New Testament Church Music

I. music: That one of the fine arts which is concerned with the combination of sounds with a view to beauty of form and the expression of emotion; also, the science of the laws or principles by which this art is regulated.

II. God's commandments forbid additions or diminutions.
DEU 4:2; REV 1:3 c/w 22:18-19; MAT 28:20; 1CO 11:1-2; PHIL 4:9.
A. **LEV 10:1-2** is an example of addition.
B. **1SAM 15:3, 9, 20-24** is an example of diminution.
C. **NUM 20:7-12** is an example of both.
D. Scripture argues from silence. What Scripture does not teach, it simply does not teach. **HEB 7:13-14.**
E. Specifics in a commandment forbid alteration. **LEV 24:5-9 c/w MAT 12:3-4.**

III. There are two types of music: vocal and instrumental. **PSA 68:25; 87:7.**

IV. Musical instruments occasionally were used in the Levitical system, even in the house of God. **PSA 33:2-3; 2CH 29:25-26.**

V. In the N.T., there is mention of:
A. trumpets. **MAT 6:2.**
B. minstrels. **MAT 9:23.**
C. pipes. **MAT 11:17.**
D. brass and cymbals. **1CO 13:1.**
E. harps. **1CO 14:7.**

VI. However, there is never a single occurrence (either by precept or example) of musical instruments in N.T. church worship.
A. We find singing commanded. **EPH 5:19; COL 3:16; JAM 5:13.**
B. We find prophecies of singing in N.T. church context. **ROM 15:9; HEB 2:12.**
C. The only kind of music we find Christ, the apostles and the churches employing is vocal. **MAT 26:30; ACT 16:25; 1CO 14:15; HEB 13:15.**
D. The only earthly "church" where musical instruments are seen in N.T. writings is the anti-church, Mystery Babylon. **REV 18:22.**
1. The heavy emphasis there is likely a relic carried over from her corrupt heritage. **DAN 3:5-6.**
2. "This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is due to God who is a spirit...That way that sense directs the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship has been set up and maintained." (Matthew Henry Commentary on DAN 3:1-12)
3. Curiously, the development of musical instruments came through the line of Cain, the archetype of sensual *will-worship*. **GEN 4:21.**
E. The principle of an event or venue where something that is otherwise permissible is not allowed is commonly recognized. For example, in a court of justice, instrumental music or a video of "12 Angry Men" or even an oration of the U.S. Code to enhance the proceeding would be rightly viewed as inappropriate and even *contempt of court*.

VII. Consider a summary of the history of instrumental music in N.T. church context.

A. Instruments were introduced by Pope Vitalian in 666 A.D. (Chambers Encylopedia)

B. "Musical instruments in celebrating the praise of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews." (John Calvin's Commentary, comment on Psalm 33)

C. John Wesley said, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen." (Clarke's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 684)

D. "I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them (musical instruments) productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe that 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 here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity." (Ibid.)

E. Martin Luther "...called the organ an ensign of Baal." (McClintock and Strong's Ency., Vol. VI, p. 762)

F. Charles H. Spurgeon did not have musical instruments in the worship at Metropolitan Tabernacle.

G. Conybeare and Howson, scholars of the Church of England, said, "Make melody with the music of your hearts, to the Lord...let your songs be, not the drinking of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart." (Comment on **EPH 5:19** in Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Vol. II, p. 408)

H. "Instrumental music is permissible for a church under the following conditions: 1. When a church never had or has lost the Spirit of Christ. 2. If a church has a preacher who never had or has lost the Spirit of Christ, who has become a dry, prosing and lifeless preacher. 3. If a church only intends being a fashionable society, a mere place of amusements and secular entertainment and abandoning the idea of religion and worship. 4. If a church has within it a large number of dishonest and corrupt men. 5. If a church has given up all idea of trying to convert the world."
(Ben Franklin, editor of American Christian Review, 1860.)

I. A Jansenist (a counter-reformation Catholic group that believed in predestination and no frills in church worship), when asked why there were no adornments or musical instruments in their place of worship said, "Because the purpose of church worship is to feed the sheep, not entertain the goats."

VIII. **EPH 5:19; COL 3:16** set the order for music for N.T. saints in the house of God's service.

A. psalm: A twitching; In a general sense: any sacred song that is or may be sung in religious worship. (**PSA 105:2; JAM 5:13**)

B. hymn: A song of praise to God.

C. song: The act or art of singing; the result or effect of this, vocal music; that which is sung; occas., poetry.

D. spiritual: Of or pertaining to, affecting or concerning, the spirit. Of songs, etc.: Devotional, sacred.

1. This would include songs that pertain to spiritual themes other than psalms and hymns.
2. This would also stand in distinction to fleshly or profane songs.

E. Remember the argument from silence: where God has expressed what He wants to hear, He has also thus forbidden alternatives.

IX. Consider some objections to vocal music only in the N.T. church.

A. "Instrumental music was used in the O.T." *Ans*. Then why not adopt other O.T. practices? **PSA 81:1-5 c/w COL 2:16-17; PSA 66:13-15.**

B. "There are musical instruments in heaven."

1. But they also don't marry in heaven. **MAT 22:30.**
2. The state of things in heaven is not a rule for conduct here.

C. "But musical instruments will draw more people to church so that they come under the gospel."

1. So will loaves and fishes, ballet, plays, movies, football telecasts, Starbucks, etc.
2. The true gospel is also a repellent. **JOH 6:65-66; 2CO 2:15-16.**
3. God is looking for spirit-led worshippers, not sensual. **JOH 4:23-24.**

D. "**LUK 15:25** is a picture of restoration to the church, so..."

1. Instrumental music is only assumed here.
2. What about the other activities: dancing, killing the fatted calf, putting a robe and ring on the penitent? Take one, take all.

E. "Instrumental music is pleasant and seems harmless."

1. Nadab and Abihu's *strange fire* was pleasant and seemed harmless. **LEV 10:1-2.**
2. The Corinthians' sensualizing of the Lord's Supper was pleasant and seemed harmless. **1CO 11:20-30.**
3. Rat poison is over 99% harmless.
4. Personal pleasure and feelings are poor determinants of right and wrong. **GEN 3:6; PRO 14:12; 28:26.**

F. "Shouldn't a person employ his talents for God?"

1. So if a person is athletic, should we have a tennis match during the service? What about a talented coroner or heart-surgeon to demonstrate regeneration?
2. So if a woman is a talented orator, should we have our first woman pastor? **1TI 2:11-12.**

G. "It's OK to use instruments in the home."

1. There are many things done in the home which are not to be practiced as part of religious worship in the church. **MAR 7:1-8.**
2. Women may speak and even teach at home, but this does not mean they should do so distinctly in the assembly of the saints. **TIT 2:3-4 c/w 1CO 14:34-35.**

H. "An instrument is merely an aid to worship."

1. Was David's ox-cart "merely an aid" to ark-moving? **1CH 13:7-10 c/w 15:2, 13.**
2. Distinguish between *aids* and *additions*. An aid helps do what God commanded, but adds no element to the final product. An addition adds an element.
3. Observe the product of what is done and see if it matches what was commanded to determine if something is an aid or an addition.
   a. God commanded Noah to make an ark of gopher wood (**GEN 6:14**). Use of a hammer would be an aid which added nothing to the finished product beyond the commandment. Substituting cedar wood, or laminating cedar and gopher wood together add something to the expressed desire of God.
   b. Jesus commands the eating of unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. A plate for passing the bread adds nothing to the finished product. Smearing the bread with liver sausage would add something. The plate is only an aid.
   c. God commands singing. A songbook is only an aid. The finished product is singing with no additional element. Use of an organ would be an addition because the finished product would be more than God wanted to hear.

X. Musical instruments cannot fulfill the requirements of N.T. church music according to **EPH 5:19; COL 3:16; 1CO 14:15.**

A. They cannot speak, teach or admonish.

B. They cannot sing with the spirit and with understanding.

C. They cannot make melody in the heart.

D. Vocal music can meet all these requirements.

1. Instrumental music can raise goosebumps but not understanding.

2. Musical instruments are "...without life..." (**1CO 14:7**) and Biblical N.T. worship is rather characterized by *living* things:

a. We have been begotten again "...unto a lively hope..." (**1PE 1:3**).

b. We are freed from condemnation by "...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (**ROM 8:1-2**).

c. Conversion is to "...walk in newness of life" (**ROM 6:4**).

d. By faith and the Spirit, out of us flows "...living water..." (**JOH 7:38**).

e. We in public worship enter into the holiest by "...a new and living way..." (**HEB 10:20**).

f. We present our bodies "...a living sacrifice..." (**ROM 12:1**).

g. As God's temple, we are "...lively stones..." (**1PE 2:5**).

3. The very *trumpet of God* is a coincidence of the resurrection at the Second Coming (**1CO 15:52 c/w 1TH 4:16**); it is the *voice* of Christ that *gives life* to the dead. **JOH 5:28-29 c/w JOH 11:43.**

E. Note **MAR 7:13.**

XI. God joys over His people with singing. **ZEP 3:17**.

XII. The institution of N.T. church communion was concluded with singing (**MAT 26:30**) and in so doing, Christ fulfilled the prophecy of Himself given by David: "...in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (**HEB 2:12 c/w PSA 22:22**).

XIII. The only instruments God is looking for in His N.T. church are *instruments of righteousness*. **ROM 6:13.**