

The BEACON

Published by the Newton church of Christ
Meeting at: St. James Church Rd and Glendale Ave

Vol. 23, No. 3

Edited by John Cripps

March, 2009



Evolution of Defense for Instrumental Music - Part Three

Ron Halbhook, Xenia, Ohio

All the pros and cons were reiterated in public debates. Clark Braden used the aid argument in meeting Joe S. Warlick in Dallas, Texas, about 1896. The Hall L. Calhoun-M.C. Kurfees exchange in the 8 and 15 1900 Gospel Advocate was distributed in booklet form the next year, with Calhoun claiming the instrument as an aid was not in the worship. He later gave up the organ and its defense. J. Carroll Stark in a November 1903 debate with Warlick at Henderson, Tennessee, appealed to the Old Testament and psalms. In the J. D. Tant-W. J. Frost debate (printed 1904), Frost used the Old Testament, angels of heaven, and aid arguments, adding that the warning against transgression in 2 John 9 applied only to the Deity of Jesus and not to His teachings.⁽²⁰⁾

The process of debate and division over the instrument, other innovations, and the underlying issue of Bible authority continued throughout the period of 1866-1906. As early as March 1864, Moses Lard called upon brethren to abandon churches which trampled upon the authority of Christ by introducing instruments. In church after church, the organ was pushed in over the protests of brethren whose only option was to leave, as McGarvey was forced to leave his beloved Broadway in Lexington, Kentucky in 1902. Before making the switch to organ defense, J.B. Briney wrote in 1870 that the choice was between the organ or the gospel and concluded concerning the man who took the organ, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." But McGarvey, F.G. Allen, and

others lost their influence in opposing instruments because they were "inconsistent in hobnobbing" with those who used them, as James A. Harding said. McGarvey admitted this with regret about the time he was forced out of Broadway.⁽²¹⁾ Only those who both regarded the organ as an imposition upon the authority of Christ and marked and avoided brethren who accepted the divisive innovation upon apostolic doctrine, could ultimately keep the organ out. The U.S. Census Bureau finally recognized in 1906 that final division had occurred.

Subsequent Developments Not a Dead Issue (1906-1980)

Debates and division over the organ question and the deeper issue of Biblical authority continue to today. Literally scores of debates have been held to study these matters. For instance, R.O. Rogers met W.W. Otey at Portland, Indiana, in 1909, claiming the instruments were commanded in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8 but they are optional expedients. Otey protested that a practice cannot be both commanded and optional, and 1 Corinthians 14:7-8 says nothing of instruments in worship. Otey and Briney debated in Louisville, Kentucky in 1908, with Otey affirming the instrument "is opposed to New Testament teaching and sinful." Briney replying the Bible does not forbid organs and they are allowed by psalms. An exchange by M.D. Clubb and H. Leo Boles appeared jointly in the Christian-Evangelist and Gospel Advocate, the whole being printed as a book in 1927. The usual arguments were made. G.C. Brewer

answered a tract by Homer Strong about 1923 and then reviewed the positions of three men (F.W. Strong, O.L. Mankamyer, and Percy E. Krewson) in 1948. "This can never be a dead issue as long as some people who profess to be Christians use instruments of music in worship and others do not use them," said Brewer. And he explained, "If we are going to restore the New Testament church, we cannot restore something that was not in it." Other debates occurred between G.K. Wallace and Burton W. Barber at Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1950, Eugene S. Smith and Julian O. Hunt in Dallas, Texas during 1953, and Morris B. Book and James P. Miller in Orlando, Florida in 1955. Barber and Book used both the aid argument and also held to the contradictory position that instruments are both permitted and required, but Hunt stuck more closely to the aid approach.⁽²²⁾ Many other examples might be given.

The psalms argument has been avidly pursued. M.C. Kurfees published Instrumental Music in Worship in 1911 showing that psalms did not carry the inherent idea of the use of instruments in the New Testament period. Briney responded with Instrumental Music in Christian Worship in 1914, trying to show that psalms always continued to carry the idea of an instrument. He said the organ may be "a mere help in worship" or "a means of worship." When O.E. Payne maintained in a 1920 book that instruments are essential to psalms, Kurfees published a review pointing out that such an argument binds the instrument, a position with which Payne and his friends were very uncomfortable. From 31 May through 5 June of 1923, Ira M. Boswell defended the instrument in debate with N.B. Hardeman before crowds of 6,000-7,000 in Nashville, Tennessee. Briney said the organ was used in connection with but not in worship, then stressed psalms, swaying between the position that instruments inhere in it and that they are merely optional. Tom Burgess is caught in the same dilemma in his more recent Documents on Instrumental Music. Making most of the traditional defenses but stressing psalms, Dwaine

Dunning was unable to extricate himself from this dilemma in his 1976 debate at Mason City, Iowa with Rubel Shelly. Everett Ferguson has provided additional helpful material on the psalms claim, as has James D. Bales in his thorough study of the whole instrumental question.⁽²³⁾

Periodic respite has come in the number and intensity of this debate at times. The two groups have gone opposite directions, their contacts become more limited, and each has been forced to devote more time to other controversies in their respective ranks. The Christian Churches with the instrument were increasingly embroiled in battles begun in the 1890s over open membership and full-blown modernism, which entailed a wholesale abandonment of any semblance of a restoration plea. The battle raged over control of pulpits, colleges, and various institutions, with a full institutional split finalizing in 1968. Meanwhile, churches of Christ had fought recurrent battles over the efforts of some brethren to gain financial support from churches for independent service institutions, especially colleges. The efforts, which had very limited success, were renewed in vigor during the 1950s with more success by emphasis on church support for orphanages, followed in the 1960-70s with the advance of church support for colleges, summer camps, and a plethora of social services and institutions. Also advanced were centralized cooperative projects which coordinated the financial support of many churches through the eldership of one church, as in the Herald of Truth in Abilene, Texas, area-wide preaching campaigns, and the support of preachers on foreign fields. These trends portend an end to the respite from heated internal controversy over instrumental music. It will be advocated and advanced on the coat-tails of these other innovations. Already the Gospel Advocate of 20 March 1980 reports that the Belmont Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee has voted through its elders to allow instruments to be used in worship (see p. 164). Churches which have consistently opposed all the innovations of the past thirty years

will not be nearly so vulnerable on the renewal of the instrument problem but will feel some of the effects and must gird for the battle.

The instrument will never be a dead issue as long as professed Christians are divided over its use! Eternal vigilance is the price for purity in worship. "The loudest call that comes from heaven to the men of this generation is for warfare, stern, relentless, merciless, exterminating, against everything not expressly or by necessary implication authorized in the New Testament."(24)

Works Sited Endnotes Studies Jan- March 2009:

1. Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1868-1870), Vol. 1, pp. 237-238.
2. John Owen, *Hebrews*, second edition (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1814), 5:467, quoted in James D. Bales, *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship* (Searcy: Arkansas: James D. Bales, 1973), p. 155. See also the excellent study by Joe Neil Clayton, *The Thunderous Silence of God* (Marion, Indiana: Cogdill Foundation Publications, p. 1972).
3. On worship, see Campbell's "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. 5," *Christian Baptist*, II (4 July 1825):239-43; on religion, see his "Anecdotes, Incidents and Facts, No. I," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 3, Vol. 5 (May 1848): 279-83.
4. "Dancing," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 4, Vol. I (September 1851):503-507 and "Instrumental Music," *Millennial Harbinger* (October 1851):581-582.
5. See for instance John Rogers, "Dancing," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 4, Vol. I (August 1851):467-468 for report of defenses of both practices in *Ecclesiastical Reformer*; A. Campbell, "Dancing"; Moses E. Lard, "Instrumental Music in Churches and Dancing," *Lard's Quarterly*, I (March 1864):330-336.
6. Lard, "Instrumental Music in Churches and Dancing," *Lard's Quarterly*, I (March 1864):330-336; Loos, *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 39 (May 1868):280-285.

7. Lipscomb, respectively in three *Gospel Advocate* articles: 6 January 1886, p. 6; 1897, p. 292; 1911, p. 174. See Earl West, *The Life and Times of David Lipscomb* (Henderson, Tennessee: Religious Book Service, 1954), 189-190, 244; Robert E. Hooper, *Crying in the Wilderness: A Biography of David Lipscomb* (Nashville: Tennessee: David Lipscomb College, 1979), p. 311.
8. Henshall, "Instrumental Music In Churches," *Ecclesiastical Reformer*, Vol. 4 (15 March 1851):171; Rogers, "Dancing"; Campbell, "Dancing" and "Instrumental Music," *Millennial Harbinger* (September and October, 1851):503-507 and 581-582.
9. On p. 199, quoted in John T. Lewis, *The Voice of the Pioneers on Instrumental Music and Societies* (Nashville: Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1932), p. 120.
10. Franklin and Pinkerton articles entitled "Instrumental Music in Churches," *American Christian Review*, Vol. 3 (31 January and 28 February -1860):19, 34. See Earl West, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, 3 Volumes (Nashville: Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1949; Indianapolis, Indiana: Religious Book Service, 1950, 1979), 1: 310-312.
11. Errett, "Church Music," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 5, Vol. 4 (October 1861): 551-560; Pendleton, *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 5, Vol. 7 (March 1864):122-130.
12. Munnell, "Review of J. W. McGarvey on Grace," *Millennial Harbinger*, Series 5, Vol. 7 (April 1864):158-162 and McGarvey, "A New Definition of Grace," *Millennial Harbinger* (May 1864): 227-230.
13. McGarvey, "Instrumental Music in Churches," "Instrumental Music," and "Reply" in *Millennial Harbinger* (November 1864):510-514; 36 (February 1865):88-91; (April, 1865):186-188 respectively; Hayden: "Instrumental Music in Churches" and "Instrumental Music" in *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1865):38-40 and (April 1865):182-186.
14. Pendleton, "Address," *Millennial Harbinger* 37 (November 1866):494-514, see 501-505. For an

incisive analysis of the speech, see Earl West, "Learning A Lesson From History, Nos. 1-3," *Gospel Guardian*, Vol. I (16 and 23 February, 2 March 1950):3, 4, and 5.

15. Hayden, "Expediency and Progress," and "Reply to Brother McGarvey," *Millennial Harbinger* 39 (January and June 1868):36-42 and 327-334; McGarvey, "Brother Hayden on Expediency and Progress," *Millennial Harbinger* (April 1868):213-219.
16. "Expediency," *Christian Standard* 3 (26 December 1868):409.
17. See Errett, "Instrumental Music in Our Churches," *Christian Standard* 5 (30 April 1870):140 and J.S. Lamar, *Memoirs of Isaac Errett*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1893), 2:22-44; reprint from the *Apostolic Times* by McGarvey, "Instrumental Music in the Church Unauthorized and Sinful," *Gospel Advocate*, 74 (21 and 28 January 1932): 72-73, 104-105, and "True Progress," *Apostolic Times*, 3 (26 October 1871):228.
18. Alexis, "Alexis on Instrumental Music in the Worship of God in Christian Congregations," *Christian Standard*, Vol. 5 (30 April 1870):140; McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism Reprinted From the Christian Standard 1893-1904* (Nashville: Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1956), pp. 115-117; Briney, *Christian Companion* (15 February 1905):4, quoted by M.C. Kurfees, *Instrumental Music in the Worship* (Nashville: Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1911; reprint 1969), pp. 53-54.
19. McGarvey and F.G. Allen, *What Shall We Do About The Organ?* (Nashville: Tennessee: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1903), pp. 4-5.
20. Calhoun-Kurfees, *Instrumental Music In The Worship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Publishing Co., 1901); *A Debate Between J. Carrot! Stark and Joe S. Warlick* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., [ca. 1903]), *Tant-Frost, Debate on the Organ and Society Work in the Church of Christ* (Cincinnati, Ohio: F.L. Rowe, 1904).
21. Lard, "Instrumental Music in Churches and Dancing," *Lard's Quarterly*, I, pp. 330-336; Briney,

"The Organ, or The Gospel Which?", *American Christian Review*, 13 (18 February 1870): 50; Harding, "Another Inconsistency," *Gospel Advocate*, 25 (23 May 1883):323; see personal remarks of McGarvey to Jesse P. Sewell, related in his "Biographical Sketches of Restoration Preachers," *Harding College Lectures 1950* (Searcy, Arkansas: Harding College Press, 1951), pp. 66-75 on pp. 74-75.

22. Otey-Briney Debate (Cincinnati: F.L. Rowe [ca. 1908]); Merrell Dare Clubb-H.L. Boles Debate (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate, 1927); Brewer, *A Medley on the Music Question* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1948), see pp. 5, 102; Wallace-Barber Debate (Abilene, Texas: Beacon Publications, 1953); *The Smith-Hunt Debate on Instrumental Music* (Dallas: Good News Press, Inc., 1953); *Book-Miller Debate* (Gainesville, Florida: Phillips Publications, 1955).
23. Kurfees, *Instrumental Music in Worship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1911); Briney, *Instrumental Music in Christian Worship* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914); Payne, *Instrumental Music Is Scriptural* (1920); Kurfees, *Review of O.E. Payne's Book on "Psallo"* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate, 1937); BoswellHardeman Discussion (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1923; reprint 1957); Burgess, *Documents on Instrumental Music* (1966); ShellyDunning Debate (West Monroe, Louisiana: William C. Johnson, Inc., 1977); Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship* (Abilene, Texas: Biblical Research Press, 1972); Bales, *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship* (Searcy, Arkansas: James D. Bales, 1973).

Via — Truth Magazine XXIV: 22, pp. 354-359 May 29, 1980

“Beware of The False Teacher, They Do Not Seek The Best For Your Soul!”