

OUR ROOTS

A Concise History of Churches of Christ

Lesson Five: The Great Divide

How many would say/would not say the Civil War divided our movements?

In 1860, there were about 1200 congregations in the north and about 800 in the south.

Slavery and abolitionism

CHURCHES IN THE CIVIL WAR

The American Christian Missionary Society

The Gospel Advocate and the Christian Standard

WERE WE DIVIDED BY THE WAR?

The war created two very different moods in the country—one in the North and one in the South—that no one could escape.

Northern churches

Southern churches

There was never a “formal” division, since we didn’t have any kind of a central organization to divide, but the division would soon become very evident. The official date is considered 1906 when the US Census Bureau listed two distinct religious groups as Disciples of Christ (2/3 of them in the North) and Churches of Christ (2/3 of them in the South)

FURTHER DIVIDING FACTORS

1. THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

2. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

- The first recorded instance of an instrument used in worship among the Stone-Campbell churches was in Midway, Kentucky, in 1859. The minister, L.L. Pinkerton, brought in a melodeon to help singing that was so bad it “scared even the rats from worship.”
- Why was the instrumental music so divisive?

UNITY OR DIVISION?

How could a group that began as a unity movement later fracture and splinter? How could significant differences between the Stone and Campbell groups be overcome for the sake of unity in 1832, while seemingly less important issues divide us by 1906?

At least part of the answer to these questions lies in attitude. While the New Testament is greatly concerned with doctrinal purity, doctrines at the heart of the gospel always center on Christ. The issues that usually divide us do not. Why? Because we make these issues more important and divisive than they should be.

T.B. Larimore (1843-1929)

When Thomas spoke of “being silent where the Bible is silent,” he allowed for strong opinions on what that silence meant. Some might think silence permits; others might be sure it forbids. The “silence” Campbell called for was the refusal to make those opinions divisive matters of faith.

Some of you know, but others may not be aware that T.B. Larimore was the second evangelist invited to San Angelo to hold a gospel meeting (the first was Andrew Jackson McCarty). Brother Larimore’s meeting lasted three months and he baptized 25 people. Knowing what you just learned about Larimore, do you think his influence on this church over 100 years ago is still visible in this congregation? How so?