

SILENCE AND WORSHIP MUSIC

Mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church is not authorized by God and should be banished from all worship services. Such is a bold statement and would probably be rejected immediately by the denominations in our area. Nevertheless it is a biblical statement of truth and can be supported by Scripture.

As we begin our study, can we agree that the Bible is the sole source of authority for all we do? Paul encourages us to remain under the Lord's authority at all times (Colossians 3:17). If we can agree that the Bible is our source for authority we will have made great progress already. In previous articles we have discussed, and shown from the Bible, that we should focus our worship toward God as he is the object of our devotion, and that silence from the Bible does not permit anything and everything (see www.escoc.net/Adobe for the articles). Our goal in this article is to summarize why the use of instruments in worship is wrong and ought be eliminated. Let us say that this has been a discussion for many years among religious people and great divisiveness has arisen because of the varied opinions. It would be impossible to fully cover the topic in a single page but we hope this will whet your appetite for further study.

The Biblical Basis for Church Music

The Old Testament speaks often of music used in worship to God under the Law of Moses (c.f. 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Kings 10:12; 1 Chronicles 13:8; 1 Chronicles 25:1-6; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 33:2; Psalm 43:4 and many others). Clearly God approved of the instrument in worship during the days of Moses' Law. It would be pointless to argue otherwise as there is such a wealth of passages supporting Mosaic worship with the instrument. We should point out, however, that God also approved of animal sacrifice under Moses' Law (Leviticus 1), the burning of incense as part of worship (Exodus 30:1), and an annual remembrance of sins (Leviticus 16) which could not be removed by the animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:4). Worship under Moses' Law was not the same as Christian worship. That entire system has been taken away (2 Corinthians 3; Hebrews 7-9) and replaced with the Law of Christ – the New Testament.

The New Testament speaks of music in worship in many ways. Consider the following passages: 1 Corinthians 14:15; *"What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also."* (1 Corinthians 14:15, NASB95)

Ephesians 5:19; *"...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;"* Colossians 3:16; *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* Hebrews 2:12; *"...saying, 'I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.'" James 5:13; "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises."* Each of these passages references both worship and music.

Deafening Silence

Before looking at the specifics of the silence argument, we must observe that there is a deafening silence on the subject of instrumental music in the New testament. As prevalent as it was in the Israelite worship services, it is remarkable that there is no mention of it in the New Testament worship of Christians! In fact, extra-biblical sources, that is, those from 1st and 2nd century historians, note that Christians sang without mechanical accompaniment. Couldn't one reasonably assume that the earliest Christians would have brought their use of instruments with them from either their Jewish worship services or even from the Gentiles pagan services? The lack of any comment or suggestion of instrumental use is remarkable.

Lack of Authority

It would incorrect to say that God *has not* authorized music in church. In fact, he has commanded music as is evident from the above passages. However, we should note that God **has been specific** about the kind of music he wants and that is vocal music. Anyone even remotely involved with the musical arts knows that there are different kinds of music. In our study here, the two kinds of music that we are interested in are vocal music (acapella, which literally means "like in the chapel"), and instrumental music. When we observe the passages in the New Testament that speak of church worship we must conclude that not one single passage can be cited which commands, authorizes, allows or even suggests the use of the instrument. More to the point, because the passages **do** authorize vocal music, that is, a specific command is given, any change of that command cannot be accepted. To add the instrument would be just that; an addition to Scripture. To replace singing with playing would be to take from God's word and add something else.

Remember, the issue here is not what we want, but what God wants. It's not a question of whether instrumental music away from the worship is evil, it is not. It is, after all, God's natural laws which allow for frequency, melody, intervals and the like.

Viewed differently, we challenge anyone who desires to use the instrument in worship to support that desire with Scripture. It cannot be done.