

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

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**Authority**

## **SHOULD A HUMAN SPEAK WHEN GOD IS SILENT?**

**Hugo McCord**

Because God has not said “No” about some religious practices, are we free to do what pleases us? To Cain and Abel, God did not give a list of what not to offer in worship, but simply what to offer, namely, firstborn lambs (Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17).

Nadab and Abihu, priests of God, were burned alive because they did not light the incense in their censers with “fire from the altar” (Leviticus 16:2). On their own (we thought?) they used fire from another place which the Lord “had not commanded” (Leviticus 10:1).

Moses to obtain water from a rock, was commanded to “speak” to the rock (Numbers 20:8). Instead, Moses on his own “struck the rock twice with his staff” (Numbers 20:11). The Lord had not told Moses not to strike the rock, but for his doing something on his own he was not allowed to enter “into the Land” which God had promised (Numbers 20:12). Are we free to do things on our own because the Lord has not prohibited them? Does silence give consent?

At no time did the Lord prohibit hand washing as a religious ceremony, but Jesus condemned it as “vain” worship because it did not originate from heaven but from “the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

Similarly, many religious ceremonies today did not originate from heaven, but from “the commandments of men,” such as sprinkling for baptism, dipping a finger into “holy water” and making this sign of the cross, bowing before images of Mary, burning incense, and the use of mechanical music.

God has not prohibited any of the above lists. The same principle that allows us to accept one of them justifies them all. I have heard of one church that offers hamburger in the Lord’s Supper for drive by worshipers, and I do not read of any verse that condemns such. Martin Luther held that what is not condemned is allowed, while Ulrich Zwingli held that what is not authorized is condemned. Because instrumental music is not authorized in the New Testament, he had the

pipes of the organ in the cathedral in Zurich, Switzerland, melted to make communion cups.

Another 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer, Dirk Phillips wrote: It is evident that what God has not commanded and has not instituted by express commands He does not want observed nor does He want to be served therewith, nor will He have His word set aside nor made to suit the pleasure of man.

In the farm home of Abraham Altars near Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1809, Thomas Campbell preached and set forth these words: “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” One of his listeners, Andrew Munro, spoke up, saying, “If we adopt that as a basis, then here is an end of infant baptism.” Campbell, though he had been sprinkled as a baby, was honest in his reply: “If infant baptism be not found in the Scriptures, we can have nothing to do with it.”

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## The Silence of the Scriptures

Ronnie Hayes

What is meant when someone speaks of the silence of the scriptures? Alan Highers in *The Spiritual Sword* wrote:

“Churches of Christ endeavor to ‘speak where the Bible speaks’ and to be ‘silent where the Bible is silent.’ We believe this is a scriptural plea based on the admonition to ‘speak as the oracles of God’ (1 Peter 4:11) and neither to add to, nor take away from, the word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19). To take away from the word of God is to remove that which God *has spoken*; to add to the word of God is to interject that which God *has not spoken*. To diminish what God has *explicitly* said is to violate *speaking* where the Bible speaks. To add to the word of God is to speak where God has *not spoken* and thereby to violate the *silence of the scriptures*. To ‘speak’ and to be ‘silent’ are equally valid principles in the scriptures” (October, 2006, 1).

The phrase “the silence of the scriptures” is truly a matter of authority. Some will say that the silence of the scriptures gives them permission or liberty to engage in some activity which the Bible has not authorized. Whereas those who live by the principle to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent, would disagree. Singing would be an example. The Bible authorizes singing. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing

with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). Those who want to use instruments of music in their worship often say, “It doesn’t say you can’t use instruments!” I hate to disagree, but it most certainly says you can’t!! The first principle we should understand about the silence of the scriptures is “When God specifically commands what He wants, it rules out every other option”! Here is a simple example that anyone can understand. What kind of wood could Noah have used on the ark and still been pleasing to God? God commanded Noah, “Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Genesis 6:14). I have literally had denominational people tell me, “Noah could have used oak in the ark if he had wanted to.” To make that statement is to deny the validity of the Bible! There is no valid reasoning behind such a statement, nor is there any example of someone disregarding what God said to do to simply do what they wanted. So why would anyone believe such a concept? Could it be an attempt to destroy the authority of the Bible?

Isn’t it interesting that God placed warnings at the beginning, middle and end of the Bible about adding to or taking away from His word. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30: 6) “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from

the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18,19). Out of a lack of respect for what God has commanded (cf. III John 9), or a rebellious heart (cf. 1 Samuel 15:20-23) man chooses to do what he wants.

The result of such ideology has been a blatant disregard for the word of God and man doing what he wants regardless of what God has said. You can see this in worship, salvation, and manner of life. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). God commands us to sing (Colossians 3:16), to pray (Acts 2:42), to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7), to give (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2), and preach the word in worship (Acts 20:7). Where is the authority to bring in choruses, solos, drama groups, and praise teams? Again, some will say, “Well, it doesn’t say we can’t”! My friend, you miss the point. The point isn’t, “it doesn’t say we can’t”, the point is, “where does it say you can”? In salvation, we are commanded to hear (Romans 10:17), believe (Mark 16:15, 16), repent (Luke 13:3), confess (Romans 10:9, 10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Yes, there are many elements involved in salvation, such as; grace, mercy, and God’s love, but these things don’t negate what man has to do to obey God. The Bible provides everything we need, we simply must accept it. Peter wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). What will we do with God’s word?

# AUTHORITY AS SEEN IN COMMANDS

Chance Hicks

The world in which we presently live is a world which sometimes struggles with authority. Children, who should obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1), can often be seen rebelling against the authority of their parents. Students rebel against the authority of the teacher in the classroom. Employees, who like servants should be subject to their masters (1 Peter 2:18), rebel against the authority of their employers. Citizens, who should submit to every ordinance of man so long as it does not violate the law of God (1 Peter 2:13; cf. Acts 5:29), rebel against the authority of the local, state, and federal governments. Many of those who claim to be religious rebel against the authority of the Scriptures including in worship those things which they like instead of those things which the Scriptures authorize. Even among those who are members of the church of Christ can be found those who have rebelled against the authority of the Scriptures. Some of these have rebelled against the commands of the Scripture concerning the music authorized in worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colosians 3:16). Others have rejected the commands concerning the role of women within the church (1 Timothy 2:8-15). Authority must be understood and must be submitted to if we are going to please our Heavenly Father!

The Scriptures are authoritative because they are from the mind and mouth of God. The apostle Paul penned to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Omnipotent, Everlasting, Holy One has given us His Word

to tell us what is authorized and right, to tell us when we are wrong, to set us aright again, and to instruct us in staying right. The Scriptures also are authoritative because they are the standard by which man will be judged. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

The Word of God is the authority, but how does the word of God authorize? There are three ways in which the Scriptures authorize: explicit statement (commands), implication, and approved example. Let us consider that the Scriptures authorize by explicit statements or commands. The term "explicit" means "precisely and clearly expressed or readily observable; leaving nothing to implication" (WordWeb, electronic version). The term "command" means "an authoritative direction or instruction to do something" (WordWeb, electronic version). The term "command" implies authority. If something is commanded, then there is no option in the matter. If a commander in the military gives a command, those under him are required to abide by his command. They have no option in the matter if they are going to be in submission to his authority. To disobey his command is to rebel against his authority and will result in punishment. The same is true with the law of God; when the law of God contains an explicit command such as singing in New Testament worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colosians 3:16), there is no option in the matter if we are going to submit to the authority of God! To participate in some other form of music other than singing in worship is to rebel

against the authority of God and to await punishment.

The children of Israel learned from Nadab and Abihu that the commands of God are authoritative. These two "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Leviticus 10:1). God had given the commands concerning the fire which was to be used, but Nadab and Abihu decided to rebel against the authority of God's commands and offer something which He commanded not. For their rebellion, God sent fire from heaven to devour them (Leviticus 10:2). The Israelites learned that the commands of God are not optional but are those things which must be done.

The commands of God must be followed during the Christian dispensation if we are going to submit to His authority. Consider some explicit statements, or commands, found in the New Testament. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21). "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4). These are just a few of the commands found within the New Testament.

The commands of God are still authoritative today! Let's determine to submit to the authority of the Scriptures and obey the commands of God. If not, we will suffer punishment for rebellion like Nadab and Abihu!

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## AUTHORITY AS SEEN IN EXAMPLE

John B. Daniels

There are several words in the Greek New Testament that are rendered by the Anglo word "example." The Greek word *tupos* denotes a print (cf. John 20:25), or it can suggest a "pattern" (Hebrews 8:5). Thus, elders are to be "examples" to the flock of God (1 Peter 5:3). *Hypotuposis* in secular Greek was an outline or sketch. In the new Testament it can denote a behavioral example or a pattern of doctrine (see 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:13). *Deigma* denotes that which is shown, hence, a specimen. Jude proclaims that the permanent destruction of the ungodly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah provides us with an example of the eternal punishment of hell (Jude 7). The term *hypodeigma*, literally, "to show under," suggest a model, either for good or bad. Example – we should not follow Israel's pattern of apostasy in the wilderness (Hebrew 4:11). The Greek word *hupogrammos* (literally "to write under,") was employed in ancient language for a child's writing exercise in copying the alphabet. The term is used to describe the sinless Christ who passively endured suffering and confidently committed His care unto the Father (1 Peter 2:21).

To impress upon the reader the importance of being able to understand and explain Bible authority as seen in example, allow me to site Colossians 3:17. Paul is writing to impress upon the brethren at Colossae how the resurrection of Christ demands for Christians a changed life (3:1ff). He mentioned we must "put to death" our members upon the earth. The life of the Christian is rather to be filled with love, peace, and the words of Christ (3:14-16). In summery he says that whatever one does in this life should be done "in the name of Christ." The phrase "in

the name of" means, "by the authority of." Therefore, we gain valuable insight into the authority principle of example when we look at how this is carried out in the Bible.

In Genesis 6:13-22 God commanded Noah to build an ark. God used very specific details in how Noah was to make this structure. In this example, God issued Noah several direct statements. Many of these statements were in the form of command. Direct statements authorize the subjects of the statements to carry out the content of the statement. When God specifies an item (i.e., Gopher wood), it is exclusive of all other items that could possibly be used. When God gives a general command (build an Ark), the subject is authorized to use the most expedient means necessary to fulfill that command. God's covenant with Noah was based upon Noah's respect for God's authority.

Our covenant with God today is no different than it was in the days of Noah. Yes, we are under a new law, "The law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), but we must still have respect for God's authority. The question is, "How does God authorize today?" He does this by direct statement: a. Imperative (Matthew 28:18); b. Indicative (John 3:16); c. Interrogative (Romans 6:1). When God specifies by direct statement we are to respect God's authority!

There is considerable controversy these days as to whether or not apostolic "example" is a legitimate means of establishing the authority in religion. Once again, "does the New Testament endorse the principle that example can bare the force of authority?" Let us consider Acts chapter eleven. When Peter, before the brethren in Jerusalem, argued the case for accepting Gen-

tiles into the church, he cited the example of the Spirit's operation upon the household of Cornelius as proof that these people were entitled to Christian status. To refuse such would be withstanding God (11:15-17).

God is not pleased with those who disrespect His authority, no matter how small a matter it may be. In the Old Testament example of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2: the men were authorized; the incense was authorized; the censors were authorized; the place of worship was authorized; but the fire was not authorized. What an excellent narrative in providing "authority as seen in example." God disapproves of progressing beyond His will (2 John 9) and inventing new and innovative ways of worshipping Him.

The New Testament teaches that matters that are authorized, as well as those that are not authorized, exist for men living today. That which is authorized can be done with God's approval. Matters which are authorized either are obligatory, which must be done in order for one to be pleasing to God, or optional, which may be done or not done, in a particular way, and still be pleasing to God. Matters that are not authorized by the New Testament are either explicitly forbidden or implicitly forbidden by explicit statements that imply the forbidding, or simply are not authorized, i.e., no example in any form.

Since all parts of God's revelation are inspired and authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16-17), this means that both the message and the form of that message are intended by God.

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## IS TRADITION AUTHORITATIVE?

Brad McNutt

The above question is rarely asked or considered. Therefore, let us direct our attention to this great question. This question will be addressed by explaining the terms of the question and then examining what the Scriptures have to say concerning traditions. By the end of this study a clear answer can be seen.

To help us better understand our topic of discussion we should spend some time in explaining the terms used. Webster defines tradition as “the handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc. from generation to generation.” In other words, tradition is a story that has been told to each generation or a long standing practice from generation to generation. Webster defines authority as “the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction.” Therefore, in this study attention will be given to whether or not tradition (long standing belief or practice) has authority (the right to give commands) in religion.

There are two types of traditions spoken of in Scripture. The first type of tradition is man-made tradition. This was common among the Jews in Jesus’ day as well as among the people of every generation. The Pharisees believed that the Word of God was too ambiguous in various places. Thus they “put a hedge” around and gave further instruction concerning these passages. These came to be known as their traditions which the people were zealous to keep (Galatians 1:14) and were to be considered on the same level as Scripture.

On one occasion in Jesus’ personal ministry He was confronted with the problem of people believing that their traditions were authorita-

tive in religion (Mark 7:1-13). The Pharisees complained that the disciples of Jesus were eating with “defiled” or “unwashed” hands (Mark 7:2). They then proceeded to ask Jesus why His disciples had “transgressed the tradition of the elders” (Matthew 15:2) or were not “walking according to the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:5). The Jews believed that one must wash his hands before eating because they probably came in contact with a Gentile during the day and were considered unclean by the Pharisees. This was and is a good sanitary practice but it is not a matter of salvation or even religion.

Sadly many people today are guilty of the same actions as the Jews. When it comes to their religious affiliation they might say, “My grandfather was a Baptist, my father is a Baptist, and if the Baptist church was good enough for them then it is good enough for me!” What is this, if it is not tradition? Others might say “We have always worshipped with an instrument as long as I can remember and so has every member of my family.” What is this, if it is not tradition? The problem is that neither the Baptist church nor instrumental music in worship to God, are found in the Scriptures. Therefore, both must be man-made traditions.

Jesus proceeded to rebuke them for their holding of traditions and rejection of the commands of God. He justly accused them of “laying aside the commandment of God” (Mark 7:8) and “rejecting the commandment of God” (Mark 7:9). This is a lesson that needs to be learned by all; by making traditions authoritative in religion one must reject the authority of God or “lay it aside!” The Pharisees were keeping the tra-

dition of the washing of hands before eating but refusing to keep the command of God that they honor their father and mother by taking care of them in their older age (Exodus 20:12; 21:17). Jesus showed them that they “made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:6). The words “none effect” are legal terms in the original language and have reference to canceling a will. Thus the Pharisees were canceling the will of God in order to keep their own traditions! This is another lesson that should be learned today; in order to keep man-made traditions in religion one must cancel God’s will concerning religion!

The second type of tradition is Divine tradition. This is tradition that is given by God to man. Paul commanded that we “stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word (inspired spokesmen) or epistle (written inspired word)” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). He also commanded that people who refuse to walk according to the traditions which had been given by God should be withdrawn from fellowship with the church (2 Thessalonians 3:6). This is good tradition because it was given by the one who has the authority to give commands, God (Matthew 28:18)!

So we return to the original question, “Is tradition authoritative in religion?” The answer depends upon what type of tradition is under discussion. If the tradition is man-made then it carries no authority but if the tradition is from God then it is always authoritative.

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## WHAT AUTHORITY DO THE ELDERS HAVE?

James E. Rogers

God has placed elders over the church as spiritual leaders in matters of judgment. Their decisions in matters of judgment are to be made in view of their knowledge and application of God's principles in matters of faith. Devoted leaders are crucial to the congregation that fulfills its purpose. A congregation will never rise above its leadership.

Paul called the "elders" (*presbuteros*, [from "presbuteros" which is "used . . . (b) of rank or positions of responsibility . . . (3) in the Christian churches, those who . . . were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches"] (Vine 2:20-21) of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Some of the qualifications of these men are found in Titus 1:5-16.

After discussing his work among the Ephesians, Paul warned the elders about wolves that would arise "not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). These wolves would wear shepherd's clothing which would make it easier for them to draw away disciples because the disciples would not suspect error to come from their shepherds. They would have their guard down and the "wolves" would devour many of them before they were aware of what was happening. These "wolves" are described as "grievous." They would burden the church with their false teaching. Their manner of operation is the speaking of "perverse" (*diastrepho*, "'turned aside,' 'corrupted,") (Vine 3:180) things. The intent of these "wolves" is to draw away (*apospao*, which is used "of drawing away disciples into error") (Vine 1:337) followers.

In order to guard against these wolves, Paul warned the "elders" to "take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the

church of the Lord" and to "watch ye" (20:28,31). The elders had the authority to do whatever was involved in taking heed to the flock, feeding the flock and watching. This authority was to be used to stop the wolves from harming the flock.

Elders have the authority to "take heed . . . to all the flock" (20:28). "Take heed" is *prosechete*, from "prosecho, Lit., to hold to, signifies to turn to, turn one's attention to . . ." (Vine 2:211). This would involve giving particular attention to the condition of each sheep and taking the necessary action in behalf of that sheep to protect it from the wolves. They could instruct the sheep as to the precautions or actions to take in this regard with full expectation that such instruction would be heeded by the sheep. They had the authority to make and enforce decisions in order to do this work.

Elders have the authority to "feed the church" (20:28). "To feed" is *poimainein*, from "poimaino, to act as a shepherd . . . is used . . . (b) metaphorically, to tend, to shepherd . . ." (Vine 2:87). More on their authority in this regard may be learned from 1 Peter 5:1-3. This would involve deciding what food was to be given, when the food was to be given and who would be used to give the food. All of this food would be given in order to protect the sheep from the wolves. There would need to be food for the "newborn babes" (1 Peter 2:2) and food for the "fullgrown" (Hebrews 5:14) sheep. They had the authority to make and enforce these and other decisions involved in shepherding.

Elders have the authority to take heed to and feed the church as they carry out their work as "bishops" (Acts 20:28). "Bishops" is *episkopous* from "episkopos, lit. an

overseer" which "indicates the character of the work undertaken" (Vine 1:128-129). Some of the qualifications of these men are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Elders have the authority to "watch" (Acts 20:31). "Watch" is *gregoreite* from "gregoreo", to watch, is used . . . (b) of spiritual alertness" (Vine 4:201). In John 10:12, Jesus indicated a hireling would leave the sheep to the mercy of the wolf. The shepherd, who does what Paul is requiring in our text, will do just the opposite. He has the authority to do what is necessary to fight to protect the sheep.

The false teachers who would arise in the eldership at Ephesus would be accountable to their fellow-elders who would be expected to use their authority to render the false teachers incapable of harming the sheep (1 Timothy 5:20). They would not re-evaluate these false-teaching elders, they would reprove them! If these false-teaching elders refused to repent, they would not re-affirm them, they would remove them.

We have studied one of several passages which show the authority of elders in action. If the student will study the other passages mentioned in this article, he may put together many of the responsibilities of the elders. With each responsibility comes the authority to carry out that responsibility. Arguments that elders have no authority are made in order to escape being held accountable for actions.

**SOURCES:** Vine, W. E., An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1966).

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## INFERENCE

Sam Willcut

Unfortunately, most people do not read their Bible as a book of authority. Rather, as Charles Hodge once declared, most read it as an editor or a critic. For example, they will say, "I could not believe in a God as that," or "My Jesus would not dare say something as that." Thus, instead of believing in the principle that says, "This is what the Bible says," most live by the principle that says, "This is what the Bible says to me," and interpret it anyhow they feel.

The word "hermeneutics" comes from the Greek word "Hermes," who was the messenger of the fabled Greek gods and the interpreter of Zeus. The Greek infinitive *hermeneuein* signifies the act of interpretation. Thus, we are dealing with the principle of understanding and applying the authoritative word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17), which we see by command, example and inference. Of course, this article deals with inference.

As Roy Deaver stated in "Ascertaining Bible Authority," brethren often speak of "inference," but "inference" relates to "implication" (1987, p. 57). In the classic work "Hermeneutics," by Professor DR Dungan, he classified this as "the inductive method" when he wrote the following: "A leading or drawing off a general fact from a number of instances, or summing up the result of observations and experiments" (no date, p. 82). He later wrote, "In the uses of this method of interpretation, all the facts are reported, and from them, the conclusion is to be reached" (Ibid, p. 83). He explains that inference/implication takes into account all the facts gleaned from the context and general understanding of the subject at hand. From the gathered facts, one may have to as-

certain logically necessary conclusions that might be unspoken. In the July 22, 1975 edition of the Firm Foundation, FL Lemley wrote an article in which he falsely declared, "Since all inferences are of human origin, unless we want to hold on to human patterns, we should discard necessary inference as poor pattern material," (p. 452). However, Thomas Warren exposed such anti-logical reasoning in his book, "When Is an 'Example' Binding?"

A couple of examples of inference might be helpful to understand further this method of interpretation. In Genesis 12:10, we see Abram going down to Egypt from Canaan because of a famine. Nevertheless, in Genesis 13:1, the Bible records, "And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south." Though the former passage did not specifically state that Lot went down into Egypt with him, we infer from the latter passage that he did, because they had been traveling from Haran together (cf. Genesis 11:31; 12:5).

In Acts 9, we read of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, including his baptism by a disciple named Ananias in Damascus (9:18; cf. 22:16). Yet, we read nowhere of his repentance, of which the New Testament (Luke 13:3, 5; 24:47) and the book of Acts (Acts 2:38) have already emphasized its importance. Considering such, we may infer that he did, because the proper understanding of recorded facts shows that God considers it necessary for obedience to salvation (cf. Acts 17:30)

Let me close with several words of caution. "Handling aright the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15, ASV) is not to be done lightly or hastily. We must be careful not to confuse mere incidentals with approved precedents. For example, the disciples met together in an upper room in both Jerusalem and Troas and partook of the Lord's Supper with just one cup, but we are not to infer that these examples are binding today insofar that we are also to meet in an upper room and partake of the Lord's Supper with just one cup. These were merely incidentals or conveniences to them at that time, and to elevate them as standards today would be to miss the purpose altogether. The apostle Peter warned that some would abuse ("wrest") the scriptures (II Peter 3:16), which literally means, "to torture my words." There is a vast difference between inference and assumption, which is why occasionally brethren will classify it as "necessary inference." Therefore, whenever the Bible demands an action, fact or teaching without specifically stating it, then the Bible authorizes by implication, and when I utilize such interpretation, I may infer such necessary authoritative things.

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Should A Human Speak When God Is Silent? ----- continued from page 8

Another listener, Thomas Acheson, spoke up (as found in Earl West's RESTORATION HISTORY, \*, p. 48), saying: I hope I may never see the day when my heart will renounce that blessed saying of the Scripture, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is a kingdom of heaven."

After that remark, Acheson burst into tears. Another man in the audience, James foster, replied,

Mr. Acheson, I would remark that in the portion of Scripture you have quoted, there is not reference whatever to infant baptism.

If we stay silent, along with God, about infant baptism also we will stay silent, along with God, about instrumental music in Christian worship. For 22 years (1957 – 1979) the Arndt-Gingrich lexicon spoke when God was silent about instrumental music in Christian worship, for the editors dated to speak on their own that the word psalmo required "the accompaniment of a harp."

In 1979 they removed their mistake, but, I am sorry to say, unwillingly, for they spoke again when God was silent by inserting the

statement that "the New Testament does not voice opposition to instrumental music" (p.891). Just as accurately one can say the New Testament does not voice opposition to lighting prayer candles, nor the use of rosaries in prayer repetitions, nor dancing in worship, nor smoking marijuana or peyote in worship.

A humble Christian would not need to be told not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ, but an inspired man put it into writing: "Everyone who goes beyond...the doctrine of Christ does not have God" (2 John 9:cf. Revelation 22: 18-19, FHV). However, some gospel preachers attempt to justify their speaking where God is silent, their going beyond the confines of the New Testament, by affirming that "the doctrine of Chris" is restricted to the deity of Jesus, and so does not include the rest of the New Testament.

They need to remember that Jesus said that anyone who rejects inspired men (as well all the New Testament writers) "rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me" (Luke 10:16). Therefore, people who respect Jesus

are thankful for all of the New Testament.

Only in religion would anyone hold to the idea that one is free to do what he pleases if there is no prohibition. A pharmacist filling a prescription does not think he is free to add some chemical that the doctor did not prohibit.

Not recently, but over half a century ago, I was struck by the initial statement of gospel preachers as they began protracted meeting in a church building or under a tent or in a brush arbor: Neighbors and friends; they who arranged for this meeting believe that the only safe course in religion is to give book, chapter, and verse for everything. We invite your criticism. If we are practicing anything for which we do not give you book, chapter and verse, please let us know and we'll stop it immediately, and which we could have something for which there is book, chapter, and verse, please let us know, and we'll begin it's practice immediately. And with we could have yesterday. Our aim is to speak where God speaks, and to be silent where he is silent.

Hugo McCord deceased