SNS 03125-505 06/15/2003
NO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE CHURCH Decatur, IL

INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 5:15-21**.
B. This morning, we took a semi-humorous look at some problems in the church and gave each malady an instrumental metaphor.
C. Tonight's lesson is very serious. As a brotherhood, preachers don't preach on this topic like they did years ago.
D. Tonight, I want to build a case (not prove) why the churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in their worship services.

I. **THE PATTERN OF NT CHRISTIANITY (AND WORSHIP).**

A. Christians are not to add or subtract from the word of God (Prov. 30:6; Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18).
(Deu 4:2) "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.
(Prov 30:6) Do not add to His words Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.
(Rev 22:18) I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book;

B. There is a pattern of doctrines (teachings) to follow (Rom. 6:17-18; 2Tim. 1:13; 1Cor. 4:6; 4:17).
(Rom 6:17-18) But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
(2Tim 1:13) Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.
(1Cor 4:6) Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.
(1Cor 4:17) For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

C. God seeks true worshippers:
1. God is worshipped in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24).
"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. **24** "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
2. God does not accept worship that is:
a. Vain (Mt. 15:6-9).
he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. **7** You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:
8'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.
9'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"
b. Ignorant (Ac. 17:23),
For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.
c. Man-made (Col. 2:18,23).
Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,… **23** These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

D. The debate over the use of instrumental music in the church is a hermenuetical one. If we could agree on the pattern, and how to follow the pattern, this issue would take care of itself.
1. The churches of Christ basically follow a hermeneutic of:

"Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

2. Denominational churches basically follow a hermeneutic of:
"Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we speak."

E. The silence of the scriptures:
1. Where there is no specific, silence means permission (Mk. 16:15).
And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.
The great commission is a "generic" command; there are various ways to do it. Therefore, silence means permission.
2. Where there is a specific, silence means prohibition (1Cor. 11:23-26).
For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; **24** and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." **25** In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it,* in remembrance of Me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
Many commands explain how to carry them out. This exactness is necessary and prohibits any substitution or addition.

F. Think through the following argument:
1. The NT authorizes a specific music--a cappella singing from the heart.
2. The NT is silent on the use of instrumental music.
3. Therefore, the use of instrumental music to accompany singing is not to be used.

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

A. First, the Lord never authorized them (instruments of music in worship); the apostles never sanctioned them; the NT writers never commanded them; the apostolic churches never used them! (G. N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, 1966, p. 668)

B. Second, Xians 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)

C. Third,
1. Xians 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).
2. The words, "making melody" comes from the Greek *psallontas* which means to strike, to touch, or to pluck.
3. 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 to deity.

D. Fourth, if a mechanical instrument inheres (essential) in the word *psallontas* then:
1. It is *impossible* to discharge the obligation it imposes without such an instrument.
2. All Xians, on this assumption, are obliged 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.

E. Fifth, did not the people of the OT period worship where instruments were used?
1. **Answer**: 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?

2. 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)

F. Sixth,
1. Others have sought to justify the practice on the ground that musical instruments in worship are aids, expedients, and/or devices which contributed to the pleasure of the worshipper. Aren't musical instruments just an aid, or expedient in worship?
2. **Answer**:
   a. 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).
   c. 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).

III. **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 666AD. In 757AD 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 Compiegne."

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 (needed or wanted) 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, music without instrumental accompaniment.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

A. Singing a cappella is more than just a choice. It is an attempt to be as Biblically accurate as possible.
B. Singing without mechanical instruments shows respect for the silence of the Scriptures.
C. Non-instrumental worship services allow music to come from the heart. It is a safe choice that we know is acceptable to God.
D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring-Xians.