

Writings

Sermons in Songs: Hymns

Pastor Bodner has been given utterance in song to write hymns since September 2002. His entire collection has grown to approximately 140 pieces.

We have placed here s sample which we trust will be profitable and potentially useful in public worship. Those interested in the collection should contact Pastor Bodner at [*jbodner@aei.net*](mailto:jbodner@aei.net).

SERMONS IN SONGS:

A Preacher's Prosody
Of Metrical Meditations

On Holy Scripture
&
On Gospel Truths

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PREFACE

SERMONS IN SONGS is a collection of devotional poetry, cast in the form of Scriptural hymns and paraphrases, covering a wide range of Christian doctrine, experience and conduct.

The hymns have been entered in the order of their composition. The Holy Ghost graciously enabled the author to express himself in this way on the date of the first hymn, upon closing his personal devotions of Bible reading and prayer that morning. The others have come to him, some in a flood of thought and feeling, some after considerable reflection and revision. He bears sole responsibility for the whole basket of figs, the good, the bad and the vile.

The author makes no pretense of matching the lyrical and doctrinal excellencies of former generations. He treads slowly and unevenly far behind on the path taken by others. Keach, Steele, Watts, Wesley, Montgomery, Denney, Newton, Cowper, Cennick, Irons, Gadsby, Kent, Havergal, Crosby, Elliot and a host of other faithful brethren and sisters have well filled our books of praise with Scriptural, spiritual song.

These Sermons in Song but echo the same gratitude for grace given to this guilty sinner. For none does he claim any extraordinary inspiration unique to the revelation of Holy Scripture. For all he hopes to claim a faithful, Spirit-taught, experimental reflection of Gospel truth, cast as much as possible in the very words of the Authorized Version of the English Bible, in full conformity to those views of faith and life summarized in the 1689 London Confession of Faith held by Calvinistic Baptists.

Several are dedicated as tokens of affectionate fellowship or grateful memory of believers dear to the author, some in earth, some in heaven. "The memory of the just is blest."

If any find these praises profitable and acceptable to public use, the author would welcome notice of it. May all who read these lines be given in heart and life the same glad tidings of great joy which prompted them.

Yours to serve in the Lord Jesus,

Rev. John Peter Bodner M.A., M.Div.

1.

O That the LORD's Salvation

" O that the LORD's salvation
From Zion soon should come,
When Israel's captive nation
Returns rejoicing, home!"
So sang the saints with longing
To see the distant day
Upon all peoples dawning
Of great Messiah's sway.

2 Salvation came from Zion
At dearest, direst cost,
When by His crucifixion
Christ died to save the lost:
When sore in His soul's travail
He shed His precious Blood
T' atone for sin's great evil
And bring us back to God.

3 Salvation comes from Zion
Whene'er the saints proclaim
The grace of God's election,
The power of Jesu's Name:
For all who, sin forsaking,
On Christ alone believe
Shall in His death partaking
Eternal life receive.

4 Lord Christ, send Thy salvation
From Zion in this hour:
In grace and supplication
Shed forth Thy Spirit's power -

Where'er Thy Bride is giving
To sinful souls and lost,
The call to waters living -
Send out the Holy Ghost!

5 From holy, heavenly Zion
Soon every eye shall see
Our Captain of Salvation
Return in victory:
Each day that Day is nearing;
We pray, "Lord Jesus, come!
We long for Thine appearing -
O bring Thy captives home!"

6 All praise and exaltation
To God the LORD, Most High
The God of our salvation
Who brought His people nigh:
To Father, Son and Spirit,
Jehovah - Three in One,
Be giv'n all might and merit,
Be endless honours done.

--- JOHN PETER BODNER, 27 SEPTEMBER 27,
2002.

7.6.7.6.D

6. Jesus our Lord,
Walk With Us in the Way

Jesus our Lord, walk with us in the way;
Slow are our hearts , our holden eyes are blind:
Draw near, go with us at the close of day,
Soothe all our sadness, still our foolish mind.

2 Jesus our Lord, talk with us in the way;
Speak we too much, and reason without faith:
Looking we see not, hearing we gainsay -
Open our eyes to what the Scripture saith.

3 Jesus our Lord, in Prophets, Law and Psalms,
Thyself reveal, and of Thee let us learn;
Upbraid our hardened hearts, our doubts and qualms --
Speak, till our hearts again within us burn!

4 O pass us not, Lord Jesus, by the way;
We would constrain Thee with us to abide:
Still with us tarry, far spent is the day;
We fain would know Thee now in breaking bread.

5 Jesus our Lord, who still amidst us stands,
Open the Scriptures, all Thy glory show;
Open our eyes, display Thy feet and hands:
Open our understanding, Thee to know!

6 Here do we tarry, witnesses to Thee:
Spirit-endued, with power from on high,
Preaching repentance, and redemption free -
We bless Thee, praise Thee, ever in Thee joy!

- JOHN PETER BODNER 27 SEPTEMBER 2002

10.10.10.10.

7.

One, Living True, Eternal God

One living, true, eternal God
With heart and voice do we confess
Creator of the heavens abroad
And earth around, forever blest!

2 "God is": in all His works we see
Displayed His wisdom and His might;
By faith we own His majesty,
And seek Him, veiled beyond our sight.

3 "God is a Spirit": worshippers
In truth and spirit now He seeks;
With image, shrine, and rite, man errs:
For by His Word alone God speaks.

4 That Word reveals that "God is light"
In Him no darkness is at all;
Our sin cannot endure His sight,
Whose light is unapproachable.

5 "Our God is a consuming fire"
The King of saints is just and true
In all His ways; in judgments dire
The wicked perish from His view.

6 Yet by the Gospel, "God is love"
Who saves the sinner, yet is just'
He gave His Son from heaven above,
Upon the cross to die for us.

7 Eternal, infinite, unchanged,
In being, wisdom, and in power,
All-holy, just, most good and true,
We praise Thy glory in this hour!

8 One God, revealed in Persons Three:
The Father, Word and Holy Ghost:
Thy praise, Most Blessed Trinity,
Earth's fullness gives with Heaven's host!

- JOHN PETER BODNER 28 SEPTEMBER 2002
L.M. /D.L.M.

10.

Desiring I Desire

"Desiring, I desire
This Paschal feast to keep,
And here in My Last Supper,
With My disciples meet."

This said our Saviour Jesus
The night He was betrayed,
Before He died to save us,
Before our debt He paid.

2 Desiring, He desired
His final hours to spend
With poor unworthy sinners
He loved unto the end.
For was not strife among them,
"Who shall be greatest soon?"
Did not their proud contention
Divide the Upper Room?

3 Yet He desired, desiring,
To show His love complete;
His own example giving,
He stooped to wash their feet.
"Among you as a Servant,
I came; in love for you,
I give this new commandment:
Love one another too."

4 Desiring, He desired
Yet greater love to show,
Than any man could ever

On any friend bestow:
For, from the throne of Heaven
Th'eternal Son of God
Stooped down to pay our ransom:
His sinless flesh and blood.

5 Desiring, He desired,
To do His Father's will
All that the Law required
He faithfully fulfilled;
To take away transgression,
As God's Passover Lamb,
He entered in His passion
Redeeming sinful man.

6 Desiring, He desires,
With sinners still to eat;
For us He spreads this Supper,
And calls us here to meet:
Proclaiming Christ has suffered,
And risen from the dead,
We stedfastly continue
In "breaking of the bread".

-- JOHN PETER BODNER,
30 SEPTEMBER 2002.

7.6.7.6D

16.

"Come, Lord Jesus!" This We Pray

"Come, Lord Jesus!": this we pray,
Haste the glorious, dreadful Day,
When with angels Thou shalt come
And Thy people gather home.
"Come, Lord Jesus!" In the air,
For Thy saints shalt Thou appear,
While the final trumpet's sound,
Echoes all the world around.

2"Come, Lord Jesus!" every tomb
Open, bid the dead to come
Stand before Thy great white throne,
Give account for all deeds done.
"Come, Lord Jesus!" On Thy right
Set the children of the light;
Set the sons of sin, bereft
Of Thy mercy, to the left!

3"Come, Lord Jesus!" Shepherd good,
Separate the flock of God
For Thine own eternal fold,
In the City paved with gold.
"Come, Lord Jesus!" Thy decree
Now proclaim, "Depart from Me,
All ye sinners doing ill ---
Enter now the flames of Hell!"

4"Come, Lord Jesus!" On that Day
Heaven and earth shall pass away,
Then new heavens and earth shall come
Filled with righteousness alone.
"Come, Lord Jesus!" Wipe away
Every tear from every eye,
Let the former things be o'er,

Death, and pain, and sorrow sore.

5"Come, Lord Jesus!" Shining bright,
Let Thy Church now stand in light,
Sinless, spotless in Thy sight
As Thy Bride arrayed in white.
"Come, Lord Jesus!" Make us meet
Our great Bridegroom soon to greet;
O prepare us now to taste
Of th'eternal wedding feast.

6"Come, Lord Jesus!" This we pray
With each new, returning day;
Still we watch, and work and wait,
Trim our lamps before the gate:
"Come Lord Jesus!" Every knee
At Thy Name shall bow to Thee:
Every tongue shall Thee confess,
And Thy Father's glory bless.

7At the Father's own right hand,
Stands the once-slain, risen Lamb,
With the seven-fold Spirit true,
Reigning, making all things new.
To the Father, with the Son
And the Spirit, Three in One,
Hallelujahs loud we raise:
Riches, honour, blessing, praise!

-- JOHN PETER BODNER
2 OCTOBER 2002.

7.7.7.7D

20.

Lord Jesus Christ Our Risen King

Lord Jesus Christ, our risen King,
We meet in worship, wondering;
At Thine appointment gathered here
Our hearts are filled with joy and fear.

2 "All hail!" Thy voice doth gladly greet
Our souls, all trembling at Thy feet;
O still our doubts and strengthen faith
Fast holding all Thy Word now saith!

3 To Thee, our Prince of life, is giv'n
All power on earth ,all power in heaven;
We willing go at Thy command,
Thy peace to preach in every land.

4 We preach to all the world abroad,
Jesus, Thy righteousness and Blood:
We bid the lost repent, believe,
And to Thy Word forever cleave.

5 As Thy disciples thus we claim
All true believers in Thy Name:
In waters deep they sink and rise
Into the Triune God baptized.

6 To us, Thy Church redeemed by Blood,
Grant the whole counsel of our God:
Into all truth may we be led,
To do and teach what Thou hast said!

7 World without end, and all the days,
Redeemer, be with us always
To bring Thy scattered sheep and lost
To Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

-- *JOHN PETER BODNER*

3 OCTOBER 2002

67.

Ascended Up On High

1 *Ascended up on high,*
Jesus our Lord is ris'n --
Exalted over every name
And power in earth and heaven! Eph. 1,4

2 *Into the heavens passed,*
Jesus, our great High Priest,
Now ever lives to intercede
Before the Throne of Grace! Heb. 4,7

3 *Glory and honour crown*
The humbled Son of man
He who for us has tasted death
Now sits at God's right hand! Heb. 1,2.

4 His Name shall all confess,
And every knee shall bow
Ye everlasting gates, receive
The King of glory now! Phil.2; Ps.24

5 *Sing praises to our King,*
Praise, all the lands throughout!
To Father, Son and Spirit sing ---
God, gone up with a shout! Ps.47

--- JOHN PETER BODNER
THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2003.

S.M.

69.

Lord Jesus, Friend of Sinners

Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
To Thee I now draw nigh:
I long to hear Thy Gospel -
How Thou didst come to die
In shame and Blood at Calv'ry
To save me from my sin:
Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
Be pleased to take me in!

2 Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
How wholly am I lost!
A wandering sheep in peril -
A coin of squandered cost -
A child whose life is wasted
In riot and enslaved:
Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
Seek me, till I am saved!

3 Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
I have no right to heaven -
Unclean, unjust, unworthy,
My soul must be forgiven:
O let Thy Name and Spirit
Both justify me now,
And wash, then sanctify me
Till at Thy throne I bow.

4 Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
Receive me, with me meet!
Though from beneath Thy table
But crumbs I fain would eat,
Grant me to share Thy kingdom,
And by Thy sovereign grace,

Among Thy chosen people
To find the lowest place!

5 Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners -
Thou dost my soul receive!
Thou dost forgive and cleanse me!
I on Thy Name believe,
And all my sins forsaking,
With those Thy Blood hath bought,
I now embrace Thy promise:
Thou wilt not cast me out!

6 Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners,
No greater love could be
Than this, which laid Thy life down
For us at Calvary:
Thou knowest that I love Thee!
O bid me follow still,
Thy most unworthy servant,
To do Thy perfect will.

7 O LORD our God, where is there
A God like unto Thee?
Thou pardonest transgression,
And castest in the sea
The depths of our trespasses
Till all is gone and lost:
We praise Thy mercies, Father,
And Son, and Holy Ghost!

-- JOHN PETER BODNER,
TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER, 2003.

99.

For Me to live is Christ

1 For me to live is Christ,
To die is but my gain:
To live and die to Him
His love my heart constrains.

2 For me to live is Christ,
Who gave Himself for me
In love, that I might live
In Him from sin set free.

3 For me to live is Christ,
Who shed His precious Blood,
And died for the unjust,
To bring me back to God.

4 For me to live is Christ,
Who ever lives to plead
Before the Throne of grace
In every time of need.

5 For me to live is Christ:
My heart with longing burns
To see Him face to face:
Lord Jesus, soon return!

6 My life is hid with God
In Christ, who reigns above:
His Spirit in my heart
Sheds forth the Father's love.

7 O Father, by Thy Son,
Thy Holy Spirit give,
That to the Triune God
I hence may ever live.

-- JOHN PETER BODNER

WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2003.

6.6.6.6.

104.

What Gift or Offering Can I Bring?

1 What gift or offering can I bring
To lay before His throne,
In tribute of my Saviour King
Who saves by grace alone?

2 All honour, riches, blessing, strength
And glory is His worth,
Whose love exceeds depth, breadth and length
And heights of heaven and earth!

3 But what can fully show the grace
Of Christ, our Lord and God,
Who suffering, took poor sinners' place
And dying, shed His Blood?

4 No gold, like wise men's, could I bear
No frankincense, nor myrrh:
Nor have I Mary's ointment rare
To lavish out, like her.

5 My heart alone may I bestow,
All contrite, broken, poor:
From day to day O let me show
Thy great salvation sure!

6 A thousand songs my voice would raise
But all shall have one theme:
To tell of my Lord Jesu's praise -
My song shall be of Him!

7 To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
One true and living God
Be glory given through heaven's hosts
And all the earth abroad!

-- *JOHN PETER BODNER*
SATURDAY, 27 DECEMBER 2003.

C.M.

113.

Jesus Christ the Lord of Glory

(Based on Mark 16)

1 JESUS CHRIST the Lord of glory
Now is risen from the dead:
Over all enthroned, exalted,
As His Church's King and Head --
See, He sheds the Spirit's grace
On His Word in every place!

2 "Preach the Gospel" 's great glad tidings
"Jesus hath His people saved
From their sins" by living, dying,
Raised the third day from the grave:
He who came to seek the lost,
Saves us to the uttermost!

3 "Make disciples of all nations -
Into all the world" we go
Shewing forth so great salvation
Till all tribes and tongues shall know
Christ hath reconciled to God
Sinners by His precious Blood!

4 All who are baptized, believing,
Shall be saved because they call
On the Saviour's Name, receiving
Jesus Christ as Lord of all:
All rejecting His command
For their unbelief are damned!

5 Thus we heed the Great Commission
Spoken to us by the Lord
Who repentance and remission,
Gives, still working with the Word
As His people yet go forth
To the ends of all the earth!

-- *John Peter Bodner*
Friday, 19 March 2004.

8.7.8.7.7.7.

129.

O what a sweet Exchange is this!

1 O what a *sweet exchange* is this!
The King of glory took my place,
My sin, my hell, His righteousness,
His heaven to give to me in grace!

2 *For me*, Lord Jesus, didst Thou leave
The glory of Thy throne on high?
For Thee, blest Saviour, shall I grieve
When earthly honours pass me by?

3 *For me* didst Thou, who knew no sin,
In our frail flesh partake of pain?
For Thee, who sought my soul to win,
Should I in suffering e'er complain?

4 *For me*, eternal Son of God,
Didst Thou embrace the cursed Cross?
For Thee, who bought my soul with Blood,
Shall I disdain reproach or loss?

5 *For me*, my Lord and God, hast Thou
A ransom free, Thy life laid down:
For Thee my life to spend, I vow
To bear Thy cross and win Thy crown!

--- John Peter Bodner
Friday 11 June 2004.

L.M.

From My Bible: Devotional Addresses

As a contributor to the pages of varied Magazines, Pastor Bodner has from time to time written devotional items to encourage the spiritual life of Christian readers. Here is a sampling of such work:

From My Bible

“Home Sweet Home”

A Song of degrees.

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. ²For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. ³Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. ⁴Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. ⁵The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. ⁶Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel. ---- Psalm 128 .

Could a song change your life? Could a song change history? This song has done both!

All who know the life of Dr. Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, will remember how his study of Romans 1:17 “threw open the gates of Paradise” to his burdened conscience. But did you know that his study of this Psalm opened to him the door of the Christian home?

For centuries tradition and mysticism had shrouded this Psalm in high-flown allegory. Marriage, childbirth, general work were discounted as lesser, lower, carnal ways of life. As the Holy Ghost opened the Scriptures to his growing faith, Luther realized this Psalm too was to be taken in its simple, plain sense. Once he recognized its true purpose, he boldly proclaimed the sanctity of the Christian home – and he boldly practiced what he preached. In time he married the former nun Katherine von Bora, and raised the first Protestant minister’s family. Every born-again believer’s home life is thus rooted in this Psalm.

Our Protestant Reformation has delivered believers from the illusion that sanctity is gained in convents and cloisters. It has restored the Biblical dignity of marriage, family, daily work as part of the Christian’s calling. Every real Christian’s kitchen is a place of praise and prayer; every parlour a sanctuary for worship and God’s Word; every home an embassy of heaven.

This little Psalm, a ‘Song of Degrees’ or ‘Song of Ascents’, comes from an inspired sing-along book placed by God’s Spirit in the heart of the Psalter, Pss.120-134. Five triplets of psalms trace the stages of Hebrew saints in pilgrimage to the three great feasts – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Chanted back and forth as worshippers traveled up to the Temple in Zion, these pilgrim psalms still mirror the joys and heartaches, hopes and fears, struggles and victories of faith which mark New Testament believers as ‘strangers and pilgrims’ seeking that better country, whose builder and Maker is God.

At this stage in their journey, the pilgrims are likely resting along the roads of the Promised Land, passing villages and homes like their own. As they rest, they look back on the homes they have left, with thanksgiving for God's gift of family. We hear in this Psalm the strains of a Hebrew "Home Sweet Home."

The godly home is blessed (vv.1-4): Hedged about, first and last, with blessing. It is blessed with the *lifestyle of grace*, as every **husband** and father takes the lead, and sets the pace of the family's walk through life in pathways of God's Law, moved with heartfelt reverence in God's constant presence.(1) It is blessed with the *contented labour*, for the man earns a day's wage for a day's work.(2) That is the Lord's definition of success, within reach of tycoon or tradesman alike.

This home is blessed with *chaste love*, as a faithful, caring **wife**, nourished, and cultivated by her husband's devotion, beautifies, provides and cheers the whole family.(3) The Bible alone provides real hope for womankind – just read Proverbs 31, Acts 16, 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Timothy 2, and Titus 2. There is a realistic, rounded view of woman unlike any other philosophy or faith. Read Proverbs 4-6; the Canticles; Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5. There is God's plan to make the life-long commitment of one man and one woman a patch of paradise.

This home is blessed with *the legacy of children*, who through the generations return thanks for their parents' nurture by supporting and aiding them in old age.(4) Just as in ancient Palestine the olive tree sends up new shoots and saplings from its radiating roots as it decays, which encircle the old with the young; so God has purposed our 'social security' in providing for our own (1 Tim5:8)

The godly home is a blessing (vv.5-6): the Lord pledges through this home the prosperity of His Temple, City and People. "Zion" was the site of the Temple of the Old Testament Church: its teaching, worship and ordinances were sustained by the families of the godly. "Jerusalem" was the capital of the Old Testament kingdom: its streets were safe, its economy sound through the multiplied industry and integrity of godly homes. "Israel" was the chosen nation at all levels and classes: only righteousness was its glory, only sin its reproach.

For us in the New Testament era no less, the blessedness of our Churches, our communities and our nation rests on the health and holiness of our homes. The piety, purity, zeal and zest of the home influences all. The story of our lives will be the story of our homes.

FOXX TV orchestrated a personal and social disaster, when it used current values in its gala-gameshow wedding, *Who wants to marry a Multi-millionaire?* Let the old motto in our kitchens remain: CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOME, THE CHIEF GUEST AT EVERY MEAL, THE SILENT WITNESS IN EVERY CONVERSATION.

From My Bible

“For This Cause”

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

²⁰Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

---- Ephesians 3:14-21

“Prayer is the language of a needy heart.”

These words of E.M. Bounds, himself a man of prayer, lay a plumb-line to judgment on so much that we think is prayer. Let us for but a moment stop, cease from all of our talking about God, all of our talking at God. Let us pause, consider, reflect: *What is it we pray for, from our hearts?*

The words we read here from the Apostle Paul express the prayer of a large, clean, pure heart. We could well say of Paul what James wrote of Elijah the prophet: “He prayed earnestly”, literally, “he prayed in his prayer.” (Jas. 5:17) We can do much else in prayer --- preach, snipe, rhapsodize, self-congratulate. Our Saviour laid this damning indictment on such prayer: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus *with himself*” (Lk.18:11).

Paul’s fervour comes through in his **posture**: “I bow my knees.” (14) True, a physical pose cannot create the soul’s emotions. Yet the inward must affect the outward. Our standing should express reverence, our sitting humble penitence, our kneeling the beggary of need. The last sight the elders of Ephesus had of Paul was on his knees (Acts 20: 36) *What drives us to our knees?*

As Paul prays for his beloved converts, his aspirations soar to encompass the entire Church of God throughout all ages, in all places (21) We can truly say he prays for us here. And as he prays, so should we pray for ourselves, for each other, for all the saints (6:18). “After this manner therefore pray ye”, said our Lord Jesus (Mt. 6:9) “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My Name: ask, and receive, that your joy may be full.” (Jn.16:24) Paul’s prayer follows and unfolds the Divine pattern of the Lord’s Prayer.

His **preface** claims our adoption as God’s children by the Saviour, both in our access to the Father, and in our fellowship with all the election of grace (14-15 cf.2:19-21). His **plea** seeks all good only from God as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”, whose redeeming Blood alone has purchased for us “the riches of His glory” (15-16 cf 1:3-7,18). His **petitions** long for the Holy Ghost to strengthen and enlarge our souls (16); for the Saviour to make our hearts entirely His home (17) . His **purposes** grasp at tip-toe and finger-tip for the infinite. It will take all God’s children to span the immeasurable dimensions of Christ’s love -- a breadth to embrace peoples of all the world; a length in seeking and saving the lost ; its depths in reaching even “the chief of sinners” himself; its height in raising us to sit and reign in heaven. (17-19) It will take the whole Church, fitly framed together as a living temple of the Spirit, to “be filled with all the fullness of God.” (19) Thus all the Body of Christ shall become “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” (1:22-23) How else will our Father’s Name be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done?

Paul’s faith is as large as his requests. His doxology of **praise** strains and stretches grammar to the breaking-point. He piles phrase upon phrase, coins new terms in double-superlative as he declares his confidence that God is hearing and answering prayer. (20-21) See for yourself as you read it. Think of *all you ever asked*; add to it all you dared to *think* of asking. *Above* all, *abundantly* above all, *exceeding* abundantly above all we ask or think, God is well able to effect by the resurrection power of His Son even now at work in us by His Spirit. Infinity, eternity, omnipotence set the expectations of prayer, because in prayer we lay hold on God.

Paul’s “**Amen**” affirms and appropriates all. (21) Dare we say “Amen” as well?

Do we pray? Do we pray in prayer? What is it we pray for, from our hearts?” For this cause” may our Triune God drive us to our knees!

The Bible & The Church: Papers on Polity

No thinking Christian can avoid the 'hot issues' of church life in our time. Pastor Bodner has had occasion to do so in the course of his ministry, and has endeavoured charitably yet faithfully to address two such topics: church music and church discipline.

"Worship in Spirit & in Truth" is a leaflet prepared for the use of Hope Assembly, and reflects the working practice of that congregation.

"The Bible, The Church and Music" is a paper presented to the Fellowship for Reformation and Pastoral Studies in 1990.

"Love and A Rod: Thoughts on Church Discipline" was an article written on request for the pages of THE GOSPEL WITNESS Magazine in 2003.

Worship in Spirit & Truth

Ours is a unique form of Christian worship. You may already be more aware of what is *absent* than what is *present*. Some have found our services plain, even severe.

But we ask you to look past what is familiar or comfortable. We ask you thoughtfully to consider, “*What saith the Scripture?*”

As Bible Christians, we are direct heirs to principles of Christian faith and life recovered from the Bible alone by the Protestant Reformers, the Puritans and the English Calvinistic Baptists. These truths are set forth in *The London Confession of Faith 1689* and its kindred standards of doctrine.

Our form of worship is indeed precious to us, but *not* because it is traditional – rather, because we hold it to be the most fully Biblical to be found among genuine Christians.

This leaflet will introduce you to **what** we do, and **why** we do it.

Sure Foundations

With all real Protestants we confess that the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, is God’s Word, the only divine rule of Christian faith and life. It is our distinctive emphasis everything we practise in the Church’s worship and work that must be based clearly and only upon the Bible **Dt. 4:1,12:32; Mt.28:18-20; I Cor. 4:6; II Tim. 3:15-17.**

We also honour the biblical distinction between the Old and New Testament periods in God’s plan to redeem His people from their sins through the Lord Jesus Christ. **Heb.1:1-2; II Cor. 3:6-18; Eph.2:11-22.**

Any reader of the Old Testament Scriptures soon meets with an elaborate, divinely appointed form of worship given to Israel to prepare for Christ’s coming. Tabernacle and Temple, Aaronic priests and Levites, animal sacrifices, incense, altar, singers, instruments, robes and festivals – all are part of a *liturgical system*, intended to point ancient believers to the future Messiah. As such, the Bible speaks of each part and all of it as *symbols, types, rudiments, meant to pass away*. All of pictures the *spiritual and eternal reality* of Christ’s person and work.

Heb. 8-10; II Cor.3:6-11; Gal.4:9-10; 1 Pe.1:18-21.

In fact, the New Testament *never* uses this Old Testament system as a model for Christian worship – and condemns those who cling to it. The Apostles view its elements as *fulfilled in Christ, the believer’s experience, or the glory of heaven*. **I Cor. 5:7-8; I Pet.2:5-10; Heb.13:8-16; Rev.8:2-5,15:5-8.**

New Testament worship is rooted in the simpler worship which grew into the Jewish synagogue. The Lord Jesus, and the Apostles gathered the early disciples on that pattern, and transformed them into the early Churches. **Neh.8; Lk.4:14-32; Ac.18:1-11; Jas.2:1-10; Heb. 10:25.**

The key elements of New Testament worship are mentioned in Acts 2:37-42 --**the Word, Prayer, Praise, and Ordinances.**

The Word

Essential to all Christian worship is the Bible. The Pulpit and its Bible stand high and central in our meeting places. Our services highlight the reading and preaching of the Scriptures. Neh.8:4-6.

At every service the Pastor, an Elder or brother appointed reads a portion of the Old and New Testaments distinctly and intelligently. Neh.8:8; Lk.4:16-20; Ac.13:15; Col.4:16; I Tim. 4:13.

The Sermon climaxes the service, as the Preacher declares the Gospel of salvation, expounds the Scriptures and applies its saving truth to our lives. Preaching depends not on human eloquence or learning, but on the power of the Holy Spirit using the Word to exalt Christ. I Tim.4:13; II Tim.4:1-5; I Cor. 1:18-2:16; Ac.20:20-32; I Th.1:5-6,2:2-4.

Whether explaining a Bible book in order, opening a short text, or tracing a theme, our Pastors and teachers "preach the Word".

Prayer

In the Word, God speaks to us; in prayer, we speak to God. Here we claim direct access to the Triune God, and pray to Him alone. Ex. 20:3-6; Ac10:25-26,14:14-15; Col.2:18; Rev. 22:8-9. We pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

Because we engage our God in living converse, we do not use written 'prayers' but look to the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Mt.6:7-8; Ro.8:26, Ep.6:18; Jude 20. Because we pray as the Body of Christ together, the Minister leads us I Tim.2:1-7, and we pray aloud together the Saviour's pattern prayer, called 'The Lord's Prayer' Mt.6:9-13; Lk.11:2-4. Each man and woman shares in prayer by showing due decorum of dress and reverence of manner. I Cor.11:1-16; I Tim.2:8-13. In prayer we may kneel, sit or stand Ac.20:36; II Sam.7:18-29; Neh.9:2-4; Mk.11:25. The service ends with the Minister's parting prayer or benediction. Num.6:22-27; Ac.20:32; II Cor.13:14; Heb.13:20-21.

Praise

God promises to inhabit His people's praise, and to fill believers' hearts with His Word and Spirit as they sing Ps.22:3; Heb.2:12; Eph.5:18-20; Col.3:16. Here too the Bible alone is our rule and standard.

Just as the Temple service, priesthood, and sacrifices are past, so too are its divinely appointed choirs and instruments. I Chron.28:13; II Chron.29:25-26; Neh.12:27,36. As New Testament Churches, we offer simple congregational sung praise alone, singing 'with the Spirit and with the understanding', and 'with grace in the heart' Ac.16:24-25; Ro.15:5-13; I

Cor. 14:15; Col.3:16. **Sung praise is not for group entertainment, but for mutual edification.**

The Bible also ordains the types of song proper to worship. We are to sing Psalms, just as the Saviour Himself did Mt.26:30 cf. Pss 113-118. The more we see Jesus foretold in the Psalter, the more we will prize biblical psalmody in our praise Lk.24:44-47;Pss 2,16,22,69,72 cf Ac.2,4,13,Ro.15.

As well, the Bible ordains the singing of “hymns and spiritual songs” expressing the Gospel – and hints of these are found in the New Testament itself **Lk.1-2; Phil.2;1 Tim.3:16; Eph.5:14.**

As in prayer and preaching, so in praise we appropriate Scripture truth in human words to mind and heart. Mindless, repetitive ‘choruses’ , drama and dance as forms of worship are heathen, not Christian . I Kings 18:26; Ac.19:34.

Ordinances

Our Saviour has distinguished His Church from the world by two simple rites: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These holy ordinances do not save us – they simply picture and pledge to those who receive them in faith the Gospel promises of salvation.

Think of a wedding ring. Any girl can buy a ring: but a ring isn’t a husband! Yet, when her bridegroom gives her that ring in marriage, he pledges his love and claims hers. So too by these simple signs the Lamb of God ‘plights His troth’ to His Bride, the Church. Ac.22:16; I Pt.3:21-22;Eph.5:25-26.

Baptism is a ritual immersion in water in the Name of the Triune God. Only those who personally profess repentance toward God, faith in Christ alone and obedience to the truth by the Spirit may receive this ordinance. Mt.28:18-20;Mk.16:15-16; Ac.8:37-38; 16:31-34; 18:8; Gal.3:7-9, 26-29. Our Saviour did not baptise, but bless infant children. Mk.10:13-16;Lk.18:15-17.

Baptism pledges to believers remission of sin, union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and adoption into God’s household. Ac 22:16; 1 Pe.3:21-22; Ro.6:1-4; Col.2:12,3:1-5.

The Lord’s Supper weekly ‘shews forth the Lord’s death till He come.’ Ac.20:7; I Cor.11:26. Baptized believers are admitted to the Table after self-examination. Ac.2:41-42; 1Cor.11:23-29.

Following Christ’s example in the Upper Room, we gather at the Table, to share one loaf and drink one cup ‘in remembrance of Him.’ Mt.26:26-29; 1 Cor.10:16. There is no ‘sacrifice’ or ‘altar’ here ; by faith we feed upon Christ in spiritual communion. Jn.6:35,54,60-63; I Cor. 10:16-17; Hb.10:10-14,13; Rev.3:21

According to Christ

Christ’s living authority in the Bible governs all our devotional life. It explains

- ❖ **Our jealousy for Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath” – the New Testament “Lord’s Day” Gn.2:1-3;Ex.20:8-11;Mt.12:1-13;Jn20:19-29; Ac.20:7 I Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10.**

- ❖ **Our stress on personal and family devotions** Mt.6:6,11;1Th.5:17 ; Dt.6:6-7;1 Pt.3:7;Eph.6:4.
- ❖ **Our simplicity: no 'garb'** Mk.12:38-40 **no statues, crosses, or human arts** Ex.20:4-6, I Cor.10:18; I Jn.5:21 **fasting without banning meats** Mt.6:16-18;Ac.13:1-3; I Tim.4:1-5, **no 'holy places'** Jn.4:19-26;Ac.17:24-25,19:9;Col.4:15.

Worship 'by the Book' shows we love the Christ who redeemed us by His own Blood. *Do you love Him ? Keep His commandments, and worship Him, in Spirit and in truth!* Jn.14:15;ICor.6:19-20, Phil.3:3.

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THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH & MUSIC:

A Calvinistic Baptist Approach

Rev. John Peter Bodner MA MDiv
Pastor, Hope Assembly of Bible Christians

Consider what I say;
And the Lord give thee understanding
In all things

ii Timothy 2:7

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CANADA

Introduction

Even Bill Gaither admits it. Music is dividing Christians and Churches more markedly than ever before. And Evangelical Baptists are no exception.

It takes little effort to instance the 'sore spots' which the Body of Christ is suffering over this issue. Here are a few.

The choice of a hymnbook. We now face a baffling variety of books of praise, vying to replace the older generation of hymnals in our pews. The tone and taste of these books, most of them commercial productions, will influence a congregation for 10-15 years. How to choose? Who will choose?

Chorus-singing. From a musical pass-time in DVBS to help learn Bible verses, this practice has now moved to dominate the congregational song of new churches or ministries. Do these choruses have any place in stated worship? Which place?

Instrumentation. The generations are now at odds over the kind of instrumental music proper to church services. Can a smaller church survive without a pianist? If organ and piano can be relied upon, what about the guitar? The saxophone? The hand-bell choir? Is it true that skill in using the drums is a "ministry opportunity" ?

Solo and Choir Work. The relative place and scope of work offered to choirs has always been a bone of contention from time to time; and what do we do with the fully-orchestrated tape accompaniments available for soloists?

Professional musicianship. A trained, self-conscious caste of church musicians is now emerging in the Churches. Whether employed as ordained 'ministers of music' or part-time 'choir directors,' these sweet singers and players upon instruments in Zion are making their present felt and their counsels heard. They have run, but who has sent them?

Promotion of Drama, Dance and Spectacle. These newer features in evangelical life began with the charismatic movement, but have certainly not stayed there. They find their entry to the church, through the musical programmes already in place. A powerful desire is growing in Churches to incorporate the arts into worship by drama, dance, greater decoration or special spectacles.

Now, how will we treat these 'sore spots'? Are they the problems, or are they symptoms of a larger problem?

Whatever may be the problem with music in our Churches today, it is clear we are singularly reluctant to consider it in the light of Holy Scripture. Only a careful, humble, honest appraisal of the Bible's teaching in this area will provide the principles, precepts and patterns we need to correct the problem.

We do need to discuss these issues from Scripture, but we also need to discuss them appropriately. To edify the body of Christ, we must show both Biblical integrity and pastoral responsibility. We must let the Bible speak in its own accents. We must also empathize with our people where they are. We have no right to promote needless offense or division; we are debtors to grace, who must learn humbly, graciously to live with imperfection and infirmity.

Of this I am personally convinced. We will not find long-term solutions to these issues by short-sighted attempts to justify the status quo with specious logic or sloppy handling of Scripture. In preaching, doctrine and practice we need to get back to the Bible, as the 'people of the Book' called Baptists.

I. The Bible as the Rule of Christian Worship

We have not very far to go in exploring the problem of music in the church, to realize that Evangelical church musicians pay only lip-service to the Bible's authority in worship. Scripture has come, in fact, to play no real, practical part in what is done and promoted in the Churches.

Permit me to illustrate. I cite a number of books in current use in church music courses in our Seminaries and colleges.

Here is Dr. Don Hustad, renowned organist of the Billy Graham Crusades, and author of the textbook *Jubilate!* He is attempting to prove to us that **the Bible is insufficient as a rule of worship:**

*All evangelicals recognize the authority of God as expressed in scripture, for life as well as for faith. However, looking to the Bible for complete directions in worship and its music has caused some historic confusion, because **the scriptures do not claim authority or speak definitively in these matters ..***

*It seems clear that any argument about the specifics of church music style that is based on biblical authority is extremely tenuous - **there is simply no definitive or consistent word ...** to me this says that God has given creative gifts to all peoples throughout history, and with those gifts a common wisdom for their use (from *Jubilate!* pp.41,44)*

If the Bible is of no use, to whom do we turn for authority in church music? Hustad's answer is: *to the people*, whose support for a given church and music style validates it Or to '*a professional ministry of music*' ordained and salaried, just like the preachers! (pp.44ff). "He who pays the piper calls the tune!"

Take another case. Here is R.G. Webber, writing in his textbook ***Worship: Old and New* (Zondervan 1982):**

The purpose of this chapter has been to trace the development of New Testament worship. Although there are many gaps in the fragmentary documents on worship, it is evident that we are dealing with a process and with a variety in the earliest Christian communities ...

There is no single complete picture of worship in the New Testament.

Because the New Testament does not provide a systematic picture of Christian worship, guidance may be sought regarding worship from the practice of the early Church (p. 43).

Again, the Bible is of no use. To whom do we turn for authority in church music? Says Webber, to "the immediate successors to the apostles" who "were careful to maintain apostolic practice". Yes: *to the Fathers*. What is the upshot of this approach? Nothing less than a revival of liturgical ritualism in the context of Evangelicalism (p. 165). Awe, reverence, and 'mystery' is to be regained "in the design of worship space, the location of the people, the use of lighting, the use of the church year, and the proper use of music" (pp.193-196). ***Back to the bells and smells of Rome!***

Here is David B. Pass, discussing "the theology of church music" in his ***Music and the Church* (Broadman 1989):**

*There is a difference between **descriptive statements** (what is or was the case) and **normative statements** (what should be the case). A **description** of the music in the Bible cannot yield **normative** statements about what the church should be doing with music today (p.7)*

To whom then do we turn to extract the Bible's teaching on music and Church worship? ***To the theologians***, says Pass, who will integrate Scriptural principle with historical and other data to make an interpretative judgment.

So, according to the leading evangelical writers on church music, take your pick: *the people, the Fathers, the theologians*. The key words which these evangelicals reject as relating to the Bible in their speciality are these: '*authority*', '*definitive*', '*consistent*', '*complete*' and '*normative*.' You can pick them out for yourself as you re-read these quotations. Would we accept such a view of Scripture on any other issue – ethics, baptism, church order, salvation, or grace?

Here is the rub. Confusion obtains in our practice of church music simply *because* we are failing to let the Bible be our rule of faith *and practice*. It is time we trust and obey Scripture as the inspired, infallible, inerrant and sufficient Word of God *in our musical life*.

If we wish to hold fast to our heritage as Calvinistic Baptists, we must face the need to recover the Biblical foundations and features of local church life – particularly in music, which by all accounts takes in a full half of the time most Churches spend in corporate worship.

The position adopted by our founders in 1646 and 1689 remains the only safe ground to take. The Bible is the *only rule for our worship*. It records *plainly all we need to know*, and is applicable *regardless of culture, time and place*. Its teaching comprehends what is *expressly set down or necessarily contained*. Those features which are not specified must conform first to *the general rules of God's Word*, and then to *Christian prudence and good sense*.

We now must move on to consider how we can apply the Scriptures to our practice of church music.

II. An Approach to the Bible for Church Music

On the basis of this Confessional view of Scripture, let us lay down five important elements to guide our use of the Bible as rule of practice for the Church. Without these proven guidelines, we are apt to misuse Scripture.

1) *The whole of the Bible is our rule*: Therefore we must develop a clear, balanced integration of all the data of Scripture on the point in question. We must avoid piece-meal, arbitrary proof-texting. Both OT and NT will bear upon our understanding of worship in Christ under the Gospel.

2) *We receive the Old Testament through the New, the New Testament on the basis of the Old*: That is, we must account for the movement of redemptive history in Scripture before we invoke particulars as norms for our worship.

3) *Redemptive history discloses that some elements of worship change, others remain unchanging*: This is the classic distinction between 'moral' and 'positive' worship, dependent on its covenantal basis, set forth in our Confessions.

4) *Precept, pattern and principle converge to exhibit the counsel of God and bind the conscience*: What establishes believer baptism as indisputable to us, must be applicable to establish the obligation to other practices in New Testament churches.

5) *The elements of worship, and the circumstances necessary for their proper observance, are to be found in the Scriptures themselves:* This does not mean that all imaginable details, but all essential details, are spelt out in the Book. What is not so revealed is subject to general Biblical truth, Christian prudence and good sense.

III. Music and Worship in the History of Redemption

We may now profitably survey the data of Scripture on music and worship, and to assign the distinctive roles of music in worship through the progress of redemptive history. To facilitate reference to the Scriptures cited, we shall be placing them in bold relief at the head of the paragraphs in which they are discussed.

A. THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

1. The Genesis of Music in Human Life

Job 38:7; Gen.4:19-22, 31:27. Apart from the Lord's poetical remonstrance to Job, there is no evidence in Scripture for the origins of human song. Instrumental music appears as the invention of Jubal, from the cursed race of Cain, along with other basic arts of human society. Both song and instrumental music appear as elements for general celebration among the patriarchs.

Instrumental music thus appears first in Scripture history as a means to "civil mirth", in Andrew Fuller's phrase. However, throughout the period of the Promise up to the Exodus, neither song nor instrumental music appear as part of divine worship. The revelation of the Word, prayer, sacrifice, vows, tithes and thanksgivings are found.

This fact may caution against viewing music as an unchanging norm in worship - as what the Baptist and Puritan forefathers called 'a moral element'. It seems rather to be a specific form of praise, whose form is governed by God's revealed will - a 'positive element.'

1. The Place of Music in the Redemption of the Chosen Nation

Exodus 15:1-21; Jg.11:34, Num.21:17-18,27-30; Deut.31:14-32:47. The Exodus creates a redeemed nation, the Old Testament Church of Israel, in which national and religious life blend as a theocracy. Here vocal and instrumental music have occasional roles, but are not made a part of the regular worship offered by the congregation at the Tabernacle.

The victory of Jehovah over Pharaoh and his false gods at the Red Sea is celebrated in the Song of the Sea. Moses leads the song, Miriam leads timbrels and dancing. Various events in the Wilderness wanderings are marked by song: the springing of the Well, the victory over the Amorites at Heshbon. Moses closes the Law by giving an inspired song of witness against the nation. These highlight specific occasions in the national life of God's people.

Num. 10:1-10; Judges 11:34, 5ch.; 1 Sam.10:5-13; 2 Kg.3:11-20. The Tabernacle worship incorporates no form of music. God does ordain the silver trumpets or horns, but these manifestly serve as signals to camp movements, alarms, or the commencement of festivals, rather than as musical accompaniments.

The same broad pattern continues with the settlement in the Promised Land: victory celebrations with song, music and dance; occasional commemorative songs, such as Deborah's. Later we find instrumental music added as a background for prophetic utterance, and this continues for some generations here and there. All these cases of national celebration or prophetic inspiration occur apart from the Tabernacle worship.

3. The Reign of King David and Music in the Temple of Jerusalem

Under David's reign, the Temple is anticipated. Both vocal and instrumental music are welcomed into the worship of the living, true God by His own express appointment and inspiration. On this change in Old Testament cultus we ought to observe the following:

1 Chronicles 13:2; 29:25-28; 28:13,19,21; Ezra 3:10; Neh.12:24,35-36,45-46. Music is divinely appointed for Temple worship. David does not appoint the Levitical courses of singers and players by his personal creative initiative, as Dr. Hustad carelessly suggests (*Jubilate!* p.42) but by divine inspiration. His proposals are “of God”, and “at the command of the LORD by His prophets”. He counts these courses of the Levites among “the works of this pattern” which he received “by the hand of the LORD”. The restoration of the Temple after years of Exile brings the exact replication of these same musical appointments as ordained by “David the man of God”.

Psalm 150. Temple music and national music are distinct. Dr. Peter Masters, Minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, though himself not opposed to instrumental music in New Testament worship, points out that passages such as Psalm 150, which deal with a variety of instruments beyond those appointed through David, are more likely inspired for national, court occasions in Israel as a theocracy, rather than the religious services of the Temple.

2 Chronicles 5:12-15, 29:27-28. Vocal and instrumental music are distinct, equal elements in Temple worship, linked to sacrifice. Instrumental music is not a mere accompaniment but a separate, distinct part of worship. Both song and music are tied to the offerings of the altar.

Psalms 134, 135, 136. Temple music was essentially the work of the Levites, not of the people as a whole. The people participated only to a limited extent in the singing through antiphonal responses and phrases like “Hallelujah” or “Amen.”

1 Kg.8:27,29; cf. Ex.25:40; Pss.2,4,103:19,115:3. The form of Temple music must be seen as integral to the nature and function of the Temple in Old Testament worship. The Temple acts as an earthly dwelling for the glory or Name of the Lord Jehovah upon earth, a replica of heaven upon earth, by which man may be granted to encounter the Most High. The real presence of God Almighty remains in heaven itself.

The sacrificial cultus of the Temple; the role of the Temple as a replica of heavenly glory, and the sacerdotal character of its service cannot be ignored when we look at its musical life. Only when we have seen the New Testament fulfillment of the entire Temple system can we assess what model, if any, the Old Testament Temple provides for Christians today under the New Testament economy of the Gospel.

4. The Emergence of the Synagogue and the Prophetic Vision of a New Temple in the Messianic Hope.

The Temple cultus itself was removed by God in judgment with the decline of the Kingdom, and the Exile of the chosen people. In the course of this upheaval, two significant themes emerge in the inspired teaching of the Prophets.

Isa.56:7; 60:7-11; Hg. 2:1-7; Isa.2:11-12,Zech.12-13.

First, the prophets point past the destruction of the Temple itself toward the hope of a New Temple holding a far greater Glory and Presence of the Lord. This new Temple will welcome the worship of all the nations of earth. This hope is woven into the warp and woof of the general promise of a coming Messiah.

Isa.57:15; 66:1-2; Ezk.10:18; 11:13-20. **Second, the prophets focus the presence of God in a believing remnant of His people.** This new, purged community will survive the Exile, return of the land. God's dwelling will be now found among the contrite hearers of His Word; He will be the "little sanctuary" of His scattered people.

The end of the First Temple, and the ministry of the prophets seem to have prompted the emergence of the synagogue as the new centre of faith and worship among Old Testament saints.

Deut. 33:10; 2 Chron.17:8-9; Neh.8:7-13; Mal.2:6-7. **To be sure, throughout Israel's history there were gatherings outside the Temple in the land to hear the Levites teach the Law.**

Ps.74:8. It is then possible that 'synagogues' existed even before the Exile.

Isa. 8:16-18; Ezk.8:1; 33:30-33. **The prophets created gatherings before and during the Exile, both of disciples who preserved their inspired utterances and writings, and of the people to hear their preaching.**

Neh.8, 10. It is certainly clear, in the wake of Ezra's teaching ministry, that synagogues took on formal features as an ongoing institution and centre for weekly Sabbath worship in the Jewish Church. In these centres for study, instruction, discipline, community and worship, the singing of the psalms by all the people was practiced. Here the ongoing, 'moral element' of divine worship predominated, where in the Temple, the 'positive element' was uppermost. The final reality was anticipated in synagogue, the typical symbols set forth in the Temple.

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT

From this Old Testament matrix of worship in Temple and synagogue that our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed and called out His own people into the Churches of the New Testament and gave them their own distinctive worship. With His advent as the promised Messiah, and His atoning work, the Temple is both fulfilled and superseded. As His kingdom is established, and believers in His Name are called out, the synagogue is purged and transformed into the New Testament assembly. Only in the light of these two events of redemptive history can we see the true significance of the Old Testament worship for Christians.

1. The End of the Temple in Christ and the Church

Jn.2,7,12; Lk.2:22-39; 2:41-50. As the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, in His substitutionary work of fulfilling the Law, our Lord Jesus clearly revered and observed the rituals of the Temple as established in the Old Testament. He was presented in its courts. He regarded it even as a Boy as "His Father's house" and pursued in it "His Father's business." He attended the pilgrim festivals which required His presence there.

Jn.2;Mt.21,24;Mt.12:6; Heb.3:6. At the same time, Christ clearly regarded the Temple as a typical institution whose significance would be fulfilled and ended in His own redeeming work as Mediator. He called Himself, as the Son of Man, "one greater than the Temple". As "Son over His own house", He claimed the Temple as "My House", as "My Father's House." Twice He purges it of offenses - at the opening and close of His public ministry. He sees His own Body, destroyed and raised again, as the locus of the prophetic New Temple. Meanwhile, He predicts the complete destruction and removal of Herod's magnificent pile.

Jn.1:14,51. Christ Jesus therefore assumes in His own Person the essential functions of the Temple. As a typical institution under the Law, the Temple had two purposes. It served as a replica of heaven upon earth, by which God dwelt among men. It acted as the gate to heaven, by which man gained access to God. The Apostle John finds these functions in the Lord Jesus. He is the incarnate Word “tabernacling among men” that they may “see His glory.” The Saviour likens Himself to Jacob’s ladder by which men have access to God.

The New Testament as it unfolds, develops this fulfillment of the Temple in Christ Jesus in two distinct, and complementary directions.

Hebrews; Revelation. The Saviour’s work as our High Priest and Advocate in heaven itself supersedes the earthly Temple as the “gate of heaven”.

1 Cor.6; Eph.2; 1 Pe.2. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost which realizes the union of believers with Christ on earth creates in the individual saint and the gathered local Church the new “temple of God, an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Thus the eschatological realization of the prophetic hope of the New Temple – with all its greater Glory, with its ingathering of all the nations to Zion -- is in the New Testament applied to the saving work of Christ and the growth of His kingdom of grace through the Churches.

The broad, basic corollary to be drawn from this fulfillment is surely that *the Temple can no longer serve as a model or rule for the worship of believers under the Gospel.* Our Protestant Reformers clearly grasped this reality in terms both of the concept of a sacrificial priesthood, and of the sanctity of places of worship. What the Calvinistic Reformers, the Puritans particularly, went on to realize from this biblical fundamental, was *the Temple cultus cannot be in any respect imitated or borrowed in New Testament worship.*

Hebrews 13, Rev.6; 2 Cor.2, Rev.8; Rom.12:2, Heb.13; 1 Pe.2, Heb.10. The inspired New Testament writers support this broad corollary in that they clearly never apply the Temple service in any aspect whatever directly to local Church life. The imagery they take from its cultus they either “eternalize” in the glories of heaven, or “spiritualize” in the experience of the believer, or “realize” in Christ’s person and work. So, for example, the “altar” appears in New Testament Scripture both as the fact of the cross, and as a centerpiece in heaven. The fragrance of the “incense” is applied

both to the prayers of the saints as they are heard in heaven and the the knowledge of Christ made manifest by their lives and witness on earth. The “sacrifices” of the redeemed are their bodies’ service and the praise of their lips. The saints are invited to priestly service in their worship.

2. The Emergence of the Churches from the Synagogue

If the Temple prefigures the work of Christ and the privileges of His people, then it is also clear the Synagogue prepares the way for the new forms their worship will take as they become Churches.

Lk.4:16; Mt.4:23,9:35,Lk.13:10; Mt.10:17,23:4, Lk.21:12; Jn.16:2. The Lord Jesus faithfully observed synagogue worship every Sabbath. He conducted His preaching ministry from its services. He sent forth His apostles to preach the Gospel in the synagogues. He foretold their sufferings and excommunication from its courts.

Acts 6:9; ch.13; 14:1; 17:1,10,17. The We can easily trace through the Acts the fulfillment of the Lord’s words, as the Apostles and early believers preach Christ in the synagogues, and as Paul begins his missionary labours in most cities at the local synagogue

James 2:1-4. What is not so noticeable at first, is that the young churches formed by separation from the unbelieving synagogues generally take on the features of synagogue worship. Indeed, the early epistle of James uses the term “synagogue” to describe an assembly of believers.

1 Tim.2; 1 Tim. 4, Acts. 18; 1 Tim.5, Acts 14; Eph.5,Col.3 . When we trace the allusions and hints of the Epistles of Paul and the other Apostles to Christian meetings for worship, again, we see the features of the synagogue. As in the synagogue, we find elders ruling and teaching the congregation; the public reading of Old Testament Scripture; preaching and exposition; singing and public prayers.

1 Thess. 5; 2 Pe.3; 1 Cor. 14; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor.10-11. Of course, the fullness of grace in the New Testament brings some very new

features to the familiar pattern. A greater measure of spiritual gifts are given, both extraordinary and ordinary. The apostolic writings are read as “the other Scriptures.” The New Testament ordinances are now present – chiefly the Lord’s Supper. Even a distinctive ‘Christian’ decorum for worship is given: men bare the head, women cover the head – a practice at odds both with Greek and Jewish protocol. Still the basic form of worship is, as all scholars agree, taken from the synagogue. In this way too, the Churches are the final purged remnant of Israel, the true Israel of God, heirs to the promises.

Dr. Ralph Martin remarks in his standard work, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1974), p. 26:

Christian worship, as a distinctive, indigenous thing, arose from the fusion in the crucible of Christian experience, of the synagogue and the Upper Room. ... the typical worship of the Church is to be found to this day in the union of the worship of the synagogue and the sacramental experience of the Upper Room; and that union dates from New Testament times.

As Dr. R.G. Webber observes in his textbook *Worship: Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) p. 50:

The twofold sequence of ‘Word and sacrament’ may be traced back to 1 Cor. 16:20-24 and Acts 2:42.

Indeed, it is strange but true, that Dr. Hustad himself, for all his insistence on the **fragmentary, insufficient, unauthoritative** character of the Bible as a rule in Christian worship and music, can manage, somehow, to provide us with the following broad outline of “early New Testament church worship” ! We find in *Jubilate!* pp.92-93:

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Reading of Scripture	1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 4:6
Homily or Exposition	Acts 20:7
Creed	1 Tim.6:12, cf. Deu. 6.
Singing “of various types, probably without instruments”	Col.3:16
Prayers “with upraised hands”	1 Tim.2:8; Acts 2:42
Congregational ‘Amen’	1 Cor. 14:16
Collection	1 Cor.16:1-2

SERVICE OF THE TABLE

Thanksgiving	Lk.22:19
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Remembrance	1 Cor.11:25
Anticipation	1 Cor. 11:26
Intercession	John 17
Kiss of Peace	Rom.16:16

Extraordinary, eh?

This material does not furnish us a hard-and-fast 'order of service' (though I have seen worse.) Hustad's outline, found in other authorities, is admittedly a reconstruction. Further, each element has varying measure of explicit command and underlying principle --- the 'kiss of peace' does not carry the same degree of evidence as does, say, the Lord's Table, or public prayer, or Scripture reading.

Nonetheless, Dr. Hustad has really disproven his own position. The elements of Christian worship **are** clearly exhibited in the New Testament. Their essential details **are** indicated, leaving other details subject to the general rules of Scripture and gracious prudence. The question is **not** left to human creativity and cultural caprice, **if** we but seriously embrace the authority of the Bible as a positive rule of Christian practice.

C. THE MUSIC AND WORSHIP OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES

As we now focus our attention on the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Church's music, we again emphasize that not every imaginable detail is furnished on the sacred page. Those essential points needed to regulate our practice are there. The general principles of Scripture will guide us where precept and pattern are not explicitly laid down.

1. The Normative Passages

James 5:13, Acts 16:25. The early believers sang. It is true that from the first "the Church has come, singing down through the ages." The New Testament exhibits the Christian singing in private devotion; and singing in informal, social praise, providing a witness to the unbelieving.

However, our interest lies specifically in the gathered worship of the local Churches. The Biblical references to this are now listed in their entirety here. The Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible in English is used:

Matthew 26:30 (after the institution of the Lord's Supper)

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Romans 15:5-14 (Paul encouraging the Church at Rome)

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: ⁶That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. ⁸Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers: ⁹And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. ¹⁰And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. ¹¹And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. ¹²And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. ¹³Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. ¹⁴And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

1 Cor. 14:15 (Paul correcting disorders of worship at Corinth)

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

1 Cor. 14:26

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Ephes. 5:17-21 (Paul exhorting the Church at Ephesus and others)

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. ¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Col. 3:16-17 (Paul exhorting the Church at Colossae and others)

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. ¹⁷And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Hebrews 2:11-13 (Paul reflecting on the mystical union of Christ with His church)

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. ¹³And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

2. The Formal Features

Now, given our hermeneutic as Calvinistic Baptists, and given our view of redemptive history as sound, I believe we may safely declare that these passages of the New Testament will furnish us with all we need to know to practice music in the local Church – not every imaginable detail, but all the essentials.

What can we learn here about the formal features of music in New Testament churches? What are the biblical parameters?

I suggest these four:

i) The music of the New Testament churches consisted of singing, NOT instrumental music. The Greek word used in all these verses is *yallw*. It is now admitted by leading lexical authorities (including Liddell-Scott-Jones, the latest editions of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, and Kittel's NT Theological Dictionary), that the word has come to mean simply "to sing" by NT times. These authorities agree that the verb's use in the contexts of these verses refers only to vocal music, song.

Where in other Greek writers of this period the word is used in a more general sense "to make melody" (harking back to classical usage), the mention of an instrument in the dative case is required to create the sense, "to play." The only instances of *yallw* so used with a dative in the NT are 1 Cor. 14:15, and Eph. 5:19 – "with the Spirit", "with the understanding", and "with the heart."

What is happening in these verses? I believe it altogether likely that, in keeping with the consistent, flexible imagery of New Testament typology, the Apostle Paul has 'spiritualized' the Temple instruments, just as in Romans 12:1 he 'spiritualizes' the sacrifices, in Phil.4 the incense offering, and in Eph. 2, the very Temple structure itself, replete with barriers marking the Court of the Gentiles.

Several writers have attempted to argue that the Greek verb *yallo* necessarily includes instrumental music. However, a fair reading of the lexical data suggests that *yallo* actually parallels the term *baptizo*. Both specify a mode of action without specifying element or instrument. To appeal to the classical usage of *yallo* here is as anachronistic as insisting the *stauros* of the NT must be a 'stake' as in the 5th c. BC.

Surely no Baptist can object to a thoughtful review of lexical data to establish the meaning of a word - and no Baptist should wish to use the shabby special pleading of the Watchtower cult.

Therefore, as a biblical parameter, singing is specified. In the absence of any other precept, pattern or principle of Scripture, we cannot hold that instrumental music is authorized in or appropriate to New Testament practice.

ii) New Testament churches practiced congregational singing, not the performance music of an individual or ensemble of privileged office or status.

The Church's song is no longer sacerdotal nor professional as that of the Temple, just as it no longer has a sacrificial priesthood. All believers are priests and kings to God and the Lamb; all believers are to sing. While 1 Cor. 14:26 suggests the 'giving out' of praise may be done by many, Eph. 5:19 and Col.3:16 show that the actual singing is a corporate act - all sing, and we speak one to another as all sing. Our Saviour Himself led the disciples as a body in song (Mt. 26:30). We do well to reflect on the fact that as we sing, He still sings in the midst of His brethren (Rom. 15; Heb.2). The congregational singing of the Protestant Reformation is a tangible badge of the New Testament's 'priesthood of all believers.'

iii) The New Testament churches sang Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as its distinct, and generic forms of vocal music.

Biblically based churches must make the Old Testament Psalms foundational to their repertoire of congregational song. The inspired, canonical book of praise which our Saviour used, and which He fulfilled as our Redeemer, provides a unique range of divinely sanctioned praise, petition, experience and duty we cannot afford to ignore. Our sung worship has become spineless with sentimentality; the majesty and deeply felt passions of the Psalter are designed to be, and must be the backbone of our praise.

Having said this, it is equally clear to me at least, that it is untenable to confine the praises of New Testament Christians to the Book of Psalms alone. The New

Testament gives distinct, clear evidence in the presence of its canticles (Lk.1-2), in the generic terms used (Eph. 5:14) and in what appear to be snatches of distinctly Christian song (Phil.2; 1 Tim.3:16; Eph.5:14), that our hymns and spiritual songs go beyond "David."

The insistence of the revered John Calvin and his doggedly loyal disciples that only inspired words befit the praises of God's people fails of conviction, though it will always hold respect. The reason for our reticence is that we view sacred song as an exercise of human, believing appropriation of God's Word in worship, as is the case in preaching, and prayer. It is not only the enunciation of God's Word, as is the case in public Scripture reading.

If we *pray* in the Holy Ghost, and according to the Word of God, in our own words, without being restricted to recite the inspired words of the Lord's Prayer.... If we *preach* by the utterance, demonstration and power of the Spirit in our own words, without having to recite the sermons recorded in the Gospels, the Acts or the Epistles.... It seems to us consistent with the evidence of Scripture that we also *sing* Scriptural truths in human words too, without being confined to rehearse the words of the Old Testament Psalter. In this we agree with Dr. John Gill in his **Body of Divinity II:iv.712 -**

Inasmuch as the Word of God and Christ in general furnishes out matter for singing His praises, I deny not, but that such hymns and spiritual songs composed by good men, uninspired, may be made use of; provided care is taken that they be agreeable to the sacred writings, and to the analogy of faith, and are expressed, as much as may be, in Scripture language.

In our own local Church, Hope Assembly, we read *and* preach the Scriptures; we pray both *ex tempore and* the Lord's Prayer; we sing metrical Psalms, *and* standard hymns, *and* more informal spiritual songs. We would choose between neither; we believe Scripture bids us profit from all.

iv) The Churches of the New Testament integrated their singing with the other elements of worship on the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath. This is simply to notice from 1 Cor. 14:26, Mt. 26:30, that song was part of formal church worship as much as the general life of the believer.

3. Principles and Purposes in New Testament Sung Praise

On the assumption that form follows function, we turn over these same normative passages to uncover the purposes of music in the New Testament churches' worship – to consider the inner life behind the form. These passages of God's Word reveal the following points:

i) **1 Cor. 14:15, Eph.5:19.** The church's singing is to rise from the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the saints. As such it requires the same intensity of preparation that would characterize prayer and preaching, and it should be as expressive.

ii) **Rom.15:6, Eph.5:19.** The church's singing should unite the congregation and serve to arouse one another in devotion. We thus both praise "with one mouth" and "admonish one another."

iii) **Eph.5:19.** The church's singing should engage the deep emotions of the Lord's people. We are called on to "make melody in your hearts unto the Lord".

iv) **Hebrews 2:12, Rom.15:9.** The church's singing should aid us in realizing the personal presence of Christ Jesus amid His people by the Holy Ghost. Just as in the Old Testament, the Lord inhabits the praises of His people.

v) **Eph.5:19-20; Col.3:16-17.** The church's singing should animate the saints in the habit of praise and thanksgiving to God in Christ. Believers should be taking the praises offered in our solemn assemblies with them into daily life, whether in joy (James 5:13) or adversity (Acts 16:25).

vi) **1 Cor. 14:9,15; Col.3:16.** The church's singing should enable the congregation to appropriate the Word of Christ to their minds and hearts. Christian song must engage all believers in *understanding and applying* Scripture truth, not merely reciting it. At the same time, what we sing should be easily related to, and *drawn from, the text of Scripture.* Words and music must be placed at a level *readily grasped* and assimilated. The Word is thus to "dwell in us richly in all wisdom." The aim of Christian song is not recreation – not art – not culture – not entertainment – but edification and devotion.

3. Summary: Scripture Teaching on New Testament Church Music

We simply wish here to pause, and sum up our findings from the data of Scripture on music in the New Testament churches, assuming this to be normative in all ages for congregations confessing *Sola Scriptura*, and the *regulative principle of our Confessions*.

The churches of Christ under the New Testament economy of the Covenant of Grace emerged from the synagogues of the Old Testament church. The Temple service was understood as a typical prefiguration of the Saviour's redeeming work and of the saints' access to God in heaven. The Temple cultus was never used as a literal model or precedent for New Testament worship. To the established features of synagogue worship – prayer, song, Scripture reading and exposition – were added the use of spiritual gifts and the Gospel ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

i) The form of music in the New Testament Churches: vocal music or *singing*, not instrumental music; *congregational* singing, not solo or ensemble performance; the *singing of the Psalms, of hymns and of spiritual songs*, including but not confined to the Old Testament Psalter; *singing as part of regular Lord's Day worship*.

ii) The functions of music in the New Testament Churches: to express the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the gathered saints; to animate their praise and thanksgiving; to engage their deep emotions in worship; to unite and arouse the congregation in devotion; to realize the personal presence of Christ amid His people; to appropriate and apply the Word of Christ to mind and heart.

It is our conviction that this form and these functions of music in the local church remain normative to all believers in Christ, because Holy Scripture is sufficient as the inspired rule of faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

IV. The Biblical Model of Church Music in History

We now offer some corroboration for this model of church music, not only as the Biblical, divinely ordained pattern, but also as the historic and best attested pattern in the centuries' old life of the Christian churches. History and tradition do not authorize our practice; however, the old German proverb remains sound – “what is new isn't true, and what is true isn't new.”

Surveying the history of the Christian faith, it is remarkable to find this Biblical model of church music dominating the larger part of its history in all branches of

Christianity. The present, popular forms of church music to which Evangelical Baptists seem so emotionally attached are of very late origin, and very poor pedigree.

The patristic writers have been fairly shown to be unanimous in explicitly rejecting instrumental music from church worship. They give evidence of congregational singing in responsorial or antiphonal forms, pre-eminently singing the Psalter, but also some other hymns. The patristic practice has survived, in slightly modified forms, in Eastern Orthodox communities.

The mediaeval West restricted singing to specialized choirs, and introduced organ music only after the 7th century. Thomas Aquinas indicates that organs were not general in churches till after the 12th century AD. These developments occur after the rise of a sacerdotal priesthood, the use of incense, and other practices borrowed from paganism, and sanctioned by direct appeal to the OT Temple model.

The Protestant Reformation in Europe witnessed a widespread recovery of the Biblical pattern of music in church worship. *Lutherans* restored singing to the people through the chorale. Organ music was not used as an accompaniment for congregational song until about 1650! Among *the Reformed*, Zwingli at first abolished all music from the church. However, Bucer and Calvin re-introduced unaccompanied unison metrical psalmody, and this form of congregational song became the characteristic feature of Reformed worship. The earlier synods of the Dutch Reformed Church agitated for the removal of organs from the churches without success. *The Anabaptists* developed an extensive hymnody, and to this day their traditional and conservative branches (Hutterian, Amish, Old Order Mennonite, other conservative Mennonites) sustain unaccompanied congregational song. *The reformed Church of England* early saw attempts to remove organs and abolish cathedral choirs - an English Convocation in 1562 defeated such an effort by a single proxy vote. *The Puritans* of England and Scotland instituted congregational psalmody and removed organs from churches during their hegemony after the Civil Wars. This was mandated by the Westminster Standards in the *Directory of Worship*.

What was the historic music practice of Calvinistic or Particular Baptists? It is generally safe to assume that, if anyone knew the meaning and implications of the regulative principles asserted by our Confessions, it would be the generation of elders and brethren who framed them. How did they implement their own position?

Our founders were Puritans, either Separatists who regarded the state church as part of 'Antichrist' or semi-Separatists who were willing to recognize the godly

and orthodox element remaining within the Establishment. Dr. Hustad, in surveying the 'Free Church tradition' makes these comments in *Jubilate!* pp. 117-118:

The early Separatists evidently had no music but eventually they began to sing unaccompanied metrical psalms.

Commenting on the Particular Baptists as 'radically Calvinist', he notes:

For all of them, the typical worship consisted of Ministry of the Word (reading and exposition), extemporized prayers with a congregational 'Amen', and possibly metrical psalms sung to open and close the service.

Floyd Patterson's article in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (II: 932) sums up the development of music in our churches thus:

The Particular Baptists who first appeared in 1638, were less particular about congregational singing, and used metrical versions of the Psalms in several of their churches. However, instrumental music was not allowed. Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Horse-lie-down, Southwark, London, was one of the first in London, if not the first in England, to introduce English hymns into the regular worship of Baptist churches. Keach used a hymn at the end of the Lord' Supper from about 1673. Although meeting great opposition, he patiently but determinedly developed the use of song in his own services and used his influence with other churches to promote what he considered to be a 'church ordinance.'

A 'Controversie of Singing' agitated the Particular Baptists. The basic question was not so much whether to sing the new English hymns, for many were much opposed to these 'human composures,' but whether to sing congregationally at all, even in the 'conjoint' singing of psalms. ... 'Worship by machinery', that is by the use of instruments, was always disdained.

In an excellent little book, *Bye-Paths in Baptist History* (London, Elliot Stock, 1871), J. Jackson-Goadby recounts the course of this 'Controversie of Singing' and the related scruples some held toward metre and rhyme, or the singing of the unconverted. Among the supporters of congregational song were numbered the leading ministers of the day: William Kiffin, Robert Steed, George Barrat, and Edward Man, whose names adorn the London 1689 Confession as signatories. John Gill's *Body of Divinity* sums up their position, since Gill in this respect followed Benjamin Keach. Hercules Collins embodied the position in some detail in a confessional document - his reprise of the Heidelberg Catechism known as the *Orthodox Catechism* 1680. These founders were one in insisting

on unaccompanied congregational of Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs alone in the Churches.

The position thus advanced in the 17th and early 18th centuries held through to the opening of the 19th century. Among the Calvinistic Baptist worthies of this period, we notice the great theologian and missionary statesman Andrew Fuller. We cite the following passages from his letters, reprinted in his **Collected Works** (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications 1988) III: 515-523 ---

Of the tribe of Judah, Moses "saith nothing" concerning priesthood. Hence Paul inferred there *was* nothing. Of altars, priests, sacred garments and instrumental music in Christian worship, the New Testament "saith nothing." Is it improper then to infer that *no such things were known in the times of the first Christians?* (emphasis his)

You perceive nothing in instrumental music contrary to the genius of the Gospel. Another might say the same things of *dancing*

The New Testament speaks of praising God by *singing*, but further it says not

Your argument from *the worship of heaven* reminds me of the argument in favour of the surplice, from the heavenly inhabitants being clothed "in fine linene, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." ... But, seriously, the heavenly employments and enjoyments are frequently illustrated by things borrowed from the Jewish ceremonial, which things were once right, but in our day would be 'will worship' Col. 2:23. The blessed above are said to be "made kings and priests unto God." In the same chapter in which we read of "harps" we also read of a "temple" and and "altar" in heaven, Rev. 14:17-18. But what would you think of an argument derived from this in favour of modern priests, temples and altars? In short, instrumental music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the Gospel dispensation.

Nor was this position peculiar to the English congregations. In Canada, the first white Baptist congregation in Toronto, begun about 1818, now the renowned Jarvis Street Church, did not introduce instrumental music into its services till 1857, precipitating a minor rupture in its membership.

In the United States, Patterson's encyclopedia entry notes that the same view prevailed without exception till 1834, and long afterwards in rural congregations unaccompanied singing was rigorously upheld. John L. Dagg, the first great Southern Baptist theologian makes these comments on music in the Church in his **Manual of Theology Part II: Church Order (1857)**, p.129:

(After reasoning that the Old Testament Psalter justifies our use of hymnody and books of praise.) **Instrumental music formed a part of the**

Temple worship; but it is nowhere commanded in the New Testament, and it is less adapted to the more spiritual service of the present dispensation.

If any Calvinistic Baptist pastor has been elevated to celebrity, if not to a 'cult of the saints,' it has surely been C.H. Spurgeon. Any who read his complete Autobiography or studied his Sermons at length will know that he continued the original practice of unaccompanied congregational singing alone in his entire ministry, including his years in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. During his life Spurgeon not only advocated the Scriptural practice, but he inveighed against the introduction of instruments whenever occasion presented itself.

From the abridged *Autobiography* (London: Banner of Truth, 1973) II:441, we have these incidents:

When William Cuff was minister at Providence Chapel, Hackney, one of the College Conference meetings was held there. The President presided, and in the course of his speech he pointed to the organ, and said, 'I look upon that as an innovation; and if I were here, I should want it to be an outovation, and then we would have an ovation over its departure. I was once asked to open an organ - I suppose the people wanted me to preach in connection with introduction of the new instrument. I said that I was quite willing to open it as Simple Simon opened his mother's bellows, to see where the wind came from, but I could not take any other part in the ceremony.'

Preaching at a chapel in the country, Mr. Spurgeon gave out Isaac Watts' version of the 91st Psalm ---

*He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode; --*

And then added, 'We'll sing it to the tune "Refuge".' The organist leaned over from the gallery, and whispered to the preacher, 'It is not in our tune-book, sir.' 'Then it ought to be,' answered Spurgeon, 'no tunebook is complete unless "Refuge" is in it;' and, turning to the congregation, he said, 'The last time I was here, you people praised God for yourselves, but now have a machine to do the praising for you. If it can't play "Refuge", we'll have it all the same, and I'll start it myself!'

An organ was not installed in the Tabernacle till its rebuilding after the fire of 1898; a grand piano was introduced about 1915.

Of course, the views of our forefathers carry no innate authority apart from the Scriptures. Nonetheless, these well-established facts ought to keep our view of the Biblical model of church music in honest historical perspective. *This is the original, historic practice of our Baptist people.* Indeed, it has survived in several leading congregations of that most traditional of our communities, the 'Gospel Standard' Strict Baptists of Britain. It just will not do to dismiss this approach as the alien custom of the Exclusive or Closed Brethren.

Our present conventional musical practice largely arose in consequence of Baptist churches competing socially with other more 'mainstream' evangelicals (Methodists, Presbyterians) as they in turn sought to rival the habits of the established Anglican Church. You will find a cappella singing as the original norm of those Dissenting and Evangelical communities too. All went 'upscale' to 'keep up with the Joneses.' The assimilation of evangelistic meetings into regular Lord's Day worship, and the general decline of doctrinal knowledge and commitment hastened the change. The change was not always for the better.

Even those who found the new measures acceptable had to admit problems. Here is Dr. E.T. Hiscox, addressing them in his now classic handbook, **New Church Directory for Baptist Churches (1894), pp. 238-244:**

Music is to be cultivated for spiritual uses, not for aesthetic or popular effects; to answer the cravings of a devout spirit, not to gratify taste.

Singing is the people's worship. The chant, the anthem, the oratorio are rather for the cathedral and the temple. Though beautiful and grand, and potent with the savour of worship, they should be sparingly used in the Christian congregation. They may incite an audience to worship but the assembly does not to any considerable extent worship in them.

Devotion seeks plain choral harmonies in which to utter its worship.

The detailed notes include warnings against hiring carnal, unconverted professional musicians to lead singing or strengthen choirs; against leaving the direction of music to church trustees; against the choir's levity, irreverence, whispering, trifling or absenteeism during the Sermon; and against developing choirs merely to entertain and attract crowds.

It didn't take long for the worst abuses to enter, did it? Those acquainted with the life and ministry of Dr. T.T. Shields, and his famous book **The Plot that Failed** will recall how the choir and its musically ambitious director became a pivot-point by which modernists and 'old families' in the Jarvis Street Church sought to undermine and oust his evangelical pulpit ministry.

Now we are not impugning the worst motives, or intentions, or effects to every choir, soloist or music director who labours in our Churches. We fully recognize

and respect the fact that they pursue their musical activities out of a sincere devotion to the Saviour. But the issue is this: what does the Saviour ask of us? That must be determined, not by popular taste, not by liturgical traditions, not by panels of theologians – but by the Word of Christ, the Bible. Is it our ambition to please Him – or ourselves?

The author of this paper has been an organist, a pianist, a soloist, a chorister, even a second cornet player in a Salvation Army band, during his pilgrimage as a born-again Christian. The Scriptures have pointed him away from it all.

Years of experience and observation confirm in him the reluctant conviction that all this musical activity in the churches is diverting the energies of saints from other, more excellent things; is undermining the reverence of worship into entertainment; is over-riding the pre-eminence of preaching the Word. He has met believers more interested in musical talent than Gospel preaching; happier to listen to singers, than to sing to their Saviour personally. “My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

He has conducted divine worship as a Minister of the Gospel for over 25 years according to the biblical model set forth here, and found, along with his hearers, the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, lacking nothing.

In the light of Scripture and history, the musical fashions of today and tomorrow appear rather too much to be the devotion of ignorant will-worship. Today’s worship wars may one day appear plainly to be pots calling kettles black.

IV. Practical Conclusions

We have at length reached the preacher’s “Finally.” Like many a Puritan sermon, this paper has been long on the doctrine and brief on the uses. It may convince those open to persuasion; it may inform those open to instruction; it may entertain those open to amusement. But what practical good may we all draw from it?

Adopting the Biblical Principles and Model

It is far easier to institute a return to Biblical church music in commencing a new congregation, than to adjust affairs in an established work. Such was the decision we took when we began the work now called Hope Assembly of Bible Christians, Mississauga, ON, Canada. We announce each sung praise, usually ; the song-leader or precentor may sometimes sing through the first verse to introduce a less familiar tune; the congregation rises if indicated, and all sing. We outline the typical services of the Sabbath as follows

: HOPE ASSEMBLY OF BIBLE CHRISTIANS
LORD'S DAY MEETINGS
BIBLE HOUR

Welcome

+ **Praise**

Opening Prayer

Announcements

Catechism

+ **Song Service**

Theme:

Songs (1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

Bible Memory Time

Devotional Bible Reading

Ministry Bible Reading

TEACHING MINISTRY

+ **Closing Hymn**

Blessing/Dismissal

WORSHIP & THE LORD'S TABLE

Call to Worship

Invocation

+ **Praise to the Trinity**

Holy Scripture

Old Testament

New Testament

+ **Metrical Psalmody**

Notices

+ **Preparation Hymn**

Prayers & Intercessions

Lord's Prayer

Confession of Faith

SERMON

+ **Table Hymn**

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Collection

+ **Dismissal Hymn**

Blessing/Dismissal

Each of these meetings, including some 35 minutes of preaching, may be held at an unhurried pace and conclude in one hour and fifteen minutes. Together they give the congregation 3 full chapters of Scripture, 2 sermons, regular extended Bible memory work, 2 reviews of creed, catechism or confession material, 10

hymns and 1 metrical psalmody, as well as prayer time. Our people seem to enjoy a good feeding upon God's Word and they love to sing.

To sustain the continuity and variety of this form of service does require steady preparation. The use of the hymns is noted weekly and deliberately varied through a number of books of praise; the Scriptures are read consecutively in the OT and NT; preaching is kept to a reasonable length, with changes of series and a number of guest preachers. Almost all the men of the congregation are involved either in reading, leading prayer, or giving reports on missions.

We invite our brethren in the ministry and the Churches to 'taste and see' that this is good, and sufficient to their souls' health and the witness of the Gospel. It requires no specialized talent, professional staff, equipment, or overheads.

Approximating the Biblical Principles and Model

Where long-established usage and prejudice has entrenched some instrumental music, some choral or solo work, it is a serious pastoral question whether or when the love of the saints, and the unity of the brethren, should be put to the test by way of reforming church practice. Even where this seems unwise for the larger good of the congregation, it is important and healthy that the values and spirit of the Biblical approach be approximated. Permit me to return to the 'sore spots' which began this paper. Let us review them briefly in light of what Scripture has shown us.

i) The choice of a hymnal. With what we have seen, first consideration must be given to the biblical content of lyrics; to the compatibility of the book to the pulpit ministry; and not least, to the level and accessibility of the book's words and music to the people.

It is invaluable to induce the musical leaders of the church, together with a few representative members, to review the present book(s) of praise and inventory what hymns, psalms and spiritual songs are familiar, well-known, somewhat known and unknown. It is equally important for the pastors and elders to assess in their books what is more, less and not useful in that inventory.

At an earlier period of ministry, the author pastored a small church with roots in the revivals and Bible school-based churches of the Fellowship. The book in current use was inadequate; but we did not seek to discard it. Instead, we restored in addition to it the use of the classic *Sankey's Sacred Songs & Solos*, a book the people had known. This provided us a needed and acceptable core of hymns helpful to the ministry. Psalmody was inconceivable; instead, we

instituted the responsive reading of the Psalms as an opening act of worship. We ought not refuse to do what we can, because we cannot do all we would wish.

We may well need to provide in two or three books a large repertoire for our people to learn gradually. Hope Assembly employs the Grace Hymns, Trinity Hymnal, Hymns of Truth of Praise, Songs & Solos, and the Psalter 1912, varying the books used from quarter to quarter.

Where musical leadership exists, efforts should be directed to provide a 'singing programme' which can orient the whole congregation to new hymns, and, if possible, learn sight-singing and part-harmony. At one point at one church, we would endeavour to get the congregation to memorize one hymn per month by its repeated singing at Bible Hour. Beginning with the most loved and familiar hymns, this can instill a precious means of grace in the hearts of the saints.

We also need carefully to trace the biblical content of our hymns, so that we and our people can appropriate their Scriptural content to mind and soul. When we sing Toplady's "Rock of Ages", do we appreciate his wonderful weaving of Exodus 32, John 19, Galatians 6 and other passages? Carefully study the thematic index of the hymnal. Where a hymnal lacks such an index, it is worth the time to develop an ad-hoc index by cross-referencing to another hymnal containing one.

The author's experience has been the current crop of commercially produced hymnals cannot adequately service our Churches; only such books as have risen from the life of the congregations, compiled and reviewed by our Pastors, elders and teachers of the Word, can and should be accepted as books of praise.

Before moving on, we ought to be careful not to despise what is best in the Gospel songs of the Moody-Sankey-Crosby school, and even later compositions as are found in the "Informal Occasion" section of the Trinity Hymnal - Baptist Edition. For example, sometime go over carefully "The Way of the Cross Leads Home." Think over even a popular song like "In the Garden" in light of the author's intent to place us beside Mary Magdalene in reflecting on her encounter with the risen Saviour that first early morning. Charity thinketh no evil, but charity should think. Dr. S.H. Tow of the Singaporean Bible Presbyterians has re-cast the popular Gaither song "Because He Lives" in a much more Scriptural vein than the original. Should we reject it out of hand?

ii) Choruses, and 'Worship Song'. Does this genre of music really merit its new-found pre-eminence in the sung praise of Evangelical churches? Decidedly not. And why? Because the monotonous, and, to be frank, infantile repetition or recitation of Scriptural phrases or jejune immature concepts does not fulfil the

Biblical purpose of song in the Church – that the Word of Christ should dwell richly in the hearts of the saints in all wisdom.

Singing does not merely recite Scripture, any more than prayer, or preaching. **Singing, like prayer and preaching, is intended to apply, appropriate, meditate, assimilate the truths of Scripture to mind and heart.** Our received forms of psalmody, hymnody and spiritual song do just that. Even the use of a refrain, as in Annie S. Hawkes' "I Need Thee Every Hour", has the advantage of pitting the repeated pleas of the refrain against the changing contexts and concepts of the verses -- not indeed unlike Psalm 136. The words of the newer items are often drowned out in the instrumentation --- with little lost for it.

If we honestly reflect on the moving principle of this music style, or this 'dynamic music for God' so-called, I fear we would find the universal animus of sensual stimulus behind the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, and the crowds of Ephesus in Acts 19. This species of 'disco for Jesus' is frankly heathen, not Christian.

Sometime ago, the author attended a day conference of Fellowship Baptist pastors and students featuring Lectures on Preaching. There was a preliminary 'worship session' led by youngsters from the Heritage Seminary's instrumental ensemble and 'worship team'. Most present listened, even chatted, during the 'worship songs' and choruses – in part, because they were too intricate in melody and in part, because they said precious, precious little. Once, however, those at the front struck up "How Great Thou Art" or "To God be the Glory", everyone quickly, and vigorously, joined in. There is a lesson somewhere in here!

iii) Instrumentation. The author can wish it, but he knows many of his readers will not be induced to sell their instruments, new and old, and then give the money to foreign missions. It should be clear, then, that instrumentation should be firmly subordinated to congregational song, and used to support it without competing with it, distracting from it, or dominating it. Too often instrumentalists play at a mad-dash pace heedless of the capacities of the people to think, and breathe, as they sing. While personally happy to dispense with all instruments, the author ventures the suggestion that a single piano is quite sufficient for any such use required. It has a harp inside – and that should satisfy the special pleading of exegetes who milk the word *yallw* for biblical instrumental music in the New Testament.

iv) Solo and Choir Work. Concerning these, there is nothing from the Lord. What judgment can be given which is faithful? Well, choirs were first introduced to our churches on the pretext of “helping the congregation sing better.” Not long afterward, instruments followed, to help the choir. If choirs are supposed to help foster strong congregational singing, **let them do it.** Choirs should spend most of their time practicing new hymns and learning how best to sing the praises for the coming Sabbath. They are far more strategically placed behind the congregation, where their sound will push the people on. For this they were once placed above and behind in lofts. Such a position eliminates the cost of expensive gowns, and the torment of sitting like mannequins behind the preachers. If choirs and music directors yearn to concretize, provide a periodic Saturday night “festival of praise” where they can do it, and perhaps make way for an evangelistic narrative, epilogue or testimonies. Ditto for soloists. Too many choirs have accumulated a costly stock of ‘greeting-card cantatas’ while neglecting the hymnal. More than once I have proposed a hymn or tune as a guest preacher, only to be told that the choir (or the choir director) “doesn’t know it.” *Shades of Spurgeon!*

v) Professional musicianship. It is true that the Lord can do without scholarship. It is more true that He would rather do without ignorance. Much of the stigma attached to the Biblical model of church music has come because those who contend for it do little to nurture or enhance it. This is a special fault among the Presbyterian and Reformed churches who practice exclusive psalmody. The author has served as a supply Minister for a couple of years in such a congregation. He has observed too little fore-thought or effort bestowed on the service of praise by good, godly men of such persuasions. He has seen and heard a style of singing snippets of the Psalms to over-worked tunes pitched inappropriately high or low that was – dare I say? – utterly cavalier. This dishonours the well-thought (if partly over-drawn) theology of this school. “A good tree bringeth forth good fruits.’

We need to encourage men of musical aptitude in our congregations whether in membership, diaconate, or eldership, to employ their gifts to develop and enhance congregational song. This does not require full-time impresarios. A precentor serves the Church as does the usher, or the Bible school teacher, or sometimes the pastors – for love’s sake. The ‘ordained ministry of music’ envisioned by Dr. Hustad, and now emerging in so-called ‘ministers of worship’ is an unscriptural waste of resources. We will give account to our Saviour for all the money we have frankly squandered on such frills, when the need for Bible translation, sound literature, missionaries, evangelism, church planting and benevolence is so great in our time.

vi) Promotion of Dance, Drama and Spectacle. These items are, like choruses and contemporary 'worship music' , bluntly, an abomination standing in the holy place. We do not encourage missionaries to become witch-doctors to reach new tribes. Why are we doing virtually the same at home?

The ancient Church tried this experiment centuries ago when it was thrust into prominence as an established imperial faith. The process gave us the ritualism of Roman Catholicism and the blasphemies of the Mass – a spectacle the skeptic Voltaire termed 'grand opera for the poor.'

The pretexts advanced for these from the Scriptures are too ludicrous to mention, and only need be mentioned to be refuted. If this style of eisegesis prevails in our Churches, whether advocated by Dr. John Frame or anyone else, we shall eventually imitate Isaiah's nudism, as have the earliest Quakers and the radical Dhokubors.

As long as we refuse the Scriptural pattern of church worship and music, we will be beset by these aberrations. If we but get back to the Bible, we will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus, peace in Christ among ourselves, and the 'worship wars' shall cease!

V. Giving An Invitation

We venture to close this paper on the Bible, the Church and music, with an invitation, just as we are, without one plea.

We can say from our hearts before God Triune, that we have no desire to raise a Corinthian contention among Christians, nor to make sad the hearts of the Lord's people, whom He would not make sad. We have only sought to provoke our readers to love, to good works, to prayer and to Biblical reformation.

We invite our readers to enter this discussion in the words of the Apostle Paul:

*Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.
Let all your things be done with charity.
My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.
Amen.*

LOVE AND A ROD:

Thoughts on Church Discipline

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“What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?” 1 Cor.4:21

TWO WOMEN WHO JUST WOULDN'T GET ALONG, whose sparring and catting troubled the whole church. A couple who tried to 'fiddle' with the collection money. A bright, articulate intellectual, too clever by half to listen to the Bible on fundamental truths. A sad, sick lad who, it turned out, loved his step-mother --- far too much. Self-important back-pew bishops fomenting contempt for the Pastor and Elders. A husband and father too absorbed with his theories of the Second Coming to hold down a job and support his family.

Oh yes, Church troubles. From CNN monitoring a Vatican enclave of U.S. cardinals coping with paedophile priests, to televangelists blubbing their sham confessions on air, church troubles are big news – and bad news.

Did you recognize any of those cases in the opening paragraph? You should have. They are all on record – in Scripture. Churches have always had troubles : apostolic, New Testament Churches. The Church at Philippi Paul so loved (Phil.4:2-3); the mother Church at Jerusalem(Ac.5:1-11); the Churches at Ephesus, (1 Tim. 1:20;2 Tim.2:16-21;Acts20:28-31) Corinth(1 Cor.5;2Cor.2; 1 Cor.4,16:15-16;2Cor.10-12) and Thessalonica (2 Th.3:6-15) – all bore the scars of dealing with the sins of imperfect believers, and the scandals of hypocrites found on the roll.

What are we doing, when aggravated conflict, heresy on basic Bible truth, sexual immorality, faction or disorder infest our congregations?

We have to do what the King and Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded in the Bible: we must exercise Church discipline.

Discipleship and Discipline

Each of us who profess saving faith in Christ by baptism and are added to our local Churches come under their watch-care and discipline. Each of us needs to understand clearly in accepting the privileges of church membership, we accept duties too. *We are accountable for our conduct to the Church. We are liable for our misconduct to the Church. Discipleship includes discipline.*

Can you imagine a hockey team where nobody took the captain's calls seriously ... or the forwards refused to pass the puck to each other ... or a defenseman constantly drew penalties for slashing and high-sticking ... or half the team never showed up for practice? They might enjoy the odd pick-up game, but they wouldn't even qualify for a minor league. They would never finish a regular season, far less contend for a championship in the play-offs! Firing the coach would likely solve nothing.

Yet doesn't this image resemble many a local Church? Without commitment to discipleship, and to discipline, no team, no business, no school, no family can succeed.

We are more than a team playing a game. We are the Church of Christ. As the Body of Christ, we need to be one (John 17:11,20-21; Eph.4:1-6); as the Temple of God, we need to be holy (John 17:14-19; 1Cor.3:16-17); as the Household of faith, we need to be catholic (John 17:1-3,20,24; Eph.2:11-22,3; Gal.6:1-16); as the ground and pillar of the Truth, we need to be apostolic (John 17:20 ; 1 Tim.3:15, 2 Tim.3:1-4:8). Discipleship promotes, and discipline protects, our unity as members, our holiness as saints, our fellowship as brethren, our fidelity as believers. If in our law-suit loving society we need to furnish legal declarations and waivers to practice Church discipline, then let's sign up!

The Lord Jesus has invested His authority in the Pastor, Elders, Deacons and Members of each local Church through the Scriptures. (Mk.13:33-37; Mt.28:18-20; Acts.2:41-42,46-47,14:21-23). He directs each and all to fulfill their appointed tasks separately or together by the Scriptures. (Mt.18:15-20; 1 Cor.5; 2Cor.2:6; Heb.13:7,17; 1 Tim.3). The written constitution and covenant of the local Church is the customary instrument by which all officers and members of the Church acknowledge and agree to work by a common understanding of the Scriptures (Neh. 9-10). Our Churches need to orient new members to their covenants, and review them together statedly.

Discipleship: The Way of Love

Whole-hearted discipleship is the basis for healthy church discipline.

The Saviour Himself has charged our Pastor and Elders to teach the Bible, preach the Gospel, defend the faith, watch over the lives of Church members, and rule the congregation. (Acts 14:21-23; 1 Tim.3; Titus 1; 1 Th. 5:12-13; Heb.13:7,17). We have recognized their call to do so and accepted their role in joining the Church. Let us let them do their job! It is our duty to attend on their preaching constantly (Heb 10:23-25), receive their teaching thoughtfully and prayerfully (Acts 17:11; 1Th.5:19-24), seek their instruction and counsel, accept their correction, and follow their lead (Heb.13:17-18). Let us willingly give our time, talents, and treasure to accomplish the Church's work and support their ministry. (Rom.12).

The Lord's people are people still. We are God's children – and sometimes, just childish. Our pastors are our nursing-fathers, to help us grow up. (1 Cor. 4:14-17; 1 Th.2:8-12; Eph.4:11-16) We are Christ's flock – and too often, 'like sheep going astray'. Our pastors are His under-shepherds to feed, lead, guard and guide our souls to green pastures and still waters, or through the valley of the shadow of death. (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe.2:28,5:1-4) We must follow them as they follow Christ. We know they do as they go by the Book. (1 Cor.11:1).

The Lord Jesus has also work for all of us. Let us get on with our own jobs! He bids all of us keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph.4:1-3, Mk.9:50); strive to forgive and be reconciled (Mt.5:21-24,18:21-35); seek to avoid giving offense and to edify (Mt.18:1-11; Rom.14:13,19); comfort and admonish one another (Rom.15:14; 1Th.5: 11; 1Pe.4:7-

11) ; serve one another in love (Gal.5:13, 1Jn.3:16-18,Jas.2:14-17); grow in grace and knowledge (2Pe.1: 1-11;3:17-18) ; to tell the Gospel message, and bear witness to Him in the world (Acts 1:8; 8:4; 1Th.1:8;Mt.10:32-33; Col.4:6;1 Pe 3:14-16).

It is pre-eminently the common obligation of God's grace upon officers and members of Christ's church to *live holy lives* -- to fulfill the righteousness of His unchanging Moral Law in the power of the Holy Ghost in loving gratitude for our free justification by the righteousness and Blood of Christ alone (Rom.8:1-4; 1 Cor.9:21;Mt.5:17-19; Ex.20:1-17; Titus 2:11-14) Church members can no more afford to 'say and do not' than Church leaders (Mt.5:20;23:1-3; James 3). However few or small our gifts and abilities, our Churches need "great grace" --- money, numbers and talent can never gain the credentials only conferred upon character (Acts 4:31-35).

Only as believers watch and pray(Mt.26:41), keep their hearts with all diligence (Prov.4:23-27) , abide in the Word of Christ (John 15:1-8), walk in the Spirit (Gal.5:16-26) and exhort each other (Heb.3:12-13) can we thrive and grow spiritually and numerically (Acts 9:31). All disciples under the yoke of Christ must learn of Him that grace of self-denial found in bearing the cross (Lk.9:23-24,57-62;Phil2:1-8; Mt.10:37; Lk.14:15-23; Mt.11:28). Here our Elders must specially take the lead(1Tim.4:6-16 2Tim2:15).

Actively pursue truth, love and holiness; error, discord and scandal will be hard-pressed to find a foothold in your life or your Church.

Discipline: The Way of the Rod

When love is not enough, there is a rod.

God Himself, who is Love, uses the rod. The Father of spirits chastens His adopted children in wisdom, in due measure, for our holiness – not to reject us, but to restore us; not to cast us off, but to confirm us as His children (Prov.3:11-12; Heb.12:1-17). God has ordained that godly parents use the rod when necessary to subdue the mischief in children's hearts and deter them from evil (Prov.23:13-14; 22:15). Meet and right is it then, that God has given the Church, whose Elders must be good fathers (1Tim.3:4-5), a rod of discipline to restrain, restore or remove those who violate her truth, love or holiness (1 Cor.4:21).

God's ancient people Israel formed the Church under the Old Testament economy (Acts 7:38; 1 Cor.10:1-21) even as the Church is God's true Israel under the New Testament economy (Gal.6:10,16; 1 Pe 2:9-10 of Ex.19:3-6, Rev. 5:9-10). In the Old Testament the priests and Levites were to safeguard the ritual and moral purity of the congregation (Lev.19:8;

Ezk.44; Hg.2:12,14; Mal.2:6-7). For trespasses in ignorance, confession, restitution and sacrifice were provided (Lev.5-6), but for sins “with high hand” against the moral Law, and grievous sacrilege offenders were “cut off” and sentenced to death (Gen.17:14; Ex.12:15; Lev.7:25-27,17:10-12,18 ch.; Num.15:27-36,19ch.). On Israel’s return from exile, the Jewish church found special expression in the synagogue, where offenders were excommunicated (Ezra 9-10; Jn.9:22,12:42,16:2).

The Lord Jesus Himself gave to His Apostles, and through the apostolic Scriptures to the Churches, the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” – that is, the “key of knowledge” of the Gospel through preaching , to open the door of faith to all who believe (Mt.16:19; Lk.11:52Ac.14:27). He has given the Churches authority to “bind and loose” -- that is, to apply the Scriptures in determining lawful and unlawful conduct (Mt. 16:19; 18:18 cf 23:1-4, Ac.15:6-11). He has given the Churches authority “to remit and retain sins” – that is, to give or refuse recognition of men’s claim to be saved by the bounds of fellowship (John 20:21-23 cf Mt. 18:17). Here the Pastor and Elders lead, with the consent and support of the Church members in admitting (Ac.9:26-28; Rom.14:1), **dismissing** (Acts 18:24-27, 1 Cor.3:1), **removing** (1 Cor.5:2,4-5,7,11,13; 2 Th.3:6; Rom 16:17), and **restoring** (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

Protecting the Truth

Believers have a common responsibility to “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The Elders of the churches have a special duty to watch and warn our people against error, whether it enters from outside, or emerges from within (Acts 20:28-32; cf 2 Peter 2). No departure from the saving fundamental truths of Scripture and the covenanted Confession of the Church ought to be tolerated in anyone. Pastors and Elders must refute and rebuke those given to heresy (Titus 1:7-14,2:15; 2 Tim.4:1-5) and lead the Church in removing those who prove unteachable and unrepentant (Titus 3:10; Rom.16:17). Members should give no ‘aid or comfort’ to the enemies of souls (2 Jn.10-11).

If Pastors and Elders use “due diligence” in instructing and warning their flocks, and believers “take good heed” to themselves in staying clear from the “thieves”, “robbers” and “hirelings” which so abound in these days, perhaps society may in time be less burdened with those who peddle God’s word, traffick in souls, and disgrace the testimony of our Saviour (Deut.13ch.;Mk.13:21-23; Jn 10:7-8,11-12; 2 Cor.2:17;

2Pe.2:1-3). Believers should not support anyone in Christian service whose teaching ministry would not be acceptable in the pulpit of their own home church.

Protecting Love

Christ Jesus ear-marked His disciples by His “new commandment”: we are to love one another even as He has loved us (Jn.13:33-34, Eph 1:15-16). Believers must do all they can in the power of the Holy Ghost to show and maintain that kind of love (Eph 4:1-3; 1 Jn.3:16-18,24). Yet, inevitably, as a community of saved sinners, offenses will arise – Christians will ignorantly or carelessly annoy, or injure each others’ feelings, good name or interests. How are we to protect the love of the saints?

The Lord Himself has ordained principles and patterns of reconciliation which we are bound by His grace to observe. They are not optional; they are mandatory. When other Church members approach us in goodwill to follow out this Word of the King, we are bound for His sake to work with them through it.

Each of us, if we suspect we may have offended, should seek out the brother we fear we have hurt, and ensure all is well (Mt.5:23-24). This would reassure our care for each other, and prevent any actual wounds from festering.

When we feel that a brother has personally and privately wronged us, we are obligated to follow the Saviour’s instructions in Mt.18:15-20, in letter and spirit.

We must settle in our hearts that our only object is “to gain thy brother”, neither to humiliate nor to harm (v.15). We must endeavour, as much as in us lies, to approach in a spirit of meekness (Gal.6:1-2). We must also settle in our hearts whether this matter warrants, if needed, taking the entire course prescribed by the Saviour, and possibly laying it all before the whole Church.

With this in mind, we must take each step appointed by the Lord Jesus, praying for speedy reconciliation. We must first see the offender privately, face to face, and open our hearts kindly and candidly as to the harm we feel has been done (v.15). If at this point the offense is acknowledged and mutual understanding obtained, the matter is at an end – never to be revisited.

Sadly, such may not be the outcome. The offender may disregard or despise our concerns, or become hostile. He may

continue in behaviour designed to exasperate rather than conciliate. If this is the response, we are obliged to take a further step – it is not an option to “just drop it.” We must take “one or two more” and again address the issue, in meekness, with the object to “gain thy brother.” (v.16)

Why this provision? “One or two more” wisely chosen brethren may lend the counsel of many, that eases communication and assists reconciliation. The “one or two more” will also underscore the gravity of the perceived offense, hopefully to sober the offender’s attitude. The “one or two more” can also prevent matters getting out of hand, by keeping order and calm in the discussion. But, in the event this further effort fails, the Saviour has provided for “one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” (v.16). Again, if in this confined circle peace may be made, the matter ends – and none involved are to mention it further.

Unhappily, an offender may continue to resist and resent this effort to conciliate and redress matters. At this point, we must with our witnesses make a full, fair disclosure of matters to the Pastor and Elders and “tell it unto the Church.” (v.17) Such a protracted difficulty ceases then to be private and becomes the general concern of the whole assembly. From this point, it will lie with the Pastor and Elders to lead the church in resolving the matter, and neither party has the right to take further action, much less to disturb the congregation at large by gossip, public outbursts, or private meetings.

When the Pastor and Elders have led the Church to a final determination on the matter, it is final. The offender is obliged to comply with the Church’s ruling, and take whatever steps the fellowship lays down. If the offender at this juncture “neglect to hear the Church” he reveals an evil heart of unbelief. It is then the Church’s responsibility to remove him from membership, and regard him “as a publican and an heathen man.” (v.17).

So vital, so imperative does Christ our King regard the harmony and unity of His people, that He demands by these precepts either the remedy of discord or the removal of the disturber. What medicine cannot cure, surgery will cut off.

It is no little thing to trouble the Church of Christ; it is no little sin to harm the least of Christ’s brethren (Mt.25:34; 1 Cor.3:17). Those who in self-willed caprice foment heartache for the Pastors and people of His churches do well to think on the sentence Christ passes

on offenders (Mt.18:6-11; Gal.5:12). Such may contrive to “walk away” and elude the Church’s discipline; they will not escape the Judge who stands at the door (Jas.5:9). Many such, who today say, “Lord, Lord” shall in that day hear , “Depart from Me” (Mt.7:21-29).

Protecting Holiness

Like truth and love, holiness is essential to believers and to Churches. Believers are not perfect; but they are pardoned – and as they claim to be cleansed in the Blood of Christ, they need to walk in the light (1 Cor.6:9-11; 1 Jn.1:5-2:6).

Churches founded on the Bible alone cannot countenance any open, blatant and continued sin in their officers or members. Upon proof or admission of any scandalous breach of the Decalogue, the Pastor and Elders must ensure the Church acts promptly to vindicate the honour of King Jesus before the world , to protect the integrity of its own character, and to constrain the true repentance or total removal of the offender (1 Cor.5ch.).

Great care must be taken in any discipline toward a Pastor or Elder (1 Tim.5:19), since discipline removes him from office without the prospect of restoration to service. No man can preach or teach with a tainted character (1 Tim.3:2,7).

Hmmmmm

You may well wonder how far any local Church truly does or can practise the discipline the Scriptures prescribe. In preparing this article I have sought to consult Pastors and elders on the practical problems of Church discipline. Several offered significant comments.

One matter raised is the co-ordination of leaders and members in exercising discipline. Church members need to realize their Pastors and Elders do *not* seek or desire to act against their people. The oversight may begin to communicate matters to the church only at a late stage in proceedings. By the time a case for discipline must be announced from the pulpit and discussed in a Church meeting, the oversight has often been long engaged in resolving the matter without this last resort. Or, the gravity of heresy or scandal is such that immediate action is needed. We ordain and

install our Elders because we think them trustworthy; discipline cases are occasions we need to show our confidence in them.

Another matter mentioned is the disturbing ease with which too many offenders find other churches to join who welcome them with open arms , no questions asked. Our leaders should expect and require by letter and testimony clear evidence we are not bringing goats or scabbed sheep into the Saviour's folds. Churches should not short-cut discipline by granting dismissal letters before problems are resolved, but give fair warning to other congregations of potential trouble. Self-serving silence does no one any good.

A further concern pastors have voiced is the tendency of church members or officers to manipulate discipline in the interest of "politicking". Instead of walking in the light as God's children, and taking responsibility to do what the Saviour's honour requires, individuals or families in the congregation show far more concern for "smoothing over things", "not rocking the boat", and "keeping the balance of power." (!) Letter-writing, secret meetings, staged confrontations, attempts to 'orchestrate' support for a faction or individual are all manifestly "works of the flesh" and not "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal.5:19-2; 1 Cor.3ch., 2 Cor. 12:20-21).

These comments, and others like them, sadly evince how much we all have yet to learn of Biblical discipleship and discipline.

Nigh to thirty years ago, I was baptized as a believer into the membership of my first home church. I have shared the trials and traumas of church life in several congregations, as a member, a preacher and a Pastor. It remains my deep conviction that Bible-based Church discipline does work. More often it removes than restores offenders . But it does achieve its needed goal to purge out the leaven of sin from the lump of the saints (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Believers need to understand and take seriously its vital role in Church life. We all must be prepared to face the consequences its exercise brings.

A Last Word

Perhaps this article may fall into the hands of an unhappy, difficult church member. Permit me to speak to you specifically. Brother, sister, please lay this to heart -- *you are not your own; you belong to the faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. You belong in Him to the Pastor and Elders, Deacons and members of the local Church where*

you hold membership. Your sole responsibility while a member of that Church is to be a good member. Accept your God-given place.

The Saviour has given the Pastor and Elders charge over the Church – *not you*. He has made them responsible for the work of the Pulpit and classroom -- *not you*. He has appointed them in orderly, lawful manner to lead the Church -- *not you*. You have not joined the Church to teach or lead them ; they are in the Church to teach and lead *you*. As much as lies in you *learn, follow*.

If your conscience cannot keep within the Church's received doctrines – *leave: you have violated your covenanted promises, and you have no place there*. If your conscience causes you difficulty with what the oversight teaches – go direct to your Pastor and seek his instruction. And if you cannot concur on lesser matters: *keep your views to yourself and keep the peace. Your Pastor and Elders, if within bounds of the Church's confession of faith, give answer to Christ for their stewardship –not you*.

The Father of heaven has given you new birth by the Holy Ghost into the kingdom of God; but as in your earthly family, you cannot choose your relatives. Your brethren and sisters in the Church membership may be ignorant, simple, or unmannered – but they are 'family.' They are saved sinners -- *just like you*. They are subject to temptations and distresses that leave them at times unlovely – *just like you*. They can speak and act, blissfully unaware of the hurt they inflict or the offense they cause -- *just like you*. They respond to kindness, courtesy, respect, encouragement, and constructive input – *just like you*.

Christ Jesus has espoused us all as His Bride – for better and for worse. Today is not our wedding day, when before Him we shall all appear “a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing”. Today we are still in our curlers.

You have no right to bear grudges or pursue vendettas within the Church's brotherhood. *You have no right* to vent your feelings in gossip. *You have no right* to complain and criticize in a manner which demeans or belittles . *You have no right* to defy or insult your Pastor, Elders and Deacons, however mistaken or disappointing they may seem to you.

Your personal conduct matters – you are *never* “off-duty” as a Christian, at home, work or play. Your attitudes, actions and inactions make a decisive impact on the spiritual tone of the Church and the influence of the Gospel on all around you – *for good or ill*. You

cannot and dare not presume to trifle with any sin, for sin kills in any quantity. It matters little whether you dabble in sludge with your fingertips or plunge your arm in up to the elbow; it stains and stinks.

If you are unhappy and in difficulty as a Church member, you must face up to any offense you yourself have committed against the light of God's Word, the love of God's people and the law of God's holiness. Seek the Lord now; seek to repent; remember your first love to Christ Jesus.

Remember: You are not your own – you are bought with the Blood of Christ, born of the Holy Ghost, bound to the Word of God. Walk worthy of your own claim to be God's child.

Truth for Today:
Newspaper Articles & Gospel Tracts

From the broadcast sermons of 'Grace & Truth Radio' , and local clergy columns from THE MISSISSAUGA NEWS, Pastor Bodner has sought to present the Gospel message as "God's truth for people today."

We present here two sample brochures that he has prepared for evangelistic use at Hope Assembly.

LIFE IS FULL OF QUESTIONS. We rarely seem to have time to think about them. Through the years we're too young, too in love, too in debt, too ill, or too old to pay much notice. But sometimes life makes us ask them. We struggle through days when a job, or a marriage ends. An accident; a wasting illness; bereavement visit us or ours.. ..

Then those questions come: *Isn't there anything more to life? Why am I here anyway? Who really cares? Do I matter? Where do I go from here?*

Of course, there are answers. The market-place of ideas is chock full of them. Trouble is, most of them are *wrong*. And following them can *ruin* you..

When you need directions in Toronto, you turn to Perley's Mapbook. When you want a phone number, you pick up the Yellow Pages. When you need those answers to life's hard questions, *you can find them. Look in the Book: the Bible.*

In fact, the sooner you do, the better. You can spare yourself, and your family, so much pain, loss and grief.

Anyone knows the Bible is a big Book! And well it should be, because it is the 'owner's manual to life.' You need to learn how to get around its pages; grasp its principles, see the parts and the whole. The heart of our ministry is to 'open the Scriptures' to people faithfully, honestly and responsibly.

In this short leaflet we'd like to outline for you the essentials of the Bible's saving message. If you don't have a Bible, or are unfamiliar with it, please feel free to get in touch; we'd be thrilled to help you get to know God's Word.

The Bible

God has spoken to us. His presence, power and glory is everywhere to be seen in our world as its Maker. But He has purposely revealed Himself to us over the centuries as He sought to save us from sin. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments that make up our Bible are His own, Spirit-breathed, complete, perfect

Word to all mankind. – God’s truth in God’s words, without error. **1 Tim.3:16-17,2 Pe.1:21.Eph.2:20**

God and Man

The Bible’s opening chapters explain where we came from and why we are here. This is not fairytale, but history: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” “*And God made man in His own image*” **Gen.1:1,28**. Our human race is one family, ‘of one blood’, descended from our first parents Adam and Eve. **Acts17:24-28**. Through work, family, society, we were designed to enjoy and glorify God **Gen.1-2; Rom.1:18-21; Eccl.12:13-14**.

Our Sin and Need

By our first parents’ disobedience, the whole human family fell under the curse of sin. We are all born alienated from God, and so morally deformed that we fail Him, disobey Him, dishonour Him, and despise Him. **Gen.3, 6:5-6; Rom.3:9-20, Titus 3:3**.

The measure of our real humanity is

God’s holy Law. **Ex.20:1-17**. It demands of us total love to God, and equal love to our neighbour. **Mt.22:36-40**. Sin neglects and violates that law. **1 Jn.3:4-5**.

You have to face God’s verdict, and accept the Bible’s ‘bad news’: you, too, are a sinner, lost, defiled, helpless, condemned.

We cannot save ourselves. Good deeds, prayers, candles, confessions, resolutions, self-help or group therapy cannot bring us the pardon or cleansing of sin God alone can provide. **Eph.2:1-10;Iwq.64;6;Titus 3:4-7**.

The Lord Jesus Christ

Sin is the Bible’s ‘bad news’, the ‘heart disease’ of our souls. Christ is the Bible’s ‘good news’: the ‘Physician’ who can heal and deliver us. **Jer.17:9-10;Mk.7:20-23. Mt.9:11-13. 1 Tim.1:15**.

God the Father gave His only-begotten, eternal Son Jesus to save us from our sins. **Jn.3:16-18; Mt. 1:21**. To do so, He took on Himself our own humanity without sin – that’s why He was born of the Virgin Mary. **Hb.2:14,Mt.1:18-25**.

As ‘God manifest in the flesh’ He *took our place* to ‘fulfill all righteousness’ for us by His sinless life, and to ‘give His life a ransom for many’ by shedding His Blood in death upon the cross of Calvary. **1Tim.3:16;Mt.3:15,Mk.10:45;Heb.9:14**.

This is the good news – ‘ the Gospel... *Christ* died for *our* sins... and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures’ **1 Cor.15:1-4.**

The Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ is alive! He rose bodily, personally from the dead. He now reigns over all heaven and earth to save us from sin **Acts.5:31-32; Eph.1:15-22; Lk.24; 1 Cor. 15.**

The Father and the Son have now sent God the Holy Spirit to bestow the blessings Christ obtained by His Blood. **Jn.3,7,14,16.**

He gives the life, love and light of Christ to the souls of all who are saved.**1Cor.2;Rom5,8.**

Your Salvation

You *need* to be saved, as we all must. You *may* be saved today! If these truths grip your heart with a sense of your sin and need, the Holy Spirit is ‘striving’ with you *now*. With His enabling, you must *now* ‘repent and believe the Gospel’**Mk.1:15.**

Repent – it means to face, grieve for, hate, confess and forsake all your sin and turn back to God. **1Jn.1:9-10; 2Cor.7;Prov.28:13.**

Believe – it means to trust yourself wholly, only to the Saviour Jesus; receive Him and rest on His saving work *now* **Jn.1:12;Ac.16:31.** You will be *saved*, and discover that *Christ is the answer to life.*

What's Missing?

QUITE A PUZZLE. Fewer people than ever before will be found in church this Sunday, but more people than ever seem to be hungering for the unseen, supernatural, 'spiritual' dimension of life.

Look at the crowds welcoming the Pontiff of Rome or the Dalai Lama. Notice how many devout, observant people stand out in dress, diet, and decorum. See the psychics setting up shop. Watch the televangelists peddling prophecy, hawking healings.

Yes, somehow we need something, someone bigger, higher than us out there – but not too big, not too high to handle.

So why the quest? What's really missing?

Only one Book holds the right answer. The Bible names it in one word: worship.

Worship

Fact is, this 'quest' goes to show *mankind was made for worship*. The Bible declares God our Maker designed us in His image to know Him, to love Him with all our heart, strength, soul and mind.. The Psalms at the heart of the Bible put it this way: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

Worship in Vain

But the quest for 'spirituality' reveals another fact. Fallen and lost in our sin, *we look to worship in all the wrong places*. The Bible indicts us all for this supreme sin, that "we worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who blessed forever more." "There is none that seeketh after God."

Yes, *we want 'spirituality' but not God*. We may even practice religion, and not know God. We actually evade God in a charade, a game of hide-and-seek.

So God sweeps man's religion aside, to reach us. The Bible reveals that God rejects much of the religiosity that we relish.

All the art of icons and images are vain. For God has told us in Scripture, "Keep yourselves from idols"

All the splendour of temples, cathedrals, mosques, synagogues and shrines are vain. God declares, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool, and where is the house that ye shall build unto Me?"

All the pageantry of ritual, vestment, music and incense is vain. God has said in His Word, "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand?... I hate, I despise your feast days.... Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

Many Churches are empty today because they have abandoned God's Word for man's wisdom. God has said, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Worship is not the quaint and varied ritual of world cultures. Worship is not a sort of 'white magic' that gets us out of the blues, into the black and puts us in the pink.

Whom we worship will determine how we worship, and why we worship. We come to resemble what we worship. The Bible condemns us all, as it condemned God's ancient people once: "They followed vanity, and became vain."

Worship in Spirit and Truth

The Lord Jesus once sought to save a lost woman by a well in a country and culture not His own. He gently probed into her past. He revealed her sin and need. Then she used religion to evade God. The Saviour answered her kindly, but candidly: "Ye know not what ye worship ... 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. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

God is still seeking our worship – not because He needs it, but because we need Him. He created us; He sustains us; He provides for us. Only God holds in His hand the issues of life and death, time and eternity. God alone can ordain how we are to approach Him with acceptance – how to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

You need to know God as He really is, to worship Him. You need to acknowledge the only living true God who has spoken to us in the Bible --- God, who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power holiness justice goodness and truth. The one God in whom are Three Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory. None other can share His glory; none other can be worshipped.

You need to be right with God, to worship Him. As fallen, lost, corrupt, defiled, helpless, blind sinners, we dare not approach God Most High, Most Holy by ourselves. As there is one God, there is one Mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus.

The Bible tells us that God the Father sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Through His sinless life, shed Blood, atoning death, risen life, and ascended reign, Jesus has become our one, only faithful, merciful High Priest to bring us back to God. We have access to the Father's immediate presence, through the Blood of Christ, by the truth of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Bible's "new and living way".

We know whom we worship. We worship in spirit and in truth . God is seeking worshippers We invite you to hear His call today. Come back to God. Come to faith in Jesus Christ; come to worship.