

CONCLUSION

In the May 8, 1956, Firm Foundation, (non-instrument journal), a writer appraises conditions in the non-instrument Church of Christ as follows: "When I began preaching twenty years and more ago several divisions among disciples were already mature and full grown. Since then they have multiplied on every hand and among every so-called fellowship. They come now with such rapidity that we are made dizzy by the spectacle."

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., writing in the January 10, 1957, issue of the Gospel Advocate, (non-instrument journal) says: "I care not what phase of church function you bring up, from anti-women-teachers to anti-more-than-one-container-in-the-Lord's-supper to anti-Bible-colleges to anti-special-songs to anti-orphan-homes to anti-standing-up-when-you-pray to anti-paid-preachers to anti-this or anti-that--you name the function, and we in the churches of Christ [anti-instrument] can name a faction that has risen up among us during the past one-hundred years contending it had to be done just one way to the exclusion of all other ways."

W. Carl Ketcherside adds his description to this lamentable condition in the January, 1965 issue of Mission Messenger:

"One faction accuses those who defend the use of individual cups as preaching another gospel; a second accuses those who employ Bible classes as preaching another gospel; a third labels those who support Herald of Truth as preaching another gospel; while those who believe in premillennial coming of Jesus as preaching another gospel. The non-instrument segment of the restoration movement has disintegrated into a group of clamoring camps and clashing clans, slashing at each other over radio and from behind paper curtains, all blasting away at the others as having 'perverted the gospel'."

J. L. Hines, writing in the American Christian Review, says he last counted twenty-six separate factions within the anti-instrument group. This is the lamentable condition of the church. This is supposedly the church which Paul urged to strive "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There has been much striving and many pieces but this is far from what Paul was urging.

Denominationalism is denounced as divisive and factious. But with disgust they might very well tell the Church of Christ (anti), "Physician, heal thyself!" "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked:".

This deplorable state is the logical result of unscriptural division that has been caused by the Spirit of "anti-ism." Once the flood gates of "anti-ism" are opened there is just no stopping place. When every issue must be faced on an either/or, heaven or hell, fellowship and disfellowship basis, the result will be twenty-six separate factions with more occurring all the time.

Let me illustrate how the spirit of "anti-ism" works in producing a faction. It is reported that a few anti-instrumental brethren have opposed church-owned meeting houses. Most non-instrumentalists call them "anti's." But they are only following "anti-ism" to its logical conclusion. Reasons for opposing church buildings could be summed up as follows:

1. There is neither Scriptural authority nor precedent for Christians to build or buy church buildings.

2. God gave instructions regarding the building of houses for religious worship in the Old Testament, but left such instruction out of the New Testament.

3. History reveals that Christians in Apostolic times did not build special church buildings. (Neander's and Mosheim's History)

4. To own property, as a church, necessitates a departure from the simple New Testament church organization, in that it demands the adding of "trustees" (an unauthorized office--not aids to the elders and deacons, but another kind when compared to them).

5. Church buildings minister to pride and worldliness.

6. The New Testament commands Christians to build up a SPIRITUAL house (the church) and NOT A MATERIAL house. Since the New Testament specifies the kind of house that is to be built up, those who build up a material house are building up another kind of house; therefore, it is an addition and not an aid.

7. Those of us who worship in church buildings are guilty of dividing the church, and keeping it divided, in that we can admittedly worship with them in their homes (their practice being unquestioned for, "the church in thy house," is Scriptural); but it offends their conscience to attempt worship with us in our unauthorized church buildings.

Now, if it is sinful to use an instrument based on very similar arguments, on what grounds can most non-instrument people consistently claim that they have authority for their church-owned buildings? For the answer to this, I must again remark that the instrument was not objected to on scriptural grounds when it first became an issue. Anti-instrumentalism in our day became an issue because of cultural, anti-formalism and anti-worldly influences in the beginning of the restoration movement. Church buildings had been owned for a number of years by churches of the restoration and therefore they weren't considered an innovation, appealing to pride and worldliness, so they passed the test. Churches of the restoration hadn't been using instruments and so when they were introduced by some, they were denounced as an innovation based upon pride and "sounding like a cow-bell in a concert." It wasn't until McGarvey's time that scriptural arguments were invented to oppose the instrument. These same arguments unwittingly can be used against a variety of aids which are stamped with approval by those who oppose the instruments. It might have been better if arguments against the instruments had been confined to pride and worldliness, for there is some emotional appeal in those arguments; there isn't even that much in the scripture against instrumental accompaniment.

The question is often asked; "If psalms means instrumental accompaniment, then isn't it true that everyone must sing with instrumental accompaniment when we meet in the assembly?"

Paul gives us three types of songs; psalms (instrumental accompaniment), hymns (especially of praise to God), and spiritual songs (either accompanied or unaccompanied). Let us notice a few things in answer to the question stated above:

1. Paul is not limiting our admonishing one another to the assembly. It included that but to limit it makes the context absurd. "See then that ye walk circumspectly (in the assembly), not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time (in the assembly only) because the days are evil (in the assembly only), but understand what the will of the Lord is (in the assembly only). And be not drunken with wine (in the assembly only) wherein is excess--but be filled with the Spirit (in the assembly only)--this being altogether too true of many who profess Christianity.)"

2. Paul gives us three ways whereby we might admonish one another in song. A person doesn't need to do all three. We understand the scripture and interpret it that way on other subjects, then why not do the same with Ephesians 5:19? To illustrate this please notice Acts 20:20. This same Apostle Paul has set an example for us. He tells us that he "taught publicly and from house to house." If we must subscribe to the "anti's" "either/or," "heaven or hell" interpretation

which they have placed on Ephesians 5:19, then Acts 20:20 demands that we must all preach both publicly and from house to house or we will be cut off from among God's people.

We are to admonish one another in song and we are to spread the gospel. Paul gives us several ways to do each. All are pleasing to the Lord but not all the various methods of admonishing in song and teaching the word must be employed by every individual.

I am not making this issue an either/or matter. But if your conscience can think in no other vein on this subject, then your conscience must reckon with the sources of scholars and overwhelming evidence presented in this thesis who state unequivocally that psallo means "to sing with musical accompaniment."

Even if you could bring forth evidence which shows that scholars differ on this subject, it is always best to take the safest course. If there were disagreement then the safest course would be the one which fulfilled what both sides demanded and left out nothing. If some say psallo means sing and others say that it included instrumental accompaniment along with the singing; the safest course would be to sing an accompanied song and in that way you have left nothing neglected in the differing opinions. Remember, I am not binding this on you, but if you insist on this either/or interpretation then this reasoning applies to you.

Another question that has been asked is: "Why don't you submit to the consciences of those who oppose the instrument in view of the fact that you do not think that everyone must sing an accompanied song in the worship of God?"

This is a good question and one that is based on a wonderful Bible principle. As a Christian I must be willing to submit to my brother's conscience on a matter that is not demanded of God. We have illustrations of this happening in the scripture. Paul taught this in I Corinthians 8 and Romans 14. Paul also said in I Corinthians 9:22, "I am all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

But there is a difference in what Paul had reference to and the problem we are dealing with. The practice of the anti-instrumentalists has been a belligerent one. The practice has been to force this belief upon us under the threat of disfellowshipping. This has not only been for using the instrument but for teaching that it might be all right to use it!

The Apostle who gave us this principle had this very problem in his day. In Acts 16 Paul took Timothy and had him circumcised "because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they all knew that his father was a Greek." This was in compliance with his principle of

"becoming all things to all men that he might win more." But in a similar instance in Galatians 2:3-4 Paul relates, "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Jesus Christ, that they might bring us into bondage." In the case of Titus the Jews were demanding that Paul circumcise Titus and Paul rebelled at being forced to do so.

In another case Paul, at various times, entered into the temple and places of worship of the Jews and in some ways was keeping the law. This was in keeping with his statement "to the Jews I became a Jew." But Paul told the Galatian Jews in 5:4 that they were fallen from grace because they demanded the keeping of the law as a means of justification.

On some occasions, while dealing with some individual cases, I have been willing to submit to the conscience of one who opposed the instrument; but I have always refused and will continue to refuse when the attitude of force is demonstrated. I will also refuse under any circumstances which could be understood by outsiders that I concurred in the belief that the instrument is unscriptural and displeasing to God.

Even though J. W. McGarvey opposed the instrument he undoubtedly saw the folly and the outcome of adding the anti-instrument opinion as a disfellowshipping law and so stated his position: "I have never proposed to withdraw fellowship from brethren simply because of their use of instrumental music in worship." (The Search for the Ancient Order by West, P. 441.)

I would like to plead with the members of the Church of Christ (non-instrument) to stop making the body of Christ a haven for factions and splits by maintaining the spirit which puts every issue on an either/or, heaven or hell, fellowship and disfellowshipping basis. We have a glorious task in preaching the New Testament Church in all its purity. It is worthy of our most consecrated efforts. Let us not handicap it by raising unnecessary barriers. Let us learn "not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of us be puffed up the one against the other."