

Music

Perhaps with the exception of a fervently led prayer during a time of great need, there is little doubt that singing does more to raise drooping spirits and elevate the depressed soul than other item of worship. Music in worship to Jehovah is ancient in origin, rich in history and divinely directed. The churches of Christ are well known for their acapella, or vocal-only style of singing in the worship of the church. Many volumes and dozens of public debates have been held on the subject of proper music in worship. The limits of space prevent a thorough review of the discussion but we will try to set forth the Bible doctrine in a concise form.

Let us begin by reminding the reader that worship is not and has never been for man's entertainment. There is a marked and well defined difference between worship directed to God and a play or performance designed to entertain the audience. Our task as worshippers is to praise "the only wise God" (Romans 16:27). When one stops praising and begins to be entertained, he has removed God from His Own glorious throne and placed himself in the role of the worshipped. Paul describes such people in Romans 1:25: "*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*" What condemnation must await the arrogant creature who would place himself in God's position!

If such a terrible fate awaits the one who worships as he wills rather than as God wills, we must explore what God expects in the worship service of the church. Several passages speak of music in the worship of the church. In every case, without exception, those passages speak of vocal music (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). Notice the clarity with which Paul speaks in Ephesians 5:19. He says we are to be "speaking to yourselves." In the Colossian passage we are to "sing." In all of these passages, there is not a single passage that invites one to play or perform. Again, only vocal music is authorized in the church.

One will sometimes try to claim authority for mechanical instruments because there is no specific instruction not to play. We readily agree that no such prohibition exists but in the same breath reject any need for such. The weakness of such an argument is clearly seen. God has already condemned the addition of any element, teaching or doctrine not specifically inspired and recorded. (c.f. John 7:16-18; Acts 2:42, note: "steadfastly in the doctrine." 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 John 9; Revelation 22:18,19). Therefore, He need not address every new fantasy of man that might be brought into worship. He has said what he wants and that is all that is necessary.

Two examples from daily life are offered: I send my son into the store with a \$20 bill. I tell him to buy a gallon of milk. When he returns I expect to get a gallon of milk and about \$17 in change. If he returns with \$20 of candy I suspect we will have to have a meeting of the minds. Even if he brings a gallon of milk and only \$17 worth of candy he has still done wrong and violated my instructions. It was my money and his additional expenditures were unauthorized. Second: I see my medical doctor and am given a prescription for Penicillin. However the pharmacist decides, on his own, to dispense Cipro. Now friends, that pharmacist is wrong and subject to discipline and possible loss of his license, yet nowhere on that prescription does it say *not* to give Cipro. He is wrong because he did what he *was not authorized to do!* Dear friends, why do we use common sense all day and then suspend normal reasoning when it comes to the Lord's work?

Yet another attempts to justify mechanical instruments of music by pointing to the Old Testament where all manner of horns, drums, trumpets and the like were often used. Such use was appropriate then but is today just as outdated as the animal sacrifices of Hebrew worship. Using this argument, why would one place a piano on the stage of the church building and oppose the placement of an altar beside it? "...*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*" was an essential element of Timothy's ministry (2 Timothy 2:15). The requirement to "rightly divide" is just as essential today as it was in Timothy's day.

The church of Christ rejects instrumental music in worship because it is not authorized in Scripture. There is neither a command, and example or an inference that it was ever used in the worship of the church until many years after the church began. Friends, it may sound good to us, it may feel good to us, but "us" is the wrong audience. God is the object of our worship and He has spoken.

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NEXT WEEK: PRAYER