Instrumental Music and the Restoration Movement

By

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There are times when division is a necessary thing

The division between the Church and the Disciples of Christ drift back to the late nineteenth century.

The difference between the two:

The Church had a respect for God’s inspired revelation in the Bible, while the other group saw the Bible merely as a product of human endeavor.

When you separate God from the Bible then that is when we start having trouble. When men want to take the Bible and let it only say what they want it to say or say something that it does not say then we have trouble.

Some say that to insist on a cappella singing is divisive within itself that this doesn’t allow anyone to think in any other way.

Others felt at this time that instrumental music was of little consequence and really didn’t matter.

Attitudes like this toward the Bible causes a low respect for the Bible resulting in strife, division, and apostasy. This drift continued into the early twentieth century.

Thus because of this strife, this caused an irrevocable division between the restoration minded churches of Christ, and the unity minded Disciples of Christ. Their differences and views on the Bible lead to the separation or division.

Two of the main things that brought about this division were the formation of the American Missionary Society, and instrumental music.

The American Christian Missionary Society was formed in 1847, just fourteen years prior to the start of the Civil War.

When this group had a meeting in 1861 where no southern brethren were present, they declared that the South was morally wrong, therefore delegates at this meeting or convention were called upon to pledge their allegiance to the North.

Many things came out of this: Tolbert Fanning, editor of the Gospel Advocate even wondered if their could be any fellowship with Northern brethren after this declaration. To many Southern brethren this served to confirm the addition of extra congregational organizations.

An extra congregation organization according to reformation thinking was an unbiblical addition.

The second concern was the establishment of the organ within the Church. While many of the Restoration Movement opposed it, Issac Errett felt it was merely a matter of opinion as there was no biblical law against organs.

Benjamin Franklin, editor of the American Christian Review responded to that by saying, “because the Bible had prescribed worship in the New Testament, any addition was an unauthorized innovation.

The first congregation to use an instrument was in Midway, Kentucky in 1859. Dr. L.L. Pinkerton was the preacher.

The division between the churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ is dated back to 1906. The two things that they were working on, the restoration of New Testament Christianity and the appeal to unity were to bring them together, but ultimately brought them apart.

The dividing line for the two movements was basically a geographic one with the churches of Christ clustering in the South from Tennessee to Texas, and the Disciples of Christ tending to fall in Ohio, Illinois, and West Virginia.

The Civil War had it’s effect on the Christians from the South as they were beat down and wanted to grow closer to God, while the Northern Christians were more into the optimistic and progressive type thinking.

The German Higher Criticism influenced the Northerners at this time, which is a study of biblical writing to determine their literary history and purpose and meaning of the authors.

In 1891, William Rainey Harper from Yale at the University of Chicago started the Disciples’ Divinity House where Disciple preachers could be trained.

These leaders begin to accept the idea of the human role in the production of the scripture and no longer held to the absolute inspiration and authority of the biblical documents, thus no longer could a reasonable discussion with them could be conducted.

R.C. Cave a preacher for the Disciples of Christ in a sermon stated that Abraham and Moses were ignorant of God’s true character, and that he did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, nor did he believe in the resurrection of Christ. He further stated that the Bible was produced as an evolution rather than a revelation.

When J. W. McCarvey tried to discuss with the Disciples of Christ some of their views, it became clear to him that it was their interpretation of the inspiration of the scriptures, which made them in error.

Disciples of Christ today want to achieve unity as long as you see it their way.