

“No Authority Needed”

Dub McClish

In the 1988 debate between Alan Highers and Given O. Blakely of the Independent Christian Church, Mr. Blakely attempted to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship by arguing that no authority is needed. He based his argument on at least three assertions:

1. The New Testament is not law and does not contain law.
2. It is not what the person does that is accepted or rejected by God, but the person himself who is accepted or rejected; if the **person** himself is accepted then what he does in worship **cannot** be incorrect or wrong.
3. The apostles gave no regulations or directions for worship nor did they ever “arraign” believers for worshiping wrongly.

Those who thus argue obviously concede (by implication) that no Scriptural authority exists for their use of instruments in worship. Since advocates of instruments have utterly failed to establish any authorization for their practice for a century and a half, they are left with no argument but the denial that authorization is needed. Of course, the ramifications of this argument are many and disastrous beyond belief, reaching infinitely further than the use of instruments.

Let us briefly consider each of these three assertions underlying the "no- authority-needed" contention. Does the New Testament contain law and is it law? Most certainly. It is the "perfect law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25; 2:12). It is "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). We must fulfill "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Paul was "under law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). There could hardly be a more anti-Biblical doctrine than denial that the New Testament is/contains law. This assertion is unmitigated antinomianism.

Is "personal acceptance" by God a "blank check" from Him to do whatever one desires to do as an act of worship? While no man can be acceptable to God apart from the blood of Christ, it is no less true that acceptance by God depends upon man's behavior, his actions, including what he does in worship. Cain was “personally accepted” by God at the time he brought his offering. However, God rejected his worship (Gen. 4:5), with the admonition that had he done well (what God required) God would have accepted him. God rejected him because his offering (worship) was sinful (v. 7). Those whom God accepts are the ones who fear God and work

righteousness (Acts 10:35). Righteousness is determined by what the law of Christ teaches (Heb. 5:13).

The Corinthians were accepted by God, but this did not make their abuse of the Lord's supper acceptable (1 Cor. 11:20–22). This episode provides an example of apostolic "arraignment" of the Corinthians by Paul for worshiping incorrectly. It also gives us an example of regulatory teaching concerning what we do in worship (the Lord's supper). On what basis does one conclude this principle does not apply to other acts of New Testament worship, including the kind of music the Lord ordained in His church (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)?

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, August 12, 2012, of which I was editor.]

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