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VF McGarvey, T.W.

WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT THE ORGAN?

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1903

WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT
THE ORGAN?

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WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT THE ORGAN?

ANSWER TO A LETTER OF INQUIRY.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR BROTHER: Your sad letter, giving an account of the trouble that has sprung up in your congregation in regard to the use of an organ in its public worship and propounding to me a number of questions on the subject, has been carefully considered. I have received so many letters of the same kind that I have concluded not to try any longer to answer them separately, but to write a somewhat elaborate answer to your letter and put it in print for the benefit of others. In doing this I am aware that I shall subject myself to the sneers of some who have learned to speak with contempt of all persons, however sincere and well informed, who claim to have conscientious objections to the practice in question; that I shall be regarded by some who are indifferent on the subject as needlessly agitating a question the discussion of which they consider harmful; and that others who lament with me the steady progress which this innovation is making among the disciples will think that I am wasting time in battling against the inevitable. But he who makes peace with an evil because it is likely to prevail appears to me to love peace more than he loves truth and to be deficient in the courage proper to a soldier of the cross, while he who refrains from speaking on a subject which to him appears important because others regard it with indifference or with contempt seems to me to esteem the applause of men more highly than the approval of his own conscience. As I do not wish to come under condemnation in any of these particulars, I will speak my mind freely to you and to all who shall take the trouble to read what I write.

That a vast amount of evil has been occasioned by the introduction of instrumental music into Christian worship is undeniable. Beginning with the first instance of it among us which I can remember—that which caused a schism in the church in St. Louis in the year 1869—its progress has been attended by strife, alienation, and division, with all their attendant evils, in hundreds of congregations. Before this it had bred similar evils among Methodist societies and Baptist and Presbyterian churches; for all these bodies in their early days, knowing that the practice originated in the Roman Catholic Church, regarded it as a Romish corruption and refused to tolerate it until it was forced upon them by the spirit of innovation which characterized the present century.

Now it is obvious that these evils, the baleful effects of which will never be fully revealed until the day of judgment, must be charged

either against those who have introduced the instrument or against those who have opposed its introduction. The same must be true in regard to all the evils which in the future are destined to spring from the same source. It is impossible, therefore, for those of us who occupy positions of influence among our brethren to avoid a most solemn responsibility with reference to these evils. I dread the thought of shirking this responsibility, and I equally dread the thought of giving advice which does not accord with the will of God. I shall, therefore, endeavor to avoid both by pleading earnestly for that which a lifelong study of God's word has fixed in my mind as the truth.

The question of responsibility for the evils just mentioned turns upon the question whether it is God's will that in his public worship his people may employ instrumental, as well as vocal, music when it pleases them to do so. If it is, then all the past and future evils of the strife in question are chargeable to those who resist the practice; if not, then all is chargeable to those who favor it. It follows that in this question, as in all other questions, we are to find the pathway of duty and safety by finding the will of God. You and I have learned that this will is to be found, in all matters pertaining to life and godliness, only in God's written word. To this, then, let us make our first and only appeal. In doing this I will take up consecutively the questions which have been submitted to me by you and others.

You ask: "How can I most successfully show that the use of the organ in the worship is wrong? What are the strong points of the argument?"

I think you put the question in the proper form. If the "strong points of the argument" will not convince, it is certain that the weak ones will not; and it is well to save words by discussing the former alone. I begin by arguing that the practice belongs to a class of things expressly condemned in the New Testament. Jesus said in reference to certain additions which the Pharisees had made to the ritual of the law: "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." In these words he propounds the doctrine that all worship is vain which originates in human authority; or, to put it negatively, that no worship is acceptable to God which he himself has not authorized. Paul echoes this teaching when he condemns as "will worship" the observance of ordinances "after the precepts and doctrines of men." (Col. 2: 20-23, R. V.) The Greek word here rendered "will worship" means worship self-imposed, as distinguished from worship imposed by God; and the practices referred to in the context are condemned on this ground, thus showing that all self-imposed worship is wrong in the sight of God.

Now it is universally admitted by those competent to judge that there is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of divine authority for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. He who employs it, therefore, engages in "will worship" according to Paul, and he offers vain worship according to Jesus.

You tell me just here that those in your community who insist upon the use of the organ deny that its use with the singing is any part of the worship, affirming that worship is altogether in the heart, and that the instrument is used merely as a help; but in taking this ground they depart from our Lord's use of the term "worship." In the passage referred to above he uses it with reference to the ceremonial wash-

ing of hands and the dipping of persons, cups, pots, and brazen vessels. (Mark 7: 3, 7.) All such things done as religious acts are included in "worship" as Jesus uses the term, and similar regulations are included in "will worship" by the apostle Paul. So must instrumental music be when used in company with singing in the house of God; so it was regarded, indeed, when, under the Jewish economy, musical instruments were thus employed, for the psalmist exclaims: "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs."

To deny, then, that the present use of instrumental music in the church is a part of the worship, is a subterfuge and an afterthought ingeniously got up to obscure the fact that it comes under the condemnation pronounced against vain worship and will worship.

As to the position that the use of the instrument is no more than a help to the worship, even if it could be maintained as the fact in the case, it would still leave the practice without divine authority; for while the authority to perform a certain service carries with it the authority to employ all helps that are necessary to its effective performance, it cannot do more. On this principle, if the use of an instrument were necessary to effective worship in song, this fact would give the needed authorization; but it is certainly not necessary to worship as defined by those just referred to—that is, the homage of the heart; and that it is not necessary to effective singing is obvious from the fact that most effective singing has been done in the churches in all ages and all countries without it and from the other fact that any one who can sing with an instrument can sing without it. In reality, the use of an instrument does not help the singing; for the singing is the same that it would be if the same vocal sounds were made without the instrument. It helps only the music, and it does this by adding to the vocal music, music of another kind. The position, then, is from every point of view involved in misconception and fallacy. Nor is this the worst feature of it; for if it be granted that men are at liberty to adopt any unnecessary helps to the worship which they may think desirable, then it follows that the Romanist is justifiable in using candles, images, incense, and crucifixes as helps in his worship; and should the day come that the majority of disciples in any congregation shall desire to introduce all these practices, the men who have admitted the organ on this ground must consent to it or abandon their present position.

My second argument against the practice in question is derived from apostolic precedent, the second of the two sources from which we learn the divine will. The acts and order of congregational worship were appointed by inspired men, to whom the gift of inspiration had been imparted for this purpose as well as for others. All that they introduced, therefore, has the divine sanction, whether enjoined by precept or not; and it is equally true that what they omitted was omitted under the same divine guidance. Their omission of instrumental music from the worship has, therefore, the divine approval; but the circumstances under which this omission took place give it an additional force as an indication of God's will. The apostles and their fathers before them had been taught to regard instrumental music as an approved element in the worship of God at the temple. They thought it proper to participate as Jews in the temple worship long after they

had established the Christian church; and we know from the Scriptures that they did so up to the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 21. Now during the whole of this time, from the great Pentecost on, there were two different worshipping assemblies in the temple every Lord's day, and often every day in the week—one, the Christian assembly; the other, the Jewish assembly. In the latter there was the offering of sacrifice, accompanied by the sound of trumpets (Num. 10: 10), and the burning of incense, accompanied by the prayers of the people (Luke 1: 10); and in this worship the disciples participated because they were Jews and they had not yet been taught that the law had come to an end. In the other, composed of Christians and directed in its exercises by the inspired apostles, there was neither sacrifice nor incense nor the sound of musical instruments. What clearer proof can there be that in the mind of the Spirit guiding the apostles all these things were alike unsuited to the worship of a Christian assembly? As respects instrumental music, there was here not a mere failure to introduce it, but the deliberate laying of it aside—the quiet rejection of it—by those who had been accustomed to its use under the former dispensation and who yet continued to worship with it when engaged in the ritual of the law. Unquestionably there is here an indication of the divine will to the effect that however acceptable to God this form of service may have been under the fleshly covenant, he desired none of it under the spiritual covenant.

This evidence derives additional force from the consideration that although in respect to both faith and practice the churches fell rapidly into corruption after the death of the apostles, their practice in this particular was so firmly fixed that they continued to worship without the use of instruments of music for about seven hundred years. Nearly every item of the old Jewish ritual and the old pagan ritual which now helps to make up the ceremonial of the Roman Church was introduced before the return to the discarded use of instrumental music. The first organ certainly known to have been used in a church was put into the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle by the German emperor, Charlemagne, who came to the throne in the year 768. So deposes Professor Hauck, of Germany, in the "Schaff-Herzog Cyclopaedia," which you can find in some preacher's library in your vicinity. The same learned author declares that its use met with great opposition among Romanists, especially from the monks, and that it made its way but slowly into common use. So great was this opposition even as late as the sixteenth century that he says it would probably have been abolished by the Council of Trent but for the influence of the emperor, Ferdinand. This council met in 1545. Thus we see that this innovation was one of the latest that crept into the Roman apostasy, and that it was so unwelcome even there that a struggle of about eight hundred years was necessary to enable it to force its way to universal acceptance. The Lutheran Church and the Church of England brought it with them out of Romanism; all other Protestant churches started in their course of reform without it, and so continued until within the present century; while the Greek Church and the Armenian Church, both more ancient than the Roman Church, still continue to reject it.

To sum up these arguments, you can now see that this practice is one of recent origin among Protestant churches, adopted by them from the Roman apostasy; that it was one of the latest corruptions adopted

by that corrupt body; that a large part of the religious world has never accepted it; that, though employed in the Jewish ritual, it was deliberately laid aside by the inspired men who organized the church of Christ; and that several precepts of the New Testament implicitly condemn it. If you can get those who think of pressing it into your church to see all this, they will, of course, desist, unless they belong to that increasing class who hearken more to the spirit of the age than to the Spirit of God.

It is claimed, you say, by those brethren that there is no argument against the use of the organ that is not equally good against the use of hymnals and tuning forks; and you wish to know the best answer to this. The answer is that if they can make this appear we stand ready to reject the hymnal and the tuning fork and to do the best we can without them. Insist, however, that we should settle one question at a time, and that the organ question is the one now before us. When this is settled, we can more easily settle the other question; and it is certain that the use of the organ cannot be justified on the ground that the use of a tuning fork or of a hymnal is just as bad. Two wrong things never made each other right.

I am now ready for your second question, but I will endeavor to answer it in another letter.

J. W. MCGARVEY.

LETTER II.

DEAR BROTHER: Your second question is this: "Should we fail to convince the brethren that the use of the organ is wrong, what else can we do to keep them from forcing it upon us?"

Did I not know that organs have often been forced into churches by the act of a few individuals without asking formal consent, and that majorities have often put them in without regard to the protests of minorities, I would be surprised at the form in which you put your question; but I hope that the brethren to whom you refer are too conscientious to do such a thing. If conscience does not deter them, they ought to be restrained by fear of bringing into contempt the practice which they advocate; for nothing can sooner bring the use of the organ into contempt than to see its advocates force it upon churches in an unchristian manner. To act wickedly in order to worship God more to your taste is to imitate Rachel, who stole her father's gods in the hope that the stolen property would help her religiously.

All that you have to do in order to persuade good men to desist from such a purpose is to point out to them the teaching of the Scriptures on similar subjects. Show them first what Paul taught in regard to eating unclean meats. In Rom. 14: 23, R. V., he teaches that he who doubts the right to eat is condemned if he eat; and as you doubt the right to worship with the organ, you will be condemned if you do it. They, in trying to force you to do it, are trying to bring you into this condemnation. In regard to meats he teaches (verse 20) that all are really clean, but that it is evil for him who eats with offense; and, therefore, even if the use of the organ were innocent, it is evil to him who uses it with offense. He says (verse 15): "If because of meat thy brother is

grieved, thou walkest no longer in love." Therefore it must be equally true that if because of thy use of the organ "thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love." He says (verse 19): "Let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another." Tell them that you would gladly do this by consenting to the use of the organ but for the fact that you believe it to be wrong, and insist that as they do not consider it wrong to sing without the organ, this precept requires them, for the sake of peace and edification, to desist from their purpose. If this will not suffice, remind them that our Lord says, "Despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;" and show them that to persist in their course, without regard to your convictions and your feelings, would be to "despise" you.

Perhaps they will answer all this by saying that in all matters of expediency it is the duty of the minority to cheerfully submit to the wish of the majority. If they do, answer them that you most heartily approve of the rule, and that if you could regard this matter as one of expediency you would cheerfully submit to the majority, but that, for such reasons as are given in the first of these letters, you cannot so regard it.

Perhaps they will say that you are an obstructionist; that you have been in the habit of raising captious objections to everything that breaks in upon old customs; that by this course you have kept the church in the background; and that it is not reasonable for the church to be hampered by you any longer. If they say this, do not fly into a passion, for there may be much truth in it. I have known some opponents of the organ of whom I think that all this could be fairly said. Examine candidly your past record (I am not acquainted with it) and see if there is any truth in the charge. If there is, confess it like an honest man, promise to do better in the future, and beg them not to sin against you now because you have so often sinned against them. If you can honestly say that the complaint is not just, promise them that at least you will try hard in the future to avoid every appearance of this evil, and beg them to desist from the evil which they contemplate toward you.

With such persuasions and Scripture precepts as these, unattended by anything on your part that is exasperating, I am sure that you will succeed with the more pious of those brethren, and that these will restrain the others.

But here you come in with another supposition. You say: "Suppose that, before we have a chance to urge these persuasions and to present these Scripture teachings, a few of the more determined shall put the organ in privately and we shall find them some day gathered around it singing and playing when we get to church." Well, if this shall be your experience, console yourself by the reflection that your lot is no harder than that of some others, and go to work in the very way that I have recommended, except with the aim to get the organ removed, and not to prevent it from coming in. The path of duty remains the same; the object to be accomplished alone is changed.

I now come to the third of your leading questions, which is this: "Suppose that, after all our efforts to prevent it, the organ shall be

deliberately introduced, or that, if surreptitiously introduced, all our efforts to have it removed shall be in vain; what ought we then to do?"

The case supposed in the question is precisely that of a majority of the brethren and sisters in different States who have written to me for advice on this subject. Their condition is a sad and dangerous one. It is impossible for a good man not to feel concerned for them or to refuse them the benefit of the best counsel that he can give them. I have reflected on the subject a great deal, and "I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord."

If you were a preacher, able to do effective work as such, I would advise you to remove your membership to some other congregation, or choose a point at which to build up another, in which you can worship according to the truth and teach in peace all the will of God.

If those of you who oppose the organ were sufficiently numerous to constitute a new congregation and had among you the facilities for working as such to edification, I would advise you to quietly and respectfully call for letters of commendation and organize another congregation in a locality favorable to peace and future growth.

I would thus advise in both these cases because it is the duty of every disciple, to the full extent of his ability, to maintain the ordinances of the Lord as they were delivered to us by him.

But as you are not a preacher and as those who stand with you are not able to organize a self-edifying church, I advise that you remain where you are, participate faithfully in all parts of the worship that are not perverted, and persevere, without growing weary, in earnest and prayerful efforts to secure the removal of the instrument. I advise this because it is the only course left open by which you can still observe such of the ordinances as are still observed according to the Scriptures. The alternative would be either to stay away from church altogether—which is a sinful course of life while there is a real church, even a partially corrupted one, within your reach—or to attend some church in which both the teaching and the worship are still farther removed from the divine order. Of course I am supposing that there is no congregation of the primitive order within reach of you to which you could transfer your membership. If there is, the path of duty is obvious.

I am well aware that the hypothetical part of this advice is severely condemned by some of my brethren for whose judgment I have great respect. They will tell you that it proposes an unscriptural test of fellowship, and that its adoption would stultify our plea for union by showing that we cannot maintain it among ourselves. In regard to the latter objection, I remark that if uniformity in using the organ is necessary to union we are already divided, because we already have churches that use it and churches that refuse it; we also have some churches refusing it that have come out from those using it. I would also remark that our plea is for union on what is taught in the word of God, and not on the unauthorized inventions of men, and that if union is marred by these inventions, the fault lies exclusively with those who introduce them. We have already seen that he who introduces such things is under condemnation, and that the condemnation is still severer when it is done with offense. If he loudly asserts, as he usually does, his liberty in Christ, we who oppose his innovation have certainly no less liberty; and we may properly refuse to be "entangled again

in a yoke of bondage." As to the introduction of an unscriptural test of fellowship, it is enough to say that we do not refuse fellowship with those who use the organ; we only refuse to partake with them in that practice and choose to worship when we can where it is not in our way. To deny us this privilege would be an attempt to force us into fellowship with a practice confessedly unauthorized in the Scriptures, than which there could be nothing more unscriptural or more intolerant.

Were I of those who think that the propriety of using instrumental music in the church is a question of expediency, I would have much to say in proof that it is inexpedient. I would point to the bitter fruits that it has borne throughout its whole history; and thus, after the Savior's precept, I would judge the tree by its fruit; but as I have placed the issue on higher ground, I will not enter into this part of the discussion.

In conclusion, let me remark that the prevalent rage for instruments of music in our worship is a passion and a fashion of the hour, and that, like all fashions, when it shall have endured for a time, it will pass away. As in case of other fashions, too, its devotees are usually deaf to reason on the subject and rebellious against authority. This tide of feeling will not be stemmed and turned back by reason and authority of Scripture; but, like all other movements of the kind, it will go on from bad to worse until its own excesses will breed disgust for it and bring about a reaction. Such, at least, is my expectation; and, therefore, having little confidence in human nature, but great confidence in the final triumph of the truth as it is in Christ, I shall toil on hopefully as the Master of the vineyard seems to direct. I commend to you the same course; and should the clouds that now hang about you grow even darker than they are, I beg you to remember that the sun ever shines above them, and that if you continue faithful the light will come to you by and by.

J. W. MCGARVEY.

A SERIOUS TROUBLE.

The following sorrowful letter was recently received. By request I withhold the name and the place. The facts are all that concern us. The letter was written by a preacher of the gospel and one of the best and gentlest of men. He has long and faithfully served the cause of Christ, and his praise is in many churches in the South and the West. His reputation, so far as I have known (and I have known about his work for years), is as spotless as the snowflake on its way from the cloud. I have reason to believe that every word he states is strictly true.

That there should ever be an occasion for the writing of such a letter is a sad commentary on our faithfulness to our plea for catholicity and unity. If it were the only such case, it could be regarded as a peculiar case of the forgetfulness of this fundamental principle that gave us being, as a people, through a mistaken desire for entertainment; but the great number of analogous cases that have appealed to me and to others in their time of distress and the many alienations

and divisions in the churches of Christ of which I have otherwise known compel the sad conclusion that the causes of this trouble are widespread and deep. The time was when our conceptions of the religion of Jesus made such a thing unknown among us. The unmistakable fact that our disregard of the fundamental principles of our plea for unity which once made such a thing unknown now makes it quite common is enough to fill with serious concern one in whose heart these principles are cherished. But to the letter:

"DEAR BROTHER ALLEN: I am in trouble; and as you never are (?), I think I will give you a slight taste of mine. Our church is in a ferment on the organ question. A few members have, with a determination worthy of a better cause, persisted till they have put it in, independently of the congregation and despite the known opposition of a number of the members. One family have left the church because of it. About thirty or forty members are positively for it, regardless of consequences; about the same number are positively opposed to it; and a large majority are indifferent, or at least passive. Now the question is: Shall we submit? The majority are for peace on almost any terms. One of the elders is at the head of the movement, and all the deacons are on his side. To fight it means a warm time, and I am frank to say that I do not know what course is best for the good of the whole church. I have always opposed the use of the organ, and yet I am not conscientiously opposed to it. I can worship where it is used and not feel that I am sinning, but others cannot; and I oppose it on the ground that its tendency is to evil and because others cannot worship with it. I was absent when it was put in, or I should have protested strongly. Now that it is in, to bring it up again means strife, alienation, and, possibly, an open rupture in the church. I would rather try to convert a heathen or an infidel to Christianity than to try to induce the average 'organ man' or 'organ woman' to desist, who would rather see a church destroyed than to fail to get the organ. But the question is: What should be done? I do not know. If you can help me, I shall be greatly obliged. I simply want to know what my duty is, now that the thing is on us. I shrink from strife, and I verily believe opposition now means division; but if I can see that it is my duty to oppose it, I will do so. I believe they would exclude me before they would give it up. I am truly sorry to have to trouble you about it, but I value greatly your judgment. Your coolness and conservatism under your own great trials mark you as eminently qualified to view properly such questions.

"Yours truly and fraternally, _____"

MY DEAR BROTHER: As I wrote you on receipt of your letter asking advice in regard to your duty under the trying circumstances surrounding you, I now ask you to consider the advice of Brother McGarvey, which I had in hand when your letter was received and which has just been given to our readers. It covers about all the points in your case, and is substantially what I should say on the same points, so far as I should be able to equal his presentation of the thought; but there are at least two thoughts not elaborated by him which I will present for your use in your kind, but earnest, pleading with those who have forced the organ upon you.

While you feel that you can worship with the organ and not commit sin thereby, you show a just appreciation of the conscientious convic-

tions of those who cannot and a correct conception of the spirit of the Christian religion by opposing it on account of the rights of others and the evil resulting from its use. I have often said, and time only strengthens the feeling, that if I were ever so profoundly convinced that the Scriptures authorize its use I should still feel compelled to oppose it on account of the feelings of others and the peace and harmony of the church. That the Bible does not require it is conceded; and what it does not require we should let alone when it brings grief, strife, and alienation into the family of God. How any one who loves the Savior can deny this I cannot see. I love music at home and all the adornments of art and æsthetic culture; but I should far prefer living in a hut barren of all such, with harmony and love, than in a gilded palace with discord and strife. One of the most striking paragraphs in the "Life of Judge Richard Reid"—that which endeared him to me more than any other one thing in that remarkable character, because it reveals a rare nobility of heart—is the following:

"He made" for the things of peace in society, in the church, and in his profession. Whenever possible to settle a lawsuit by arbitration or agreement, he would advise that this *first* be tried. He was called in consultation concerning the use of the organ in the church. There was a party favoring its introduction, *volens volens*, and over the heads of a respectable minority. He asked of one strongly in favor if it could 'now at this time be brought in *peaceably*.' 'No,' was the reply; 'I think not.' 'Then,' he said, 'I shall oppose its introduction. I am pledged to see the conscience of these men respected. I myself have no conscience for or against an organ; I can worship God in the presence or the absence of one; but I consider the welfare of the church, the *life* of the church, its peace and prosperity, of more importance than an organ.'"

The man who appreciates an organ, or anything of that nature, more than the peace and harmony of the church in which he worships God, is a total stranger to the Spirit of Christ, without which we are "none of his." But I must come to the points in question:

1. I regard the use of the organ in the worship a violation of one of the fundamental principles of our plea for restoration and unity. We have ever claimed that our plea is catholic—that is, we hold as common ground that, and that only, which is conceded by all to be right. In restoring just what we find in the beginning in faith and practice, and refusing all else, we stand on undisputed ground. All partisan, disputed ground we have left to others. For instance, we immerse. All churches concede that to be baptism. It is not in debate. The controversy is all about sprinkling and pouring. That is partisan; immersion is catholic. The debate is not about what we do, but about what others do. The same is true in regard to the baptism of a penitent believer. All concede that to be right. The debate is all about the baptizing of those not believers. So of our creed, our names, our church polity, etc. All can stand where we do, for we stand on conceded ground; all cannot stand on any sectarian ground, for all cannot accept any denominational position. The grandeur and strength of this position have been the chief causes of our unprecedented growth. The world has seen and felt the advantage and self-evident correctness of this catholic position; but the introduction of the organ, since all cannot worship with it, is a violation of this grand principle. All can

worship without it; all cannot worship with it. Therefore we can be united and harmonious without it; we cannot be united and harmonious with it. To introduce the organ to the destruction of our peace and unity is a complete renunciation, therefore, of this principle of catholicity characterizing our plea for the union of God's people on God's word.

That this catholicity is essential to our union the organ brethren concede as well as others. For instance, in his sermon on "The Disciples," recently preached in New York and put in tract form, Brother B. B. Tyler says:

"Moreover, as an effort to restore the primitive *catholicity* of the church is a prominent feature in our work, we could not be blind to the fact that immersion is catholic, while sprinkling and pouring are not. . . . In taking our stand definitely and positively in favor of immersion we hold to that which bears the stamp of catholicity and reject the practices which lack this stamp, *and in a union of God's people we must have something on which they can all agree.*"

Now as "we must have something on which they can all agree" in order to union, how can we expect union among ourselves in disregard of this principle?

If we cannot appreciate union among ourselves sufficiently to dispense with such a thing as an organ in order to secure it, it shows that we are unwilling to be governed by the principles we urge upon others for the glory of God. With what kind of a face can we urge others to give up their party names, creeds, etc., for the sake of union when we will not give up the use of an organ for the same thing? Does not the prayer of the Master for the union of his disciples apply to us as well as to others? If we manifest so little appreciation of this essential principle of union, how shall we expect others to regard our pleading with them to abandon their creeds, names, etc., for the sake of this vital truth? The simple fact is that to the extent that brethren urge the use of the organ to the detriment of the peace and harmony of the churches of Christ, to that extent do they surrender this fundamental principle of "our distinctive plea" and become partisans and sectarians before the world.

2. The use of the organ in the worship is a violation of the royal law of love. In his epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, Paul teaches that if we disregard the conscientious convictions of our brethren and thereby cause them to stumble, we sin against them and against Christ. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) He also teaches that the causing of strife and division in a church of Christ is one of the most grievous of sins: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them." (Rom. 16: 17, R. V.) Here we are expressly required by divine law to "mark" them that cause brethren to stumble and that produce divisions in the churches and avoid them. We are not permitted to regard and treat such as deserving of our Christian fellowship. It is, therefore, one of the most serious offenses against which the New Testament has legislated. It matters not what it is that causes the stumblings and divisions; we are not permitted to do anything that causes them unless it should be something that God *actually requires*; and the things about which Paul was speaking were not things of that nature, neither is the organ.

God does not permit us to force people to worship with the organ who believe it wrong to do so. To even try to induce or force one to do that which he believes is wrong is a sin. Even if the thing be in itself innocent, it is wrong for him to do it who believes it is wrong. "To him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." A man must believe that the thing which he does is right, else it will be wrong to him. His believing a thing is right does not make it right, but his believing it to be wrong makes the doing of it wrong to him. One must be conscientious in all that he does; and, above all things else, he must be conscientious in the worship of God.

This being true, and it also being true that a large number of good people cannot worship with the organ without doing what their conscience condemns as wrong, we are not permitted by divine law to force them to do so or to try to induce them against their convictions. If we do, we sin against them and against Christ. We sin against them because it results in harm to them; we sin against Christ because he forbids it, and we violate his law. The law of love permits no such conduct, and to violate this law is to sin against its divine Author, as well as the violation of any other law.

Nor does God permit us to drive some of the brethren from the church to avoid doing what they believe to be sinful. To do so is to cause division in a way that God condemns; and if we thus sin, he demands that we be marked and avoided as schismatics. So it matters not how the effort may result, it condemns us in the sight of God. If the brethren submit and debauch their conscience by doing that which they believe to be wrong, we sin against them and against Christ, says Paul. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) If we drive them from the church which they have to leave to avoid condemning themselves in this way, we are guilty of the sin of causing division, to which we have referred. In any event, therefore, our conduct is just as positively forbidden as is blasphemy or adultery.

It will not do to say that this is a matter of expediency, and one, therefore, on which God has left us free. Things of expediency on which God has left us free to act by majorities *must be considered as such by both parties*. If one party believe it *sinful*, it may not be forced on them as a matter of expediency. The eating of meats was conceded to be a matter of expediency, innocent in itself; and yet when this "liberty" would result in evil to a brother, *it was forbidden*. To insist on it, then, after knowing that it would cause one to stumble and indulge in it as a matter of expediency was to commit a double sin—a sin against the brother and a sin against Christ.

Nor will it do to say that brethren have no right to hold to such conscientious objections to the use of the organ. It is simply a fact that they do thus regard its use in the worship as forbidden by the law of the Lord, and those so holding will compare favorably in intelligence and piety with those who think differently; and we have to deal with the *fact as it is*, and not as some of us would have it to be.

Nor will it do to plead conscience on the part of those who favor the organ as well as on the part of those who oppose it. There can be no such ground for conscience, unless it is considered as *divinely required*, so that they cannot worship without it without feeling that they sin against God. But the use of the organ is not urged on that ground; hence there is no ground for the advocacy of conscience in the case.

In a case like this, where alienation and division are involved, conscience can require us to persist only when the issue is something that the word of God absolutely requires us to do; but it is not held that God requires us to use an organ in the worship; it is only held that he permits it, and we have seen plainly that he permits nothing of this nature when such consequences result.

On this point many good brethren reason falsely, I think. They say: "We conscientiously believe that the use of the organ would be for the advancement of the cause and the good of the church. We are as conscientiously in favor of it as others are opposed to it; therefore our conscience in the matter is equal to theirs and is to be equally respected." These good brethren fail to see that they apply the word "conscience" alike to two very different classes of things. If A conscientiously believes that, on the ground of expediency, the use of the organ will result in harm, and B, on the same ground, conscientiously believes that it will result in good, the conscience of one is just equal to that of the other; if A believes that the use of the organ in the worship is divinely prohibited, so that he sins in its use, and B believes that it is divinely required, so that he sins if he worships without it, the conscience of one is just equal to that of the other. But when A believes that it is divinely forbidden and B simply holds that it would be for the best, as a matter of expediency, there is the breadth of the heavens between the two. B must believe that it is divinely required as an item of the faith, and hence a sin to dispense with it, before his conscience in the matter is of the same nature as that of A, and equal to it, who believes that God has forbidden it and that to use it is a sin. But conscience is not pleaded on this ground; hence the claim is false. This being true, it effectually destroys the plea of expediency as constantly urged. Even if brethren heartily believe that the use of the organ would promote the interests of the church if all would accept it, they cannot think it would be for good when alienation, strife, and division will result. Nothing, as an expedient, can be for the best that will produce such results in the light of God's condemnation of them; but on account of the conviction, wide and deep, that the use of the organ is contrary to the divine will, these results must follow its introduction. Since these results must exist in the present state of thought and nothing can be expedient and good that produces them, the plea of expediency is gone. Then since the Bible does not *demand* its use, regardless of consequences and under existing circumstances, it is inexpedient, the plea of justification in its use becomes wholly groundless, and from every point of view the defense breaks down.

Urge these considerations, my dear brother, in connection with those presented by Brother McGarvey, in the name, the love, and the spirit of the Master, and I pray God to give you success in restoring peace and harmony in the church which you so dearly love; but whether you succeed or not, may God give you the peace of mind and heart that ever comes from a sense of duty well and faithfully performed.

Your brother in the faith and for the old paths,

F. G. ALLEN.

