

Music In The Church — Its History

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Scripture ref: Colossians 3:16

SUBJECT: Worship

TITLE: Music in the Church-Its History

PROPOSITION: In this lesson we will examine music as historically used in the church. We will look both at sacred history, and secular history.

OBJECTIVES: Each member should be able to understand what kind of music was used in the church until modern times.

AIM: To educate every member on the history of music within the church.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read: Colossians 3:16

2. About the Text:

- 1) The kind of music the church has is certainly a big deal in today's religious environment.
- 2) It is the first and the last thing many hear when visiting some church.
- 3) There are many for whom it is the primary reason for "going to church."
- 4) And there is a place for music in worship.
- 5) What is the music of the church?
- 6) What ought our attitude to be toward music in the church?

3. The situation today.

- 1) Within churches of Christ that music has been a cappella in nature.
- 2) We have also taught that it is sinful to use instruments in God's worship.
- 3) There are some churches of Christ today that teach that instruments are optional.
- 4) Other churches have adopted the instrument for some of their worship services.
- 5) Is this merely a "tradition" that we have within churches of Christ?
- 6) Is this something that is optional?
- 7) Is the instrument an issue of fellowship?

4. The series.

- 1) In the coming weeks, we will have a series of lessons on "Music in the church."
- 2) In this series, we will discuss, in depth, the various different facets of this issue.
- 3) I hope that you will be present for each of these lessons.

5. Today

- 1) Today we will be discussing the history of music in the church.
- 2) We want to look at both sacred history and secular history.

6. Ref. to S, T, P, O, and A.

DISCUSSION:

I. MUSIC IN THE CHURCH – SACRED HISTORY

1. Remember that we are discussing music in the church.
 - 1) Not as it was under the Old Covenant.
 - 2) Not passages that discuss music in heaven.
 - 3) We will discuss these two things in a future lesson.
 - 4) Music in the church limits us to the New Testament.
2. What is specifically said in the New Testament about music in the church?
 - 1) Matthew 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
 - 2) Mark 14:26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
 - 3) Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.
 - 4) Romans 15:9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.
 - 7) Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
 - 8) Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
 - 9) Hebrews 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.
 - 10) James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.
3. Praise comes from the lips. Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.
4. There are no instances in the Bible of the church ever using instrumental music to worship God.
5. Thus sacred history testifies as to the kind of music that the early church used – singing.

II. MUSIC IN THE CHURCH – SECULAR HISTORY

1. Limitations and Benefits of Looking at Secular History
 - 1) Secular history is not authoritative to establish worship practices.
 - 2) However, we ought to know how relatively new the practice of instrumental music in worship is.

- 3) Our friends who use the instrument need to know this as well.
 - 4) This establishes that we are not just some crack pot outfit trying to be difficult.
 - 5) The weight of history is on our side on this issue.
2. The "Church Fathers" did not use instrumental music, and in fact, rejected it.
- 1) Ignatius (50-117) in his epistle to the Romans, says, "Pray, then, do not seek to confer any greater favour upon me than that I be sacrificed to God while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in love, ye may sing praise to the Father, through Christ Jesus, that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west. It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him."
 - 2) Clement of Alexandria (c150-215) writes: "The Spirit, distinguishing from such revelry the divine service, sings, "Praise Him with the sound of trumpet;" for with sound of trumpet He shall raise the dead. "Praise Him on the psaltery;" for the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord. "And praise Him on the lyre." By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum. "Praise with the timbrel and the dance," refers to the Church meditating on the resurrection of the dead in the resounding skin. "Praise Him on the chords and organ." Our body He calls an organ, and its nerves are the strings, by which it has received harmonious tension, and when struck by the Spirit, it gives forth human voices. "Praise Him on the clashing cymbals." He calls the tongue the cymbal of the mouth, which resounds with the pulsation of the lips. Therefore He cried to humanity, 'Let every breath praise the Lord,'"
 - 3) Clement then says, "The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honour God, is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel, and flute."
 - 4) Justin Martyr (100-165) was a great apologist for the early church during years of persecution.
 - a. He records for us that the emperor Trajan once asked Pliny what to do about the Christians. Pliny's response included a brief note about their worship. That they met in the morning, and that they sang praises to Christ and God.
 - b. He, said, "Simply singing is not agreeable to children, but singing with the lifeless instruments and dancing and clapping; on which account the use of this kind of instrument and others agreeable to children is removed from the songs in the churches, and there is left remaining simply singing." (Justin's Questions and Answer to the Orthodox, Ques. 107, p. 462).
 - 5) AUGUSTINE (354-371) "musical instruments were not used. 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 theater and circus, it is easy to understand the prejudices against their use in the worship." (describing the singing at Alexandria under Athanasius)
 - 6) Chrysostom (347-407) "David formerly sang songs, also today we sing hymns. He had a lyre with lifeless strings, the church has a lyre with living strings. Our tongues are the strings of the lyre with a different tone indeed but much more in accordance with

piety. Here there is no need for the cithara, or for stretched strings, or for the plectrum, or for art, or for any instrument; but, if you like, you may yourself become a cithara, mortifying the members of the flesh and making a full harmony of mind and body. For when the flesh no longer lusts against the Spirit, but has submitted to its orders and has been led at length into the best and most admirable path, then will you create a spiritual melody." (Chrysostom, 347-407, Exposition of Psalms 41, (381-398 A.D.) Source Readings in Music History, ed. O. Strunk, W. W. Norton and Co.: New York, 1950, pg. 70.)

- 7) Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) "Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize." (Thomas Aquinas, Bingham's Antiquities, Vol. 3, page 137)
- 8) The Catholic Scholar, James W. McKinnon says, "More important than explicit opposition to instruments is the simple fact that they were not used in the patristic period." (As quoted in the Spiritual Sword, January 2004, Volume 35, no. 2.)

3. Roman and Greek Tradition

- 1) The instrument was first introduced by Pope Vitalian I in 670 A.D. "Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some churches of western Europe, about 670; but the earliest trustworthy account is that of the one sent as a present by the Greek emperor Constantine Copronymus to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 775." (The American Cyclopedic, Vol. 12).
- 2) The Greek Orthodox church never adopted instrumental music and still does not use it to this day in their worship services.

4. Many of the reformation leaders spoke out against it.

- 1) Martin Luther - "The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal." (McClintock and Strong)
- 2) John Calvin - one of the founders of the Presbyterian church, said, "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 other shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews." (Commentary on Psalms)
- 3) Adam Clarke - a Methodist commentator who knew John Wesley, the founder of the same church said
 - a. "the whole spirit, soul, and genius of the Christian religion are against this."
 - b. "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. Away with such portentous baubles from the worship of that infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and in truth, for to no such worship are those instruments friendly."
 - c. "And I further believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian Church is without the sanction and against the will of God; that they are subversive of the spirit of true devotion, and that they are sinful."
 - d. "I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of

God; and have reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor."

- e. Clark also quotes John Wesley as saying, "I have no objections to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen."

4) Charles Spurgeon

- a. Considered one of the greatest Baptist preacher's that ever lived, did not have the instrument within his congregation of 10,000 people.
- b. In commenting upon Psalm 42:4 said, "David appears to have had a peculiarly tender remembrance of the singing of the pilgrims, and assuredly it is the most delightful part of worship and that which comes nearest to the adoration of heaven. What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettiness of a quartet, the refined niceties of a choir, or the blowing off of wind from inanimate bellows and pipes! We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it."

- 5) David Benedict, a Baptist historian, in his book, Fifty Years Among the Baptists (1859), said, "Staunch old Baptists in former times would have as soon tolerated the Pope of Rome in their pulpits as an organ in their galleries."

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM HISTORY

1. We are on firm ground by worshipping without the instrument.
2. The church of the New Testament did not worship with the instrument.
3. The church subsequent to the first century church did not worship with the instrument for over 600 years.
4. The Greek Orthodox church still does not worship with the instrument.
5. Early leaders of the reformation did not condone the use of the instrument in worship.
6. As far as the instrument goes, we stand right next to those who have historically opposed it.
7. Who is it then that has diverged from the vast majority of history on this issue?
8. It is the burden of those who use the instrument in worship to justify its use and practice

CONCLUSION:

1. Our plea is to restore New Testament Christianity as it was within the church of the first century.
 - 1) To do this, we must go back to the pattern within the New Testament for worship.
 - 2) The pattern of the New Testament for music is SINGING.
 - 3) That pattern was properly held for a little over 600 years.
 - 4) That pattern was supported by those of the reformation.
 - 5) That pattern is what we practice today.
2. Next week, we will look at some New Testament arguments against

instrumental music.

3. Invitation