

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



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THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC IN CHRIST'S CHURCH

--By Phil Young

"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." **Colossians 3:16**



The public worship of God is a great privilege for Christians and ought to be of great benefit to them. Scriptural worship includes preaching **FOR** God, teaching **ABOUT** God, prayer **TO** God, communion **WITH** God, and praise **TOWARD** God.

Private worship differs somewhat from our public devotions – it is more unrestrained, more personal, and more self-oriented. It is "My God and I" as we walk along together, and "He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the joy we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

But our public worship is another matter. It is more restricted and must be more guarded so that the assembled worshippers are not deceived or led into a lack of reverence to **THE DEITY**. To be acceptable, it must be in both "Spirit and Truth", that is, it must be in harmony with the Holy Spirit and the Sacred Scriptures.

In short, our corporate worship must be **AUTHORIZED**. We must not invent new items or attitudes of worship.

See **Matthew 15:9** for the danger involved with such practices.

Christian music comes under the category of PRAISE TOWARD GOD and is an important part of our duty when we assemble. It ought to be enjoyed and participated in by ALL worshippers. Learn to sing and FEEL it in your soul. Singing EXPRESSES emotion. Singing ELICITS emotion. Let ALL the people sing, should be our rule.

Martin Luther never did a grander thing than when he restored singing to the congregation at the dawn of the Reformation. One of the most striking marks of Protestant worship ever since has been the joining of the voices of the whole people in praising God on High. When an Irish Catholic choirmaster wanted to compliment his singers, in a popular movie in the 1950's, he beamed and said, "Aye, ye sing like Protestants". It would be a tragedy to lose this power, but the fact of the matter is, we are losing it.

Congregational singing is declining drastically. In all the churches known to this writer that are embracing the "new-wave worship" the process is accelerating rapidly. Hearty full voiced singing of all the assembly is being replaced with a kind of mere moaning or murmuring on the part of the congregation, while they are deafened by the voices of the "praise band" so-called, that dominates all.

Electronic technology has now made possible a room full of roaring sound, with piercing, penetrating instrumental music that wholly overpowers the sweet sound of human voices making melody to the Lord.

Even in the rare instances now-a-days when there is a single song-leader, he often holds a black "ice-cream cone" mic directly in front of his face and by manipulation of the sound board totally smothers the harmony of the unmagnified voices of the brethren.

In addition, most of these leaders encourage hand clapping which disturbs and diminishes further the sound of praise (very few hand clappers are singers).

Twice in the last week we have heard from believers who love good singing report their experiences in a "new-wave" church, where entertainment seems to have

replaced praise, and where instrumental music and electronic methodology have replaced simple singing. What a loss! What can we do to recover before we lose everything?

To learn and know how to sing **Scripturally** should be important to a Christian. It is instructive then to read **Colossians 3:16-17**, and **Ephesians 5:19-20**.

In these passages is given a three-fold classification of Christian praise, with some important attendant additions. So:

PSALMS - Praise songs, usually with instrumental accompaniment, speaking and teaching **ABOUT** God. Examples would be: "Joy to the World", "We're Marching to Zion". There are relatively few of these in our song books.

HYMNS – Prayer/Praise songs, addressed **TO** God in the First Person. These include: "Come Thou Almighty King" and "How Great Thou Art". Some of the greatest compositions in our books are hymns.

SPIRITUAL SONGS – A testimony or exhortation song, addressed to **OTHER** people, a Gospel song. Such a song would be "Since Jesus Came Into My Heart" or "In My Heart There Rings a Melody". It is sad to some of us that this class of praise songs is being neglected and forgotten.

The other corollary additional instructions, which will aid us in singing with God's approval and blessing, are also found in these texts in Colossians and Ephesians.

1. Right singing must spring out of the Word – "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly singing..."
2. Right singing will have teaching qualities – "Teaching and admonishing one another..."
3. Right singing will not be silly or simply sentimental – "in all wisdom..."
4. Right signing will include serious **warning** – "admonishing one another..."
5. Right singing is expressive of **Grace** – "With grace in your hearts..."
6. Right singing will include your **heart** – "In your heart to the Lord..."
7. Right singing will **show gratitude and thanksgiving** – "Giving thanks always for all things..."

In every generation and every century there have been good psalms, hymns, and songs written by godly men to encourage, instruct, and inspire other men in praising the Lord.

There have been some outstanding praise songs and choruses produced in recent years, and we would not want anyone to misunderstand us in our strictures on some of the abuses which we feel have been allowed to cripple and hobble great singing in some circles today.

We surely have every right to protest the things that are harmful and encourage the things that are Scriptural essentials. And we ought by all means not to forget the rich and time-proven hymns and Gospel songs, which have thrilled generations of believers for so long.

By all means, have the new, the fresh, the praise choruses, with enthusiasm and joy and participation from all. But let us also restrict those elements that are damaging the fabric of worship – the extremes – the radical – the vaudevillians – the tawdry, the intrusive noise, and the like. Worship and praise deserve better.

Several years ago I was leading a tour to Europe and the Bible Lands. Included in our itinerary was the beautiful land of Switzerland.

During a bus tour with our group, the guide commented on our singing and asked us if we could sing, "Isn't the Name of Jesus Something Wonderful" which we proceeded to do. She said, "If only the churches of Switzerland had singing like that, they would be filled instead of empty"!

We need to resume the moral of that story!