

# CONGREGATION SINGING TO CHOIR LISTENING

by **David Lee Burris**

## ONLY FIVE WORSHIP ACTIVITIES

- 
- ✓ **TO HEAR THE WORD**
  - ✓ **TO GIVE OF OUR MEANS**
  - ✓ **TO PRAY WITH ASSEMBLY**
  - ✓ **TO PARTAKE THE SUPPER**
  - ✓ **TO SING TO THE LORD!**

<b>General Command</b>	<b>Necessarily Authorizes</b>
Hebrews 10: 25 ASSEMBLE	Building Facility
1 <sup>st</sup> Cor. 16: 1 & 2 GIVE	Church Treasury
Acts 2: 38 BAPTIZE	Church Baptistry
Ephesians 5: 19 SING	Song Leader
Acts 20: 7 COMMUNION	Plates & Cups
Matthew 28: 18 TEACH	Teaching Aides

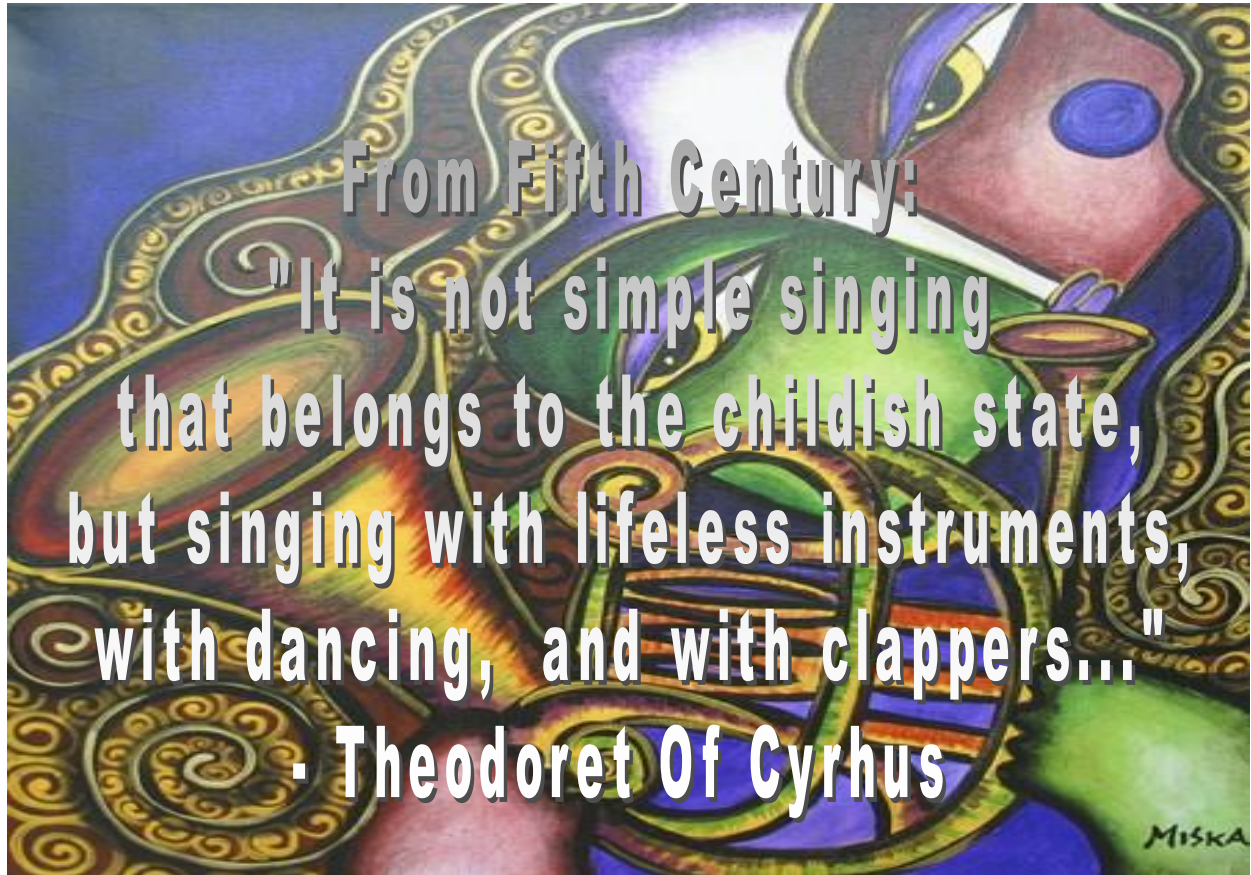
<b>SCRIPTURE REFERENCE</b>	<b>SING</b>	<b>PLAY</b>
- Matthew 26: 30	YES	NO!
- Acts 16: 25	YES	NO!
- Romans 15: 9	YES	NO!
- 1 <sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15: 15	YES	NO!
- Ephesians 5: 19	YES	NO!
- Colossians 3: 16	YES	NO!
- Hebrews 2: 12	YES	NO!
- Hebrews 13: 15	YES	NO!
- James 5: 13	YES	NO!
- Revelation 5: 2, 3, 8, 9	YES	NO!
- Revelation 14: 2 - 3	YES	NO!

<b>Scripture Commands</b>	<b>HUMAN VOICE</b>
Ephesians 5: 19 "Speak In Song"	<b>CAN</b>
Colossians 3: 16 "Teach In Song"	<b>CAN</b>
Colossians 3: 16 "Admonish In Song"	<b>CAN</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Cor. 14: 15 "Sing Understanding"	<b>CAN</b>
Hebrews 2: 12 "Praise God"	<b>CAN</b>
Hebrews 13: 15 "Give Thanks"	<b>CAN</b>



**Musical Instruments: Double flute, Dulcimer, Assyrian harp, and Sackbut.**





## WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? Pulpit System & Chorus Music

The Word is Truth

### ➤ Altar Replaced With Pulpit:

- Luther had the entire area ripped out of the front of the church. High up on one of the pillars of the church was a rostrum or pulpit which the Catholic priest had climbed up by means of a circular staircase to read dutifully the weekly announcements to the faithful flock below. Luther had one of those pulpits placed in the front & center of the building, where the altar had been. That was new. Brand new. And so, was born the Protestant pulpit!

### Congregational Singing

- Martin Luther and his followers understood the importance that music can play in spiritual health and encouraged church singing.
- They also stressed the importance of hymns sung in the worshipers' native languages as a means for facilitating greater personal involvement for churchgoers.
- This led to the creation of a new kind of music, called the *chorale*.

## Presbyterian Commentator Lyman Coleman

- “It is generally admitted that the primitive Christians employed no instrumental music in their Christian worship. Neither Ambrose, nor Basil, nor Chrysostom, in the noble encomiums which they severally pronounce upon music, make any mention of instrumental music. Basil condemns it as ministering only to the depraved passion of men. (Water) organs were unknown in the church until the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Previous to this they had their place in theater rather than in the church. They were never regarded with favor in the Eastern Church and vehemently opposed in many places in the West.”

## “Worship Music” By J. Curwen In 1880:

- “Men still living can remember the time when organs were very seldom found outside the Church of England. The Methodist, Independents, and Baptists rarely had them & by the Presbyterians were stoutly opposed. But since these bodies began to introduce organs, the adoption of them has been unchecked. *Even the Presbyterians are giving away, & if we read the future by the past, we can hardly doubt that in a few years unaccompanied singing will very seldom be heard.*”

## Sing W/ Instrument Accompany: Campbell Concert W/ Cowbell?

- Fact: Early Church Fathers Comments Condemn
- Fact: (666 AD) First Organ One Catholic Church
- Fact: Erasmus (Desiderius) - "Theatrical Music"
- Fact: Thomas Aquinas " ...not seem to Judaize."
- Fact: Martin Luther – "...an ensign of Baal."

**“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. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which our God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to Him.”**

**- John Calvin**

# Incident At Thorpe Spring, Texas

- The Instrument Of Music Began Entering Worships Assemblies Around 1860
- 1894, The Sons Of Clark Desired To Bring It In At Thorpe Spring Much To The Strong Reservations Of Joseph Clark
- Tuesday Night, February 20, 1894, B.B. Sanders, A Minister Who Favored The Instrument Was Involved In A Gospel Meeting.
- A Petition Was Signed By 139 Members Of The Congregation Saying They Did Not Want It, Even Having The List Read
- Before Meeting Began Joseph Clark Stood And Prayed A Prayer For Unity
- As Addison Clark, Directing The Worship, Said The Students Had Been Promised Instruments And They Were Going To Have Them, Turning He Looked At Miss Bertha Mason, The Pianist, And Said, "**Play On, Miss Bertha!**"
- When It Was Introduced Brother Clark, Now In His 80s Departed The Assembly With 2/3 Of The Congregation
- The Church Of Christ Was Re-established Across The Street.

## Influence of Modern Trends on the Church

*Is new always better than old? Not always. Some modern trends have had a negative impact on the church.*

**By Wayne Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)**

Influence is a powerful thing.

Every person both influences & is influenced by others in varying degrees. Jesus stressed the importance of godly influence when he compared his disciples to salt (Matthew 5:13).

Paul also warned of the power of bad influence when he noted that "evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33). The Greek word for "companionships" is **homilia** having to do with association. Here it denotes "bad company" (Arndt and Gingrich, 568). We tend to behave like those we run with.

## The Influence of the Primitive Church

It is remarkable that the church of Jesus Christ as such was constituted in the initial centuries of its existence was a body of tremendous influence. It revolutionized the antique world. The Lord hinted of this in his prophetic parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33).

Historians have noted that as a consequence of Christianity, many evils of the ancient world were abolished or at least curtailed (e.g., crucifixion, the brutal gladiatorial games, slavery, the abuse of women, infanticide, etc.).



Even skeptics have conceded the point. British philosopher Bertrand Russell conceded that the influence of Christianity “remains the inspiration of much that is most hopeful in our somber world” (Russell, 137).

It is not without significance, however, that when the church was exerting such a wonderful impact, it was being persecuted bitterly. Then, a strange thing happened.

In A.D. 313, Constantine issued his famous “Edict of Toleration,” which brought an end to Christian persecution. Unfortunately, it also accelerated an era of spiritual decline. Christianity even became a state religion. Ultimately, the church was “baptized” in an atmosphere that can only be described as worldliness.

Great and devastating changes were wrought that finally resulted in an egregious, fully-organized apostasy the residue of which abides to this day.

## **Our More Recent History**

The concept of restoring pristine Christianity was revolutionary, both in Europe and in America. Courageous pioneers sought a return to the original pattern of Christ’s religion. The idea caught on, and the cause of the “ancient order” spread like a prairie fire across the frontier in the waning days of the nineteenth century.

In the late 1800s, students of the old Nashville Bible School (later named after David Lipscomb) baptized some 5,000 souls in a five-year period. In the early portion of the last century, the church was one of the fastest growing religious bodies in America.

A typical example of the influence of the church was seen in the Tabernacle Meetings conducted by N. B. Hardeman in the early 1920s. When the first meeting was held in March-April of 1922, the old Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee was “packed and jammed” with 6,000 to 8,000 people. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 were turned away (*Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons*, 11).

And there was no compromise of doctrine in Hardeman’s sermons! Those were glorious days for the kingdom of Christ.

But in the early decades of the previous century, something else was happening. A movement known as “modernism” was evolving. It reflected an inclination to reject the concept of **propositional truth** based on **divine authority**.

Men like Presbyterian clergyman Harry E. Fosdick (1878-1969) argued that the Bible had developed along evolutionary lines. They rejected the supernatural elements of Scripture.

This ideology became pervasive in both Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. A major component of the restoration heritage (the Disciples of Christ) was also influenced by this heresy.

More recently modernism has been succeeded by a philosophy known as “Post-modernism” This dogma, more dangerous even than modernism, is a late 20th-century theory contending there’s no such thing as real knowledge—at least in the objective sense. Rather, truth is subjectively determined by each individual.

One writer says that Postmodernism reflects a “rebellion against all aspects of the modern culture that had prevailed in the West since the late 19th century” (Dever, 30).

Postmodernism has impacted the religious community at large in a devastating fashion, and the churches of Christ have been significantly influenced by this ideology as well.

## The Trendy Church

Over the past several decades there has developed a growing mentality that the church is an outdated organism. Somehow, we have lost touch with the "millennial" generation. Therefore, it's imperative (they say) that we update the church model. We must make it more trendy.

This idea is rooted in a cultural phenomenon that may be figuratively described as "**societal osmosis.**" Environmental influences silently and slowly move from one realm to another. The trends of secular society to a significant degree have seeped into the religious fabric of our culture.

There is no better example of this than the current endorsement of homosexual unions in some of the historic Protestant sects. *That which once was an abomination is now fashionable.*

Further, the contaminated elements of "Christendom" in differing degrees ultimately trickle into the church. Not a few citizens of Christ's kingdom are like the Israel of Samuel's day. They lust to be like the nations [churches] round-about (1 Samuel 8:5).

Consider briefly some of the major changes that have been observable in the church over the past several decades.

## **A New Call for Denominational Blending**

Though a few radical “voices of concern” (e.g., Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett) were being raised a half-century ago, scarcely anyone would have dreamed that high-powered people in some of our major schools would be calling now for an ecumenical blending with denominationalists in the swaddling days of the new millennium.

And yet, voices as “sectarian” as anything imaginable are now frequent and unrestrained within our midst. No longer is J. D. Tant’s quip, “Brethren, we are drifting,” *apropos*. Many are now rushing with a head of steam towards a “Casey Jones” disaster.

## **Subjective Faith**

We are progressively departing from a dependence on the New Testament as the authoritative source of instruction in religion and ethics towards a subjective-style, get-in-touch-with-your-feelings philosophy.

Many congregations no longer have substantial Bible classes where the Word of God is explored deeply and taught powerfully, with a solid application made to Christian living. Rather, we have “sharing” sessions wherein we “testify” of exciting events we’ve experienced in the work-place.

Even some of our Bible class literature (not a little of which has been transported from denominational publishing concerns) is filled with people-centered scenarios. “What would you do if you were in Johnny’s place?” The biblical emphasis is paper thin.

At the same time, a “new hermeneutic” has evolved by which the authority of **apostolic example** is questioned, the concept of **necessary inference** is ridiculed, the matter of the **silence of the Scriptures** is affirmed to be a pure fabrication.

## **Feminism in the Church**

The influence of society’s feminists is also being felt in the church. As denominational groups ordain female “priests” and “clergy,” congregations from Connecticut to California are also opting for an expanded role for women.

Church after church is announcing that Christian ladies will be progressively employed in leadership roles. The New Testament subordination of women is viewed as a cultural oddity of the first century with little, if any, application for today.

Again, some of our [church affiliated] institutions of higher education are leading the way in this digression.

## **Erosion of Marriage**

When Hollywood blazed the trail in serial “marriage,” many wondered if small-town America could be far behind. It wasn’t. Now, the same pattern is seen running rampant in the church.

“Single again” groups are in vogue. Experts and counselors in “marriage enrichment” skills are in great demand, while seminar directors generally are careful to throw a wide loop that avoids confrontation with the biblical law of divorce and remarriage.

Every sort of quirky notion imaginable, the design of which is to “sanctify” adulterous liaisons, has surfaced in recent years. While we must have sincere compassion for those who are victims of divorce, the compromise of biblical truth is not a solution for these heartaches.

## **Gimmick-based Evangelism**

Just as the world of denominationalism has been gimmick-driven in recent years, so our people have not been far behind. We have explored every mechanism under the sun helpful for attracting the public’s attention.

We have offered a variety of classes and a host of public services within our neighborhoods in hopes of enticing the baby-boomers, Generation-X, and now Millennials. All the while, we largely have ignored the very thing responsible for our greatest success — the wonderful and simple proclamation of the gospel.

While some labor under the illusion that the modern world no longer wants the message of a dusty book twenty centuries old, actually, just the reverse is true. Many are starving for spiritual truth. Rich Bible teaching presented by those who are excited about the treasures of scripture is attracting the attention of many lost people.

## **“Contemporary” Worship**

The denominational world has little interest in the teaching of the New Testament in terms of a divinely-authorized worship format. Will-worship (Colossians 2:23) for the most part has been the order of the day.

With roots that reach deep into paganism, Catholicism has been steeped in pageantry for centuries. Early Protestantism attempted a remedy. Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon, and other notable Protestant scholars, for example, expressed strong views against the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.

**Ferguson has noted that the expression *A cappella* (which refers to purely vocal music) literally means “in the style of the church.” His exhaustive research led to this conclusion:**

***The classical form of church music is unaccompanied song. To abstain from the use of the instrument is not a peculiar aberration of ‘a frontier American sect’; this was easily, until comparatively recent times, the majority tradition of Christian history (Ferguson, 83).***

**Less than fifty years removed from Ferguson’s comment, it is not at all uncommon to hear prominent brethren arguing that instrumental music is a non-issue that certainly ought not to be treated as a test of Christian fellowship.**

***“There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether instrumental music is used in worship” (Osburn, 90).***

**It is almost certain that conditions are developing among churches of Christ that eventually will accommodate large-scale innovations in congregational worship.**

**Even now, a number of sizable churches following the lead of denominational groups (Veith, 4-5) are staggering their services, providing a "traditional" worship format for the older generation (dare we say, "fogies"?). Then also a jazzed up service is arranged for those who are more contemporary.**

**Too, it is a sad commentary on our attitude toward the hours of sacred worship that our dress has degenerated to casual, not to mention sloppy. Sandals and shorts are observable not infrequently in some places.**

**What has happened to our sense of solemnity of occasion?  
What impression do we convey to community visitors?**

## **Conclusion**

In his letter to the saints in Rome, Paul instructed the brethren to "be not fashioned according to the world" (Romans 12:2). The present imperative form of the verb means, "stop being fashioned [conformed — KJV]!" The principle involved in this admonition is broad in its application. Barclay attempts to catch the spirit of it.

*"Don't try to match your life to all the fashions of this world; don't be like the chameleon which takes its color from its surroundings; don't go with the world; don't let the world decide what you are going to be like" (170).*

Let us summon the courage to make the appropriate applications, yielding to truth and common sense, rather than fickle trends of an unspiritual society.



## Are Choirs and Solos Authorized for the Church Assembly?

*Is performance singing with praise teams, choirs or solos acceptable in the worship of Christ's assembly? What are the arguments for and against this modern movement?*

By Wayne Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)

One of the controversies generating considerable interest among the Lord's people these days is the question of whether or not the use of choirs and solos is permissible in the worship assemblies of the New Testament church.

In numerous places the utilization of such singing arrangements has already been implemented. Some churches have specially named groups with coordinated wardrobes. Others are clamoring for these special singing groups. Musical entertainment is invading the church.

As a people who have always argued our religious positions upon the basis of scriptural authority, it behooves us to ask: is choir and solo singing in the church assembly authorized by the Scriptures? If it is not, then such cannot be condoned, no matter how popular the practice has become.

### Congregational Singing

Historically, it has been quite evident to most Bible students that the type of music authorized for church assemblies by the New Testament Scriptures is that of congregational singing.

Paul wrote:

*And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:18, 19 [ASV]).*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God (Col. 3:16 [ASV]).*

There are several important things here. First, the language of these verses is such that it involves a plurality of individuals, it is entire congregations, in the obligations enjoined. The imperatives “be filled” and “let dwell,” along with explanatory plural participles, “speaking,” “singing,” “making melody,” “teaching,” etc., indicate the activity of the church as a whole, rather than individual action, or that of a small portion of the church, as suggested by the solo-choral arrangement.

Second, the terms **heautois** (“one to another” [Eph. 5:19]) & **heautou** (“one another” [Col. 3:16]) are grammatically classified as reciprocal, reflexive pronouns.

According to noted grammarians Dana and Mantey (1968, 131), such a usage, in the context under consideration, represents “an interchange of action” in the verbs employed.

J. B. Lightfoot (1892, 219) has noted that the reflexive nature of these pronouns emphasizes the “idea of corporate unity.” When the church as a whole sings, there is “speaking one to another.” When one group is active (the choir) and another group is passive (listening audience), there is no interchange of action.

Choir & solo music doesn't fulfill the requirements of these contexts. Godet affirms that Ephesians 5:18ff and Colossians 3:16 refer to hymns that are sung by “the whole Church” (1890, 281).

Third, the participles “speaking,” “singing,” etc., explain the manner of implementing the imperatives (commands) “be filled” and “let dwell.”

Consequently, if one group (the chorus) may sing and praise God for another group (the audience), that is equivalent to arguing that one group may “be filled” with the Spirit for another, or the choir may “let [the word] dwell” in them as representatives for the balance of the congregation.

**The New Testament does not sanction the notion of proxy worship. One segment of the church can no more sing for another than it can observe the Lord's supper for another, or give for another. God expects faithful worship from each Christian.**

Fourth, if Ephesians 5:18-19 & Colossians 3:16 exclude congregational singing and suggest solo or choir singing, as some allege (DeWalt 1985, 293), then solo and choir singing is not an option; rather, it is an obligation, and everyone in the church must be active in this type of singing function.

This is similar to the argument that N. B. Hardeman made in his debate with Ira Boswell. When Boswell contended that the Greek word **psallontes** ("making melody") in Ephesians 5:19 inferred a mechanical instrument, Hardeman, with relentless logic, proved that since all of the saints at Ephesus were commanded to make melody, this would surely demand that each of them personally employ an instrument. Boswell was devastated by the argument.

Those today who are contending for choirs or solos on the basis of this passage are in an equally embarrassing position.

## **Major Arguments for the Choir and Solo Arrangements**

Those who are introducing and defending the choir or solo practice in the church assembly attempt to justify their position by use of the following methods.

### **"The Bible is silent"**

Others contend that choirs and solos are permissible since the Bible is silent regarding them. A cartoon published in *Image* magazine (Vol. VI, No. 1) suggested that quartet singing is just as scriptural as an opening prayer.

The implication was this: the Scriptures do not mention quartets and they do not mention "opening" prayers. We have no problem with the latter; thus, the former should be accepted as well.

The fact is, however, if the church is authorized to pray in assembly (and it is [1 Corinthians 14:15ff]), the first prayer would of necessity be an opening prayer. Such **is authorized** therefore.

Now, where is argumentation of equal force for the quartet? This type of reasoning has been used for ages in attempting to justify infant baptism, rosary beads, incense burning, musical instruments, and a host of other human inventions. As an interpretive procedure, it is absolutely worthless.

## Solo-singing in Corinth

Some are contending that 1 Corinthians 14 verse 26 contains the New Testament authority for solos in the worship assembly. Rubel Shelly, former preacher for Woodmont Hills church in Nashville, Tennessee, asserts: "The New Testament precedent is actually clearer for solo or small-group singing than for congregational singing (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26-28)" (1989). Shelly suggests, however, that the congregation for which he preaches will, for the most part, stay with congregational music. Why, pray tell, if precedent for solo singing is stronger? This very attitude reflects a posture that disdains biblical authority!

Don DeWelt of the Independent Christian Church similarly argued that there is little, if any, authority for congregational singing.

What does 1st Corinthians 14:26 actually say? That passage declares:

*What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying (ASV).*

This verse does not remotely provide what is needed to justify solo singing. First, the passage does not mention singing. A psalm can be read or quoted as easily as it can be sung. Further, a psalm could be presented to the congregation for learning without a solo even being performed. It certainly could have been introduced phrase by phrase with the church joining in, in the same fashion as antiphonal singing.

### ***Antiphonal Singing:***

**when two groups would sing the lines or phrases of a psalm back & and forth to each other. Antiphonal singing in which the congregation was divided into two choirs and chanted alternately came in alongside the responsorial chant of the late fourth century.**

### ***Responsorial Singing:***

**when the song-leader would sing the lines or phrases of a song, and the congregation would respond in unison with words of the chorus.**

If a verse does not explicitly state a truth, or at least necessarily imply it, no speculation should be made by which to justify some coveted practice. Imagination is poor basis upon which to construct argument.

Second, while it may be reasonable to conclude that a spiritual gift, i.e., an inspired song, is in view in 1st Corinthians 14:26, the natural presumption would have to be that once the song was given by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit and conveyed to the congregation, the subsequent use of the psalm would've been regulated in harmony with the apostle's instructions elsewhere (Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16), and that would demand congregational singing—not a solo performance.

In this connection we would make passing reference to the case of the disciples as they assembled in Acts 4, celebrating the release of Peter and John from prison. The text states that they **“lifted up their voice to God with one accord”** (v. 24).

Macknight, coupling this to 1 Corinthians 14:26, comments that since it is said that the whole company “lifted up their voice with one accord,” it is evident that this utterance must have been delivered “by two or three sentences at a time (as Paul directed the Corinthians to do in the like cases) that all the company might join in it” (1954, 195).

Moreover, **if a psalm were sung under the influence of the Spirit for instructive purposes, that would have no bearing upon what the local church is allowed to do today.** Hodge has noted:

*It was only so long as the gifts . . . continued in the church that the state of things here described [1 Corinthians 14:26] prevailed. Since those gifts have ceased, no one has the right to rise in the church under the impulse of his mind to take part in its services (1857, 300).*

Third, it appears fairly obvious that the Apostle Paul, in this context, is attempting to correct an abuse. H. K. Moulton, lecturer in New Testament studies at New College, University of London, classifies 1 Corinthians 14:26 as one of several Corinthian passages which reveal “selfish individualism” (cf. 1:12; 11:21) on the part of these saints, thus worthy of apostolic rebuke (1977, 37).

If such is the case, this verse is hardly one to be cited in support of the chorus-solo system. The truth is, the New Testament is void of authority for solo and choir music in church worship.

Why, then, has there developed this relatively modern craze for a new form of church music?

## The Solo-Chorus Innovation

As with many other features of the early church, after the close of the first century, gradual changes in the apostles' doctrine began to be introduced. The testimony of history clearly establishes the fact that for a good while congregational singing continued to be the practice of those professing Christianity.

The early "church fathers" spoke of that worship in song in which "the whole congregation forms one general chorus" (Chrysostom), and "to a man . . . make up a chorus" (Ignatius), wherein "the whole people join in song" (Ambrose) unto God. Eusebius, known as the "father of church history," says that the churches' congregational singing was so loud - it could be heard "by those standing outside" (Frost 1989, 2-9).

M'Clintock and Strong note:

*From the apostolic age, singing was always a part of divine service, in which the whole body of the church joined together; and it was the decay of this practice that first brought the order of singers into the Church (1970, 776).*

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* points out that at first singing was congregational, "but gradually the practice of having a body of trained singers was introduced." By the fourth century A.D., choral groups were being employed in some of the churches. By the time of Gregory the Great (d. 604), "the Schola Cantorum [school of singers] was fully established" (Cross 1958, 1225, 273).

Historian John Hurst writes regarding the primitive church worship:

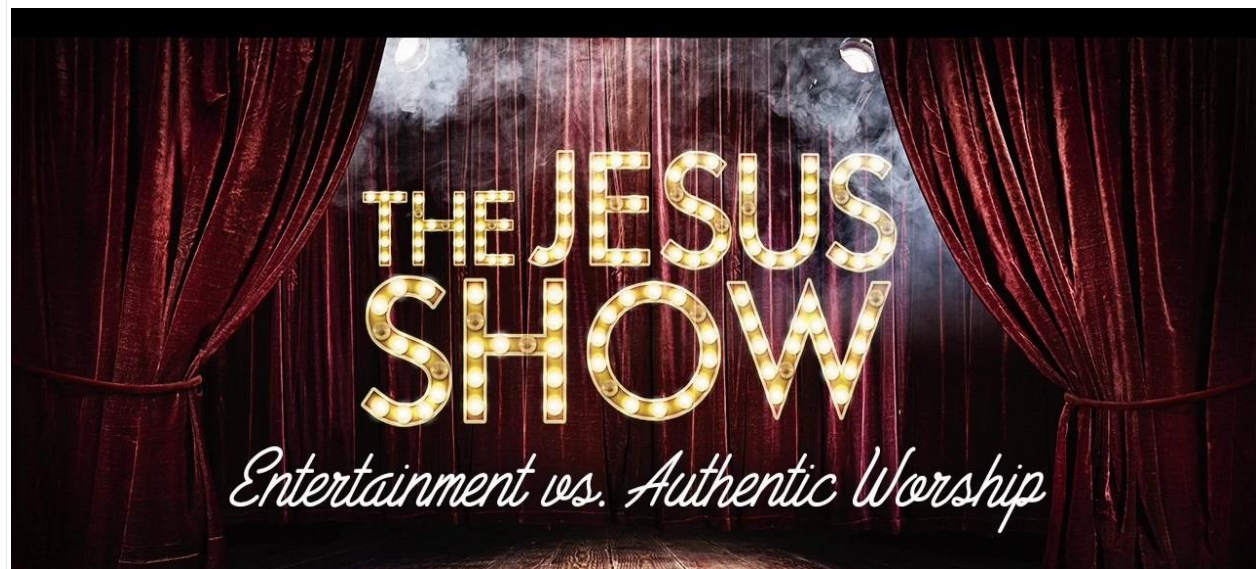
*The singing of psalms & hymns was an important part of the service. It might be led by an individual, but Paul's advice proves that singing by the whole congregation was regarded as the best form of praise (1897, 142).*

The testimony of ancient history is clearly against choir or solo singing, and in favor of congregational singing.

## Modern Motives

The fact of the matter is, the current trend toward solos and choirs in the services of the church reflects an attitude that attempts to shift the emphasis from the simple message of the gospel to an aura of sensationalism and entertainment.

Rubel Shelly thinks that by the introduction of special music (choirs & solos) and religious drama, the hope that the church might “catch more flies with honey” than with our regular or “traditional” format. What a sad state of affairs when ordinary gospel preaching & humble congregational worship are being compared, by implication, to vinegar!





## EARLY CHURCH PRE-TEST

➤ *What is the earliest mention of a church choir?*

107

307

507

707

## EARLY CHURCH PRE-TEST

➤ *This 4<sup>th</sup> Century bishop in Milan reintroduced congregational singing?*

TIMOTHY

AMBROSE

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

BILL GAITHER

The difference between Worship and Entertainment - God intends the worship of His church in song to be both vertical (speaking to God above) and horizontal (speaking to those around us).

**First**, Scripture instructs Christians to “sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19). They are to “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16). The Hebrew writer urges, “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name” (13:15). **This vertical dimension must be present for any song to be regarded as worship. God is first & foremost the audience of our worship.** Our first task is to adore and to please Him. Any act that takes the focus off God or acts to the glory of man rather than God can never be regarded as worship.

Those who seek or accept praise for themselves rather than glorify God have in all times been responsible for grave error (Numbers 20:12; Psalm 19:13; Acts 12:20-23). Christians are to do all things to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

**Second, musical worship has a horizontal dimension.** Paul exhorted Ephesians to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19). He instructed the Colossians: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16). One reason why early Christians assembled together was to “encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Paul instructed the church at Corinth that their psalms were to edify; “let all things be done for edification” (1 Corinthians 14:26). Worship directed toward God was also to “build up” brethren. All Christians have the responsibility of speaking, teaching and counseling one another.

**The function of entertainment as a pastime must never be confused with the reverent and sacred act of worship.** One must wonder at the behavior of some of the contemporary singing groups who have blended their religious songs with an entertaining style. It has left many confused as to whether to call their activity entertainment or worship. This confusion serves their purpose; for if they are criticized for their actions in worship, they say they are entertaining. And if they are accused of entertaining, they speak of their ministry, “leading the congregation in worship.”

A further confusion related to worship and entertainment is the function of the heart. Some, not understanding the nature of worship, believe that the stirring of their hearts constitutes worship. All songs have the ability to stir the heart.

Dramatic, theatrical and love songs can be charged with great emotion and passion. Emotion doesn't make them songs of worship. Many songs that do contain religious thoughts may be filled with fervor and with passion but not be worship. Singing to worship requires understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15); its purpose is to teach and admonish, to give thanks and to praise. Worship in song is the intentional act of the heart and lips to glorify God. One must remember that simply because the hearts of an audience are stirred, God's name may not have been glorified or His heart pleased by the aroma of the sacrifices.

**Things that are holy are not to be cheapened by making them common.** God's name is never to be taken in vain. To turn our worship into a performance or a show can never please God. It fails to give God the glory due His holy name. The worship of the tabernacle in the Old Testament was a serious matter to God, because He is a holy God. He insists on being treated holy. This theme is a major tenet of the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy.

**To treat worship as a common matter is a great offense to God, no matter how pleasing it may be to men.** It is the same for the church today. Those who enter worship must never do anything that takes the focus off of the holy respect due to our God. Realizing the importance of God-directed worship, Jimmy Jividen correctly observed: "God desires worship directed from the heart of man. All of the pomp of men, all of the orderliness of form, all of the beauty of art and all of the emotional stimulation evoked through drama and music cannot substitute for the simple devotion of a humble heart."

Small group singing & solos may take the focus off God & put it on performers. The emphasis here may be put on the beauty of the voice rather than on the greatness of God. Such a concept forgets that God Himself is the audience. Our worship is to be directed to Him so we might offer to Him a sacrifice of praise. Worship was never intended to be showy. Such an idea could never reflect the respect and reverence due to our Creator and Savior. Singing hymns is a sacred act of the heart and lips; its sole purpose is to express love and/or gratitude for God. People can perform the right act but with the wrong motive.

Jesus sharply condemned the Pharisees for their "showy" religion (Matthew 6:1-18). We too must be careful that we do not practice our acts of righteousness to be seen. **Small group singing and solos are exclusive rather than inclusive.** By their very nature choruses ask for trained singers & melodic voices. One music ministry advertised for audition to be a part of their chorus. One must wonder if there are any qualifications as to which Christians may worship publicly. The Scriptures, after all, instruct every Christian to sing.

Why should anyone be then excluded from worshipping because he is a poor singer or tone deaf? If God does not care whether a brother or sister is tone deaf, why should we?

When small groups perform, there will always be the question of who may be a part of it. Artistic concerns, then, become a standard of inclusion and exclusion. Such standards could never have been part of the first century church. Paul opposed at every turn the sectarianism, arrogance and jealousy the immature church at Corinth had experienced with their spiritual gifts.

Solos and small group singing will inevitably lead to conflicts among the immature. The problems of jealousy and ego based upon musical skill will abound. Most denominations have had enduring problems with choirs, for it grants the opportunity for the worst in personalities to come out. If a church were assembling a choir, there are some Christians who would never be asked to join. The reason is because they are not good singers. In small group singing artistic concerns become more important than one's right to adore God.

We must then ask when has God ever considered music skill as criteria for his worshipers? Why should anyone who has that musical skill have the right to include or exclude anyone on the basis of that skill?

The quibble is brought up here about part singing. If some parts sing while the rest remain silent in part of a song, why can some parts not sing the whole song while others listen? Further, if one part can sing a whole song, why can't it sing the whole service? In response we ask: if only the sopranos or only the basses sang a whole service, how could the others fulfill their responsibility to sing?

Every Christian has the responsibility to sing when he has gathered with his brothers and sisters. In part singing where one group sings part of a song alone (such as the females singing the verses in "Angry Words"), the men temporarily do not sing the verses but are not altogether excluded from singing. This is not unlike the action in antiphonal or responsorial singing, both of which do not exclude anyone from singing some of the song.

Choirs as a separate group from the congregation were not present among the earliest Christians. It was an innovation that led to special singers for the congregation. **Because they sang more difficult songs, others ceased to sing.**

**According to McClintock & Strong, the appointment of singers as a distinct class in the Church for their part of religious worship, and the consequent introduction of [secular] music into the church, marks another alteration in the psalmody of the Church.**

These innovations were first made in the 4th century; and though the people continued for a century or more to enjoy their ancient privilege of all singing together, it is conceivable that it gradually was forced to die, as **an assembly could not well unite in theatrical music which required in its performers a degree of skill superior to that the congregation could expect to possess.**

An artificial, theatrical style of music, having no affinity with worship of God, soon began to take the place of those solemn airs which before had inspired the devotions of his people. **The music of the theatre was transferred to the church, which accordingly became the scene of theatrical pomp and display rather than the house of prayer and praise, to inspire by its appropriate and solemn rites the spiritual worship of God (VI:758).**

McClintock and Strong further observe that until the sixth or seventh century the people were not entirely excluded from participating in the singing. **They were allowed to sing in the choruses and in the responses. But “it soon came about that the many, instead of uniting their hearts and their voices in the songs of Zion, could only sit coldly by as spectators” (Ibid.).**

Solos and small group singing asks the church members to worship through others. If one silently listens to others sing, one has not fulfilled their own responsibility to praise God with his lips, to speak, teach, or admonish. Every Christian has responsibility to sing, and no one else can fulfill that responsibility for him. Although one's heart has been stirred by another's singing, one hasn't sung if he has merely “sung in his heart.” Singing is an act of both the heart and of the lips. **To sing and not make melody in one's heart is not worship. It mocks God! In the same way, to stir one's heart but not speak with one's lips, is to fail to do what God has asked.**

May one please God simply by observing others partaking of the communion? Although one's heart be stirred greatly in the remembering, has one obeyed the directive if he has not eaten the bread or drunk the cup? May one please God simply by observing others contributing to the Lord's church? Although one's heart may be stirred deeply with love and gratitude, has one obeyed the Lord's instructions? Has one become a Christian who has watched others being baptized? Although in his heart he may have believed and genuinely repented, is he regarded as obedient if he is not baptized?

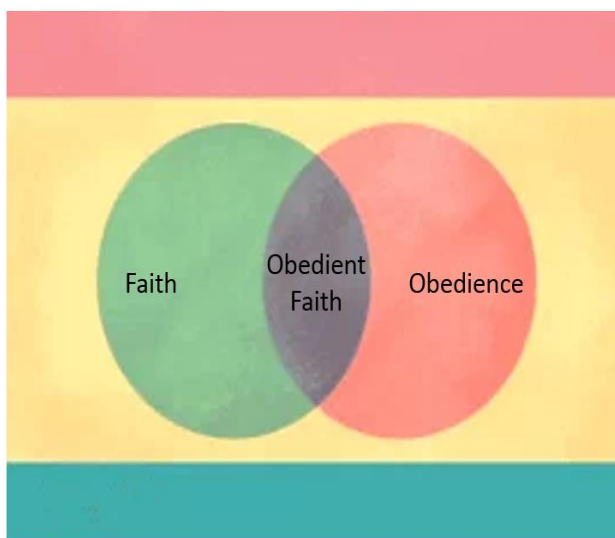
Obedience must be heartfelt, but one is not free from sin until he has acted in obedience. The heart and the act are both necessary. To observe another fulfill his responsibility is not the same as one worshiping the Lord himself.

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## AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

# Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



*O That Will Be Glory*

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

*I an* Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

*When by His grace I shall look on His face, e*

*That will be glory, be glory for me. me.*

