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CONVENTION

OF

UNITED PRESBYTERIANS

"

OPPOSED TO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD,

HELD IN THE

FOURTH U. P. CHURCH, ALLEGHENY, PA.

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SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS
AGAINST
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
IN THE
TESTAMENT WORSHIP.

BY REV. WM. WISHART, D. D.

First. The worship of God under the New Testament originated in the synagogue and not in the tabernacle or temple. It was little else than a continuation of the devotional services of the synagogue with the addition of the Christian Sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Our Divine Master honored the synagogue, not only by making it his custom while he was in the world, to teach and worship in it on the Sabbath day (*Luke* 4 : 15, 16), but also by selecting it as the pattern or model for his church under the present dispensation both with respect to government and worship. Hence by his spirit in the Apostle he exhorts his people in all places and at all times "not to forsake the assembling"—literally the *synagogueing*—"of themselves together as the manner of some is." *Heb.* 10 : 5. But in the worship of the synagogue there was confessedly no instrumental music.

Second. The New Testament is totally silent with respect to the use of instrumental music in the worship of God. Not a solitary text can be found to afford the least authority for it either by way of precept or example—in express words or by legitimate inference. We have in the New Testament both precept and example for vocal music in the worship of God, but not the slightest reference to instrumental as an accompaniment of it. Yet

when our Lord commissioned his Apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, he also required them to teach these disciples to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded. *Matt. 28: 19, 20.* Can it be possible that it was his command or will that they should teach them to observe or employ instrumental music in the worship of God, when not a word of such teaching can be found in all their writings, nor a solitary example of such music among all the disciples whom they taught or in all the churches which they organized?

Third. As the New Testament is silent with respect to the use, so the old is equally silent with respect to the *optional* use of instruments in the worship of God. The optional theory which is the only theory for which the friends of instrumental music now generally contend, is as destitute of any foundation or warrant in the Old Testament as in the new. All the efforts that have been put forth in order to prove from the Old Testament that there is a *permissive* appointment of some things in the worship of God which does not require but merely authorize the observance of the thing appointed, have proved a complete failure. Is God so indifferent to his own appointments as to leave it optional with men whether to observe them or not? Is it consistent with his sovereignty, wisdom and goodness to appoint acts of worship and means of grace which men may either accept or reject at pleasure? It is not to be expected that an assumption so derogatory to the character of God, could find a warrant anywhere in the revelation of his will. Nay, there is no appointment of instrumental music in the Old Testament but what is imperative. The employment of it in the worship of the temple was in obedience "to the commandment of the Lord by his prophets (*II. Chron. 29: 25*), and the language by which it is prescribed elsewhere is in the form of authoritative command and exhortation. See *Psalms 33: 2; 81, 2, 3; 147: 7, and 149: 3.* But what warrant we would ask—does the imperative appointment of instrumental music under the Old Testament, afford for the optional theory, that *we may use it or not as we please.* If Old Testament appointment still remains binding under the present dispensation, it not only guarantees the privilege but imposes the obligation to use it, and those who under the plea of Old Testament appointment, claim the privilege, ought also to acknowl-

edge the obligation and duty. If not, they certainly should be able to show that there has been a change or relaxation of the original appointment by some competent authority, so far as to leave the use of instruments in worship to human choice or convenience.

Fourth. Instrumental music belonged to a carnal and typical system of worship which, we are clearly taught in the New Testament, was done away in Christ and to which we are exhorted not to return. This system the apostle described as a "shadow of good things to come," (*Heb.* 10 : 1), as "carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation," (*Heb.* 9 : 10), as "rudiments of the world" from which we are dead with Christ and "ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men" to which we are not to be subject (*Col.* 2 : 20-22), and as weak and beggarly elements" to which we are not to return (*Gal.* 4 : 9). To use instrumental music in New Testament worship, is to return to the weak and beggarly elements of a defunct system.

It may be said indeed that there were some things in this old ceremonial system which were of a moral and permanent nature, and did not pass away with the coming of Christ ; that the singing of Psalms, for example, was a part of that system and yet remains as an ordinance of worship under the New Testament. In reply we would say, might it not be possible that the singing of Psalms in *the form prescribed by the Old Testament ritual*, was after all but a ceremonial and typical service like the other services of a worldly sanctuary and that this ordinance under the present dispensation was founded on *New Testament* institution ? We cannot but think that the singing of Psalms by a select choir of Levites over the sacrifices, in connection with the music of harps and psalteries, and the sounding of the trumpets by the priests, was only a part of ceremonial and representative worship, and that the law which prescribed this form of *Psalm singing* has ceased to be in force under a dispensation in which we have neither Levites, nor sacrifices, nor priests blowing trumpets. Our New Testament law, which makes it the personal duty of all the faithful to sing *with grace in their hearts to the Lord* (*Col.* 3 : 15) or to *sing and make music*, not with harps and psalteries, *but with their hearts* to the Lord (*Eph.* 5 : 19), certainly seems to be a very different law.

It is believed and maintained by some, and that, we think, not without some reason, that all the instituted rites of Old Testament worship, as well as the worldly sanctuary in which it was performed, were ceremonial and transient, and so were abrogated by the death of Christ; and that New Testament worship has its foundation and warrant exclusively in New Testament appointment. It is indeed not the place in a summary of this kind to investigate this subject. But we may be allowed to say that it is not merely "the worldly sanctuary" but also the whole system of worship connected with it and called "ordinances of Divine service" (*Heb. 9:1*), that is declared by the Apostle to have been "a figure for the time then present" (verse 9). This whole system he also designates as consisting in "carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation" (*Heb. 9:10*), and as being "a shadow of good things to come" (*Heb. 10:1*). In other words he affirms of the whole system of tabernacle worship without indicating any specific or express exception, that it was typical and transient. Hence the presumption is, that all the ordinances of Old Testament worship, were abrogated by the death of Christ, and if any exception to this principle is claimed, the burden of proof rests upon him who claims it. He must be able to show—not merely that the ordinance or part of Old Testament worship which he claims to be moral and permanent, has not been specifically repealed, but that it is specifically recognized and approved in the New Testament.

Hence we lay it down as an incontrovertible principle that no ordinance of the Old Testament can still be in force under the present dispensation, unless it is clearly recognized and sanctioned in the New Testament. For if we go beyond this limit and introduce rites and ceremonies into the worship of God, solely on the ground of Old Testament appointment and without any recognition or sanction in the New Testament, then we shall have incense and altars and images and priestly vestments, and in the language of Dr. Candlish, there would be "no barrier in principle against the Sacerdotal system in all its fullness, against the substitution again in our whole religion of the formal for the spiritual and the symbolical for the real.

Fifth. It will add to the above argument when we consider that instrumental music is in its own nature external and

sensuous and in strict keeping with the peculiar externality and sensuousness of Old Testament worship. It naturally belongs to the category of carnal rites, imposing forms, and attractive ceremonies by which the worship of God under the former dispensation was adapted to the infantile state of the church; but is inconsistent with that simplicity and spirituality which is the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament worship and with respect to which it is so often put in contrast with the worship of God under the Old Testament. See *John* 4 : 23, 24; *Phil.* 3 : 3; *I. Peter* 2 : 5.

Sixth. That the praise of God under the present dispensation should be exclusively vocal, is intimated by the Apostle in *Heb.* 13 : 15: "By him therefore let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." With respect to this passage let it be observed, 1. That it has reference to the formal worship of God; for the offering of sacrifice is formal worship. 2. That it has reference to the spiritual worship of the new testament, in distinction from, and in opposition to the symbolical and typical worship of the old; for it is the offering up of sacrifice through Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest, atoning sacrifice, and altar, "whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," and to whom we can only come by forsaking the camp of Judaism and its ceremonial institutions. 3. That it has reference to the worship of God particularly in the ordinance of praise. The original words here rendered *sacrifice of praise* were used by the seventy to designate the thank-offering and are in the old testament rendered *sacrifice of thanksgiving*.—*Lev.*, 7 : 12. *Psalms* 50 : 14; 107 : 22, and 116 : 17. This sacrifice was offered under the former dispensation when some special mercy or great deliverance called for expressions of gratitude, and was the outward token and symbol of love and gratitude cherished in the heart and proclaimed by the tongue. The great salvation wrought out by Christ, of which all former deliverances were but faint shadows, calls for expressions of gratitude from all his followers. But this gratitude is formally expressed in the ordinance of praise. This is the part of formal worship especially intended for the exercise and manifestation of this grace. We offer up the spiritual sacrifice of thanksgiving or praise to God when we cherish love and gratitude in our hearts

and formally express it in the ordinance of praise. And this we are to do *continually*, that is, on *all stated and proper occasions*. But this praise—let it be observed—is particularly defined as being vocal: “it is the fruit of the lips giving thanks to his name.”

Seventh. When our Lord instituted the ordinance of the Supper, he and his disciples sang a hymn.—*Matt. 26: 30*. That is—as is generally admitted—they sang a portion of the inspired Psalter without any instrumental accompaniment, in the first institution and observance of this solemn ordinance—an ordinance which was to be observed as a memorial of Christ and of his gracious work till he comes again. And did he not leave us an example that we should follow his steps? Is not the Sacrament of the Supper to be observed not only in commemoration of his love but also imitation of his example? Is it then *Christ-like* for his professed followers to employ instrumental music in connection with the observance of this ordinance? But this is the great central ordinance of the new testament, with which all the other ordinances are connected and around which they cluster. And if instrumental music should not be employed in connection with the observance of this ordinance, it should not be employed at all, in New Testament worship.

Eighth. An argument may be derived from the history of the church: It speaks no good of instrumental music. It clearly shows the significant fact, that the purest and best periods of the church, since the days of the apostles, have, as a general rule, been marked by the exclusion of instrumental music from the worship of God, while its introduction and use have invariably been associated with the decay of vital piety, and with the blighting influence of a spirit of formality and worldly conformity. It is a historic fact which cannot be controverted, that it was not used in the primitive church, that the most eminent of the primitive fathers testified against it, that its introduction and use in the worship of God could not have been before the eighth or ninth century, or perhaps still later, when the church had become grievously corrupt—when the papacy had already arisen and the *man of sin—the son of perdition* that opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, was already revealed; that during the dark period of papal supremacy and domination, those faithful

witnesses for God, living in the valleys of Piedmont, who still continued to maintain the purity of apostolic doctrine and worship, excluded it from their worship—that at the time of the reformation from popery, all the leading reformers opposed it, and the best reformed churches excluded it from their worship—and that since that time, those denominations that have been most faithful in maintaining the principles of divine truth—most spiritual and devout, and most zealous for the honor of Christ and the glory of God, have still continued to exclude it. And if the present rage for it both in our own country and in Great Britain, is not the fruit and evidence of a serious decline of spiritual life and of a strong tendency to formalism and ritualism in the church, it must certainly be an exceptional case.

Ninth. Instrumental music tends to discourage and destroy congregational singing and so to contravene and thwart the true design of the ordinance of praise. This ordinance was evidently intended to be a medium through which all the faithful may and ought to express their love and gratitude to God—through which every mouth shall confess to God and every tongue extol his name. But when instrumental music is introduced into any branch of the church, the result invariably is, that to a great extent, the artistic and heartless music of a select few, is substituted in the place of the simple and heartfelt music of the many, who are all commanded *to sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord*, and the solemn ordinance of praise is degraded into a mere musical entertainment. It is vain to say that this result is not necessary nor intended. It is enough that it is, and always has been, the *actual result*, and that no good intentions have ever been able to prevent it. Nor will it ever be otherwise. Human inventions when permitted to have a place in the church, always have and always will make of none effect the commandments of God.

