

Areas of Disagreement: Music

I. Musical Instruments in Corporate Worship (Return to the Discussion).

A. For Accompaniment.

1. They are a circumstance of worship. They assist us in performing the element of singing praise to God. Thus, we should use them as a circumstance, for what they are intended, to accompany the voice of the congregation, not as entertainment.
2. As a circumstance, we apply the criteria of circumstance. We are to use them according to their nature.
3. How many? (A number which the size of the congregation demands for effective accompaniment of voice without overshadowing or overwhelming it.)

B. For Stand-Alone Instrumental Music.

1. The Arguments Against Allowing It.
  - a. Instrumental music was appointed by David for the temple. 1 Chr 13:8; 2 Chr 29:25-30; etc. In the temple, only the Levites played stand-alone instrumental music. Thus, it is ceremonial and has passed away. Not played in this manner before in the Tabernacle, or after in the NT.
  - b. Stand-alone instrumentals, solos, etc., were not part of NT worship.
2. The Arguments in Favor of Allowing It.
  - a. Instruments and instrumental music were not connected to anything that was fulfilled in Christ; thus, they are not ceremonial and are still usable.
  - b. They were used in the Temple to celebrate victory. (We must point out, however, that this was not done in corporate worship.)
  - c. There appears to be Scriptural warrant in Pss. 92, 150.
  - d. The harp in Rev 5:8-9. (We must point out, however, that these were for accompaniment of voice, not stand-alone instrumentals.)

## II. Choirs and Solos in Corporate Worship.

### A. Arguments against Allowing Choirs and Solos.

1. They were appointed for Temple worship. Thus, they were Levitical. 1 Chr 6:31ff.
  - a. What about solos we see in the OT? No clear instances of any of it done in corporate worship.
2. Choirs and solos not found in NT worship. Due to the NT doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, the entire congregation is now the choir.
3. NT believers are commanded to sing, not listen to singing. Singing is different from some other elements of worship in that it is not commanded to be done as one representing the many.
4. The historic Reformed position has been against choirs and solos and in favor of congregational singing only.

### B. Arguments in Favor of Allowing Choirs and Solos.

1. Choirs are not ceremonial. (But see above.)
2. Choirs help the congregation sing. (But the congregation is commanded to sing and do so as skillfully as possible; thus, the answer is that they should be taught outside the corporate worship.)
3. Choirs can offer more sophisticated praise than the congregation can. (Even if true, it does not change the Biblical command for all to sing.)
4. Choirs lead in singing similarly to leading in prayer.
  - a. In the corporate worship service, prayer is only to be led by elders.
  - b. There is no Scriptural warrant for a group to lead in singing, especially when they are not elders in the church.
5. Choirs are seen in Scripture: Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14, seeing the 24 elders, angels, and living creatures as a group equivalent to a choir. Cf. also 7:11-12; 11:17-18; 15:3-4; etc. (But angels = heavenly hosts; living creatures symbolize creation; 24 elders symbolize the whole

church. All the angels sing, all creation sings, all the church sings; this is not a group leading others as a choir.

6. Solos are authorized by the singular commands of the Pss.; e.g., Ps. 92. (But “I will sing to the Lord is not anything that we could not all say.)
7. Women sang solos. (Many weren’t solos; the women sang at the same time that the rest of Israel did. Nor were they leading the music. The text simply emphasizes their joy. Plus, this did not take place in corporate worship.)

C. Conclusions.

1. I am not in favor of choirs in corporate worship, and even less in favor of solos. Choirs are not, however, the line in the sand for me; they are not the hill which I’m prepared to die for.
2. Even if people have gifts for some things, such as singing, gifts (natural or spiritual) are not the criteria for what is to be done in corporate worship. They must not drive function. God’s word is the standard.
3. In this, as any other matter of worship, we ought to be sure we are Biblically convinced of our position. Know why you stand for something. And in matters of disagreement with those committed to the RPW and committed to the necessary elements, be gracious.