

A walk with Mr O (52)

Crown Him Lord of ALL

Mr O, some Christian books I've been reading recently mention 'The Regulative Principle'. I think I know what that is but I'm not entirely sure.

Have you asked the AI feature on your phone?

Yes, of course. But I don't trust everything that AI tells me, especially about spiritual things.

How wise! Well, 'The Regulative Principle' is a rather dull theological term for something which ensures that our churches bring the Lord pleasure rather than disappointment.

I'm glad that I've asked my question, then, because I obviously need to know about it.

Yes, you do . So do we all. The word 'regulative' comes from the Latin word 'Regula' which means a ruler (like the one you had on your desk at school) or a patten. How does a church decide what should be included in its times of worship and what should be left out? It rules some things in and it rules other things in and it rules some things out. On what basis? What rule does it use?

Isn't the answer obvious, Mr O? We are Evangelicals, aren't we? We believe that we should only do what is biblical.

Exactly. But what does that mean in practice? It means accepting that the church belongs to God and not to us. He chose it redeemed it, and indwells it . Christ, the church's Saviour, is also its Head. He is the only person who has the right to say what should go on there.

We don't have that right. So, we include in our worship only those elements that he has expressly commanded, or of which his Word has given us clear examples. We leave everything else out.

But it's not that easy, is it? I mean, the Bible doesn't tell us what time our services should be or where they should be held, and it certainly says nothing about printed hymn books, psalm books, screens, platforms, or seats!

The Regulative Principle is not about the circumstances of our worship, but only about the elements that should be included in our worship. We need to be very clear about that.

So, what would you say, Mr O. If this principle is so important, why do we hardly ever hear about it?

I may be wrong, but it seems to me that this principle, which was so precious to our spiritual forefathers, is now largely dead, buried, and forgotten about. It has largely been replaced by what those forefathers called 'will-worship'.

'Will-worship'? What on earth is that?

It simply means choosing to worship God as we want, and not as he wants.

Can you give me some examples?

Yes. A lot of churches have chosen to sing only hymns and worship songs. They rarely, if ever, sing a psalm. But in the New Testament, churches are commanded to sing psalms and of course, there are examples of believers doing it. So, what is holding those churches back?

There are many good psalm versions available today, with tunes that are easy to sing. To leave psalms unsung is an open statement that we will only worship God in ways which please us, whatever the Head of the Church may say.

I shall need time to think about that, Mr O. But do you have any other examples?

I'll limit myself to two. You will have noticed in many Churches that the Bible reading is often done by one person, while someone completely different does the teaching. That is simply unscriptural. By means of several examples and one clear command, the Bible teaches us that the man who does the scriptures reading is also to be the man who does the preaching. Go on, be a Berean – search the scriptures to see for yourself whether that is so!

I'll do that! So, what is your final example?

There are still churches that have seat-to-seat collections, despite what the Bible says about giving being secret, and despite the fact that one New Testament church was actually forbidden to take such a collection!

At the end of the day everything boils down to this: if Jesus Christ is Lord, do what he says, if he's not Lord of all. He's not Lord at
