

**Schedule of Meeting Times:**

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM  
Speaker, Robert Emerson  
Study Sunday 10:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM  
Singing every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening  
Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

“...Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” —2 Kings 6:16



**Preacher / bulletin editor:** Kris Vilander, (256) 472-1065

**E-mail:** kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org

**Website:** www.haysmillchurchofchrist.org



**Servants during June:**

**Songleader:** Stanley (7), Larry (14), David (21), Peter (28)

**Reading:** Robert

**Announcements:** Larry

**Table:** David, Peter, Marty, Stanley

**Wednesday Lesson:** Kris (3), Larry (10), Stanley (17), Kris (24)

**Lawn Mowing (week starting):**

Robert (7), Larry (14), Kris (21), Marty (28)

**Singing:** Perhaps 28?

**Area Meetings:** We will update as we find out more information...

**Hays Mill church of Christ**

21705 Hays Mill Road  
Elkmont, AL 35620

# The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” —1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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## Who Started This “Argument from Silence”?

*By Paul Earnhart*

The students of John L. Girardeau, professor at Columbia Seminary, South Carolina in the 1880's, asked him to explain to them why he opposed the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Presbyterian churches. In response, he wrote a book which was published in Richmond, Virginia in 1888. It was titled, Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church. Girardeau's expanded discussion of this subject gives some valuable insights into how men of the Reformed tradition in late 19th century America decided the

question of whether or not a practice was pleasing to God.

Girardeau began his discussion with a statement of principle which guided his arguments throughout the book: “A divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government, and worship in the church; that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence from their statements is forbidden.”

It may surprise us that a 19th century Presbyterian seminary professor not only understood the “argument from silence,” but used

it and felt confident that others would be persuaded by it. I suspect that there has been the feeling on the part of some that those who labored so earnestly in the last century to turn men back to simple New Testament Christianity were the originators of the idea that God's silence on a matter was equal to a divine prohibition. Clearly, that was not true.

The arguments Professor Girardeau makes will sound very familiar to those of us who have been concerned to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent."

He first says that the prohibitory significance of God's silence is deducible from 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which affirms that God's man is fully equipped for "every good work" by the "holy scripture." Everything therefore not mentioned in the Scripture would not be a "good work." Sound familiar?

Girardeau then proceeds to give some biblical statements that verify his principle of silence. Exodus 25:40, "And see that thou make them after their pattern which hath been showed thee in the mount." Deuteronomy 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep

the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you." He cites also Deut 12:32; Prov 30:5-6; Heb 8:5; Mt 15:6; 28:18-20; Col 2:20-23; 2 Tim 3:16-17 and Rev 22:18-19.

In extending his argument further, our Presbyterian professor treats several concrete instances that argue the prohibition of God's silence. He cites the cases of Cain and his sacrifice, Genesis 4. He mentions Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, Leviticus 10:1-3 about which he comments: "But they presumed to add to God's commandments, exercising their own will in regard of his worship, they did that which he did not command them, and they were instantly killed for their wicked temerity." He adds the cases of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Numbers 16, Moses' striking of the rock, Numbers 20, Saul's sacrifice at Gilgal, 1 Samuel 13, Uzzah's touching of the ark, 1 Chronicles 13:7-10, and the presumption of King Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21.

His arguments are then summarized in the following words: "The mighty principle has thus been established by an appeal to the didactic statements of scripture and to special instances recorded in scriptural history... that whatsoever is not in the Scripture, either explicitly or

by good and necessary consequences, is forbidden."


Girardeau goes on to observe that instrumental music was never used in the worship of Israel without God's explicit command, 2 Chronicles 29:25-26 and, therefore, could not be used in New Testament worship without an explicit New Testament command. He notes that instrumental music was never used in synagogue worship and that rabbinic literature forbade its use on the Sabbath, save in the Temple.

From the New Testament, Girardeau simply asks, "Did Jesus teach or practice it?" "Did the Apostles teach or practice it?"

From what he writes, it is obvious that this Presbyterian teacher had paid a price for his convictions: "it is easy to see how irrelevant and baseless is the taunt flung by high churchmen, ritualists and latitudinarians of every stripe

against the maintainers of the opposite principle, that they are narrow-minded bigots who take delight in insisting upon trivial details. The truth is exactly the other way. The principle upon which this cheap ridicule is cast is simple, broad, majestic. It affirms only the things God has commanded, the institutions and ordinances that he has prescribed, and besides this discharges only a negative office which sweeps away every trifling invention of man's meretricious fancy."


The irony is that I first found this old book preserved in the library of a college operated by avowed restorationists who practice the very thing which Girardeau condemns. The book's card revealed it had lived a quiet life.

Who started this "argument from silence?" As nearly as we can determine, God did. 

## *Remember in Prayer*

**Bernice Osburn** suffered a mini-stroke Wednesday (6/3); she is recovering at Valley View Rehab, 5968 Wall Triana Hwy, Madison, AL 35757. Cards can be sent to her daughter **Beverly Toney** as well, at 16888 Lon Road, Athens, AL 35613

Please continue to pray for **Lois**

**Adams, Madelene Britnell, Carolyn Dennis, Tim and Dot Hice, and Polly McNatt...** 

*We begin meeting at our normal times today—and I look forward to seeing you, and studying God's word together! —Kris*