

## INTRODUCTION



The surprised visitor could not believe her brown eyes! All the church was assembled together on the Lord's Day, yet not a single organ, piano, tambourine, guitar, or drum could be seen or heard! She wondered what kind of church would, or *could* function in an entertainment-mad society without instrumental music in its assembly. She asked out of curiosity, "*Where's the organ?*"

Yes, there are churches in the twenty-first century that still sing praises to the Lord and edify one another without the aid of man-made instruments. Those who are looking for a show might be disappointed, but the following question must be considered: "Did Jesus die on Calvary in order to establish a theater for our pleasure, or a church for our salvation?" (Acts 2:47) The blood-bought *ekklesia*<sup>1</sup> is "called out"<sup>2</sup> of the pleasure-mad throng for her spiritual edification, not for mere carnal entertainment!

## A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

A fundamental principle, not only for religion, but for most every walk of life: If you want to please someone, find out what *he* likes! Any question about why the church

worships the way she does needs to be answered from what has been revealed to us by Christ and in "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Don't be like a husband who buys his wife a ratchet set for *her* birthday! *Read* what the New Testament says about music in the church; *then* you will truly know what God likes!

## MUSIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Were you aware that the word "music" is used only one time in the New Testament? Jesus used the word in His parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25)--*sumphonia* in the original Greek, meaning a "*unison* of sound...i.e. a *concert* of instruments..."<sup>3</sup> But no symphonies are ever mentioned by Jesus or the apostles in reference to His *ekklesia*. In fact, the word "instruments" appears only twice in the New Testament--when Paul speaks of our bodies as "instruments" in Romans 6:13. ("instrument"(singular) does not appear in the New Testament)

Jesus sang a hymn with the apostles after the Passover, the night in which He was betrayed. We also read of Him singing praise to His Father one other time: "in the midst of the church" (Hebrews 2:12). We thus have a divine precedent from Jesus, who always obeyed the Father--*sing!*

When the church is established in the book of Acts, again we find no mention of singing, or instrumental music, in the assembly of the saints. The only singing

mentioned in all of Acts is from the depths of the Philippian jail when Paul and Silas were heard by their fellow prisoners "praying and singing" praises to God at midnight (Acts 16:25).

The silence of the Scriptures on musical instruments in the church is not considered enough to persuade some to sing without them in the church, but it is *at least* an indication that many churches place far too much emphasis on this part of our service to God in the church. When the Lord *does* speak about music through His apostle, the words are "teach," "speak," and "admonish," with no mention of *playing* anywhere except "**in your heart** to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16-17).

Words spoken with the human voice, emanating from a heart that is in tune with God, are the worship that God has asked of His children. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). The fruit of our lips is the worship God wants. Why then do some want to give Him a ratchet set?

## THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

About 190 A.D., Clement of Alexandria listed eight musical instruments used by the ancients, then said:

***"We, however, make use of but one instrument, the word of peace alone by which we honor God, and no longer the ancient psaltery, nor the trumpet, the tympanum and the aulos, as was the custom among those expert in war and those scornful of the fear of God who employed string instruments in their festive gatherings, as if to arouse their remissness of spirit through such rhythms."***  
(Paedagogus, Book 2, Chapter 4)

Notice the one instrument Clement said was in use during his time. Isn't that same "word of peace" still sufficient for our edification today? (Colossians 3:16: 1 Peter 4:11)

Historians also confirm that instrumental music was not played in the assembly of the early church:

***"Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the 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 VI to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 755."*** (THE AMERICAN CYCLOPAEDIA, Vol. 12, p. 688)

Even groups that freely use them today will concede that the organ arrived late for church.

## THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE REFORMERS

During the Reformation, when souls began to leave vain religious traditions and return to the simple teachings of the New Testament, the organ was rejected as not being in harmony with the word of God:

*“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. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to Him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints, only in a known tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:16)”*  
(Commentary on Psalms 33, John Calvin)

To refer to churches that do not have an organ as *non-instrumental*, is like referring to churches that don't burn incense as *non-incense burning* churches. It is a technically correct term, but not very helpful or fair to the whole discussion. Why are the churches who remain with the pattern considered odd by those who have changed God's order?

### “IN THE MID-1800's”

There was a time in this country when singing without instruments was normal in most churches. For example, back in the mid-1800's there was a small Illinois town that had two churches in the community. Neither one wore the name “Church of

Christ,” and neither one used instrumental music. But when one finally bought an organ, the other soon followed. It is hard to believe that the purchase of these instruments was the result of any serious study of God's word.

### SO...WHERE IS THE ORGAN?

So how do we answer the question of our curious visitor? According to the Bible, we have to conclude that God does expect the assembly to have an organ. In fact, He wants to hear one organ for every soul who assembles. If you truly care about finding the whereabouts of the organ God is seeking, it will not be found being manufactured by Wurlitzer or Hammond. The organ of God's choice is the one He created within each of us. “Singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord” is the will of God, in keeping with the psalmist who said: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--These, O God, You will not despise” (Psalms 51:17).

Where's the organ in your church? May it always be a humble heart in each member, clean and pure in the sight of God, bringing forth thanksgiving and praise to God, and words of edification and admonition to others. God has told us His desire. Is His desire your pleasure also? “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

### ENDNOTES :

- 1 Greek word translated “church” in the New Testament (see *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, James Strong, #1577)
- 2 “eklesia” carries this meaning (see *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Thayer, #1577)
- 3 *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, James Strong, #4858

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# Where's the Organ?



by

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