

LESSON TWELVE: INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND THE DESTINY OF THE “DISCIPLES OF CHRIST”

A. SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION CIRCA 1850

1. Clashing perspectives

- a. The Campbell movement emphasized forms of organization and worship, and cooperation in common work.
- b. The Stone movement emphasized individual piety and responsibility.
- c. The Campbell movement allowed for the adduction of principles of organization and interpretation to “complete” the understanding of what scripture meant.
- d. The Stone movement denied that anything can be known from scripture except what is explicitly stated.

2. Common perspectives

- a. Both regarded the church as an institution, having responsibilities distinct from those of its members.
- b. Both tried to take the side of “the silence of the scriptures.”

3. The result

- a. Campbell argued for super-congregational organizations as a way of doing “kingdom work.”
- b. Those who opposed the societies tended to emphasize individual action.
- c. But so long as support of societies was not required:
 - (1) Many people, even those who had no conscientious objection to them, did not support them.
 - (2) Therefore, very few of them prospered, and they tended to fall into disuse over time.
 - (3) Few “lines of fellowship” were drawn over the issue, and animosity tended to be temporary.

B. THE GREAT DIVORCE

1. Concerning the use of music in the worship of God

- a. Musical instruments, as well as dancing, were used among the Jews as forms of worship (Psalm 150).
- b. Musical instruments, though available, were not used in the apostolic church.
- c. Instrumental music has consistently been rejected by reformers, including the Campbells and Stone.
- d. The literal meaning of *a capella* is “in the style of the chapel” (i.e., the church).

2. The introduction of musical instruments in worship by the Disciples of Christ

- a. Denominational pressures had much to do with the adoption of this innovation.
- b. The first recorded case of use among Disciples was a melodeon at Midway, KY, in 1860.
- c. Instruments were introduced into congregations by majority vote, or, by fiat, by determined minorities.
- d. The determination of these innovators was remarkable; in many cases, those who wished to use instruments pressed their position against majority opposition and all argument, and simply refused to be deterred.
- e. Though the use of societies had a potentially more sweeping impact, societies were not as efficient at dividing the people as were instruments, because the latter affected worship and could not be ignored.
- f. In the last quarter of the 19th century, there were two bodies of baptized believers where there had been one; one of these bodies used instruments and supported societies, while the other refused to go along with either.

3. The arguments supporting the use of instrumental music in worship

- a. Singing was so bad in some congregations as to make worship impossible.
- b. Instrumental music is an *expedient*, “like song books, church buildings, papers or schools.”

4. The arguments opposing the use of instrumental music in worship

- a. There is no scriptural authority for it—the music specified in the New Testament is vocal.
- b. Something is being added to the worship, not merely used to aid what is already being practiced.
- c. Instruments in Jewish worship were not expedients, they were used, like dancing, as forms of worship.
- d. The whole issue of “expediency” needs re-examination.

C. THE LONGER-TERM RESULTS OF THE DIVISION

1. **Over time, from the “Restoration Movement,” came three more-or-less distinct groups of baptized believers**
 - a. Those who called their congregations “churches of Christ,” primarily tending to follow the course set by Stone, rejected societies, instrumental music and intercongregational cooperative arrangements of most kinds, and ultimately comprised the most “conservative” branch of the Campbell-Stone trunk.
 - b. Those who called themselves “disciples of Christ,” one offshoot of the Campbell followers, aggressively pursued recognition as a “mainstream” American Protestant denomination, tending to be the most “liberal” branch.
 - c. In the middle were the “Christian Churches,” who continued to require baptism for remission of sins, many of whom rejected the broadest inter-congregational cooperative arrangements, and some of whom even eventually turned away from instrumental music in worship.
2. **What is in a name?**
 - a. Stone and his followers had allowed only the name “Christian.”
 - b. Some insisted on being called “*Christ – ians*”
 - c. Campbell preferred the name “Disciples” or “disciples of Christ,” not so much as a name but as a description.
 - d. As the division progressed, the names “Christian Church” and “Disciples of Christ Church” were the most popular self-appellations among the society/instrument groups.
3. **What is in a society?**
 - a. “They (societies) are not designed to interfere with the perfect and untrammelled independence of any congregation of Christ whatever, whether rich or poor, influential or obscure. They are not designed to permanently concentrate power and money in the hands of a few. As a matter of fact they have never done so, nor is it possible that they every can.” -- J Eichbaum, c. 1850.
 - b. In 1882, the Missouri State Convention of the ACMS adopted a constitution which assumed the oversight of all schools operated by Disciples within the state.
 - c. In 1888, a motion before the Kansas City Alliance of Christian Preachers stated: “The brotherhood ought to have authority over individual congregations.”
 - d. In Mississippi in the late 1800s, there were efforts by the state convention of the ACMS to take control of all church property.
 - e. In Kansas and North Carolina, the ACMS state conventions claimed authority to approve all preacher hiring.
 - f. Overseas, the ACMS, without consulting its sponsoring congregations, made arrangements with denominational missionaries which resulted in property which had been purchased by funds supplied from those congregations being turned over to the denominational missionary bodies, and territories abandoned to the denominational missionaries.
4. **Results**
 - a. Preachers in Disciples of Christ congregations, after publicly denying the inspiration of scripture and the divinity of Christ, were allowed to remain in their jobs, in good standing with other congregations and with the ACMS.
 - b. Teachers in colleges sponsored by the Disciples specifically for the purpose of countering the doctrines being promulgated in liberal denominational seminaries remained in their positions after denying such teachings as the virgin birth of Christ and the resurrection.
 - c. In 1907, the Disciples of Christ joined the Federation of Protestant Churches in America.
 - d. In the early 1900s, the Disciples of Christ participated in unity discussions with a major branch of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

D. TAKING STOCK

1. **What early differences among the restorationists led to the divisions of the latter half of the 19th century?**
2. **Were these differences inevitable, and if not how might they have been resolved?**
3. **Which of their restoration ideas should we use to guide us today?**
4. **What can we learn from their mistakes?**