

# **INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP**

Sometimes it is easier to comprehend the scripturalness or unscripturalness of a practice when we know its historical background; such as where, how, etc..., it began. Notice that here we must turn to secular history, not because it is our guide, but because there is nothing, **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING** in the scriptures concerning instrumental music in Christian worship. The sources quoted could be multiplied but space will not permit!

**SCHAFF-HERZOG ENCYCLOPEDIA** (Vol. II, pg. 1702) "The first organ certainly known to exist and be used in a church was put in the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapel by the German Emperor Charlemagne, who came to the throne in 768. It met with great opposition among the Romanists, especially among the monks, and it made its way by slowly into common use. So great was the opposition even as late as the sixteenth century that it probably would have been abolished by the Council of Trent but for the influence of the emperor Ferdinand." This council met in 1545. Thus we see the innovation of the instrument of music was one of the latest that crept into the Roman Catholic apostasy, and it was so unwelcomed even by them that a struggle of about 800 years was necessary to enable it to force its way into universal acceptance.

**FESSENDEN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA** (Art and Music, pg. 852) "Vocal music, which is the most natural, may be considered to have existed before another..." "Instrumental music is also of very ancient date, its invention being ascribed to Tubal, the sixth descendant from Cain. Instrumental music was not practiced by the early Christians, but was an aid to devotion to later times is evident from church history."

**McCLINTOCK AND STRONG'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.** "Sir John Hawkins, following the Romanish writers in his work on the history of music, made Pope Vitalian, in A.D. 660, the first who introduced organs into the churches. But students of Ecclesiastical Archaeology are generally agreed that instrumental music was not used in churches until a much later date; for Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1250, Catholic scholar) has these remarkable words: "Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may seem not to Judaize." Not only was the instrument not generally used even in the 13th. century, the Eastern church (Greek Orthodox ) never have used it.

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## **TESTIMONY OF THE REFORMERS**

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All Protestant churches growing out of the reformation, with the exception of the Church of England, which retained it by a single vote (59 for and 58 against), at first rejected mechanical instruments of music as being "Popish" or "Romish" and unscriptural. The custom of an organ accompaniment did not come about, among Protestants, until the 18th. century.

Martin Luther (Lutheran) - "The organ in the worship is an insignia of Baal."

John Calvin (Presbyterian) - "It is no more suitable than the burning of incense. The Catholics was "borrowed it from the Jews."

John Wesley (Methodist) - "I have no objections to the organs in our chapels, provided they are neither seen nor heard."

Adam Clarke (Methodist) - "Instrumental music in worship to God has never been productive of good, it is an abomination to the Lord."

Charles Spurgeon (Baptist) - "I would just as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."

Joseph Bingham (Anglican) - "Music in churches is as ancient as the apostles, but instrumental music not so."

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## **WHY SOME USE INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP**

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1. THEY DON'T SEE ANY HARM IN IT!

The things of God are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:12-14). The natural man, he goes merrily by human desires and judgments, receives not the things of God. God thoughts are different and higher than man's ways and thoughts (Isa 55:8-9). Was there any harm in Eve eating a little fruit? Was there any harm in David letting the ark be carried on a new cart (2 Sam. 6:6-7; 1 Chron... 15:13)? Was there any harm in Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire which God had not commanded (Lev. 10:1-2)?

A thing may be morally right and at the same time religiously wrong. There was no thing morally wrong with the Pharisees washing their hands, cups, pots, etc... (Mark 7:2-5). But when they made it a part of religion, Jesus said, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Mark 7:7). "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the traditions of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do (vs. 8)

There is harm in it! It has divided the religious world, it discourages congregational signing, it is often a source of friction and jealousy, it makes it more difficult to understand the exact words and teaching of a song. Since it is not found in the pages of the New Testament, it is only a commandment of man, and therefore will make our worship vain (Matt. 15:9).

## 2. IT WAS USED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT!

We are not under the Old Testament. Jesus said not one jot or tittle would pass of the Old Testament until all was fulfilled (Matt 5:7). But after his death and resurrection he said it was fulfilled (Luke 24:44). Jesus had a New Testament that went into effect after his death (Heb. 9:15-17). The New Testament had a new priest of the tribe of Judah, not of the tribe of Levi as it was under the Old Testament, so "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law: (Heb 7:11-15). Jesus nailed the Old Testament to the cross (Col 2:14). While the Old Testament is every bit God's work, it is not the standard and guide in religion for Christians. Today Jesus Christ has all authority (Matt. 17:1-5). Whole the Old Testament is every bit God's work, it is not the standard and guide in religion for Christians. Today Jesus Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18-20). We are to listen to Christ, not Moses and Elais (Matt. 17:1-5). If we want to make an attempt to live the law of Moses, we must do it all (Gal. 5:1-4). When the Jewish Christians wanted to bind circumcision, one part of the law, on all Christians, they were told they had to do it all and therefore fall from grace. If we want to take the instrument from the Old Testament, then we also offer animal sacrifices, burn incense, keep Saturday and do no work of cook our food, go to Jerusalem three times each year, etc.. Let us be thankful that the glorious Old law has been abolished, and been replaced by a law that far exceeds in glory (2 Cor 3:6-13) (See charts 31-36).

## 3. DAVID USED IT IN HIS WORSHIP!

There reasoning is like this: 1) Everything David did in worship is permissible for us. 2) David used the instrument in worship to God. 3) Therefore, we can use the instrument in worship. But David kept the law of Moses (1 Kings 2:3; 1 Chron. 16:7,40). He kept the seventh day, incense was offered in his worship (Ex 40:27), with sackcloth and ashes. If the above reasoning is true, then why don't we do all of these? We can see that what David did in worship to God does not make it right for us.

## 4. THE PSALMS ARE STILL BINDING!

Can Christian sing, "I will offer unto thee burnt offerings..." (Ps. 66:15). Can we sing "Break thou the arm of the wicked" (10:15)? Jesus classed the Psalms as part of the law (John 10:34; 15:25). He singled out the Psalms as specifically being fulfilled along with the law and the prophets (Luke 24:44). There are no doubt many passages in the Psalms that Christians could use in singing praise unto God, but notice we are commanded to sing psalms, not play them (Eph. 5:19).

## 5. THE BIBLE DOES NOT SAY NOT TO USE IT!

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). In order to worship in faith we must find what we do religiously in the word of God. We are commanded to all things in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17), that is, by his authority,. God did not forbid Noah to use pine or oak in building the ark, but he specified gopher wood (Gen. 6). Noah knew that this meant not to use any other kind of wood. God did not forbid the use of coke on the Lord's Table. But he specified fruit of the vine. We do not have to search the scriptures every time a new soft drink is invented looking for a

"thou shalt not". The teaching of the New Testament, both by example and command, specifies a particular kind of music -- VOCAL.

## 6. THERE ARE INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN HEAVEN!

One passage frequently cited to prove this (Rev. 10:17). if taken literal would have us concluding that no married persons will be in heaven. The book is a book of symbols, therefore we see red, white, black horses, various kinds of beasts, a crystal sea, etc. What did John hear in the text? He heard a voice. As to rhythm, it was as the voice of many waters. As to volume, it was as the voice of a great thunder. As to melody, it was AS the voice of harpers harping on their harps. And they SING. We are not told that they play. They sing, and their voice is as the voice of harpers harping.

Another frequently cited passage is Rev. 5:8. The reasoning is like this: 1) Everything mentioned in heaven in the book of Revelation is permissible in church worship. 2) Instrumental music is mentioned in heaven 3) Therefore instrumental music is acceptable in church worship. But the same verse mentions "golden vials full of odors". This would permit incense. See also Rev 8:3).

## 7. IF USED IN THE HOME, WHY NOT IN THE CHURCH?

A thing may be morally right and religiously wrong. It is not wrong to eat steak at home for a meal. But it would be wrong to have it on the Lord's table. We might add that this does not apply just to the meeting place. Christians can worship God in song at home, as Paul did in jail. An instrument would be wrong to use at a place worship to God

## 8. IT IS USED JUST AS AN AID!

*Observation actually shows it to hinder congregational singing. It becomes a crutch and destroys man's ability to sing without it. It can not aid the teaching that is done in singing, in fact it drowns out the words and therefore the meaning of songs. Our desire to EXPRESS our emotions (joy-James 5:13) is not aided, we do not EXPRESS our emotions by listening.*

## 9. THE GREEK WORD 'PSALLO AUTHORIZES IT!

Some contend that this Greek word means both to sing and play. the word is translated "melody in EPH. 5:19, 1 Cor. 14:15, and in James 5:13. If Psallo means to sing and play both, then one has not obeyed the command until he obeys both. If the word means what they contend, the playing can no more be left off than the singing. The word "psallo" cannot merely permit instrumental music. It either includes it (in which case it can not be omitted), or it excludes it (in which case it can not be used). The apostles knew Greek, spoke Greek, wrote in Greek, and were guided into all truth by the spirit. The apostles taught people to sing. As previously pointed out, music and church historians, and the New Testament all testify that the music of the church in the first century was singing, unaccompanied. In fact, Christians who heard and read the New Testament commands to sing did nothing else for over 600 years and in 150 references to Christian music up to the middle ages opposition was found to be "uniform, vehement, monolithic" (THE CHURCH FATHERS AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, doctrinal dissertation at Columbia University by James McKinnon)

Unless an accompanying instrument is used along with the word, no instruments inheres in the word. Ephesians 5:19 makes the instrument the heart. Since God has specified the instrument, no alternative is allowed.

The Greek Catholics do not use instrumental music as opposed to the Roman Catholic. they ought to know their own mother tongue.