

WHY THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST... DO NOT USE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The Lord never authorized them (instruments of music in worship); the apostles never sanctioned them; the New Testament writers never commanded them; the apostolic churches never used them! (G.N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, 1966, p. 668)
- B. Christians are to walk by faith, and not by sight (1Cor. 5:7); faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17); and, without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11:6). Mechanical instruments, when used in the worship of God, easily fall out of this classification. (G.N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, 1966, p. 668)

II. AN ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 5:19.

- A. Christians are commanded to speak one to another “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). The words, “making melody” comes from the Greek *psallontas* which means to strike, to touch or to pluck.
- B. Does the word then have reference to the plucking of an instrument of music?
Answer: Paul designates the instrument which is to be plucked or twanged: the heart. It is the heart-felt participation of the emotions in the praise we are to render to God. It was Paul’s view that the “strings of the heart” (and not those of man’s manufacture) pulsate in fervent praise in our devotions, to deity.
- C. If a mechanical instrument inheres in the word *psallontas* then:
 - 1. It is impossible to discharge the obligation it imposes without such an instrument.
 - 2. All Christians, on this assumption, are obligated to pluck the strings of a literal instrument of music in worship, in which case the ability to play a stringed instrument is a pre-requisite to acceptable worship.
 - 3. All wind instruments such as horns, organs, etc., would be excluded since these do not have literal strings to be twanged.

III. INSTRUMENTS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT.

- A. Did not the people of the OT period participate in worship where such instruments were utilized? Indeed, so, along with plural marriages, animal sacrifices and the burning of incense! Shall we conclude that polygamy, burnt offerings and the other shadows of the Law are authorized today?
- B. Paul forevermore settled the question of the relation of the Christian to the Law when he wrote: “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the Law; ye are fallen away from grace.” (Gal. 5:4) (G.N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, 1966, p. 668)

IV. AIDS, EXPEDIENTS OR DEVICES.

- A. Others have sought to justify the practice on the ground that musical instruments in worship are aids, expedients, and devices which contributed to the pleasure of the worshipper. This is precisely the premise the Roman Catholics defend their use of the Rosary, the veneration of graven images and other idolatrous acts.
- B. Israel fabricated a golden calf to “aid” her devotions; Aaron veered ever so slightly (?), from the divine directive; but, the effects which followed were far from insignificant (Ex. 43:25-29; Num. 20:7-12). Nadab and Abihu had to learn the hard way about offering a strange fire, when they substituted their own instead of what God had commanded (Lev. 10:1,2).

V. THE TESTIMONIES OF OTHERS.

A. **Chamber's Encyclopedia.**

"The organ is said to have been first introduced into church music by pope Vitalian I in 666. In 757 a great organ was sent as a present to Pepin by the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Copronymus, and placed in the church of St. Corneille at Compiègne."

B. **Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.**

"In the Greek church the organ never came into use. But after the eighth century it became more and more common in the Latin church; not "however, without opposition from the side of the monks." Its misuse, "however, raised so great an opposition to it that but for the Emperor Ferdinand, it would probably have been abolished by the Council of Trent. The Reformed Church discarded it; and though the Church of Basel very early reintroduced it, it was in other places admitted only sparingly, and after long hesitation."

C. **Martin Luther.** (Reformation leader).

"The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal."

D. **John Calvin.** (Founder of Calvinism).

"It is no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of tapers, or revival of the other shadows of the law. The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews."

E. **John Wesley.** (Founder of the Methodist Episcopal church).

"I have no objection to the organ in our chapels provided it is neither heard nor seen."

(*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. IV, page 684)

F. **Adam Clarke.** (Greatest of Methodist commentators).

"I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity." (Clarke, *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 684)

G. **Charles H. Spurgeon.** (A great Baptist scholar, who for 20 years preached to 10,000 each Sunday and never allowed instrumental music to be used in worship during that time). "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."

H. **Alexander Campbell.** (Restoration preacher, Christian).

"To all whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I should think instrumental music would not only be a desideratum but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But to all spiritually minded Christians such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert." (Da Vee, 1954, p. 9,10)

I. **Webster's New World Dictionary.**

The word "a cappella" is of Latin origin and means "according to the chapel." It is said that a cappella music is the music of the church, without instrumental accompaniment.