

instruments, have been made void by the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They are not only not binding upon the Church, they are not permitted - being a shadow of the thing to come, the substance of which is Christ Himself.

#### II. Singing Praise in the New Covenant

Seeing that instruments under the Old Covenant are typological, what then under the New Covenant? Let us consider these three points:

A. *Worship is spiritual, not ceremonial.* In the Gospel according to John, our Lord instructs the woman from Samaria, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and Truth: for the Father requireth even such to worship Him' (4:23). Worship under the New Covenant is not ceremonial, neither based on physical location or outward ostentation; but rather is spiritual: that is, wrought by the Holy Spirit according to the truth of God's Word without the necessity or use of ceremonial law.

B. *The Sacrifice of praise is the fruit of lips.* It is no longer with instruments and sacrifices that people sing praise, but only with their words: 'Let us therefore by him offer the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is, the fruit of the lips, which confess his Name' (Heb 13:15).

C. *Christian singing is New Covenant musical worship.* The instruction to the Church is clear: 'speaking unto yourselves in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts' (Eph 5:19; *c.f.* Col 3:16). There is no use of instruments, but only the voice. From the heart, one sings praise with the congregation.

In summary, the use of instruments in worship, being a part of the sacrificial and ceremonial system, has been abrogated along with the Old Covenant and is not prescribed under the New Covenant. Thus, instruments are not to be used by the Church in New Covenant worship.

## IV Practical Remarks

### I. Matter of Liberty, Not Legalism

One charge often set against the practice of exclusive a cappella singing in worship is that it is too strict and irrelevant to modern culture. The abrogation of instruments under the New Covenant is not a matter of legalism, but of true liberty. The New Covenant Church has been freed from the bondage of the ceremonial law, as Christ, being the once-for-all sacrifice for sin, has fulfilled it. To use instruments in worship would be to put the Christian back under the Old Covenant.

### II. Understanding the Instruments in the Psalms

How does the Church then understand the references to instruments as they sing the Psalms, such as in Psalm 150? We understand the references to instruments in the same way as sacrifices: pointing to the atoning work of Christ. Thus, we praise God through the mediation, not of priests and instruments, but through the Lord Christ Jesus, to Whom the Psalms direct us.

### III. Benefits of Singing Without Instruments

Though prescription, not pragmatism, is the rule of the Church's faith and life, consider these three benefits of singing without instruments:

A. *Musical worship can take place at any time.* In times of plenty or persecution, in buildings or outside, in private or corporate settings, Christians always carry with themselves the proper instrument for offering praise: their voice.

B. *There is no impetus for the 'worship wars.'* The preferences of men must be subordinate to the theological teaching of God's Word.

C. *There is great joy in hearing congregational singing.* We are commanded to admonish one another in singing. What a joy it is to hear God's people sing!

'All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the LORD with cheerful voice!'



## *The Fruit of Our Lips: Singing Praise without the Use of Instruments*

A Pamphlet to Encourage  
Believers & Covenant Families  
in Biblical Christian Worship

*'Let us therefore by him offer the sacrifice  
of praise always to God, that is, the fruit  
of the lips, which confess his Name.'*

## **Introduction**

### I. The Call to Ongoing Faithfulness

It is important for the Christian to remember that neither the traditions of men, customs of culture, nor preferences of individuals can regulate the faith and obedience of the Church - only the Word of God can. Christians are called to ongoing obedience to the Word of God.

### II. The Need of Ongoing Reform

Likewise, there are manners in which the visible Church has fallen into error, either in doctrine or practice. It is the responsibility, therefore, for the Church to continue in that which is right, and reform that which is corrupt, according to that infallible rule of God's Holy Word.

## **I**

### **The Regulative Principle of Worship**

#### I. Defining the Regulative Principle

The fundamental principle of biblical worship is called the 'Regulative Principle' which may be defined as thus: 'The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.' (*WCF XXI.1*) As the LORD says, 'What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' (Deut 12:32).

#### II. Prescription, Not Just Prohibition

The measure of biblical worship is not merely by prohibition, but prescription. The Church is agreed that we may not worship *contrary* to Scripture. Yet, we must also confess that we may not even offer worship to God that is not *contained* in Scripture. To do so would be to offer 'strange fire' before God, invoking His holy and righteous judgment (Lev 10:1-3).

### III. Scriptural, Not Just Sincere

Likewise, the measure of biblical worship is not just the sincerity of one's heart, but Scriptural warrant - either expressly set down or by good and necessary consequence (*WCF I.6*). The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church rightly explains, 'Sincerity cannot make unscriptural worship acceptable to God' (*RPT XXI.1*). According to the final word of Scripture, 'Hath the Lord as great pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as when the voice of the Lord is obeyed? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken *is better* than the fat of rams' (1 Sam 15:22).

## **II**

### **Instruments in the Old Covenant**

#### I. Instruments and the Levitical Priesthood

The first consideration in regards to instruments in Christian worship is to discern how instruments were used in the Scriptures. Upon examination, musical instruments in worship were directly connected with the Levitical Priesthood in the Old Covenant. 2 Chr 29:25-26 says 'He appointed also the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with viols, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and Gad the King's Seer, and Nathan the Prophet: for the commandment *was* by the hand of the Lord, *and* by the hand of his Prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.' According to the Lord's command, only those specially designated by the Lord (the Levites and Priests) were to play the instruments as a part of the offering of sacrifices in the temple. Today, those who propose the use of instruments in worship believe that any and all who have gifts should use them in the sacred setting of worship. The Scriptures correct such a view regarding instruments - as, according to the Lord, only those appointed (Levites/Priests) were permitted to use them, and only for an expressed purpose (sacrifice).

### II. Instruments and the Sacrificial System

The following verses of 2 Chronicles clearly show the purpose of the instruments: 'And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar: and when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began with the trumpets, and the instruments of David king of Israel. And the congregation worshipped, singing a song, and they blew the trumpets: all this *continued* until the burnt offering was finished' (29:27-28; *c.f.* Num 10:10). The instruments were an element of offering the sacrifices under the Old Covenant. When the sacrifice was finished, the instruments were no longer in use: 'And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him, bowed themselves, and worshipped. Then Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the Seer. So they praised with joy, and they bowed themselves, and worshipped' (29:29-30). When the sacrifice ceased, they sang the Psalms without the use of instruments since they were only for the sacrifice.

## **III**

### **Instruments and the New Covenant**

#### I. The Abrogation of the Old Covenant

We find ourselves, by God's grace and providence, now in this time where the true sacrifice has been offered on our behalf - the Lord Christ Jesus being the substitutionary and propitiatory atonement of His Church. The Old covenant has been abrogated (made obsolete), and in its place is the New and better Covenant: 'But now *our high Priest* hath obtained a more excellent office, inasmuch as he is the Mediator of a better Testament, which is established upon better promises. In that he saith a new *Testament*, he hath abrogated the old: now that which is disannulled and waxed old, is ready to vanish away' (Heb 8:6, 13). These things which inherently belong to the Old Covenant, such as