

Scriptural Silence Sometimes Forbids

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Those who divided the church over a century ago by forcing in the missionary society and the instrument had to deny the significance of Scriptural silence concerning both innovations. Now some of our brethren are carelessly doing the same thing in a move for union with the Independent Christian Church (ICC). We expect those in the ICC to try to negate the force of Scriptural silence, but we **do not** expect our own brethren to surrender it as casually as some are.

"Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," more than any other one principle of Biblical interpretation, has been responsible for the restoration and maintenance of New Testament Christianity. Through the same "breach in the dam" of Scriptural authority that was made for instrumental music (because "the Bible doesn't forbid it"), others have brought in countless other innovations (burning incense, counting beads, using milk and cornbread on the Lord's table, et al.). These folk are wrong about the use of instruments in worship and similar innovations. What they mean is, "The Bible doesn't **explicitly** forbid instrumental music in worship." They refuse to admit the fact that the Bible **implicitly** forbids things by its mere silence concerning them. It would be interesting to hear a debate between an it's-not-condemned-in-the-Bible instrumentalist of the ICC and an ICC man who contends for milk and cornbread on the Lord's table.

Respect for the silence of Scripture, involving the "law of inclusion and exclusion," is rooted in Scripture itself. Simply put, when God specifies what He wants man to do or how He wants man to do a certain thing, He simultaneously **includes** what He wants and **implicitly excludes** (i.e., forbids) every other thing in that class. We naturally and unconsciously use this principle every day.

When a song leader says, "Please turn to number 100," he implicitly **excludes** every other song by **including** the song specified. (Does anyone ever reason, "He didn't say **not** to sing number 200, which I like better, so I will sing it"?) Noah respected this principle, using only gopher wood in building the ark. Although there was no **explicit**

prohibition of other woods, Noah obviously understood the **implicit** prohibition (Gen. 6:14, 22). Nadab and Abihu did not respect God's silence and God consumed them for offering "strange fire," not because it was **explicitly forbidden**, but because it was fire "...which he [God] **commanded them not**" (Lev. 10:1, emp. DM). That fire was "strange" (and prohibited) simply because God was silent about its use.

Inspired men of the first century understood and applied this principle. There was **no authority** to bind circumcision on Christians because inspired men were silent concerning it (Acts 15:24). God excluded/prohibited any angel from being His Son or reigning at His right hand by His silence concerning any such position for them (Heb. 1:5, 13). The Christ could not be a priest in Israel (Heb. 8:4), because He was of Judah, "...as to which tribe Moses **spake nothing** [emp., DM] concerning priests" (Heb. 7:14). If inspired writers used this principle to interpret Scripture, then so must we. The Lord's people greatly need a strong renewal of emphasis on the validity of this principle.

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