

I. The exercise of Church power in reference to the worship of God is limited by a regard to the source of that power, or the authority of Christ.

If the Lord Jesus Christ be the only source of authority within His own Church, then it is abundantly obvious that it is an unlawful interference with that authority for any party, civil or ecclesiastical, to intermeddle with His arrangements, to claim right to regulate His institutions, or to pretend to the power of adding to, or of taking away from, or altering His appointments. The positive provisions of Divine worship, including all its parts, are as much under His authority, and owe their form and character and binding obligation as much to that authority, as the articles of faith which the Church holds. In neither case has He delegated His authority to any ecclesiastical substitute to exercise in His absence. In the province of Divine worship as much as in the province of Divine truth, He claims the sole right to dictate and impose His appointments on men. And if it is a matter militating very directly against His authority as Head of the Church, for the Church itself to dictate articles of faith to the consciences of men in the department of Divine truth, it is no less so for the Church itself to usurp the power to impose rites and ceremonies on the consciences of men in Divine worship. Of course, when I say this, I mean rites and ceremonies imposed as *parts* of Church worship, and not merely circumstances about Church worship, necessary

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first, to your drink: I say that if ye either eat or drink without assurance of God's word, in so doing ye displease God. For says not the Apostle Paul even of meat and drink, that 'the creatures are sanctified unto man by the word and by prayer,' etc.... The question was not, nor is not, of meat and drink, wherein the kingdom of God consists not; but the question is of God's true worshipping, without the quibble we can have no society with God.... One meat I may eat, another I may refuse, and that without scruple of conscience. I may change the one for the other as oft as I please. Whether we may do the same in matters of religion? May we cast away what we please, and retain what we please? if I be well remembered, Moses in the name of God says unto the people of Israel, 'All that the Lord thy God commandeth thee, that do thou: add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it.' *By this rule, think I, the Kirk of Christ will measure Goddis religion, and not by that which seemeth good in their own eyes.*.... Such ceremonies as God has ordained we allow, and with reverence we use them. *But the question is of those that God has not ordained;* such as in baptism are spattil, salt, candill, cuide (*i.e.* a chrisom or face-cloth)—except it be to keep the bairn frae cauld—hardis, oil, and the rest of the Papisitical inventions."—*Hist. of the Ref. in Scotland*; Works, Laing's ed. Edin. 1846, vol. i. pp. 195–200. See also Knox's letter to the Queen Regent, vol. iv. pp. 80–84 [*The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (repr. AMS Press, 1966)].

to its administration according to decency and order, but forming no part of it. But that the rites and ceremonies imposed by the Church of Rome, and also the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of England, are used as *parts* of worship, cannot be denied. It cannot be pleaded or pretended that they are necessary to the outward administration of it in a decent and orderly way. They are observed and imposed as ordinary parts of worship as much as any other of its institutions,—not perhaps as essential to its validity, but certainly as adding to the edification it imparts. It is on this very ground indeed—namely, that such rites and ceremonies are fraught with spiritual benefit and advantage in the ordinary practice of worship—that they are defended by their advocates. They are not accessories to worship, necessary on the ground of decency and order to its administration; but ordinary parts of worship, introduced into it for the purpose of contributing to its spiritual effect. In the words of the Prayer-book of the Church of England, they are held to be "such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification whereby he might be edified." And in this character, and pretending to be parts of Divine worship—if not necessary to its validity, at least necessary for its full effect—they cannot but be regarded as an encroachment on the province of Christ as Head of the Church, and are an unlawful interference with His authority. He claims as His exclusive right, authority to dictate what observances and institutions of worship He sees best for the approach of sinners to God in a Church state; and it is a usurpation of His power for the Church itself to assume a right to regulate His institutions, to add to His appointments, and superinduce its own provision for worship upon His.

Such plainly is the limitation set to the exercise of Church power in worship by the authority of Christ. In the department of the rites and institutions of Divine service, His authority is supreme and exclusive; and if it is to be kept entire and untouched, there is no room for the entrance into the same province of the Church's power at all. This principle plainly excludes and condemns every ecclesiastical addition to the worship of God, and every human invention in its observances. It shuts up the Church to the simplicity of the Scriptural model; and forbids every arrangement within the sanctuary, and every appointment in holy things, of whatever nature it be, which does not find its precedent and warrant there. It condemns the impious and superstitious observances which the Church of Rome has unlawfully introduced into the worship of God: its

spurious sacraments; its worship of the Virgin, and the saints, and the host; its fasts, and penances, and pilgrimages; and all the rest of its unwarranted and unscriptural impositions upon its members, unknown to the Word of God, and opposed to it.

But the principle now laid down does more than condemn the ceremonies in worship which Popery has imposed, and which are often as revolting to all right Christian taste and feeling as they are superstitious and unscriptural. It condemns no less those rites and ceremonies introduced into worship by the Church of England, and considered by her to be not only innocent, but subservient to its spiritual effect. Whether such rites and ceremonies may or may not conduce to the spiritual edification of those who make use of them in worship, is not the question to be determined, although a right answer to this question would not be difficult to find, and it would militate strongly against the expediency of their introduction. But the only proper question is, Have these rites and ceremonies been appointed or not by the authority of Christ ruling alone and exclusively in His house? If not, then they are all unlawful encroachments upon that authority. It cannot be pretended that they are made no part of the ordinary worship of the Church, but rather belong to those outward circumstances of administration which fall under the apostolic canon, and are necessary to the order and decency of its celebration. It cannot be pretended that the sign of the cross is necessary to avoid indecency or prevent confusion in the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. It cannot be pretended that turning of the face towards the east is essential to the orderly and decent performance of any part of public prayer. It cannot be pretended that the use of a white surplice in some parts of Divine service, and not in others, is necessary to the right discharge of the one or the other.<sup>25</sup> It cannot be pretended that the consecration of buildings in which public worship is conducted, or of ground in which the burial of the dead is to take place, is a ceremony dictated by natural reason, and absolutely necessary to give effect to the apostolic canon. It cannot be pretended that the bowing of the head at the repetition of the name of Jesus, and not at the repetition of the name of God, is decent and orderly in the one instance and not in the other. These ceremonies and rites cannot be, and are not alleged to form, any part of the circumstances of decency and order necessary to the due discharge of Divine worship, as they would be necessary to the due discharge of any civil solemnity in like circumstances. And if not, if they are not introduced into Church worship as essential to preserve decency or prevent disorder, then they must be

introduced into Church worship as parts of it, considered to be necessary or at least conducive to its full or better effect. Viewed in this light, we are warranted to say in regard to them, without at all requiring to enter on the question of whether they contribute to the edification of the worshipper and the better effect of the worship or not, that they are unwarranted by the authority of Christ as revealed in His Word, and are therefore unlawful interferences with His power and rights as the only Head of ordinances in His Church.

II. The exercise of Church power in the matter of worship is limited by a regard to its rule, or the revealed Word of God.

Were a regard to the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church, and therefore the Head of ordinances in the Church, to be put out of view altogether, the rule which is appointed for the exercise of Church power, and to which it is bound to adhere, would itself condemn the invention of rites and ceremonies by ecclesiastical authority, and the imposition of human ordinances in the worship of the Church. There can be no law for the regulation of Divine service, any more than for any other department of the Church's duty, except the law of Scripture, to the exclusion of the arbitrary will or capricious discretion of all parties, civil or ecclesiastical.

25. "As to the name surplice," says Wheatly, "I can give no better account of it than what I can put together from Durand, who tells us that it was so called because anciently this garment was put *super tunicas pellicas de pellibus mortuorum animalium factas*—upon leathern coats made of the hides of dead beasts; symbolically to represent that the offence of our first parents, which brought us under a necessity of wearing garments of skin, was now hid and covered by the grace of Christ, and that therefore we are clothed with the emblem of innocence. But whencesoever came the name, the thing certainly is good.... The colour of it is very suitable; for it aptly represents the innocence and righteousness wherewith God's ministers ought to be clothed. And it is observable that the Ancient of Days is represented as having garments *white* as snow; and that when our Saviour was transfigured, His raiment was *white as the light*; and that whenever angels have appeared to men, they have always been clothed in *white* apparel. The substance of it is linen; for woollen would be thought ridiculous, and silk would scarce be afforded. And we may observe that, under the Jewish dispensation, God Himself ordered that the priests *should not gird themselves with anything that caused sweat*, to signify the purity of heart that ought to be in those that were set apart to the performance of Divine service; for which reason the Jewish ephods were linen.... The Levites also that were singers were arrayed in *white linen*; and to the Lamb's wife was granted that she should be arrayed in fine *linen, white and clean*; for the fine linen is, *i.e.* represents, the righteousness of saints."—*Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer*, Lond. 1853, p. 100 f.; see also pp. 105, 106, 416–418 {Charles Wheatly, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (1710; 1853; many editions)}. Proctor, *Hist. of Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge 1855, p. 210, etc. {Francis Proctor, *A History of the Book of Common Prayer: with a rationale of its offices* (Cambridge: 1855)}.

And if the matters of worship as well as matters of faith which the Church has to deal with are to be regarded according to that law, there can be no room for the exercise of human judgment in the case, and no door left open for the use of ecclesiastical discretion. In the department of worship as well as in the department of doctrine, the Church has no latitude beyond the express warrant of Scripture, and is forbidden as much to administer a worship not there revealed, as to preach a Gospel not there revealed. The single fact that the rule of Church power in the worship of God is the rule of Scripture, is decisive of the whole controversy in regard to rites and ceremonies, and ties up the Church to the ministerial office of administering a directory made for it, instead of presumptuously attempting to make a new directory for itself. The worship not enjoined in the Word of God is “will-worship” (Greek p 367), and as such neither lawful nor blessed.

There is no possibility of evading this argument, except by denying that the Scriptures are the only rule for worship, or by denying that they are a sufficient one. Neither of these denials can be reasonably made. The Scriptures are the only rule for worship, as truly as they are the only rule for the Church in any other department of her duties. And the Scriptures are sufficient for that purpose; for they contain a directory for worship, either expressly inculcated, or justly to be inferred from its statements, sufficient for the guidance of the Church in every necessary part of worship. There are, *First*, express precepts contained in Scripture, and designed to regulate the practice of Divine worship in the Church as to ordinances and services; *second*, There are particular examples of worship in its various parts recorded in Scripture, and both fitted and intended to be binding and guiding models for subsequent ages. And, *third*, When neither express precepts nor express examples are to be met with, there are general Scripture principles applicable to public worship, enough to constitute a sufficient directory in the matter. Anything beyond that directory in the celebration of worship is unwarranted and superstitious. And the danger of tampering with uncommanded rites and observances is not small. Let the evil of “teaching for doctrines or duties the commandments and ordinances of men” be once introduced into the Church, and a departure from the simplicity of Scripture worship once begun, and superstitions will strengthen and grow apace. In point of safety as well as in point of principle, it is the duty of the Church to adhere with undeviating strictness to the model of Scripture, and to shun the exercise of any power in Church

26. Article vi [Thirty-Nine Articles].

worship beyond the limits of that directory expressly laid down in the Word of God.

The limitation affixed to the use of Church power in public worship, by a regard to the authority of Scripture as its rule, is exactly to the same effect as the limitation set to it by a regard to the authority of Christ as its source. Scripture, because the revealed expression of Christ’s will in the matter, affixes the same boundaries to the exercise of ecclesiastical power in the worship of the Church, as does the authority of Christ as the Head of the Church. By both there is a field left for the use and discretion of natural reason, in ordering the necessary circumstances connected with the administration of it. The Bible was never intended either to bestow or to supersede common sense, whether employed about the outward and non-essential circumstances of Divine worship, or the outward and non-essential circumstances of any civil and human solemnity. The Bible was never intended to supplant natural reason in the department of matters essential to order and decency in the Church, as much as to order and decency anywhere else. But within the province of what is essential and proper to public worship as an ordinance of God, the Scriptures are the only rule; and the appointment of rites and ceremonies, as part of the ordinary public worship of God, is a sin against the authority of His Word as the sole and the sufficient rule in the matter. Perhaps one of the most flagrant and offensive examples of such an offence in connection with Divine worship, is the conduct of the Church of Rome, in arbitrarily declaring the Apocryphal writings to be canonical and inspired of God, and introducing them into the service of the Church in public worship, as of the same authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Worse by far than the introduction into the worship of God of a mere ecclesiastical ceremony, unknown or opposed to Scripture in some particular instance,—this is an attack on the authority of Scripture generally, by introducing into public worship the writings of man, as entitled to the same place and the same sway as the Word of God. And in the catalogue of human inventions introduced into the worship of the sanctuary in the Church of England, certainly not the least, or the least offensive, is the appointment of Apocryphal books to be read occasionally as part of the ordinary service, “for example of life and instruction of manners.”<sup>26</sup> Although she does not ascribe to these spurious writings the character of inspired Scripture, as Popery does, the Church of England cannot be considered without serious blame in introducing them into the public worship of God as an occasional part of her services. It is an

exercise of power, in regard to public worship, that very greatly offends against the authority of the Word of God as the sole rule of worship, to the exclusion of anything not expressly warranted by itself, and more especially to the exclusion from the service of the sanctuary of writings that pretend to the same authority with itself.

III. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by a regard to its objects, or to the liberties and edification of the members of the Church.

The introduction of human rites and ceremonies into the worship of the Church, by ecclesiastical authority, very directly goes to oppress the consciences and abridge the spiritual freedom of Christ's people. In so far as the provisions of public worship are appointed by Christ, and expressly regulated in His Word, the plea of conscience cannot lawfully come in to resist their observance, or object against the enforcement of them. Conscience has no right, and can possess no liberties, in opposition to the ordinances of Him who is the Lord of the conscience. But the rights of conscience furnish a plea that may lawfully be urged in opposition to ordinances and ceremonies imposed by mere human authority, and enforced by ecclesiastical power. In so far as the provisions of worship in the Church are merely human, and not of Christ, the conscience of the members who are called upon to comply with such provisions, when grieved and offended, has a right to be heard and respected. Even when the ceremonies enjoined are in themselves indifferent and not offensive, the fact that they are imposed by man as part of a service which Christ alone has a right to impose,—that as portions of a Divine ordinance they are introduced by human authority, and not by the authority of Christ,—is itself sufficient, whatever be their character as in themselves, and apart from this introduction blameless or not, to evince that they are unlawful. Every part of Church worship, because an ordinance of God, is binding upon the conscience by His authority: it imposes a kind of obligation which no other solemnity can impose. And when, as part of that ordinance, there is introduced some rite or ceremony or appointment of man, claiming to have an equal authority, and to lay upon the conscience the same obligation, however harmless it may be in itself, it is an offence against the liberty and rights of the Christian people of the Church. It is of no avail to allege, that the members of the Church which imposes ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies as part of a Divine ordinance, have the alternative open to them of withdrawing from the communion of the Church if their consciences are aggrieved, and so preserving their Christian liberty by secession. The Church has no right to offer to its members

the alternative of submission to her commanded ceremonies or the forfeiture of Church communion, and by an exercise of its authority to shut them up to the adoption of the one or the other of these two things. The Church has no right to impose on the conscience or obedience of its members its own ecclesiastical inventions, by the force or terror of excommunication from its fellowship. To do so, is to forget that she has no title to make terms of communion for herself, or to enforce any but what Christ has laid down. It is to forget that she has no right to make still narrower the narrow gate of entrance into the Church, by restrictions of her own devising. To lay down a formula of Church worship of her own, to appoint rites and ceremonies of her own, and to enforce these under the alternative of forfeiture of Church fellowship, is a violent and unlawful encroachment upon the conscience and the liberties of Christ's people. The restriction thus put upon the exercise of Church power in public worship, by a due regard to the liberties of Christ's people, effectually excludes the introduction into it of human arrangements or ecclesiastical ordinances. We have already had occasion to remark, in the case of the Corinthian Church, how, with regard to a practice declared to be indifferent and innocent by Paul himself, he nevertheless refused to adopt it in his own conduct,—and much more would he have refused to impose it on others who deemed it not innocent,—when he saw it to “wound their weak consciences.” In the case of meat offered to idols, although in his own estimation it was neither the better nor the worse for being so offered, yet he laid down the principle, “I will not eat meat so long as the world standeth, if it give occasion of stumbling to my brother.”<sup>27</sup> And the Council at Jerusalem embodied the same general principle in one of its canons for Church order.<sup>28</sup> It was enough to justify an express prohibition of a practice in itself harmless, if that practice offended even the mistaken consciences of any of Christ's people. Respect, then, to the liberties of its members, as that liberty is interpreted by the apostle and the council at Jerusalem, must *à fortiori* prevent the imposition, by ecclesiastical authority, upon them of practices or ordinances in regard to which their consciences have reason to be offended, because they are not blameless. In such a light must many of the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England be regarded; and on this ground the Puritans resisted the imposition of them, although in vain. These ceremonies whatever might be their own character when viewed apart by themselves, were not blameless, because they

27. 1 Corinthians 8:13.

28. Acts 15:20, 29.

were accounted part and parcel of the corruptions of the Papal apostasy, “relics of the Amorites,” as Bishop Jewel called them,—and in consequence, directly fitted to ensnare consciences neither weak nor mistaken, and to involve the abettors and practisers of them in the sin of partaking in its superstitions. Kneeling at the communion, for example, whether blameless or not in itself, formed part of the Popish system of transubstantiation, and of the idolatrous worship paid to the host. Stated fasts and holidays appointed and observed by the Church—whatever might be said in favour of them considered apart and by themselves—were part and parcel of the Romish claim to impart holiness to times and seasons by ecclesiastical authority alone. The surplice, appropriated as the dress of the minister in certain parts of worship and not in others, was an element in the Popish theory of priestly virtue and sacramental grace. The sign of the cross in baptism could not be separated from the Romish doctrine of the *opus operatum* in the ordinance. And it was not weak consciences alone, but enlightened consciences, that felt aggrieved and oppressed, when these and like ceremonies were imposed by ecclesiastical authority upon them, under the pain, if they refused to conform to such superstitions, of forfeiting the communion and privileges of the Church.<sup>29</sup> A due regard to the liberty of conscience belonging to Christ’s people forbids the exercise of Church power in the introduction of such ecclesiastical ordinances in the worship of God.

29. [Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. vi { Gisbert Voetius (1589–1676), *Politica Ecclesiastica*, 4 vols. 1663–1676}. Calderwood, *Altare Damascenum*, *passim*.] {David Calderwood (1575–1650), *Altare Damascenum* (First edition, supposedly published at Amsterdam by the Press of the Exiled English Church, 1623, and second and best edition, Lugduni Batavorum: Apud Cornelium Boutešteyn, 1708)}.

30. [“Saravia holdeth,” says George Gillespie, “that ‘by the sign of the cross we profess ourselves Christians.’ Bishop Mortoun calleth the cross ‘a sign of constant profession of Christianity.’ Hooker calleth it ‘Christ’s mark applied unto that part where bashfulness appeareth, in token that they which are Christians should be at no time ashamed of His ignominy.’ Dr. Burges maintaineth the using of the surplice, ‘to signify the pureness that ought to be in the minister of God.’ Paybody will have kneeling at the Lord’s Supper to be ‘a signification of the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ.’ The prayer which the English service-book appointeth bishops to use after the confirming of children by the imposition of hands, avoucheth that ceremony of confirmation for ‘a sign whereby those children are certified of God’s favour and goodwill towards them.’ In general, our opposites defend that the Church hath power to ordain such ceremonies as by admonishing men of their duty, and by expressing such spiritual and heavenly affections, dispositions, motions, or desires as should be in men, do thereby stir them up to greater fervour and devotion.”—*Engl. Popish Cer.* Part iii. ch. v. 1 {*Dispute* (2013) 225–226}. Saravia, *De Divers. Grad. Minist. Evang.* cap. 24, sec. 25. Field, *On the Church*, 2d ed. B. iv. ch. 31, p. 396. Hooker, *Eccles. Pol. Lib.* B. v. ch. lxx. 11. Burges,

IV. The exercise of Church power in the worship of God is limited by the proper nature of that power, as exclusively spiritual.

There are no more than *two* ways in which a properly spiritual power can be brought to bear upon the souls of the worshippers in public worship. There may be, in the first place, a spiritual power or virtue connected with the truth which the Church publishes, by which it produces a spiritual effect on the soul. Or there may be, in the second place, a sacramental grace or virtue connected with the outward and sensible ordinances which the Church administers, by which they produce a spiritual effect on the soul. In the one case, it is the Spirit of God employing the teaching of truth by the Church as the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. In the other case, it is the Spirit of God employing the dispensation of ordinances by the Church as the channel through which He communicates a spiritual virtue. Through both the one and the other of these instrumentalities does the Spirit of God usually operate upon the souls of men in the ordinances of public worship, so as to become a spiritual power within their understandings and their hearts. But beyond these means of spiritual grace, the Spirit of God does not usually go. He does not employ the inventions and ordinances of men as His instruments in either of these two ways. He does not make them by His presence and power to be means of grace, either by employing them to teach truth, or by using them, instead of or in addition to the divinely appointed ordinances and Sacraments of the Church, to communicate grace.

1. The Spirit of God does not employ the rites and ceremonies of men to be teaching signs in the Church, and to communicate truth; nor does He make these rites and ceremonies, as mystical or significant types declaring the truth, to be a spiritual power in the hearts of men. Upon this very ground the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church of its own authority are sometimes defended. They are pleaded for as significant signs, capable of teaching spiritual truths, and actually employed as instruments by the Spirit of God for that end. The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England speaks of them under that character. It declares them to be “neither dark nor dumb, but such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification.”<sup>30</sup> Such unquestionably was the character of the rites and ceremonies once appointed by God Himself in the Old Testament Church. They formed, in addition to other characters that belonged to them, a great system of types, or teaching signs, the shadows

and pictures of spiritual truths; and employed in that capacity by the Spirit of God to produce the spiritual effect of truth upon the understandings and hearts of the worshippers. That great system of typology in the ancient Church was an instrument for communicating spiritual truth in part before the truth itself was fully revealed. But these significant and teaching ceremonies ordained by God Himself until a better and more spiritual system was introduced, have—now been done away. They are unsuited to the spiritual nature of the Gospel economy. They have given place to a higher and better dispensation, in which doctrines are not taught by types or significant actions, but by the truth itself impressed by the Spirit of God on the soul. And if the typology of a former Church, *divinely* appointed, is forbidden to be used, as inconsistent with the spiritual nature of worship now, shall we say that a *human* typology of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, mystical and significant, is to be accounted as lawfully standing in their place? An intelligent and proper regard to the nature of Church power in the New Testament Church, as distinctively and properly spiritual, itself forbids the use of human rites and ceremonies in Divine worship as typical or significant signs.<sup>31</sup>

2. The Spirit of God does not employ human rites and ceremonies in the second way I have mentioned, or as ordinances linked with spiritual grace, instead of or in addition to those of Divine appointment. Under this second aspect of them, the use of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies is sometimes defended. They have been pleaded for as if they were ordinances like the Sacraments of the New Testament, —outward acts linked to inward grace,—sensible signs connected in some mysterious manner with a spiritual power. Such a theory can consistently be maintained only on the principle of the *opus operatum*, of the Church of Rome, or of the power of the priest to communicate a priestly virtue and sacramental grace to the outward institutions that he administers. Here, too, an intelligent and due regard to the nature of Church power, as exclusively spiritual, would declare the fallacy of such a theory. As human and not Divine ordinances, the Spirit of God does not employ them as means of grace;—nor does He pour through the channel of their administration by the Church the tide of His spiritual influence. They are of man, and not of God; and therefore they carry with them no spiritual blessing from the Spirit. And if they have any virtue or power at all, it must be supposed to be derived from the Church in appointing or dispensing them,—from the priestly grace or sacramental charm which the Church, according to the Popish principle, has ability to impart.

A right understanding of the exclusively spiritual nature of the power of the Church would forbid such a notion. The only power which the Church is the instrument of dispensing through ordinances is the power of the Spirit, given not to human inventions, nor in connection with ecclesiastical and uncommanded ceremonies, but only to the ordinances and Sacraments appointed by God. The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual, and linked exclusively to the outward ordinances which have been enacted by Christ. She has no power to communicate grace *ex opere operato*, through rites and ceremonies of her own. The very nature of that power forbids the use of ecclesiastical ordinances imposed by its own authority in the Church.<sup>32</sup> ■

*Lawfulness of Kneeling*, ch. xvii. p. 52. Paybody, *Apol. for Kneeling*, Part iii. ch. ii. 15. {The reference to Saravia's "De Diversis Gradibus Ministrorum Evangelis" is the source for the last sentence in the quotation. The first reference which is omitted is to "N. Fratris et Amico." Both appear in Saravia's *Diversi Tractatus Theologici* (1611). See the notes on the references in the 2013 revised critical edition of Gillespie's work.}

31. [Voetius, *Polit. Eccles.* tom. i. lib. ii. Tract. i. cap. vii., *Probl. de Cer. affect.* 3–8 {Gisbert Voetius, *Politica Ecclesiastica*, volume 1, part 2 (Amsterdam: Ex officina Joannis à Waesberge, 1666) 431. "Sequuntur problemata de Ceremoniarum affectionibus...."}]

32. [*The Plea of Presbytery*, by ministers of the Synod of Ulster, Glasgow 1840, pp. 417–457 {Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Synod of Ulster, *The Plea of presbytery: in behalf of the ordination, government, discipline, and worship of the Christian church as opposed to the unscriptural character and claims of prelacy: in a reply to the Rev. Archibald Boyd, A.M., on episcopacy* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1840)}. Cunningham, Works, vol. i. {*The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*}, pp. 31–37, vol. ii. {*Historical Theology*, vol. 1} pp. 68–73, vol. iv. {*Discussions on Church Principles: Popish, Erastian, and Presbyterian*}, pp. 250–256.]