

THE INSTRUCTOR.

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ORIGINAL DEPARTMENT

To the Editor of the INSTRUCTOR:

Sir,—I have heard and read a great deal, from time to time, for and against the use of Instrumental Music in Divine worship; but the sound argument and excellent reasoning contained in the following article surpasses all I have hitherto seen on the subject. The discussion between C. R. and a Vocal Musician terminated very abruptly, without bringing the matter to any definite conclusion. By giving this article a place in your valuable little miscellany you will much oblige,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A LOVER OF MUSIC.

Montreal, April 20.

REMARKS ON THE USE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN DIVINE WORSHIP.

If the universal authority of scripture could be applied to the question before us, it would, of course, supersede any controversial inquiry respecting it—but such a decided authority, I am aware, has never been attempted to be advanced either by the friends or foes of the practice in question—no passage of holy scripture has been produced, in which, by fair interpretation, the use of musical instruments in public worship is either enjoined or prohibited, allowed or discountenanced.

Both parties, it is true, claim the tacit sanction of scripture to their respective views—the one, in the fact, that instrumental music in divine worship is no where forbidden, and that it was unquestionably used for devotional purposes by some eminent saints of the Jewish church, if not a regular part of the temple worship—the other, in the total silence of the New Testament writers on the subject, and also, in the more simple and spiritual character of Christian worship, than that of the Jews. But from these appeals to the Bible, no conclusions can be drawn, forasmuch as, when weighed together, it may be

difficult to say whether of them has the preponderating weight of plausibility. Destitute then of the light of revelation, reason and analogy must supply its place—and regarding the subject as a question of expediency, its merits must be deduced from the adaptation or unfitness of instrumental music for the purposes of devotion, and the good or the mischievous effects which can be fairly ascertained to result from its introduction.

As vocal music is universally acknowledged to be a scriptural and appropriate part of the external worship of God, our method must be first, to enquire in what the propriety of singing consists, as a part of divine worship, and secondly, whether, or to what extent, the same fitness is possessed by instrumental music. We must first observe, that there is nothing naturally sacred in singing, any more than in playing—they are both to be ranked under the same art of music, or the art by which the sense of hearing is delighted by means of melodious or harmonious sounds. Now the most remarkable effect of singing, (for to the consideration of singing, we now purposely confine ourselves.) is the excitation and expression of the emotions of joy, grief, gratitude, awe, love, &c. The air of a tune may be adapted to all the most prominent passions of the mind, and where that adaption is striking, it does more than merely express the emotion—it awakens and deepens it. Thus a tune with a lively air would not only be in unison with a cheerful frame of mind, but such a disposition it would cherish. A solemn tune is calculated to produce or deepen a feeling of seriousness and awe. Now, singing is applicable to devotional purposes, chiefly from its influence on the emotions of the mind. Right feeling is the very essence of devotion. To understand our obligation and duty to God, is indeed indispensable: but to be so far affected by the former as to be inclined to perform the latter is a very different thing, and that which is alone truly acceptable to God, or influential on human conduct.