

The Music of the Early Church: The Testimony of Scholarship and Religious Leaders

"All ancient Christian music was vocal" (Dr. Curt Sachs, Columbia University). "Both the Jews in their temple service and the Greeks in their idol worship were accustomed to sing with the accompaniment of instrumental music. The converts to Christianity must have been familiar with this mode of singing, but it is generally admitted that the primitive Christians employed no instrumental music in their religious worship ... Musical accompaniments were gradually introduced; but one can hardly be assigned to a period earlier than the fifth and sixth centuries. Organs were unknown in the church until the eighth or ninth century. Previous to this they had their place in the theater rather than in the church" (Lyman Coleman, Presbyterian). "Music in the church is as ancient as the apostles; but instrumental music is not" (Joseph Bingham, Church of England). "That instrumental music was not practiced by primitive Christians. is evident from church history" (*The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*). "...Respected scholars simply say that in the early church no instruments were used. They came in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, too late to be authorized by inspiration in the Scriptures" (*The Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*). "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law" (John Calvin, originator of Presbyterianism). "Only singing ... and no playing of instruments, was permitted in the early church" (Hugo Leichtentritt). "I have no objection to the organ in our chapels provided it is neither heard nor seen." (John Wesley, originator of Methodism). "...I here declare that I never knew them [instruments of music] productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God, I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against such all corruptions in the worship of that Infinite Spirit who requires His followers to worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Adam Clarke, Methodist). "There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of a vocal nature" (Emil Nauman, *The History of Music*). Dear reader, the early Christians, who were guided by the apostles (John 16:13-14), did not use mechanical instruments; of music in their worship, but instead sang in acapella fashion. They: Sang with grace in their hearts, Colossians 3:16 Sang with their hearts, Ephesians 5:19, Sang with the spirit and with the understanding, 1 Corinthians 14:15, but nowhere are we told that they ever employed musical instruments. Since we have neither command nor example for such in the New Testament, how can we afford to add them to our assemblies today (Leviticus 10:1-2; 2 John 9; Colossians 3:17; Deuteronomy 22:18)?

By: Mike Benson