

WHERE DO YOU STAND ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC? WHERE SHOULD YOU STAND?

by Stafford North

A useful way to study whether instruments of music are acceptable in Christian worship is to study the various positions taken for and against their use and then to examine each in light of scripture. Below are listed the most widely recognized of these positions, pro and con, and some thoughts on each.

A Review of Positions Favoring the Use of Instruments in Christian Worship.

1. Instruments should be used in Christian worship because they are commanded. Those with this view cite Psalm 150:3, for example, which says “make music to Him with tambourine and harp” and 2 Chronicles 29:26 which says they used cymbals, harps, and lyres as “commanded by the Lord through his prophets.”

The weakness of this view is that the commands and examples are from the Old Testament plan for worship and not from any teaching for Christian worship. In the Christian age, we do not worship as the Jews did with priests dressing in special clothing, offering of animal sacrifices, burning of special incense, and confessing sins over the head of a goat. To look to Jewish worship for what is acceptable in Christian worship is not God’s way. Jesus told the woman at the well (John 4:23) that the time had come when people would worship God in a new way, and in the Christian age we follow that new plan contained in the New Testament. To use commands about Jewish worship as authority for God’s plan for Christian worship is to use the wrong source. Those teachings are not our guide in the Christian age. Christ nailed that law to the cross (Colossians 2:14) and Romans 7:1-7 says that it has passed away. In discussing this point, some say, since Jesus worshipped at the temple where instruments were used in an indication that we can worship in this way. Does that apply to all the actions of temple worship such as offering animal sacrifices and other special ceremonies of the priests? We follow Jesus’ example by worshipping as God has taught for our era just as He followed God’s plan for His era.

2. The use of instrumental music in Christian worship is authorized by the New Testament’s use of the Greek word *psallo*, a word which means to sing with an instrument.

The New Testament does, in some passages, use the word *psallo* in regard to Christian worship. In Ephesians 5:19, for example, the passage says to “Sing [*ado*] and make melody [*psallo*] in your heart to the Lord.” The original meaning of the word *psallo* was “to pluck.” Over time it was associated with “plucking” a stringed instrument. Then it came to mean to “sing while plucking.” Still later, in New Testament times, it was typically used to mean to sing without an instrument (Ferguson 13). We all know that words can change meaning over time. Take the

word “cool,” for example. For years this word meant that something was less than room temperature and thus was “cool” as opposed to “warm.” Now, however, the word is often used to mean that something is “neat,” or “hip” or “stylish.” “Cool” has a new meaning, and so have “neat” and “hip.” Words do change in meaning.

We should not be surprised, therefore, that over several centuries, “*psallo*” had changes in its meaning. Look carefully, however, at Ephesians 5:19. It says to sing (*ado*) and make melody (*psallo*) in your heart. In this passage, the word for sing is *ado* which clearly means to vocalize in song. Literally translated, the verse would read, “sing (with your voice) and sing with your heart.” The verse uses *psallo* to describe something one does with the heart. Surely the verse does not mean we can play an instrument with our hearts. If the word necessarily includes the use of an instrument, then the passage says I must sing and along with that I must play an instrument in my heart. What could that mean? It can and does mean that I should sing and, as I sing with my voice, I should sing or “make melody” with my heart. Since to do something “with the heart” means to do it “with feeling,” or “with meaning,” another way of stating the meaning of this verse is to say we should “sing and feel and mean what we are singing.” All the translators of major versions of the New Testament have understood what the word *psallo* meant to those of the first century and have, therefore, translated it “sing.”

To argue that *psallo* authorizes the use of instruments puts one in a very odd situation. If “*psallo*” means to “sing with instruments,” it is very strange that early Christians did not do it. The historical record on this point is quite clear. Musical instruments were not used in Christian music until about a thousand AD. As late as 1250, the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas was opposing the use of instruments in worship. Are we really to believe that early Christians, who knew Greek very well, knew that *psallo* meant to sing with instruments but they never did what the word called for? Clearly they knew that *psallo* did not imply the use of instruments to accompany singing for such was never their practice. The Greek Orthodox Church, also well acquainted with the Greek language, still does not use instruments in its worship. If instruments are inherent in *psallo*, then one could not fulfill the command of that word without using instruments and that would mean that *a cappella* singing falls short of the command and that everyone would have to play an instrument.

The Latin word *a cappella*, in fact, is a word used to describe early Christian music. It means “as in the chapel” or “as in the church.” The very word everyone uses to describe “singing without instruments,” then, means to sing like the church sang in the early centuries. To say, then, that the word *psallo* implies the use of instruments is to say the writers of scripture told the church to use instruments and yet, while the church was under the leadership of these very writers, they didn’t do as they commanded. So the *psallo* argument is not a justification for the use of instruments in Christian worship.

3. Instruments are allowed in Christian worship because they are mentioned as being part of worship in heaven. Some say, as John relates the vision he sees in heaven, he mentions instruments in the worship. Since, the argument goes, we will use instruments in heaven, we should be allowed to use them on earth.

This argument sounds good on the surface but a careful examination reveals its flaws. Let's look at the passages in Revelation which some say justify their use in Christian worship. Revelation 1:10 speaks of one whose voice is loud "like a trumpet." Just a loud voice. No worship with instruments. Revelation 14:2 speaks of a sound like a "roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne." The singing here is compared to rushing waters and to thunder and to the sound of harps. No worship with instruments here either, but there was loud singing. In Revelation 18:22, when the wicked city is destroyed, the angel said there would no longer be the music of harpers or flute players or trumpeters in the city any more. This verse speaking of secular music on earth and is not describing a worship scene.

In Revelation 5:8, the text says, "the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song." The elders and living creatures are seen holding both harps and golden bowls. We are told that the golden bowls of incense are a figurative expression representing the prayers of the saints. As incense, in the Jewish age, rose as a sweet smell to God, so in our age, our prayers rise as a sweet smell to him. The harps, of the Jewish age, here are a figure also taken from the Old Testament worship, to represent the singing in heaven. When the passage speaks directly of what these creatures and elders did musically, it just says they "sang a new song." Still no worship with instruments. Revelation 15:3 says that those victorious over the beast "held harps given them by God and [they] sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb." Again, a group is said to be holding harps, still used as a figure from the Old Testament, for when we are told what they actually did, we are told they "sang the song of Moses . . . and the Lamb."

So these passages in Revelation that mention harps are using these instruments in a symbolic sense as does Revelation with bowls of incense, lambs, an altar of burnt offering and an altar of incense. Do we want to take all of these figures, like the altar for incense and the altar for burnt offering and make them justification for using these things in our Christian worship?

Even if one were to prove that the heavenly scene has singing with instruments, that would not be proof that Christians on earth should use them. We must take our practice in Christian worship from what God has directed Christians to do in their worship. So, no proof from Revelation either that actual instruments are

used with singing in heaven and certainly no proof that they are to be used in Christian worship.

4. Instruments are allowed in Christian worship as an aid to the singing. Those who hold this position say that instruments are not, in themselves, intended as an act of worship. They argue that just as we use a song book to aid our singing, and just as we use a loud speaker system, an electronic device, to project the song leader's voice, we can use a piano or organ to help people sing the right notes.

The issue in this argument is whether the playing of instruments in worship is, in itself, an act of worship offered to God, or is simply done to help us to do more effectively something God has told us to do in worship. First, it must be admitted even by those who take this position, that in many instances, instruments are played in worship services intended as an offering of worship to God. Many churches use instruments to play entire pieces of music with no singing at all. Such could hardly be called using instruments as an aid to singing.

Others who use instruments argue that just as a singer gets to use his/her talent in music to praise the Lord, so should one with an instrumental talent should be allowed to use that talent to praise the Lord. The point is, then, that many who believe in the use of instruments consider their use a means of worship on their own and not an aid to anything. To make the aid argument, one would have to confine the use of instruments to the role of aiding the singing and nothing more, and that is not the typical practice.

But let us examine this argument in a different way. Can the use of instruments be considered in the category of aids like a hymnbook, or an air conditioner or a speaker system? There is a strong reason, in addition to what is stated above, why this is not an acceptable position. We must recognize that instruments can be and have been a means of worship on their own. In the Old Testament, instruments were viewed as a means of worship when no one was singing. "Praise Him with the tambourine and the harp" (Psalm 150:3). A hymnbook cannot in any sense be a means of worship on its own, nor can a loud speaker system. Thus, something incapable of being a means of worship on its own might be considered as an aid to worship—a building, pews, a heating system, even a song-leader. But instruments do not belong in this category. Many use instruments today as an act of worship even while others claim the use of instruments is only an aid. It cannot be both. The aid argument takes an element of Jewish worship, just like offering an animal sacrifice or the burning of incense, and seeks to use it "only as an aid." At the least, it is highly questionable to take what, on its own, can be a means of worship, and to consider it only an aid even though many others have intended it as worship. Can one take what is often used as a means of worship on its own and, simply by declaring so, change that use into just an aid? Surely such is not a wise course when following God's directions for worship is so important.

Those who take the position that instruments are only an aid, often couple that view with a statement that instruments are nowhere forbidden in Christian worship. So we move next to examine that position.

5. Instruments in Christian worship are acceptable because they are nowhere forbidden. According to this argument, if God had not wanted us to use instruments He would have specifically forbidden them. God told us not to lie or to commit fornication. Since God, in a similar way, did not forbid the use of instruments in worship, then we may use them without any violation of scripture.

I sometimes wonder if those who make this argument have thought through it carefully. Do they really believe that one can do *anything* in worship that is not specifically forbidden? Has God forbidden using brownies for the bread of the Lord's Supper? Has God forbidden milkshakes for the cup? I sure like brownies and milkshakes. They would taste good to me. If one takes the position that we can use instruments because they are not forbidden, how would he explain that we would be wrong to use brownies and a milkshake for communion? We all understand, of course, that when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He used unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine and said to take these elements in memory of Him. He did not, of course, have to give a list of all the foods not to use in the Lord's Supper. When He specified what to use, that settled it. He did not have to provide a list of five hundred things not to use; He only had to specify what to use. This is how language works. If the doctor specifies a particular prescription for you, you don't expect the pharmacist to say, "I know the doctor said Zocor, but he didn't say not to give you Milk of Magnesia. Since it is cheaper, I thought you'd like me to substitute it." You would say, "Look, the doctor said Zocor, and that is exactly what you should give me. Anything else is an unauthorized substitution." And you would be right.

The New Testament specifies "singing" as the type of music for Christians to use in worship. Paul mentions singing as he describes what happened in the Corinthian assembly (1 Corinthians 14:15). Paul mentions singing "one to another" in Ephesus 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. These and other passages describe what we are to do when we are with each other, when we come together. Romans 15:6 speaks of our glorifying God "with one heart and mouth." As we sing together, then, we sing with one mouth and one heart. Hebrews 13:15 says our sacrifice of praise is the "fruit of lips that confess his name." When one type of music is specified for worship, all other types of music are necessarily eliminated. The Bible is replete with examples of this principle. God prescribed one way to move the ark of the covenant. When David chose another way, he could not justify that by saying, "But you didn't say not to move it on an oxcart" (1 Samuel 6). In another case, when God specified a particular way the priests were to obtain the fire for offering incense, Nadab and Abihu were not permitted to "bring strange fire" derived in another way (Leviticus 10). Their father Aaron didn't say, "But God didn't say they couldn't get their fire somewhere else." They were stricken dead because they used "unauthorized fire." When the Corinthians were

making the Lord's Supper into a common meal, Paul told them He had received from the Lord the instructions he had given them about how to take the supper, and they were to partake as they had been told and were not, therefore, to invent new ways of doing it (1 Corinthians 11:24).

If my wife asks me to go to the grocery and get a bottle of de-caffeinated, diet coke, she does not give me a list of all the things not to buy. Just specifying what I am to get is sufficient. That is how language works. And so it is with God. When He tells us to sing as part of our worship to Him, we are not at liberty to use anything not forbidden; we are, rather, permitted to do in worship only what He has specified. Since instruments are not specified as a means of Christian worship, we should regard them as forbidden.

6. Some say using instruments in worship is not "a salvation issue," so whether we use them or not is a matter of little importance. Those making this argument say that those who like instruments can use them, and those who oppose them can refrain. The use of instruments, they say, is just a matter of preference. After all Paul said that on "disputable matters," we should let people do as they choose (Romans 14:1-3). We are not to judge each other in such matters.

There certainly are "matters of preference" about which we should not raise an issue or judge one another. The specific cases Paul mentions in Romans 14 are eating meat that had been offered to idols and observing special days. On such matters, we should allow each person his own personal opinion and not treat this difference as a "salvation issue." Paul's explanation of these issues makes it clear, however, that there are other issues which cannot be treated in this fashion. Paul certainly does not recommend that personal choice be allowed in every matter on which we differ. So the real question here is whether the use of instruments falls in the category of "matters of preference" or do instruments fall in the category of things about which Paul would say some "are turning to a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6). Peter described some as those who "have left the straight way and wandered off" (2 Peter 2:15). The New Testament is filled with admonitions like the one from John: "See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you (1 John 2:24).

So the question is this: Does the use of instrumental music in Christian worship belong among those issues on which we can and should grant liberty, or does it belong among those issues on which we must take a firm stand? How do we go about answering such a question? What guidance does the scripture give in deciding what is "a matter of opinion" and what is "a matter of faith."

Since Romans 14 is a passage often cited in such discussions, what light would that passage cast on this matter? The prime issue in Romans 14 is eating meat offered to idols. Certainly Paul would never have approved eating meat offered to an idol as worship to an idol. He is here discussing, rather, the extent to one must take special precautions to avoid eating such meat in a non-worship setting.

There is no question of worship here for Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 10:18-21 that no one can eat at an idol's table and at the Lord's table too. The question, then, is only a matter of how far one must go to avoid the appearance of eating meat offered to idols. One man eats everything, asking no questions, because he knows an idol is nothing. The other goes to great lengths to find out about the meat so he can avoid eating the meat if it has been sacrificed to an idol. His conscience is still tender on this issue. In 1 Corinthians 10:25, Paul says one does not have to check out the meat he buys in the meat market. In Romans 14 he says that if someone wants to take such care, it is not wrong, and all should be willing to accept the brother who does it differently than himself. So those who take special care should not condemn those who do not take such special care. Neither one is worshipping an idol. Also in Romans 14, Paul makes a similar point about keeping special days. It is not wrong, for example, for a Jew whose national custom is to refrain from work on the Sabbath to continue to do this. Those who choose to continue such a custom may do so but should not bind it on other Christians who do not wish to participate in it.

What do we learn from this examination of the issues on which Paul insists there must be liberty? They are matters of personal practice, not something all the church does in their solemn assemblies. These matters of liberty do not involve moral questions or doctrinal differences. Paul is not speaking here of allowing liberty on what the whole church does when they come together for worship. He is only dealing with what meat a person puts on his table at home or the way in which a family deals with a national tradition. On matters like these we should allow liberty and not expect all to follow the same practice.

When we come together in our assemblies to worship God, however, we are dealing with an entirely different type of issue. On matters of worship God has always given very specific teaching, and if there is any lesson to be learned from God's dealing with people over the span of the Bible story, it is that when God tells His people how to worship Him, He expects them to follow His instructions exactly. From the very first occasion of worship recorded in scripture, the case of Cain and Abel, it is clear that one can worship unacceptably. God wants His specific instructions about worship to be followed. While we do not know all the details of what Cain did wrong, we learn from him that it is possible to worship improperly. Later, the Israelites disobeyed by worshipping a golden calf when God had said to worship only Him. The priests Nadab and Abihu brought "unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command" (Leviticus 10:1-2). What did they do wrong? God had told them how to obtain the fire for offering incense and they got their fire in some way that was "unauthorized." God does not permit in worship what He has not "authorized." Saul offered a sacrifice and Samuel told him he had "not kept the command the Lord your God gave you" (1 Samuel 13:13). What command did Saul disobey? God never told Saul directly he could not offer a sacrifice. The command he disobeyed was God's command authorizing the tribe of Levi to offer sacrifices. When God told the Levites to preside at the sacrifice, He was also commanding all others not to do it. Saul

disobeyed this implied command and was severely punished for it. In 2 Chronicles 26:16-20, we read of Uzziah entering the temple to offer incense. Eighty courageous priests confronted him saying “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord.” Uzziah, the king, became angry, but the Lord struck him with leprosy which he had until he died. Thus, another case showing that when God designated certain people or certain things in worship, He is, by that statement, excluding other people or other actions. Hebrews 7:14 states that when Moses “said nothing about priests” from Judah, that was equal to stating that priests from Judah were excluded. So when the command specifies only one possibility out of several in a category, the others in that category are excluded.

But these are all Old Testament cases? While we are told to learn from such examples (1 Corinthians 10:11), is God as strict in the New Testament age about worshipping only as He commands? If God expected strict obedience to His worship instructions in both the Patriarchal Age and the Jewish Age, the presumption would be that He would expect strict adherence in the Christian Age. And that is exactly what we find. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul gives a strong rebuke to the Corinthians about how they were partaking of the Lord’s Supper. They had made of it a time of a common meal, a time which created divisions and insults to those who had less to bring. Paul reminds them in verse 24, that what he had told them about how to partake of the supper had come directly from the Lord, and he calls them back to the instructions he had given them before about how to partake. Note that Paul got the instructions about how to worship from the Lord and had passed these to the Corinthians. They, however, had added unauthorized things to their partaking of the communion. Paul urges them to return to what he had taught before. He further charges that those who have added these things would be worshipping “in an unworthy manner” and so are guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27). Clearly this makes worshipping according to what has been revealed to us a matter of highest importance.

In view of what God has said in both the Old and New Testaments about how important it is to worship only as He has revealed, and in view of the condemnation that falls on those who do not, surely adding a kind of music not used by early Christians when under apostolic guidance must be viewed as a matter of importance. Does this raise it to the level of a salvation issue? Clearly there are worship errors that do reach that level. And here is the clincher: How can anyone be absolutely certain that God does not care whether one adds instruments or not? One may say he thinks God does not care, but there is no way, in view of all the Bible says about not departing from the revealed plan of worship, that anyone can be certain. Since we can be certain that singing without instruments is in harmony with God’s revealed plan, but cannot be equally certain that using instruments is acceptable, surely it is wiser not to use them.

So is the use of instruments a “salvation issue?” Since God has shown us that worship is to be done only as He commands and He has not commanded instruments, surely it is wiser to offer Him singing, which He has authorized, rather than the instruments, which He has not authorized. Exactly how God will deal with this unauthorized addition in the judgment day, He has not said specifically. And that is just the problem; we don’t know. So let’s offer vocal music, which we know pleases Him, rather than instrumental music which we cannot know will please Him. Since one cannot know for sure that offering “unauthorized” music is not a salvation issue, we are clearly on more certain ground to sing “a cappella,” in the manner of the early church. What we bring to God in worship matters to God. Let us, therefore, bring to Him what He has asked us to bring.

Should those who oppose the use of instruments, then, extend their fellowship to those who do? Fellowship implies approval. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul addresses the question of fellowship with the man who has his father’s wife. He says that even the pagans do not approve of such behavior. For the Corinthians to continue to fellowship him would be to send a message of approval for something even pagans condemn. Paul then commands them to withdraw from him. Paul also writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 that “if anyone does not obey our instruction in this epistle, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.” To associate with those who have strayed, Paul says, is to send the message of approval of what they do. In the same way, John tells Christians that if someone “comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him” (2 John 10). Again the point is clear, to extend fellowship implies approval. This does not mean, of course, that we can have no contact with such people, but does mean that we do not extend to those who are engaging in a practice which is not in harmony with scripture the same fellowship we would to those who are in such harmony.

If those not believing the use of instruments is God’s plan for Christian worship extend full fellowship to those who do, by such fellowship they indicate that they consider the matter of no consequence. For them to extend their fellowship, indeed, is an encouragement to use the instrument. If it makes no difference in fellowship, then it really makes no difference. While, as indicated above, we cannot predict exactly how God will deal in judgment with those who use the instrument, the very fact that we do not know that God will approve of it should be sufficient reason not to give it our support. Extending fellowship to those who use instruments in worship is certainly an encouragement for them to continue its use and, eventually, a discouragement for anyone to oppose it. Surely no one would believe that churches who fellowship those who use the instrument will, over the long term, not have pressure to begin to use it themselves. To fellowship those who use the instrument in worship is but a way of saying that the issue is of no significance.

A Review of Positions Opposed to the Use of Instruments in Christian Worship.

1. Instruments should not be used in Christian worship because this violates the principle of seeking to restore New Testament Christianity. It is widely accepted that instruments were not used in Christian worship when the inspired apostles were in charge of worship assemblies. Everett Ferguson quotes J. W. McKinnon's doctoral dissertation at Columbia University which places the introduction of instruments in the tenth century (12). If we seek, then, to restore New Testament Christianity in worship, as well as in doctrine, organization, and membership, then we certainly would not use instruments. Since instruments had been used both by themselves and with singing under the Jewish system, it seems clear that abstaining from the use of instruments in either fashion under the New Covenant was intentional. If, then, one is seeking to be the church of the New Testament, as restoration churches do, then one would sing without instruments. To add them is clearly to weaken one's stance as a restoration church and, thus, to make it more difficult to stay with the restoration concept on other issues. If one refrains from the use of instruments in worship for no other reason than this, the choice would be the best one. "Because the early church when under apostolic guidance did not do it that way" is an excellent reason to refrain from any activity in worship or church practice.
2. Instruments should not be used in Christian worship because they hinder rather than aid the congregational singing. That congregational singing was part of Christian worship is clear both from references to it in the New Testament and in Patristic writing. What was the purpose of this singing? Christians were to "teach and admonish one another" as they sang "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16). The singing was to edify or strengthen the church (1 Corinthians 14:26). The singing was to praise God (Hebrews 2:12; 13:15; Romans 15:9). But instruments can do none of these things. Instruments do not teach, admonish, edify, or praise. So playing an instrument cannot achieve what we are to achieve with our singing. Churches using instruments with their singing, moreover, do not have as much congregational participation in the singing as do those do those not using instruments. Often the instruments overpower the singing so that it is hardly heard. Rather than help achieve the purposes of praising God and teaching and edifying one another, instruments tend to thwart such purposes.
3. Instruments should not be used in Christian worship because they tend to move "worship" toward "entertainment." A problem in many churches today is that their worship occasions are becoming more and more like entertainment. This trend involves two wrong moves: (1) those who are supposed to be offering their own worship to God are transformed into mere spectators, and (2) worship that should be "God-centered" becomes "me-centered." Thus the occasion is planned around what the people like to hear rather than around what can help people send the right message to God in the way He has prescribed. Unfortunately, some churches use the "concert" mode to attract people to attend and, in the process, "sell out" their worship to entertainment. The use of instruments adds to this

- “entertainment” mode along with other elements of a concert—singers on stage with microphones, lots of sound equipment in evidence, lots of clapping after the songs, adulation expressed to the “big name” singers, and songs chosen to please the crowd. Such “entertainment” is not the picture we get of New Testament worship offered to God and the use of instruments contributes to this trend.
4. Instruments should not be used in Christian worship because they have frequently been a source of division among churches. Churches where instruments are introduced are often split apart and churches which use them and those who do not cannot have close fellowship because of the difference in their worship style. This has been true through the ages and is still true today. Why introduce something into Christian worship, which is supposed to bring us together, (Romans 15:5) which, in actuality, tears congregations apart?
 5. Instruments should not be used in Christian worship because they introduce an unauthorized element to worship. The Bible makes it clear that we must worship God only as He has authorized. God has never left human beings to design their own plans to worship Him. Since the New Testament does not authorize instruments in worship and since Christians in the apostolic age did not use them, we should not presume that God desires them in our worship. The use of unauthorized elements into worship is condemned in the Bible and those who did it were censured. We would have to believe, therefore, that God would be displeased by adding such unauthorized elements today.

Once two men were debating the use of instruments in worship. Since the one for using instruments played the piano, the other asked him to go to a piano and play Amazing Grace. When he was finished his opponent asked, “Why didn’t you sing?” The man favoring instruments said, “Because you didn’t ask.” The opponent of instruments said, “I rest my case. I don’t use an instrument in Christian worship because God didn’t ask.”

In this study, we have seen that positions taken in favor of the use of instruments in Christian worship do not stand in the light of examination. The positions against such use, on the other hand, are worthy of acceptance. At the very least, the use of instruments in the assembly of Christians is highly questionable, and there are strong indications that God does not authorize or approve their use. Of course there are other elements involved in acceptable worship, and we should all be concentrating on how to make our singing as God would have it as well as how to improve our participation in other elements of worship. Any congregation, however, that wants to be sure its worship receives God’s approval will refrain from including unauthorized elements such as the use of instruments. We can be certain that sincere a cappella singing is pleasing to the Lord. We cannot, however, be sure that using instruments pleases Him. At the very least, it would seem wise not to take such a chance? If those singing are otherwise worshipping properly, no one thinks that singing without instruments is unacceptable to God. Surely this is the better course to follow!

Works Cited

Ferguson, Everett. “Lifting Our Voices.” *Gospel Advocate* (February, 2000), 12-13.