

Worship Wars: Are Modern Worship Practices Permitted or Pitfalls?

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This paper examines conflicting ideas about acceptable worship in church services. Throughout church history, differing perspectives on worship music have caused significant tension and disunity in the church. Worship has progressed from Old Testament tabernacle worship to New Testament worship in home churches. Worship shifted significantly again in the late 1700's to 1800's when a dramatic increase in hymn writing caused the church to consider what made a song appropriate for church. As people continued to write worship songs, the debate has escalated to what is now known as the "worship war".

The regulative principle is the most biblical principle to follow when deciding what style of music should be used in our worship services today. The regulative principle states that, "the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will" (WCF 21.1). That definition allows for significant flexibility when it comes to musical style, so long as Christians remain firmly grounded in biblical standards for the content of the music. Contemporary worship songs can be beneficial when utilized in worship services today, so long as they live up to the biblical and theological standards for proper worship of God. While Christians should be cautious with what they sing in church, this disagreement should not divide people to the point of disunity in the church. The focus of worship should always remain on God, not man.