**Instrumental Music**

*A matter of tradition?*

**Introduction**

1. **When questions regarding differences with other religious groups arise in the Lord’s church, the manner in which they are approached is imperative.**
2. If they are dealt with in a general way – “This is how we do things” – and not a specific way – “This is why we do it this way, and the other way is wrong because…” – the crux of the matter is missed, and a door is opened which allows countless false doctrines to infiltrate and poison the church.
3. The general, surface deep approach, tends to carry with it the idea that tradition is the factor.
   1. **When the question is not approached in a specific manner regarding scripture, the standard by which these questions are considered appears as mere human tradition.**
   2. The ignorant will gain the idea that the difference is not a matter of salvation, and will have the inclination that participating in such activity is harmless.
   3. **The denominational mindset is assumed by those who are ignorant. They might conclude that that is just the way we do it, but other ways are not sinful.**
4. When this approach is used, those who have heard the scriptural arguments against such issues die off, and their children remain in an ignorant state. This is historically detrimental to the Lord’s people **(*cf. Judges 2:7, 10 – “So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua…When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.”*)**.
5. It is important to make the distinction: is the difference between mechanical musical instruments used in worship, and simply and solely singing, a matter of human tradition, or is it a specific matter of authority? – God has given specific instruction which disallows mechanical instruments.
6. Tradition – Divine and Human (Origin determines authority.)
7. Tradition of the Elders (**cf. Matthew 15:1-9**)
   1. **(v. 1-2)** – Scribes and Pharisees notorious for questioning Jesus with the ulterior motive to discredit Him. This time they question Jesus about His disciples.
      1. **If His disciples are accused, then He is accused as well. They are to be followers of His teaching.**
      2. Their accusation is transgression, but against a tradition of the elders.
      3. *Tradition of elders: “the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which were not written in the laws of Moses” (Antiquities 13.10.6) (Josephus).*
   2. **(v. 3)** – Jesus objection to this idea of transgressing the elders’ tradition was not necessarily because of the tradition itself, but how it was viewed.
      1. *“The words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law: for the words of the law are weighty and light; but the words of the scribes are all weighty” (Berachoth 3.2). (Jerusalem Talmud – A collection of rabbinical teachings and traditions)*
      2. Jesus objected to the Pharisees for **1)** not keeping all of the law ***(“Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!” Matthew 23:24***) and **2)** placing human traditions above the Law of God. (Among other things of course.)
   3. **(v. 4-6)** – Jesus gave an example of their unrighteousness in the matter.
      1. **Command to honor parents** – comes with financial obligation to them as well as respect and care.
      2. **Tradition to exempt oneself from command** – earmark that money for a gift to God.
         1. Often times they said such but did not end up giving it to God.
         2. Either way, it is not an exemption from such command.
   4. **(v. 7-9)** – Jesus’ conclusion.
      1. They are hypocritical. They claim to be righteous, close to God, and upholders of His law, but are not.
      2. **It is vain (empty; useless) to honor God, and try to please God, by doing things He has not authorized, or placing human tradition above His law.**
8. Tradition of God
   1. **(v. 3)** – The commandment of God the scribes and Pharisees transgressed was also a tradition.
      1. **Tradition is not inherently wrong, nor inherently right.**
      2. **The origin of the tradition makes the difference.** 🡪
   2. **2 Thessalonians 2:13-15** – There is divine tradition that **MUST** be followed.
      1. **(2:1-2)** – Concerning the resurrection.
         1. **(v. 13-14)** – They had hope because of their obedience to the gospel **(cf. 1:8).**
         2. **(v. 14)** – In the resurrection they would be identified with Christ’s glory.
      2. **(v. 15)** – An exhortation to stand fast.
         1. They needed to remain faithful – i.e. keep the traditions given them. (Word – speaking in their presence; Epistle – writings; Apostles).
         2. **1 Thessalonians 2:13** – The tradition by word and epistle received from the apostles was divine tradition. (**This tradition is binding, and pertains to salvation – to adhere is to lay up heavenly treasure. To transgress is to forfeit salvation**.)
   3. What about the absence of musical instruments in worship in churches of Christ? Is it a tradition?
      1. A Capella music in the church of Christ is certainly a tradition, **but it is a divine tradition**.
      2. **To introduce mechanical musical instruments into worship would not be acceptable to the Lord**. 🡪
9. The Problem With Instrumental Music In Worship
10. Authority of Divine Tradition
    1. **Colossians 3:17** – Everything done must be authorized by Christ.
    2. Authority is established in three ways. (Example: Lord’s Supper)
       1. **Command** – **1 Corinthians 11:24** *(Observance*)
       2. **Example** – **Acts 20:7** (*Time*)
       3. **Necessary Implication** – **1 Corinthians 11:26; Acts 20:7** (*Frequency*)
       4. **To not observe, observe on a different day, or observe on a different frequency, is unauthorized, thus sinful.**
    3. Silence Prohibits, not permits – **Hebrews 7:11-14**
       1. Priests under the Old Law only came from the tribe of Levi.
       2. The priesthood was not perfect, thus there needed to be another priesthood.
       3. Jesus is that perfect High Priest, but came from Judah, not Levi – according to the order of Melchizedek.
       4. **This implies that silence is prohibitive. Jesus could not be a priest under the old Law, so the Law changed with His Priesthood.**
11. Worship in Song
    1. **In the New Testament, every scripture that refers to musical worship, either by command, example, or implication, only discusses singing.**
       1. Command – **Ephesians 5:19** (“speaking”; “singing”); **Colossians 3:16** (“singing”)
       2. Example – **Matthew 26:30** (“sung”); **Mark 14:26** (“sung”); **Acts 16:25** (“sang”); **Romans 15:9** (“sing”); **1 Corinthians 14:15** (“sing”); **Hebrews 2:12** (“sing”); **James 5:13** (“sing”)
    2. *“Psallo”*
       1. **Ephesians 5:19** – the use of the word *“psallo”* is used as an authority for instrumental music in worship – this word does not authorize musical instruments.
       2. Melody – *Psallo* – “to pluck off, pull out; to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang” (Thayer); “To twitch, twang” (Vine); “Probably strengthened from *psao* (to rub or touch the surface); to twitch or twang” (Strong).
          1. Can be used to refer to the strings of an instrument. (“to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate” – Strong).
          2. **Also used to refer to plucking hair, a bowstring or a carpenter’s line. (Not inherently or exclusively related to musical instruments.)**
       3. **Ephesians 5:19 says, *“in your heart to the Lord”* – referring to the heart string – metaphor.**
       4. What instrument anyway? – stringless instruments excluded.
       5. Who plays? – Must be everybody. (Congregational action – ***“to one another”***)
       6. NOT AUTHORIZED.
    3. The act of singing without instruments in the church of Christ was not an arbitrary decision or preference.
       1. Divine tradition (commands and instructions given by God) were given to us that require singing.
       2. **To transgress such tradition is to deny God, and rebel against His holy requirements.**
12. Failure to adhere to divine instruction/tradition.
    1. Nadab and Abihu – **Numbers 16:46; Leviticus 10:1-3**
    2. **Matthew 7:21-23** – Those who do not do as Jesus says will not get to heaven.

**Conclusion**

1. **The absence of mechanical instruments in song worship is not a matter of culture, preference, or human tradition, but divine tradition.**
2. We must emphasize this truth to avoid ignorance in the future, and failure to abide by the Law of Christ.
3. Using mechanical instruments in worship is unauthorized and sinful.