

Differences of Opinion Regarding Worship: Music

- I. Introduction.
  - A. Review.
- II. The First Area of Disagreement over Music: Exclusive Psalmody or Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?
  - A. Exclusive Psalmody/Hymnody Debate.
    1. Arguments for Exclusive Use of the Psalms.
      - a. The Sufficiency of the Psalter.
        - (1) They say the NT is silent. Thus, if Psalms only were to be sung in the OT, then it must be the same in the NT.
        - (2) Psalms include aspects of Christ's work. Therefore, they are sufficient for the gospel age. (But they cannot present Christ's work in its full revelation and light. See below.)
        - (3) Psalms address all the exigencies (necessary matters and needs) of the Christian life.
      - b. The Psalms are the Hymn Book of the OT.
      - c. Only the Psalms are Inspired Music for Worship.
      - d. Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16: the terms "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" are all found in the titles of the Psalms and are to be understood as referring only to the Psalms.
      - e. The "hymn" which Christ and the apostles sang after the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:30) was most likely Pss. 113-118.
      - f. Arguments from Church History.
    2. Answers & Insurmountable Objections to Exclusive Psalmody Arguments.

- a. The assumption is that Scripture commands exclusive psalmody, as in the KJV of Ps. 98:5 and other Pss. However, the Heb. term, zimrah, used in those places is the word for “melody” or “praise,” even though it is translated “psalm” in the KJV. The Heb. term “mizmor,” the proper term for “psalm,” is used only in the titles of various Psalms. Thus, there is no command to sing Psalms exclusively in corporate worship.
- b. The claim is that in Ep. 5:20; Col. 3:16, “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” are all three terms for the inspired Psalms, since each term appears in the titles of some Psalms. 1). This argument involves a logical fallacy: just because some psalms are hymns and spiritual songs does not infer or require that all hymns and spiritual songs be Psalms. Similarly, if Psalms are required in worship, it does not infer that hymns and spiritual songs which are not Psalms are not allowable, authorized, or required for worship. 2). There is also an exegetical fallacy: just because each term appears in Heb. in the titles of Psalms does not determine or require that Paul use the Greek terms with the same meaning in the NT, where the context does not limit the range of the words to the inspired Psalter.
- c. The claim is that Israel in the OT used only the inspired Psalter in corporate worship. 1). Prior to David’s authorship of the majority of the Psalms, the only Psalm that was certainly included in the inspired Psalter was authored by Moses. A few others may possibly have been in existence, but it is not certain. In the time from Jacob’s clan moving into Egypt until David authored more Psalms, what did Israel sing in corporate worship? Even in the time from Moses to

David, approximately 410-440 years, Israel must have sung more than these few Psalms in corporate worship. 2). Even in the time after David, Israel sang more than the inspired Psalter in corporate worship. Cf. Is. 38:20. Whether Hezekiah's songs were inspired or not is not the question, though it is likely some were not inspired. The point is that they are not in the Psalter itself. Thus, Israel, according to the command of the Word of God through Isaiah and the command of her king, were to use songs from outside the Psalter in corporate worship ("in the house of the Lord").

- d. The claim is that church history affirms exclusive psalmody, especially the Presbyterian tradition in the Reformation. But from the time of Calvin onward, surviving liturgies demonstrate that the Reformed tradition always allowed for hymns other than the inspired Psalter in corporate worship: various Doxologies, the Apostles' Creed set to music, the Ten Commandments set to music were regularly used in corporate worship throughout the time and geographical breadth of the Reformation, even if at times the preponderance of congregational singing was the Psalms.
3. Arguments for the Use of Hymns along with Psalms in Worship.
    - a. Scriptural Warrant.
      - (1) There is no Scriptural warrant for exclusive use of Psalms.
      - (2) There is Scriptural warrant for use of hymns, including spiritual songs, and psalms. Ep. 5:20; Col. 3:16; etc.
    - b. The History of Redemption: Phil. 2:9-10. The NT events and Scripture gave us the greater light of the gospel, greater clarity of doctrine, fulfillment of the OT promises. Shouldn't we sing more

fully informed praises to God grounded in NT revelation?

- c. 1 Cor. 14:15, 26. This does not refer to the OT Psalter. It is either a charismatically composed psalm of the NT or a non-inspired psalm. Either way, it shows NT warrant for advancing the content of Psalms.
  - d. Worship in the Book of Revelation: 5:9, 10, 12, 13; 14:3; 15:3, 4. This is a picture of worship as it is to happen in the church now. 24 elders include the church militant and triumphant. It shows singing that is not restricted to the Psalter, but includes expressly Christological model for earthly worship. If the Psalter is not sufficient for heaven, where they will sing a new song of Christ, how can it be sufficient for earth?
  - e. Other NT examples: Lk. 1:46-55, 67-79; 2:13, 14.
4. Criteria for Hymns: Psalms are to be the pattern.
- a. Progression in thought.
  - b. Minimal repetition.
  - c. Theological weight.
  - d. "Sift": a variety of collective and subjective voices as well as God's voice.
  - e. Emotional complexity.
  - f. Weight of piety.
5. What About "Praise" Choruses? "Contemporary Christian Music"?
- a. Most do not fit the criteria.
  - b. Many "Scripture songs" take Scripture out of context.
  - c. Often there is impropriety in the doctrine advocated or the tunes used.