

Following Dr. Morey To The Regulative Principle of Worship

Precis

This Article will show that there is a climactic Biblical Theological perspective revealed in the Scripture indicating: (1) that new psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs were to be expected, that some were already given and more would be created; (2) that the Scriptures provide the warrant for the church in her New Testament maturity and freedom to add further psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for worship by versifying New Testament texts and completing Old Testament psalms with New Testament truth; (3) that the Scriptures teach these new songs are to be considered the true songbook that the Lord Jesus Christ gives His church in the fulfillment of and as the antitype to king David's giving the Old Testament psalms to Israel as her songbook; and (4) that by singing these completed revelation songs the Lord Jesus is pre-eminent by His Word and Spirit among His brethren leading the worship of the Father according to the testimony of Hebrews 2:11-12, Isaiah 35:10, Joel 2:28, Malachi 3:3, Hebrews 1:1-3, 8:1-2, 9:11-12, 10:19-22, Ephesians 1:10, 5:19, Colossians 1:16-18, 3:16, Revelation 4:11, 5:9-10 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4, and others.

* * * * *

Contents

Introduction

1. Some relevant Issues To Consider
 - a. The Kingly Prerogative
 - b. Permanent or Temporary Types
 - c. Rigor, Compulsion, Exactitude
 - d. Significance of the Name

2. The Basic Scripture And Creed Foundation
 - a. Belgic Confession Article 25
 - b. Dr. Morey's Suggestion
 - c. Calvin's Understanding
 - d. Hebrews 1:1-3 And Confirmation

3. An Overview of Scripture Support And Three Examples
 - a. New Songs Inspired By The Spirit
 - b. Psalm 51 Completed, Romans 8:28-39 Versified, Psalter #200
 - c. Ephesians 5:19 And Colossians 3:16
 - d. Joel 2:28 And Isaiah 26:1-2, 35:10
 - e. Revelation 4:4:11, 5:9-12, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4

4. An In-Depth Consideration of Specific Texts
 - a. Luke 1-2 And Malachi
 - b. John 1:1-18 And Hebrews 1:1-3
 - c. John 2:1-11
 - d. John 4:19-42
 - e. Hebrews 2:11-12 And Psalm 22
 - f. Mark 14:26 And Matthew 26:30
 - g. Acts And Temple Attendance
 - h. Acts 16:25 And The Jerusalem Council
 - i. Hebrews 8-10

5. Problems For Exclusive Psalmody
 - a. The Name Problem
 - b. The Translation Problem
 - c. The Classical Texts Problem
 - d. The Biblical Theological Problem

6. Some Conclusions

Introduction

Dr. Morey's "*Examination of Exclusive Psalmody*" is to be applauded for his exemplary expose` of Exclusive Psalmody's lack of Scripture support, but not for his improper conclusion which, to this writer, fumbles the truth rather than scores with it. For that reason, I find Dr. Morey's work astute, laudable, but baffling.¹ Astute because he covers a wide range of material in a succinct, comprehensive and convincing manner. Baffling because, as a Westminster Ph.D. - a school that emphasizes Biblical-Theology - he points us to the Biblical-Theological solution of the psalmody issue, but as will be explained, mysteriously punts rather than running into the end zone.

Therefore, while agreeing with Dr. Morey's criticism of Exclusive Psalmody and lauding him for the goodly amount of history he provides, this article will demonstrate that the true Biblical conclusion evaded him and that by default, his otherwise excellent article mistakenly ends supporting those who would sing uninspired hymns in the worship of our Lord.

The church's failure to complete the eschatological solution of the psalmody issue has allowed that matter to divide churches for centuries. It is this author's hope that those concerned with the issue of psalmody would consider the Biblically responsible thesis presented in this article and either refine it or correct it, for the purpose of promoting the worship of our Lord.

Therefore, this article expands the Biblical-Theological analysis of the psalmody issue that Dr. Morey began. Dr. Morey's suggestion that new divine redemptive activity is accompanied by new redemptive revelation and celebrated by new inspired songs is the simple pattern the Scripture reveals and that which I believe is the correct path to follow.

This article will demonstrate that the new redemptive revelation of the New Testament, according to Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:14-18, not only presents itself as the climax of God's revelatory disclosure and therefore must be treated as such; but also and **most importantly**, that Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:14-18 teach that the "**speaking**" of the Son "**in these last days**" is the New Testament and therefore the New Testament should properly be considered "**the Word of Christ**," while all the previous revelation or "**speaking**" of God through the prophets was properly the Word of the **pre-incarnate** Son of God and **not** the "**Word of Jesus Christ**", the incarnate Son of God born of the virgin Mary in the fullness of time. Only when "the Word of Christ" is taken in that sense will we rightly understand Eph. 5:19 and Col.3:16, and give Jesus Christ the pre-eminence in all things, singing included, which the Scripture calls for (Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:16-18).

¹ https://www.the-highway.com/exclusive-psalmody_Morey.html

This article contends that the Biblical **distinction in the divine "speaking"** of Hebrews 1:1-2 has been uncritically neglected by the church in constructing its regulative principle of worship, choosing rather to ignore Hebrews 1 and either follow the early church's uncritical continuation of Psalm singing, or to merely provide various textual support to discredit exclusive psalmody in order to sing uninspired hymns in worship.

However, once that distinction of Hebrews 1:1-2 is accepted, Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 will be understood as Christ calling His church to exercise her maturity and freedom from her Old Testament schoolmaster and begin versifying the New Testament - "**the Word of Christ**" - into psalms, hymns and spiritual songs suitable for mutual encouragement in worship, while at the same time the church maintains the Old Testament regulative principle that the church sings only the divinely inspired words given her.

The argument, then, of this article is that following the eschatological distinction in God's revelatory "**speaking**" taught by Heb. 1:1-2 and John 1:14-18 and guided by the Belgic Confession, Article 25, will lead us to the climactic New Testament Regulative Principle: Christ's Church sings Christ's Word; which is the fulfillment of Hebrews 2:12, *"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."* Our Lord, by placing His Word in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, which is then versified into new psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, is with us and leads us by His Word and Spirit in the new worship of the Father (John 4:23).

The validity of such a Biblical Theological study as this is the fact that the Lord did not originate all things at once in history, but rather introduced all things according to His eternal council and wisdom which determined this extended unfolding of His sovereign will in history. God's purpose for revealing His eternal good pleasure over many years is also a **sacred process of revealed truth** that is equally as important as the **final product** of God's truth. **Simply stated the church should recognize not only what God said but also how He chose to say it.** Both are sources of divine truth.²

* * * * *

1. Expanding that Introduction the Relevant Issues are These:

a. The **divine prerogative** that David exercised in connection with Israel's worship must be investigated because David added his songs and singers to Israel's worship. He did this without condemnation even though God had forbidden adding anything to the Tabernacle and Temple worship, even condemning Nadab and Abihu for that very thing (Lev. 10:1-7).

² Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, August 1963, pp.14 ff.

Therefore, if adding psalms and singers to God's worship were not the king's prerogative, it would have been idolatry to do so and David would have been condemned for it along with his adultery and murder. The fact that David, as the type of Christ, added songs and singers without condemnation to Israel's worship equals the force of an authorization to do so and prophetically expresses, then, the prerogative and future fulfillment of Israel's true king, Jesus Christ, doing the same. If Israel's typical king provides songs for God's people to sing in worship, it should be recognized, then, that such activity is a prophetic function of the kingly office to be fulfilled in the future by David's antitype, Jesus Christ; and that we should expect new worship songs being given to the church by her Lord and true King; which is exactly what the New Testament reveals and explicitly encourages. Also, if guided by the Spirit, David added psalms and temple singers to God's worship and was not condemned because doing so foreshadowed the coming glory of Christ who would fulfill that kingly function in the great congregation after His resurrection, the new songs in the New Testament would be confirmation of that interpretation of David's kingly activity (Psalm 22:22, Heb. 2:11-12).

Also, if 1 Peter 2:5 and 2:9 are considered with the previously mentioned kingly activity of Christ according to Hebrews 2:11-12, namely, that believers are a "**royal priesthood**," (vs.9) meaning believers are Priests (the noun in the greek) who act kingly (the adjective in the greek) and therefore exercise a kingly function³ in their priestly activity, then according to 1 Peter 2:5, when believers as "*a holy priesthood..... offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*"⁴ then, the question that should be considered is this: Could believers' priestly exercise of their kingly function be derived from Jesus' kingly fulfillment of David's having providing Psalms for worship? In other words, as believers versify the Word of Christ into New Testament psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to sing in worship, when offering up these spiritual sacrifices in fulfillment of 1 Peter 2:5, would this activity of believers be a continuation of Zechariah's "offering in righteousness" (Luke 2:67-75) and therefore the continuing fulfillment of our Lord's "*purification of the sons of Levi*" (Mal. 3:3)?⁵

b. Whether the Old Testament exclusive psalmody was **permanent or temporary** must be investigated. If David's adding Psalms and singers to the temple worship is understood as foreshadowing Christ's fulfillment of that aspect of the kingly office, then that past prophetic activity of David does not remain unchanged after Christ fulfills it; but rather, we should find the gospel truth completing David's prophetic words just as the New Testament fulfills the prophetic statements of the other Old Testament prophets. Confirming this completing activity, we find new psalms inspired by the Spirit in the New Testament that are worded in the **past tense** to express our Savior's completed redemption. The appearance of these new psalms would indicate that the

³ cf. Revelation 1:6 "*And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father...*"

⁴ Note the "acceptable sacrifice" in connection with Zechariah's purification; cf. Point 4.a.

⁵ This question is answered in section 4.a.

Old Testament exclusive psalmody was temporary and not intended to be permanent because Christ's satisfaction and exaltation has been accomplished and no longer prophetically future as David's psalms state. Therefore it seems reasonable that David's psalms, by speaking of Christ's redemption as future rather than "**finished**," should not continue in their Old Testament form in the New Testament worship and age of fulfillment, but should be completed and added to the new worship songs produced from "**the Word of Christ**" - **the New Testament** - according to Eph. 5:17 and Col. 3:16? In that manner, Christ by working through His Word and Spirit in His people to produce these new psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, would be fulfilling the instruction of Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19, as well as Mal. 3:3, I Pet. 2:5 & 9 and John 4:23.

c. The regulative **rigor, compulsion and exactitude** of the Law of Moses must be investigated in connection with psalmody. If the Davidic exclusive psalmody of the Old Testament should be seen as part of Israel's compelling childhood training under her schoolmaster, that would explain the necessary word for word repetition and exactitude of exclusive psalm singing in her worship under the Law of Moses which demanded such exactitude in every area of Israel's life and worship. Consider the rigorous exactitude of the tithing regulations⁶, the marriage regulations⁷, the sacrificial regulations⁸, the building regulations of the tabernacle⁹ and even the dress regulations for the priests,¹⁰ particularly the high priest's dress requirements that stipulated his exact vestments from head to toe as well as his every movement that he made in the holy place.¹¹

If Word for word exactitude in singing is considered a necessary requirement of Israel's immature slavery state under her schoolmaster until the time she is free of that tutor and gains her mature stature and inheritance in the New Testament age, that would indicate exclusive psalmody was only appropriate and relative to the church in the Old Testament age while she was under her schoolmaster who demanded word for word repetition in her childhood school lessons. But that regulative rigor would not be demanded of nor appropriate to the mature church of the New Testament after her childhood stage passed and the church was no longer under her schoolmaster and his compulsive exactitude (Gal. 3:24-25, cf. Acts 15:10 and Matthew 11:29-30).

Confirming this rigorous and exhausting exactitude of Old Testament Israel's life under the law of Moses is Peter's statement in Acts 15:10, that obedience to the Law's demand was an "*unbearable yoke*." His words are no criticism of God's Law, but only

⁶ Matthew 23:23

⁷ Leviticus 18-21, Matthew 5:31, 19:9

⁸ Burnt, Free Will, Heave, Meat or Meal, Peace, Sin, Special, Thank, Trespass, Vow, Wave

⁹ Exodus 25,26, 27, 35, 36, 39

¹⁰ Exodus 28:2-43

¹¹ Exodus 39:1-31, Leviticus 16

that the Law's extensive and comprehensive demand aspect was so exhausting and overwhelming that neither the fathers nor the apostles were able to bear that "yoke."

Also, consider what a yoke is and what its purpose is. A yoke is a heavy beam that draft animals bear and are attached to that acts as a control mechanism in order to steer working animals in the line and direction their master desires. Describing the Law's demand as a yoke that Israel had to bear in order for God to steer them in the direction He desired, it is reasonable to assume that singing psalms exclusively was the path set before Israel and by the yoke of rigorous word for word demand to steer Israel's worship in the direction that pleased Him: namely, exclusively singing inspired words. However, in contrast to that "yoke" of the Law, our Savior calls His people to take "His yoke" upon them, because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:29-30). In calling His people to take on them His yoke it is reasonable to assume that the "yoke of the law" - its exhaustive exactitude in certain areas - is dismissed; that Christ's New Testament people now bear His lighter yoke, they do not bear the yoke of the Law's rigorous and exhaustive liturgical or sacrificial demands anymore, which would suggest the end of exclusive psalm singing related to the alternative "lighter" yoke of Christ. That conclusion confirms the freedom Christ's New Testament people have from their schoolmaster's rigorous, exhaustive demand of word for word exclusive psalmody and also indicates that a different "yoke path" has been given by our Lord to His church in the matter of singing.

d. The significance of our **Savior's name** being revealed only in the New Testament should be investigated in connection with psalmody. As previously stated, if it was only after His incarnation that the name Jesus Christ was revealed, then the Psalms of David would be only the word of the pre-incarnate Son of God, but not the word of **Jesus Christ incarnate** according to Hebrews 1:1-2, which states that the speaking of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, was "**in these last days**" and not previous to this dispensation (Heb. 1:1-3).

Also, as previously mentioned, that conclusion would be critical to understanding the classical New Testament texts purported to support exclusive psalmody, because if those texts, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, exhort Christians to speak "**the Word of Christ**" in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, those texts are not referring to the Old testament Psalms of David, but to the New Testament which is the "**the word of Christ.**" If that conclusion is confirmed, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 would then be proof for the very opposite of that which exclusive psalmists claim for those texts. It would be proof for the versifying and singing of New Testament texts that proclaim the fullness of "**the great salvation which began to be spoken by our Lord**" (Heb. 2:3).

e. In addition to those significant considerations we should recall all the divinely commanded things that our Lord changed in order to be open minded in considering that there could be a change even in psalm singing. For example, our Lord ended all the divinely commanded Mosaic sacrificial laws, He ended the Levitical priesthood, He changed circumcision to baptism, He changed Passover to Communion, He changed

the seventh day Sabbath to the Sunday Lord's Day, and He made all His people to be prophets, priests and kings! Considering all those radical changes, creating New Testament Psalms from the "**fullness of truth that came by Jesus Christ**" is not unthinkable (John 1:14, 17).

* * * * *

2. The Scripture and Creed Foundation for New Testament Psalms

The proof for the Psalmody issue for this article begins with the Belgic Confession's statement in Article 25 of the "**The Abolishing of the Ceremonial Law**".¹²

*"We believe that the ceremonies and figures of the law **ceased at the coming of Christ**, and that all the shadows are accomplished, so that the use of them must be abolished amongst Christians; yet the **truth and substance of them remain** with us in Jesus Christ, **in whom they have their completion**. In the meantime, we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty to the glory of God, according to His will."* (The Psalter, p.47, emphasis mine)

Three things we should understand from B.C. 25:

First, that there is a division that the Confession makes in the truth. It refers to the truth according to it's **substance** and it refers to the **form** the substance was given in the Old Testament which it calls "*ceremonies and figures and shadows.*"

Second, the Confession says that **only** the **substance** of the ceremonies and figures and shadows of the law remain; but the ceremonies, figures and shadows themselves - that is, the Old Testament **forms** given the truth - **do not remain**.

Third, the Confession says the **substance** of those ceremonies and figures and shadows have their **completion - their final form - in connection with Jesus Christ**. The Confession implies that the ceremonies and figures and shadows do **not** have their **completion** or **final form** in the Old Testament itself.

Summarizing, then, what the Belgic Confession teaches is: The Old Testament ceremonies, figures and shadows have not merely ended, but that there is a New Testament **completion - a final form** - of the truth of those ceremonies, figures and shadows in connection with Christ.

Therefore, according to the Belgic Confession, it is not unreasonable to look for **the completion and final form of the ceremonies and figures and shadows in the New Testament**. Should, then, the church's search for the completion of the

¹² Belgic Confession, Article XXV.

ceremonies and figures and shadows also include the Psalms of David because they were the words of a prophet (Acts 2:29-30)?

Most christians would agree that because the Old Testament ceremonies, figures and shadows do not remain, the church should not continue to use those "**forms of truth**" in her worship today. However, understanding that the former ceremonies, figures and shadows, being divinely instituted Old Testament "**forms of truth,**" their former usage establishes **principles** of how that truth guides the church. The practices themselves of the ceremonies, figures and shadows should not to be continued in their Old Testament form, but the principles derived from them should be continued, according to the teaching of the Belgic Confession, Article 25.

Considering these statements, this question should then be answered: Are the Psalms of David part of the ceremonies, figures and shadows that are temporary? If the Psalms should be considered as typical forms of truth, then the church must look for their **completion - their final form** - in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Specifically, the church should ask: does Israel's true king, Jesus Christ, when fulfilling David's prophetic exercise of the kingly prerogatives, give His church His own Psalm Book? And, finally, if the Word of Christ "**completes**" David's Psalms, the church may also draw the conclusion, then, that the true Regulative Principle of worship is this: **Christ's Church sings Christ's Word.**

* * * * *

In his article "*Examination of Exclusive Psalmody,*" Dr. Morey suggested this very thing:

"Should not we progress from the shadow to the reality which casts the shadow? Should we be content with the seed and never seek the flower? The Psalms have only the seeds and shadows of the person and work of Christ. We must now turn to the reality and fulness of the New Testament to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We need to sing in response to the work of Christ, to sing of Him and His mighty deeds, to speak the matchless name of Jesus, to tell of His greatness in our day and in our lives. Thus, to restrict the people of God to the shadows of the Psalms is retrogressive and reactionary. The church needs to be set afire with the fullness (sic) of New Testament truth and experience..... A Biblical-theological understanding of the unfolding character of the history of redemption will see new songs and hymns composed with each chapter of God's plan. When God executes His wrath or grace, it is time to compose new songs which celebrate these covenantal acts of God. This is why new songs are to be found in the historical books before the Psalms and in the prophetic books after the Psalms. The mighty acts of God in every generation were put to music and song. The people of God had the freedom to write new songs to praise God; they were never restricted to the Psalms".¹³

¹³ Morey, op. cit., pp.11-12.

* * * * *

Calvin called attention to Hebrews 1:1-2 as a key passage that points out the significant **discontinuity** in the manner in which God chose to reveal His eternal good pleasure.¹⁴

Concerning that discontinuity, **Calvin** says: “comparing their condition to ours.....the mysteries which they only beheld dimly, under shadows are made clear to us; as is well explained by the author of the Epistle of Hebrews...” Calvin then quotes Hebrews 1:1-2 as a **key verse** to understand the difference or discontinuity in the dispensations.¹⁵

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:1-2, emphasis mine).

Calvin includes in the term gospel, *“the promises by which God reconciles men to Himself, and which occur throughout the Law... Hence it follows, that gospel, taken in a large sense, comprehends the evidences of mercy and paternal favor which God bestowed on the Patriarchs. **Still, by way of excellence it is applied to the promulgation of the grace manifested in Christ**”* (ibid., 2/9/2, emphasis mine).

Following Calvin, then, while agreeing that the **substance** of the Truth or Gospel is the same in both Testaments so that there is unity and continuity between the Old and New Testament, it is that which Calvin called *“the excellence,”* that is, the clarity, finality and superiority of the Word spoken by our Lord, that this article builds its conclusions on.

* * * * *

Accordingly, the Biblical starting point for this study begins in Hebrews 1:1-2. Those verses are the author of Hebrews special introduction to the teaching of his entire epistle and, therefore, they reveal an **intentional succession of speaking from the prophets to God Himself** because that is the theme of his epistle: that the Hebrews should move up in their faith and life to *“the speaking of the Son of God”* because His *“speaking”* is more excellent than angels, more excellent than Moses and more excellent than all the prophets.

According to Hebrews 1:1-2, first the prophets spoke the Word, then finally God Himself spoke the Word in the person of His Son. The former speaking of the prophets must refer to the Old Testament because that is the dispensation in which they

¹⁴ Calvin, Institutes, Book 2, Chapter 9, Paragraph 1.

¹⁵ Calvin, ibid.

prophesied and the latter speaking of the Son was in *"in these last days"* which would refer to the New Testament age; so that the *"the speaking of the Son,"* would be the New Testament and the *"speaking"* of the prophets would be the Old Testament. Confirming that distinction, in the second chapter the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to give *"more earnest heed to the things which we have heard"* because they will not escape if they *"neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord..."* (Heb. 2:1-3). By referring to the gospel as the *"great salvation"* that *"began to be spoken by the Lord,"* the writer is building his exhortation on the distinction he previously made in chapter 1 when he referred to the Lord's speaking as being *"in these last days."*

The author designates the activity of the prophets and the Son as *"speaking"* because he is referring to the living, powerful, Word of God, which goes forth by the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which God sent it to do. The Scripture is God speaking. As Jesus said to His disciples: *"He that hears you, hears Me"* (Luke 10:16).

When considering this *"speaking of the Son,"* we should recognize that it is God's **intentional** revelational climax because it is the highest conceivable speaking there could be. There could be no higher speaking because it is the speaking of God Himself on earth; as the **last** prophet Malachi said: *"The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple"* (Mal. 3:1). That Malachi announced the Son's appearance and speaking as well as the end of the Old Testament age is clear from the rest of his prophecy.

Consider: Malachi announced the coming of the One who is the *"messenger of the covenant"* in the sense that He brings the Covenant with Him. Also, that the climax of the older revelation comes in connection with this Messenger of the Covenant and His speaking is because He is the final One, the One God's people *"delight in."* He shall *"purify the sons of Levi"* (Mal.3:1 & 3); indicating a final purification. In addition, His coming ushers in the *"great and dreadful day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5). That day is preceded by Elijah's coming and begins with God's great judgment of sin at the cross and judgment of the house of Israel (Ps. 50:3-4, Ps.96:13, Isa. 61:2, Mal. 3:5, John 9:39, 12:31, 16:11, 1 Pet. 4:17).

Because He is the Lord Himself who comes to His temple, no higher or additional **"speaking"** beyond His could occur; therefore the Son's **"speaking"** should be regarded as the climax or finalizing of all God's redemptive speaking, the finalizing of all divine revelation (Rev. 22:18-19).

What Malachi writes in prophecy, therefore, are the final eschatological events ending the Old Testament age and beginning the New Testament age. Malachi's prophecy proclaims the coming of the Lord's final salvation, His final satisfaction and final judgement of the Lord on Old Testament Israel as a nation. Confirming that day is the beginning of the New Testament age, Malachi writes that God shall send Elijah the prophet to prepare the way for the Lord before that terrible day (Mal. 4:5). The fact of Elijah's coming before the Lord appears locates all these climactic events in the New Testament age and associates them with the first advent of the Lord.

Therefore Malachi's prophesy is the last "*speaking*" of the last prophet because Elijah will come next, then the Son of God will appear and purify the sons of Levi, so that Israel will finally have a purified priesthood: "*Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord...*" (Mal. 3:4, Heb. 10:19-22). More will be said of Malachi's prophesy and this purification of the sons of Levi in connection with the birth of John the baptist, whom Jesus said was Elijah (Matth.11:14, Luke 1:17).

* * * * *

Continuing, then, with Hebrews 1:1-2, just as the Son of God is superior to the prophets, the Word or "*speaking*" of the Son - the New Testament - is superior to the Words of the prophets, the Old Testament. Because the Son's speaking is the highest speaking possible - there are no other Sons of God, Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father - there is a **finality** to Jesus' "*speaking*," which means that the New Testament does not merely follow the words of the prophets, but that the New Testament completes the prophets' words in the sense that it brings the prophets words to their **intended revelational climax**, just as the divine person of the Son completes the line of human prophets (Heb. 3:3-6). That conclusion supports what has been said concerning the "*completion in Christ*" of the Belgic Confession, Article 25, for this study.

It also indicates that the Old Testament revelation, altho it is the Word of God, it cannot be considered final by itself apart from it's New Testament **completion** (Heb. 7:19); also, while the New Testament fully agrees with that former revelation, it is superior to that older revelation, just as its author is superior to the prophets. It is that superiority of the New Testament that must be considered in relation to the **status** of all of the prophets' "*speaking*;" notably, that superiority would include the status of David's "*speaking*" (read, Psalms) in relation to New Testament worship. If Christ's speaking completes the prophets' speaking, then Christ's speaking completes David's speaking; so that the Psalms should be completed in terms of Christ's speaking, which would be the gospel and the truth of the New Testament.

Therefore, because of the New Testament's revelational finality and superiority, the reformed believe the New Testament provides the divine interpretation of the prophets' "*speaking*" and advances the prophets' "*speaking*" to it's intended fullness of meaning, as the writer of Hebrews points out: "*For this man (Christ Jesus) was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house....And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant... But Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we...*" (Heb. 3:3,5-6) This truth of the superiority of Christ's word the writer of Hebrews labored to prove to his readers and it is that same truth the church needs to hear in relation to that which she sings in worship.

* * * * *

After Hebrews 1:1-2, the author of Hebrews explains in chapter 2 the purpose of the prophets' "*speaking*" being completed by the Son's "*speaking*." God's purpose was to introduce the fullness of salvation and redemptive truth through His Son, so that for all eternity the Son of God would be pre-eminent among His redeemed people leading them in the worship of the Father: "*For both He that sanctified and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee*" (Heb. 2:11-12).

Hebrews 2:12 teaches the completion of God's eternal purpose: it is the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:3-6). God's eternal good pleasure, which He purposed to accomplish by Jesus Christ His Son in human nature, was that His Son would be pre-eminent in the redemption of His elect and the praise of His Name, "*That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one **all things** in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; **even in Him...***" (Eph. 1:10, emphasis mine).

It will be demonstrated subsequently that this "*singing praise*" by Christ takes place after His resurrection and that the singing spoken of is the new psalms of completed revelation (cf. Point 4.e "*Hebrews 2:11-12 and Psalm 22*").

The author of Hebrews continues his message of the superiority of Christ over the angels, Moses, and the Levitical priesthood, leading to his conclusion in chapters 8-10 that the Hebrew believers should worship with Christ and the great congregation in the heavenly Zion, rather than fall back to the Mosaic covenant ceremonies which Christ has terminated. He confirms that divine purpose with many verses:

*"In that He saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old **is ready to vanish away**"* (Heb. 8:13, emphasis mine).

*"The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them **until the time of reformation**"* (Heb. 9:8-10, emphasis mine).

*"For **the law having a shadow of good things to come**, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect"* (Heb. 10:1, emphasis mine).

*"Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first**, that he may establish the second"* (Heb. 10:9, emphasis mine).

Having demonstrated that the removal of the Mosaic things are the effect of Jesus' incarnation, His satisfaction and His ascension, the author of Hebrews then introduces the **true worship of God** in chapter 10:

*“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest (to worship) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way (His Word and Spirit), which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God: **Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,** having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”* (Heb. 10:19-22, parentheses and emphasis mine).

Based on the above, that the gathering of all things in heaven and earth for God's worship (singing!) through Christ, being the climactic purpose of God's redemptive activity, the church should be attentive to the worship found in that final *"speaking"* of the Son - the New Testament - which directs the church upward to the heavenly worship and Christ's singing praise among His brethren after His ascension; rather than conforming to the typical singing based on the prophet's *"speaking"* which has been fulfilled. That understanding also suggests that the church should develop a regulative principle based on the Son's *"speaking"* and His leading God's worship, rather than the Old Testament and the Psalms of David; i.e. that new regulative principle should be: **Christ's church sings Christ's Word.**

* * * * *

3. An Overview of Scriptures Supporting the Singing of New Testament Psalms

What then do we find when this final age of redemption begins? Notice, then, carefully: we find that **new songs** of praise to God are uttered (Luke 1:41-45, 1:46-55, 1:67-79, 2:14, 2:27-32, 2:38). These new songs are not verbatim repetitions of the Psalms. That is important to recognize. The new revelation in it's **completion** of the older revelation is accompanied by new songs - as Dr. Morey pointed out - and reveals from it's very beginning that these inspired words of new worship songs **need not be the Psalms of David.**

The principle of new psalms accompanying the new revelation is confirmed in Luke's Gospel by the explicit statement that these new songs are inspired of the Holy Spirit: Luke 1:41, 1:35, 1:67, 2:13, 2:27, 2:36. That inspiration of the Spirit would include the prompting of the individual's heart to produce these songs, providing the words for these songs in the simple truths of the new age.

Second and just as important: The new songs express their completion of the older ones by their phrasing these **new redemptive accomplishments in the past tense!** Carefully notice the new songs do not refer to former prophetic matters as things which Christ must yet suffer or fulfill; but rather, they speak of what God in Christ has already accomplished; their message is stated in the past tense, they proclaim what Christ has ***“finished.”***

Specifically notice that fact in Mary's Magnificat: the verbs concerning the Lord God's actions are in the **past tense**, e.g. *“He **has helped** His servant Israel”* (Luke

1:54). Also Zechariah's song, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He **hath visited** and **redeemed** His people. And **hath raised up** a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David," (Luke 1:68-69, 2:31).

Third. According to the Belgic Confessional principle of **completion**, if the inspired Psalms of David, which Israel's king provided, are seen as part of the type of Christ that David was and that not only the **person** of the type is important but the **action** of the type is also important, then we should **expect** our king, the Lord Jesus Christ, to provide His church with new revelation songs in this age of completion; just as David provided Old Testament Israel with her songs of worship. That is exactly what we see in the songs of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, Anna and the saints in the Book of Revelation.

To confirm this **principle of completed type**, consider the familiar type of the High Priest. We know that our Lord Jesus is the **person** of the true High Priest, but we also know He has fulfilled the typical **action** of the High Priest: He provided the atoning sacrifice (Heb. 7:27-28). Both the **person** of the type as well as the **action** of the typical person Jesus Christ fulfilled. Consider another familiar **action** our Lord fulfilled: just as the High Priest placed the blood on the typical mercy seat in the holy of holies, our Lord placed His own blood on the true mercy seat in the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 9:11-14).

That is why, for our consideration concerning what the church sings, we must carefully consider the actions of the type in question, i.e. king David. Because his actions are typical and symbolic, they should receive their **completion in Christ**, so that David's typical actions - giving the Psalms for worship - do not remain; only the substance or truth of the Psalms remain being fulfilled by Christ.

Therefore, it should be expected that David's antitype, the Lord Jesus, in the time of completion would in like manner provide the songs for the true Israel's worship; and that these new songs would express David's truth in its completion; i.e. as the Psalms prophesied Christ's suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation, so the content of Jesus' new Psalms would proclaim His **finished** suffering and death, His **finished** satisfaction, His accomplished resurrection and present exaltation, as well as His having poured out His Spirit.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema suggested this idea of completion in his editorial for the Protestant Reformed Standard Bearer of 10/1/61:

"It is true that the Psalter¹⁶ speaks of Christ as, for instance, in number 200:

*"Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
Earth's remotest regions shall his empire be;
They that wilds inhabit shall their worship bring,*

¹⁶ The Psalter, Protestant Reformed Psalm Book Revised Edition (PRC) December 2002

Kings shall render tribute, nations serve our King.”

*“But, in the first place, this is possible only because a New Testament element is introduced in the psalm which does not occur in the original form of the psalm. It speaks of the king of Israel, and of the king’s son. And although we readily admit that this king of Israel is a type of Christ, we cannot know this except in the light of the New Testament. And, in the second place, **even so the Psalter in versifying this psalm is not quite correct and makes the congregation sing an Old Testament song. For Christ has already all power in heaven and on earth. Hence, the church of the new dispensation must not sing that Christ shall have dominion over land and sea, but rather: “Christ now has dominion over land and sea.”*** (emphasis mine SP)¹⁷

Rev. Hoeksema was referring to Matthew 28:18, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth....”* Our Lord’s words - **“is given”** - in the original greek are: **Ἐδόθη μοι**, which is an aorist passive tense, so that the sense of our Lord’s words is: All authority is already given me....etc. So that to sing **“Christ shall have dominion...”** contradicts our Lord’s statement in Matthew 28:18 and Rev. Hoeksema was quite correct when he stated: **“Hence, the church of the new dispensation must not sing that Christ shall have dominion over land and sea.... but rather: “Christ now has dominion over land and sea.”** Sadly, Rev. Hoeksema’s denomination did not heed his wisdom.

Another example, which I have completed, is this:

140. Psalm 51. 7s. Tune: Ajalon

God be merciful to me,
On Thy grace I rest my plea;
Plenteous in compassion Thou,
Blot out my transgressions now;
Wash me, make me pure within,
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

My transgressions I confess,
Grief and guilt my soul oppress;
I have sinned against Thy grace
And provoked Thee to Thy face;
I confess Thy judgment just,
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I am evil, born in sin;

140B Psalm 51 (completed)

Christ was merciful to me,
On His grace I rest my plea;
Plenteous in compassion He,
Blotted out my transgressions free;
Washed me, made me pure within,
Cleansed, O cleansed me from my sin.

My transgressions I confessed.
Grief and guilt my soul oppressed;
I have sinned against Thy grace
And provoked Thee to Thy face;
I confessed Thy judgement just,
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I was evil, born in sin;

¹⁷ Standard Bearer Volume 38/1962 Issue 1 @sb.rfpa.org (no page number)

Thou desirest truth within.
Thou alone my Saviour art,
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,
Wash me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust
By Thy wrath and judgment just,
Let my contrite heart rejoice
And in gladness hear Thy voice;
From my sins O hide Thy face,
Blot them out in boundless grace.

Thou desirest truth within.
Thou alone my Savior art,
Taught Thy wisdom to my heart;
Made me pure, Thy grace bestowed,
Washed me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust
By Thy wrath and judgment just,
Then my contrite heart rejoiced
And in gladness heard Thy voice;
From my sins You hid Thy face,
Blotted them out in boundless grace.

Or this original versification from Romans 8:28-39; which may be sung to the tune of St. George's Windsor, ("Come Ye Thankful People Come, Raise the Song of Harvest Home.")

Praise our God, Who works all things
Causing them for good to be;
Those that love Him, they surround
By decree, eternal, bound.
Whom He foreknew, He did choose
To become like Christ conformed.
That the Son, First-born should be,
Of His brethren, made by Thee.

Whom He chose He also called,
Calling them to Christ, His Son.
These He also justified,
They in glory shall abide.
What to these things e'er be said?
God be for us, dare we dread?
He His own Son at the cross
Spared Him not, despite the loss.

Who will lay a charge against
God's elect and chosen ones?
It is God who justifies -
Who the one that dare replies?
Condemnation ne'er prevail,
Yea, Christ Jesus died, All Hail!
He is raised and glorified;
At the throne shall He abide.

Who shall sever us from Christ -
From the love of Him who died?
Tribulation, stress or ill?

Hunger, nakedness, bad will?
As t'is written by our God,
We with death must daily trod.
Counted e'er for death each day,
Sheep to be then killed for aye.

We are more than conquerors,
Overwhelming all our foes.
He who loved us leads our way -
Death, nor life, nor angels sway.
Nor things present, nor to come,
Nor the powers, height and depth -
Nor creation, harm afford,
To God's love in Christ our Lord.¹⁸

* * * * *

In support of the accompaniment of new redemptive activity with the production of new songs of worship, it is not surprising then, that we should find New Testament instruction like this: "*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*" (Col. 3:16, cf. Eph. 5:19).

Note well: It is the **Word of Christ** - the New Testament - not the Psalms of David that believers have richly dwelling in them "*in all wisdom.*" "*Dwelling in them*" is the main verb, while "*teaching and admonishing*" are subordinate participles. Therefore the grammar of the text indicates that our hearts are to be filled with the "*Word of Christ*" - the New Testament - and that knowledge of the New Testament is to be wisely and faithfully expressed in new songs for "*teaching and admonishing.*" That is the main thought of the text.

Second, then, is how that New Testament truth is to be expressed in all wisdom. All the believers' knowledge of New Testament truth living in them is to be put into "*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*" to teach and admonish each other. Therefore, believers have instruction from their Lord in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 to use the spiritual wisdom He gives them in sanctification to versify "**the Word of Christ.**" That instruction **from the Lord** would involve the creation and use of those new songs in the worship of God, which Christ would then be leading by His Word and Spirit in fulfillment of Hebrews 2:12.¹⁹

Conversely, if in Colossians 3:16 Paul is pointing the Colossians back to the use of the Psalms of David to express their wisdom of "**the Word of Christ,**" he would in

¹⁸ Versified by Stuart Pastine 1976

¹⁹ Further considerations will indicate that the words *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* do not necessarily refer to the Psalms of David.

effect be sending them away from the New Testament redemptive completion of the gospel back to the word of the prophets, which would mean sending the Colossians back to the old typical, shadowy revelation that has been fulfilled according to Hebrews 8:13, 9:8-10, 10:1,9. If that were Paul's instruction, he would in effect be reversing the progress of revelation, something like putting new wine in old wineskins.

In addition, if Paul is teaching in Colossians 3:16 that there is some underlying necessity that the Colossians are **required** to sing the Psalms, he would then be placing the Colossians back under the legalism that the Judaizers were forcing upon them (Col. 2:16-23); as well as denying the freedom they have in Christ *"to seek the things that are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God"* (Col. 3:1-3). If that were the meaning of Paul's words it would be the opposite of where Hebrews 10:19-22 directs God's people to boldly go and where **new psalms** are being sung (Rev. 4:11, 5:9-10, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4).

Seeking the things above where Christ is, would bring believers to the heavenly worship and the songs revealed in the Book of Revelation, rather than the Psalms of past revelation. Also, if Paul is intimating here that in Col. 3:16 there is a requirement of singing the Psalms, that would deny the very purpose of his instruction in verse 15, which was to pay no attention to the Judaizers and their legalistic demands, but rather, to continue in the peace and freedom of Christ by letting the New Testament gospel dwell richly in their hearts and govern their actions with their fellow church members.

Col. 3:16 should be understood in the context of the climactic **"speaking"** of the Son of God (Heb. 1:1-2) and that **believers should, in the office of prophet, follow the examples of Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, Zechariah and Simeon, by wisely versifying the Son's inspired Word that is richly dwelling in them into new psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.** How else could they seek the things that are above and "boldly enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by that new and living way that He consecrated for us? (Heb., 10:19-20). For believers *"have come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born...and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant..."* (Heb. 12:22-24). Why would those who come to the heavenly Zion not sing the Word of their King along with the saints and angels in heaven who are singing new psalms? (Rev. 4:11, 5:9-10, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4).

* * * * *

At this point we should ask: Is there any foundation in the Old Testament for this activity of new songs to appear in the New Testament era? That question is answered in part by Psalms 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, and the prophesies of Joel and Isaiah.

These New Testament songs, voiced by ordinary believers in their office as prophets through the inspiration of the Spirit, may be understood as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28. *"...And it shall come to pass **afterward**, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your **sons and your daughters shall prophesy...**"*

Remembering that *"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy"* (Rev. 19:10), Mary, Elizabeth and Anna *"a prophetess"* (Luke 2:36) are three of the first **"daughters"** already prophesying in the new age, the time referred to by Joel. Zechariah and Simeon are two **"sons"** also prophesying or testifying of Jesus in that **"afterward"** time period i.e. at the start of the new age. Later, Phillip's four daughters would prophesy (Acts 21:9) as well as some of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27-31, 14:26-33).

As indicated by Joel 2:28, the indwelling Spirit of God causes ordinary believers to prophesy (testify) the new revelation. They do not create it, nor do they sing uninspired man-made words. The Spirit who inspired Jesus' Word fills believers' hearts with that same Word, so that the Word of Jesus richly dwells in them, which they versify into psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as Colossians 3:16 encourages.

Additionally, Isaiah 26:1-2 speaks of a new song that will be sung in the day of judgement when God judges the wicked in Israel. At that time the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion *"with **songs and everlasting joy** upon their heads...."* (Isaiah 35:10). Considering that their return to Zion is the Zion that is above (Heb.12:22), their songs of **"everlasting joy"** would be the new songs proclaiming the joy of completed salvation as exhibited in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 4:11, 5:9-10, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4).

About this new prophesying and these new songs of **"everlasting joy"** proclaiming the finished work of redemption, more will be said in connection with Paul and Silas singing hymns in Acts 16.

However, confirming the arrival of this new worship which Isaiah and Joel spoke of, we find Jesus appropriately announcing a new worship to the woman at the well in John 4. (We should expect that new songs would be sung in new worship.) *"Woman, believe me, that the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.... But the hour cometh, **and now is**, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in **Spirit and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him"* (John 4:21-23).

It is this new **"truth"** (read, final truth) that came by Jesus that the true worshippers will be singing in their worship of the Father, encouraged to do so knowing that the Father is *"seeking such to worship Him."* Also, here is the new location where believers worship: *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to **enter** into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way. which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God; Let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith...."* (Heb. 10:19-22). The new worship is at the throne of God.

Believers have not come to Mount Sinai, we have *"come unto Mount **Zion**, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born...."* (Heb. 12:22-23).

That is the "Zion" which Isaiah spoke of and it would seem that the worship of God's people on earth would correspond with our new location - the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven - where we find the songs of Revelation that express Christ's redemptive accomplishment in the **past tense**:

*"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou **hast created** all things, and for thy pleasure they are and **were created**" (Rev. 4:11).*

*"And they sung a **new song**, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou **wast slain**, and **hast redeemed** us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And **hast made us** unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).*

*"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that **was slain** to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:11-12),*

*"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, **stood** before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands....saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:9-12).*

*"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb **stood** (read, victoriously) on the mount Zion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name **written** in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps and they **sung** as it were a **new song** before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14:1-3).*

*"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that **had gotten** the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments **are made manifest**" (Rev. 15:2-4). (The emphasis on the past tenses is mine.)*

* * * * *

4. A More In-depth Consideration of Specific Texts

a. Luke 1-2 as it confirms Malachi's prophecy

Immediately after his introduction Luke narrates the birth of John the Baptist, of whom Malachi ended his prophecy and the Old Covenant revelation by saying: "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*" (Mal.4:5). Considering that John is Elijah (Matthew 11:14), this is a deliberate connection on the part of the Holy Spirit **completing** the Old Testament revelation with the New Testament revelation.

To introduce the matter, Luke begins with the priest Zechariah, the father of John, informing us Zechariah is childless, and that he is chosen as representative of the priesthood to offer incense at the end of the evening worship service. However, an angel appears, informs Zechariah of John's birth and John's calling to introduce Israel's messiah; but Zechariah does not believe this promise of God and his lips are sealed by the angel (Luke 1:20).

When fulfilling Malachi's prophesy, we ask: why does the Holy Spirit choose to reveal this detail of Zechariah's unbelief rather than just write the details about John after his miraculous birth? Why does the Holy Spirit begin Luke's gospel with an investigation of Zechariah's childlessness, his lack of faith and the closing of his mouth? The answer is not personal, it is Christ centered. Malachi prophesied that when Christ came He would "*purify the sons of Levi.*" (Mal. 3:3). Zechariah's unbelief demonstrates how much the "*sons of Levi*" needed that purification and how it begins with the birth of John the baptist.

Consider the situation: Zechariah, an outwardly "*righteous*" priest, representing all the sons of Levi is about to offer prayers to God in the temple of God; but he does not believe God's promise of giving a son. Note well: Zechariah does not believe that God is able to give a "**promised son.**" The very mother promise of Genesis 3:15, the promise God fulfilled to Abraham, the promise of Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 of the savior: "*unto us a child is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder*" Zechariah does not believe!

Zechariah, a supposedly "righteous priest" representing all his brethren the sons of Levi, does not believe God as he ministers in God's house. By this investigation, the Spirit is demonstrating how desperately the sons of Levi needed to be purified and that the time was at hand for the "*Son to be given,*" for the "*Messenger of the Covenant*" to appear and the "sons of Levi" to be purified.

No wonder Zechariah's mouth is shut. His prayer would not be a sweet aroma ascending up to God on Israel's behalf, but a blasphemous denial of God, an offering of unbelief (Luke 1:20). How can an unbelieving priest, representing an unbelieving priesthood, bless God's people? Note well, the whole worship stops and everyone goes

home unblest. The Messenger of the Covenant is about to appear and Zechariah cannot "stand" before the Lord as Malachi prophesied (Mal. 3:2).

Malachi spoke that very thing. When God sends the Messenger of the Covenant, "who may abide the day of his coming? Who shall **stand** when he appeareth? ...He shall purify the sons of Levi...**that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness**" (Mal. 3:1-5, emphasis mine). Zechariah could not stand in his unbelief. Afterward, when he believes, his offering in righteousness will be noted.

With John's birth, the "great and dreadful day" that Malachi spoke of is beginning (Mal. 4:5). This fact is most important: "the great and dreadful day" begins with the coming of Christ, His first advent (1 Pet. 4:17). "The sons of Levi" - beginning with Zechariah - will be purified by Jesus (Mal. 3:3). "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth..." (Mal. 2:7). More priests will soon be purified (Acts 6:7, 1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 1:6, 5:10). They, too, will "offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" similar to Zechariah's. This we shall see.

But before that, this important qualification must be restated: Zechariah's "offering in righteousness" is inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that we may say his worship offering is "in Spirit" (Luke 1:67). That first, then next, we shall see that his offering is also in "the truth" that came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Therefore, Zechariah's "offering in righteousness" reveals the beginning of the "Spirit and truth" worship which Jesus said "now is" (John 4:23).

God's chastening ends and Zechariah's lips are unsealed when he sees the promised son and by the grace of Christ, believing, confesses his name. "His name is John" (Luke 1:63). Then, filled with the Spirit, Zechariah prophesies and a wonderful New Testament Psalm of the new age is given (Luke 1:67-79). Notice should be taken of the fact that when the "sons of Levi" are purified, their offering in righteousness is a New Testament Psalm (1 Pet. 2:5), not an animal sacrifice, nor a Davidic Psalm as they formerly sang. Note well, also, the priests' song in heaven: "Worthy is the lamb (who purified them) that **was slain...**" (Rev. 5:9-14, **past tense**, brackets and emphasis mine)

It should also be noted that Zechariah's offering in righteousness is a new psalm of praise that **fulfills** the old Psalms; e.g. his first line, verse 1:68, is "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people." That line comes in part from Psalms 41:13, 72:18, and 106:48 taken together; but notice also its completion.

Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν
λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ, (Luke 1:68).

That God "visits" His people is a very familiar Old Testament refrain (Gen. 50:24, Ex. 3:16, 4:31, Ruth 1:6); but mostly it is said to "visit" Israel's sin (Ex. 32:34, 34:7, Ps. 89:32, Jer. 5:9, 29:10, Lam. 4:22, Amos 9:9, Zeph. 2:7). However, with the incarnation of their Savior and His purifying work begun, that judgment of sin becomes redemption in their song, i.e. "He hath **visited** and **redeemed** His people." The greek word

“λύτρωσιν” means to ransom, “to free by paying a price” “to redeem”. Notice, also, this “**redemption**” is **past tense**, even though the Savior is not yet born: “**redeemed His people.**” (ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν - 3rd person singular 1st aorist indicative active).

Continuing in Luke 1:69, Zechariah’s words are, “**And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.**” These words carefully weave together other Old testament scriptures (2 Sam. 22:3, Psalm 18:2, 132:17, Ezek. 29:21). But note well: they are placed together **in the past tense - God has raised up a horn of salvation.** That “**horn**” is not John. He is of the tribe of Levi, but the “**horn**” is in the house of David. Zechariah is referring to our Lord.

Also significant is the combination of words that Zechariah used: God “**raised up**” a “**horn of salvation.**” That combination of words is never used in the greek Old Testament. There are “**horns**” mentioned, but not one is “**raised up.**” However, that verb “**to raise up**” is used very frequently in the New Testament. It is especially the correct word that refers to our Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection in the New Testament (50 times).

As a “**horn of salvation**” our Lord was “**raised up.**” We should see the play on words involved: “**Raised up**” may refer to our Savior’s birth (Luke 1:69), His ministry (Acts 13:23) and His resurrection (Luke 24:6, 34). His complete satisfaction. Also, “**in the house of David,**” indicates Zechariah is proclaiming the fulfillment of God’s promise to David, that the Christ would be his son. That is exactly what David said in Psalm 18:2, “**the Lord is my horn of salvation.**”

So we see in just these two verses of his New Testament psalm, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah has woven together the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ from the Psalms and other Old Testament texts to make his “**offering in righteousness**” as Malachi prophesied (Mal. 3:3). A striking example of a New Testament Psalm and completion of some Old Testament texts, which should be sung according to Col. 3:16.

Zechariah’s New Testament Psalm should be considered as the beginning of the New Testament’s priests - believers - making “**offerings in righteousness**” as Malachi 3:3 prophesied. These offerings believers would offer **having** been “**purified**” and “**purged as gold and silver**” in the blood of the lamb (Mal.3:3, cf. 1 Pet.1:22).

* * * * *

In addition to the above, it is well to reconsider **I Peter 2:5 and 9**, because those texts in conjunction with Mal. 3:3 and Luke 1, present a line of facts that verify the thesis of this article.

First, according to 1 Peter 2:5, believers are “**a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.**” That designation of believers offering up spiritual sacrifices is an inspired application of Malachi’s prophecy to

christians. The Holy Spirit writes in 1 Pet. 2:5, that once "*purified*" these believers do what Zechariah did, so that their "*spiritual sacrifices*" would be the purified priestly "*offerings in righteousness*" as stated in Malachi 3:3, fulfilling also the exhortations of Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19.

Then second, the Holy Spirit having stated that believers are priests like Zechariah, continues in I Peter 2:9 to expand that qualification of believers. Besides being a "*holy priesthood*," believers are a "**royal priesthood**" (βασιλειον ιεράτευμα)²⁰. In other words, believers are Priests (the noun) who are kingly (the adjective) or priests who exercise a kingly function, i.e. their priestly offerings have a kingly aspect.

In other words, believers' exercise of their priestly function is similar to Zechariah's "*offering in righteousness*" - a song. Added to that, the exercise of their kingly function would be similar to Jesus' kingly function, producing worship songs; because by obeying Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, believers would be providing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs for worship and mutual encouragement. In other words, as believers offer up their "*spiritual sacrifices*" according to 1 Pet. 2:5, and as they obey Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 to versify the Word of Christ, that obedience of believers would indicate that their versification of the New Testament into psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are offering to God worship that is "*acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" and that those new psalm "*offerings in righteousness*," because they are "acceptable to God," must be the new worship in "*Spirit and truth*" which Jesus spoke of and the Father is seeking (John 4:23-24).

That line of Biblical thought verifies the thesis of this article: that Christ's church should versify for singing in worship Christ's Word.

* * * * *

Continuing, with the Forerunner present and the work of purifying the sons of Levi begun, Luke's focus of this new revelation now proceeds to **Mary** and the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26-2:7). Unlike Zechariah, Mary answers the angel in faith. His name shall be Jesus as the angel said (Luke 1:31). Like Zechariah, Mary breaks forth also with a New Testament verbal "*offering in righteousness*" (Luke 1:46-55). We note Mary's praise is all **past tense**, it is what God **has done**.

Echoing 1 Sam. 2:1-10 and Psalm 34:1-2, Mary begins: Her soul magnifies the Lord, as Psalm 34:1 states; but in addition her spirit has rejoiced in God **her Savior**.

The Psalmist didn't say that. He only said: "*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord...*" Also, when Hannah prayed, she said her horn was exalted...and "*I rejoice in Thy salvation*" (1 Sam. 2:1). Mary's "**My savior**" is an **advance** on what Hannah and the Psalmist said. They both knew salvation through a substitute sacrifice. But Mary's words proclaim the very **completion** of that sacrifice ritual, which is the fullness of the

²⁰ cf. ?made us unto our God kings and priests" Rev. 5:10 "And they sang a new song..." Rev. 5:9

New Testament gospel. "**My Savior**" is the very fulfillment of the Old Testament ritual of the believer placing his hand on the head of his sacrifice and it being killed in his place. That is the same to the believer - identifying Jesus - through faith as "My Savior." Jesus Christ is his/her personal savior, personally taking his sins on Himself, suffering the wrath of God and paying the penalty for those sins on the cross. Mary has expressed the gospel completion of the Old Testament sacrificial ritual, which the words "**My Savior**" proclaim. More could be said of Mary's song, but the above is sufficient to promote the theme of this article.

In addition to Mary's and Zechariah's new inspired hymns, when the promised Son is born, the worship of completed revelation continues in the words of the angels: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14).

Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ	Glory to God in the highest where He dwells;
καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη	And upon earth, peace to the men upon whom
ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας.	God's favor rests. ²¹

The heavenly host army of angels praise God in words that are poetry, which is equivalent to a hymn of praise. But, this praise is a proclamation of the results of Jesus birth. It basically summarizes the whole gospel. The birth of Christ - His incarnation in fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies from Genesis 3 to Malachi 4 - brings **glory to God** by revealing His divine majesty, sovereignty, and righteousness. It brings "**peace**" - the result of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, reconciliation with the Holy God, and eternal life in fellowship with God - to the men of God's good pleasure. A mighty summary of all the Old Testament promises and prophecies, **completed** by the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ, all majestically compressed into the ten words of the angel's poetic couplet joined by "kai" (and).

Arguably, with these **three witnesses**, according to Deut. 17:6, the testimony of new redemptive activity producing new redemptive revelation celebrated by New Testament Psalms is not only confirmed as characteristic of God's progressive revelation, but also encouraged because we are told these new offerings are "*pleasing to God*" (1 Pet. 2:5) and "*the Father is seeking such*" (John 4:23).

What has been demonstrated in simple terms from Luke 1-2 and I Pet. 2, is that when the last prophet's words are fulfilled with the birth of Christ, the "*Purifier of the sons of Levi*" begins to lead His people by His Spirit in offering to God new hymns of worship that proclaim the "*great salvation which **began** to be spoken by our Lord*" (Heb. 2:3).

The **completion** of the Old Covenant revelation by the New Covenant revelation makes these new Psalms the "*Song of Moses and the Lamb*" (Rev.15:3). It is the song

²¹ Marshall, Howard I., Commentary on Luke, New International Greek Testament Commentary, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978, p.112.

of completed revelation: both testaments joined by the truth of Jesus Christ, praising the Lamb who **was slain**, who is before the throne of God in heaven (Rev. 5:6)

That is also the significance of the twenty-four elders around the throne: 12 from the Old covenant age church combined in unity with 12 elders from the new covenant age church, all joined in one song before the lamb (Rev. 4:10-11, 5:8-13, 7:10); who is leading "*the great congregation*" in the worship of the Father by His Word and Spirit (Heb. 2:12).

* * * * *

b. John 1:1-17 and Hebrews 1:1-2

We know that the apostle John, in writing his Gospel introduces the Word who existed with God and was God already at creation. But the Holy Spirit in John 1 has much more to say about the Word than just His eternal existence.

The Spirit reveals the glory of the incarnate Son. "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14).

In two ways, the Son's glory is revealed: first, that as the incarnate Word He is the only-begotten Son of God reflecting the fullness of God's glory, and second, that as the Word of God He is full of the grace and truth of God.

The Spirit is revealing the glory that the disciples beheld in the person of Jesus was the greatest and highest glory there could be. There could be no higher being to display additional grace and truth. Also, the Word is the only begotten Son of God. There were no other natural sons of God to display more truth and grace. Therefore, Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth in a way that no other person could display more grace and truth or display grace and truth better than the eternal Son of God in human flesh. Jesus Christ was God's intentional fullness of grace and truth.

By this witness, the Holy Spirit is informing the church that Jesus Christ is the highest and final display of divine revelation. This is basically the same testimony as Hebrews 1:1-2, that the Son's **speaking** is the highest there could be and therefore the Son's speaking is the climax of God's redemptive disclosure.

That Jesus is "*full of grace*" means everything Christ is, everything He said and everything He did was grace, for grace, and accomplished grace. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.....to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*" (Eph. 1,6, emphasis mine).

Second, the Spirit witnesses that Jesus, the eternal Word was also *"full of truth"*²². The greek word the Spirit used for truth is ἀληθείας.. It means reality.

Jesus was also the fullness of divine reality. He was the highest expression and fullest revelation of the character, being and eternal good pleasure of God, so that, by contrast all previous truth delivered through the Law and ceremonies were mere shadows of Him. In the words of Hebrews 9:8-10, they were *"a figure for the time then present... which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation"* (Heb. 9:8-10, emphasis mine). Therefore, Christ's coming and His glory being revealed had a concluding and climactic effect on all previous divine revelation.

The Spirit, in John 1:17, further explains the glory of Christ that was introduced in verse 14: *"The Law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* (John 1:17)

ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. (John 1:17).

The Law was given by Moses: διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη. The first word "διὰ" plus the third word "ἐδόθη" which is a passive verb, indicates Moses was merely an instrument that God used to deliver the Law, i.e. only a servant bringing a message, a message that was an unbearable "yoke" or burden that Peter said *"Neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"* (Acts 15:10). The Law killeth. It's demands sinners cannot possibly meet. It's shadows and ceremonies only portray a hidden truth and distant grace. Therefore, Moses delivered only death, condemnation and a mere shadow of grace.

In contrast to that, grace and truth *"came"* by **Jesus Christ**. Here it is necessary to insist that John is writing of the incarnate Son of God when he writes that grace and truth came "by Jesus Christ." John is saying that grace and truth came to be in the highest and most climactic way with the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

The greek word for *"came"* is: "ἐγένετο." It means "to come to be" "to become" "to originate."²³ (The same word "ἐγένετο" is used in John 1:3, *"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."*)

Moses brought death, condemnation and only a distant hope for sinners. Jesus brought eternal life, justification, sanctification, glorification for sinners. Moses could do nothing to help sinners meet the demands of the burden he brought; while Jesus, being full of grace and truth, could freely provide abundant grace to give sinners eternal life. Such was the vast difference between Moses and Jesus according to John 1:17.

²² W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, University of Chicago Press, 1957, p.35

²³ Bauer, op. cit. p.157

John's comparison continues in verse 18. Having compared what Jesus and Moses brought, John now compares the vast difference between their persons. He writes, *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."*

To complete this incomparable difference between Christ and Moses, John writes that Jesus is God the Son in the bosom of the Father. The Son eternally shares the most intimate place at the Father's side. He is ever near the Father's heart. Ever looking upon His Face and sharing His love. And Moses? John says Moses never even saw God's face once. That's the comparison.

So we see in these opening verses of his gospel, John has revealed that Jesus Christ is the highest conceivable revelation of God and of God's redemptive disclosure; to whom even the great Old Testament mediator of the covenant - Moses, a man who had direct communication with God - does not compare in the slightest way.

John's comparison is the same as Hebrews 1:1-3. Jesus Christ is *"the brightness of His (God's) glory, and the express image of His person"* incomparably supreme over Moses in His person and incomparably supreme above all that Moses delivered, so that the grace and truth Jesus brought terminates the regime of shadows and death that Moses delivered (Heb. 9:8-10). No greater person could ever come and no greater truth or grace could ever be revealed. As the Book of Hebrews clearly and copiously lays out, Jesus Christ was incomparably supreme and glorious over Moses, angels and all the prophets.

There is, then, a **demand** that arises from the testimony of Hebrews' and John's witness to the Son's incomparable glory, person and climactic speaking. If His person is the highest conceivable revelation of glory and His speaking is the highest conceivable revelation of grace and truth, in response the church must render to Him the highest conceivable honor, worship and **submission** to His *"speaking."* Her preaching, her prayers and her worship in praise and **singing** must exhibit this highest submission to Jesus Christ and the Word of Christ - the New Testament - so that ***"in all things He might have the pre-eminence"*** (Colossians 1:18).

Some might protest that Christ is pre-eminent in the Psalms. Yes, He is pre-eminent in their message. The Psalms are about Christ. But the critical and deciding factor is this: altho the Son of God inspired the Psalms and He is their message, the Psalms were actually 1) written by **another** about Christ and 2) David's Psalms are a prophet's *"speaking,"* which is inferior to Christ's own personal speaking **"in these last days,"** because His *"speaking"* is the highest and most glorious *"speaking"* of God Himself in person that there could be! His Person and Word are in an exalted class by themselves.

The Psalms are the words the Spirit inspired David, a **prophet**, to write about the coming of Christ. They are true and precious, but again, this is the **critical point**: based on Hebrews 1 and John 1, Christ's speaking is superior to all the prophet's speaking and the Psalms are part of the prophet's speaking; they are **not the Son's personal**

speaking "in these last days." That is the sufficient reason why the Word of Christ, the New Testament, should be given **"the more earnest heed"** than the Psalms of David in the worship of God's people.

We believe that emphasis of the writer to the Hebrews as he exhorts his readers to move up fully to the Word of Christ: *"Therefore we ought to give the **more earnest heed** to the things which we have heard..."* applies also to church's worship songs (Heb. 2:1-3, emphasis mine).

* * * * *

c. John 2:1-11

John 2 presents the beginning of Jesus' ministry and His first sign or miracle as He reveals His glory. We know it as the miracle at the wedding in Cana. We should recognize that this is a **deliberate** beginning of signs in which our Lord chose a fully appropriate occasion for Him to manifest His glory as the **true bridegroom** to His people. Christ begins to reveal, then, this specific glory: that as the only-begotten Son of God in human nature He is the promised Messiah, the One who alone gives His people the eternal joy of the Father's wedding feast, as Isaiah prophesied:

"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of **wines on the lees**...He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe tears from off of all faces..." (Isa.25:6-9, emphasis mine).

Because there was no wine, according to Jewish custom there would be no joy and gladness at this wedding. It was a disastrous failure on the part of the groom to allow the wine that gladdens the heart to run out so that his guests would have no joy or celebration at this wedding.

Eating and drinking was the sign of covenant fellowship. It portrayed the time when God's people would sit down at the His table and enjoy eternal fellowship with Him.

But this wedding was in a crisis situation. Mary can do nothing, she only says *"They have no wine."* Jesus replies that it is not *"My Hour."* He has His eyes set on the cross because by the cross He will supply the true wine of true joy that fulfills Isaiah's prophecy. But He stops for a moment to demonstrate in His first sign that He is the true bridegroom and that He is able to give the true joy which comes only from the wine (His blood) that He provides (Isa. 12:1-3, 35:10, 51:11, 61:10, Jer. 31:12-14, Acts 2:46-47).

Therefore, Jesus has the washing pots of the law filled to the brim which He changes into the best wine, indicating that what the law could not do - there was no true joy in earthly washings - His Word produces the joy of the wedding feast. By *"speaking"* He supplies the *"best"* wine revealing that He is the true bridegroom whose Word will produce the truly *"best"* wine when "His Hour" comes for all who trust in Him; i.e. *"This cup (wine) is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you"* (Luke 22:20).

We see in John 2, He that is full of grace and truth, when He begins to deliberately manifest His glory, He reveals that it is **His Word** that produces the joy and **singing** of the wedding feast as it will be at the marriage of the true Bridegroom.

*“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying...Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, Let us be **glad and rejoice (i.e. sing)** and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the lamb has come, and His wife hath made herself ready...”* (Rev. 19:6-7, emphasis mine).

Notice, also, it is the song of the Lamb they sing, not a Psalm.

* * * * *

d. John 4:19-42

In John 4 our Lord proclaims the end of Temple worship and the beginning of a new worship in spirit and truth which God the Father is seeking. We must remember the contrast the Spirit already provided in John 1, that the Law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

That contrast applies here also. So that when Jesus speaks of the *“true worshippers”* (vs.23) He is not saying that the Old Covenant Temple worship was false, but that by contrast with the new, final worship, that former worship was greatly inferior, fleshly and therefore temporary (Heb. 9:9-10). Therefore, to the woman at the well Jesus said: *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth...”*(John 4:23). In other words, with His coming the old worship is ending and the new, *“Spirit and truth”* worship is starting: it **“now is.”** We must ask: In what way has the new worship started?

In John 4:21, Jesus instructs the samaritan woman that she will worship the Father, but it will **not** be at Mt. Gerizim nor at Jerusalem. Notice particularly in those words, our Savior informs us that the Mosaicly commanded valid temple worship is ending, it will not continue beyond His death, when the Temple curtain is divided and exposes the empty holy of holies. Jesus' statement underscores the temporary character of all the Mosaic ceremonial legislation. Confirming that, Hebrews 7:12 speaks of a necessary *“change in the Law”* because Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek and not Aaron. For the purposes of this article we underline that phrase: With Jesus' coming there is a **change in the Law of Moses!** Jesus Himself says that in John 4:21.

Also, Heb. 9:8-10 speaks of various other Mosaic ordinances that were discontinued because all those things were figures *“imposed on them until the time of reformation.”*

The significance of John 4 is that all the previous revelational directives of the Mosaic legislation that pertained to the temple worship have been abrogated, being replaced by a new temple not made with hands and a **new worship** in the Spirit and

truth which came by Jesus Christ and which the Father is seeking. In other words, all that was involved in that valid temple worship: the levitical priests and the sacrifices, the altar of burnt offering, the altar of incense, the golden pots and pans, accompanied by the levitical singing of psalms - all of it was replaced by the new worship produced by the Spirit and truth that came by Jesus Christ.

Considering what has been established by the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy in Luke 1-2, the conclusion we should draw from this announcement of new worship in John 4 is that Jerusalem, the Temple, the Levitical priesthood and all the outward symbolic and prophetic activity connected with those institutions has ended. There is now a new high priest, a new temple not made with hands, there are new priests whose "*offerings in righteousness*" are new psalms, the fruit of lips cleansed "*as gold and silver*" in the blood of Jesus (Mal. 3:3, 1 Pet. 2:9). As the author of Hebrews says, New Testament believers have not come to Mount Sinai, we have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to God the judge, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:18-24). And in the heavenly Jerusalem, as previously demonstrated, they sing new psalms of completed revelation (Rev. 4:11, 5:9-12, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4, 19:6-7).

This new worship being offered by these new priests in "*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*" proclaiming "*the Word of Christ that is richly dwelling in them*" (Col. 3:16) would be the new worship Jesus spoke of "*that now is*" and therefore should be adopted by the church of Christ because it is the worship that Scripture teaches the Father is seeking (John 4:23) and Zion is singing.

There was a special significance to Jesus' words, when He said: "*The hour is coming, and now is...*" The complete giving of the "*Spirit and truth*" was not finished at the time He spoke to the samaritan woman. It was in progress. He had already undertaken the mediator's office by His incarnation and begun to fulfill all righteousness, His high priestly once-for-all sacrifice was being prepared. But His death, resurrection and ascension, leading to Pentecost, would truly fill this new temple with the Spirit so that then He would be pre-eminent among many brethren leading the true worshippers by His Spirit and truth in their new worship songs (Hebrews 2:9-12). That truth the following examination of Hebrews 2:11-12 and Psalm 22 will confirm.

* * * * *

e. Hebrews 2:11-12 and Psalm 22

"For both He that sanctified and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. 2:11-12).

This text in Hebrews is a quotation of Psalm 22:22, a Psalm of David from the time of his persecution by Saul expressing his grief and confident hope as God's anointed in his ascension to Israel's throne.

However, in Psalm 22, what David writes goes far beyond David's experiences (e.g. vss. 14-18) because the Holy Spirit inspired this writing to be prophetic of Christ's suffering and exaltation, therefore the suffering is more than David's suffering and the exaltation is more than David's exaltation.

The point of that transition from suffering to glory comes in **verse 22** with the Psalmist's confident expression that the One spoken of will declare God's name to his brethren and sing God's praise with them.

Consider that transition. Just before verse 22, in verse 21, David writes these strange words: *"Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns."*²⁴ We look to Isaiah 34:6-8 to clarify these words: *"The sword of the Lord is filled with blood...**the unicorns shall come down with them...**For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion."*

According to Isaiah 34, in the day of the Lord's vengeance when He settles His righteous controversy with Zion, God hears the voice of the suffering One whose hands and feet are pierced (Ps. 22:16) and whose garments they have cast lots for (Ps. 22:18). The *"horns of the unicorns"* refers to the deadly strength of David's enemies which have surrounded him but from whom he is confident the Lord will save Him.

The passage in Isaiah mentions the *"unicorns coming down"* at the same time it refers to *"the Lord's sword being filled with blood"* and God's righteous controversy with Zion being settled forever. We know Jesus' crucifixion and death are being spoken of because He is the one whose hands and feet are pierced, not David; He is the one whose garments are cast lots for. The text is referring to the time when God's wrath is poured out on His Son at the cross which settles God's controversy with Zion. Therefore the figure of the unicorns is developed in Isaiah's prophecy to proclaim the occasion of messiah's death. Christ's death settles the account for His elect, but it also brings down His enemies (John 12:31, 1 Cor. 15:25, Eph. 1:20-22, Col. 2:15, 2 Thess. 1:9). Henceforth, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a savor of life unto life and death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16).

David said God heard him when he was surrounded by the unicorns, but Isaiah's clearer revelation pictures God's sword **"taking down"** the unicorns at the same time of messiah's death and when God's controversy with Zion is settled.

Notice, then, that this singing of the Lord in verse 22 comes after His crucifixion and death in verse 21; that is, Christ's singing begins after His death and resurrection in the time of His exaltation, when, according to Psalm 22, His praise is *"to Thee (God) in the great congregation"* (Psalm 22:25) which takes place during the general conversion of the nations (Psalm 22:28-32).

²⁴ "You rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen" (English standard Version)

Therefore, we may assume, according to Ps. 22:22 and Heb. 2:11-12 that it is during His exaltation that the Lord Jesus sings with His brethren which leads to several conclusions:

First, going back to verse 22, we note that in the greek text of the Hebrew (the Septuagint) the word for “*I will sing **praise** unto Thee*” is the greek word **ὕμνήσω**. That is the same word used when Paul and Silas were singing **hymns** in Acts 16:25 and our Savior sang a **hymn** with his disciples at the last supper, which was a Psalm of David.

However, it has been established that this singing of **hymns** in Hebrews 2:12 definitely refers to the Lord's singing **after** His exaltation to glory and it has also been definitely established that the hymns being sung in heaven are new songs of completed revelation and **not** the Psalms of David (Rev. 4:11, 5:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4).

Secondly, because the **new hymns** being sung in heaven are defined by that same greek word “**ὕμνήσω**,” that would prove that the meaning of the greek word **ὕμνήσω** does not always refer to the Psalms of David. It would indicate that the word **ὕμνήσω** is a more general term whose basic meaning is “hymning,” “to sing praise,” “to sing a hymn.”²⁵

In addition to explaining the meaning of “**ὕμνήσω**,” it is also a fact that in the Book of Revelation the greek word “ὠδὴν,” which is the same greek word used for “*spiritual songs*” in Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19, is used to refer to the singing of new hymns, which are not the Psalms of David (Rev. 5:9, 14:3, 15:3).

Therefore, it has been demonstrated that the Scripture teaches that the greek words for two of the three categories of songs in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, do not necessarily indicate that the Psalms of David are referred to; so that, in those two classical texts, the phrase “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς) does not necessarily indicate the three titles of the Psalms of David, as exclusive Psalm singers allege; but rather, that those terms are simply three general categories of spiritual songs that the Scriptures refer to. Therefore, it has been demonstrated from Scripture that Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, do not support exclusive psalmody, but instead, support the thesis of this article, that Christ's church is called to versify His Word, the New Testament, and complete the Psalms of David for the new worship the Father is seeking.

* * * * *

f. Mark 14:26 and Matthew 26:30

Matthew and Mark report the singing of a **hymn at the Last Supper**. Jesus and His disciples sang the traditional Psalm for the Feast of Passover. Luke and John do not mention this singing.

²⁵ Bauer, *ibid.*, p.844)

The fact that Luke and John omit this singing is significant for they wrote for gentiles, while Matthew and Mark wrote for jews. Including mention of this traditional singing would testify to the jews that Jesus and His disciples intentionally fulfilled all righteousness even to the end; while omitting that singing would testify to the gentiles the freedom of the church from all jewish legalism; which was officially decided at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23-29).

The simple statement that Jesus sang Psalms at the Last Supper proves nothing more than His messianic zeal to fulfill all righteousness, which He demonstrated all the way to the cross when He said, *"It is finished."* In His high priestly prayer, this is the first thing that He mentions: *"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"* (John 17:4).

Fulfilling all righteousness was uppermost on His heart and mind (Ps. 40:8, Zech. 9:9, Luke 2:49, Math. 3:15, John 5:30, 8:29, 46, 15:10, Phil.2:8, Heb. 10:7-9). That explains the singing in Mark 14:26 and Matthew 26:30. There is no prescription in those texts to sing Psalms just because Jesus sang the Psalms. There is only the demonstration of Christ's perfect righteousness and His fulfilling the office of mediator for the glory of God and the salvation of His elect to the very end (John 13:1).

Therefore, citing these texts to prove strict psalm singing would be misleading. Neither of these texts specifically teach nor require that the New Testament church must sing what Jesus sang. If believers were required to do what Jesus did, we would all have to teach in every synagogue of Galilee and worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, the very thing Jesus told the samaritan woman not to do!

* * * * *

g. Acts and the Disciples' Temple Attendance.

Acts 1:4 states Jesus' command to His disciples that they not leave Jerusalem but wait for the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came producing the preaching of the Word in many languages which resulted in 3000 souls being saved (Acts 2:41). From this event and those following (Acts 3:1, 5:20, 42) we see the purpose of the disciples remaining in the temple after Pentecost was to preach according to the Lord's command because His elect were there and the church's' witness to the jews was important as this large crowd of believers *"continued daily with one accord in the temple...having favor with the people"* (Acts 2:46-47). Particularly notice what follows: *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* Therefore the reason for remaining in the temple was for the salvation of God's elect, not to affirm anything of it's worship.

Remember, Jesus had already dismissed going to Jerusalem and worshipping in the temple in John 4. The temple and it's typical services, which included the singing of David's psalms, was being abrogated - *"The hour cometh and now is..."* - and replaced by the new worship God was seeking in *"Spirit and truth"* (John 4:23-24).

Consider also how the apostles at the Jerusalem council, dealt with God's command through Moses concerning circumcision (Acts 15:1). The pharisee party demanded that: *"it was needful to circumcise them, and to keep the law of Moses"* (Acts 15:5).

In response, the apostles guided by the Holy Spirit declared for this New Testament age that requiring Law obedience to be saved was *"tempting God"* and putting *"a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"* (Acts 15:10).

Contradicting the pharisees' demand to obey the Law for salvation, the apostles guided by the Holy Spirit, rejected it and required only a minimum of practical obedience in order to maintain good fellowship between the gentiles coming into the church and the majority of its members who were jews (Acts 15:19-20, 28). This apostolic settlement concerning the Law of Moses (which would include all the ceremonial law) lead to the joy and liberty of the New Testament church to obey the voice of Jesus (Acts 15:31).

Therefore, it was not because the temple ritual had any validity that the disciples continued to attend, neither did the typical Mosaic ordinances retain any continuing demand on believers; but the purpose of the disciples continuing to attend the temple was for the preaching of the gospel and witnessing to the jewish nation of the joy and fellowship of the true church, in fulfillment of the prophets' words:

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes" Psalm 118:22-23, Acts 4:11.

"Behold, i will send my messenger, and He shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" Mal.3:1, Acts 3:12-26.

Again, in Acts 21:20-26, we see Paul entering the temple when he was advised to demonstrate to the jews that he *"walkest orderly, and keepest the law"* (Acts 21:24, 25:8). But in going to the temple Paul's purpose was to witness, not to affirm anything of the temple worship or any demand that he had to obey the Law for righteousness. This demonstration on Paul's part was to exercise his christian freedom from the law; specifically, that *he could become a jew to the jews and a gentile to the gentiles, in order to win some* (1 Cor. 9:20). Paul's freedom included being loosed from the 2nd Commandment's abrogated ceremonial requirement of attending the Temple worship with it's psalm singing.

* * * * *

h. Acts 16:25

"Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." (Κατὰ δὲ τὸ μεσονύκτιον Παῦλος καὶ Σιλᾶς προσευχόμενοι ὕμνουσιν τὸν

θεόν, ἐπηκροῶντο δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ δέσμιοι). This text is important because of the church's mindset it reveals.

The greek word for “*sang praises*” is ὕμνου. As previously stated, it is the same word used in Mark 14:26 and Matthew 26:30 to denote the singing at the Last Supper, which we know were the Psalms of the Hallel. However, that same greek word is also used in Revelation 4:11, 5:9-12, 14:1-3, 15:2-4, for **hymns** that were not Psalms, but expressions of salvation accomplished.

Notice, also, that this text is a simple declarative sentence stating a fact: Paul and Silas were singing hymns. It is not certain these hymns were Psalms, most likely they were; but the important point is that there is no command in this verse requiring the church to sing the Psalms, neither is there any indication that Paul and Silas needed to obey the 2nd Commandment in their singing. Rather, their singing could just as well be considered part of the missionary zeal of the church at that time (Acts 6:8, 7:2, 8:4-5, 29-30, 9:40-42, 10:34), as well as just their customary Old Testament piety.

While the text says nothing conclusive concerning exclusive psalmody, the true significance of Acts 16:25 is that it shows the mindset of the church and it's leading theologian at the time. At this point in the progress of revelation, Acts 16:25 follows the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, where the church and it's theologians battled against the legalistic theology of the pharisees. Note well, at the Council the disciples had rejected legalism, but they wrote no creed or confession that the church must believe concerning it. The Council merely provided a few **practical** guidelines to the gentiles in order to maintain peace and good fellowship in the church (Acts 15:20,28-29)

Because the Holy Spirit lead the church to that decision we may consider it carefully to understand the mindset and theological conditions in the early church at that time of Acts 16:25. The faith had been seriously attacked, challenging the gospel of sovereign grace and salvation by faith alone; but in rejecting that attack no creed or confession was written even though the church's best theologians were present and lead by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28). All that the apostles and elders wrote were practical guidelines: abstain from sexual immorality, from things strangled and from blood. What we see is this: In the Spirit's leading of the church into all truth (John 16:13) at that time, theology, ecclesiology and hymnody were far from the church's mindset and concern.

Based on John 16:13, we may assume that it was not the Spirit's leading nor was it in the minds of the church's theologians (Peter, Paul, James) to formulate any official theology, even of sovereign grace or the worship of the church at that time of Acts 15 and 16. Why? Why was that the situation at the time? Why was there no divinely lead creedal or theological inclination at that time?

The answer is that at that point in her history and the progress of God's revelation, the early church and her theologians were not thinking theologically or creedally because there was **NO** body of new redemptive revelation to explain the new redemptive events that God had accomplished. Hence, we find the early church's

worship similar to that of the synagogues they were familiar with because the majority of the members were Jews brought up to sing David's Psalms. The disciples' worship at the time was not based on any self-conscious, New Testament theological considerations because there was no New Testament to consider. As Acts 6 and 15 clearly demonstrate, the leading of the Spirit in the early church only dealt with pressing practical concerns.

The only writing at the time of Acts 15 & 16 was possibly the Epistle of James, which contained no doctrinal theology; a fact that puzzled Luther, but which supports the previous statement. James' teaching, "*faith without works is dead*" was only a practical admonition to his scattered Jewish brethren to correct their antinomian actions and boasting that they didn't need to obey the Law because Abraham was their father.

These facts make it reasonable to assume that at the time of Acts 16:25, which was prior to A.D. 70 and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple which would end the sacrificial worship accompanied by Levites singing David's Psalms, that the Holy Spirit had not led the church into any consideration of what true worship is, so that Jewish believers like Paul and Silas continued to sing what they had learned from their youth, the Psalms of David.

What is known of that time is that the Holy Spirit inspired individuals to prophesy new songs, as Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, which some Corinthian individuals did also (Luke 1:41, 1:35, 1:67, 2:13, 2:27, 2:36, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27-31, 14:26-33).

However, according to the Biblical Theological principle that divine redemptive activity being followed by divine redemptive revelation there could be no theological or creedal reflection by the church because the body of new redemptive revelation was not yet written, therefore the Holy Spirit did not lead the church into any theological consideration of New Testament worship.

All that is evident in Acts is that the apostles and the early church were acting on the Great Commission (Acts 1:8, 28:23, 31); and that only in the second generation of the church's leaders, based on Paul's epistles, was there a budding concern for "**doctrine**" (1 Tim. 4:13, 2 Tim. 2:2, 15, 3:14-17, 4:2-5, Tit. 1:9, 2:1, 15, 3:3-11).

Those valid considerations answer the question: *Why did Paul and Silas sing Psalms in Acts 16:25 rather than New Testament psalms?* The answer is, while Acts 15-16 was a time of increasing success for the gospel with great multitudes flooding into the church, there were no New Testament books written at the time to guide the church in defining her soteriology or ecclesiology, much less her doctrine of singing. Those prevailing conditions lingered on until 70 A.D. when the temple and its worship was finally destroyed and the church began to consider what true Christian worship was, being guided then by Peter and Paul's epistles and the Book of Hebrews. It was about that time, towards the latter part of the first century, that the Scriptures began to regulate the church's worship and believers began to sing new songs from inspired revelation (1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27-31, 14:26-33).

Therefore, prior to the writing of the New Testament Scriptures, because there was no body of completed redemptive revelation expounding what Christ had accomplished as the church transitioned from the Old Testament age to the New Testament age, the Spirit's leading of the church at that time produced only the advisory decisions of the Jerusalem Council and Paul's exhortations to the second generation leaders to require sound doctrine; but with little confessional leading from the Spirit, by default Paul and Silas sang what they were accustomed to sing from their youth, i.e. Psalms.

* * * * *

i. Hebrews 8-9-10

In Hebrews 8, the author explains why the first covenant was replaced: if it had been faultless, there would have been no need for a better covenant (Heb. 8:6-7). Going on to Chapter 9, he acknowledges that the first covenant ordinances were of **divine service** (Heb. 9:1) and that the priest going into the Tabernacle accomplished this valid service of God (Heb. 9:6). But, then, the author says all that *“was a figure for the time present”* and because those things were *“carnal ordinances”* they were *“imposed on them until the time of reformation”* (Heb. 9:10).

Also, the writer of Hebrews says that the time of reformation came with the death of the testator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:16). Before that time of reformation the patterns of the heavenly things were being purified with the blood *“of calves and of goats,”* but the heavenly things themselves had to be purified with a better sacrifice than those (Heb. 9:19). Also, because those sacrifices had to be continually repeated it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, therefore **“God had no pleasure in them.”** (Heb. 10:8, emphasis mine).

Consider that conclusion of Hebrews 10:8. Even though those sacrifices were *“divine ordinances”* and accompanied by divinely inspired Psalms, **God had no pleasure in them.** An amazing statement. It was the right service and the right songs for that time, until the time of reformation, but then, **because God had no pleasure in them,** Christ's one perfect sacrifice removed them (Heb. 10:6-9). *“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second”* (Heb. 10:9).

Exclusive psalmists must take note of God's dissatisfaction with divinely ordained sacrifices and Psalm singing. Therefore Hebrews 10 is a most appropriate place to end this study. Exclusive psalmists should consider two things concerning those sacrifices accompanied by the Levites singing David's inspired Psalms: 1) **God had no pleasure in them;** and 2) **God removed them!**

We should ask: Why? Hebrews gives two reasons. Those ordinances did not remove sin (Heb. 9:12) and neither did they make the believers' consciences perfect (Heb. 9:9). In other words, those ordinances, accompanied by the Psalms of David, in themselves could not remove one sin, so that the Old Testament believer's conscience did not have the full assurance of sins removed, which God would provide in the future

through the finished sacrifice of Christ; and therefore, neither could those Old Testament believers have that full assurance of faith when they sang their praises because their songs could only point to a future satisfaction; those songs, like their sacrifices, did not proclaim a present, finished and possessed salvation. Because Christ's substitutionary atonement was not yet completed, His divine righteousness was not yet actually imputed to those believers, neither was His Holy Spirit given as the Spirit of sanctification permanently living in all believers as proclaimed in the gospel; hence their consciences were not perfected and their songs reflected that imperfection.

As mere shadows of Christ, those ordinances were totally inferior representations of Christ Himself by both their design and failure to satisfy. Because they feebly and only in a shadowy and earthly fashion pointed to what Christ **would do**, it is understandable that God had no pleasure in the "*carnal ordinances*" and mere shadows of His Son and His Son's satisfaction. Also, it would be reasonable to assume that if God had no pleasure in mere shadows of His Son's righteous satisfaction, that He would also have no pleasure in songs that only expressed mere shadows of His Son's righteous satisfaction.

Because God intended the Psalms only as prophetic preparation for Christ, they could not, at that time, clearly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, neither could **they** proclaim that precious Name, because all of that gracious salvation Christ would only "**finish**" on the cross in the age of completion. But, with Christ having finished "*the great salvation*" and all the types and shadows having been removed, the new Psalms expressing the New revelation could then clearly proclaim all of Christ's finished work.

But that is not the end of the instruction of Hebrews 10. The author continues explaining what takes place at the time of reformation when the shadows are removed: "*But this man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, **sat down on the right hand of God***" Heb. 10:12).

Christ's one sacrifice for sins was eternally effective because it was "**once forever**" and therefore permanently exalting Him, which is particularly important for this study because that exaltation of our Lord opens the way for God's people with "**boldness to enter into the holiest**" (Heb. 10:19). "*Into the holiest*" is where the Old Testament high priest alone could go once a year, but never the people; but now after Christ's once forever sacrifice all believers are exhorted to continually enter the heavenly "*holiest*" where Christ is seated and the heavenly church's worship is surrounding His throne ("*Let us **draw near** with a true heart and full assurance...*" Heb. 10:22).

The greek word "**draw near**" (προσερχόμεθα) is in the present tense and subjunctive mood, indicating that God's people "**should continually draw near.**" But the important point for this study is that believers are **corporately** called to draw near to Christ (the verb is plural) where He is - in the holiest. In other words, Christ's church is exhorted to enter into the heavenly worship knowing that God is seeking us (John 4:23).

Further confirming the thesis of this article is that entering with a **“true heart”** is a renewed heart full of God’s truth, the truth that came by Jesus Christ, the truth of the *“Son’s speaking in these last days.”*

Exclusive psalmists must consider the truth of Hebrews 10:12-22, that the church's worship is joined with the heavenly worship where Jesus is at God’s right hand and where the new psalms of finished redemption are being sung. Would it be appropriate, then, to enter the *“holiest”* singing Old Testament revelation when those in heaven are singing New Testament completed revelation? Would the Psalms of David, with their types and shadows of Jesus’ future suffering, not be out of time and place in the midst of the final heavenly glory of Christ exalted and the heavenly host singing:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:11-12),

“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:9-12).

“Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:2-4).

In the light of Hebrews 10, we must answer this pointed hypothetical question: upon entering Christ’s exalted presence at the throne of glory in heaven, should the church sing: *“My God, my God, I cry to Thee; O, why hast Thou forsaken me? Afar from Me, Thou dost not heed, Though day and night for help I plead”* ?

Should we not conclude that those prophetic words were appropriate for Israel to sing as she waited for her Savior to come? But, that they would not be appropriate to sing now when Christ has already come, already been forsaken and is no longer forsaken, but seated at the right hand of God? Neither would those words be appropriate for New Testament believers to sing either, because with Christ on the throne sending His Spirit, He never leaves us nor forsakes us (Matthew 28:20).

4. Exclusive Psalmody's Problems

a. Exclusive psalmists have a serious Name problem. Perhaps this is the simplest and strongest argument against exclusive psalmody: His glorious name is not in “His Songbook.” This problem concerns the honor, the glory and the pre- eminence that the Lord Jesus has received in His exaltation. The problem is that the incarnate Son of God is exalted to the right hand of God, His praise being sung by angels and men, His Name is above every name that is named in heaven or on earth and there is no other Name that is given among men whereby we may be saved, but His Name is **not** in *“His songbook.”* His Name is the Name to whom every knee shall bow, but it is **not** in *“His songbook.”* Again, if the true worship of Jesus Christ, according to John 4:23, has already begun, why would His worshippers have “a songbook” without His Name in it? How can that be the church’s “true” songbook?

How could it ever be possible that this exalted Lord Jesus would have His church sing His praise, but not mention His own glorious Name when they sing? How could a book without His Name in it ever be thought of as His New Testament songbook? When all that call on that Name have salvation given them, why then may they not sing that name? When every true preacher preaches His Name and His church makes every prayer in His Name, why may they not sing His name? Last of all this: His beloved bride adorns herself with His righteous robes of salvation and yearns to worship Him in her song, but she cannot find the Name of her Bridegroom in her Songbook nor speak His Name in her songs? How is that possible? It is not. It is indefensible.

Exclusive psalmists have no answer to these serious questions. Some hedge, others equivocate. To admit that His Name was not given at the time is to acknowledge that David's Psalm's were not permanent, but temporary, that they were to be used until the time of reformation when His name would be given and He would have the honor of speaking the final truth (Heb. 1:1-2).

b. Exclusive psalmists have a serious translation problem. The Psalms in the English language are translations of the Hebrew originals, generally involving linguistic choices, i.e. interpretation, paraphrase and omission. Many words and phrases, sometimes even whole sentences, of the Hebrew originals are omitted in the English psalms. Also, the linguistic choices and paraphrases are uninspired man made choices. To truly sing the inspired Psalms faithfully, without interpretation or omission, the singing would necessarily have to be word for word in the Hebrew language.

c. Exclusive psalmists have serious word problems with the classical texts: Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. First, the greek words *psalmos*, *hymnos* and *ode* that are found in the titles of the Psalms in the greek translation of the Old Testament are not part of the original inspired psalm; those names are in the superscriptions, which are considered later editorial additions and not part of the inspired text.²⁶ Therefore appeal to the use of those terms in the greek Old Testament is inconclusive at best.

Also, those terms are used for other portions of the greek Old Testament: e.g. the word "*ode*" is found in Ex.15:1, Deut. 31:19, 21, 22, 32:44, Jud. 5:12, 2 Sam. 22:1, Hab. 3:1,19; which would allow the singing of those portions if Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19 were strictly adhered to as commanding the singing of *psalmos*, *hymnos* and *ode*.

In addition, the word "hymnos" is found in Isa. 42:10, again requiring the singing of that passage also. And finally, "ode" is also found in Rev. 5:9, 14:3, 15:3, requiring the singing of those passages from the New Testament if Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19 were strictly adhered to as commanding the singing of *psalmos*, *hymnos* and *ode*. However, this is the point: if Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 require the singing of other Scripture portions, then, those two classic texts do not teach exclusive psalmody.

²⁶ Roland K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1969, p.977.

d. Exclusive psalmists have a Biblical Theological and redemptive revelation problem. The problem is exclusive psalmists fail to seriously address the textual proofs abrogating the Old Covenant rituals with their types, symbols and temple sacrifices accompanied by Levites singing Psalms. Exclusive psalmists fail to appreciate the New Testament's superiority, completeness and finality in the revelational speaking of Christ in these latter days according to Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:14-18. Ignoring the progress of God's redemptive revelation and the new hymns accompanying it, while assuming the continuation of the schoolmaster's exactitude of Old Testament psalm singing, exclusive psalmody is committing a major Biblical Theological blunder and the serious error of not giving Christ the true pre-eminence the New testament proclaims that He has received in His exaltation, as well as the recognition the Holy Spirit deserves as He fills believers with all the heavenly gifts of sanctification.

For example, beginning his series on the "*The Uniqueness of the Psalms*" Rev. A. Stewart says, "*The book of Psalms occupies a special, even unique, role in all the Scriptures*" because it was written over many years, with many authors, being the longest book and most comprehensive, adding that it was "*written with the express divine purpose of it's being sung by God's people.*"²⁷

That statement is a half-truth. Yes, the psalms were written to be sung by God's people - God's Old Testament people. But the question that assumption of Rev. Stewart must answer is this: Was everything revealed by God in the Old Testament permanent for Christ's church to do? Or were only certain things permanent? If everything was permanent, Heb. 8:13, 9:8-10, 10:1,9 need to be rewritten. If only some things were permanent, proof is needed for each; however, no proof was given.

Here we see that an advocate of exclusive psalmody fails to realize, as do most exclusive psalmists, that in giving the Psalms - God's "*express divine purpose*" - was being communicated through types, shadows and symbols by the prophets - David being a prophet - in Israel's **age of immaturity** (Gal. 3:23-25); so that God's purpose in providing those typical songs to His Old Testament people was to lead them to Christ and to learn that the church sings only inspired revelation. Once that principle was established, Christ's church in the age of her maturity and freedom would apply that principle to the new revelation given her and sing that new revelation, as she did previously with David's revelation.

The exclusive psalmist's burden is to prove that David was not acting prophetically as a type of Christ when he gave Old Testament Israel her songs and that the songs David gave were not typical and shadowy songs of Christ that have their truth completed in the New testament. The exclusive psalmist must prove that the prophet David's actions were not part of God's rigorous schoolmaster lessons demanding word for word repetition by Israel until God's people were no longer under a rigid schoolmaster (Gal. 3:25) and that "*unbearable burden*" of the Law was abrogated (Acts 15:10).

²⁷ (Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, Online publication, 6/3/23),

By avoiding the typical character of David's actions as Israel's king in giving the Psalms to God's people, the exclusive psalmist fails to see the true Regulative Principle introduced by the inspired requirement of Old testament exclusive psalmody: that the church sings the inspired word of her King. Specifically: Israel's true king - Jesus Christ - gives the true Israel her songs with His New Testament Word. The church sings the Word of Christ - the New Testament - which is richly dwelling in believers (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16).

In addition, the exclusive psalmist's claim that what is commanded continues until specifically rescinded, may be easily disproved, because the termination and removal of all the typical ceremonies is exactly the testimony of these verses:

*"In that He saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to **vanish away**"* (Heb. 8:13, emphasis mine).

*"The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, **imposed on them until the time of reformation**"* (Heb. 9:8-10, emphasis mine).

*"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can **never** with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect"* (Heb. 10:1, emphasis mine).

*"Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first**, that he may establish the second"* (Heb. 10:9, emphasis mine).

Another failing attempt to justify exclusive psalmody is made by exclusive psalmists when they claim that at the Passover when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, He and the disciples sang the Hallel Psalms and therefore, while the bloody Passover sacrifice passes away as merely an Old Testament typical observance, Psalm singing "**passes over**" into the new dispensation.

By making that claim, as previously stated, the exclusive psalmist turns a simple fact into an ecclesiastical command. Nowhere in the Scriptures He inspired did the Holy Spirit indicate that the Lord Jesus was teaching ecclesiology at the last supper, neither is there any indication in the Last Supper texts that Psalm singing should continue in the New Testament. In fact, as already stated, two of the gospels make no mention of the Psalm singing at the Last Supper and our Lord's command stating what the church **should do** indicates the opposite:

"Take, eat; this is my body" "Drink ye all of it." (Matth. 26:26-27) "Take, eat: this is my body" (Mark 14:22).

We may conclude from those declarations containing our Lord's specific commands that what He was changing from the Old Covenant sacrament to the New Covenant sacrament **He indicated**, that which He was commanding to continue: **He said it**. In other words, Jesus specifically stated what "**passes over**" into the New Testament age, never specifying any particular song or songs.

However, if the exclusive psalmist **assumes** that the singing of the psalms carry over - without authorization - what prevents the assumption that other elements of the passover carry over also? Our Lord's two specific commands are the essential and exclusive qualifiers of what carries over into the New Testament age as the following texts, **particularly** 1 Cor. 11:23, indicate.

The next time the Sacrament is mentioned, there is no singing (Luke 24:30). Then, Acts 2:42 says only that the disciples "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" Acts 20:7 only states the "*disciples came together to break bread.*" In 1 Cor. 10:16, Paul refers only to "*the cup of blessing which we bless*" and "*the bread which we brake.*" Those are the required essentials of the Sacrament, as 1 Cor. 11:23-25 will confirm. Following that, in his lengthy correction of the Corinthians' communion, when referring to the sacrament and the Lord's commands concerning its celebration, Paul states that **exactly** what he received from the Lord about the sacrament he "**delivered**" to them:

*"For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: **this do** in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: **this do ye**, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do she the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11:23-26, emphasis mine).*

Exactly what the church is to do concerning the sacrament, Paul received from the Lord. Exactly what Paul received from the Lord, exactly that he delivered to the Corinthians. Paul's statement should be understood as if he said, "*Everything the Lord commanded you to do, I told you, exactly.*" **All** that Jesus commanded about the sacrament, Paul told them. It was only the two specific commands concerning the bread and the wine, **nothing more**. Therefore, the Scriptural evidence reveals that our Lord required no particular singing in connection with the Sacrament.

5. Conclusions

a. First of all, and most important, if this thesis is correct then the church's present worship leaves much to be desired and serious change is needed. If this thesis is correct, and I believe it is, the church needs to be educated about this and prepared for change because if what is written here is correct, then, those singing David's psalms or those singing uninspired words are not offering God the worship He desires because Davidic psalms and uninspired hymns are not the "*Spirit and truth*" worship that God has instructed His church to sing.

b. Second, as the true Israel of God, Christ's church should not forget or forsake the truth she learned from her schoolmaster days: the Regulative Principle of Worship. Altho she is no longer under that schoolmaster, because she has reached her maturity in Christ and has come into her inheritance of grace and truth in Christ, she is able and called to recognize the substance of truth in her former schoolmaster's worship songs, able to understand and supply their completion from the New Testament as it dwells in them richly. Also the church should get busy versifying the New Testament into psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, as Eph.5:19 and Col. 3:16 encourage her to do.

c, Third, nothing in this article encourages the singing of uninspired words in the worship of our Lord. Remembering her schoolmaster lessons, learned previously in the old dispensation, that she sings only inspired words given her by her king, therefore, the final Regulative Principle of worship is: Christ's church sings Christ's Word, the New Testament and the Psalms completed by His New Testament truth.

Stuart Pastine January, 2023 scpast761@hushmail.com