

March 2019

From: Walter Ziffer two letters, two issues of Respond enclosed (11/62, 1/63)

Walter Ziffer

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504 East Yeasting Street
Gibsonburg, Ohio
October 22, 1962

Mr. John Allen Chalk, Minister
Broad Street Church of Christ
155 East Broad Street
Cookeville, Tennessee

Dear Mr. Chalk:

It was a pleasant surprise to hear from you. We also remember you from our visit to us quite well.

Yes, Nelson, A.M.II, and Mrs. A.M.Burton, Sr. are good friends of ours. In fact it was Mrs. A.M.Burton's daughter, Mrs. Otis Grant, who worships with the Hillsboron congregation in Nashville, that was largely responsible for my affiliation with the Church of Christ church. And so I am greatly thankful to this family for all that they have done for me and my wife.

Now let me say just a few words about my "highly critical attitude" toward the Churches of Christ. Really, to be frank, I am no more critical of the Church of Christ church than I am of my present own denomination, the Disciples of Christ. As you so appropriately state in your letter: the church must be examined critically, always with a view of improvement. This is precisely what we have been doing. This is why we are in the ministry; this is why I am at Graduate School. We are trying, as conscientious Christians, to reform and to purify the church of Jesus Christ. We are doing this, we think, in a humble spirit, always praying for God's guidance.

Since our earlier years were spent in the Church of Christ church in the South it is only natural that we have been examining and studying that denomination with more interest than those others with which we are not as familiar. In the course of this study we have found that several claims which this denomination makes are fallacious. Some of these are, their stress on non-instrumental music in worship, their resistance to and condemnation of the Disciples' Missionary Society, their claim to be THE ONLY CHURCH when in truth they are nothing but another denomination, - and most of all, the legalism and worksrighteousness that goes straight against the preaching and teaching of Jesus and St. Paul.

We have also come to the realization that the so called Restoration Ideal has outgrown itself. It is, in fact today, an anachronism. It is neither constructive nor scriptural. The church of Jesus Christ needs not to be restored. It has always been and will always be perfect. In support of this statement many Scripture quotations could be quoted here. WHAT NEEDS TO BE RESTORED IS M A N who has wandered far away from his God. The image

of the Almighty has been obliterated in man by man. This is the tragedy. And let me say here that this image cannot be restored by so called "Scriptural worship" or by "weekly communion" or by the "not wearing of shorts" or by the "refusal to attend mixed swimming pools." The Church of Christ church is concentrating on trivia without getting to the heart of things, i.e. a spiritual re-awakening to the reality and kingship of God.

Let me also state that the true church, as I already stated, has always existed. It consists of those men and women who hold within their bosoms the image of God in Jesus Christ. Such men and women can be found on all continents, regardless of race, ~~x~~ color, or particular Christian denomination. The church of Christ has always been universal and catholic; this is her genius. Anyone who claims that this church is limited to some odd 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ million members of a denomination that CALLS ITSELF the Church of Christ, is in bad need of a re-study of his testaments.

Now Nelson, A.M. II, Mrs. Burton, her daughter, and many other people we know down there are sincere. But they are grossly misinformed. I venture to say that none of them have for themselves studied ~~the~~ Paul's Letter to the Galatians or Romans which contain the gist of the Christian Gospel. Just as our friends the Roman Catholics, who depend on their priest's interpretation, so they also are committed to an interpretation that is as narrow as any fundamentalist's interpretation can be. Such people need to be prayed for, for they have never yet come to grips with the FREE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST. Perhaps a re-study of Luther, hand in hand with a fresh study of Paul's letters, would help!

So you can perhaps see where we stand today; devoted wholeheartedly and enthusiastic about the Biblical faith and its realization today; but rather disinterested in a legalistic reconstruction of 1st century details, commonly called, RESTORATION MOVEMENT.

Our reference line must be Christ - and not Campbell or Stone;
It must be Paul - and not McGarvey and Lipscomb;
It must be the Father of our Lord Jesus - and not any RESTORATION MOVEMENT principles.^v

It will be a pleasure to discuss these matters in more details with you - provided you are interested to do so. In the meantime we have placed you on ~~our~~ the mailing list of our little publication RESPOND which attempts to deal with some of these matters.

Thank you once again for your concern. Give our best regards to your family.

Sincerely
Walter
Walter Ziffer

504 East Yeasting Street
Gibsonburg, Ohio
October 22, 1962

Dear Friends:

We are genuinely sorry that RESPOND, issue No. 3 on the subject of Church Music, has been delayed. The delay has been due to a case of pneumonia with which Walter came down about four weeks ago. Hospitalization became necessary. Needless to say, much of the work for issue No. 3 could not be done. We hope, the Lord willing, to send you this important issue toward the end of next month.

The response to RESPOND has been picking up. Several letters from interested parties were received. This is heartening. Some of these notes implied among other things that the publication is written from the Christian Church viewpoint. This needs correction and clarification, we think. By the very nature of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which we serve at the present, no single person can ever express that church's viewpoint since no such viewpoint exists. Each congregation is completely autonomous and never subject to any official doctrine, creed or belief. Thus each individual member of the Christian Church tries (or shall we say, should try) his best to understand the Scriptures to the best of his ability, always praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this all important enterprise. By the same token then RESPOND is a pamphlet issued by the Ziffers personally with no connection whatsoever to the Christian Church. We attempt to communicate to you the truths of the Christian faith as WE see them. This we do hoping and praying that God has and will enlighten our hearts and minds, ever leading us to a better understanding of Him..... Thus if you find that we disagree with someone of the Christian Church who perhaps at one time or another in the past debated with a member of the Church of Christ church upon a specific issue, do not be surprised. That man, no more than we, could ever represent an "official" viewpoint of the Christian Church. There simply is no such thing in spite of the fact that you may have heard slanderous remarks about the International Convention of Christian Churches or the United Christian Missionary Society and how these organizations wield dictatorial powers over congregations. The truth is that these are co-operative agencies; they do not and will not coerce. In fact they have no power to do so !

We have at the present time fifty people on our mailing list. If you know someone who might be interested to receive RESPOND please let us know. We will try to comply with your request as fast as possible. Back-copies can be sent only upon special request. Any reaction to our publication will be appreciated as long as it is to the point and constructive. Do not hesitate to write !

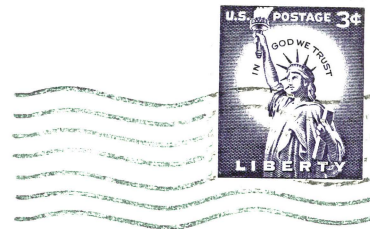
One more note of personal character. Walter is back home again, feels much better and hopes to resume his full time work toward the end of October. Your prayers for his speedy and complete recovery will be appreciated.

May the Lord bless you and watch over you !

Sincerely

the Ziffers

*zipper
Gibsonburg, Ohio*



*Mr. John A. Chalk, Minister
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155 E. Broadstreet
Cookeville, Tenn.*

RESPOND

November 1962

Published by the Ziffers, Gibsonburg, Ohio NO.3

Music in the church (3)

Issues NO.1 and 2 of RESPOND demonstrated that the argument against instrumental music in worship is an argument from silence. The Scriptures do NOT make it clear whether or not Instruments were used in the early church; deduction, speculation and rationalizing are the tools used by those who would see in the New Testament a clear plan and command for the non-instrumental form of worship.

It is clear that on the basis of the Bible alone we cannot describe the detailed form of worship of the early Christians. From a survey of the environment in which early Christianity moved we can arrive at some useful information on this matter.

It appears from the majority of the sources (there are some who dissent from this general pattern) that, indeed, the main strand of early Christianity did not use instrumental music. The reason for this cannot be found in any direct revelation from God but instead in a series of reactions of the Christians toward the pagan atmosphere in the midst of which they lived. Also the fact that the early church inherited the form of the Jewish synagogue worship nearly in its entirety had a tremendous influence upon the church's behaviour. Since the synagogue, from the time of the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70 onwards, did not use instrumental music, it was quite natural for the church to inherit the non-instrumental tradition right along with other features of worship.

It would be presumptuous to attempt to discuss all these factors in detail (with original sources quoted) in this small publication. By the same token it is not advisable to spoon-feed to our readers a certain portion of this study in successive issues of RESPOND. The only alternative is to present in this paper the core of the argument only. Those of our readers who will be interested in the whole study consisting of approx. forty pages are invited to request it. We will be happy, sometimes in January, to send it to you.

CHRISTIAN REACTION # 1 - THE PERSECUTIONS

The earliest large scale persecution of Christians took place under emperor Nero of Rome in A.D.63. This persecution was caused by the conflagration of the city of Rome. The fire, which destroyed three fourths of the city, was blamed upon the Christians. In large-scale manhunts Christians were apprehended and severely punished. The punishment consisted of death in the arena. Some were crucified; some were thrown into the

mal skins, and then hunted as wild animals; others were devoured by wild beasts; others still served as human torches, wrapped up, covered with pitch and lit up. It is significant that these atrocious tortures were committed to the strains of music - INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC. It is well known that the organ (hydraulus) provided this music. Hence at this point we have our first clue to the Christians' antagonism toward instrumental music. Historians of that period tell us that many Christians during those tragic days hid in the catacombs of Rome. It is almost inconceivable to imagine people, pursued by their enemies, running for life, burdening themselves down with musical instruments. And so here we have a secondary clue.

CHRISTIAN REACTION # 2 - PAGAN MUSIC

a) Sacrifices : When Jew and Christian alike no longer even thought of sacrificing animals to God, the Romans did so daily. Not only did they sacrifice to their many gods - but they did so also to their emperors. The rituals were of a highly repulsive nature. A constant accessory to animal sacrifice in Rome was the playing of INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, notably the flute. The dying animal's groans would mingle with the sensuous tunes of the flute; and all this would accompany the terrible spectacle of the death throes of scores of animals. A favorite ritual was that of sacrificing a pregnant cow, the foetus of which was torn from the animal, and to the strains of INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC (the flute) burned on the altar.

b) Mystery Religions: The mystery religions of the East were imported to Rome approximately three centuries before the Christian era. The cultus involved esoteric rites of initiation in which music played an important part. The historian Livy gives us the following description of a typical initiation: " They would lead him (the initiate) to a place which would ring with howls and the song of a choir and the beating of CYMBALS AND DRUMS, that the voice of the sufferer, when his virtue was violently attacked, might not be heard... By the accompaniment of LYRE and FLUTE, men would engage in lustful practices with men, and women with women."

c) The Circus: This great Roman pastime began with a procession from the Capitol to the area of the Circus. The head of the procession was formed by a band of MUSICIANS. With their straight Roman trumpets they excited the bystanders. What followed in the arena is well known. Gladiatorial combats, the slaughtering of hundreds of animals, the so called NAUMACHIAE or sea fights where ships appeared in the flooded arena, manned by prisoners of

and criminals, who would then fight one another until the water in the arena had turned red of the shed blood. Only few people survived. And all this TO THE SOUND OF MUSIC !

d) The Theatre : This was a "cultural" enjoyment. It consisted of pantomimic dances primarily. The dances were of a lewd nature. There was bending and twisting; there were exotic exhibitions put on by men and women. MUSIC formed the accompaniment to these dances. The Church Fathers violently attacked the Theatre with its degrading and demoralizing effects. Chrysostom called the theatre "the habitation of pestilence, the gymnasium of license, the school of profligacy." Sensuous sex was the main exhibit; men and women alike sat in the audience fascinated. The necessary corollaries to these performances were adultery, fornication and violence. In their denunciations of the Theatre, the Fathers mention instruments such as the flute, the psaltery, the pipes, etc...

The main accusation against instrumental music was leveled at the instrument's tone's ability to seduce man. Instrumental music was capable to arouse man's passion. But also women were told not to sing in worship; the voice of a woman was considered to arouse likewise the passion of the worshipping men, according to the Fathers.... Here then we find several new clues to the problem.

CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE - The Synagogue

It is universally agreed today that the early Christian church, its organization and worship pattern, was fashioned quite closely after the structure of the Jewish synagogue. This is not to deny any originality to the church ! What were some of the features inherited by the church ? The early Christian "matins" - were based on the three daily recitations of the SHEMA prayer; the minister's benediction - on the priestly benediction; the repetition of the Lord's Prayer - on the repetition of certain Jewish fixed prayers; the responsive reading - on the antiphonal reading of the synagogue; the reading from Gospel and Epistle - on the reading of the Law and the Prophets; the Christian lectionary - on a division of Scripture into pericopes in Judaism; the offering - on the weekly collection of alms. The AMEN was taken over; baptism can be paralleled with Jewish proselyte baptism; the baptistry is the equivalent of the MIKVAH; the Christian pulpit is the Jewish BEMAH; the Holy Kiss of the N.T. is the same kiss practiced by the rabbis and their disciples, etc. THERE WAS NO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE SYNAGOGUE ! Such music was forbidden for several reasons; since the destruction of the temple it had been forbidden as a sign of permanent mourning for this institution. Secondly, it was forbidden because of the commandment of Sabbath rest. Thirdly, it was a conscious reaction to the same paganism which we described above. Both religions were monotheistic and so were equally repulsed by pagan ritual. Even the attitude toward women in worship was the same. The same motive can

be found in the writings of the rabbis. Thus it is no wonder that the early church, in inheriting practically all her worship forms from Judaism, took the non-instrumental custom over with all these.

AESTHETIC CONSIDERATION

The idea of aesthetic beauty was totally unknown in those days among Jews and Christians alike. To the Bible the idea of pure aesthetics is equally unknown. Beauty in the Biblical sense is always related to morals and ethics. The Hebrew word TOB (good) means morally good. The Hebrew word NA'IM (beautiful) carries with it the connotation of "pleasant, agreeable, and morally good." Purely aesthetic prettiness or beauty is actually condemned in the Old Testament. In Proverbs 31:30 we read, "Favor is deceitful and beauty (YOFI, sensual prettiness) is vain." In Hebrew thought there is no definite distinction between beauty and ugliness; there is but one distinction, that of holiness versus profanity. The Jews of the New Testament era had ascetic tendencies. The Pharisees, and in more radical form the Essenes, were wholly preoccupied with fulfilling the "letter" of the Law. Beauty, whether this be painting, sculpture or music, left them absolutely cold. Need we any better proof for this than the fact that nowhere in the New Testament can we find a description of the physical features of a man or woman. Paul of Tarsus was a Pharisee. Thus he had inherited something of this austerity. Since Paul was responsible for the formation of practically all churches in Asia Minor we can safely assume that he carried with him and also communicated to his converts the Pharisaic, austere patterns of worship. To Paul instrumental music was lifeless and soulless - because he was a Pharisee.

SUMMARY

There is little doubt that the main body of churches did not use instruments in worship. The repeated polemics against instrumental music by the Church Fathers point to the fact that some churches DID USE instruments. Otherwise these exhortations would make no sense at all. The Church Fathers' invectives are based on these men's conscious reaction to paganism's misuse of the instrument. The fact that the church inherited most of its forms of worship from the Jewish synagogue is further reason for the former's adoption of the non-instrumental custom.

It remains to be said then that the early church's refusal to use instrumental music was based upon human reactions rather than any explicit revelation from God.

(next time: RESTORATION - and what it should be.)

RESPOND

January 1963 Published by the Ziffers, Gibsonburg, Ohio No. 4

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

How do we recognize the genuine Christian church?

It is the church which Jesus Himself instituted; it is the church which, for almost 2000 years, has perpetuated the Christian faith; it is the church which for many centuries has pointed erring man toward God and salvation. These are some of the unique attributes of an organization (for lack of a better word) which has stood, stands, and will stand firmly, in a crumbling world.

Jesus foresaw this kind of a church when He first envisaged its formation. After Peter's Confession (Matthew 16:15) Jesus turned toward him and predicted the eternal and eternally powerful character of the church. He said, " And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." He then gave the church, through Peter, the so called Keys - the power to bind on earth and to loose on earth as it were bound and loosed by God Himself. The church, in view of all this, is a congregation of Christians who, by the grace of God, stand united in a fellowship which is capable of withstanding the powers of death ! By definition, the church is organically connected to God; it is the very ultimate of all human groups, fellowships and institutions.

How is it possible that this greatest of all fellowships eventually became deprived of its original God-given power ? Is it possible that through the ages deterioration gnawed away at an organization whose center is God ? Is it possible that between the second century A.D. and the nineteenth century A.D. the church ceased to exist - until in the nineteenth century it was once again resurrected by men ?

If we hold to such a view we are clearly contradicting our Lord Jesus. For Jesus, when He established the church, saw this church as a continuing force in the world ahead - a fellowship of human beings whose power was not to be limited or encroached upon by any humans. When in Matthew 28:19 Jesus placed upon the hearts and shoulders of His disciples the Great Commission He concluded, " and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age." The promise is clear: Jesus, the Christ, would remain with His church until a new age, a new order of things, would be ushered in. On the basis of these few Scripture selections alone

one may safely conclude that through the ages, from Jesus till today and beyond, the true church which He Himself established has been existing.

The writer of Hebrews echoes the words of Jesus when he affirms, "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe."

That which God establishes - REMAINS; that which God plans to keep pure - REMAINS PURE. Denying this means ascribing to God all the many weaknesses with which man is limited; denying this means denying the omnipotence of God.

Now it seems that so called Restorationist spokesmen are doing just that. The Church of Christ churches proudly affirm to be constituent parts of the Restoration Movement. By so doing they are suggesting that the church which Christ established has deteriorated and that they (the Restorationists) must take pity on this God-established church and restore it!

Now on the surface the plea for restoration sounds perhaps fairly plausible. In view of Scripture, however, an effort at human restoration of something that is divine is nothing but arrogant appropriation of power which belongs to God only - for a purpose that is fictitious! And the tragedy of the Restoration movement is that so many people are lulled into security - when such security is completely unwarranted and scripturally impossible.

THE CHURCH NEEDS NOT TO BE RESTORED! The church has been here and will continue to be here. It is here for a purpose - that of redeeming mankind by channelling God's love to them. That this kind of a community has always existed, even through the darkest ages of history, no historian in his proper mind would deny. The very existence of the church this day witnesses to its power of perpetuation through calamity, confusion, and persecution. The fact that some of us have experienced the healing power of the church in our own lives is proof enough that the church has existed all along and that it is, even today, permeated with the Spirit of Jesus Christ.....

Restoration, as claimed by the Church of Christ churches, has no justification for existence, It has no real purpose; there is nothing scriptural about it.

That this so called Restoration Movement is a "movement" is equally untrue. The very word "movement", in a religious or social context, suggests that it is something that MOVES

through masses of people; it suggests a new orientation in these people's lives and a common purpose and goal which cuts across all walks of life and human affiliations. "Movements" are never restricted to ONE group! As soon as a movement becomes limited in such a way it automatically ceases to be a movement and becomes a sect or at best a denomination. A good example of this phenomenon is the Protestant Reformation. As long as reformation of the church remained a common goal among people of different walks of life, in different geographical localities, in different social strata, in the whole width and breadth of the Roman Catholic church, the Reformation was a valid "movement." But as soon as this movement hardened, it became exclusivistic and limited. When this happened it could no longer claim the title "movement" but precipitated, as it were, into various religious denominations. Thus we have today no longer a Reformation, but instead groups like Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc.

On the other hand the Temperance Movement has remained a legitimate movement. It cuts across religious groups; trade or professional groups, social strata, etc. It has not become an exclusivistic organization.

The Integration Movement, likewise, remains a real movement wherever people strive for the equality of the races.

The Church of Christ church lists itself in the American religious census. This in itself is proof that it does not merit the title "movement." It is restricted to two million people, approximately, concentrated primarily in one geographical area of this country. The Church of Christ church has separated its people from the main stream of historic Christianity. Does not the church's absence from all efforts to bring about a united Christendom (National Council and World Council of Churches, Ecumenical Conferences, etc.) demonstrate its exclusivistic character?

It is crystal clear that neither Church of Christ church, Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches have remained a movement. They all are sects or denominations, the difference being that some of these groups openly acknowledge this inevitable development, whereas some others stubbornly refuse to see reality.

We hope that from the preceding discussion it will have become evident that the title RESTORATION MOVEMENT holds within it two ideas fallacious and contrary to Scripture.

BUT RESTORATION IS A GOOD WORD IF APPLIED PROPERLY!

It has a very definite place in the vocabulary of the Christian faith.

Restoration is necessary, not for the church, BUT FOR MAN who is a sinner before God.

Needless to say, this cannot be accomplished by the restoration of first century church life, its customs and forms. Much of this early church life is totally irrelevant to today's Christianity. Just as the world changes from century to century so also man's situation in the world changes, so also it becomes necessary that the eternally true message of Christ be constantly re-interpreted, expressed in modern intelligible terms, terms which "speak" to a 20th century man or woman. Of course, man's basic predicament never changes; therefore God's eternal truth, which addresses itself to this predicament, remains always a relevant truth. Its communication must however be adapted to changing world conditions.

Modern church life need not be concerned with the restoration of first century details. Today's Christian church must seek to reach man wherever he might be; confront him in modern terms with Jesus Christ; and thus restore him to a love relationship with God.

The Restoration prattle of the Restorationist leaders never penetrates to the core of the Gospel. It ticks out the motes and swallows the beams. It concentrates upon worksrighteousness and misses the Good News of God's love to all men.

The apostle Paul knew something about true Restoration. Even a hasty perusal through his letters to the Galatians and Romans brings before us his preoccupation with weighty matters of salvation. At no time was he interested in practices and customs and forms; his concern is for the NEW BIRTH - the NEW CREATION which he himself experienced and which any man can experience who gives up selfrighteousness and trust in forms, and instead throws himself upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. The rebirth is the true restoration - the restoration to a blessed relationship with God the Father.

The whole idea of Restoration is foolishness; the church of Christ does not stand in need of any human restoration. It is the figment of the imagination of people who have at best a poor understanding of Scripture and history and little faith in God. The church universal has existed for a long time and it will not only survive but outlast such eccentric approaches; it always has in the past!

God established His church; He is with it even today. Asking for a church better than that is blasphemy.