

Music and Singing

- I. Singing is an authorized part of our worship to God, but it must be done “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).
 - A. Some falsely say the “Church of Christ” does not believe in “music” in the Church.
 1. Christians do believe in music, but it must be done as God has ordained.
 2. We must have authority for the things we do (e.g., God must authorize it)
 - B. Scriptures impart authority and teach us in three ways:
 1. By direct commands
 - a. Generic: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19); Generic commands tell what to do (“Go”) but not how to do (drive, walk?)
 - b. Specific: “Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood” (Gen 6:14); Acts 2:38 this command specifically says what to do and how to do it (build an ark of gopher wood) - To do anything else is unscriptural.
 2. By an example which was approved by inspired men (Ill John 11)
 - a. Not like Acts 5:1-11, which was not approved!
 - b. But rather like Acts 6:1-6, an Apostolic example.
 3. By necessary inference - a logical conclusion drawn from Biblical teaching
 - a. These are things essential to the fulfillment of other commands or
 - b. These are things that imitate (follow the pattern) of other sound examples.
 - c. For example, Heb 10:25 commands us to assemble, and the necessary inference authorizes us to provide a place for these assemblies.
 - C. We look to God’s Word for: Purpose - Principle - Precedent/Pattern (F. LaGard Smith from *The Cultural Church*)
- II. There are generally two kinds of music: vocal and nonvocal
 - A. Vocal music is music originating from the human voice; there are two kinds:
 1. Verbal articulate involves singing words (in language)
 2. Nonverbal articulate is using voice for non language sounds (humming, whistling)
 - B. Nonvocal music includes mechanical instrumental music (piano, harps) or natural instrumental (finger snapping, stomping feet, clapping hands)
 - C. The question becomes: what form of music is acceptable in worship?
 1. What has God authorized?
 2. We must look for command, example or inference.
- III. What does the New Testament teach us about music in Worship? List narratives (there are also passages mentioned in the book of prophecy, Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3).
 - A. Matt 26:30 and Mark 14:26 - “After singing a hymn, they went out to . . . “
 - B. Acts 16:25 - “. . . Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”
 - C. Rom 15:9 - “. . . I will give praise to Thee . . . I will sing to Thy name.”
 - D. I Cor 14:15 - “. . . I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also”.

- E. Eph 5:19 “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;”
- F. Col 3:16 - “. . . teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
- G. Heb 2:12 - “. . . In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise.”
- H. Heb 13:15 - “. . . let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”
- I. James 5:13 - “. . . Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.”

EACH AND EVERY REFERENCE TO MUSIC IS TO VOCAL MUSIC -
VERBAL ARTICULATE - SINGING!

IV. The above verses tell us:

- A. Who is to sing? - every Christian - it is not a spectator sport - not a performance, not entertainment, not about solos or choruses but participation!
- B. What are we to sing? psalms, hymns, spiritual songs - God focused!
- C. When are we to sing? continually, in good times & bad times, cheerful or facing trials
- D. Where do we sing? where ever we are, in the midst of the congregation
- E. Why are we to sing? to worship God (it is addressed to Him), to give thanks and praises unto God, to teach and admonish one another
- F. How are we to sing? with the spirit (from the heart), with the mind (understanding) making melody in our heart
- G. These passages authorize vocal (verbal articulate) music - Singing
 - 1. By command: Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16
 - 2. By example: Acts 16:25; Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26
 - 3. By inference: Heb 13:15

THERE IS NO COMMAND, EXAMPLE OR INFERENCE AUTHORIZING ANY
USE OF NONVOCAL MUSIC (e.g., instrumental music).

V. Was instrumental music used in Old Testament worship? YES

- A. Under the Old Law, Jews used many instruments of music in praise to God.
 - 1. II Chron 5:11-13 mentions cymbals, harps, lyres, trumpets
 - 2. David appointed singers with instruments of music (I Chron 15:16; 16:4-7)
- B. However, this was all done by the nation of Israel under the Old Law.
- C. Today, Christians are under the New Testament (covenant) not the Old Testament
- D. The Old Law (system) ended being nailed to the cross (Rom 7:6; Eph 2:14-15)
- E. Many things have changed in going from the Old Testament to the New Testament
 - 1. Consider the day of worship
 - a. Jews were told to keep the Sabbath (7th day) as their day of worship (Ex 20:8-10)
 - b. Christians worship on the first day of the week (Sunday) - Acts 20:7

2. Consider the sacrifices
 - a. Jews offered yearly animal sacrifices - Heb 9:1-10
 - b. Christ offered Himself as a one time sacrifice for our sins - Heb 9:11-15
 - F. If we are to justify instrumental music based on the Old Covenant, then we logically must accept all worship practices: animal sacrifices and incense burning
 - G. Under the Christian Age, we are to worship according to the pattern (Phil 3:17) and instructions given to the New Testament Church. Its music is singing!
- VI. Does the use of the Greek words “psallo” or “psallontes” found in Eph 5:19 justify use of instrumental music in worship?
- A. Some people argue that the use of an instrument is inherent in the meaning of these words which are found in Rom 15:9; I Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19 and James 5:13.
 1. Historically, the word “psallo” has been used to mean and to describe many different things
 - a. Plucking out the hair
 - b. To twang the bowstring
 - c. Snapping a carpenter’s string (chalk line)
 2. Since this can and was sometimes used to describe the action of twanging the strings to play a musical instrument, it is argued that instrumental accompaniment goes along with the meaning of the word.
 3. To properly understand the meaning of these New Testament words, one must examine the usage and context at the time of the writing
 - B. By the time of the first century, these words were being used to mean plucking the chords of the human heart.
 1. Note that the context of Eph 5:19 defines the instrument being used; it is the human heart - “... making melody with your heart to the Lord”
 - a. This fact is confirmed by Col 3:16 which provides further commentary on this verse, “... singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God”
 - b. These two passages mean the same thing and the instrument is the heart.
 2. This view is confirmed by:
 - a. Lexicons: James Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament; Baqster’s New Analytical Greek Lexicon; G. Abbot Smith’s, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the N.T.
 - b. The 50 Greek scholars who translated the King James version of the N.T.
 - c. Approximately 100 Greek scholars who translated the N.T. American Standard version
 - d. McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia
 - e. E.A. Sophocles, a native Greek and professor of Greek at Harvard for 38 yrs
 3. The Greek Orthodox Churches (who know Greek) rejected the use of instrumental music for centuries and most still reject it today

- C. What if the Greek words “psallo” or “psallontes” actually did mean to twang the strings of a musical instrument?
1. Eph 5:19 is not optional; it is a Biblical command.
 - a. This means we must all comply always!
 - b. Everyone would be required to play such an instrument to worship God acceptably
 - c. However, we have no New Testament example of that being the case.
 - d. In fact, every Scripture that mentions music in worship is singing and only singing with no mention of musical instruments
 2. Furthermore, James 5:13 would require cheerful Christians to play musical instruments no matter where they are - at work, at home, at play
 - a. This may be beyond the talents and abilities of some.
 - b. All can verbally articulate in vocal music
 3. This is a false, irrational view of Scripture.

VII. What do we learn from history?

- A. Instrumental worship was never a part of the Jewish synagogue worship service and was not introduced into synagogues (and then only some) until the 19th century (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol IX, p. 432).
- B. The early New Testament Church did not use instrumental music in worship.
 1. Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, pp. 53-54.
 2. Kurt Pahlen, *Music of the World*, p. 27.
 3. Hugo Leichtentritt, *Music, History and Ideas*, p. 34.
 4. Emil Nauman, *The History of Music*, Vol 1., p. 177.
 5. Dr. Frederic Louis Ritter, *History of Music from the Christian Era to the Present Time*, p. 28.
 6. Frank Landon Humphreys, *Evolution of Church Music*, p. 42.
 7. George Park Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 65, 121.
 8. John Kurtz, *Church History*, Vol 1., p 376.
- C. Pope Vitalian introduced the first organs into some churches of Western Europe about 670 AD (*American Encyclopedia*, Vol 12, p. 688)
- D. In the Greek church, the organ never came into use, but after the eighth century it became common in the Latin church, not however without opposition from the side of the Monks. (V.E. Howard, *What Is the Church of Christ?*, Greenville, TX: 1956)
- E. Comments of Denominational Leaders (Ref. Greg Gwin, *Back To Basics*, p. 36, 1993, published by Faith and Facts, Inc., P.O. Box 681275, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268)
 1. John Calvin (founder of Presbyterianism): “Musical instruments in the celebration of praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the Law. . . Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in the noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the Apostles is far more pleasing.”

2. Martin Luther (founder of Lutheranism): “An organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal.”
 3. John Wesley (founder of Methodists): “I have no objection to instruments of worship, provided they are neither seen nor heard.”
 4. Charles Spurgeon (English Baptist): “I’d as soon pray to God with machinery as sing to God with machinery.”
- F. The expression “a cappella” is used even today to mean without instrumental accompaniment
1. It refers to vocal music only - singing
 2. Its literal word meaning is “in the chapel” referring to the fact that the early Church used only vocal music without instruments.
- VIII. The Law of Exclusion requires us to sing and to sing only without instruments
- A. When God Specifies something, it Excludes everything else of similar kind.
1. God told us to sing
 2. Therefore to do anything else is to sin by adding to or taking away from God’s word.
- B. Recall Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-2)
1. They were commanded to burn incense to the Lord
 2. However, they added to God’s command modifying the incense and burning – offering strange fire which God had not commanded them
 3. Not only was it not acceptable, but it cost them their lives!
 4. They dishonored God by their disobedience (Lev 10:3)
- IX. New Testament worship involves SINGING and making melody with our hearts.