

II. Exclusive Psalmody – Practical Support

A. Psalter is Inspired

- Regarding songs, Psalms alone are inspired and inerrant
- The Psalms are “above suspicion”. We never have to fear if we might be singing error.
- Singing to God in worship is “returning praise”. When we sing/meditate on Psalms we are “thinking God’s thoughts after him”

“The Scriptures preached and the Psalms sung provide an ideal curriculum for shaping the faith of the church.”
– Michael Lefebvre

B. Psalter is the King’s Praise

1 Chron 25 David appoints hymn-writers for God’s worship. David directly oversees this work as verse 2 states the appointed men “prophesied according to the order of the king” and verse 6 reads they “were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord”.

“In biblical worship it is the king who leads the congregation into worship, and it is the king’s own songs that the congregation sings with him.” – Michael Lefebvre

Heb 2:11-12 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

C. Psalter is universal and ecumenical

- No Christian can rightly oppose the Psalter. At worst, they might oppose exclusively singing the Psalms
- Regarding the RPW, singing God’s inspired Word is freeing for His people

“The practice of (man-inspired) hymn singing is inherently schismatic. It’s impossible to bring a new song into worship and avoid controversy.” – Rev J. Scott Wilkinson

III. Exclusive Psalmody – Scriptural Support

Eph 5:18,19 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

A) Man-inspired Position

Psalms, hymn, and spiritual songs in Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 refers to three distinctive genres of songs to be sung.

1) Problem of poor hermeneutics in this interpretation – eisegesis vs exegesis

Our modern usage of Psalm, hymn, & spiritual song is not the same as Colossians and Ephesians

How, then, would Ephesians and Colossians at time of Paul’s writing have understood terms “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”?

B) Exclusive Psalmody Position

Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 are all terms referring to Spirit-inspired songs from the Psalter.

1) Evidence from Septuagint

Septuagint –translation of Hebrew Old Testament into common language of people of Roman Empire (Greek)

If you are a member of the Ephesian or Colossian congregations, only bible you have is Greek Septuagint.

Three musical terms in Greek– Psalm, hymns, and song - are quite common in Septuagint, including Psalter.

Among Psalm headings in Septuagint:

- Psalm and song occur 12 times together in variety of formats:
 - “a Psalm of David, a song” Psalm 65
 - “a song of David among the psalms” Psalm 4
 - “a Psalm of a song” Psalms 30, 48, 68, 75, 87, 92
 - “a song of a psalm” Psalms 66, 83, 88, 108
- Psalm and hymns appear conjoined twice as “a psalm of a David among the hymns” Psalms 6, 67
- Psalm 75 contains all three terms together - “For the end, among the hymns, a Psalm for Asaph, a song for the Assyrian”

2) Answering Common Objection – “So Paul is just saying psalms, psalms, psalms in Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16?!”

Paul is calling the same thing by different names to give a fuller and more emphatic description of it by specifying its various aspects. Such rhetorical expansion is a common stylistic device in Scripture.

- Ex 34:7 “...keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin”
- Deut 30:16 “...to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments”
- 2 Cor 12:12 “...the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”
- 1 Tim 2:1 “...I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men”

Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 are likely instances of this same pattern of expression.

3) Evidence from Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16

- a. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” emphasis on “teaching and admonishing”, activities associated with Scriptures. “word of Christ” synonymous with Word of God. What better way to let the Scriptures dwell within us, resulting in teaching by song, than by singing the Psalms!
- b. “spiritual songs” – Greek word “pneumatikos” (spiritual) appears in NT 25 times. In 24 of those occasions, most appropriate translation is spirit-given, spirit-led, produced by the Holy Spirit. Many commentators believe Paul meant “spiritual” to be taken qualitatively

To conclude:

To be consistent with the regulative principle of worship, proponents of man-inspired hymns *must* show from Scripture where God commands us to sing man-inspired hymns. When pressed to do so, proponents of man-inspired hymns will generally reference Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16. However, when understood in the proper context and correct hermeneutic of Scripture, we recognize Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 do *not* refer to modern day ideas of psalms, man-inspired hymns, and man-inspired songs, but rather psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are different terms used by Paul to emphasize the same thing – Spirit-inspired Psalms. Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 therefore actually become commands to sing Spirit-inspired Psalms exclusively. As a result, the regulative principle of worship *does* command us to sing only Spirit-inspired Psalms, while there is absolutely no warrant for human inspired hymns in worship.