

## RESPONSE TO ARTICLE ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

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Articles initially appearing in the *Good News From Getwell* are placed on the web site ([www.getwellchurchofchrist.org](http://www.getwellchurchofchrist.org)) for an even wider circulation. A visitor to the web site responded to an article appearing there on the subject of “The Music of the Church.” In the spirit of Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,” his remarks are welcome. They will now receive point by point and paragraph by paragraph the courteous attention they deserve.

We read, *“I found it rather distressing to see such a unilateral diatribe against the word of God. It would seem that the article may need to be corrected, redacted, or written over. I would recommend that the author refrain from writing on the subject.”*

Clearly the respondent’s reaction is without demonstration; it is simply an assertion. An investigation of the original article will prove that the focused presentation was against the use of instrumental music in worship in harmony with the word of God as born out by the Bible passages examined in the article. Now, the respondent should make up his mind. Does he want the article reworked or does he want the writer of it to refrain from writing? Perhaps the comment is meant to be offhanded and simply needs to be edited or dropped altogether.

Next, we read, *“Since the hypothetical young man raised the question, ‘Since God did not give us a direct command on where we should worship whether it be in a building or outside and we can do either, why can’t we use pianos or organs since he did not give us a direct command not to use instruments in the Bible?’ I will attempt to answer this.”* I assure you the young man was not “hypothetical.” He was as real as SGP are the initials of the person who wrote the response under review now. And, in SGP’s attempt to answer the young man’s question he will not once make reference to the young man’s quandary over the authority for the meeting place for worship as contrasted to the authority for the type of music acceptable to God in worship as was addressed in the initial article which appeared on the web site.

Here is the respondent’s “attempt” to provide an answer, *“Never mind that the Greek word psálla used for ‘sing’ in the New Testament has both meanings of*

*vocal praise and stringed instrumental praise, but, furthermore, we ought to consider Psalm 150, which explicitly exhorts, 'Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.'* These are the same scriptures which Jesus grew up reading and to which he referred constantly throughout his ministry.”

We will not accept the respondent's definition of *psállo* and allow him to pass on to other matters without investigation. *Psállo* does indeed mean “sing” in the New Testament; so does *aído* infinitive form *ádontes*, meaning “to sing.” *Psállontes* infinitive form of *psállo* also means “to make melody” as in Ephesians 5:19, “Singing [*ádontes*] and making melody [*psállontes*] in your heart to the Lord.” *Psállontes* literally means “to twitch or twang” with the instrument not included in the word, just the action, thus, the KJV has “making melody.” The instrument to be played specifically is identified in the text; it is “the heart.” It is, therefore, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual, not mechanical.

Further, the exegete errs when he says *psállo* “has both meanings of vocal praise and stringed instrumental praise” because, if true, to obey the command to *psállo* the worshiper would not have the option to have “vocal praise” by itself or “stringed instrumental praise” by itself. Later the respondent will state his preference for unaccompanied praise, yet such an option is not allowed if *psállo* means “both.” He is only authorized to do “both” if *psállo* means “both.” If he thinks *psállo* carries the option of singing “with stringed instrumental praise,” then he needs to show the biblical text from which such a view is to be drawn and in which the particular “stringed instrument” to be played is named.

The reference to Psalm 150 does not support his case. One, the Old Testament, while bringing us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24) and serving for our learning (Rom. 15:4), is not the law under which men living today are subject (Col. 2:14; Rom. 8:2). Two, the Old Testament law was never designed to be selectively followed but was a unit, all of which was to be obeyed (Gal. 3:10). Three, the Old Testament was given to Israel, not the church (Deut. 5:1-3; Acts 15:1-35). Four, the respondent is arguing for “stringed instruments,” and Psalm 150 has also cymbals, organs, timbrels, trumpets, and dance. Does the respondent have all of those instruments in his worship? If not, it would be interesting to see how he singles out “stringed

instruments” without becoming a law unto himself. It appears he is hedging on “a unilateral diatribe.” Five, Jesus Christ lived under the law and perfectly kept it that he might “take it out of the way” (Matt. 5:17-18; John 19:30; Col. 2:14).

Finally, we read, *“Now if a person does not care for instrumental music in their church, that is okay by me. Personally, I think some of the most excellent praise is done without accompaniment. However, let us not allow our personal preferences to cloud a clear study of the scriptures. Nor, especially to create even more divisions within the church of Jesus Christ. I apologize if my words seem harsh and do not wish to sow seeds of discord.”*

It is the respondent who is stating personal opinion. He just happens to prefer “praise . . . without accompaniment.” Division is erased among brethren when “all walk by the same rule” (Phil. 3:16). We concur with his closing statement and will not let the fact we disagree be construed as “harsh.” Thank you, for the lively and we hope informative exchange.