

“Worship Music”
Ephesians 5:17-19; Colossians 3:16
Judsonia Church of Christ, February 8, 2004
John L. Kachelman, Jr.

Introduction:

- I. The cultural chaos of our modern society has invaded the church. One of the clearest evidence of this is in changes in the manner and practice of worship.
 1. Many will not notice the subtle cultural restructuring that is in process with the lessening moral values or the compromise of the oneness of the Church. They may lament that "we are not as we once were" but not much more attention will be paid. However when changes begin to be made in the worship procedures then attention is seized.
 2. It should not be surprising to find that worship changes are being encouraged by those living in a culture opposed to traditional values/beliefs. Those in favor of following culture try to rally support for their changes under the banner of "more spiritual worship." They seek to initiate changes in worship in these areas:
 - 1) Assemblies where the whole Church is gathered together are de-emphasized. Small groups are being advocated.
 - 2) Mechanical instruments in worship are being tolerated. It is being suggested that the mechanical instrument is no different than the number of Communion Cups, song books, etc.
 - 3) "Praise Worship" is being touted as the only real avenue of "spiritual worship" (i.e. holding up hands, swaying with songs, hand-clapping, other emotional avenues so participants can "feel" the worship).
Note: We are once again hearing that "worship" is an attitude not an act! "Those who believe in using instrumental music in the worship as an aid, or on the same basis as songbooks begin with a definition like this *Worship is simply an attitude – a condition of the heart.* They say you could not put instrumental music in the worship because you could not swallow the instrument ... Worship is an action, not an attitude. It is service rendered and the observation of rites. Worship then, is an action – not an attitude" (G.K. Wallace, *A Critical Review of a New (Old) Modernism and a Plea for Unity*, p. 60).
 - 4) "Special Music" presentations are urged as a means to bring people into the building (i.e. solos, singing groups, quartets, choirs, etc.).
- II. Consider now some of the more prominent "changes" in worship music that are affecting the Lord's Church. These "changes" are sowing seeds of

digression and apostasy. Many are unsuspecting followers of these errors because they "do not know" God's Truth on these issues.

Body:

- I. The use of **MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC** in the worshiping assemblies.
 - A. This issue has long provided a fertile area where "culture" seeks to modify God's commands for worship music. Today's culture has attempted to confuse Believers about this issue. Consider the Scriptures and observe how they can provide us with boldness and confidence in our belief.
 - B. Some basic observations on this issue:
 1. Controversies over worship music have embittered and divided brethren. It has wrought division and harsh words in denominations when first introduced.
 2. This topic is seldom studied. Because it is seldom studied most do not know why we do not use mechanical instruments in singing. This ignorance leaves many susceptible to accepting error.
 3. Consider some common remarks about not using mechanical instrumental music in worship.
 - a. "It is just our heritage in the American Restoration Movement."
 - b. It is because those who began our branch of the "A.R.M." were too poor to purchase the instrument."
 - c. "It is an archaic belief that should be changed."
 - d. "I really don't know why we don't use it."
 - e. "Our practice is rooted in an arrogance and is more sinful than actually using it."
 - f. "It is a dinosaur from the past traditions that should be changed."
 - C. How do you view mechanical instrumental music in the worshiping assemblies? Is it "wrong but not sinful"? Is it merely opinion? Is it a sin that will cause one to go to Hell? Does it invalidate worship?
 - D. Consider five of the arguments FOR the tolerance of the mechanical instrument in worship. Some urge us to "tolerate" the mechanical instrument even if we cannot "accept" it. *Such urges us to accept that which God condemned.*

1. *"Instrumental music is a 'non-issue' today!"*
 - a. Such addresses the issue with apathy and urges all to view it as a neutral matter. It is admitted that instruments have caused problems but so have other things (i.e. multiple cups in Communion; Bible Classes; Orphan's Homes; etc.). With a shrug the whole practice is passed off as inconsequential!
 - b. However the issue is very important. It is eternally important! The current attempt fails to admit the following facts about the issue:
 1. It numbs one's sensitivity to obeying the absolute authority of God's Word and respecting the divine will as being able to direct our worship (Matthew 15:7-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). To God this is an issue!
 2. It fails to recognize that mechanical instrumental music is another KIND of music. It is different from vocal music (See James D. Bales, *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship*, p. 278).
 3. It mis-classifies mechanical instrumental music with Communion cups, etc. The number of containers used in Communion does not add another element! (Bales, p. 261).
 4. It fails to see the connection of mechanical instrumental music with religious authority. If it is just "opinion neutral" then so is all else in religious practice! (Bales, p. 274,283).
2. *"Instrumental music is only an AID to singing. It is not an addition."*
 - a. Such often presents mechanical instrumental music as occupying the same category as a meeting-house, lights, sound systems, etc., as it helps the worshipers sing better.
 - b. Mechanical instrumental music IS NOT an aid! (Bales, p. 259ff).
 - 1) It causes singing to become artistic performances for man and man forgets God.
 - 2) It discourages instead of encourages singing.
 - 3) It adds another kind of music which God has not authorized (thus leaving the realm of an "aid").
 - 4) If it "aids" worship by making the services more attractive, what else can we change to bring more in? Such an "aid" is really a detriment (See Bales, p. 269 for the inconsistency of this argument).
 - 5) If the unauthorized "aid" of the mechanical instrument is

acceptable, then any other "aid" will be legal! (See Bales, p. 270-272).

- 6) It fails to recognize that some "aids" are departures from God's revealed will (Bales, p. 272b),
 - 7) It fails to admit that mechanical instrumental music in the Old Testament was considered more than an "aid" – it was an addition to it! (Bales, p. 280).
 - 8) "The aid argument is an old one, and it has not improved with age. However, it has sanctioned more and more additions to the worship....This argument supposes that we may accommodate the worship of God to our own taste and feelings, and model it in such a way as to enliven our affections, and give us pleasure" (Bales, p. 274-275a).
3. *"Instrumental music is okay because it is not a part of worship."*
- a. There are several variations of this argument:
 - 1) "The instrument aids only the worshiper and has no part in worship."
 - 2) "The true believer worships in spirit (attitude) and since you cannot put the instrument into his/her heart (attitude) you cannot have it in worship."
 - 3) "All of life is worship (Romans 12:1,2). We listen to music in daily life hence we are using instruments in worship. What's the difference in Monday – Saturday and on Sunday?"
 - b. Each of these positions is easily answered. It is sad that many today are ignorant of these matters.
 - 1) The notion that the mechanical instrument does not have a "part" in the worship is absurd. Mechanical instrumental music is a kind of music (Bales, 278). To add mechanical instrumental music is to add another kind of music to the services. To think that mechanical instrumental music has no part in worship when it is used in worship is to be ignorant of Scripture (2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 150:3-5 – "with"; See Bales 279-280).
 - 2) The contention that "worship" is only an attitude and not an act is an old liberal dodge that does not work. "Worship" is grossly misunderstood and abused in our day. Worship is an "action" that demonstrates devotion to God.¹ The error of believing that worship is only attitude and not action is evident in texts speaking of "coming to" and "going from"

worship (2 Samuel 12:20; Zechariah 14:16; Matthew 2:2; Acts 24:11; etc.). When we "worship" we are "drawing near" to God (an action). We "draw near" by speaking (Hebrews 13:15); singing (2 Chronicles 29:25-30); praying (2 Chronicles 7:3); giving (2 Chronicles 29:27,28); and Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). We must have the right attitude (heart/spirit) but we must also have the right action! Imbalance in either leads to vain worship. ***Mechanical instrumental music takes the action of worship and changes it from that which God commanded*** (i.e. it contaminates its "holiness").

3) The distorted concept that "worship" is everything we do in daily life has become a common notion. Romans 12:1,2 is used to suggest that everything a Christian does is "worship" (even the mundane tasks of each day). This distorts and confuses the whole concept of "worship" and leads sincere hearts to absurd conclusions.² The context of Romans 12 shows that Paul was discussing devoted living instead of devoted worship. To equate "worship" assemblies with "services" in every day living is to ignore the fact that there are certain "worship acts" that must be performed in a spiritual setting and these are far different from the normal duties of daily living!

c. Mechanical instrumental music is definitely a part of worship. Just because some are defining "worship" in a way that permits the use of mechanical instruments, does not erase the fact that it is worship that God has not commanded!

4. *"Instrumental music is not the problem. Those who oppose it are the troublers and they are causing the division – not those who are sincere in its use!"*

a. This is another age-old ploy of "charge and counter-charge follow each other in quick succession, and general confusion is the result."³ (1 Kings 18:17,18).

b. History is clear – The division has come by those who have pushed the use of the mechanical instrument!⁴

c. This argument strives to remove any commendable qualities from the divisions. Inspiration does not condemn Christians for causing division unless those divisions harm the Lord's Church (1

Cointhians 1:10). Some divisions are right and thus are commended (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 11:19).

- d. The truth of the division over mechanical instruments in the worship assemblies is summarized by Kurfrees. "One side introduces a practice admitting that the Lord does not require it, and knowing, in advance, that division in the body of Christ will be the inevitable result; the other side refuses to engage in the practice believing that the Lord requires them to stand aloof from it. Hence, here is an instance of division in the body of Christ mutually caused by both sides in a case of two opposing parties, but with this radical difference, viz., it is caused by one side when there is not only no necessity for it, but the most solemn of all reasons against it; while it is caused by the other side when there is not only a stern necessity for it, but when it is the last resort in order to maintain a pure conscience toward God and toward man. In the latter case, innocence can be maintained in no other way; in the former, only guilt is incurred" (p. 264-265).
5. *"Instrumental music should be allowed because it allows certain members to use talents for the Lord."*
- a. This is becoming a main argument for justifying the use of instruments in worship. Those who wish to introduce "special music" presentation also rest heavily upon this argument.
 - b. Bales, p. 331, treats this fully. There are a number of problems with this argument –
 - 1) It makes man's "talents" the standard for worship instead of God's Book.
 - 2) To base one's practices of worship upon "talents" is to replace "faith" with "sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).
 - 3) To argue for "talent" directed worship is to practice "will worship" (Colossians 2:18-23; Matthew 15:9).
 - 4) This allows man to "direct" his own worship (Jeremiah 10:23).
 - 5) This argument will allow the introduction of anything that is discovered as a "talent" (cooking; dancing; acrobatics; etc.). Interesting query - What happens when one has a "talent" to play a "one man band" but in doing so is unable to "sing"? Does his "talent" override Inspiration's command to "sing"?
 - 6) **Note:** In the arguments being made to allow chorus, solos, etc.,

into worship, this "talent" argument is foremost (i.e. "*God has given me a special talent to sing and I want to praise Him with it.*"). The same flaw appears in the justification of solos as in the justification for playing of mechanical instruments.

- f. Mechanical instruments of music should not be used in the worship assemblies. Even though Change Advocates castigate this position as "traditional heritage" it is biblically sound! The use of mechanical instruments of music is wrong (sinful) because . . .
1. **It DISTORTS** the biblical commands.
 2. **It COMPROMISES** the absoluteness of God's commands and the New Testament pattern of vocal music only in worship assemblies.
 3. **It WEAKENS** believers so they are willing to allow other innovations that will carry the Church further into apostasy.
 4. **It RESULTS** in disastrous consequences. The "end" it has historically led to is utter ruin.
 5. **It VIOLATES** the principle of holiness which is to govern God's people.

II. The use of "**PRAISE WORSHIP**" in the worshiping assemblies.

- A. This a term of recent use but it is being used in speeches, articles, and conversations as a descriptive term of the "true spirit" with which our modern culture defines genuine worship.
- B. Cultural voices charge that present worship assemblies are "dull, boring, sullen, and unspiritual." It is suggested that such must be changed and the Change Agents claim they have discovered the way to true "spiritual" worship – it is via "Praise Worship!" In addition it is charged that we have become guilty of ceremonialism in our assemblies – "Two songs, a prayer, and a song" is the rut; we do not use contemporary music; we have an unwritten worship program of when to stand; prayers are made with traditional phrases that are seldom understood and are actually "vain repetitions; etc. To counter this "stale atmosphere" we are being urged to accept the "shock treatment" of "change"!
- C. Congregations must be careful they are not guilty as charged! Many have allowed themselves to become ritualized in worship and ceremony and stale in worship spirit! We must present the right attitudes in worship. The Psalms present the attitude which our worship must portray (Psalms 100; 9:11; 67:3; Acts 2:47; Hebrews 13:15).

Apathy and nonchalance in worship is repulsive to God! (Malachi 1:10ff).

D. There are grievous problems with the "Change Advocates" solution of "their" Praise Worship. Here is another example of how their "good intentions" have gone awry.

1. **Inconsistency** They recoil at "traditions" in worship yet advocate their own set of "traditions." They ask us to trade our traditions for their traditions! They are quick to condemn others for "somber sullenness" yet they do not present an outward "joy." When asked about this they assert that they are rejoicing "inside" – why will they not allow such an option to those they consider "sullen"? They claim our worship is traditional and cultural. They want to "raise hands," kneel, and other practices in worship. Yet these are culturally rooted in Jewish life as revealed in Scripture. Why castigate us for being "culturally bound" while they are pleading for us to submit to another culture's restriction? This inconsistency should cause some to suspect the "changes" being urged! (Romans 14:22b).

2. **Emotionalism** The current fad is to make worship more of an up-lifting entertainment period rather than a period of devotion to God. People today are focusing upon "feelings" in worship more than upon participation in it. Worship is not a spectator sport! Current efforts by which emotionalism is given top priority: efforts to make the Lord's Supper more "meaningful" by someone carrying a cross down the center aisle or having a trio sing. The problem is that emotional changes must increase if they are to continue to stimulate. New boundaries must be crossed if the emotional stimulation is to remain "high." Ultimately "anything" that promises to add "meaning" will be tolerated (This opens the door to all kinds of error!). Tom Holland, "The current demand for change in worship ... is basically a challenge from the world to dictate to the church the kind of worship that will be appealing and worthy of applause."⁵ "A pentecostal aura hangs over the thought process; i.e., an emotional barometer determines whether a program, or action, is approved. The higher the emotional appeal, the more excitement is generated in implementing the practice. Emotionalism then becomes the motivation for religious activity ... The natural result of such a priority is that the believer is led to attend worship to 'get something out of the service' rather than giving his worship to God ... Church leaders begin to listen to the pleas of the people to

provide for them their 'felt needs.' 'Things' took the place of teaching" (Eddie Whitten, *What Does God Authorize In Worship?*, p. 293).

3. **Selfishness** The "ME Generation" has matured and is now influencing the Church. This is the generation directed solely by self-centered pursuits. If something is not "fulfilling" it is discarded. This tragic attitude has invaded families, marriages, jobs, and the Church. Its motto in the Church is based upon "felt needs." As Elders are pommelled with cries for "felt needs" to be fulfilled, the desired "changes" are soon enacted. Consequently "things" take the place of teaching as people try to "get something out of the worship." The problem is that people come to worship to GET something rather than to GIVE God devotion. This subtle shift has had a damning effect upon worship. We hear calls to make worship more "meaningful to me" rather than to make worship conform to God's decrees! Scriptural worship becomes secondary to personal appeal; faithfulness and devotion become secondary to meeting "needs."
 4. **Subjectiveness** Once the decision is made to "meet felt needs" one launches upon a subjective journey. "Needs" become the control of decision-making. Of course this leads to division because its only guide is emotions. Some claim that worship is made meaningful only when you sway as you sing songs; clap hands in rhythm; or lifting up your hands when you pray. While these may enhance the worship's "spirituality" for some, it ruins it for others. How does subjectivism determine which group has "ruined" worship? The biblical injunction for Corinth certainly applies here! (1 Corinthians 14:40).
 5. **Note:** These problems are too great to ignore! Those who do ignore them will face appalling compromises. What they intended will be far surpassed. They will struggle with grief because their changed worship is still not as "spiritual" as they had thought. Such emptiness always characterizes those duped by false teaching! (2 Peter 2:1-19).
- III. The use of "**SPECIAL MUSIC**" presentations in worshiping assemblies strongly urges modifications of God's commands for worship.
- A. The term "special music" refers to special singing presentations by groups (choirs, quartets, solos, or choruses).

B. There is a growing number who deny that congregational singing is the ONLY format authorized in the Bible.

1. Lynn Anderson, "Music That Makes Sense," *Wineskins*, p. 26ff ridicules those who "control" the singing so as to limit it to only congregational singing of "classical music." Read his comments throughout the article that sarcastically snubs congregational singing (*Wineskins*, Jan/Feb 1993, Vol. 1, No. 9).
2. Rubel Shelly (July 19, 1989) in Woodmont Hills bulletin – "The New Testament precedent is actually clearer for solo or small group singing than for congregational singing."
3. Calvin Warpula, "The New Testament Encourages Special Music In Worship," *Wineskins*, p. 26ff argues that there is Scriptural authority for special music presentations and we have rejected the original pattern of worship music used by our first century brethren.
4. Advocates of the use of "special music" support their position with these arguments.
 - a. *"The Bible offers support for special music"* (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Acts 16:25; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). From these texts the following are concluded: the congregation listened to those who sang and sometimes sang all together; the "speaking to one another" does not mean all spoke at the same time (simultaneously) because the "teaching one another" (Colossians 3:16) would be pandemonium.
 - b. *"The Bible does not say that congregational singing is the only format."* Those who insist that it is are making a "creedal law beyond Scriptural authority." (They thus seek to practice a "permissive" silence of Scriptures).
 - c. *"Our 'freedom' in Christ allows us to let people use the musical format they like without judging them."* We do not judge over song books or styles of songs so why should we judge whether one has a solo or choral group? We should be free to choose where God has not legislated.
 - d. *Opposition to special music is because we "inherited this tradition from religious ancestors."* According to some the first century

Christians actually had solos but these were later repressed.

- e. *To ban special music presentations is to "force a pattern from our traditions where God has not given one."* We are thus guilty of making an unscriptural law in referring to "regular" or "official" worship assemblies. This inconsistency is further seen in our allowing singing groups to perform before or after worship assemblies.
- f. To some Christians these cultural arguments seem convincing while others find these arguments an incredible display of biblical ignorance. Here is a clear point illustrating how Change Advocates are ready to jettison Scriptural authority if it enables them to accommodate "felt needs" approaches!
- 1) Subjectiveness reigns
 - 2) Pragmatism directs all choices
 - 3) Pluralism compromises and distorts long held Truths
 - 4) Here is the emotionally charged, Scripturally irresponsible argument – "Where does Scripture 'command' singing groups and multiple song leaders? The same place it 'commands' congregational singing and one song leader! One song leader and congregational singing is not the *only biblical way* to worship; it is simply *one cultural way*" (Lynn Anderson, "Music That Makes Sense," Wineskins, p. 29). Upon what basis is this determined? If special music leads to growth and revitalized spirituality, why don't we see such in the denominations who have used it for years?
- C. The Change Advocates claim we are wrong and are guilty of driving people away by insisting that congregational singing is the **ONLY** format allowed in worship. Let's examine the major points and test them to see how accurate they are.
- D. Does Scripture offer support for special music?
1. Change Advocates claim it does. According to their argument these texts support it – 1 Corinthians 14:26 sanctions solos; Acts 16:25 duets; Hebrews 2:12 solos; Ephesians 5:19 singing groups; James 5:13 solos. These texts are explained in such a way that gullible minds accept all statements without any questions. There are some serious points, not discussed, which destroy the Cultural Advocates position.

Notice the following.

2. Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16. Here are two key texts regarding New Testament worship in song. Historically these have been the texts guarding against innovations in worship music. Any "change" in worship music must deal with these texts! Such is the case with special music advocates – they have to explain these texts so that their musical formats are allowed.
 - a. An analysis of Ephesians 5:19 is a simple task.
 - 1) The Subject – "You" is understood; the Ephesians
 - 2) The Verb – "Be filled" (**PLEROUSTHE**; πληρόω) is plural and admonishes all to be filled.
 - 3) Two Plural Participles modifying the verb – Speaking, Singing, Making Melody, Giving Thanks, Submitting Yourselves.
 - 4) Our focus is upon "speaking to yourselves" (**HEAUTON**; ἑαυτοῦ). Thayer's lexicon (p. 163) says this is a "reflexive pronoun of the third person." It means "reciprocally, mutually, one another." Thus the term indicates simultaneous action of one to another ("the agent and the persons acted on are the same," p. 163). The ones doing the "speaking" are also the ones being spoken to at the same time.
 - 5) How were these to "speak"? By singing. In singing they would be "filled with the spirit" as they spoke to one another.
 - 6) Who? The whole Church – the understood subject ("you") shows those singing were not a part but the whole!⁶ All are to sing. All are commanded to sing – not listen! (Where is Scripture that commands us to listen to singing in worship?) All are commanded to be active participants in "speaking to one another" as indicated by the active participles.
 - 7) **Note**: A most significant fact! We find here a reciprocal action required of a group (the Ephesian Church) and not individuals. This is significant because it shows that small groups are not

commanded! All are to be involved – each is to sing and in doing so is to teach, admonish others while he is taught and admonished at the same time by others singing! The "one another" term indicates that a solo is excluded. It is NOT a song sung TO one another BUT a song sung WITH one another. Each believer is singing along with every other believer.

- 8) "Significant Greek Terms That Must Be Considered!" Here is a most interesting point. Cultural Advocates for "special music" in worship assemblies say that "speaking to one another" is done as the special music groups sing for they are "speaking to others." However the Greek word used will not allow such interpretation. **HEAUTON** (ἑαυτοῦ), is used but they need **ALLELON** (ἀλλήλων) to satisfy their argument.
- a) **ALLELON** (ἀλλήλων) refers to communication between people. It is mutual and reciprocal (Thayer, p. 28). However it describes communication where one speaks and the other listens. It stresses individual action that is mutually reciprocal (Luke 2:15; 6:11; 7:32; 24:14). There is a lapse of time between one speaking and the other speaking. Each eventually teaches/admonishes but not at the same time.
 - b) Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16 DO NOT use **ALLELON** (ἀλλήλων) but **HEAUTON** (ἑαυτοῦ)! And that term indicates simultaneous action of a group. Luke 23:28 – all wept together; it was not one weeping now and another later (See Guy N. Woods, "Is Congregational Singing Required In The Worship Of God In The New Testament Church?" *Gospel Advocate*. May 16, 1985, p. 290).
 - c) "The reflexive **HEAUTON** differs from the reciprocal **ALLELON** in emphasizing the idea of corporate worship" (Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles To The Colossians*, p. 221).
 - d) IF small group musical performances were authorized in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 a totally different word would be used. While our English language may be vague and its meanings change as we define "to one another," the dead Koine Greek language does not change. Inspiration's wisdom in using this dead language preserves God's exact command regarding worship singing – it is to be simultaneous where each saint is involved! We are not

commanded to listen but to sing. **Note:** This is a devastating point for those seeking to find Scriptural authority for special music in worship assemblies. "To find choral or solo singing in the passage, we would have to assume that individuals singly or a few at a time are 'filled with the Spirit' at a given time in our worship. These would sing while the majority of the congregation (lacking the devotion that seeks expression in glorifying God) simply listen. This is patently absurd. By what stretch of the imagination could one singing a solo justify his action by appealing to Ephesians 5:19, 'I am speaking to ourselves (yourselves), in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs'? Nor it is any better to reason, 'I am fulfilling my part in speaking to ourselves (yourselves), which will be completed when everyone else does the same thing in due time. Yet this is precisely the argument that those who would justify solos and choirs make. Their ploy only works by twisting the text and either being ignorant of the Greek terms or by deliberate refusal to admit the impact of the Greek – either is a damnable predicament! Honest scholarship must be pursued and Scriptural wresting must be exposed (2 Peter 3:15-17)!⁷

- 9) An analysis of Colossians 3:16 is also a simple task.
- a) "One another" is **HEAUTON** (ἑαυτοῦ).
 - b) "Teaching" "admonishing" are present participles.
 - c) The subject is the whole Colossian Church.
 - d) It discusses how Christ's supremacy will impact individual lives and the collective Church.
 - e) Cultural advocates suggest that "one another" refers only to teaching. They thus argue – "Do you really mean that we should teach one another simultaneously? Such would be absurd! Therefore the speaking to one another in Ephesians 5 cannot refer to only simultaneous singing, it must also include speaking to one another while others listen. Thus the authorization for special music." This argument is based upon the reading of Colossians 3:16 in the NIV which separates "teaching" from "singing." However such a separation IS NOT found in the Greek. Such is simply the bias

of the translators and is now being used to lend authority to special music groups in worship.

10) Summary of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16

- a) **The Worship** - singing to the Lord.
- b) **The Act** - teaching/admonishing in song.
- c) **The Focus** - psalms, hymns, spiritual songs
- d) **The Place** - when assembled together "What is pictured is congregational singing, as practiced by churches of Christ today. The authority is specific: when brethren sing in worship, this is the order. Whenever the congregation worships God in song, this is the pattern to be observed. Choirs and solos violate the divine pattern."⁸

11) **Note:** Change Agents say they do not want to "bind" special music but they desire the "freedom" to use it without condemnation. Such places them in a dilemma. Note ...

- a) To find Scriptural authority they go to Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.
- b) The imperative is used – "be filled" "let the Word dwell." This does not allow option but states an urgent requirement. Thus, whatever "speaking to yourselves" is, it is not optional.
- c) If choirs and solos are intended, they **MUST** be used; they are required!
- d) If special music is intended in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, we are sinning **IF** we do not use them. But the Change Advocates tell us that it is a matter of little consequence – an optional issue!

E. *The Problems With Using 1 Corinthians 14:26 As A "Proof-Text" For Solos.*

1 Corinthians 14:26 is the favorite "proof text" of those insisting that special music is Scriptural. They suggest that if God revealed a "psalm" to one then that person was to sing the psalm to the Church. Here, they assert, is a Scriptural precedent for solos.

1. There are a number of problems with this argument.

2. It describes a unique assembly – totally unlike any today!⁹ **Note:** An indefinite verb ("when") introduces the assembly (cf v. 23). This is used regarding indefinite times – the time of this assembly was not known (i.e. "If this takes place, then ..."). "The assembly of 1 Corinthians 14 is an IF assembly, not a normal, definite assembly."¹⁰
3. It requires absurdities for modern worship – the regulations have no bearing at all upon assemblies except those where the miraculous gifts were displayed. For example: only 2-3 men could teach (including Communion, prayer, song, etc.); those desiring to comment in a foreign language are limited to 3 but only if there is an interpreter; women must keep totally silent (cannot even sing thus contradicting Ephesians 5:19); women have to ask husbands only about spiritual matters (even if husband is a reprobate).
4. It is used inconsistently – people pick and choose what they want to apply. Anti-Classes, Anti-Woman teachers for children and women's classes argue their pet hobbies from this passage, but do not consistently bind all regulations. Today the special music advocates look here to find support. But one must hold to all or none! "Regulations of spiritual gifts are not transferable to non-gifted men."¹¹
5. It was written to correct, not command. Paul is rebuking those who abused the assembly. There was something amiss in those addressed and it needed correction.
6. It reads too much into the text. Where do you find the word "solo"? The "psalm" could have been read. Why "add" singing a solo? Nothing indicates a psalm revealed to man would have to be sung solo to the congregation. "If the expression, 'every one of you hath a psalm,' means the man to whom the psalm was revealed had to sing solo, would it not then follow that in order for a quartet to sing, every person in the quartet would have to have the same psalm revealed to him? And the only way there could be congregational singing would be when every member of the congregation received the revelation of the same psalm at the same time."¹²

- F. Summary of 1 Corinthians 14. In order for advocates of special music to establish their point, they must prove –
1. That all assemblies in the first century were like the assemblies of 1 Corinthians 14, and explain how or why all assemblies were indefinite ("ify").
 2. That instructions to specified persons may be transferred to others not under consideration. Having done this, they must be consistent and acknowledge that they intend to:
 - a. Limit teachers to only 3 in any assembly.
 - b. Appoint "judges" in every assembly.
 - c. See that all women have their heads covered in all assemblies.
 - d. Direct all women to learn from their husbands at home, whatever his spiritual maturity may be.
 - e. Confine the singing to not over three solos at a given assembly, and then only by men (**HEKASTOS**, "every one," is masculine). In addition, they must prove that the "psalms" given by the Spirit (vs. 26) were sung in solo, and were not songs revealed to be sung by the congregation (or recited). Also, they must prove that the singing of vs. 15 was solo and not singing in a foreign language. Without proving these things, the special music advocate has no certainty to his position. Assumptions are a meager basis for accepting special music in our worship assemblies.
- G. "Last Resort Texts" There are some minor texts that are used to advocate special music presentations. Each of these fails to provide a necessary basis for the practice.
1. James 5:13 – not in a public worship assembly. We can do many things in private that we cannot do in the public worship assembly.
 2. Hebrews 2:12 – See Guy N. Woods, p. 296, *Gospel Advocate*, 5/16/85.
 3. Acts 16:25 – Is this a basis for duets? This was not a worship assembly (cf Don DeWelt, *Gospel Advocate*, 5/16/85, p. 293).
- H. "Congregational Singing Is Commanded!" Does the Bible say that congregational singing is the only format? We have seen that Ephesians

5:19/Colossians 3:16 command singing that is simultaneous. This is the only format commanded. Should we try to justify special music by appealing to the "permissive silence" (what is not specifically commanded or condemned is allowed) we will open the door to false doctrines (i.e. the rosary; instrumental music; etc.). The Scriptures command ONLY congregational singing. It thus eliminates all other "formats" for the worship assemblies. Even if a preacher should get up and SING Psalm 23 instead of READING it, it is wrong!

I. Do we have the "freedom" to use special music in worship? The real question is – Do we have the "freedom" to change what God has legislated? Many "Change Advocates" are crying for "freedom" yet they bring bondage (2 Peter 2:19). We do not have the freedom to loose where God has bound (Matthew 18:18).

J. Are special music presentations opposed today because such is "inherited" from our religious ancestors? Is Warpula's contention true that we oppose choruses only because Calvin/Zwingli did? No. This same rationale can be applied to opposition to the Pope or respect for the authority of Scriptures. There are positions which the Reformers held that were right. Our agreement is upon what is RIGHT instead of what is "inherited." We oppose special music because the practice is without Scriptural support. Congregational singing was practice in the first Century. "Advocates of choirs-solos claim to find comfort in the practice of early Christians during the developing 'apostasy' (2 Thessalonians 2:3,7). It is claimed that choirs and solos constituted the practice of the churches from the apostolic age through the early centuries. *The claim is not so.* Choirs-solos were introduced and became popular as the apostasy developed" (Frost, p. 8). Historians unite in stating that congregational singing was the norm for worship.

1. **Chrysostom** (4th Century A.D.) – "In the apostolic age the music was entirely vocal and congregational ... It was the ancient custom, as it still is with us, for all to come together and unitedly join in singing. ... all join in one song ... the whole congregation forms one general chorus" (Dr. H. Christopher, *Lard's Quarterly*, Oct. 1867, p. 360).

2. **Ignatius** (c. 35-107 A.D.) – "To a man you make up a chorus, so that joined together in harmony and having received the godly strain

(chroma Theou) in unison, you might sing in one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father" (James McKinnon, *Music In Early Christian Literature*, p. 18).

3. "The singing was congregational for the first three centuries. The charm of their music was not in the harmony of sweet sounds, but in the melody of the heart ... The singing was gradually drawn from the congregation and confined to a choir ... the style of music was changed, so that the congregation was compelled to remit this part of the worship, and leave it in the hands of trained singers. Church music thus became a refined art of difficult attainment, and limited to a few professional singers" (From Coleman's *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, quoted by Dr. H. Christopher in *Lard's Quarterly*, October 1867, p. 362).
- K. In opposing special music in the worship, are we guilty of "forcing a pattern where God has not given one"? No. The pattern is found in Ephesians 5:19/Colossians 3:16 and it mandates congregational singing.
- L. Are we unscripturally legislating "regular" or "official" worship assemblies? No. The New Testament Church had regular assemblies each Lord's Day. They came together at a set time to join together in worship activities (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 11:18; etc.). In these regular assemblies they sang, took Communion, studied Scripture, exhorted by God's Word, and prayed. Their example indicates that the Lord's Day assemblies were special times and regularly planned. They worshiped God during set periods just as the Scriptures command us to do.
- M. Are we inconsistent to allow special music groups to perform before/after regular worship assemblies? No. Such often provides a convenient time and its close proximity does not make it worship. If it does then we could not have two different activities scheduled immediately following each other for they would be one activity, not two. What if two families decide they will eat together immediately following the assembly. Is their meal a part of worship? Certainly not. Such an absurd conclusion indicates the error. "Worship" activities are defined by Scripture as being one of the "five acts" of worship. Special musical performances would be wrong if they were enmeshed with

these five acts but not wrong if they are apart from them.

N. The Change Advocates are calling for tolerance regarding the use of special music. Such is suppose to build the Church in membership and spirit. However that is error! *The Bible commands congregational singing only and therefore condemns any special music during worship.*

This innovation is wrong because ...

1. **It DISTORTS** the biblical command.
2. **It COMPROMISES** the absoluteness of God's commands and the New Testament pattern of congregational singing.
3. **It WEAKENS** believers so they are willing to accept more innovations that will "enhance" the worship.
4. **It RESULTS** in disastrous consequences.
5. **It LESSENS** the uniqueness of God's design for holy worship.
6. **It VIOLATES** the principle of holiness which is to govern God's people.

Conclusion:

- I. John 4:24 – Worshiping assemblies are obligated to honor the commands of God.
 1. We are not "free" to choose worship activities that appeal and please ourselves. The object of worship is honoring and pleasing God.
 2. A failure to honor God leads man to worship activities that dishonor God. God will not remain indifferent when treated with worship actions that are contrary to His revealed will (Leviticus 10:1-3; Malachi 1:6-14).
- II. The New Testament has clearly revealed how our great God wants to be worshiped. We are given specific commands. We can read of the biblical examples. We are able to take the New Testament narrative and infer required actions.

Those who choose to worship God contrary to what the New Testament teaches, will be held accountable. Changing the divine pattern of worship is a damnable offense.

III. Let us assemble to worship our Lord God Almighty. Let our attitudes be humble and our actions be the result of biblical commands.

Footnotes from the above

1.

An article in *Wineskins*, July 1992, presents the current liberal argument of this point (see "Right-Brain Christians in a Left-Brain Church," by Lynn Anderson, p. 28). An apt summary of worship being an "act" is given by Guy N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, September 2, 1982, Vol. CXXIV, No. 17, "Of What Does Worship Consist?" p. 514. Jividen's observation regarding phraseology "acts of worship" is correct. "The phrase 'acts of worship' has had some bad press in recent times. One could just as well say, 'activities of devotion' which would mean the same thing. One could just as well say, 'human responses to the numious' which would convey the same idea. The last phrase might appeal to the theologian. The phrase 'activities of devotion' may appeal to the pious monk. The phrase 'acts of worship' is probably best understood by the man on the street. It is true that the phrase, 'acts of worship,' has been stereotyped by reactionary writers in some circles to mean 'cold ritual involving mere word worship in the assembly,' but such does not nullify the right use of the phrase" (p. 13,14).

2.

We have referred to several books already which address this popular justification for instrumental music. One further that will be most useful is *What Does God Authorize In Worship?* 1990 Bellview Lectures. Bobby Liddell, editor. Firm Foundation Publishing House, P. O. Box 17200, Pensacola, FL 32522. Of special interest to this point will be the lecture on p. 288ff.

3.

M.C. Kurfees. *Instrumental Music In The Worship*. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1969, p. 250.

4.

See Kurfees, p. 259ff; *The Instrumental Music Issue*, ed. Bill Flatt. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1987, p. 60ff.

5.

The Spiritual Sword, January 1993, p. 32.

6.

Gene Frost, "Answering The Advocacy Of Choirs And Solos In Worship," *The Gospel Anchor*,

July 1989, Louisville, KY: P.O. Box 36033, 40233, p. 163(3).

7.

IBID., 164(4).

8.

Ibid

9.

See Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers, Vol. 1*, p. 106ff; Frost, 167(7).

10.

Frost, 165(5).

11.

IBID, 166(6).

12.

Bobby Duncan, "Choruses, Quartets, and Solos," *Sound Words*, Vol XVII, October 1989, No. 10.