

The REMINDER

The weekly newsletter of the church of Christ in Bellaire, TX

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Number 2

WHO STARTED THIS "ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE?"

The students of John L. Girardeau, professor at Columbia Seminary, South Carolina in the 1880's, asked him to explain to them why he opposed the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Presbyterian churches. In response, he wrote a book which was published in Richmond, Va. in 1888. It was titled, "Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church." Girardeau's expanded discussion of this subject gives some valuable insights into how men of the Reformed tradition in late 19th century America decided the question of whether or not a practice was pleasing to God.

Girardeau began his discussion with a statement of principle which guided his arguments throughout the book: "A divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government and worship in the church; that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence from their statements is forbidden." It may surprise us that a 19th century Presbyterian seminary professor not only understood the "argument from silence," but used it and felt confident that others would be persuaded by it. I suspect there has been the feeling on the part of some that those who labored so earnestly in the last century to turn men back to simple N. T. Christianity were the originators of the idea that God's silence on a matter was equal to a divine prohibition. Clearly, that was not true.

The arguments Professor Girardeau makes will sound very familiar to those of us who have been concerned to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent." He first says that the prohibitory significance of God's silence is deducible from 2 Tim. 3:16-17, which affirms that God's man is fully equipped for "every good work" by the "holy scripture." Everything therefore not mentioned in the Scripture would not be a "good work." Sound familiar?

Girardeau then proceeds to give some Biblical statements that verify his principle of silence. Exodus 25:40, "And see that you make them after their pattern which has been showed to you in the mount." Deut. 4:2, "You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep the commandments of Jehovah..." He also cites Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Heb. 8:5; Matt. 15:6; 28:18-20; Col. 2:20-23; Rev. 22:18-19.

In extending his argument further, our Presbyterian professor treats several concrete instances that argue the prohibition of God's silence. He cites the cases of Cain and his sacrifice. He mentions Nadab and Abihu from Lev. 10 about which he comments: "But they presumed to add to God's commandments, exercising their own will in regard of his worship, they did that which He did not command them, and they were instantly killed for their wicked temerity." He adds the cases of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Moses' striking the rock, Saul's sacrifice at Gidgal, Uzzah's touching the ark, and the presumption of King Uzziah.

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Bulletin Board

Sermon Notes:

AM Lesson - Steve - "You Are A Chosen Generation"

PM Lesson - Jack - "The Second Coming of Christ"

NEWS AND NOTES: Well, maybe we're all home from the holiday travel. Time to begin another new round. Don't know of any in particular who are out of town this weekend, but there usually are some. Again, many thanks to God for watching over us throughout our years.

There are several who have some serious prayer needs in regard to their health. Rudy Black's niece has been diagnosed with cancer, and is to begin treatment. Rudy also has a sister, Janie, who has a mass in her lung. Treatment plan is being developed. Please keep this extended family in your prayers Bethany Moon has a friend with a seriously premature baby. Pray for family and child that things go well. We've had many with several of the viruses that are going around. They can be serious, but certainly take toll on our energy and patience. Hang on, spring is just around the corner (for us).

Bill and Prissy Hill are now attending at Norhill. We're not pleased with their decision, but wish them well at their new church home.

There is a sing-up sheet on the bulletin board for this year's youth devotion. Need teachers and volunteers to bring food.

Argument From Silence

Continued from front page)

His arguments are then summarized in the following words: "The mighty principle has thus been established by an appeal to the didactic statements of scripture and to special instances recorded in scriptural history...that whatsoever is not in the Scripture, either explicitly or by good and necessary consequences, is forbidden"

From the New Testament Girardeau simply asks, "Did Jesus teach or practice it?" "Did the apostles teach or practice it?"

From what he writes, it is obvious that this Presbyterin teacher had paid a price for his convictions: "it is easy to see how irrelevant and baseless is the taunt flung by high churchmen, ritualists and latitudinarians of every stripe against the maintainers of the opposite principle, that they are narrow-minded bigots who take delight in insisting upon trivial details. The truth is exactly the other way. The principle upon which this cheap ridicule is cast is simple, broad, majestic. It affirms only the things God has commanded, the institutions and ordinances that he has prescribed, and besides this discharges only a negative office which sweeps away every trifling invention of man's meretricious fancy."

Who started this "argument from silence?" As nearly as we can determine, God did.

condensed from an article by Paul Earnhart

Assignments for today

Sunday, January 12, 2014

Morning Service

Announcements.....Bob Ward
Hymn Director.....Lee Williams
Scripture Reading.....Acts 4:8-12
Scripture Reader.....Jesse Knapp
Opening Prayer.....Dan Kimbrough
Closing Prayer.....Bob Ward

Evening Service

Hymn Director.....Mark Mann
Opening Prayer.....David Haley
Closing Prayer.....Bob Ward

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Schedule of Services

Sunday:

9:30 AM Worship
11:00 AM Bible study
5:00 PM Worship

Wednesday:

7:30 PM Study and Devotional
Minister and editor
Jack Smith and Steve Garrett

The Reminder is published weekly by the church of Christ in Bellaire