


1917

## Review of John B. Cowden's Tract on "Instrumental Music in the Church" and Reply to J.B. Briney's Friendly Criticism.

M. C. Kurfees

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs\\_books](https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books)

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Music Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kurfees, M. C., "Review of John B. Cowden's Tract on "Instrumental Music in the Church" and Reply to J.B. Briney's Friendly Criticism." (1917). *Stone-Campbell Books*. 52.  
[https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs\\_books/52](https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books/52)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Stone-Campbell Resources at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stone-Campbell Books by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

**Review of John B. Cowden's Tract on "In-  
strumental Music in the Church"**

AND

**Reply to J. B. Briney's Friendly Criticism**



**BY M. C. KURFEES**



ISSUED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION AND PAID FOR OUT OF THE  
FREE-TRACT FUND CONTRIBUTED BY READERS  
OF THE GOSPEL ADVOCATE

FOR ADDITIONAL COPIES ADDRESS THE  
**GOSPEL ADVOCATE**  
317-319 FIFTH AVENUE, NORTH, NASHVILLE, TENN.

### **PUBLISHERS' NOTE.**

---

This tract comprises a series of eight articles written by M. C. Kurfees, of Louisville, Ky., that appeared in the Gospel Advocate, beginning with the issue of January 25, 1917. These articles present a clear, concise, and scholarly review of a tract on "Instrumental Music in the Church" that had been written and was being extensively circulated by John B. Cowden, of Tullahoma, Tenn. When Brother Kurfees had about finished his review, he received a letter from the venerable J. B. Briney, of Pewee Valley, Ky., calling in question certain statements. This letter, together with Brother Kurfees' reply, appeared in the Gospel Advocate of April 12, 1917, and is included in this tract. We submit these articles in their present form with the firm belief that a careful reading will prove of great benefit to all.



## “INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE CHURCH.”

---

Brother John B. Cowden has written another tract, the title of which is “Instrumental Music in the Church.” A copy of this tract has been placed in our hands with the request that we review it in the Gospel Advocate. With this purpose in view, we have given it a close, careful, and prayerful examination, and now proceed to review its logic and its doctrine. It makes some specious points, but, as a matter of fact, it is incorrect in nearly all of its vital statements, does not even once state the only issue that is in dispute, and is thoroughly false and misleading in its teaching.

Only a short time ago, as our readers will remember, we called attention to the very defective logic and unsound teaching of his tract on the missionary-society question, entitled “Fellowship in Furtherance of the Gospel;” and they will further remember, no doubt, that we presented, in these columns, some samples of the remarkable logic (?) by which this new champion of the society and organ cause attempts to illuminate the controversial arena. In justice to him, it is proper here to add that, both in that tract and in this, he writes, in some of his paragraphs, as if he really thinks he is logical; but, in all seriousness, we feel constrained to respectfully observe that, if the reasoning in his two tracts is a sample of correct logic, then what a pity that the renowned logicians of the ages—Aristotle, Sir William Hamilton, John Stuart Mill, Archbishop Whately, Coppee, and all the rest—could not have postponed their coming till now, that they might sit at his feet and learn! Then, the immortal works which have guided the currents of scholarly thought through the



ages and have been the admiration of the world would never have been written, and "Aristotle's Dictum" would be a back number! His course of reasoning, both in this tract on instrumental music and in that on the missionary society, is so utterly foreign to the principles of all true logic that in neither of them does he even one time state the only issue that is in dispute between the advocates and the opponents of these things. It is a pity that a brother who either does not know an issue, or, knowing it, seems unable to state it, will nevertheless undertake to discuss it with an argumentation as the result that will probably mislead unthinking minds.

It is the purpose of this review to examine every point in this tract that is material to a correct representation of his effort to defend instrumental music in the worship of God under Christ; and to these different points we now invite attention.

1. He says: "The anti-organ element in the church has been very active in Tennessee in disseminating their position; while the pro-organ element . . . have consistently had very little to say on the subject." This is not a complete nor correct statement of the case. "The anti-organ element" does not have to do anything and does not do anything "in Tennessee" or anywhere else "in disseminating their position," except simply to preach and practice what is in the New Testament, no more and no less, until "the pro-organ element" becomes "active in disseminating their position" by introducing instrumental music or something else not mentioned by Inspiration in the worship appointed for Christians; precisely as the anti-infant-baptism "element in the church," or the anti-incense "element," does not have to do anything and does not do anything "in disseminating their position," except simply to preach and practice what is in the New Testament, no more and no less, until somebody, like Brother Cowden and his sympathizers, becomes "active" in introducing these things or something else that is not mentioned in the New Testament. Then, of course, if they



would be faithful "in disseminating their position," they have to call attention to the fact, for the benefit of those who might be thus led to think otherwise, that such things are foreign to the New Testament, have been introduced and added by man, and that, therefore, if we would be true to the New Testament, we must stand aloof from the practice of infant baptism, the burning of incense, the use of instrumental music in the worship, and anything else, for that matter, which God himself omitted from the religious service ordained for Christians.

2. Again, he says: "If it were not for the fact that the organ is being made a test of fellowship and 'a wall of partition' between brethren, . . . there would still be no effort to present the position and defense of those using an organ." Well, *who is it that does this?* Are not he and those with him guilty of the very thing which he here charges? Suppose, for the sake of the argument, it should be admitted, once for all, that the opponents do make the organ "a test of fellowship" and "a wall of partition" between brethren, does not *he* do the same thing? Let us see. There is "a test of fellowship" and "a wall of partition" between him and the Roman Catholics and High-Church Episcopalians in the practice of burning incense in the worship of God. Brother Cowden tells them that there is no divine authority for the practice, and that, therefore, he cannot join with them in it; but that, if they will remove the "wall of partition" which they have thus erected between him and them, he will gladly join with them and have fellowship with them in the worship—that, believing their use of incense in the worship is without any divine authority, he cannot conscientiously join with them in it. Nevertheless, they not only pay no attention to his conscientious plea and persist in their practice, but they write a tract, we shall suppose, and circulate it about Brother Cowden and those with him, accusing him and them of making the burning of incense "a test of fellowship" and "a wall of partition" between brethren. What would he say? *Yea, what*



could he say? Our brother might appreciate then, as he evidently does not now, that "those who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

Moreover, to press this point, as fact and truth here demand, we respectfully turn upon him with the question: Why do you not tear down this "wall of partition" between you and others by joining with them in baptizing infants? Most especially and seriously do we ask this question when they say to you, as you say to us, "I hope that you will not allow our differences to come between us as brethren," and that we may "be a united host against sin in the world and sectarianism in the church." *Why do you refuse to do so?* If in reply you tell us it is because God has told us whom to baptize and does not mention infants, and that, therefore, you cannot conscientiously baptize them, then we reply, *that is exactly the fact in the other case.* God has specifically told us, as we shall see further on, the kind of music to make in his worship and does not mention instrumental music, and therefore we cannot conscientiously use it in that worship. It is true, God does not tell us not to play instrumental music in his worship, but it is equally true that God does not tell us not to baptize infants. In both cases we are told by the Lord what to do, and he is simply and equally silent on the things in dispute in both cases. Moreover, for every point which you will find in God's terms specifying whom we are to baptize which excludes infants, we will find a corresponding point in God's terms specifying the kind of music to be made in his worship which excludes instrumental music. Standing on this sacred and safe ground, we hold ourselves ready at all times to make the test.

3. Coming to his main defense, he says: "I propose to show, by both the words, deeds, and character of Christ, that instruments of music are permissible in his church."

Now, this is the proper way to come at the argument, and it is the only way by which to settle the question as it should be settled. And we here say, with all the frankness



that we can command, that if Christ, by his "words," to say nothing of his "deeds and character," tells us, in any way, shape, form, or fashion, that we are permitted to use instrumental music in the worship, that will settle it once and forever with us, and never another word of objection against the practice will we utter. It is noteworthy, too, that our brother says "we find but one word" from Christ on the subject. Very well; one is enough. If Christ by merely "one word" tells us we are authorized or permitted to do a thing, that will settle it unequivocally and finally with everybody who has proper respect for his authority, and we will not trouble our brother to hunt even for a second word. His language here, which is clear and explicit, is: "Though we find but one word here, this one word clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind just as the one word, 'baptizo,' clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind. This word, in the original, is 'psallo.'" Then, descanting upon the meaning of this one word of Christ on the subject, he says: "Every Greek lexicon of authority defines 'psallo' to mean: 'Play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment, sing.'" Then, not having space to quote their definitions, he merely mentions by name the lexicons of "Pickering, Groves, Dunbar, Bagster, Wright, Greenfield, Yonge, Thayer, Sophocles, Green, Liddell and Scott, Robinson, Donegan, and Parkhurst."

Now, we frankly confess that we feel the force of this large and respectable list of famous lexicographers; and, that we may fully understand and appreciate the one vital fact at this point, let us get before us exactly what Brother Cowden says and what he has here ventured to teach. As just enumerated, he has appealed to fourteen Greek lexicons to get the meaning of "psallo;" and, mark the point, it is "psallo" *in the New Testament*, "psallo" as one of the words of Christ, whose definition he is giving and summoning all these lexicographers to support. This point is vital. Let the reader keep it constantly in mind, for on it the whole controversy turns. Hence we are not concerned here about the meaning of a word at the time of Homer or



Thucydides, or any other time during the classic period, but the meaning of a word in the New Testament, one of the words of Christ; and of course whatever meaning it had as used by him and as used in the New Testament is binding on us now, and we must, at all hazards, contend for and practice that meaning, whatever it may be. And here we come to the matter of vital concern. Brother Cowden, claiming to be backed by all of these Greek lexicons, says this word means in the New Testament to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment." And he reinforces his position here by saying that "this one word" of Christ "clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind just as the one word, 'baptizo,' clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind." Our brother is making genuine progress here, from the logician's point of view, and we will have no trouble in reaching a conclusion from the premises which he submits. The standard lexicons all tell us that "baptizo" in the New Testament means to immerse, and both they and Brother Cowden correctly tell us that we have not obeyed the command expressed by that word till we have been immersed. This reasoning is thoroughly sound; for, of course, if a word "clearly and unmistakably" expresses a given act as its meaning, then we have not obeyed the command expressed by that word until we have done that act. No matter how many other acts we may do, if we leave undone an act "clearly and unmistakably" denoted by a word, we have not obeyed the command expressed by that word. This reasoning will stand the test of all the lexicons, all philology, and all logic, so that we may confidently take our stand here and defy all comers. And hence, by every law of language and all correct rules of interpretation, our brother's logic at this point forces us to the conclusion that we have not obeyed the New Testament command expressed by "psallo"—"this one word" of Christ—until we "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment." This is the meaning which he says the word "clearly and unmistakably" has in the New Testament; and he says that "this one word" of Christ "clearly



and unmistakably reveals his mind just as the one word, 'baptizo,' clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind." That settles it. According to Brother Cowden, here are two words of Christ—"baptizo" and "psallo"—each word "clearly and unmistakably" expressing a given act, and we have not obeyed the commands expressed by these words until we have done in each case that act. In the case of "baptizo," the act expressed in the verb form is to *immerse*; in the case of "psallo," it is to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment."

Now, all of this being true—and Brother Cowden tells us it is—if, in the one case, we have not obeyed the command expressed by "baptizo" till we are immersed, then, in the other case, we have not obeyed the command expressed by "psallo" till we "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment." In other words, if the conclusion thus reached follows in the case of "baptizo," then, beyond all doubt and equivocation, the conclusion thus reached follows in the case of "psallo." If not, why not? Hence, according to Brother Cowden, every church of God on earth that does not have instrumental music in its worship is living in open rebellion against Christ in precisely the same way as when it fails to practice immersion. If not, why not? He tells us that when Christ uses the word "psallo," it "clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind just as the one word, 'baptizo,' clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind," and that the former as used by Christ and in the New Testament means to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment;" and, of course, if, when he uses "baptizo," he commands persons to be immersed, then, when he uses "psallo," he commands them to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment." If not, why not?

4. From the premises thus far submitted in the tract under review, both its author and all the rest of us are now face to face with the inevitable and unavoidable necessity of choosing one or the other of two, and only two, alternatives—namely, we must either put musical



instruments into all our church houses and play on them in the worship of God if we would obey Christ, or it must be shown that "psallo," contrary to the Cowden claim, does not, in the mouth of Christ and in the New Testament, mean to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment."

In the light of all present-day New Testament scholarship and lexicography, we unhesitatingly take the latter position, and are, therefore, consistent in refraining at all times and under all circumstances from playing such instruments in the worship of God; whereas those who claim that the very word used by Christ, and which, therefore, expresses his command, means to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment," yet omit such playing and such singing, of course are not doing what they thus claim that he tells them to do, and, therefore, as every schoolboy ought to be able to see, they are not consistent in making such a claim and following it with such an omission.

Moreover, the silly attempt (the reader will pardon the word "silly" in this connection; we use it advisedly, for the case demands it) to escape from the horns of this dilemma by the claim that "psallo" "permits" them to play on instruments, but does not "command" them to do so, is worse than absurd. Concerning such use of instruments, the tract under review sets up this claim in the following manner: "Neither Christ nor his apostles commanded them; but, as we have clearly shown, they did *permit* them. . . . All that is asked is 'the freedom for which Christ set us free'—the permission to use them or not use them, as we see fit."

Yes, verily, *that* is all you want—the liberty to have your own way and to exercise your own will in spite of the expressed way and will of God. But wait a moment! How did you learn that Christ "permits" you to play instruments in the worship of God? You have told us, in unvarnished words, that you learned it from his use of one word, and that "this word in the original is



'psallo.'" You have also told us in words of no uncertain meaning that this one word "clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind just as the one word 'baptizo' clearly and unmistakably reveals his mind;" and finally, you have told us, and claimed to be backed and "buttressed" by fourteen Greek lexicographers, that "this one word," in the mouth of Christ and in the New Testament, means to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment," and now you have the face and the temerity to turn around and tell us that you have "the permission to use" instruments "or not use them, as" you may "see fit!" That is, according to your absurd, self-contradictory, and self-destructive position, what Christ *tells* you to do is something which you have "the permission to" do or not to do, *as you may see fit!*

With all due respect for the author of this tract and for all others who make this claim, there is not, from the philological point of view, *any sense in such a claim at all.* A mere tyro in language knows that if one word means to "immerse" and another means to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment," and the Lord uses these words in telling persons what to do, he tells them in the one case to be "immersed," and in the other case to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment." If not, why not? And to say that, in the one case, he merely "permits," but does not "command" them to do what is expressed by the word in that case, is to say that he merely "permits," but does not "command" them to do what is expressed by the word in the other case. Again we ask, if not, why not?

5. We come now to consider the argument based on the lexicons, and shall give attention, first of all, to his animadversion on Sophocles' definition of "psallo." Concerning our comment on this author and his lexicon in our book on music, he says: "Brother Kurfees even goes to the extreme of false statement, saying in his book (pages 47, 48) that 'Sophocles declares that there is not a single example of *psallo* throughout this long period (146 B.C. to 1100 A.D.)



involving or implying the use of an instrument.' Sophocles declares no such thing nor anything that could be construed to mean that."

We will now see whether or not "Sophocles declares no such thing;" and, notwithstanding the assumed infallible correctness of this critic, we will also see how much confidence may be placed in his bold, sweeping, and unqualified assertion. That statement in our book was not made in haste, nor without prayerful thought and deliberation, backed by extended and painstaking research. In fact, we may further observe, it is hoped with becoming modesty, that the statement was not made without its author's *knowing what he was talking about.*

Be it observed, then, first of all, that we did not say in what *specific* way Sophocles so declares. There are different ways in which men can and do say things. Even "actions speak," and we have it on good authority that they sometimes "speak louder than words." That we may see the real issue at this point and the utter groundlessness of his contradiction of our statement, let us inquire here, what is the business of lexicographers or the makers of lexicons and dictionaries? There is but one correct answer to this question, and that is, *to define the meaning of words.* This, to its fullest extent, but this only, is their business. But what is it to "define" a thing? It means "to fix the bounds of" it, "to mark the limits of" it, and hence, as applied to words, it means "to fix the bounds" or "to mark the limits of" a word. That is, a definition marks the limits or extent of territory, no more and no less, covered by the meaning of a word. As Webster succinctly expresses it: "A definition is designed to settle a thing in its compass and extent." There we have it in a nutshell. In defining words, then, lexicographers are to give the "compass and extent" of their meaning. Hence, when we look at the meaning of a word of any language as given in a lexicon of that language, we have a right to conclude, if the maker of that lexicon can be relied on, that he has given us, not merely in part, but in full, as



Webster expresses it, the "compass and extent" of meaning covered by that word in all of its examples and uses in the literature of that language, and throughout the entire period in which he is professing to define words; and if there should be discovered, as is sometimes the case, an example of the use of a word with a meaning not given in such lexicon, then, if the lexicon is to be reliable, either its author or somebody else must revise it and add the newly discovered meaning to its definition of that word; or, finally, if it should be discovered, as is also sometimes the case, and which actually did occur in the case of Liddell & Scott's Greek lexicon, that a meaning has been given to a word for which, on further research and examination, it is found no example with that meaning exists, then his lexicon must again be revised and the mistaken meaning thus found to be lacking in the support of a single example must be expunged from the record. This occurred in the case of Liddell & Scott in their definition of "baptizo." A little before or about the middle of the nineteenth century they issued their great Greek lexicon, and gave, as a part of their definition of "baptizo," the meaning "to pour upon." The first American edition of their work, edited by Dr. Drisler, contained the same meaning; but, on further research, these two great scholars of the Church of England discovered that they were mistaken in supposing that they had found an example of the word with that meaning, and consequently, in their next edition, they expunged that meaning from the record, and were followed in this honorable course by the American editor in the next American edition; and in all subsequent editions, even the eighth and latest great edition of that great work, that meaning was omitted; and thus by that act and in the most convincing of all ways they "declared that there is not a single example of" baptizo in all Greek literature, so far as their researches have revealed, "involving or implying" that meaning.

Now, of course, it would be a very easy matter even for an uninformed person of ordinary intelligence, but without



proper caution and prudence in making assertions, to write a tract and say that any one who makes this statement about Liddell & Scott on "baptizo," which is identically the same statement we made about Sophocles on "psallo," "even goes to the extreme of false statement," and that Liddell & Scott "declare no such thing nor anything that could be construed to mean that;" but all who have even a schoolboy's acquaintance with the facts about making lexicons know that the only "false statement" in such a case is the statement made by such a critic.

Turning now to the great lexicons which not only define Greek words for the New Testament period, but whose learned authors, Thayer and Sophocles, made a specialty of the Greek covering that period and put their lexicons before the literary world, *not* with particular and exhaustive reference to the classic period, but as distinctly and especially defining words, one of them for the New Testament period exclusively and the other for the Roman and Byzantine periods, which include the New Testament period, we find, according to these two eminent and unequalled lexicons, not a solitary instance of "psallo" throughout this long period of over twelve hundred years, reaching back to 146 years before Christ, that means to "play on an instrument" or "sing to musical accompaniment." On the contrary, Thayer, after conceding and frankly stating that the word *did* mean to play on an instrument in the classic period, distinctly and positively states in so many words: "In the New Testament, *to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song.*" Thus he not only does not give a solitary intimation about its meaning to play on an instrument after the opening of the New Testament period, but actually places its meaning for the latter period over against and in contrast with the classic meaning, saying that "in the New Testament" it means "to sing." And Sophocles, defining the word for the period extending from 146 years before Christ to 1100 A.D., defines it to mean "*to chant, sing religious hymns.*" Here again there is not the remotest intimation about playing on an



instrument. Hence, according to the definition of "psallo" by these world-renowned lexicographers, the "compass and extent" of its meaning are exhausted when they declare that it means "to chant, to sing religious hymns," "to celebrate the praises of God in song;" and by this fact they declare, as solemnly and powerfully as lexicographers can declare anything by the making of lexicons, that there is not a solitary example of "psallo" throughout the periods indicated that means anything else; and they declare it in precisely the same way that Liddell & Scott and other lexicographers declare that there is not a solitary example of "baptizo" in all the literature of the Greek language that has any other meaning than to immerse.

And, finally, it is quite sufficient to say in reply to superficial critics who, with a boldness and positiveness that could be better employed, tell us that Liddell & Scott, as to "baptizo," and Sophocles and Thayer, as to "psallo," "declare no such thing nor anything that could be construed to mean that," then please show us an example of "baptizo" as cited by Liddell & Scott, and an example of "psallo" as cited by Sophocles and Thayer, that has any other meaning in the period named, and then, and only then, will they meet the argument based on New Testament lexicography.

6. Before completing the argument based on the lexicons, we here further expose the petty attempt to juggle with "psallo" by making it "permit," but not "command," the use of instrumental music. The author under review, in his supplemental tract, entitled "Understanding the Issue," is even bold enough to say that such music in the worship "is *permitted*" by "the New Testament;" but is not "authorized" by it! His words are: "The issue between us is not whether or not the instrument is *authorized* in the New Testament, . . . but whether or not it is *permitted*. If it were authorized, we would not dare omit it; but that it is permitted—that is, may or may not be used—is our position."

There now! What a wonderful "New Testament" we



have! By telling us to do a thing it "permits" us to do it, but it does not "authorize" us to do it! If that fine and rare hairsplitting power of discrimination, which enables him to see that the New Testament, when it uses a word meaning a definite and explicit act which "every Greek lexicon of authority defines" it to mean, "permits" that act to be done, but does not "authorize" it to be done—if, we say, this rare power of discrimination does not elevate him to the first rank as a metaphysician, we should like to know the reason why! We are glad of his concession: "If it were authorized, we would not dare omit it." We shall attempt no further analysis here of such rare theological niceties, except to observe that when he succeeds in convincing his readers that the New Testament "permits" them to do a thing, he will most likely find it difficult to convince them that it does not "authorize" them to do it; and if they should come back at us with the question, "What about the consistency of this New Testament, anyhow, which tells us that it *permits* us to do a thing, but does not *authorize* us to do it?" we acknowledge in advance that the question is too much for us, and that we shall turn it over to Brother Cowden or to some other metaphysician.

But he has quoted from some Greek scholars—namely, Ropes, Riddle, Dwight, Bacon, and Hodge, representing Harvard University, the Hartford Theological Seminary, Yale University, and Princeton University—some of whom say, in substance, that "psallo" "in New Testament times *did* allow the use of an instrument."

Now let the reader please note the significant fact that not one of these Greek professors and translators, quoted by Brother Briney and requoted by Brother Cowden, *dares to say, and does not say, that "psallo" in the New Testament means to "play on an instrument."* This fact is most significant. But why did they not say that it has that meaning? Simply because of the twofold fact that *it does not have that meaning in the New Testament, and they know that it does not.*



We heartily join our brother in saying that "fortunately some of the translators of the Revised Version are still living and can speak for themselves," among whom is that brilliant scholar, Prof. M. B. Riddle, of whom Brother Briney made inquiry concerning "psallo" and whom Brother Cowden quotes; but Brother Briney seems to have been unfortunate in framing his question, and instead of asking whether or not the word *includes* playing on an instrument, which is the proper form of any question seeking the meaning of a word, he seems to have asked whether or not it *precludes* it. Of course, Professor Riddle could make but one reply to a question like that. On the same principle of dealing with lexical matters, and with the same propriety, Brother Briney could have varied his question and the Professor could have said that it does not "preclude" dancing!

But we also have an interesting statement from the same brilliant member of the Revision Committee. In a letter dated October 20, 1914, replying to the question, "Will you kindly tell me whether or not the verb 'psallo,' as used in the New Testament, includes playing instrumental music?" Professor Riddle said:

As you doubtless are aware, the Greek verb "psallo" is derived from the notion of thrumming on a stringed instrument. This sense it retains in the Septuagint. But in the New Testament, where it occurs four times [he meant five—M. C. K.] (Rom. 15: 9; 1 Cor. 14: 15; Eph. 5: 19; James 5: 13), this etymological sense passes over to that of singing praises to God. Hence, the New Testament does *not necessarily* include the accompaniment of instrumental music. I regret that I cannot give a more definite reply, but the matter is left in doubt by the New Testament usage.

Now, will Brother Cowden and Brother Briney please ponder that letter? It not only candidly gives the classic sense as that of "thrumming on a stringed instrument" and states that "this sense it retains in the Septuagint," but, with equal candor and fidelity to the philological facts in the case, it adds: "But in the New Testament . . .



this etymological sense passes over to that of singing praises to God." Moreover, it not only says that "the New Testament does *not necessarily* include the accompaniment of instrumental music," but it distinctly states that "the matter is left in doubt by the New Testament usage." From all of which it follows that, if the facts in the case are respected, instrumental music *cannot* be used in Christian worship without doubt as to its propriety. Not only does Professor Riddle say it is in doubt, but we all know, from such premises, that the only infallibly safe way is to leave it out. This course we know is right and beyond all doubt.

But some one asks: "Is the tract now under review correct in the claim that these scholars say 'psallo' 'permits' playing on an instrument?" Yes, in the case of some of these scholars, this claim is based on a fact, and we freely and cheerfully admit it; but it is also a fact that they say "baptizo" "permits" sprinkling for baptism. This was our statement in the Cookeville address, and we now submit the facts which establish the correctness of that statement. First of all, it is a lamentable fact that most Greek professors and Greek lexicographers, not even excepting some of the most brilliant names which figure in this controversy, sometimes teach one thing as scholars and another thing as theologians; and, in some instances, what the scholar's lips say is contradicted by what the theologian's life says; and hence we are fully aware of the fact, and were aware of it long before Brother Cowden discovered it, that Greek professors and lexicographers will, as scholars, define "psallo," in the New Testament, always and everywhere, to mean to *sing*; and yet, under the influence of theological training and environment, will straightway go and play on instruments in making music in the worship of God and claim that "psallo" "permits" them to do so. But it is also equally true that these same Greek scholars will define "baptizo" to mean to *immerse*; and yet, under the influence of theological training and environment, they will straightway go and practice sprinkling and



pouring for baptism, and claim that "baptizo" "permits" them to do so. With their lips they say a thing, in this case, as scholars; with their lives they contradict it as theologians.

"But," some one may ask, "is it claimed that 'baptizo' 'permits' sprinkling and pouring for baptism, just as it is claimed that 'psallo' 'permits' playing on an instrument?" Yes, that is exactly the fact. They, precisely as all others, claim no authority for baptism except that expressed by "baptizo;" but they sprinkle and pour for baptism; therefore, they claim that "baptizo" "permits" them to sprinkle and pour for baptism. No other conclusion is even possible from these premises. We could not make this point if, when they sprinkle and pour, they claimed to be obeying a command expressed by some other word than "baptizo," but they make no such claim; and hence, when we make the statement that the same Greek scholars who claim permission from "psallo" to play an instrument in making music also claim permission from "baptizo" to sprinkle and pour for baptism, we simply state a fact. Liddell and Scott, two of the most brilliant lexicographers that figure in this controversy, are prominent examples; and even if exceptions to our statement can be found, these, nevertheless, establish the statement as a fact. If the author of the tract under review is not yet convinced, then let him please visit what is called a "baptism" in the church in which these great scholars held membership and to whose form of alleged baptism they gave the influence of their great lives, and they will say to him, in a way that speaks louder than words, that "baptizo" "permits" them to sprinkle and pour for baptism.

If it be replied here that this is a perversion of "baptizo," and that these Greek scholars do not get the idea of sprinkling and pouring from that word, but merely practice it in spite of the explicit and incontrovertible meaning of the word, we promptly and unreservedly acknowledge that this reply is correct; but we return the counter reply



that precisely the same thing is true in the case of "psallo." These Greek scholars do not get the idea of playing an instrument from the New Testament use of "psallo," simply because that idea is no more in the word in that volume than is the idea of sprinkling and pouring in "baptizo." "Psallo," in this case, is perverted in their hands precisely as "baptizo," in the other case, is perverted in their hands. And it is a remarkable fact, as before observed, that not a single one of the living scholars quoted in this controversy says "psallo," in the New Testament, means to play an instrument; and neither will they say that "baptizo" means to sprinkle or pour. *They know that "baptizo" and "psallo" do not have those meanings in that volume.* Yet, in spite of the facts in the case of both "baptizo" and "psallo," they will sprinkle and pour for baptism and play on instruments in making music, precisely as Brother Cowden, in spite of the facts in the case of "psallo," will play on instruments in making music. In professed obedience to a command expressed by a given word, both are guilty of performing an act the idea of which is nowhere in the word. In other words, both are adding to the word of God, and both in precisely the same way.

[NOTE—Concerning our giving "the definition of 'psallo' as found in the tract" to "play on an instrument, sing to musical accompaniment, sing," an inquirer asks why, "in referring to this definition" subsequently, we omit the word "'sing' as a part of the definition." Because all are agreed on both sides that "psallo" means to sing, and that definition, not being in dispute, may properly be omitted in the way stated. It is proper to keep before the reader the definition that is in dispute.]

7. We dismiss the fantastic distinction between "permit" and "authorize" by noticing the new form of question in which our brother claims to "put the issue squarely"—thus: "Does the meaning of '*psallo*,' as used in the New Testament, permit or exclude the use of an instrument?"



Of course the correct answer to such a question depends altogether on the sense in which he uses "permit" and "exclude." According to Webster, one is logically compelled, in any such use of the word "permit," to attach to it one of two meanings—namely, it must mean either (1) "to grant (one) liberty to do an act; to authorize;" or, (2) "only acquiescence, or abstinence from prevention." But if he attaches the former meaning to any New Testament word, which tells persons to do an act, then the act thus involved is enjoined and *must* be done; but if he attaches the latter meaning to such a word, then the "acquiescence or abstinence from prevention" would apply not only to *one thing* as being not enjoined, but merely not prevented by the word, but to *everything* else in the whole catalogue of acts possible to man; and with such a construction of "psallo," or of any other New Testament word, for that matter, it would "permit" one to fiddle, to dance, to shout, to clap the hands, to sit down, to stand up, to walk, to run, to turn a somersault, *and to do anything else which it is possible for man to do* that is not specifically forbidden. Why not? If "psallo" means "abstinence from prevention" as to one thing which it does not enjoin—namely, "to play on an instrument"—then of course it means "abstinence from prevention" as to any other thing which it does not enjoin. If not, why not? Why select *one thing* which it does not enjoin and claim "liberty" from it to do that one thing, and not claim the same "liberty" from it to do *any other thing* which it does not enjoin? And thus the "liberty" gotten in this way from "psallo" "to play on an instrument" is the "liberty" to do anything else under heaven which is not specifically forbidden. In other words, such juggling with "psallo," in the guise of "liberty," is *nothing short of bald and unrestrained license.*

Now, the facts are, as Webster expresses it and as has already been shown, "psallo," precisely like all other words, has its own "compass and extent" of meaning, and beyond that limit it neither says nor does anything.



8. He says "the Bible defines most of its important words," and that "it defines 'psallo'" to mean: "Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings;" "I will also praise thee with the psaltery;" "Sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp; with the harp and the voice of melody;" and he then adds, "This is the Old Testament meaning of the word," and that it has "the same meaning in the New Testament." In proof of this, he here quotes our classmate of many years ago, Professor Lockhart, as saying: "New Testament usage does not require a new definition of the term." Then, according to Brother Cowden and Professor Lockhart, the New Testament meaning of "psallo" is to "sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp" and "with the psaltery of ten strings," and, therefore, it follows, with the force of irresistible logic, that the New Testament commands the churches to "sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp" and "with the psaltery of ten strings;" and that, therefore, any church that does not play such instruments in its worship is in rebellion against God. *If not, why not?*

9. But our brother discovers, from the book of Revelation, that in heaven there are "harpers harping with their harps," and he asks: "If singing to musical accompaniment is right in heaven, how can it be wrong here? If Christians sing the song of the Lamb in heaven with musical accompaniment, why may they not do the same here?"

Now, the logic of this is that whatever it is right to have or to do in heaven, it is right to have and to do here in the church. Very well; listen now to this, which John also saw in heaven: "And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." (Rev. 8: 3.) Hence, according to Brother Cowden's logic, the churches should have "golden censers" and "much incense" and "add it unto the prayers of all the saints;" for "if" the use of incense



"is right in heaven, how can it be wrong here?" "If Christians" burn incense in heaven, "why may they not do the same here?"

Moreover, we learn from plain Bible facts and statements that there is infant membership "in heaven;" and if it "is right in heaven" to have infant membership, "how can it be wrong here?" "Let those that oppose" infant membership here "answer." Brother Cowden is one of those who oppose infant membership here; but he will either be dumb before his own logic in this instance, or else surrender his position, one or the other.

10. But here our brother's flexible logic takes another form. He says: "We have instruments in use both under Moses, a lower dispensation, and in heaven, a higher dispensation, without a single word from Christ forbidding their use in the intermediate dispensation, which doubly assures us of their divine approval."

Now, that is not only an ingenious turn, but it can be made more serviceable as an argument than even Brother Cowden, its inventor, seems to realize. For instance: "We have" incense "in use both under Moses, a lower dispensation, and in heaven, a higher dispensation, without a single word from Christ forbidding" its "use in the intermediate dispensation, which doubly assures us of" its "divine approval;" and therefore, after all of Brother Cowden's opposition to it, our Catholic friends are right in burning incense in the worship of God. If not, why not?

And this: "We have" infant membership "in use both under Moses, a lower dispensation, and in heaven, a higher dispensation, without a single word from Christ forbidding" its "use in the intermediate dispensation, which doubly assures us of" its "divine approval;" and therefore, after all our brother's opposition to it, our Catholic and Protestant friends alike are right in having infant membership "in the intermediate dispensation!" If not, why not?

11. Our brother's next argument is thus stated: "Christ attended the temple services from childhood to the day of



his death, and we have no record of his ever disapproving of the use of instruments in any way."

Now, notwithstanding he makes this argument, he seems to realize that it is not valid, for he immediately adds: "It is claimed . . . that Christ worshiped as a Jew and not as a Christian, for the church had not then been established." This claim is correct, and it is a complete answer to that argument; but our brother attempts to offset the answer by the assumption that Christ "expressed his approval of instruments through the apostles by the same acts after the church was established."

Of course, if this is true, it is a valid argument; but, as we shall now show, it is a purely groundless assumption without a solitary word or fact in the whole New Testament as a premise from which it is a necessary conclusion. That the reader may see that there is not a vestige of truth in support of the assumption, we here quote from "Instrumental Music in the Worship," an exposure of the same seductive fallacy, as follows:

It is amazing to see how even strong men, when committed to the defense of what they cannot prove, will resort to a process of reasoning which assumes or takes for granted the very thing which they have set out to prove. This effort to find support in apostolic example for instrumental music in Christian worship is a conspicuous illustration of this fact. In his debate with Brother W. W. Otey, in 1908, Brother J. B. Briney stated the case as follows: "Not only before the day of Pentecost, but afterwards, Peter and John were going up into the temple at the ninth hour of the day, and there were these instruments of music, and that these men went up there to participate in those devotions where these instruments were being used, it seems to me, does not admit of reasonable doubt, and yet, notwithstanding the fact that the Savior was there in his lifetime, and notwithstanding the fact that the apostles frequented that temple and participated in those thanks and adoration and praise, yet not one line or one word or one sentence ever fell from apostle, prophet, or Christ in condemnation of that practice." (Otey-Briney Debate, page 44.)

We desire now to analyze and examine these statements, and especially their logical bearing upon the point in dis-



pute. They are four in number, as follows: (1) "Peter and John were going up into the temple at the ninth hour of the day." (2) "There were these instruments of music." (3) "That these men went up there to participate in those devotions where these instruments were being used, it seems to me, does not admit of reasonable doubt." (4) "Notwithstanding the fact that the apostles frequented that temple, and participated in those thanks and adoration and praise, yet not one line or one word or one sentence ever fell from apostle, prophet, or Christ in condemnation of that practice."

Now, suppose "Peter and John were going up into the temple at the ninth hour;" and suppose it is true that "there were these instruments of music;" and suppose, furthermore, that "not one line or one word or one sentence ever fell from apostle, prophet, or Christ in condemnation of that practice"—suppose all this is true, still we are confronted with the stubborn fact that, so far as the one point here at issue is concerned, everything depends upon whether the thing assumed in No. 3 is true or false. But the unvarnished fact here is that what is assumed in No. 3 is nothing more nor less than a bald and groundless assumption with not one word, fact, or intimation in the entire record that proves it. . . . We now reach the climax of proof touching the purpose for which the apostles went into the temple, when we are informed by Luke that, as the result of their labors thus far in the temple, "the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him [which is the sect of the Sadducees], and they were filled with jealousy, and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward," whereupon "an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out and said: "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life; and when they heard this, they entered into the temple about day-break, and taught." . . . The captain of the temple and the chief priests were dumbfounded at this unexpected turn in the current of events, and while they were perplexed over the situation, "there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people." . . . Now, not only do we have all this plainly in the record, but there is not one word that says they "went up there to participate in those devotions." Yea, more; not only is there not a word in the record that says they went there to engage in the temple worship, but there is not a word that says they went there to worship at all. The record



specifically gives a different purpose which led them into the temple—namely, to introduce the new faith and the new order of worship under Christ. . . . We are, therefore, irresistibly led to the conclusion that whoever, in order to find support for instrumental music in Christian worship, appeals to the fact that the apostles went into the Jewish temple where such music was used in the Jewish worship, appeals to a record that does not contain a single statement, fact, or word in support of the practice. (Pages 99, 101, 104, 106, 107.)

12. The next turn, which our brother's flexible logic takes, appears in the following statement: "An organ or any other instrument is an expediency, about which there are many local conditions to be considered in determining its use in the church, which often makes its use questionable or inadvisable." That is to say, according to Brother Cowden and Professor Lockhart, it is sometimes "questionable or inadvisable" for churches to do what "Christ and his apostles" have told them to do! But does Brother Cowden's position necessarily lead to this conclusion? Most assuredly it does. He says "the Bible defines most of its important words;" that it defines "psallo" in the Old Testament to mean to "sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp," and "with the psaltery of ten strings," and other instruments; and that the word has "the same meaning in the New Testament," from all of which, of course, it follows that "Christ and his apostles," by their use of this word, tell us to "sing praises unto Jehovah with" such instruments; and yet he now tells us, as we have just seen, that "there are many local conditions . . . which often make" their "use questionable or inadvisable!" Surely any thoughtful person can see the inconsistency of such a contention and the invalidity of such arguments.

13. Concerning Paul's famous argument against eating meat when it caused trouble, he says: "Unless it can be shown that the use of an organ may lead some weak members to sin thus against their conscience, 'which no one attempts to show, 'the eating-no-meat argument' has no



bearing on the subject." But what he here says that "no one attempts to show" is the very thing which some of us not only "attempt to show," but which we *do show*. The very thing which compels their opposition to the practice is the fact that they cannot engage in the practice without sinning "thus against their conscience." If they could join in the practice without a violation of conscience, all their opposition to it, of course, ought to cease.

14. Attempting to meet the argument that God himself has determined and appointed the different acts of the worship to be rendered to him, and hence that he has appointed the kind of music to be made in that worship, our brother utters this rare oracle: "Nothing can be made a part of worship except by the will of the worshipers, and for any one to undertake to say what enters into another's worship is the height of presumption." It is truly astonishing that the author of this statement did not himself see both its incorrectness and its utter absurdity. The Lord's Supper is "a part of worship" regardless of "the will of the worshipers." Of course, one may perform that "part of worship," or any other part, with the wrong motive or in some other sinful way, and thus render the worship unacceptable to God; but neither that circumstance nor any other circumstance would change the fact, or have anything whatever to do with the fact, that the Lord's Supper is "a part of worship." The Lord himself made it so. If our critic had said that "the will of the worshipers" is essential to *the acceptable performance of an act* of worship, his statement would be correct; but God himself has appointed certain acts of worship, among which are the Lord's Supper, vocal music, prayer, etc., and, regardless of "the will of the worshipers" or whether these acts are otherwise rendered properly or not, such considerations have nothing whatever to do with the fact that they are all parts of worship—the worship which was divinely ordained.

Moreover, if "nothing can be made a part of worship



except by the will of the worshipers," then "the worshipers" themselves may determine and fix what is to be done as worship to God, and God himself has nothing to do with it! And hence the entire ritual of Rome and of Buddhism, too, for that matter, may become a part of Christian worship, if it be so ordered "by the will of the worshipers!" Thus our brother's position comes to a veritable *reductio ad absurdum*.

15. He says: "Every one concedes the legitimacy of such aids to the singing as the tuning fork, song books, lights, etc. Now, if it is right to use note books and lights to aid and guide the eye in singing, why is it wrong to use an organ to aid and guide the ear in singing?" This is a very common and specious sophism, and often misleads those unpracticed in the art of reasoning; but the following passage, taken from "Walking by Faith," is a complete answer to his question and a complete refutation of his point:

If an organ were only used to pitch the tune, there would be nothing wrong in its use, because we are commanded to sing, and we cannot sing without pitch. Whatever is essential to doing a command is involved in the command; but pitching the tune is essential to doing the command to sing; therefore, pitching the tune is involved in the command to sing. No difference whether it be pitched with the voice, a tuning fork, a pitch pipe, or any other way, the thing that is done—viz., *pitching the tune*—is involved in the command to sing. Moreover, when a tuning fork is used to pitch the tune, nothing is done in singing that is not done without it, pitching the tune being the only thing done with the tuning fork, which is done in singing without the fork, for it is impossible to sing without pitching the tune. But when a musical instrument is used with the singing, something is done that is not done without it—viz., another kind of music is made simultaneously with that made by the human voice. It is praising God with two kinds of music where God himself has chosen and appointed only one kind. The same principle applies to the use of note books. In using notes, no act is performed that is not performed without them, and nothing accompanies the singing that does not also accompany it without them; but in using musical instruments,



an act is performed that is not performed without them, and something does accompany the singing—viz., instrumental music—which does not accompany it without them. By no sort of reasoning can it be shown that playing on an instrument and singing are so related that singing involves playing or its equivalent; but it can be shown that musical notes and singing are so related that singing involves either the notes or their equivalent. This is seen in the following reasoning: We are commanded to sing; but we cannot sing without a tune; therefore, the tune is involved in the command to sing. Again: A tune cannot be sung without length and pitch of tones are indicated; but notes or their equivalent are essential to indicating length and pitch of tones; therefore, notes or their equivalent are essential to singing a tune. If it be said that many persons sing who do not know the notes, it is sufficient to reply that they learned the tune either directly or indirectly from some one who got it from the notes. The principle is the same whether the tune be learned directly or remotely from the notes. A tune cannot exist without notes or their equivalent. The notes simply indicate length and pitch of tone, which are essential to either vocal or instrumental music. If it be objected that the instrument gives the tune to the ear just as the notes do to the eye, I reply, this is a mistake. The instrument has to get the tune from the notes just as does the leader of the singing. This is an artful sophism, founded on an egregious blunder. *The tune exists before it is played on the instrument.* But, it may be asked, if a tune were improvised on an instrument, would that not be a case of the ear getting the tune from the instrument? By no means. Though a multitude of ears might hear it, it could only be an instrumental solo, no one knowing the tune but the performer, from whose soul comes the tune, and not from the instrument. If it could be said of musical instruments, as it can be of musical notes, that their use results in nothing but singing, there would be nothing wrong in using them, for we are commanded to sing; but their use produces another kind of music which we are not only not commanded to have, but which the Lord excluded from Christian worship. (Pages 27-29.)

And we here add that "the Lord excluded from Christian worship" instrumental music in precisely the same way in which, and at precisely the time when, he excluded infant membership and the burning of incense—namely,



in the way and at the time he left them out of, or did not incorporate them in, the new worship under Christ.

16. Our brother's concluding indictment is in these words: "But Brother Kurfees objects at this point: 'When the instrument is used to aid the ear, something more than aiding the ear is done—instrumental music is made, which, in this specific connection, the Lord has implicitly forbidden.' Where did he forbid it? Nowhere, as every one, that has read the New Testament, knows; if Brother Kurfees could not find it, it is useless for any one else to look; and for him to make such a statement as the above without giving chapter and verse for same is bold dogmatism, if not presumptuous sin."

But "Brother Kurfees," it so happens, "could" and *did* "find it;" and he will now furnish Brother Cowden and others the proof. First of all, it is a Bible fact that, when God selects and designates to be used for a given purpose one species out of a number of coördinate species in a given line of things, he thereby excludes or "implicitly forbids" the use of all the other species for that purpose in that line. For example, the term "quadruped," denoting a genus, comprises all species of animals having four feet, such as the cow, horse, sheep, deer, hog, and dog. Now, when God in ancient times entered this line of coördinate species of quadrupeds and instructed his people to bring one of the species—for example, a cow—and offer it in sacrifice, he thereby implicitly forbade bringing for that purpose the sheep, deer, horse, hog, or any other one of the numerous coördinate species; and, in such a case, if "Brother Kurfees" had been there and some one had brought a sheep, a hog, a horse, he would have promptly entered an objection "at this point," and said, "In this specific connection the Lord has implicitly forbidden" the sheep, hog, and horse; but if Brother Cowden had been there, of course he would just as promptly have asked, "Where did he forbid it?" and, no doubt, with



equal promptness in that case as in this one, he would have answered his own question by saying, "Nowhere, as every one, that has read" the record of God's commands, "knows;" and so he would have proceeded to offer sheep, and horses, and hogs, and dogs, and any other species of quadruped *ad libitum* in sacrifice! If not, why not? This is identically the course which Brother Cowden says we may pursue touching the music to be made in God's worship. The term "music," denoting a genus, comprises two coördinate species of music—namely, vocal and instrumental; but God, in appointing music to be made in Christian worship, entered this line of coördinate species of music and selected one species—namely, vocal music; and when we attempt, in obedience to this appointment of God, to make music in Christian worship, we should, of course, make the species which he appointed; and if some one attempts to bring another species, of course "Brother Kurfees," if he proposes to be loyal to God's expressed will, is certain to "object at this point" and to say: "In this specific connection the Lord has implicitly forbidden" it. Is it not right to enter such an objection at such a time? If not, why not? But the man who, when God specifically commands the offering of a cow in sacrifice, would so far ignore God's specific command as to offer a sheep, a horse, a hog, or a dog, will also, when God commands the making of one species of music in worship, make another species, *if he wants to!* Why not? The principle involved in both cases is precisely the same.

Finally, the numerous fallacies inadvertently perpetrated in the tract which we have now reviewed, together with the biblical facts adduced in their exposure, vividly illustrate the only infallibly safe course in religion. Tersely expressed in clear and concise terms, that course is to speak only *what, when, where, and as God has spoken* in any realm of things in which he has spoken at all. And it is an incontestable fact that, so long as religious leaders follow this course, it is impossible for them either



to go wrong themselves or to lead others to go wrong. Then, why not follow it? Why take chances where there is certainty? On the hypothesis that the word of God is to be our standard and guide in religion, this is the one and only conclusion that will stand the final and crucial test of both reason and revelation.

---

### BROTHER BRINEY'S FRIENDLY CRITICISM.

Pewee Valley, Ky., March 16, 1917.—My Dear Brother Kurfees: I neither desire nor intend to interfere with your review of Brother Cowden's tract on instrumental music; but as you make mention of me personally in the fifth installment of your review (to which I make no objection whatever), I think it but fair and just that I be heard by the readers of the Gospel Advocate upon the matters with which you connect my name; and knowing you as I do, I refuse to entertain for a moment the thought that you will deny me this privilege.

You think that I was unfortunate in framing the question I propounded to Professor Riddle, and I doubt not that this is your honest opinion; but my opinion is that I was fortunate and happy in the construction of my question. I was reviewing your book on instrumental music, and I carefully framed my question to suit the issue you raise and discuss in that volume; and that issue is that "psallo" in the course of its history underwent various modifications and changes of meaning, and that by the time it reached the apostolic age it had dropped out of its meaning all association with instruments of music, and was not used to indicate music that might be accompanied with an instrument. In other words, you claim that in its use in New Testament times it precludes the use of an instrument, and that one cannot use an instrument in connection with *psalloing* without transgressing the command (if command it be) to sing or *psallein*. This is the issue that I was investigating, and hence the strict legitimacy of my question. I did not ask whether "psallo" included the use of an instrument in its meaning in New



Testament times, for I never believed that. I believe with Professor Ropes, of Harvard University, and scholars generally, that "the term, in the New Testament use, has substantially the meaning of our word 'sing,' which is used of vocal music both with and without accompaniment."

You present what I take to be an extract from a letter written by Professor Riddle, and say: "Now, will Brother Cowden and Brother Briney ponder that letter?" I beg to assure you, my dear brother, that I have been pondering the substance of that letter for many years, and it is to be regretted, let me kindly suggest, that you did not ponder it more carefully and logically before publishing what you say about it. There is nothing in that letter to modify or change in any way Professor Riddle's letter to me. In his letter to you he says: "Hence, the New Testament does *not necessarily* include the accompaniment of instrumental music." (I suppose the italics are his.) Now, that is exactly what I have believed and advocated for years. Mark you well that this distinguished scholar says that "psallo" as used in the New Testament does "not *necessarily* include accompaniment," and that implies that it *may* include it, which makes the case much stronger against you. According to the Professor's necessary implication, it may, and it may not, include accompaniment; and if it may include it, he who opposes it *may* be fighting against God. Ponder this well and prayerfully, my brother, I entreat you.

But Professor Riddle says "the matter is left in doubt by the New Testament usage," and by implication you mildly censure me for defending a thing that is in doubt. But what is in doubt, pray? If you will "ponder that letter" a little more carefully, you will discover that it is the answer that he gives to *your* question, and not the answer he gives to mine. In answer to your question he says that "the New Testament does *not necessarily* include the accompaniment," and immediately adds: "I regret that I cannot give a more definite reply, but the matter is left in doubt by the New Testament usage." Now, it is perfectly



obvious that "the matter" that "is left in doubt" is the matter of the Professor's indefinite reply to you, and that is that "the New Testament does *not necessarily* include the accompaniment of instrumental music." That a man with your keenness of perception should have overlooked this plain meaning of language is marvelous to me.

Professor Riddle does not accompany his reply to my question with any doubt whatever. In the question, "Does 'psallo' in its New Testament use preclude the use of an instrument?" the answer rings out loud and clear, "My opinion is that the word does *not* preclude the use of an instrument;" and in this opinion he is supported by Ropes, Hodge, Bacon, Dwight, and every other world-renowned scholar who has spoken on the subject, so far as my knowledge goes. Brother Kurfees, please name one scholar—*just one*—who is entitled to be ranked with those just named, who says that the New Testament use of "psallo" precludes or disallows the use of instrumental accompaniment. Timothy Dwight, that Nestor of American scholars, says: "The use of such an instrument is regarded, I think, by scholars, as altogether probable." Notice that this high authority does not say some scholars, nor even most scholars, but "scholars" without limitation.

You say with emphasis, as if it had some bearing on the issue at stake, that "not one of these Greek professors and translators, quoted by Brother Briney and requoted by Brother Cowden, *dares to say, and does not say, that 'psallo' in the New Testament means to 'play on an instrument.'*" I would kindly suggest that that is not the issue at all, for nobody claims that the word means "to play on an instrument." The contention is, in the language of Professor Ropes, that "the term in the New Testament use has substantially the meaning of our word 'sing,' which is used of vocal music both with and without accompaniment." Keep the real issue in sight, and argue with reference to that, and thus avoid confusion.

With continued esteem and cordiality, I remain,

Fraternally yours,

J. B. BRINEY.



### BROTHER KURFEES' REPLY.

Notwithstanding Brother Briney's name was only incidentally mentioned, and only in that way because Brother Cowden had mentioned it and quoted from him, yet we are glad to give him this hearing before our readers, and the more so because it not only furnishes an opportunity to expose in strong hands the fallacies involved, but it brings before the public *an important admission from Brother Briney*; and hence, on receipt of his article, accompanied by the information that he had sent a copy of it to Brother Cowden, we promptly wrote him as follows:

Certainly, I will gladly publish your letter in the Gospel Advocate. However, I insist that, in case he gives it any further publication than we accord it in the Advocate, you see to it that he shall give the same publication to my reply. . . . I am not only willing for you to "be heard by the readers of the Advocate upon the matters with which" I "connect" your "name," but I am glad of the opportunity to further expose the fallacy at this point in the Cowden contention and which is substantially repeated by you; but I insist that such further exposure of it shall also have any additional publicity that may be given your letter.

We now give attention to our esteemed brother's communication, in which he is not only wrong on the facts of philology, but he misstates the issue raised in our book, and attributes to us an entirely different issue which we have at least never intended to raise. Of course, we assume and fully believe that he did not intend any such misstatement; and the astonishing thing is that a writer with his well-known, logical acumen did not see the blunder contained in his words. We invite careful and critical attention to his leading statements.

1. Concerning our objection to the way he framed his question to Professor Riddle, which objection we still insist is based upon correct principles of philology and the true course in seeking the meaning of words, he says:

I was reviewing your book on instrumental music, and I carefully framed my question to suit the issue you raise and discuss in that volume; and that issue is that "psallo"



in the course of its history underwent various modifications and changes of meaning, and that by the time it reached the apostolic age it had dropped out of its meaning all association with instruments of music, and was not used to indicate music that might be accompanied with an instrument.

No, no, dear brother, we make no such point as that. It is true that our book does, indeed, "raise and discuss" the issue "that 'psallo' in the course of its history underwent various modifications and changes of meaning, and that by the time it reached the apostolic age it had dropped out of its meaning" *the meaning to "play on an instrument;"* but we *do not* "raise and discuss in that volume," nor anywhere else, that "psallo" "was not used to indicate music that might be accompanied with an instrument." On the contrary, we know that "psallo," in the New Testament, just as "sing" in modern English, *does* "indicate music that" *may* "be accompanied with an instrument." It also "indicates music that" *may* "be accompanied with" dancing, too, or with anything else, for that matter, with which anybody may wish to accompany it. *Why not?* The word "psallo," in the New Testament, means to sing or make vocal music, and that, according to the very highest lexical authority, is all that it does mean in that volume; but, of course, it "might be accompanied with an instrument," or with anything else, but such accompaniment *is not in the word*. If, therefore, any such other thing be dragged in, it must come from some other source than "psallo."

2. He says: "You claim that in its use in New Testament times it precludes the use of an instrument." That depends altogether on what he means by "precludes," and here is precisely where his fallacy lurks. We claim, and base the claim on the very highest lexical authority in existence, that "playing an instrument" is not *in the word* "psallo"—*is no part of its meaning*—and that, therefore, doing such an act is doing *nothing* that "psallo" tells men to do, just as sprinkling water is doing *nothing* that "baptizo" tells them to do. If he means that whatever



is not *in* a word's meaning—that is, does not belong to the word at all—is “precluded” from usage *so far as that word is concerned*, then, all right, “psallo” does, in this sense, “preclude” playing instruments. Immersing a man is doing what “baptizo” expresses, but that would not “preclude” sprinkling water on him if he chose to have it done; but the latter act would not be doing what is in the word, or what the word says do, just as playing an instrument is not doing what is in the word “psallo,” or what the word says do.

3. He says we claim “that one cannot use an instrument in connection with *psalloing* without transgressing the command (if command it be) to sing or *psallein*.” Wrong again, dear brother. We make no such claim as “that one cannot use an instrument . . . without transgressing the command to sing or *psallein*.” We simply claim that *using an instrument* is not obeying the command that is in “psallo.” “Psallo” means to *sing*, and singing is not *playing an instrument*. Playing instruments is no more a transgression of “the command to sing or *psallein*” than it is a transgression of the command to “love one another.” Playing instruments is not *in* the command to “love one another,” and neither is it *in* “the command to sing or *psallein*.”

4. Now, listen to this: “I did not ask whether ‘psallo’ included the use of an instrument in its meaning in New Testament times, for I never believed that.” There now, we have it in “black and white.” Thanks to Brother Briney for this candid, most vital, and far-reaching admission. The fact is, if he is correct in this position, of which we have not the shadow of a doubt, because he is backed in it by the highest lexical authority and by all philology bearing on the question, then it forever settles the question, and it settles it with the inexorable force of fact and logic against Brother Briney's position. If “psallo,” as he has now candidly admitted, does not “include the use of an instrument,” then, of course, “the use of an instrument” is not in the word, and whoever goes to “psallo” in search of support for such use goes in vain. And this



admission takes forever out of his hands any further consistent appeal to "psallo" in support of his practice. He may argue for it on some other ground, but never again can he consistently argue for it from "psallo." He says *it is not in the word*, and we say, Amen and amen!

5. It is astonishing how wide of the mark our brother hits in handling the language of Professor Riddle. We take pleasure in assuring him that we did "ponder" both "carefully and logically" what the Professor says "before publishing what" we "say about it;" and we have no doubt but that the learned Professor, speaking from the theologian's point of view, did the very best he could to help his fellow advocate of instrumental music in the worship; but, fortunately, we have on record his decision as a scholar, and it sustains, with all the force and ability which great learning can command, our contention that, although "psallo" originally "is derived from the notion of thrumming on a stringed instrument," yet, at the opening of the New Testament period, "this etymological sense passes over to that of singing praises to God."

6. But our brother says: "According to the Professor's necessary implication, it may, and it may not, include accompaniment; and if it may include it, he who opposes it *may* be fighting against God." But hold, dear brother, till we look at all the facts in "the Professor's necessary implication." If God has used a word with one meaning so clear and unmistakable that all the world, both the learned and the unlearned, can see it, and are, therefore, all a unit upon it, but with another meaning which not only the unlearned cannot know, but which even the most learned, such as Professor Riddle, by the diligent application of all their powers of research, cannot dig up and bring to light, and which, as he candidly confesses, is "left in doubt," and which, therefore, they *cannot know*, surely he will not hold them responsible for not practicing such an unknown and undiscoverable meaning! Whereas, to undertake, in such a case, to practice the supposed, but undiscoverable meaning, is to run the risk of doing a thing as obedience to God which never once entered his



mind, or which he has nowhere expressed to the comprehension of his creatures.

7. But he asks: "What is in doubt, pray? . . . It is the answer that he gives to *your* question, and not the answer he gives to mine." Exactly so; but this not only leaves our brother's position without support, but it indicates still further that there is no support for it. Let us see. There is a vast difference between *omitting* to do and *doing* a thing "left in doubt by the New Testament usage." Those who omit it are justified in assuming that, if the matter "in doubt" were something to be done, the infinite God could have used a word that would make the fact known; but those who do the thing not only cannot know what it is God's will, but they take the risk of committing presumptuous sin. Hence, to the full extent that the two positions here parry each other, the advantage is decidedly with those who omit the doubtful practice.

8. He calls for "one scholar—*just one*—who is entitled to be ranked with those just named, who says that the New Testament use of 'psallo' precludes or disallows the use of instrumental accompaniment." We answer the very misleading but well-concealed fallacy in this demand by saying that the same scholars—for example, Thayer and Sophocles—who say "that the New Testament use of "baptizo" "precludes or disallows the use of" *sprinkling or pouring*, say, in the identically same way, "that the New Testament use of 'psallo' precludes or disallows the use of instrumental accompaniment"—that is, by giving, in the one case, a definition which *leaves out* sprinkling and pouring, and, in the other, a definition which *leaves out* "instrumental accompaniment." In the case of both these words, and of all other words, for that matter, as every schoolboy ought speedily to learn, when we have the correct definition of a word—the "compass and extent" of its meaning—anything and everything not included in that definition is, *so far as authorization by that word is concerned*, "precluded or disallowed."

9. Replying to our statement that "not one of these Greek professors and translators, quoted by Brother Briney



and requoted by Brother Cowden, *dares to say, and does not say, that 'psallo' in the New Testament means to 'play on an instrument,'*" he says: "I would kindly suggest that that is not the issue at all, for nobody claims that the word means 'to play on an instrument.'" We "would kindly suggest that" Brother Briney is behind the times, and "that that is" *the one leading issue in this discussion.* We are sorry he seems to have read to so little purpose the Cowden tract and our review of it. The author of the tract distinctly and positively takes the position, and argues it with all the force he has, that, in the Old Testament, "psallo" meant to praise Jehovah "with the psaltery," and "with the harp," and to "sing praises unto him" with the "psaltery of ten strings," and other instruments, and that it has "the same meaning in the New Testament;" and he even quotes Professor Lockhart in support of this position.

10. Finally, of course we can have "vocal music both with and without accompaniment," but that by no means proves that the word *sing* has yet come to mean both vocal and instrumental music. "Sing" still means "to utter musical or melodious sounds," and this is what "psallo" means in the New Testament, the former being a correct translation of the latter; but if the time ever comes—and as a philological conjecture, based on current practice and the inevitable changes to which English and all other languages are subject in the course of their history, we shall not be surprised if it does come—when the English word "sing," like "psallo" in the Septuagint, will mean instrumental as well as vocal music, thus presenting, in its historical development, the same changes observable in the history of "psallo," though in the reverse order—if that time ever comes, then "sing" will cease to be a correct translation of the New Testament "psallo," and another English word, with the meaning that sing now has and has had for several hundred years, will have to be used in its translation into English.