

Two Points of Difference for those holding the Regulative Principle

On Psalms and Instruments

Part I: an evaluation of exclusive Psalmody (EP)

7A. Transition to positive argument

To prove that the case for exclusive Psalmody fails is important but not enough. It is an important base and beginning, but not sufficient for the complete story. We need both negative and positive argument because when two views differ, both could be wrong (some other alternative might be better). Showing the opposing view to be wrong does not automatically prove your view right. For example, if we cannot biblically limit singing to the Psalms, it might be the case that we must limit singing to the words of Scripture (like Calvin: include the 10 commandments and the song of Simeon of Luke 2 in our singing).

Broader point: we need the positive argument regarding uninspired hymns because of the RP (the regulative principle). Why is appeal to the RP at this point appropriate?

Why do we need more than a negative critique or a view?

8A. Positive arguments for singing uninspired songs in worship

Of course, “uninspired” means “not inscripturated by divine inspiration, not part of the Bible.”

1B. Finding the answer within the difficult question

How can we sing new covenant revelation of the gospel?

1C. Problem

To be sure, we cannot access the precise revelatory songs of the apostolic era. Some of these songs are no doubt now within the NT, at least in some residual form (as 1 Tim 3.16 on the great mystery of godliness; cf. other likely texts). The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of the time of fulfillment include Mary’s *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus* of Zachariah. Still, it is apparent that the NT does not itemize the content of new covenant songs beyond the fact that the songs we are to sing are to have the word of Christ for their content.

We have the commandment to sing that comes to us from the apostolic era in which the command meant the singing of new revelation as part of the oral tradition of the gospel of fulfillment. We have no direct access to those songs.

How can we sing those songs without direct access to them?

2C. Solution

We can sing those songs in the sense that we can sing the gospel that those songs gave us as part of the word gifts of the foundation laying time of the church. We can access this gospel by going to the NT as an interpretation of the OT (so we do not exclude the OT from our singing).

We do not have clear delimitation regarding the revelatory (prophetic and teaching) songs of the apostolic time. *Therefore, to obey the command to sing the gospel of Christ we must now go to the product of that singing and those revelatory gifts that we have in the NT form of the apostolic oral tradition that gradually became the written foundation of the church.*

2B. Finding the answer within the Psalms

Furthermore, to sing the fulfillment gospel of Scripture (the word of Christ that God gave us first in the apostolic tradition and then in writing), we must either a) voice the very words of Scripture (in a range of ways from exact duplication to paraphrase, or b) voice the teaching of Scripture in light of fulfillment (in compositions that are theological interpretations). Sometimes there may be minimal interpretation in the songs that voice the very words of Scripture (cf. changes in wording for poetic purposes or for singing purposes).

However, when we voice the teaching of Scripture in song, interpretation is maximal. The psalm revelation carried with it the gift of interpretation according to 1 Corinthians 14. We no longer have Spirit granted infallible interpretation. The songs by which we now sing the theology of Scripture are to be scriptural. How do we do this?