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Show Me Your Friends

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The Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes wrote, "Tell me what company thou keepest, and I'll tell thee what thou art." Cervantes was not a prophet, he simply understood the strong influence friends exert over our lives. You can tell a lot about a person by the company they keep. Scripture brings this truth to light.

Show me your friends ...

And I'll show you your religious convictions. David wrote, "I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts" ([Psalm 119:63](#)). Our companions will help or hinder us in letting our light shine, doing good works, devotion to God and in getting to heaven. We ought to be concerned if we realize all our close friends are either godless or involved in false religion.

And I'll show you your favorite activities. "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man in rags" ([Proverbs 23:19-21](#)). We do things with our friends. Obviously, we do not choose friends so we can AVOID them. We want to spend time with them and generally pursue common interests. Are you involved with the party-hard, drunken, drug-using crowd? Well, guess what that makes you.

And I'll show you your feelings about proper speech. "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise" ([Proverbs 10:19](#)). Some people's mouths are a hotbed for sin: gossip, profanity, anger, criticism. Let us remember, "Evil company corrupts good habits" ([1 Cor. 15:33](#)).

What Do Your Friends Say About You?

The Spiritual Simplicity of Our Singing

Paul Earnhart

In the 1940's Elmer T. Clark observed that it is "a peculiar type of mind which is convinced that God is interested in whether his worshipers sing with or without instrumental music" (*Small Sects in America*, p. 16).

Clark's words carry a twentieth century bias. The truth is that the mind which he thought so peculiar was once dominant in "Christian" thought. The use of musical instruments in the worship of the churches is a relatively recent development. Most Protestant churches in America did not yield to the practice until the nineteenth century.

The unadorned simplicity of our spiritual singing is not a cultural statement but a matter of faith — a response to the teaching of the New Testament.

The worship of the Old Testament church with its complex rituals was not simple. During the intricate rites of the temple sacrifices a Levitical chorus was commanded to sing and a Levitical orchestra to play ([2 Chron. 29:25-28](#)). But the New Testament refers to the appointments of temple worship as "*carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation*" ([Hebrews 9:10](#)). This reformation is dramatically illustrated by the total absence of any reference in the New Testament to Christians worshipping God with sacrificial animals, incense, lamps, choirs, or orchestras. There is only the admonition for the disciples to speak to each other and to the Lord in "*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*" ([Ephesians 5:19](#); [Colossians 3:16](#)).

Christian worship in song is not a choral contest. Spiritual singing has spiritual ends. Since God's ways differ radically from our own (Isaiah 55:8-9) it is of no consequence that in the mind of some the absence of musical instruments (or of devotional lamps and incense) diminishes the appeal of the singing. What is important is that we have sufficient trust in God to follow His instructions with the confidence that His methods achieve His purposes.

The silence of the New Testament on instrumentally accompanied singing has had its impact in history. The early centuries not only reveal no use of instrumental music in worship but an expressed opposition to it as belonging to the spiritual infancy of the Old Testament church.

Eusebius of Caesarea (early 4th century), commenting on Psalms 91:2-3: "Of old at the time those of the circumcision were worshipping with symbols and types it was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the psalterion and kithara ... We render our hymns with a living psalterion and a living kithara with spiritual songs. The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument."

Chrysostom (late 4th century): "It was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn from idols; but now, instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal."

Theodoret of Cyrhus (early 5th century): "Question: If songs were invented by unbelievers to seduce men, but were allowed to those under the law on account of their childish state, why do those who have received the perfect teaching of grace in their churches still use songs, just like the children under the law? Answer: It is not simple singing that belongs to the childish state, but singing with lifeless instruments, with dancing, and with clappers. Hence the use of such instruments and the others that belong to the childish state is excluded from the singing in the churches, and simple singing is left." (all preceding quotes taken from *Questions and Answers for the Orthodox*).

The Roman Catholic Church continued this opposition at least until the time of Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) who wrote: "Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize."

The Greek Church (Orthodox) has never used musical instruments. Several Protestant reformers held to the same sentiment. Calvin wrote that "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" (*Commentary on Psalm 33*).

John Wesley (founder of the Methodist church) was more succinct: "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen" (quoted in *Adam Clarke's Commentary*).

The use of instruments in worship is not progress but a carnal retreat to spiritual kindergarten. We should glory in the supreme spirituality of our singing, sanctified by God and accompanied by the higher melody of our hearts.