

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Let's Exchange Bibles???

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Many hope that this summer's gathering of members of "a cappella" churches of Christ with members of the Christian Church will correct a hundred years of division over the issue of using mechanical instruments of music in worship. The North American Christian Convention was held in Louisville, Kentucky. This convention of the Christian Church invited such preachers as Jeff Walling, a preacher of the Providence Road Church of Christ in Charlotte, North Carolina, to address the convention in attempt to open doors.

One of the friendly gestures manifested at the convention was Jeff Walling exchanging his Bible with Dave Stone, a preacher for the Christian Church. "I want to tell you tonight, you are my brother," Walling told Stone. Stone said, "The great thing about these Bibles is that they are exactly the same. They are the same translation. They are God's word." Walling then challenged the 6,000 to go home and do the same. To some it was "an emotional display of love and acceptance". While acceptance was no doubt generated in this convention, the solution to the division

will never be found in exchanging Bibles. We have always acknowledged that we have the same Word. It is our attitude toward authority that must be addressed. We must manifest the attitude that God demands of us towards His word before true unity in Christ can be seen .

Doing only what is authorized in Scripture is the principle behind "a capella" singing as practiced in the churches of the New Testament. One can point to passages in the New Testament that clearly authorize the kind of music God wants in worship. "Singing with grace in your hearts unto God" is the clear directive (*Colossians 3:16*). "...making melody with your heart" accompanies the singing, not a mechanical instrument of music (*Ephesians 5:19*). No one believes that singing is error, for it is clearly authorized. We can be unified by only singing.

Doing that which is not expressly condemned is the principle behind Denominational practices of using mechanical instruments of music in worship This is necessary because one has no New Testament passage showing that such instruments were used in

the worship of the Lord's church; nor do they have passages authorizing the practice.

To serve God with the attitude that we can do that which God has not expressly condemned , instead of that which He authorizes has led more than one person in the Bible to ruin. Uzziah was struck with life long leprosy for going "into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense..." (2 Chronicles 26:16,19, 21). He learned that such work "pertaineth not to thee...but to the priests" (2 Chronicles 26:18). God authorized the priests to burn incense. Uzziah could not say, "God you did not tell me that I couldn't," and escape his punishment of leprosy. Saul "forced himself to offer sacrifices" instead of waiting for Samuel as authorized. He could not say, "God you did not tell me that I couldn't," and escape the forfeiting of his Kingship. (I Samuel 10:8, 13:8-14).

In worship we all can agree that God authorizes singing. Unity in the faith can be achieved when we are satisfied with doing only what God authorizes. Exchanging Bibles will not do it. Changing attitudes towards God's Word is the only way to unity.