

Instrumental Music In The Church

Instrumental music is beginning to make inroads into churches of Christ. Despite a long-standing resistance of instrumental music based upon the scriptures, at least five prominent churches of Christ in the country have added instrumental worship services since 2001, according to *The Christian Chronicle*, a newspaper published by churches of Christ. Oak Hills Church of San Antonio, TX, formerly the nation's second-largest congregation, made the decision in August to use instruments in its worship services and dropped the "Church of Christ" designation from its name. Other churches of Christ that have added instruments to their worship service include a church in Seattle and three others in Texas.

For the first 15 centuries after Christ, people sang; they did not use musical instruments because they knew they were an addition to the New Testament. Erasmus, a 15th century Dutch philosopher and theologian, opposed the use of musical instruments in worship. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, he wrote, "The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes, and dulcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them. Men run to church as to a theatre, to have their ears tickled." There are several other well-known quotes that could be shown, but it is sufficient to say that many individuals throughout history have known that instrumental music is not revealed as a part of worship in the New Testament church. They knew that the Bible commanded us to sing: "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19). Colossians 3:16 says, "*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.*"

Flavil Yeakley, director of the Center for Growth Church Studies at Harding University in Searcy, AR, told *The Christian Chronicle* that he does not see the movement as a trend. He said, "I would think of it as five isolated tragedies." The newspaper article states that two churches in Arkansas are made up members who wished for a less restrictive worship style. One of the interviewees stated that the reason it has become such a large issue is because there are people in key positions such as Max Lucado [author and preacher at Oak Hill Church] who have brought this issue to the forefront. More liberal members of churches of Christ are beginning to see musical instruments in their worship as an enhancement, a tool to connect with a culture that constantly experiences music. Chuck Monan, a preacher in Arkansas, said their church does not see itself in opposition to any other churches using musical instruments during their worship. "We do not try to be conde-

scending or obnoxious about it," he said. "It is really up to the individual to decide for themselves. It is a choice we have made based on scripture."

I wish I could share Flavil Yeakley's optimism; however, I believe that more and more churches will drift away from a strong biblical stand. For the most part, the only differences of liberal churches of Christ from denominations have been the essentiality of baptism for salvation and the rejection of instrumental music in worship. Yet slowly and surely both of these doctrines have been abandoned by churches who no longer wish to "swim against the stream" of liberalistic and modernistic thought. Paul told Timothy, "*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 1:13). The Bible must be held up, no matter how many denominations ridicule us or no matter how badly more liberally-minded members want it. Can you hold fast in the face of change?

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