

Instrumental Music in the Church

In a recent conference on church issues I spoke at length about what comprises a Biblical church meeting and why it must be absolutely scriptural in order to properly represent Christ. A long period of questions and discussion followed this and it became clear that the foremost question in people's minds was the issue of instrumental music.

Before we go any further I need to establish my background to avoid misconceptions. I love music and consider it to be a gift of God. It enables gifted people to communicate feelings direct to the heart and is thus a very powerful tool. Consequently it is also much misused by the world and the enemy. Secondly, I am a musician and have been playing at a professional level, to audiences, for over 40 years. Apart from being great personal therapy and relaxation, I love entertaining people and making them happy. I am certainly not anti-music!

Finally, I have done all the things that musicians do in the Charismatic Movement today. I have been a, so-called, worship leader playing to thousands and using music to build up emotional content in the meeting. I was one of the first musicians to improvise and solo on an electric guitar during worship times in 1980. I was writing Christian songs and performing them from 1971. For a year I was the chief-musician for an apostle (which meant very little actually). I had the first rock band on Songs of Praise, playing on Brighton seafront, which included Stuart Townend on keyboards and which was oft requested and repeated. Another scratch-band I put together had Paul Oakley on backing guitar/vocals. I played with and for Dave Fellingham many times. Once I led an evangelistic celebration on Brighton beach, to hundreds of people, with just a 12-string acoustic guitar and no other musical support. I played in churches of various types, performing many things from 'Come Together' in the 70s in London, to pop/rock bands for fun at a church house-party in Cardiff. I rejected all this sort of playing in church worship in the late-80s and abhor the domination of music in so-called Charismatic praise. In this paper I will explain why.

For a more general discussion of what worship is and how worship is conducted in church please consult my paper, *'Worship, getting it Biblical'*. For a synopsis of the specific music issues, see my paper, *'A catechism on instrumental music in the church'* [I have extensively taken sections of these and reworked them here].

In this article I seek to restrict myself to whether any form of instrumental music is valid in church and discuss this more fully. Christians today take it for granted that instrumental music has always been part of the church gathering, but this is far from true. For most of church history evangelical meetings have had no instrumental music at all; indeed even Roman Catholic meetings did not officially have instruments for over 1,000 years. Gradually evangelical churches made excuses to adopt Roman practices regarding music while trying to avoid the logical connection to the other Roman errors that sensual music is associated with. Organs did not feature in American Presbyterian churches until the mid-1800s; even then they were vigorously condemned by consistent Calvinist preachers. Today only a few high Calvinist churches (Presbyterian and Reformed Baptist) omit the use of musical instruments. It is my contention that the earlier church practice is more Biblical and godly than sensual superficiality that prevails today.

There is no teaching, command or precedent to use instrumental music in the New Testament.

This is very important. Everything necessary in the church is explained in apostolic instruction, manifest in apostolic practice and established as apostolic tradition in the experiences of the early churches. If we need any instruction about how we conduct a church meeting, it is available in apostolic teaching.

The apostles do not command or give instructions about using musical instruments in the gathered church. In fact there is silence about music in the whole NT, apart from a symbolic reference in Revelation to harps, which picture the sung praise of the heavenly saints.¹ There aren't any physical musical instruments currently in heaven where everything is spiritual and immaterial. Conversely, the apostles give clear instructions regarding sung praise and the speech content of meetings.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus did not sing praise to God accompanied by musical instruments; neither did he command us to use them. There is no NT reference to churches using musical instruments and the early church after the death of the apostles had none for several hundred years.

Is this not merely an argument from silence?

In some senses yes. So what? Our job is to follow the commands of the apostles, not add to them from our own imagination. Ringing bells or waving flags are not mentioned in the NT, but that is not a reason for doing these in church.

This brings us to the question of the regulative principle.

Reformed churches have what is termed the 'regulative principle' to determine what is allowed in Christian worship and edification. It teaches that only what is commanded by God in his word is acceptable, and nothing else. Arminians, Charismatics, Roman Catholics and Lutherans have the 'normative principle' which is the reverse. This teaches that anything is acceptable unless scripture specifically prohibits it. That the latter is ludicrous is shown by the fact that smoking or skateboarding in the meeting could be allowed.

Clearly the most Biblical approach is the regulative principle expounded by Calvin and many others. Under this, musical instruments are forbidden. For centuries this was the accepted position of all the great evangelical theologians.

Church worship is in Spirit and truth.

God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Jn 4:24

The basis of Christian worship is that it is a spiritual, not fleshly, activity. It is spiritual in that it is prompted and controlled by the Holy Spirit and it must be based upon truth – that which is taught in God's word. If it is not truly spiritual, and is not based upon scripture, then it is not allowed in the church.

¹ There are two references to harps (*kithara*) in Rev 14:2 and 15:2 but these are symbolic figures, in a highly symbolic book, for the praise of the saints using the image of the national instrument of Israel. In a similar way, golden bowls are stated to represent the prayers of the saints, there are no physical bowls or harps in heaven

The apostles command us to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pt 2:5); one example of this is the fruit of the lips giving thanks (Heb 13:15). The human voice is thus the expression of God's Spirit in the church; it brings teaching, encouragement and exhortation, but it also brings praise to God expressed in songs. These songs themselves can have the power to teach and exhort the brethren (Col 3:16).

It is important to understand that worship has nothing to do with music. The Charismatic errors have convinced people that they can only properly worship in a large mass in front of a loud rock band. This is emotionalism not worship. Biblical examples of worship include Jacob leaning on his staff at home (Heb 11:21) or David immediately after the death of his son.

Worship is obeisance to the king, the yielded obedience and sacrificial presentation of one's life to God's service; an inner consecration and submission. It is something done throughout one's days and has nothing primarily to do with music or even singing at all. In fact worship is actually stated to be logical, the very opposite of passivity and being emotionally 'lost in God'. The 'reasonable service' of Rm 12:1 means 'rational worship'. It is intelligent service to God by the sacrifice of our lives.

So, Christian worship is thus manifested in a number of practical ways. It is spiritual service expressed by the presentation of our bodies in obedience to God; the outworking of a life submitted to God in reverence and godly service. It is even seen in the giving of money to the poor and needy (Heb 13:15-16; Phil 4:18); helping the poor is as much a spiritual sacrifice as singing praise. Another form of praise is works of righteousness (Eph 1:12; Phil 1:11). Worship is the inner motivation; praise is the outward expression.

The chief historic precursor of the local church was the Jewish synagogue. This had no music.

Old Covenant music was a focus of the temple services, and also to some degree of national celebrations in the open air, but the religious life of the Jewish community was settled in local synagogues from before the exile (Ps 74:8), and the synagogue had no instrumental music. Its chief focus was the place where Levites were despatched to hold teaching services (Num 35:1-7; Jos 21).

Music also had no place in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, God's original pattern for public worship.² After God allowed Israel to have a king like the nations, he allowed them to have a temple like the nations, but his original purpose was different. Tribes distant from Jerusalem only came to the temple for the three great feasts, the normal life of the worshipper was in the local synagogue. Thus, temple worship with its music was exceptional, not the norm for most worshippers.

Even in the temple, music was used with restraint. Of the nine types of Jewish instruments, only four were used in the temple: the 12 stringed harp or lyre, harp, cymbals and trumpet and these could only be played by Levites or priests at certain prescribed times to draw attention to the blood sacrifice. Sung worship continued after this but instrumental music stopped.

² Apart from the silver trumpets (shofar) to proclaim New Year, Sabbath days etc.

Open-air civic services (e.g. to celebrate victory in war or national thanksgiving) used other instruments as well, such as tambourines or flutes. Some Psalms (such as 150) mention these additional instruments for use outside the temple in national events. Psalm 150 is not an apologetic for bands in the church today; indeed, it does not even refer to instruments used in the temple, but to national events outside. These instruments would not be used in temple services.

All church historians agree that the synagogue was the original model for the local church meetings, and these had no music. The Lord himself gives force to this since his ministry began as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy in the local synagogue (Lk 4:16-21). The ministry and structure of the church follows that of the synagogue: a local town meeting, governed by a team of male elders and established for edification of the saints. The word is even used for the church by James [Jam 2:2; 'assembly' = *sunagoge*]. The church also follows the synagogue by having no musical instruments.

The use of instrumental music and massed choirs is an Old Covenant institution and must be interpreted by New Covenant principles.

The apostles constantly give a spiritual interpretation to the forms of Old Covenant worship; the whole substance of the book of Hebrews is based upon this. In fact, apostolic teaching sharply focuses attention on a disjunction between what occurred under the Old Covenant to what prevails under the New Covenant administration. The format of the old is said to be annulled, cancelled, obsolete and this format includes musical instruments [Heb 7:19, 8:13, 9:8-10; 2 Cor 5:17]. Furthermore, we are told that after the cross of Christ all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17), and features of this newness include: a new nature, a new covenant, a new creation, a new commandment, a new name, a new song, and a new Jerusalem. The cross changed everything; the Old Covenant was fulfilled and completed and the New Covenant inaugurated.

It is very important that we understand how to interpret the material aspects of the Old Covenant; by failing to understand apostolic interpretation many people have fallen into serious errors that damage their faith. This is the case with all Jewish Root teaching and the chief principles of Dispensationalism.

The blood of bulls and goats for atonement is indivisibly linked in the Old Covenant worship system with its officiating priesthood, massed choirs, feasts, musical instruments, vestments, a stone temple, burning of incense and so forth. Some Christians point to the errors of the Roman Church adapting cancelled Old Covenant forms (e.g. feasts, vestments and a sacerdotal priesthood) but others fall foul by accepting different Old Covenant forms (choirs, musical instruments, sacred church buildings, harvest festivals etc.).

The NT absolutely dispels any form of carrying over into the church all material Old Covenant forms. It consistently interprets these as being a type [or figure, picture] of spiritual realities in Christ. Thus the offering system is a type fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ; the sacrificing mediatorial priesthood is fulfilled in Christ as the only High Priest. It is impossible to take this list of temple worship forms and remove two or three items but retain the rest. New Covenant interpretation demands that we symbolise these things and see them all fulfilled in Christ and his people. Thus, as there are no more stone temples or buildings of worship (Acts 7:48, 17:24) so there is no instrumental music or massed choirs; these picture the pure, spiritual, harmonious worship of saints.

In the old covenant, synagogue worship was the universal, teaching based focus for a believer's religious life and this became the basic model for local churches. Temple worship was unusual, established in Jerusalem only, ritualistic and thus full of symbolic types that foreshadowed New Covenant truth. When Christ established the New Covenant, the types of Old Covenant symbolism were cancelled. Thus instrumental music was eradicated along with mediatorial priests, priestly garments, sacrifices of animals, external rituals and religious buildings. It is the synagogue not the temple that is the material precedent for church meetings.

Music bears the same relation to praise as incense does to prayer, the one accompanied the other in temple services (1 Chron 23:5 with 13). Incense pictured the rising up of prayers to God (Ps 141:2; Lk 1:10; Rev 5:8, 8:3,4), whilst music spoke of the sounding forth of God's testimony. Saints under the Old Covenant needed the encouragement of the symbols, as they did not have the fulness of the Spirit or the full benefits of the cross (1 Pt 1:10). We no longer need these external figures as we have the Spirit indwelling us. Instrumental music and incense were superseded by the sacrifice of Christ.

But doesn't the use of the Greek word *psallo* ('making melody') suggest playing (plucking) a stringed instrument?

... speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Eph 5:19

Firstly, it would be a foolish person who would overturn apostolic silence on a subject on the basis of an obscure Greek word. There is no clear instruction to use instruments in worship in the New Testament. Secondly, by Paul's time this Greek word had come to mean only unaccompanied singing. There was no connotation of plucking a musical instrument. It retains this meaning today. Thirdly, even in ancient texts, the word's meaning was determined by the context, just as one can *ride* a horse, a car, a plane, a train or a boat. *Psallo* did not always imply an instrument, but could mean plucking hair or a bowstring. If Paul only meant 'to pluck a stringed instrument' by using *psallo*, then there is no place for using keyboards, or flutes, or trumpets. Plus, everyone has to use a harp or such like since the command is universal. No, even if the word meant 'play' instead of 'sing', Paul would be suggesting that we use the human heart, as opposed to the Old Covenant where saints used instruments; worship is inward and spiritual, not external and physical. The use of *psallo* here and elsewhere means 'to sing'.³

What is the instrument God chooses?

Singing is music that is produced from the human spirit without any mechanical aid or human artifice. The voice expresses what is in the heart through the use of words. Singing is thus the communication of thoughts mixed with emotional colour from the heart. Like rational speech, singing is of divine origin whereas instrumental music stems from an invention of fallen man; indeed from Jubal of the line of Cain (Gen 4:21). All three members of the Godhead sing. The Father sings over his people (Zeph 3:17); the Son sang with his disciples (Matt 26:30) and also sings with his people (Heb 2:12); the Holy Spirit sings within the hearts of the elect (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).

³ See the excellent paper, *Psallo*, by Daniel H King, *Truth Magazine* XXIV: 20, pp.325-328 May 15, 1980. Also available on <http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume24/TMO24122.htm>

The human voice is the focus of practical apostolic directions, 'each one has a psalm, a hymn a spiritual song', because the voice is the means of edification in the gathered church. Since the key basis of gathering is edification (1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11; Rm 14:19), the voice has a prime role within the assembly, for it is by the voice that others are edified. Also, an aspect of praise is the fruit of lips giving thanks. So the voice is vital since it is the means of sharing what the Spirit gives us in spirit and truth. This means that the voice is the pre-eminent means of physical expression and nothing must detract from it. Instrumental music is a distraction from the human voice in singing. Nothing is purer than an unaccompanied song.

The basis of instrumental worship

Music has some comparisons with mathematics, being a non-verbal means of communication that has no inherent morality. However, while mathematics is a neutral means of communicating deep truths, music is not neutral in relation to human reactions. Music has the power to produce strong emotional responses and all societies throughout history have ascribed certain emotions to particular combinations of musical notes. This is why various myths accredited instrumental music with supernatural power, such as Orpheus charming animals with a lyre.

Despite rationalistic attempts to denude music of these emotional associations, all societies still interpret music in set ways. A minor key will communicate pathos; a major key can produce joy; 2/4 strident rhythm accompanies marching troops. Even two notes or two chords alone produce certain immediate feelings. Cmaj7 to Fmaj7 played gently suggests romance or sadness, while the notes E to F played as a dirge imply menace or danger.

Instruments are the expression of the flesh, of human wisdom and skill, of human emotion. The cleverness of musical skill is not acceptable to God under the New Covenant. It is an important NT principle that God is not worshipped by the actions of men's hands (Acts 17:25). Neither is the emotional stirring caused by instrumental music beneficial to the church.

In the Old covenant some men were gifted by the Spirit to perform artistic works and craftsmanship in order to build items used in worship. This is no longer the case since worship is now done in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). There is no need for any artistry – worship is spiritual. Artistry includes music.

Musical instruments have no life of their own (1 Cor 14:7) and thus have no place in being offered to God in worship. Worship is done in Spirit and truth, in life; it's something from the heart, the offering of spiritual sacrifice. The use of instruments is spiritually dead. We do not worship through music; we worship by the Spirit. If we have the Spirit, we need no music.

The main function of music is to draw attention to itself, to encourage contemplation of what it communicates. That music communicates is easy to prove; just look at the effects of martial music in the history of warfare. Regiments do not have bands for nothing. The stirring effect of 2/4 martial music exhorts soldiers to push themselves in warfare. Even aged war veterans still get an adrenaline rush when ceremonially marching alongside a brass band. The power of a good symphony is also impossible to deny; but even a good pop song can reduce men to tears if associated with an emotional event. Musicians have power, and this has always been celebrated in history and legend. But this power to create associations, emotions and stimulation is entirely unsuited for Christian worship. The

believer wants and needs no emotional stimulation of the flesh, but stands before God simply clothed with Christ and worships God in simplicity.

Music is also associated with merry-making, partying, revelry, carousing (Isa 24:8). It is not appropriate to bring the components of human partying into the worship of God's people. The things that stimulate the flesh to party should not be used to inspire the heart to spiritual worship. The music of partying is also connected to harlotry (Isa 23:16) and is thus entirely inappropriate to church life.

Intense music has always been a feature of pagan idolatrous worship (Dan 3:15) and is singled out as being an aspect of Babylon fit for judgment (Rev 18:22). Music has not merely been a feature of demonic religious faith, but has always been an integral and vital element in generating a false sense of spirituality; indeed, scripture implies that Satan was skilled in music (Ezek 28:13).

Music also engenders false mysticism and has been used by the occult and mystics for centuries. It is used to enhance a felt communion with the spirit world through establishing a loss of self, intellectual passivity or an altered state of consciousness. In this vulnerable state where self-control is neutered, demonic forces can invade a willing compliant seeker and impose their will. To help the deception they will often impart some kind of 'religious' experience: a vision, a revelation, a feeling of ecstasy or a satisfied settled state. The engendering of passivity is the basis of occultism and is thus the foundation of all mystical religions, whether they are modern New Age ideas or ancient Gnosticism and Hinduism. Music is almost always a vital component in this process, both in stimulating frenzy and inculcating passivity because music is a very powerful tool to touch the heart of man directly.

Drums are never mentioned as being used for God's worship in scripture. However, drums have always been a strong focus of pagan worship because they are so powerful in directing emotions. This is why armies use drums to generate resolve in a fighting force. Drums quickly stimulate the flesh in the direction set by the leader of a unit. In pagan worship they engender passivity and abandon through dance.

Christian worship is not enhanced by singing songs to emotional instrumental accompaniment – indeed stirring music may detract from true worship. Music stimulates the flesh, but worship is in spirit and truth.

The Charismatic notion is that worship is a mystical ascent up a ladder of musical entertainment. The idea is that worship begins with loud, vibrant, exuberant songs repeated and strung together without pause, using intense musical activity to overwhelm the senses; followed by reflective, quiet emotional songs leading to an increasing sense of passivity and suggestibility. This is entirely unbiblical and pagan.

The Charismatic focus upon domineering music is what has led to many other forms of demonic expression and manipulation: the engendering of passivity, impromptu dancing, suggestibility, indecent noises (barking, screaming, etc.), indecent activities (pogoing, running, falling over etc.). Giving into emotionalism under musical constraints leads to abandon, and this leads to captivation by whomever is manipulating the audience.

The use of instrumental music in pagan rituals.

No one denies that most heathen worship is centred upon various forms of instrumental music. The foundation of virtually all pagan ritual is the need to induce passivity in the worshipper and this is done by various means; but the most common is music. Sometimes shamanistic ceremonies utilise drugs, dancing, fasting, the touch of a master, pain or meditation based upon images; but mostly passivity is induced by instrumental music and particularly strong rhythm.

The reason for this is that all heathen religions appeal to the senses of man in one form or another. Even cults that seem opposed to each other still appeal to the senses. Zen may be very different from African shamanism, but both require sensory deprivation or control. Shamanism may emphasise the outward lack of control (frenzied dancing, music, ritual), while Zen focuses upon withdrawal, control and quietude; but both are fleshly, both are focused upon affecting the senses. Zen seeks for the loss of mind in passivity through abandonment of mental/emotional control, while most forms of shamanism seek passivity through the loss of outward restrictions. Both mistake the rising of unrestricted subjective emotions and soulish imaginations for contact with the spirit world. In fact they have both simply allowed demonic forces to impact their personality and delude them through the loss of self-control.

The quickest way to subject large groups of people and bring about suggestibility and passivity is through instrumental music. By abandonment to incessant music a person can quickly fall into an altered state of consciousness, whereby they can be easily manipulated by a shaman. This abandonment brings feelings of euphoria, similar to being drunk or drugged. Thus a person is happy to give control of their life to another for a time because it feels nice. These emotions are then stated (by the shaman) to be a touch from a god and the individual feels confident that their request has been heard. In strong cases of emotional stimulation the release of endorphins, adrenaline or serotonin may even influence natural powers in the human body to bring about small changes, such as pain relief, or mental stimulation. This leads to claims of healing or contact with dead relatives. In extreme cases there may be actual changes brought about by intense occult activity and union with demons. For instance, the ability to feel no pain when walking over hot coals or being pierced by a sword, bent backwards over a sharp object or hit with hammers. All these have been evidenced in history in times of mental convulsion appearing in the guise of religious fervour.

Thus the prelude to pagan religious fervour is often the use of music, and particularly of repetitive music. The correlation with the use of music in Charismatic churches should be noted.

The use of instrumental music Charismatic rituals.

Charismatics considered it a coup that praise music written for Charismatics, and certain 'Christian' performers, entered the secular pop charts in the early 90s. Sadly many of these singers tended to end up apostatising and becoming sold-out worldly entertainers. This shows how high a place music has in Charismatic worship and how commercial it has become. Worse, it has been a vehicle for ecumenism,

Contemporary Christian Music is proud of its ecumenical and charismatic spirit. this ecumenism extends open arms toward apostate protestant denominations

and the roman catholic church. (*Making Musical Choices*, Bob Jones University, 1986, p. 86).

The history of Pentecostalism and Charismaticism is steeped in instrumental music; indeed, it has always been a prime reason for securing the interest of outsiders. People wary of shoddy doctrinal teaching and ungodly behaviour were overcome by the modern music offered. Pentecostal writers have actually stated that church success came through emotionally-charged music; this initially was up-tempo jazz. Referring to the period 1901 to 1914, first general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church, Howard Goss, said,

Without it [jazz] the Pentecostal Movement could never have made the rapid inroads into the hearts of men and women as it did. Neither could we have experienced a constant victorious revival over the fifty years ... It was generally not the conventional church-hymn singing ... there appeared to be neither poetry nor musicianship in the composition. But, there was something far more effective than either. ... we were the first, so far as I know, to introduce this accelerated tempo into gospel singing. [Howard Goss, *The Winds of Change*, p. 212, 207-208.]

Incessant, rhythmic, loud music was a cornerstone of early Pentecostalism leading to:

The spirit moved some to dance, others to speak in the unknown tongue, to shout, to jerk, or to fall in a dead trance. Mourners in ever-increasing numbers fell on their knees, elbows in a folding chair, at the altar, while the exhorters clapped hands to the time of the music ... the steady and almost terrifying rhythmic noise. [It was similar to] the extreme mesmeric orgies of such primitive groups have been often enough described. ... The indigenous song merges into the hypnotic rhythmizing used in this indigenous type of religious practice. [George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*.]

Famous leaders built their ministry on the recently emerged popular jazz style; one was Aimee Semple McPherson:

She threw out the dirges and threats of Hell, replacing them with jazz hymns and promises of Glory. [Morrow Mayo of *The New Republic*, quoted in Robert Bahr, *Least of All Saints: The Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*, Prentice-Hall (1979) p267.]

This attitude of adapting worldly genres of music into supposed worship times has been characteristic of the whole modern Pentecostal / Charismatic Movement. At the beginning, Pentecostal songs were influenced by rag-time and then traditional jazz. Indeed Pentecostal historians are happy to admit this:

In each decade of this century [20th], the music was certainly reflective of contemporary styles: gospel singing, piano styles reminiscent of jazz, popular singing of the quartets, and so on. [*Dictionary of Pent. & Char. Mvts.*, p693.]

Over time, new secular musical forms emerged (Country, Rock n' Roll, Neo-Folk, Pop, Rock etc.) and the young demanded change. This change generally happened a decade or so after the impact in the world. In the early 60s the popular church form was folk; later a sort of folk-rock emerged, and then a more mainstream pop. As Charismatic musicians became more confident, and as more young people joined the churches, the style became much more rock oriented. By the mid-80s many, such as Graham Kendrick, took on an openly aggressive hard rock sound that (in the days of the 60s) would have pleased fans of Jimi Hendrix and Cream. Today there is a diversity of styles, but they are all loud and strive to sound as worldly as possible.

As these stylistic changes occurred, so the musical instruments used in churches changed. In the early years there was only a piano accompaniment, with rhythm in Pentecostal churches being banged out on tambourines. In the southern American states large choirs and an organ were prominent. By the mid-60s acoustic guitars were gradually introduced in the UK, perhaps with a few other acoustic instruments (such as flute). During the 70s more instruments gradually crept in here and there; but it was in the 80s that the explosion took place. With the eventual influence of rock music it was inevitable that amplified instruments appeared in churches. As soon as this happened everything was forced to change since PA systems were then required for more than the preacher. Electric guitars and keyboards were able to produce almost any sound that may be required; indeed a Yamaha DX7 was a prerequisite for Charismatic churches. Since the sound was becoming loud, bass guitars and drums soon became necessary to ensure that rhythm was maintained. By this time the instrumental music had drowned out the singing of the congregation and older folk began to take ear protectors to meetings.

Charismatics also believe that the very sounds they play impart spiritual blessing, especially music connected to the Toronto Experience and subsequent outbreaks of emotionalism.

Because something is imparted when you listen to this tape. I don't want it to sound spooky or mysterious, but there's something powerful about embracing the music of the revival. The fire of the revival can stir in you even as you listen to the songs that took place at the Brownsville revival. ['Don Moen Discusses Music at Brownsville Assembly,' *Pentecostal Evangel*, November 10, 1996.]

Charismatic instrumental music did not just take on the outward forms of the world, seeking to bring a professional and secular sound into the churches, but it brought about an outright pagan influence seeking to induce passivity in the congregation so that manipulative leaders could take control. Through passivity, unscrupulous leaders could claim healings, deliverance from demons and so forth, when what had occurred was that people became hypnotised and more suggestible. Healings were minor and temporary; really just pain relief from surges of adrenaline and endorphins. But people felt just as drugged and emotionally stimulated as a pagan in a heathen ritual. Thus the Charismatic musical experience continued and developed. In its worst form it brought about sufficient passivity to release the Toronto Experience extremes of pagan hypnotism, with all the same effects found in Hindu kundalini or shamanistic abandonment.

It is possible to take videos of a Toronto type meeting and compare them with Wiccan (modern witches) festivities, Hindu devotees under a powerful guru, Native American ghost dances, primitive aboriginal rituals or African tribal shamanistic ceremonies and find that there are no essential differences. The outward form and words are different, but essentially there is little difference. There is a slow build up of emotional excitement

through repetitive music, increasing authoritarian control by an elevated leader, increasing lack of self-control as passivity is induced, leading to a hypnotised audience. Tongues may erupt, followed by improvised chanting in unison, people falling to the floor, followed by indecent behaviour of various sorts (howling, screaming, frenzied dancing etc). It is noteworthy that the Hindu practices to awaken kundalini energy, considered dangerous even by many Hindu gurus, bears close comparison with what happened in the Toronto Experience. Indeed, the demonic eruptions from releasing kundalini ('serpent power') have been around far longer than the Christian church; so any mimicking is not being done by Indian gurus, rather the other way round.

Charismatic music has been a means of opening the gates for a flood of pagan practices based upon the inducement of passivity in congregations. Instead of church music stimulating the mind to consider the doctrinal thoughts of a hymn (the traditional method), modern Charismatic music (and historic Pentecostal music) has concentrated upon the emotions to lift the subjective imaginations of the people and make them suppliant to things they would never consider in their normal daily routine. This is to say nothing of the superficial trite choruses, the constant repetition, the loud music, the dominating drum rhythms, or the mood controlling flowing of songs.

I repeat that the flow of Charismatic music in a service is nothing other than the rising up a mystical ladder found in heretical movements throughout church history. It begins with strident music to stimulate passion and gradually weans folk into mystical feelings until they are completely passive. Isn't it curious that Charismatic healers are unable to bring about any 'healing' until they have a willing and hypnotised audience. None of them ever go into a hospital to heal anyone, nor do they stop sick people in the streets and heal them on the spot. In fact, I have never found any genuine, accredited healing by a Charismatic leader of a chronic condition that vanished immediately. It is only after an hour of musical conditioning that people can be affected by Charismatic propaganda and mesmerism.

When did music begin to arise in the church?

After the death of the apostles the churches began to degenerate; indeed this process of deterioration is evidenced in the later epistles being focused upon correcting error. Gradually men began to assume unlawful authority in church meetings and erroneous practices developed. By the 3rd century these errors were compounded into authoritarian structures ruled by monarchical bishops over a laity reduced to doing nothing. After 313 the Edict of Milan made things worse still when the emperor endorsed Christianity. With churches becoming fashionable to curry favour with Constantine, basilicas were used to house church meetings (setting the future fashion for church architecture). It was around this time, as the church rapidly apostatised in doctrine and practice, that music began to be introduced because the pagan people joining the church wanted to feel at home. Hence churches began to copy pagan services and introduced musical instruments. This move was severely criticised by sound church leaders, such as Chrysostom, who condemned this practice as a mere stimulation of fleshly emotions. To give an examples of comments by good church leaders, note these:

Augustine (354-430)

Musical instruments were not used [since] the pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theatre and circus. [Augustine 354 A.D., describing the singing at Alexandria under Athanasius.]

Chrysostom (344-407)

David ... had a lyre with lifeless strings, the church has a lyre with living strings. Our tongues are the strings of the lyre ... much more in accordance with piety. Here there is no need for the cithara, or for stretched strings, or for the plectrum, ... or for any instrument. [John Chrysostom, 347-407, *Exposition of Psalms* 41, (381-398 AD)]

God hates the worship paid with kettledrums, with lyres, with harps, and other instruments? [John Chrysostom: *Adversus Judaeos*, Homily I, VII:2]

Clement of Alexandria (155-220)

Musical instruments must be excluded from our wingless feasts, ... for the tongue is a harp of the Lord ... the mouth as a lute moved by the Spirit as the lute is by the plectrum; ... we make use of one instrument alone: only the Word of peace by whom we a homage to God, no longer with ancient harp or trumpet or drum or flute which those trained for war employ. [Clement, *The instructor, Fathers of the church*, p130.]

Eusebius (265-339)

It was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the psalterion and cithara and to do this on Sabbath days... We render our hymn with a living psalterion and a living cithara with spiritual songs. The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. [*Commentary on Psalms* 91:2-3]

Origen (185-254)

The organ is the church of God composed of contemplative and active souls. The pleasant sounding cymbal is the active soul captured by the desire for Christ. [*Commentaries on the Psalms*]

In the early centuries the introduction of music was local to some areas and not universal. In the East, where there was a close pagan influence, some churches succumbed to it; also in some Celtic communities in Britain there is some evidence of music in an early stage. However, the use of a primitive organ (the chief instrument then) gradually became more widespread by the 700s. However, most commentators agree that this was not a general practice until the late 13th century. In 1250 Thomas Aquinas stated that, *'the church does not use musical instruments to praise God ... pipes are not to be used for teaching, nor any artificial instruments, as the harp, or the like'*.⁴ Organs were introduced into Roman Catholic services by Pope Vitalian in 671, but were then removed until rehabilitated after 1250.

The testimony of respected church leaders.

Until the last century, most good men have felt that music is not allowed since there is no mention of it in the New Testament. This is still the position of some traditional Presbyterian churches, strict Baptists and older Brethren groups. The Reformers, for

⁴ Thomas Aquinas in Bingham's *Antiquities*, Vol. 3, page 137.

instance, did not condone the use of music, condemning organs and instrumental music as: *'ludicrous things, by which the word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned'* (Calvin). The basis of their sung worship was Biblical Psalms sung a cappella, although Luther wrote his own hymns and chorales as well. Later, men introduced popular hymns [e.g. Isaac Watts] and only gradually did the use of some musical support for these become popular long after the Reformation.

Often local rural churches had no means of accompanying the songs anyway. Not until the development of the piano could congregational singing be adequately accompanied by a cheap popular instrument, and this was not invented until 1710. Before this, only large, rich, institutional churches could afford to build pipe organs, although some institutional churches probably had foot-pedal wind organs. Smaller 'portative' organs were known at least as far back as the Middle Ages, although music for them has not been discovered dating before the 15th century. It is possible that some early Celtic churches used stringed instruments (cithara) but there is scant evidence. It was not until the 19th century that American Presbyterians began to introduce organs into churches, and even then it was severely criticised by such great theologians as RL Dabney, JL Girardeau and RJ Breckinridge.

Early church fathers

Eusebius explained that musical instruments were too closely associated with the world and pagan celebrations to be used in worship: *'Our cithara [i.e. harp or guitar] is the whole body, by whose movement and action the soul sings a fitting hymn to God; and our ten-stringed psaltery is the veneration of the Holy Spirit by the five senses of the body and the five virtues of the spirit'*. [Quoted in *Music in the Church*, Rev G. Wauchope Stewart BD, The Guild Library. Note: Eusebius was not condoning dancing as acceptable bodily movement in worship. Church leaders condemned people who started to clap or dance in his day.]

What did the Reformers say about instrumental music?

John Calvin (1509-1564): Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. [John Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 33*]

Theodore Beza (Calvin's successor in Geneva, 1519-1605): If the apostle justly prohibits the use of unknown tongues in the church, much less would he have tolerated these artificial musical performances which are addressed to the ear alone. [Quoted in John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, p 166]

Martin Luther (1483-1546): The organ in the worship is the insignia of Baal... The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews. [Martin Luther, McClintock & Strong's *Encyclopedia*, Volume VI, p 762]

Presbyterians have long considered organ music to be *'an abomination'* (*Glasgow Prebytery*) or a *'corruption'* (*General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 1644).

What did later church leaders say about instrumental music?

CH Spurgeon (Baptist, 1834-1892): One can make melody without strings and pipes. We do not need them. They would hinder rather than help our praise. Sing unto him. This is the sweetest and best music. No instrument like the human voice. ... What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettiness of a quartet, bellows, and pipes. We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it. [*Treasury of David*, Commentary on Psalm 42.]

Adam Clarke (Methodist, 1762-1832): [Should musical instruments] be used in Christian worship? No; the whole spirit, soul, and genius of the Christian religion are against this; and those who know the Church of God best, and what constitutes its genuine spiritual state, know that these things have been introduced as a substitute for the life and power of religion; and that where they prevail most, there is least of the power of Christianity. ... to no such worship are these instruments friendly. [Clarke's *Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. II, pp. 690-691.]

John Girardeau (Presbyterian, 19th c): The church, although lapsing more and more into deflection from the truth and into a corrupting of apostolic practice, had not instrumental music for 1200 years (that is, it was not in general use before this time); The Calvinistic Reform Church ejected it from its service as an element of popery, even the church of England having come very nigh its extrusion from her worship. It is heresy in the sphere of worship. [John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, p179.]

Instrumental music ... was permissible ... only when God commanded it ... in connection with the typical and temporary services of the temple. He did not command it to be used in the ordinary Sabbath worship of the synagogue, and accordingly it was not employed in that institute ... God did not command it to be introduced into the Christian church, and in conformity with his will it was not employed in the apostolic or the early church. It was not known in the church for centuries. It was ... a late importation into its services – an importation effected without divine authorisation, and therefore in the face of the divine will. If our exposition of the second commandment is valid ... we violate that commandment when we employ instrumental music in public worship, because we devise, counsel, command, use and approve a mode of “religious worship not instituted by God himself.” [Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, p117-118.]

Philip Schaff (German Reformed Church, 1819-1893): The custom of organ accompaniment did not become general among Protestants until the eighteenth century. [*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, (1953) Vol 10, p257]

John Wesley (Anglican, founder of Methodism 1703-1791): I have no objection to instruments of music in our worship, provided they are neither seen nor heard. [quoted in *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. 4, p685]

RL Dabney (Presbyterian, 19th c): God set up in the Hebrew church two distinct forms of worship: the one moral, didactic, spiritual and universal, and therefore perpetual in all places and ages – that of the synagogues; the other peculiar, local, typical, foreshadowing in outward forms the more spiritual dispensation, and therefore destined to be utterly abrogated by Christ's coming. Now we find instrumental music, like human priests and their vestments, show-bread, incense, and bloody sacrifice, absolutely limited to this local and temporary worship. But the Christian churches were modelled upon the synagogues and inherited their form of government and worship because it was permanently didactic, moral and spiritual, and included nothing typical.

Dr. Girardeau is supporting the identical position held by all the early fathers, by all the Presbyterian reformers, by a Chalmers, a Mason, a Breckinridge, a Thornwell, and by a Spurgeon. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

Popish worship is addressed to the senses, and the imagination through the senses. According to the Papists' own theory of his worship, the mass is a grand Action. ... a solemn drama ... The sentiment of devotion is conveyed sufficiently, by the character of the music. But the theory of Protestant religious music is, or ought to be, essentially different. We appeal to the understanding and to those intelligent emotions, which are produced by the understanding on the heart. We sing articulate, intelligent words, in a familiar language, conveying to every hearer, instructive ideas and elevating sentiments. The articulation of words sung, is the very essence and soul of our musical worship. ... The scripture represents religious music as the vehicle of religious instruction, and imply the necessity of distinct articulation. [1 Cor 14:15-16; Col 3:16] ... These passages fully sustain the assertion that religious music, to be scriptural, must contain intelligible articulate words, conveying some pious instruction or emotion. [RL Dabney, 'Organs'; From the *Watchman And Observer*, Richmond VA, February 22, 1849, Volume IV, No. 28.]

It is always urged: "we must have an organ to keep pace with other churches in attracting a congregation, and in retaining the young and thoughtless." **Has it come then to this, that the chaste spouse of Christ is reduced to borrow the meretricious adornment of the "scarlet whore," in order to catch the unholy admiration of the ungodly? Not thus did the Apostles devise to bring sinners to the church. They were taught to go after them. ... If we are authorised to add to God's worship, forms purely of human device, in order to make it more palatable to sinners, to what corruptions shall we not give entrance?** ... We believe that all such artifices, of human device, to catch popularity, are inconsistent with the genius of the Presbyterian Church, derogatory of her honour, and blasting to her interests. [RL Dabney, 'Organs'; From the *Watchman And Observer*, Richmond VA, February 22, 1849, Volume IV, No. 28. Emphasis P.F.]

God is to be worshipped only in the ways appointed in his word. Every act of public cultus not positively enjoined by him is thereby forbidden. Christ and his apostles ordained the musical worship of the New Dispensation without any sort of musical instrument, enjoining only the singing with the voice of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Hence such

instruments are excluded from Christian worship. Such has been the creed of all churches, and in all ages, except of the Popish communion after it had reached the nadir of its corruption at the end of the thirteenth century, and of its prelatial imitators. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*. Emphasis P.F.]

Why do not our Christian æsthetics feel equally authorised and bound to build altars in front of their pulpits, and to drag the struggling lambs up their nicely carpeted aisles, and have their throats cut there for the edification of the refined audience? "Oh, the sacrifices, being types and peculiar to the temple service, were necessarily abolished by the coming of the Antitype." Very good. So were the horns, cymbals, harps and organs only peculiar to the temple-service, a part of its types, and so necessarily abolished when the temple was removed. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

Doubtless the objection in every opponent's mind is this: That, after all, Dr. Girardeau is making a conscientious point on too trivial and non-essential a matter. I am not surprised to meet this impression in the popular mind, aware as I am that this age of universal education is really a very ignorant one. But it is a matter of grief to find ministers so oblivious of the first lessons of their church history. They seem totally blind to the historical fact that it was just thus every damnable corruption which has cursed the church took its beginning; in the addition to the modes of worship ordained by Christ for the New dispensation, of human devices, which seemed ever so pretty and appropriate, made by the best of men and women and ministers with the very best of motives, and borrowed mostly from the temple cultus of the Jews. Thus came vestments, pictures in churches, incense, the observances of the martyrs' anniversary days in a word, that whole apparatus of will-worship and superstition which bloomed into popery and idolatry. "Why, all these pretty inventions were innocent. The very best of people used them. They were so appropriate, so æsthetic! Where could the harm be?" History answers the question: They disobeyed God and introduced popery, a result quite unforeseen by the good souls who began the mischief! Yes, but those who have begun the parallel mischief in our Presbyterian Church cannot plead the same excuse, for they are forewarned by a tremendous history ... That a denomination, professing like ours to be anti-prelatial and anti-ritualistic, should throw down the bulwarks of their argument against these errors by this recent innovation appears little short of lunacy. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

They [musical instruments] tend usually to choke congregational singing, and thus to rob the body of God's people of their God-given right to praise him in his sanctuary. They almost always help to foster anti-scriptural styles of church music, debauching to the taste, and obstructive, instead of assisting, to true devotional feelings. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

All true worship is rational. The truth intelligently known and intelligibly uttered is the only instrument and language of true worship. Hence all social public worship *must be didactic*. The apostle has settled this beyond possible dispute

in 1st Corinthians. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

Man's animal nature is sensitive, through the ear, to certain sensuous, æsthetic impressions from melody, harmony and rhythm. ... sinful men, fallen and blinded, are ever ready to abuse this faint analogy by mistaking the sensuous impressions for, and confounding them with, spiritual affections. Blinded men are ever prone to imagine that they have religious feelings, because they have sensuous, animal feelings, in accidental juxtaposition with religious places, words, or sights. This the pernicious mistake which has sealed up millions of self-deceived souls for hell. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

God's policy in limiting his musical worship to melodies of the *human voice* ... For his Christian church, the non-appointment of mechanical accompaniment *was its prohibition*. ... the innovation is merely the result of an advancing *wave of worldliness* and ritualism in the evangelical bodies. These Christians are not wiser but simply more flesh-pleasing and fashionable. [R. L. Dabney, Review of John L. Girardeau's *Instrumental Music in Public Worship*.]

Conclusion

I trust it can now be agreed that: there is no apostolic command, model or sanction for instrumental music in the church; that there is great danger in introducing pagan and worldly elements into church meetings, which instrumental music certainly involves; that the history of the church reveals that for the most part there were no musical instruments used and that the greatest evangelical theologians condemned the use of any instruments from the earliest times until recently. We should not allow the use of musical instruments into our ministry to God but should sing with all our hearts unto the Lord with voices joined as one.

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