

“Aid” or “Addition”

What is the Difference?

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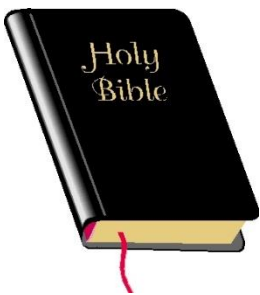
A kindly gentleman replies: “Because musical instruments are not authorized by the New Testament, hence, they are additions to the divine pattern which prescribes Christian worship.”

But the intrigued visitor probes further: “Why then do you use song books? Aren’t these also additions?” “No, the brother replies, “our song books are merely aids; there’s a difference between an addition and an aid.”

Conversations like the previous take place on numerous occasions. There is much confusion in discerning the difference between an “addition” and an “aid.” What is the difference?

How is an “addition” distinguished from an “aid”? An addition occurs when a particular action has been altered, or the fundamental composition or substance of a thing has been changed. An aid alters nothing; it merely facilitates the implementation of the action or substance, without changing anything.

Perhaps several examples will help us focus on this.



Aids vs. Additions

A cane may aid one in taking a walk, but with or without this device, one is just walking. But if one walks for a while, and then rides a bicycle, he is no longer just walking; something has been added to his mode of travel. Now, he’s both walking and riding.

A mother sends her son to the market to buy a loaf of bread. He brings the bread home in a bag. The bag is merely an aid. Should he purchase a candy bar as well, he has disregarded the instruction of his mother by an addition.

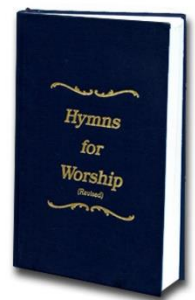
A man takes his automobile to the service center for an oil change. The attendant may use a wrench and funnel to aid in his replacement of the oil. There is no problem with that. But we all understand that if he changes the spark plugs as well, he has augmented the original instructions.

Jesus taught that the communion supper is to consist of bread and fruit of the vine. A table, plates, and cups facilitate (aid) the implementation of those commands. But to garnish the bread with peanut butter, and “punch up” the fruit of the vine with ginger ale, is to be guilty of addition.

Christians are obligated to preach the gospel everywhere to the extent of their ability. In order to accomplish this, it is acceptable to use aids (e.g., tracts, television, the world wide web, or a building). But if one combines something with that gospel (as the Judaizers did in the first century when they taught that circumcision, an element of the Mosaic law, is also necessary to receive salvation – **Acts 15:1**), that is an offense.

When the church commences the praise portion of its service, the saints may “sing,” for such is enjoined by God (**Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16**). Christians may employ song books, a projection screen, or a tuning fork (to determine the appropriate “pitch”). Still, though, in the final analysis, they would be singing only.

On the other hand, if the church sings to the accompaniment of an organ, piano, etc., those thus participating have added something to what the Lord authorized. There now are two types of music – vocal and instrumental. The nature of the original command has been supplemented.



Additions are wrong.

And so, the serious Bible student must conclude that the use of a mere aid only accommodates obedience to God's will. Such expediencies may fluctuate from time-to-time and from place-to-place.

On the other hand, those who respect the authority of the sacred Scriptures will not tamper with the divine prescriptions for worship by the clutterment of additions. They will not add to sacred instruction, for to do so is to invite the wrath of God ultimately.

One needs to remember what happened to those who put God's Ark of the Covenant on a "new" cart (**2 Sam. 6:3**), instead of transporting the sacred chest as the law had required (**Ex. 25:12-14**). David later admitted that this addition was "not according to the [divine] ordinance" (**1 Chron. 15:16**). It pays to know the difference between an "aid" and an "addition."

To many, such matters perhaps seem rather trivial. This is because they have never fathomed the concept of the necessity of absolute obedience to the sovereign Creator.