

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

United Presbyterian Church of North America

CONVENTION

OF

UNITED PRESBYTERIANS

"

OPPOSED TO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD,

HELD IN THE

FOURTH U. P. CHURCH, ALLEGHENY, PA.

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1883.

INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC

NOT AN

INCIDENT OF WORSHIP.

BY REV. JAS. HARPER, D. D.

THE OCCASION OF THIS DISCUSSION.

At its meeting this year (1883) the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America saw fit in the face of strenuous remonstrance, to decide that the use of instrumental music is a mere incident, which, according to option, may or may not be conjoined with singing in divine worship, and that it is one of those circumstances in relation to worship which do not require any specific appointment by God, but are left to be regulated by human taste and sense of propriety.

Against this decision, a protest, numerously signed, was entered and it was placed among the official records of the Assembly. In support of that protest and of others of a kindred nature offered at the previous meeting of the Assembly, and with the desire and hope of rendering them effective and of vindicating what we believe to be the true constitutional position of our church in regard to the matter in dispute, we are at this time convened.

To the charge that we who persevere in combating the policy and principles lately espoused by the Assembly, are factious troublers of Zion, our reply may be, that one of the declarations of our Confession is that synods and councils may err; that it is our settled conviction, that in more particulars than one, our General Assembly has seriously erred in its treatment of the question of instrumental music; that we claim it as our right, and deem it our duty as well, to labor by pen and tongue to convince those who abet the Assembly's action that they are mistaken, and

that the responsibility for the agitation so much to be deplored must rest upon those who have persistently striven to induce the church to repudiate a principle which it not only had received by a venerable tradition but also had deliberately adopted, and who, moreover, have now confessed that, in their view, the matter about which they have made such stir is only an incident so insignificant as to need no Divine appointment, and to be used or dispensed with at pleasure.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION.

Although the attitude assumed by the General Assembly in regard to instrumental music in worship has already, in general terms, been indicated, it is advisable to revert to that point and treat it somewhat more fully.

First, then, the Assembly professes continued adherence to the principle which pervades all our standards, that the only acceptable way of worshipping God is that which he has himself appointed.

Second. It repudiates the view for which so many among us so stoutly contended not long ago, that instrumental music has been appointed by God as an ordinance to be observed in his worship under the present dispensation, and denies that it is an ordinance, or any part of an ordinance of New Testament worship.

Third. It is clearly enough, though somewhat circuitously, declared that instrumental music may lawfully be used in worship now.

Fourth. The apparent contradiction between the last position and the two previously stated, the Assembly tries to evade by asserting that the use of instrumental music is a mere incidental matter belonging to the same category with the use of a tuning fork, of particular tunes, and of musical notes.

The problem which the Assembly sought to solve was this: Unable, however willing, to prove that instrumental music in worship is now of Divine appointment and being bent on opening the way for its use in our religious services, how can we pronounce its use lawful without palpably trampling on the

doctrine of our standards that every part of our worship must be of Divine appointment? The happy solution which presented itself and was adopted is this: That instrumental music is not an ordinance of worship, and no part of one, but merely an incident, or circumstance about worship, and having no necessary or prescribed connection with it.

Thus labeled as an "incident," not an ordinance, instrumental music, it seems to have been presumed, could more easily be smuggled into our church.

In its deliverance on this subject, the Assembly uses language vague enough to allow room for many things commonly regarded thus far with disfavor among us.

Thus it says, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for example, must be observed by the exclusive use of the elements appointed for each. But there may be mere incidents of an ordinance or helps to its observance, no part of the ordinance itself, which are not placed under such restriction." Again it says, "Now the question is to which of these classes does instrumental music belong, the essentials or the incidentals of worship?" Then it proceeds to show that instrumental music belongs to the class of "incidentals" which need no appointment in order to be legitimately used in worship.

Does the Assembly then teach that provided water be used in baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, it is a matter of no importance, or an incidental matter, how these ordinances are observed? If so, it is immaterial, a mere matter of taste and option, whether baptism is performed by sprinkling or by dipping, and whether the Lord's Supper is received in a sitting or in a kneeling posture.

The truth is that there are two classes of "incidentals," between which the Assembly failed to make any distinction, namely, such as are necessary to the *full* and *regular* observance of an ordinance, but not to its *validity*; and such as do not affect either the validity or the completeness and regularity of an ordinance. In other words, there are some things which, though appointed by God and of intrinsic importance, do not so belong to the essence of an ordinance that their absence

renders it utterly invalid. One born blind may still be reckoned a human being though he lacks what belongs to human beings in their normal and complete condition; and one who has lost a hand or arm and who is the victim, moreover, of disease, does not for these reasons cease to be a human being. In like manner we recognize as substantially valid baptism and ordination as performed by many denominations against whose forms of baptism and ordination we earnestly testify. Baptism by dipping or with the sign of the cross is valid but not regular. Ordination by a Protestant diocesan bishop, though not regular, that is in strict accord with the law of God's house, we concede to be valid. There may be defects or additions in the administration of an ordinance which do not so far vitiate it as to render it null and void, and yet against these irregularities of administration we may and should most resolutely witness as being mutilations or corruptions of divinely prescribed ordinances. Now in the sense indicated, instrumental music in worship is incidental, for we do not hold that its combination with vocal music renders the worship utterly void; yet we protest against its use as an unwarrantable element or adjunct, and, on that account, a corruption of the worship.

But there is another class of "incidentals," the right to use which is implied in the right to perform a certain act or service, which therefore need no specific appointment, being naturally warranted by the obligation, or the right to do a certain thing. For instance, if we are told to sing in worship, we must, if we would act rationally, or to edification, use some tune, or some style of singing; if we are directed to meet for worship, we must have some mutually understood time and place of meeting; if we are to take up a collection as a part of our worship, we must make some arrangement conducive to the end in view.

Manifestly the Assembly has ranked instrumental music in worship in this latter class of incidents, or circumstances, but by failing to discriminate between this and the other class of incidents which we have pointed out, it has given to its position an air of reasonableness which does not properly belong

to it. The question, then, which we are to treat is this: Can instrumental music be lawfully used in worship without divine appointment? or, Is instrumental music in such a sense an incident that, though not appointed by God, it may warrantably be used in his worship?

Let it be understood that in the sequel, we shall use the word, incident, in the sense attached to it by the General Assembly.

REFUTATION OF THE "INCIDENTAL" THEORY.

It may be proper to suggest at the outset of our strictures on the "incidental" doctrine that there is some difficulty in arguing upon it, for the reason that if one do not almost instinctively perceive that instrumental music, when used in worship, is an integral part of that worship, so far as form is concerned, arguments to prove it to be so are very likely to prove unavailing. Should any one demur to the proposition that one and one added together are equal to two, all you could rationally do to convince him of the truth of the proposition, would be simply to explain the terms used in it, and appeal to his common sense, or intuitive perceptions. In like manner, he who, after listening to worship rendered with an instrumental appliance, does not grant that the music of the instrument forms a part of the service, will probably be slow to feel the force of any arguments used to establish that point. Still there are arguments which appear to us sufficiently cogent to confirm the impression which would most naturally be made on the mind of a hearer, that instrumental music employed in worship is a real part of the worship with which it is blended.

I. There lies against the "incidental" doctrine a presumptive argument derivable from history.

1. If instrumental music is a mere incident to be used at option in worship, surely the church in the apostolic age and that which succeeded it, extending onward in our era for some centuries, would have had some knowledge of this fact. It would be most singular if the apostles, in their intercourse with the churches, should never have given a hint of the liberty enjoyed under the New dispensation, as is now alleged, to employ

or to refrain from employing, according to pleasure, the tones of a harp, or of other musical instruments. Did they never in their travels encounter a community so cultured or so rude as not to crave or need instrumental help? Among the people to whom in the first three centuries of our era, the gospel was carried, instrumental music was very prevalent, as any one familiar with the Greek and Latin classics must know. Can it be that in no place where the church was established under apostolic supervision, the liberty was taken, which according to the "incidental" theory existed, of resorting to instrumental aid in worship? or, that no hint was given by the apostles that the use of instrumental music was lawful, and might be helpful in worship? And if no such hint was given, and no such liberty used, the wonder increases when we consider that the Jews had used, at least in their temple worship, the music of instruments, and that the Pagan Gentiles, no less than they had been accustomed to it in their religious rites. Moreover, in the "Hymnal" of the apostolic church, that is the inspired Book of Psalms, frequent mention is made of musical instruments and of the duty of using them, a circumstance which might have suggested even to the dullest minds the question whether or not it was not proper and even a duty to use instrumental music in the services of the New Testament Church? This was no subtle question of doctrine which might occur only to acute and inquisitive minds, but one which lay on the very surface, and likely in the circumstances to obtrude itself on almost every mind. Besides, had not the apostles, writing by inspiration, employed in different instances the verb, *Psallo*, to indicate the ordinance of rendering praise to God? And however that word may have lost its earlier meaning, it could hardly fail to suggest to the Greek-speaking people that earlier meaning, which was to play on a stringed instrument. Would it not be most unaccountable, if, indeed, the apostles held the "incident" theory, that they should never have met or made an occasion on which, either by word or deed, they might suggest to the church the glorious liberty into which it had been brought, that of using instrumental music in its worship, or of refraining from the use of it? If any such suggestion had been given by any of the apostles, we may be sure from all we

know of the tendencies of human nature, and of its workings in the church, even of the first century, and still more of the following centuries, that the hint would not have been forgotten, and the liberty to which it pointed been unused.

Yet we may fearlessly defy any man to prove that in the New Testament church for some centuries after its organization, instrumental music was ever used in worship. Not only this, but in the writings of the Christian Fathers who flourished in the age referred to, we have overwhelming evidence that in their time the practice of using musical instruments in the formal worship of God had no existence, and was deemed utterly inadmissible in the Christian church. Even Dr. Killen, whom I venerate as one at whose feet I sat in the study of church history, but whose recent departure from his earlier views, I deplore, is forced, with manifest reluctance, to admit that the early Christians never used in the proper worship of God the help of musical instruments.

Let no one bury his head in the sand, as does Dr. Killen, in the latest edition of his work, "The Ancient Church," and try to evade the force of our argument by saying that the Christians of those times were either too poor to equip themselves with instruments for use in worship, or too much afraid to use them because of persecutors, or too much dejected in spirit to have any heart to employ them; for very inexpensive instruments were procurable then, and in many instances the Christians were wealthy, while they were not afraid to sing so loud as to be easily heard by enemies and to confess Christ in the very face of death, and that with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory." Nay more, the use of instrumental music would have tended to avert the suspicion and ill-will of their heathen neighbors, who were wont to reproach them as "atheists," and therefore dangerous members of society, because, forsooth, they had no temple, no altar, no sacrifice, and no splendid ritual.

The "incidental" theory as to instrumental music, we feel confident found no place for at least several centuries in the church of Christ after its New Testament organization, and on this ground in part we contend that the theory in question is wrong.

2. A second item of the presumptive argument to be drawn from history is this, that the "incidental" theory is of modern origin, or at least only of late years has obtained any prominence. In days long past there were discussions, keen and learned, as to the propriety of using instrumental music in worship, but the advocates of that practice were wont to plead either that it was prescribed, or that it was clearly commended in Scripture, or that the church was vested with authority to decree rites and ceremonies not expressly forbidden in Scripture, and might therefore employ as an aid or embellishment of its worship instrumental music. Even so late as the time of Dr. Candlish, of Edinburgh, whose life was bounded by the years 1807 and 1873, the notion that instrumental music is an incident on a par with a tuning fork, though it had been mooted, was deemed so crude and absurd that, acute thinker as he was, he declared that the man who seriously propounded such a view was not fit to be reasoned with.

It is a noteworthy circumstance also that in the stricter churches, as for instance in our own and in the Presbyterian Churches of Great Britain and Ireland, recourse is had to the "incidental" theory only after the attempt has been made, but without success, to prove that the Bible either enjoins or favors the use of instruments of music in worship during the present dispensation. The wish to have the so-called liberty to use instruments of music being met by the argument which the Bible yields against the practice, and moreover being confronted with the law of worship as formulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it was deemed expedient to make a flank movement, and try to secure the admission of this music under the plea that it is only an incident. The fact that this doctrine is of comparatively recent origin, forms in itself no adequate argument against it; but the fact that it seems an after-thought, resorted to only in a strait and in order to gratify a desire which has become almost ungovernable, does beget in us the suspicion that the theory in question is born rather of the passion for music, which has sprung up, than of reason, or of the study of the Bible.

II. A second argument against the "incidental" theory is this, that in the only case known to us in which instrumental music was

certainly used in worship with divine approval, it was prescribed by God himself and formed a constituent element of the worship rendered to him, an adjunct, it is true, of the vocal music, yet as distinctly appointed as the vocal music itself, not a mere optional incident, the use or the omission of which was to be regulated by mere human discretion. This fact, which we may assume to be such, should make us cautious about accepting the theory that instrumental music has now fallen to the grade of a mere petty circumstance to be admitted or rejected according to the dictate of human taste or prudence. Where has God signified it as his will that what he once legislated about so particularly may now, under the character of an incident, be employed or omitted in worship according to the capricious taste and erring judgment of worshipers? What authority is there for placing now in the list of trifling incidents that which God himself once prescribed as an element of his worship? Has this music so changed its nature in the lapse of time that, though formerly by divine authority a part of the service of praise, it is now but an incident, subject to the direction of human prudence, or even of the whim of fashion?

III. A third objection to the "incidental" theory is, that carried out logically it would involve the admission of appliances and arrangements which even its advocates might regard with repugnance. The argument amounts to this, that the plea for instrumental music as an incident would prove too much for those who advance it, at least if they are disposed to steer within the limits of the Westminster standards. Instrumental music, it is claimed, may be used in worship, if not, indeed, positively required, because it is, or may be, a help to the observance of the ordinance of praise. Now might not the same plea be as valid for the use of a prayer-book, as for the use of musical instruments in worship? Some think that a prayer-book, not only may be used, but even should be used, conducing so greatly, as they judge, it would to the rounded and decorous observance of the ordinance at least of *public* prayer. Such persons might urge that the use of a prayer-book is only an incident which needs no divine appointment, and that its manifest utility as a guide and aid in prayer, should, in these circumstances, secure for it a place in many, if not all, pulpits and congregations. If instrumental music is allowed on the plea of being a help in praise, why deny the right to use

use a prayer-book as a help to prayer? Our assembly might not at present be prepared to admit that a prayer-book is a help in prayer, and on this ground might refuse to sanction, or permit, its use; but might it not be that in the Assembly of 1890, the party of progress, having tasted the sweets of license in regard to music, would propose to license a prayer-book also, and succeed in carrying a vote in the assembly in favor of the doctrine that a prayer-book is a mere incident, which ministers and others who consider it helpful are at liberty to use? If an assembly, without an overture on the subject, could determine, in the face of great resistance, that instrumental music is an incident of worship and a help to it, why might not an Assembly pronounce a prayer-book to be an incident of worship and helpful in it? And in favor of such action, it might be urged that a prayer-book much less obviously connects itself with the service of prayer, than instrumental music does with that of praise.

Why also might not dancing as a help to the excitement and expression of religious fervor receive sanction as an incident and a help?

Why, too, might not the observance of Christmas and Easter, now coming ominously into fashion in denominations formerly hostile to the recognition of such festivals, be legalized by some future Assembly under cover of the "incidental" doctrine?

Nay, what is there to prevent, according to the drift of the Assembly's action, the employment among us, publicly and privately, of the sign of the cross, of crucifixes and of pictures as aids to devotion? If any one should be so unenlightened as to demur to the use of these alleged auxiliaries to devotion on the ground that God never appointed them as such, he may at once be silenced by the "incidental" talisman. Let these appliances be forthwith pronounced mere incidents helpful to piety, especially to prayer, and at once they may take rank among us as allowable, if not highly commendable, expedients. And judging by the past we may hazard the prediction that many a one who now, in relation to the changes suggested, would be disposed to ask incredulously and indignantly, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" might in the drift of events be found willing to grant license to those forms of will-worship, if a movement for them should arise.

IV. For a fourth and final argument against the "incidental" theory we may appeal to the common sense of men.

It is an essential feature of the Assembly's theory that instrumental music is no part of the service of worship with which it may be connected, that it is no ordinance and no part of an ordinance. As the Assembly shrank from the task of proving that God has appointed the use of instrumental music in the worship of the New Testament Church, and as it professed continued adherence to the principle that every lawful form or part of worship must have divine appointment, it was logically compelled, when it would declare it admissible, to deny that instrumental music is any part of worship. Now to this denial we oppose the argument of common sense, alleging that instrumental music when used with vocal song, and blending with it, forms an integral part of the entire offering made to God in the way of praise.

In developing this argument it may be best to allow our thoughts to pursue the track suggested by an interpretation and application, much relished by some, of a certain clause in the Westminster Confession of Faith. In that calm and weighty formulary, (Chap. II. Sec. 6,) occur these words: "There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed."

Now it is claimed that instrumental music is a circumstance such as the words quoted describe, and therefore that it may be used in worship without any violation of the Confession.

The question then arises, What is the general nature of those circumstances to which the Confession in the clause quoted refers? In determining this point some stress is to be laid on the proof-texts cited in support of the sentiments expressed in the clause. The texts adduced are *I. Cor.* 11: 13, 14, "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him;" and *I. Cor.* 14: 26, "How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a

revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying;" v. 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Now these texts simply indicate that in the matter of dress or costume, and the wearing of the hair, the common decencies or conventional proprieties of life and that the order requisite for the appropriate transaction of business by any ordinary society be observed by Christians in their assemblies. If applied to the matter of music in worship, they merely teach that that part of the service should be performed in a becoming manner, but they do not warrant the addition of instrumental music to vocal music, if vocal music alone has been appointed by God, unless the position be taken that music of a suitable sort for worship, public and private, cannot be produced by the human voice unaided by an instrument. But neither nature, nor experience, nor Scripture gives any countenance to such a position. There is no text, be it observed, quoted by the authors of the Confession to show that in the rendering of praise to God, musical instruments, as mere circumstances, might be employed. If it were proved, indeed, that such instruments either should or might be used in worship, then the proof texts actually quoted would enforce the duty of using the instruments in an edifying way.

Notice how cautiously the clause in the Confession is worded. Instead of the phrase "circumstances of worship," which might be understood to mean things involved in, or blended with, the worship, the language used is, "circumstances concerning worship." The "circumstances," moreover, are explained to be "such as are common to human actions and societies," that is such as are implied in the right to do a certain thing, or in the right of a lawful society to operate for the proper ends of its organization.

Now it seems clear that, so far as regards worship, the "circumstances" contemplated in this clause of the Confession are distinguishable by these two marks, namely:

1. They are only circumstances *concerning* worship, not elements or parts of it.
2. They are circumstances so naturally implied in the acts of worship to which they pertain as not to need a distinct or separate appointment.

If instrumental music in worship is to be admitted under the shield of this clause, it must be a circumstance of the sort now *indicated*. Let us apply the tests just specified and see the results. First. Is instrumental music, when employed in connection with worship, any part or element of the worship? or is it a mere circumstance concerning it? So far from forming no part or ingredient of the worship, instrumental music, when used, is always an obvious, and in most cases an obtrusive and dominant element of it. We may venture to say that no man, unwarped by theory or the desire to gratify a taste, would form any other judgment. So far as the external service is concerned, the combined volume of music, instrumental and vocal, married to certain words, is the offering which, in the case supposed, the worshiper presents to God. Unlike the preparatory use of a tuning fork, or the silent, unnoticeable use of musical notation, the instrumental music audibly pervades from beginning to end the service in which it is employed, and as really as the vocal, with which it unites, is to be deemed a part of the service. To any who can be present in a worshipping assembly where instruments are brought into use, and not *feel* the truth of our position, it is difficult to carry conviction by any process of reasoning, just as it is difficult if not absurd, to reason with any one who stoutly repudiates the evidence of his senses as to the existence of an external world. Is not the use of the voice in praising God a form or mode of worship? And is not instrumental music, when used in combination with vocal music, a form of worship also, or a mode of expressing homage to God? Why should the one be called a form or mode of worship, and the other not? If a stranger to our religion were to enter a church while the service of praise in vocal and instrumental music was in progress, would he not inevitably conclude that it is a part of our religion to play to God as well as sing to him? Then, when to all this is added the consideration, that music of an instrumental sort was once appointed by God as a substantive part of the forms to be employed in his worship, the conviction is forced upon us that such music, if used now, constitutes a mode or form in which men express to God their praises. But if this music is a part or element of the worship, it is not one of the circumstances contemplated in the clause under which instrumentalists take shelter, and cannot be allowed under cover of that clause.

Second. Having applied the first test and found that instrumental music cannot be classed among the circumstances concerning worship, let us proceed to the application of the second test. Is the right to use instrumental music so naturally and clearly implied in the command of God to praise him with the voice in song, that an intimation that we are at liberty to use instruments in the exercise of praise was needless? Does the direction to praise God with the voice in song carry in it beyond reasonable doubt permission to add instrumental to vocal music in that service?

Here let it be noted that the law of worship, as it is formulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is, that everything is to be excluded from the worship of God except that which he has appointed. Hence we ought not to offer to him a service as to the divine appointment of which we are in doubt. In this point of view "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Even Cicero, though a heathen, felt the force of this principle, for he wrote thus: "*Bene praeceptum qui vetant quidquam agere, quod dubites aequum sit an iniquum,*" that is, They teach well who forbid you to do anything about which you are in doubt, whether it be right or wrong. Now is it so clear that the command to sing and especially to sing in solemn worship, bears wrapped up in it permission to supplement the vocal, with instrumental music, that there can be no just doubt as to our liberty to do so? Is the right to make this addition so clear that no warrant to do so is needed beyond the mere command to sing? We think not.

The command to Moses to make two silver trumpets authorized him to take such steps as were needful, according to human custom and discretion, to produce those instruments, but it did not authorize him to prepare any other instruments to be joined with these as helps or adjuncts. Why then should the command to sing be counted a warrant to annex playing to singing? Can singing not be performed appropriately without instrumental aid or accompaniment? Doubtless it can.

On the night of his betrayal, the Saviour and his disciples sang a hymn, but without instrumental aid; and what he did or countenanced, was right. Should it be said that men often

sing badly, it may be replied that men often play on instruments badly, and sing badly besides, even when led by instruments of music. We conclude that the right to use instrumental music is not naturally implied in the precept to sing the praise of God, and hence, according to this second test, instrumental music is not one of the circumstances meant in the clause cited from our Confession.

Corroborative of our view touching the import of this clause is the fact that the Church of Scotland, at a time when she was unquestionably hostile to the employment of instrumental music in worship, adopted heartily the Confession of Faith, in which is found the clause on which we have been commenting. That church, moreover, was, at the time when she first adopted this Confession, peculiarly alive to the peril of admitting into worship anything destitute of divine appointment, for she had passed through a long and deadly struggle with prelacy, which aimed at adorning the simple worship of God with sundry devices alleged to be helpful to piety and not prohibited in Scripture. Yet the keen eyes of such men as Alexander Henderson and George Gillespie could detect in the clause under notice, no pretext for the introduction of instrumental music, else, we may be morally sure, they would never have assented to the clause in question, or allowed it to stand unmodified.

A kindred fact lending support to our interpretation of this clause is this, that for more than two hundred years, the Church of Scotland never understood this clause to afford an opening for the introduction of instrumental music into her worship. In the beginning of this century, when that church was far from being strict in her adherence to the most important parts of the Confession, an organ was introduced into one of the congregations of Glasgow, but the matter having been brought before the Presbytery having jurisdiction, that court issued a peremptory order that the use of the organ should cease, as being contrary to the word of God and the constitution of the church; and thus the organ was ignominiously silenced, no appeal even in its behalf being taken, we believe, to any of the superior courts of the church. In the Relief Church, also, which was far from being very stringent in its order and discipline, a similar attempt was, in 1829, made in a certain congregation, with a like result.

So, also, in the Irish Presbyterian Church, this clause was never supposed till recently to be elastic enough to permit, under the character of an incident or circumstance, the use of instrumental music in worship. Nor even yet has that church sanctioned that view. Its General Assembly this year decided simply that it was inexpedient to adopt the course of appointing a commission to deal with certain congregations which contrary to the law of the church were using instruments in worship.

We need hardly say that the position taken by the late Assembly of our church is a novelty in its history. Indeed we are not aware that any church has ever fairly and formally committed itself to the position assumed by our General Assembly. The action of our Assembly does not fairly commit our church to the position in question, for we hold that the Assembly in its action in this case, usurped power denied to it by our constitution. There is thus a strong historical presumption against the interpretation of our Confession which the supporters of the Assembly's doctrine are constrained to give. The interpretation in question seems to be the product of that consuming desire for a sensuous worship, which has invaded our own denomination in common with nearly all others. Against the doctrine that instrumental music, when used in worship, is a mere incident, or "circumstance concerning worship," we appeal from the intoxication of the present hour to a time when the sober common-sense of man shall regain its sway.

Extended as has been this discussion, we cannot close without expressing regret and astonishment that an Assembly like ours, whose members, every one, were solemnly pledged to maintain purity of worship according to the spirit and the letter of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, should, at a single bound, have leaped to the position that instrumental music is only an incident or circumstance which may legitimately be employed in worship or in connection with it, without any appointment by God. Was then the Assembly so sure that this is the right view, and a view consistent with our standards, as to have felt no compunction in removing as far and as fast as it could, obstructions to the employment of instrumental music in our worship? Was the Assembly so sure even that this music *is* a "help" to the singing of the praise of God? Had the Assembly ever seriously investigated

even this secondary problem, that, namely, as to the helpfulness of instrumental music in worship? Certainly it had never asked the mind of the church on this particular point. Instead of rushing to such a conclusion, would it not have been more seemly for the Assembly, and especially in view of the earnest petitions addressed to it, to have pronounced the use of instrumental music in our worship irregular and illicit, until the mind of the church on the question could be legally ascertained? Even if not absolutely required by the provisions of our constitution to take this course, which we are convinced it was, the Assembly would have presented a more dignified, courteous and judicial aspect, had it adopted it. If instrumental music is only, as the Assembly declared, an incident which no one is under obligation to use, why should there have been such haste to open the way for its admission, with the certainty of thereby giving offense to the consciences of many, and at the risk even of rending the church?

But when we thus speak of the Assembly, we have in view only the majority of it; for on its roll were found the names of not a few who manfully withstood the course of the majority and who when worsted in the vote, not in the debate, placed on record a solemn protest with their names affixed. Let us stand by that protest and by the kindred protests offered at the Assembly of 1882, and let us strive to make them effective.

Resolved, "That the incidental theory to which the General Assembly at its late meeting committed itself, touching the relation of instrumental music to worship, is at variance with the teachings of Scripture, and with our subordinate standards."

Referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

