

# THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT



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## A GLOBAL HISTORY

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# Preface

In January 2003, Paul M. Blowers, of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Douglas A. Foster, of Churches of Christ, and D. Newell Williams, of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) wrote the final paragraphs of the introduction to *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*:

A comprehensive history of the Movement written jointly by scholars from each of the three major streams may be on the horizon. Points of consensus regarding the telling of the common story are emerging. Moreover, the historians involved in this effort have come to recognize each other as persons of faith, commitment, and insight.

Having labored for many years on *The Encyclopedia*, each confessed relief that as exciting as such a project would be, it would surely be the task of a future generation of historians. *The Encyclopedia* was published in 2004 and within a year Cyrus White, publisher of Chalice Press, and Glenn Carson, president of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, approached Williams with a proposal that he write a comprehensive history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Williams replied that such a history would have to explore not only the Movement's North American streams, but its significant global development, and therefore would require a diverse team of historians working over a period of several years.

In response, White and Carson asked Williams to draw up a proposal. Williams called a meeting with Blowers and Foster at the Annual Meeting of the AAR and SBL in Philadelphia in November 2005, at which the three developed a plan for producing a global history that would involve Stone-Campbell scholars from all parts of the world. Blowers, Foster, and Williams would serve not only as researchers and writers, but as general editors of the project. The plan also called for the appointment of a managing editor who, in addition to being one of the writers, would handle details of arranging writers' conferences, communicate with the writing team, and correspond with outside reviewers. In total, the project would employ fourteen historians as researchers and writers, and they would meet face-to-face in three intensive writers' conferences over a period of three years.

In the eighteen months following submission of "final" drafts, the three general editors and the managing editor would, in correspondence with the full team, edit the manuscript for submission to Chalice Press.

Chalice Press and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society accepted the proposal in substance, and during the spring and summer of 2006 refined the details of the covenant by which the DCHS would raise funds for the project and Chalice would publish the work. The general editors asked Scott Seay, assistant professor of Church History at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS), to serve as managing editor. In support of the project, CTS agreed to provide meeting rooms and overnight accommodations for the three writers' conferences.

During the summer of 2006 the general editors and managing editor recruited ten other historians from a pool of over three hundred potential contributors to join them in writing what they were soon calling "A World History of the Stone-Campbell Movement." The group gathered for the first time at CTS on January 7-10, 2007. This first writers' conference began with worship in the Seminary's Sweeney Chapel and included a litany of commissioning led by Glenn Carson and Cyrus White in which all of the writers participated. Several members of the writing team met each other for the first time in this opening worship in which participants prayed for each other. Each day of the conference began with corporate spiritual exercises, and the conference concluded with a closing act of worship. The group followed a similar pattern of worship and spiritual practices in each of the following conferences. Through a process of small group and plenary sessions, the writers constructed an initial outline and assigned research and writing tasks. Each of the writers made a commitment to highlight in the central narrative the contributions of groups that had received less attention in previous histories, including women, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and the Stone-Campbell Movement outside North America.

First drafts from all fourteen writers were due to the managing editor by December 1, 2007. On January 6-9, 2008, the writers met at CTS for their second conference. Having reviewed each other's work, the

writers identified gaps in the previous outline which led to a significant revision of the book's structure and a new set of assignments. The goal was to submit individual contributions for a second draft of the manuscript to the managing editor by August 31, 2008. In addition, the writing team affirmed at the second conference that since the early years of the Stone-Campbell Movement in North America had already been told in multiple publications, they would give greater attention to the more recent story of its worldwide expansion, partnerships, and twenty-first century challenges.

The writers gathered at CTS for their third and final conference on November 14-16, 2008. After reviewing the second draft, the group further revised and refined the outline and identified additional tasks for each of the writers, including in some cases consultations with persons from outside the writing team. The writers also determined that since no chapter would emerge as the work of any one member of the team, and since the overall outline, revised at every conference, was a product of their corporate discernment, chapters would not be identified in the final text as having been written by particular members of the team. The new history was a genuinely multi-authored work.

Third drafts were due to the managing editor by December 1, 2009, but as could be expected, not all of the writers were able to submit their contributions on schedule. Nevertheless, by summer 2010, Williams and Foster, who had received research leaves from their respective academic institutions, Brite Divinity School and Abilene Christian University, and assumed primary responsibilities as general editors, were able to begin preparing a fourth draft that ultimately would be sent to outside reviewers. In the process, it became clear that there were still a number of topics and issues missing from the manuscript that needed to be added to fulfill the goals of the project. The general editors, managing editor, and several members of the larger team took on new research and writing assignments, and other writers provided essential resources for editing existing sections of the manuscript.

The writers and outside reviewers received the fourth draft in two installments, the first in December 2010 and the second in March 2011. Appreciation is expressed to outside readers James O. Duke, Everett Ferguson, Sheila Gillams, Robert F. Rae, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Randi Walker, who offered helpful comments on the manuscript. Carefully considering responses from both members of the writing team and the outside reviewers, Foster and Williams undertook

significant further editing of the manuscript from May 2011 through February 2012, while managing editor Scott Seay edited footnotes and tracked down missing sources. Special thanks are due to Sheila Gillams who, at the request of the editors, provided information on developments since the 1960s in the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, a predominantly African American stream of the Movement.

Though Williams, Foster, and Blowers had not expected to be involved in writing the history they saw on the horizon in 2003, they are grateful to have shared in this project. They are also grateful to have partnered with the eleven colleagues with whom they have co-authored this first attempt at a world history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. In addition, they are grateful to the academic institutions that granted members of the writing team leave time to devote to this project, especially Abilene Christian University, Brite Divinity School, and Christian Theological Seminary. Finally, they are grateful for the bold vision of Chalice Press and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in inviting such a proposal and for the commitment and energy of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in funding it.

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# Contributors

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**Paul Blowers** (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame) has taught on the faculty of Emmanuel Christian Seminary since 1989. Although he is a recognized scholar of early Christianity, he also is widely published in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. His work aims at improving the self-understanding of the Movement across its various expressions. He is a member of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

**Lawrence A. Q. Burnley** (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania) is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and currently serves as assistant vice president for diversity and intercultural relations, and assistant professor of history at Whitworth University. For many years he served as an executive for Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), travelling abroad and conducting seminars and workshops to improve race relations in the churches.

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**Edward J. Robinson** (Ph. D. Mississippi State University), after serving at Abilene Christian University for six years, joined the faculty at Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, in 2010. The author of five books, his work focuses on pioneer leaders in African American Churches of Christ.

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**D. Newell Williams** (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) has been president and professor of modern and American church history of Brite Divinity School since 2003. His numerous articles and five books have focused on the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement. He has served the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in many ways, recently finishing a term as moderator. An ordained Disciples minister, he regularly preaches and teaches in congregations and other church venues.

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# Introduction

## *A New History of the Stone-Campbell Movement*

“History is providence illustrated.”<sup>1</sup> So begins William Thomas Moore’s *A Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ*, published in 1909 to celebrate the Centennial of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*. Moore’s volume reflected the view of history that had reigned supreme in American Protestant thought in the nineteenth century. Far from a series of random events, history was the theater of God’s action. For Moore, the Stone-Campbell Movement was the climax of the forward march of New Testament Christianity.

The Stone-Campbell Movement was born of the union in the 1830s of two frontier American reform efforts—the “Christians” led by Barton W. Stone, and the “Reformers” or “disciples of Christ” led by Alexander Campbell. Unable to decide on one name, members of the Stone-Campbell Movement were known variously as Christians and Disciples of Christ, and their churches were identified as Christian Churches or Churches of Christ. By the end of the nineteenth century they had divided in North America into two streams, one taking the name Churches of Christ, the other taking the names Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ. A division in the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ stream was under way by the 1920s and eventually gave rise to groups known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), often referred to as the Disciples, and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, sometimes referred to as the independent Christian Churches. Churches in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were known as Churches of Christ.

For leaders of the generation of Stone and the Campbells, and for many in Moore’s own time, the idea of the “fall of the church” developed by early Protestants had an undeniable logic. The story had three stages beginning with the apostolic age that was Christianity’s creative and normative era. This was followed by a long period of decline during the patristic and medieval periods, finally yielding to an age of recovery or restoration begun by the Protestant Reformation. The Stone-Campbell Movement, then, could be understood as the completion of that long

yet incomplete reformation. Identifying the goal of his efforts as the *restoration* of apostolic Christianity, rather than a mere reform of existing Christianity, Alexander Campbell’s 1825 words still resounded loudly in 1909: “Celebrated as the era of reformation is, we doubt not but that the era of restoration will transcend it in importance and fame, through the long and blissful Millennium.”<sup>2</sup>

Moore expanded this providential perspective with the idea of a law of development that was part of “the very fabric of the world.” It unfolded in three phases: creation, chaos, and reconstruction. The opening of Genesis already previewed these phases: the completed and perfected creation (Gen. 1:1); the chaos that threatened to overthrow its order (1:2); and the reconstruction of the world in the progressive development of created things culminating with humankind (1:3-27).<sup>3</sup> All great movements in salvation history went through the same stages, including the Stone-Campbell Movement.

For Moore, the creative age of the Movement had begun with Thomas Campbell’s appeal for Christian unity in the *Declaration and Address* (1809). “In the beginning,” wrote Moore, “God created the movement, and simply used Thomas Campbell to put its great principles into a language that might be read by the people of the ages to come.”<sup>4</sup> Soon, however, the Movement found itself caught in the chaos of denominational rivalry, drifting from its true vocation. Then, in the early 1830s, particularly with the start of Alexander Campbell’s monthly journal the *Millennial Harbinger*, the Movement regained its compass, reconstructing its true mission to overcome Christian division once and for all and to spread New Testament Christianity to the far corners of the earth.

Early histories of the Stone-Campbell Movement largely shared Moore’s providential outlook. They usually assumed the Movement to be at the vanguard of the final phase of Christian history.<sup>5</sup> Writings like Robert Richardson’s *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (1868-69) and John Rogers’ *Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone* (1847), praised the heroes of the Movement as champions against the sectarianism of their time. The

most triumphalistic version, a study by John Rowe, made them into larger-than-life figures who transcended the faults of ordinary humans. First published in 1884 and in subsequent editions to 1913, Rowe's history contrasted the restoration of primitive Christianity with the apostasies that had littered church history for centuries.

Where, among all the existing sects, do you find such sentiments uttered as were uttered by Thomas Campbell? Is there one prominent man among any of the denominations, at this time, who proposes such measures of reform as were instituted by Thomas Campbell? Do you hear any of our Protestant divines talk as he talked, and do you see any of them labor as he labored, to crush out sectarianism and to purify the Church of all tradition? Do you find one Protestant minister among ten thousand ministers making the least plea for Christian union upon the basis of the Bible? Not one. Intellectually and morally, in comparison with Thomas Campbell, they were all pigmies.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the hyperbole, Rowe's logic rang true for many members of the Stone-Campbell Movement at the close of the nineteenth century: the Stone-Campbell Movement was the culmination of previous Protestant reforms. Another option was to argue that it was the heir to a line of persecuted, often invisible New Testament Christians who had resisted apostate Roman Catholicism. Alexander Campbell, who often referred to the Movement as "the current Reformation," could also use the second approach as he did in his 1829 debate with Bishop John Purcell.<sup>7</sup> This argument paralleled Baptist Landmarkism and provided a ready-made historical pedigree and legitimization of the Movement. It would be used in the twentieth century by the conservative Disciple James DeForest Murch in a history of the Movement widely circulated among Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Moore's portrait was more modest by comparison, but hardly less romantic and apologetic. The Disciples of Christ, he wrote, "have been called by Divine Providence to meet this emergency [of restoring apostolic Christianity] in the onward course of Christianity around the world."<sup>9</sup> Moore's contemporary James H. Garrison, who produced another history of the Movement the same year, *The Story of a Century*, hoped that as members faced a new century with new challenges they would exercise constructive self-criticism so the Movement might remain true to its calling. It was not enough to rest on the laurels of the past. The Disciples of Christ,

Garrison argued, had to adapt to changing times, to be open to new truth while faithful to their own principles.<sup>10</sup> If they could do this they had every hope of leading the way toward Christian unity in the dawning ecumenical age, the "Period of Reunion" as Garrison dubbed it.<sup>11</sup>

David Lipscomb, an early twentieth century leader in the North American Churches of Christ, also held hope for the future of the Stone-Campbell Movement in the changing landscape of Protestant Christianity, but on very different terms. Unlike Garrison, who saw the Movement working in "federation" (cooperative union) with other denominations on the way to unity,<sup>12</sup> Lipscomb declared that only by reducing Christianity to its divine simplicity and purity through a thoroughgoing restoration of precise doctrines and practices could the Movement fulfill its mission. As reliable as the voice of the Campbells and Stone had been, they were still only human voices. God would have to fight the ultimate battle for unity through his unfailing Word.<sup>13</sup> The Stone-Campbell Movement was only as good as its testimony to that Word.

The voices of Garrison and Lipscomb, added to those of Moore, Rowe, and other writers, show the diverse ethos of Stone-Campbell historiography at the one-hundredth anniversary of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*. An unmistakable triumphalism resounded in all these writers, though in far more somber tones in Lipscomb. For them, the Stone-Campbell Movement was well on its way to fulfilling its mission to serve the unity of the church and the evangelization of the world. The future held uncertainties, to be sure, but there was profound confidence in the rightness of the Movement's dedication to the Lordship of Christ, the banishment of creeds as tests of fellowship, the honoring of liberty of theological opinion, and the reign of Scripture in matters of faith and practice in the church.

### **The Critical Turn in Stone-Campbell Historiography**

The centennial histories of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* appeared just as critical historicism was emerging in the academic centers of Europe, Great Britain, and North America. This new approach viewed history as the result of patterns of cause and effect in social, cultural, and economic forces. Moore mirrored, to some degree, the influence of historicism with his notion of a "law of development" in church history. Nineteenth-century history writing, influenced by Idealism, Romanticism, and the newly expanding social sciences, had focused on macro-histories, "totalizing"

narratives that took in whole sweeps in the advance of human culture.<sup>14</sup> By the early twentieth century, however, Ernst Troeltsch and others were pointing out that historiography had come to a new crisis with the exclusion of the divine dimension of history and the recognition of the absolute relativity of all cultural values.<sup>15</sup>

Moore and his generation of Stone-Campbell historians were far too committed to the supernatural factor in Christian history, and to the transcendent integrity of biblical revelation, to heed the more radical, secularist forms of historical interpretation. However, in the early twentieth century a new generation of Stone-Campbell historians began to reflect parts of the newer critical methods. Far less openly apologetic, these writers attempted to achieve some critical distance from the Movement while still remaining faithful to it. One early example was the admission that the Movement had never been uniform, but had included differing, even conflicting ideas and views from its very beginning. As early as 1905 Errett Gates observed in his history *The Disciples of Christ* what would later become common, that the core principles of Christian unity and the restoration of apostolic Christianity were not as compatible as the Campbells and others had supposed. The potential for division was present early, capable of undermining the Movement's mission.

By 1961 Winfred Garrison was saying this more candidly. Liberals and conservatives were both present in the founding generation, he argued, and there were liberal and conservative elements even in the thinking of individual figures. The early leaders, Garrison wrote, "did not all hold the same views and transmit the same heritage of ideas."<sup>16</sup> Such insights into the complexity of the Stone-Campbell Movement would in time be crucial for historians trying to understand the divisions that took shape in the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

Another signal of this critical turn in Stone-Campbell historiography was an acknowledgment of the early Movement's American character. The early twentieth century was an important transitional period in the writing of American history. The so-called New or Progressive History attempted to move beyond the "mythic" constructions of American identity in an earlier era. As Ernst Breisach notes of this school of thought, "abstractions like providence, nation, and democracy had evoked a false sense of continuity between past, present, and future and had helped to preserve injustice." Progressive historians instead proposed to describe history on the ground, free from old ideological perspectives, and

to reveal hidden factors moving America toward a just society—though they often overlooked major problems like racism in favor of socio-economic theories of conflict and social progress.<sup>18</sup>

A transitional figure in the emergence of the New History was Frederick Jackson Turner. Though Turner upheld the old ideal of American "exceptionalism,"—its unique role in the history of nations—he believed that historians must look at social, economic, demographic, and geographic factors to tell how this nation of immigrants became an authentic democracy.<sup>19</sup> Turner's organizing principle was his famous "frontier thesis." The westward expansion of America across the frontier was the key to its self-realization as a nation and ultimate independence from Europe.

The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing...out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier...the complexity of city life.<sup>20</sup>

Given the importance of the western frontier in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, it is little surprise that some of the Movement's own historians were drawn to Turner's thesis. Winfred E. Garrison, in particular, appropriated this frontier model in his *Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ* (1931). Garrison identified three stages in the expansion of the American frontier: the colonial, the revolutionary, and the western pioneer phases. The third phase, including the Second Great Awakening and the development of a distinct culture in the trans-Appalachian frontier, was the birthplace of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Like Turner, Garrison focused heavily on a profile of the western pioneer as sturdy, enterprising, independently-minded, and self-reliant. These were the movers and shakers of the Stone-Campbell reformation. They were "prophets among the pioneers." But after the Civil War, with the vanishing of the old frontier, the Movement's advocates faced the new frontier of urbanization:

The Disciples never quite kept pace with their rivals in the cities. They lacked both the financial and the cultural resources which others drew from their constituencies in the East. Born on the frontier, they had only frontier materials out of which to develop the instruments of advancement, and this they did with laudable energy and notable

success, but subject to the limitations imposed by their origin. But if they fell behind in the cities, they were at home in the county-seat towns throughout the Mississippi Valley and, for the most part, kept abreast with their economic and cultural development as well as their growth in population.<sup>21</sup>

Garrison's emphasis on the uniquely American and frontier character of the Stone-Campbell Movement was the first of many such studies. It became typical of histories of the Movement to include a preliminary chapter on its American background.<sup>22</sup> Some of these studies would be written by outsiders looking in. For example, the so-called "Chicago School" historians, including Jerald Brauer and Martin Marty, emphasized the irony of a Movement dedicated to the destruction of denominationalism in an American context which encouraged denominationalism, itself becoming a denomination—indeed not one but three.<sup>23</sup> As recently as 1989, historian of American Evangelicalism Nathan Hatch profiled the Movement as a quintessential example of the process of "democratization" in the Second Great Awakening, again accentuating the uniquely American shape of Disciples and Christians.<sup>24</sup>

Garrison further influenced the historiography of the Movement by his reconsideration of its beginnings. Early histories, including Garrison's own *Religion Follows the Frontier* (1931), followed Robert Richardson's two-volume *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* that regarded Stone's movement as a tributary that flowed into the Campbell reform rather late in the story. Moore published *A Comprehensive History* in 1909 because it was the centennial year of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*, then widely viewed as the beginning of the Movement. In contrast, Garrison's *An American Religious Movement* (1945) begins with the statement that the Movement "began early in the nineteenth century with the union of two separate movements." The assumption of a Campbellite mainstream with a less-important Stoneite tributary had been abandoned.

This shift in understanding of Stone's role in the Movement had been anticipated in B. B. Tyler's *A History of the Disciples of Christ*, published in 1894 as part of the "American Church History" series. The change in Garrison's thinking between the publication of *Religion Follows the Frontier* and *An American Religious Movement* appears to have been a result, however, not of Tyler's work, but the publication of two books highlighting the ministry of Stone and the Christians: A. W. Fortune's *The*

*Disciples in Kentucky* and Charles Crossfield Ware's *Barton Warren Stone: Pathfinder of Christian Union*. Both books were published in 1932 to commemorate the union of the followers of Stone and Campbell and reflected not only regional pride (Stone lived in Kentucky), but also the authors' desires to celebrate a founder of the Movement whose influence they believed was less susceptible than that of Alexander Campbell to legalism and exclusivism. Reflecting this shift in perception of Stone's role in the formation of the Movement, Leroy Garrett titled his 1981 history *The Stone-Campbell Movement*. The authors of this history have also chosen that designation as the Movement's most appropriate name.

Perhaps the most dramatic critical turn in Stone-Campbell historiography was the adoption of social-scientific models of interpretation by insider historians. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., a scholar from Churches of Christ, published the most extensive early treatment. Harrell's *A Social History of the Disciples of Christ* appeared in two volumes: *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (1966) and *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900* (1973). These studies broke new ground in exploring how millennialism, nationalism ("Manifest Destiny"), and the desire for religious and social reform interacted and shaped the Stone-Campbell Movement's early reformers.

Most influential, perhaps, was Harrell's argument that ideological differences over slavery, and eventually the Civil War itself, had created a *de facto* sectional alienation that underlay other sources of division between Disciples groups north and south of the Mason-Dixon Line. A number of historians agreed with Harrell's thesis and came to see sectionalism as a major factor in the eventual breach between Disciples and Churches of Christ.

One of the virtues of Harrell's work was his attention to minorities in the Stone-Campbell Movement. His was one of the first histories to give concentrated attention to the plight of African Americans in the Movement and their role in shaping it despite the often-discriminatory record of white churches. Although Garrison and DeGroot's chapter "Negro Work" in *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (1948) discusses the work of African Americans, Harrell called attention to the reality of racism in the Movement, even after most members had discarded biblically argued theories of racial inferiority.

Such socio-historical studies of the Movement had great influence in helping its streams develop a healthy self-criticism about their internal life and their relations to the broader religious culture. In recent decades such

studies have been on the increase, and, together with more traditional approaches that focus on the Movement's intellectual history, have cumulatively created what Douglas Foster and Michael Casey have called a "new historiography" in the Stone-Campbell tradition.<sup>25</sup>

### **Globalization, Postmodernity, and the Rewriting of Stone-Campbell History**

In his *Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ*, W. T. Moore argued that in Christian history there is a "law of progress, which is always practically Westward." Christianity's eastward advance was rare, he asserted, and its "zig-zagging" northward and southward had been modest from the time it began in ancient Palestine. Moore generalized that if one examined all the facts, this law of Westward progress would be seen as universally true throughout history. He concluded that Christianity had always followed and contributed to this law of progress, and that its future success would continue to be Westward.<sup>26</sup> Writing before the World Wars doused confidence in the unrelenting progress of Western Protestant civilization, Moore believed that the Stone-Campbell Movement was a microcosm of this law of Christianity's westward progress and mirrored the ideal of American manifest destiny.

A century later, this vision seems overconfident, narrow, and unsustainable, though some may still find sympathy with it. For one thing, it hardly does justice to the fact that Christianity has always been moving in many directions. Examples include the early southward expansion into Africa, the important eastward missions of Nestorian Christians to India and China as early as the seventh century, and the northward track of Byzantine Christianity into Slavic lands in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Even in the modern missionary age, amid the "discovery" of the Americas, Christianity's penetration of the Far East and of the southern hemisphere, notably Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, are a major part of its story. In fact, as missiologists now can demonstrate, the center of world Christianity has moved from the West (Europe, Britain, and America) to the global South including Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia. Already these regions are sending missionaries to re-evangelize the West.

But neither does Moore's vision of a constant westward progress do justice to the Stone-Campbell Movement itself. Early in its history the Stone-Campbell Movement in the United State moved eastward to interact

with its British roots—influencing and being influenced by restorationist groups there. The Movement in Canada intersected with and was shaped by its southern neighbors as well as British immigrants. Stone-Campbell Christians from the northern hemisphere soon carried their faith to the southern, and churches formed in New Zealand and Australia. The first international missionaries from North America went to the Middle East, to Turkish-occupied Palestine, south to Jamaica in the Caribbean, and to Africa. In the twentieth century Stone-Campbell missions proliferated all over the world, and numerous indigenous traditions took a life of their own far beyond the English-speaking world. Any history of the Stone-Campbell Movement written today requires telling the story of this global reality.

Globalization has already dramatically reshaped historiography. In the study of American history alone, significant changes in the reconstruction of the American past call into question older limited analyses. Thomas Bender, for example, speaks of the campaign to "deprovincialize the narrative of American history" and "to integrate the stories of American history with other, larger stories from which, with a kind of continental self-sufficiency, the United States has isolated itself."<sup>27</sup> America is not a self-enclosed identity but a complex construction of the multiple historical trajectories of its constituent peoples and nationalities; not a melting pot, if that means a single coherent narrative of national identity, but a kaleidoscope of multiple identities. These new global approaches aspire to dethrone the "nation" as the key historiographic category. Whether or not they can produce coherent and compelling understandings rather than simply being reactionary to older versions of American history and identity, the critics will judge.

Another watershed in historical studies is the acknowledgment of the shift from modernity to post-modernity. In Moore's time, historiography was geared to macro-history and totalizing narratives, especially those focused on "progress" or "modernization." A shift away from macro-history began in the 1970s, especially rejecting history written from the standpoint of dominant institutions or socio-political elites. Instead, the focus was on "micro-histories" and the stories of outsiders and marginalized groups, especially immigrants, racial minorities, and women.<sup>28</sup> The question of how—or whether—these stories should be included in a larger narrative has generated considerable debate. Are they merely detached stories and perspectives, or can they be made integral parts of an overarching story?

Furthermore, how do historians construct or “impose” such a larger story?

The impact of globalization and postmodernism on the historical field in general also poses important challenges for church historians, including historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement. For many years scholars have produced histories of the Stone-Campbell Movement in specific geographical contexts. While indispensable for the information they provide, these studies tend to fit the specific story into a macro-narrative of the Movement that emphasizes its American origins and development.

In 1958, for example, Robert G. Nelson, former Disciples missionary to Jamaica, produced a centennial history, *Disciples of Christ in Jamaica, 1858-1958*. The book is largely a chronicle of the institutional dimensions of the Disciples mission in Jamaica, but also an apology for the ecumenical mission principles of the Disciples of Christ in the United States.<sup>29</sup> While Nelson briefly refers to the challenges of native Jamaican leaders to take over the work, the missing element is the story of how indigenous Jamaicans embraced and shaped the Stone-Campbell Movement.

In contrast, Daisy L. Machado’s 2003 study *Of Borders and Margins: Hispanic Disciples in Texas, 1888-1945*, is “history from a ‘margins’ perspective.” Machado speaks in a postmodern and “postcolonial” manner about Anglo Disciples’ experience of the “other” in the Hispanics of the borderlands whom they encountered and eventually evangelized beginning in the late nineteenth century. For Machado, this was not a mere abstraction or set of historical data—it was reality “shaped by a past that lives on in the present and continues to affect Hispanic Disciples living in the United States.”<sup>30</sup>

Machado parallels the telling of national history “by those who had the power to impose themselves... [and] to name themselves and to exclude others from that self-definition” with the recounting of the clash of identities between largely Anglo-American Disciples and Texas Hispanics who had deep roots in a Latino Catholic culture.<sup>31</sup> In this context, Machado argues, the American ideal of conquering the western frontier, which found expression in Stone-Campbell Movement missions, had important and often disturbing implications, including the missionaries’ sense of cultural and racial superiority. The Movement succeeded, in her view, only to the extent that it was able to raise up Mexican-Texan church leaders who endured the prejudices and fostered the Movement’s virtues on their own terms.

Machado’s work shows the need for histories of the indigenization of the Stone-Campbell Movement, even if they disrupt consensus interpretations of the Movement’s expansion. Another such history is that of the General Assembly of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, International, sometimes referred to as the Assembly Churches. The African American body has remained largely independent of the predominantly white North American streams of the Movement.

Narrating the stories of women in the Stone-Campbell Movement has also been an important dimension of the postmodern reframing. Numerous studies have appeared in recent years, some of a more biographical or anecdotal character, including Debra Hull’s *Christian Church Women* and Loretta Long’s *The Life of Selina Campbell*.<sup>32</sup> Others openly engaged the concerns of feminist historians and theologians, including Mary Ellen Lantzer Pereira’s *Women Preaching in the Christian Church*.<sup>33</sup>

Because ideas (theological, ecclesiological, missiological, etc.) and identities have no reality apart from their embodiment in human lives, seeking to recapture the unique experiences of individual leaders has been crucial. An excellent example is Edward Robinson’s work on the ministry and legacy of Samuel Robert Cassius (1853-1931). Cassius was born in Virginia as an enslaved African, but became an effective evangelist and organizer among African American Churches of Christ. He also worked against American racism, writing a powerful attack on discrimination in 1920 titled *Third Birth of a Nation*, a response to the D. W. Griffith movie *Birth of a Nation*.<sup>34</sup> The likes of Cassius raise questions about who were the true “progressives” in an era when liberal Protestantism was laying sole claim to the “social gospel.” D. Duane Cummins’s biographies of A. Dale Fiers and Kenneth L. Teegarden highlighted their leadership in regard to controversial social issues.<sup>35</sup>

The new historiography of the Stone-Campbell Movement has also provided different self-definitions of the Movement’s streams. For example, recent studies of Churches of Christ show how factors besides legalism or exclusivism, such as counter-cultural millennialism, shaped the consciousness of churches alienated from “mainline” Disciples of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Another area of fruitful study has been the debate among scholars from Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and Churches of Christ over whether their streams legitimately qualify as “Evangelicals” in the American Protestant context,<sup>37</sup> even amid the larger dispute over the usefulness of the term.<sup>38</sup>



## The Challenge of a New History of the Stone-Campbell Movement

Clearly among the foremost challenges of writing a new history of the Stone-Campbell Movement is telling the story in a way that includes its multiple dimensions, but also explains the ways in which those streams continue to intersect and interact. When *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* was published in 2004, it opened up new opportunities for the Movement's constituencies to explore the history that has both held them together and broken them apart. This study is in part a follow-up to that project. Its contributors serve as guides to the "movements within the Movement." Major attention is given to dimensions of those movements that have received little notice in earlier histories or which deserve to be revisited and reassessed.

An especially great burden of the present study is to expand the understanding of the international scope of the Stone-Campbell Movement. The World Convention of Churches of Christ has reported from research conducted by Clinton Holloway that the Stone-Campbell Movement has manifestations in at least 180 nations.<sup>39</sup> Though many are the outgrowth of missionary work and remain relatively small, the missiological and ecclesiological dynamics of these communities and their unique developments of Stone-Campbell identity constitute a whole new field of exploration.

This study follows a generally chronological order beginning with the emergence of the Movement in the United States. Chapter one recounts the story of the Stone and Campbell movements and their union in the 1830s. Chapters two through five continue the story in the United States up to the first decade of the twentieth century. The influences of sectionalism, war, race and gender receive special attention. Separate chapters are devoted to the emergence of African American institutions and women's organizations, topics that have not received extensive examination in general Stone-Campbell histories. In chapter five, both social and theological factors receive attention in the description of the division in North America into Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ at the end of the nineteenth century. The chapter also identifies important differences within these two streams.

Chapter six examines the origins of the Movement in the United Kingdom and the British Empire and the development of British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand streams of the Stone-Campbell Movement. While the churches in the UK and British Empire

were similar to those in the United States, these are nevertheless unique stories shaped by distinct origins and cultural contexts. One significant difference was the absence of influences from Barton Stone in the development of these streams.

Chapter seven traces the remarkable global expansion of the Stone-Campbell Movement undertaken by the churches in Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and North America from the 1870s to the 1920s. This is a first attempt to write this wide-ranging and diverse story. The chapter relates this missionary effort with an eye both to chronology and geography, from beginnings in Scandinavia, France, and Turkey, to Asia, the South Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The chapter also gives attention to the development of differing theologies and strategies of mission, noting the significant influence of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.

The next six chapters continue the story of developments in North America, the UK, and the British Commonwealth. Chapter eight describes the consolidation and complexity of North American Churches of Christ. The focus of chapter nine is the growing cooperation yet ultimate division within North American Disciples of Christ. The 1971 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* recorded that division with separate listings for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. The following chapter expands the story of the emergence and development of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. The next two chapters describe responses of the North American streams to social changes that began in the 1960s, and distinctive theological and institutional developments in those streams. Chapter thirteen discusses developments in the UK and British Commonwealth, including division, growing cooperative efforts, and unions with other churches. It also gives attention to the churches' response to issues of war, gender, sexuality, and race.

Chapters fourteen through seventeen pick up the story of the spread and development of the Stone-Campbell Movement internationally, in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. Though indigenization is a major theme in these accounts, reflecting the current state of historical research and writing on the Stone-Campbell Movement the authors of this text relied largely on sources written by missionaries. The writers hope that this first attempt at a global history will stimulate the writing of additional indigenous histories.

Chapter eighteen focuses on the theme that birthed the Stone-Campbell Movement and that became the greatest irony of its existence—Christian unity. Though established by advocates of the unity of Christ’s church, the movement itself has divided more than once. Yet at the same time, the quest for unity has continued at the heart of this global movement.

An important new horizon of Stone-Campbell history, embodied in the present work and reflected by initiatives such as the World Convention of Churches

of Christ, the Stone-Campbell Dialogue, and *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, is expression of a common identity among the Movement’s faithful—an identity transcending those things that have divided us, whether doctrine, practice, race, ethnicity, gender, or local heritage. Claiming that common ground will be a crucial gauge of whether the Stone-Campbell Movement will continue to move, witnessing faithfully to the gospel of reconciliation and the reign of Jesus Christ in and for the world.

# 1

## Emergence of the Stone-Campbell Movement

The Stone-Campbell Movement began with the union in the 1830s of two North American groups: the Christians led by Barton W. Stone, and the Reformers led by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Influenced by a host of people, ideas, and events, both groups affirmed that Christian unity was critical to the evangelization of the world and the in-breaking of Christ's earthly reign of peace and justice. The founders of both groups were identified with Presbyterian denominations—Stone in the United States, and the Campbells in Northern Ireland. Also, each group attracted significant numbers of Baptists. Yet despite these similarities, there were significant differences between the two groups.

### Christians

The Christians emerged from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, a body profoundly shaped by colonial revivalism. The revivals that appeared among New Jersey Presbyterians in the 1720s proved controversial. The central issue was the revivalists' insistence that religion was a "sensible thing," an *experience* of the work of the Holy Spirit, and not merely a matter of believing the right doctrines and living

a moral life. Matters came to a head in 1741 when the anti-revival Old Light party expelled the pro-revival New Light party from the Synod of Philadelphia. Following the division, the New Lights constituted themselves as the Synod of New York and continued to grow, while the Old Lights declined. In 1758, the two parties reunited largely on New Light terms.<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian Church from which the Christians emerged in the early nineteenth century was the church formed by the reunion of 1758.

Barton Warren Stone (1772-1844) joined this church while studying at the classical academy of Presbyterian minister David Caldwell in Guilford County, North Carolina. When he entered the academy in January 1790, a neighboring Presbyterian pastor, James McGready, was leading a revival among the fifty or so students of the academy. McGready stood squarely in the tradition of the colonial awakening, preaching that human beings were created to know and enjoy God. Having lost this capacity because of the first sin, however, they sought happiness through the satisfaction of their "animal nature," the possession of "riches" and "honors," and a "religion of external duties" which they thought appeased God who remained unknown and unloved. Yet none of these substitutes could satisfy their longings for happiness. At death they would be separated from God eternally and suffer torments beyond human comprehension.<sup>2</sup>

McGready urged that salvation delivered God's elect from future punishment and enabled them to experience in this life the happiness for which they were created—the happiness of knowing and enjoying God. Heaven was a continuation of this happiness. Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ caused the sinner to fall in love with God and come to Christ, both for pardon from the penalty of sin and release from its power. Though this faith was a gift from God, only sinners who *applied to Christ*—who sought faith—could have assurance of receiving it. One applied to Christ by using the "means of grace," which



The Old Northwest

included withdrawing from distracting activities such as dancing and playing cards, asking God to change one's heart, and meditating on the horrors of sin and the full and free salvation in Jesus Christ.

Stone had entered Caldwell's academy with the intention of pursuing a career in law, a career he believed would enable him to attain the wealth, status, and pleasures that, according to the popular literature of his day, would bring him happiness. Born December 24, 1772, near Port Tobacco, Maryland, he had grown up in an Anglican family long accustomed to wealth and social standing. His father, John Stone, whose holdings in land and sixteen enslaved Africans identified the family as upper middle class, had died when Barton was three. Four years later, in the midst of the American Revolution, his mother Mary had moved the family to Pittsylvania County, Virginia, where they had continued to identify with the Church of England.

Though Stone tried to ignore the revival, he could not deny that the converts seemed to enjoy a happiness he did not know. Hearing McGready preach, he resolved to seek the gift of faith. In keeping with Presbyterian teaching of the time, his period of seeking faith lasted a full year. At one point he despaired of ever receiving it. He reported that he received the faith he sought through a sermon delivered by McGready's colleague, William Hodge.

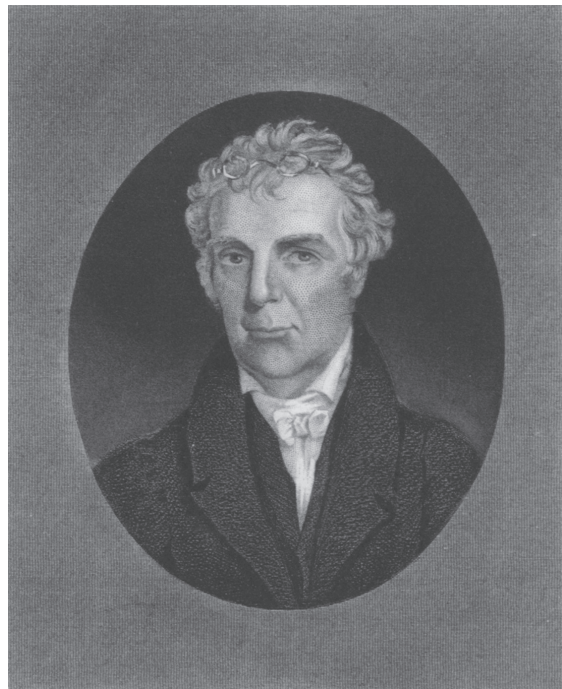
With much animation, and with many tears, he spoke of the love of God to sinners, and of what that love had done for sinners. My heart warmed with love for that lovely character described... My mind was absorbed in the doctrine—to me it appeared new.

According to revivalist Presbyterians, to find one's heart "warmed" with love to God and to find something "new" in the preaching of what God had done for sinners through Jesus Christ were signs of faith. Stone reported that the truth of God's love triumphed, and that he fell at the feet of Christ, "a willing subject."<sup>3</sup>

Following his conversion, Stone felt a call to preach the gospel. Completing his studies at Caldwell's academy, he became a candidate for the ministry in the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina in spring 1793. This was the beginning of a struggle, which, though it would not prevent him from being ordained as a Presbyterian minister, would ultimately lead him to separate from the Presbyterian Church—a struggle between Presbyterian doctrine and Enlightenment reason.

The Presbytery directed Stone and former classmate Samuel Holmes to prepare for an examination on the doctrine of the Trinity by reading a work by the seventeenth century Dutch Reformed theologian, Herman Witsius.<sup>4</sup> Stone remembered that

Witsius would first prove that there was but one God, and then that there were three persons in this one God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—that the Father was unbegotten—the Son eternally begotten, and the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son—that it was idolatry to worship more Gods than one, and yet equal worship must be given to the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.



Engraving of Barton W. Stone from a portrait by Alexander Bradford who lived in Georgetown, Kentucky, in the 1820s. It appeared in the *Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone Written by Himself, With Additions and Reflections by Elder John Rogers*, published in 1847.

Previously Stone had prayed to the Son without fear of idolatry or concern for equal worship to the members of the Trinity. The result of his effort to follow Witsius' Trinitarian teaching was that he no longer knew how to pray, which greatly diminished the enjoyment of God he had known since his conversion. "Till now," he wrote,

“secret prayer and meditation had been my delightful employ. It was a heaven on earth to approach my God, and Saviour; but now this heavenly exercise was checked, and gloominess and fear filled my troubled mind.” When he and Holmes discovered that each was having the same problem, they stopped studying Witsius, convinced that his text obscured rather than enlightened the truth and had disrupted their spiritual development.<sup>5</sup>

Like other Americans of the Revolutionary generation, Stone had been influenced by the Enlightenment dictum of John Locke that propositions inconsistent with clear and distinct ideas were “contrary to reason.” To Stone, the idea that there was more than one God, which he found implied in Witsius’ teaching that equal worship must be given to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was inconsistent with the clear and distinct idea that there is one God. Not considering the possibility of holding in tension seemingly contradictory propositions, Stone concluded that Witsius’ treatment was unintelligible.<sup>6</sup>

Witsius’ work, however, was not the only treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. Henry Patillo (1726-1801), a respected member of the Orange Presbytery, championed the views of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) who had been influenced by the Enlightenment. Watts argued that the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity was not contrary to reason. To be sure, the idea that “three Gods are one God, or three persons are one person” was contrary to reason. The Scriptures, according to Watts, taught that “the same true Godhead belongs to the Father, Son and Spirit, and... that the Father, Son and Spirit, are three distinct agents or principles of action, as may reasonably be called persons.” Thus, to say “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God” was not contrary to the proposition that there is one God.<sup>7</sup>

As to the proper worship owed to the members of the Trinity, Watts asserted that the Scriptures revealed all that was necessary. One could be sure that it was proper to worship Father, Son, and Spirit because Scripture clearly reveals that they share in the divine nature or godhead, implying that we should worship the members of the Trinity with an eye to the specific place, work, and character Scripture attributes to each.<sup>8</sup>

Stone and Holmes obtained Watts’ “treatise” and accepted his views.<sup>9</sup> Stone’s struggles with Presbyterian doctrine and Enlightenment reason, however, did not end with his discovery of Watts’ treatise. By spring 1794, he had decided to pursue some other calling. “My mind,” he wrote, “was embarrassed with many abstruse doctrines, which I admitted as true; yet could not satisfactorily

reconcile with others which were plainly taught in the Bible.” As before, when Stone had struggled with the doctrine of the Trinity, his intellectual difficulties affected his devotion: “Having been so long engaged and confined to the study of systematic divinity from the Calvinistic mould, my zeal, comfort, and spiritual life became considerably abated.”<sup>10</sup>

Yet he could not shake his call to ministry. After teaching for a time in Georgia, he returned to North Carolina in spring 1796, successfully completed his theological examinations, and received a license from the Orange Presbytery to preach the gospel as a probationer. He had not, however, overcome his earlier difficulties with Calvinist theology. He admitted that during his first years of ministry, he accepted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination as true but beyond human understanding. As a result, he avoided it in preaching.<sup>11</sup> David Caldwell had advised just such a course of action to another of his students, Samuel McAdow, who later became a leader of the Cumberland Presbyterians.<sup>12</sup>

In late 1797, the Presbyterian congregations at Cane Ridge and Concord in central Kentucky invited Stone to serve as a probationer. The following spring, he received a call through the Transylvania Presbytery to become pastor of the two congregations. October 4, 1798, was set for his ordination.<sup>13</sup> Knowing that he would be required to “sincerely receive and adopt” the Westminster Confession of Faith as “containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures,” he undertook a careful re-examination of the document. This resulted in an even greater crisis than before. He could not believe the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the Confession. Furthermore, he had great doubts about the Confession’s teaching on predestination. Convinced that God *gives* faith, he struggled to understand how a God who loves sinners could give faith to some by a special work of the Spirit and condemn others for not believing.<sup>14</sup> In Lockean terms, the clear and distinct idea was that God loves sinners and desires that they come to faith.

As the day of his ordination at the Cane Ridge meeting house arrived, Stone informed James Blythe (1765-1842) and Robert Marshall (1760-1833), two leaders of the Presbytery, of his difficulties with the Confession’s teaching on the Trinity. He did not, however, share his doubts regarding the doctrine of predestination. The Adopting Act of 1729 had allowed Presbyterian ordination of ministerial candidates who would only partially subscribe to the Confession of Faith if, in the view of the presbytery, the candidate’s objections to

the Confession concerned “non-essentials.” Though later repealed by the Old Light Synod of Philadelphia, the Adopting Act’s ideas continued to guide many Presbyterians.

Failing to relieve Stone of his difficulties with the Confession, Blythe and Marshall asked him how far he would be willing to adopt it. Stone answered that he would be willing to do so as far as he saw it consistent with the Word of God. Blythe and Marshall indicated that Stone’s partial subscription was sufficient, and the ordination proceeded.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, a revival had begun in Logan County, Kentucky, forty miles north of Nashville, Tennessee, that would help Stone resolve his difficulties with the question of how a God who loved sinners could give faith to some and condemn others for not having it. James McGready, whose preaching had fueled the revival at Caldwell’s Academy, had become pastor in 1796 of three congregations named after Logan County rivers—Red, Muddy, and Gasper. By spring 1797, a brief awakening had occurred at the Gasper River church. During summer and fall 1798, awakenings had begun at the Gasper, Muddy, and Red River congregations.

These revivals grew out of sacramental meetings—a Scottish tradition widely adopted by eighteenth-century American Presbyterians. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, ministers from several congregations preached on themes related to conversion and the Christian life. On Sunday they observed the Lord’s Supper, with a thanksgiving service often following on Monday. The pattern begun in 1798 of heightened religious interest and conversions associated with sacramental meetings was repeated the next summer. The hallmarks of what became known as the Great Revival in the West (1797-1805)—large crowds, camping on the grounds, and the phenomenon of “falling”—first appeared during the summer of 1800.<sup>16</sup>

Stone, who attended one of McGready’s Logan County camp meetings in early spring 1801, described the falling. “Many, very many fell down, as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparently breathless and motionless state—sometimes for a few moments reviving, and exhibiting symptoms of life by a deep groan, or piercing shriek, or by a prayer for mercy most fervently uttered.” Gradually the “gloomy cloud, which had covered their faces” gave way to smiles of hope and joy; then they rose “shouting deliverance” and addressing the surrounding crowd “in language truly eloquent and impressive.”<sup>17</sup>

Even more amazing than the falling was that sinners appeared to obtain faith within a matter of hours. In the late eighteenth century, Presbyterians, along with Baptists and Methodists, assumed that the sinner’s application to Christ, or seeking of faith, would last from several weeks to a year, as it had for Stone. McGready taught that it was only when sinners had been thoroughly convinced of their helplessness to save themselves that they would perceive the excellence and glory of what God had done for sinners in Jesus Christ. Presbyterians understood this process of “conviction” to be a work of the Spirit that prepared the sinner to believe.<sup>18</sup>

Before attending McGready’s sacramental meeting in Logan County Stone had developed the view that God gives faith through the hearing of the gospel without a special work of the Spirit to prepare one to believe. Yet difficulties with the idea had prevented him from declaring it publicly. Stone reported in 1805 that his difficulties were removed by what he believed was the work of God in the revival. “Many old and young, even little children, professed religion, and all declared the same simple gospel of Jesus. I knew the voice and felt the power.”<sup>19</sup>

Stone believed this voice was the voice of God speaking through the gospel. The power he felt was the power of the gospel to make sinners fall in love with God and desire both forgiveness of sin and release from its power. Stone reported, “I saw that faith was the sovereign gift of God to all sinners, not the act of faith, but the object or foundation of faith, which is the testimony of Jesus, or the gospel; that sinners had power to believe this gospel, and then come to God and obtain grace and salvation.”<sup>20</sup>

Convinced that God gives faith through hearing the gospel without a previous work of the Spirit, Stone returned to central Kentucky and urged sinners to “believe now, and be saved.” Soon reports of falling at meetings spread throughout the region. In June, Stone conducted a sacramental meeting at his Concord church in which Baptists and Methodists, as well as Presbyterians, participated. The outdoor meeting continued for five days and nights. Colonel Robert Patterson, longtime member of the Lexington Presbyterian Church, attended and began a chronicle of the rising tide of revival in central Kentucky. Patterson estimated the attendance at Concord as 4,000 and the number who fell as 150. Presbyterian communion services marked by falling and the participation of Baptists and Methodists continued in the region through July.<sup>21</sup>

Stone's sacramental meeting at Cane Ridge, later known as the Cane Ridge Revival, began Friday, August 6, 1801, and continued through Thursday. Observers estimated the number of wagons on the grounds on Saturday and Sunday at between 125 and 148, covering the equivalent of four city blocks. Estimates of the number of people on Saturday and Sunday ranged from 10,000 to 20,000. One participant counted seven ministers preaching at the same time in different parts of the camp, some using stumps and wagons as platforms. Eighteen Presbyterian and four Methodist ministers participated. Between eight and eleven hundred took the Lord's Supper, administered Scottish Presbyterian style to successive groups of communicants seated at tables in the meeting house. Estimates of the number who fell ranged from three hundred to three thousand.<sup>22</sup>

An unidentified black preacher who addressed a circle of African Americans was likely a Baptist.<sup>23</sup> There is no evidence, however, of widespread mingling of blacks and whites at the Cane Ridge meeting. Blacks were members of Presbyterian churches, but worship services were segregated. Black members at Cane Ridge sat in a loft that they entered by a ladder from outside the building.<sup>24</sup>

Stone's Presbyterian colleagues Richard McNemar, Robert Marshall, John Thompson, and John Dunlavy accepted his "new light" concerning faith. However, not all Presbyterians were pleased. Stone recounted that the strict orthodox Presbyterian clergy "writhed" under the doctrines, but did not publicly oppose them at first because of the phenomenal success they seemed to have among the people.

By fall 1802 the situation had changed. Suffering membership losses to the Baptists and Methodists, some Presbyterians began aggressively preaching the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. In response, the Methodist and Baptist preachers focused on their distinctive doctrines. Desiring to maintain the unity that had characterized the Revival, Stone, McNemar, Marshall, Thompson, and Dunlavy refused to preach the distinctive doctrines of the Presbyterians, continuing, instead, to call simply for sinners to believe the gospel and be saved.<sup>25</sup>

By summer 1803, differences arose over order in the services, especially "mingled exercises"—the simultaneous offering aloud of individual prayers and exhortations. This practice, which had been a feature of the revival in Logan County, appeared in central Kentucky in fall 1801, following the Cane Ridge meeting.

As the revival continued, physical manifestations such as jerking and laughing increasingly accompanied the mingled exercises.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, Stone and the other ministers who believed that faith came by hearing the gospel without a special work of the Spirit supported mingled exercises, which would seem to have made it difficult to hear the gospel. Furthermore, they did little to discourage the growing catalog of physical manifestations, including dancing and singing. Some of the ministers who opposed Stone's view of faith approved of at least some of the disputed practices. Generally, however, Presbyterians who opposed the new doctrine tended to view mingled exercises as unauthorized.<sup>27</sup>

Matters came to a head at the Synod of Kentucky that opened in Lexington September 6, 1803. Stone and his colleagues could see that the majority of the Synod was determined to suspend them from the ministry over their doctrinal stance. On September 10, the ministers presented a protest declaring their withdrawal from the Synod's jurisdiction rather than be "prosecuted before a Judge (Confession of Faith), whose authority to decide, we cannot in Conscience acknowledge."<sup>28</sup>

The Synod's efforts to heal the breach were unsuccessful, and the five formally united as the "Springfield Presbytery." They chose that name because of the support they had received at the Washington Presbytery meeting at Springfield, Ohio in 1803, and the "evident displays of divine power" during the sacrament held at that meeting. In January 1804, the Springfield Presbytery published a one-hundred-page pamphlet titled *An Apology for Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Synod of Kentucky*. This document stated their position on faith and called for the renunciation of creeds as a means of maintaining the unity of the church. The Revival, they insisted, had demonstrated that unity was a gift of the Spirit and that the Bible was a sufficient rule of faith and practice. They also were clear that they continued to regard the members of the Synod "as brethren in the Lord," and that they did not desire to separate from their communion, or to exclude them from theirs.<sup>29</sup>

Stone reported that the *Apology* alleviated much of the prejudice against them that resulted from the Synod's opposition to their doctrine and convinced many of the truth of their teachings. He noted that positions expressed in the pamphlet resulted in positive relations with the Methodists, who apparently assumed there would be a quick union with the Springfield Presbytery. The very popularity of the Presbytery, however, made it hard not to

think of themselves as a distinct party, undermining their intention to maintain the unity witnessed in the Revival.<sup>30</sup>

At the June 1804 meeting of the Presbytery at Cane Ridge, Richard McNemar offered a solution. He proposed adoption of a document he had drafted titled *Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*. It declared: “We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large.” On June 28, 1804, the members of the Presbytery signed their names as witnesses to the document. Appended to the *Last Will and Testament* was “The Witnesses’ Address,” in which the subscribers declared that it was “from a principle of love to Christians of every name, the precious cause of Jesus, and dying sinners who are kept from the Lord by the existence of sects and parties in the church” that they had consented “to die the death.”<sup>31</sup>

The witnesses did not, however, give up their prerogatives as Presbyterian ministers. Like all Presbyterians, they rejected legislating for the church on their own authority rather than the authority of Scripture. They renounced licensing and ordaining ministers on the basis of the candidate’s adherence to a creed or confession of faith. Yet, they did not give up their responsibility as ordained ministers to examine, license, and ordain qualified candidates recommended by congregations.<sup>32</sup>

At the June 1804 meeting the witnesses also determined to be known exclusively as Christians. Rice Haggard (1769-1819) had recommended this in a sermon at Bethel Church two months earlier, arguing that Acts 11:26 should be interpreted as meaning that God had given the disciples the name Christian. A decade earlier Haggard had convinced Virginia and North Carolina Methodists led by James O’Kelly (1735-1826) who rejected Bishop Francis Asbury’s appointment system to adopt the name Christian.<sup>33</sup>

Marshall and Thompson noted that the Presbytery’s belief that the millennium was near was a major influence in their adoption of the *Last Will and Testament*.<sup>34</sup> As early as the sixteenth century English Puritans had associated the thousand-year rule of Christ that many saw prophesied in Revelation 20:1-6 with a sudden growth of Christianity. David Rice (1733-1816), the father of Presbyterianism in Kentucky, had identified overcoming division among Christians and renunciation of slaveholding as other marks of the millennium’s approach.

The witnesses believed the Revival had overcome division among Christians. Stone also believed slavery was ending—a belief supported by the public record. Emancipations in Stone’s county increased during the course of the revival, largely as a result of deeds

of manumission filed by members of the Cane Ridge congregation.<sup>35</sup> Reared in a slaveholding family, Stone had become an opponent of slavery in 1797. In a letter to neighboring Presbyterian pastor Samuel Rennels he had argued against the biblical defense of slavery. “Slavery,” he declared, “dissolves the ties of God and man; ties the most strong and indissoluble of all others. One of these ties is conjugal affection. The loving husband is torn from the weeping distracted embraces of the most affectionate wife[,] carried far off & sold like a beast...how must the happiness of this loving pair be forever destroyed!...can this be right? Can it be agreeable to a good God?”

Stone argued that Scripture interprets Scripture and that no interpretation could be authoritative if it stood in conflict with the biblical revelation of God’s love for all.<sup>36</sup> In 1800 he had presented a resolution from the Cane Ridge and Concord churches to the West Lexington Presbytery declaring that slavery was “a moral evil, very heinous, and consequently sufficient to exclude such as will continue in the practice of it from the privileges of the church.” A year later, he had filed a deed of manumission for two enslaved Africans, Ned and Lucy, whom he had received as a bequest from his mother the year before.<sup>37</sup>

The signers of the *Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery* thought they were promoting the unity of the church and thus hastening the coming of the millennium. However, the seven years following the publication of the document were marked by both external and internal controversy. During 1804, they were “sorely pressed” by the Synod’s charge that their preaching that Jesus died for all and not merely for an elect implied universal salvation. Key to the Synod’s charge was the doctrine of substitutionary atonement by which Jesus’ death purchased salvation for all for whom he died. They replied that Christ died to restore sinners to union with God by a radical display of grace and not as a substitute for sinners. Stone developed the new doctrine in a thirty-six-page pamphlet titled *Atonement: The Substance of Two Letters Written to a Friend*, published in spring 1805. This publication sparked a written controversy with members of the Synod that expanded to Stone’s doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>38</sup>

In the midst of this controversy, Shaker missionaries from New York visited the Christians in 1805 proclaiming that Christ had returned to earth in the person of Ann Lee (1736-1784) and promising perfect holiness to all who accepted celibacy and communal ownership of property. Two of Stone’s closest colleagues, Richard McNemar and John Dunlavy, became Shakers, along with members of



their congregations. Stone attributed the success of the Shaker mission among the Christians to the desire of some in his movement for perfect holiness and what he called the “wild, enthusiastic speculations” of his fellow preachers, including the claim that the Millennium had begun.<sup>39</sup> Stone, who had married Elizabeth Campbell just prior to the Cane Ridge Meeting, could not believe he would be a more perfect Christian without her and strongly opposed the Shakers wherever they went.<sup>40</sup>

The major issue at an October 1808 ministers meeting was slavery. Some ministers from Ohio proposed that the churches withdraw Christian fellowship from slaveholders. Stone and David Purviance, another Kentucky preacher who opposed slavery, argued against making it a matter of fellowship. Stone reportedly said that the conduct and character of every slaveholder in their churches was exemplary in every other way. Furthermore, many of them had “suffered great persecutions for the Christian cause and name, and that to declare them out of fellowship would be ungenerous and cruel in the extreme.”<sup>41</sup> This was quite a change for Stone, who eight years earlier had proposed to the West Lexington Presbytery the exclusion of slaveholders, and may reflect his fear of losing members after suffering significant losses to the Shakers. Stone may also have come to believe that the best way to influence erring Christians was not to expel them, but to remain in fellowship.

The Christians also struggled with the issue of doctrinal uniformity that emerged over differences regarding baptism. At an 1807 conference held to discuss the subject the group decided

...that every brother and sister should act freely, and according to their conviction of right—and that we should cultivate the long-neglected grace of forbearance towards each other—they who should be immersed, should not despise those who were not, and *vice versa*.

Several Christian preachers, including Stone, adopted believers’ immersion and were immersed.<sup>42</sup>

Stone reported that despite the 1807 decision allowing wide leeway on believers’ immersion, some ministers were unhappy that members of their congregations were submitting to it. Among those ministers were Marshall and Thompson who began to recommend that the Christians should have a formal statement of belief, a “*formulary*...by which uniformity might be promoted and preserved.” Stone and others opposed the idea, insisting that the arguments for a “formulary” were the

same used for the creation of every divisive human creed ever written.<sup>43</sup>

At a general conference at Bethel, Kentucky, in August 1810, the ministers decided that the Christians would establish a formal union and publish a statement of their current views, but not adopt a formulary. The formal union amounted to nothing more than the participants subscribing to a resolution to “unite themselves together *formally*, taking the word of God as their only rule and standard for doctrine, discipline and government, and promising subjection to each other in the Lord.” The group appointed ministers Marshall, Thompson, Stone, Purviance, and Hugh Andrews to write a document expressing the Christians’ current beliefs concerning doctrine and church government. They hoped such a statement would eliminate prejudice by individuals who believed they denied the divinity and atonement of Christ and rejected church order, and would open a door for cordial relations with other denominations.<sup>44</sup>

Seven months later, at a general conference at Mount Tabor, Kentucky, the committee reported that they could not come to a consensus on their current views. Marshall, Thompson, and Andrews insisted on orthodox statements on the Trinity and atonement, which Stone and Purviance opposed. After discussion, the conference declared that a consensus statement was not necessary. They asserted that they could simply continue in love and unity, bearing with one another despite differences in doctrine.<sup>45</sup> The conference also took back the formal union that had been approved at the Bethel conference. Deeply disappointed at their failure to bring doctrinal uniformity to the Christians, Marshall and Thompson returned to the Presbyterians.<sup>46</sup>

Though internal controversy subsided after the Mt. Tabor conference, external controversy continued unabated. In 1811, Marshall and Thompson published a pamphlet criticizing the Christians for their false doctrine and “their disorganized state.”<sup>47</sup> David Purviance responded to Marshall and Thompson with *Observations. Constitution, Unity, and Discipline of the Church of Christ, addressed to the brethren of the Christian Church*. Three years later, Stone published a statement of the Christians’ doctrines based on a draft he had prepared for the committee charged with preparing a statement of beliefs for the 1811 Mount Tabor conference. Titled *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio. On Several Important Doctrines of Religion*, his purpose, as when a member of the failed drafting committee, was to open a door to fellowship with believers who viewed them as heretics.<sup>48</sup>

Stone's delay in publishing *An Address* was likely due to changes in his personal circumstances, beginning in May 1810 with the death of his wife Elizabeth. In October 1811, a thirty-nine-year-old widower with four daughters, he married Elizabeth's nineteen-year-old cousin, Celia Wilson Bowen, and moved to middle Tennessee.<sup>49</sup>

As with his earlier publication on *Atonement*, this new treatise did not satisfy critics. In 1815 Presbyterian minister Thomas Cleland of Mercer County, Kentucky, published a response titled *The Socini-Arian Detected*, attacking Stone's views of the atonement and Christology. Stone would not publish again for seven years, again likely due to a series of changes in personal circumstances including a move to Lexington, Kentucky, then to a farm near Georgetown, Kentucky, and the births of two daughters and a son. During this interval he revised his Christology in light of Cleland's criticism, but his revised edition of *An Address* published in 1821 still did not satisfy his Presbyterian critics, nor did his rejoinders answer their objections.<sup>50</sup>

In 1826, Stone began publication of the monthly *Christian Messenger*. In addition to calling for Christian unity on the Bible alone, the journal supported the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816. The society's founders believed slaveholders would manumit enslaved Africans if assured of their removal from white society, reflecting the racism of both supporters and opponents of slavery. In 1821, the Society purchased land in West Africa and established the colony of Liberia to demonstrate to the federal and state governments the feasibility of colonizing free blacks in Africa. Stone continued to support the Colonization Society through the 1830s.<sup>51</sup>

Within two decades of the return of Marshall and Thompson to the Presbyterians in 1811, the Christian Church in the West numbered more than sixteen thousand members in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Ohio and Indiana. Many had joined through profession of faith and baptism. Others had come from the Christian Church movement in Virginia and North Carolina associated with former Methodist James O'Kelly. A sizable number of Baptists—not only individuals and congregations, but whole Baptist associations—had united with the Christians in response to their call for Christian union on the Bible alone.<sup>52</sup> The lineage of most of these associations was Separate Baptist, a movement that had emerged from the Great Awakening in New England. By 1827, a sixth of Kentucky Baptist churches of Separate lineage had become Christian Churches.<sup>53</sup>

In the fourth issue of *The Christian Messenger*, Stone began a nine-part "History of the Christian Church in the West." The words "in the West" recognized that there were Christian Churches in Virginia and North Carolina and also in New England. The Christians in New England had emerged from the Baptists in the early years of the nineteenth century and were led by Abner Jones (1772-1841) and Elias Smith (1769-1846). In 1808 Smith founded the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, reprinting in the first issue the *Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*. Smith opposed state-supported churches and their clergy, infant baptism, and the doctrines of the Trinity and predestination.<sup>54</sup>

Stone began his account of the Christian Church in the West with a report of prayers for revival at the beginning of the century which, he declared, God had answered by pouring out his spirit "in a way almost miraculous" in Tennessee and Kentucky. The final event in his *History* was the return of Marshall and Thompson to the Presbyterians in 1811. For Stone, the response of the Christians to Marshall and Thompson's proposal of a creed had established their identity as a Christian unity movement. Acknowledging continued opposition to the Christians he declared, "We trust in the living God, and labor to be accepted of him not doubting but that on the ground we now occupy, the whole church of God on earth will ultimately settle."<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Stone had observed the emergence of a movement among Baptists in Virginia, Pennsylvania, the Western Reserve (Ohio) and Kentucky known as "Reformers" or "New Testament Baptists," which, in his view, had much in common with the Christians.

### Reformers

Two Scots Irish Presbyterians—Thomas (1763-1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), father and son—were leaders of this other group. Alexander Campbell claimed that his family had descended from the clan Campbell of Argyll, Scotland, headed by the first Duke of Argyll, Sir Archibald Campbell, a leader in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Sources give contradictory testimony, however, concerning whether Archibald's father, Thomas, immigrated to Ireland from western Scotland in 1710 or was born in Ireland.<sup>56</sup>

Alexander recorded that his grandfather, also named Archibald, had converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism (the Church of Ireland) after serving in the British military in Canada during the Seven Years War.<sup>57</sup> While Catholicism was the majority faith of the

Irish, it was certainly not typical of Scottish emigrants to Ulster, who were almost universally Presbyterian. Archibald's conversion to Anglicanism would have given him privileges unavailable to either Irish Catholics or Presbyterians. Anglicans were "the ascendancy," the ruling class of Ireland, though vastly outnumbered by both Catholics and Presbyterian "dissenters." In counties of Northern Ireland where Presbyterians were in the majority, identification with Presbyterianism could also provide social and economic opportunities. All four of Archibald's sons became members of the Antiburgher Seceder Presbyterian Church, one of many factions among the fiercely independent Scottish Presbyterians in Ireland.<sup>58</sup>

In the early 1700s Scottish "Seceders" had come to Northern Ireland proselytizing. These zealous "dissenting dissenters" had rejected the reintroduction of patronage into the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland in 1712. Patronage was the right of the hereditary owner of church property to select and install the minister in the parish church. The Scottish General Assembly had abandoned the practice in 1690 after William and Mary officially reestablished Presbyterianism in the Church of Scotland.

The British Parliament, however, brought it back as an incentive to Scottish landowners to support Queen Anne instead of the Catholic Stuarts who had been ousted in the 1688 Glorious Revolution. Those who continued to support the Stuarts were called Jacobites from the Latin for James—*Jacobus*—the deposed Stuart King. While the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland opposed patronage, they accepted it with the understanding that local presbyteries had the right to overrule any appointment. The Seceders, however, refused to allow patronage at all and withdrew to form their own Associate Synod opposed to the General Synod of the Church of Scotland in 1733.

Later, the Seceders themselves divided between Burghers and Antiburghers. This was a dispute over the "Burgess Oath" imposed on city officials in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Perth to keep Catholics out of public office after the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion.<sup>59</sup> The officials were required to swear that they would abide in and defend "the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof...renouncing the Roman Religion called Papistry."<sup>60</sup> The clash was over whether or not the term "true religion" could be interpreted as referring to the Seceders. The Burghers believed it could, and therefore supported the oath; the

Antiburghers believed it could not, so opposed it.

The Seceders also suffered an Old Light-New Light division over subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The New Lights opposed subscription because of the clause concerning upholding "the true religion" which implied, they believed, the established church from which they had seceded—the church that had accommodated lay patronage. Between 1799 and 1806 both the Burghers and Antiburghers divided into Old Lights and New Lights. New Lights tended to ease strict adherence to Calvinist doctrine. The Old Lights, on the other hand, sought to maintain rigorous loyalty to orthodox doctrine.<sup>61</sup>

Religion in Northern Ireland had been shaped by constant conflict. Much of it reflected the divisions inherited from Scotland just described. But there were additional sources of conflict as well. Unlike in Scotland, where the state church was Presbyterian, in Ireland Presbyterians were dissenters, their political loyalty always under question by English officials. Ulster Presbyterianism, therefore, was formed largely by its experience of restrictions imposed by the (Anglican) Church of Ireland.

Conflict in Northern Ireland also reflected tensions between the majority Catholic population and Protestant communities consisting of the politically dominant Church of Ireland and Presbyterian dissenters who exercised considerable control in certain northern counties. The Peep O'Day Boys formed as a violent organization to protect and advance the economic well being of lower-class Protestants against Catholics and their "Protestant co-conspirators." In response, the Defenders, formerly a body dedicated to land reform for all, transformed itself into a Catholic defense organization.<sup>62</sup>

In the midst of the struggles, however, some Non-Seceder Presbyterians in eastern Ulster exhibited remarkable levels of religious tolerance. In Belfast, New Light leaders who opposed required subscription to any confession of faith other than the Bible raised most of the funds for the construction of St. Mary's Catholic Chapel and attended its dedication ceremony in 1784. They also helped form the Society of United Irishmen in 1791 that called for full political rights for Catholics, uniting Catholics and Protestants in a campaign for Irish independence from Britain. In 1793, their General Synod of Ulster went on record as favoring reform in the Irish Parliament and emancipation of Catholics, praying "that the time may never more return when religious

distinctions shall be used as a pretext for disturbing society or arming man against his neighbour.”<sup>63</sup> Jane Corneige, wife of Thomas Campbell and mother of Alexander Campbell, grew up in County Antrim, a center of New Light strength.

Though Thomas Campbell’s affiliation was with the strict Antiburgher Seceders, his personal sentiments tended toward the liberal and tolerant. Before his Anglican father consented for him to begin training for the Antiburgher ministry, Thomas had established a school for the poor in heavily Catholic Connaught.<sup>64</sup> He refused to be involved with any of the religio-political intrigues of the day, publicly opposing the secret societies that pitted Catholic against Protestant and Irish against British.<sup>65</sup>

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, missionary societies that emerged from the English Evangelical Revival began a campaign to evangelize “heathen” around the world. Evangelicalism, largely in the form of Methodism, began to take shape in Northern Ireland before the Campbells departed for America. Methodists, particularly those supported by the Countess of Huntingdon, were leaders in forming the General Evangelical Society in Dublin in 1787 to furnish “a succession of zealous and popular ministers of every denomination who shall be employed to preach... wherever an opportunity shall offer.”<sup>66</sup>

Eleven years later, in the aftermath of the failure of the United Irishmen to throw off the yoke of Britain in the Rebellion of 1798, Thomas Campbell was a founder and the only Antiburgher member of the Evangelical Society of Ulster (ESU).<sup>67</sup> Like the Dublin Society, the ESU proposed to send preachers, regardless of denomination, to preach the gospel to the lost. Over the next year the ESU gained support and members.

In July 1799, however, Thomas Campbell’s Antiburgher Synod posed the question, “Is the Evangelical Society of Ulster constituted on principles consistent with the Secession Testimony?” After considerable discussion the Synod voted that it was not, and after a conference with three elders, Thomas Campbell submitted to the verdict by promising to “try to see eye to eye” with the Synod and to withdraw from any leadership role in the ESU.<sup>68</sup> By 1803 the Synod had forbidden any connection with the organization.

Campbell was also frustrated in his efforts to bring about union among the Seceders in Ireland. The Burgher and Antiburgher division had to do with political matters unique to Scotland. The burghess oaths had never been required in Ireland, yet the two parties remained

separated there just as in Scotland. In 1790 Ulster had twenty-five Antiburgher congregations and forty-two Burgher.<sup>69</sup> Though Thomas Campbell and other leaders felt there was no reason for them to be separated, the churches remained under the jurisdiction of the Scottish Synods that saw the distinctions as essential.

In October 1804 Campbell participated in a consultation at Richhill that drew up a formal proposal for the union of the Burghers and Antiburghers in Ireland. The Synod meeting in Belfast later that year received the proposal favorably. However, when the General Associate Synod—the Scottish body over all the Antiburgher churches—heard of the proposed reunion, it squelched any formal proposal being brought to its assembly. Nevertheless, in 1806 the Associate Synod of Ulster sent Thomas Campbell to the General Synod meeting in Glasgow, with a formal application to allow the Irish churches to make their own decision about this matter. The Synod allowed him to argue his case, but refused to allow the proposition to come to a vote.<sup>70</sup>

Deep disappointment with this failure, coupled with the burdens of operating a school, pastoring a congregation in Ahorey, and continuing political and religious unrest resulted in serious illness. Campbell’s physician advised him that he would only get worse if he did not remove himself from the cause of his stress. In 1807 Campbell decided to do what tens of thousands of people from Ulster had already done—sail to America.<sup>71</sup>

By 1790, Irish immigrants and their descendants made up a fourth of the white population of Pennsylvania.<sup>72</sup> Networks of family members already in America, along with recruiters and merchants, fueled Irish emigration, capitalizing on their desire for a better life—economically and, in the case of Thomas Campbell, religiously.<sup>73</sup> The merchant networks that developed were shaped by region, religion, kinship, political allegiances, and economic priorities, and rarely overlapped.<sup>74</sup> Campbell could be assured that ships sailing from Londonderry would link him immediately with his kind of Irish Presbyterians who had already settled in the United States. Arriving in Londonderry April 1, 1807, he contracted passage with the captain of an American ship, the *Brutus*, sailing for Philadelphia on April 8.

Campbell landed in Philadelphia after a thirty-five day voyage and discovered that the Associate Synod of North America, which combined the Burgher and Antiburgher Seceders in the United States, was meeting in the city. Presenting himself and his letters from the Presbytery of Market Hill and the church at Ahorey, he was welcomed and assigned to the Chartiers Presbytery

in western Pennsylvania. His base of operations was near the town of Washington, an area where many people he knew were already living.

He did not, however, achieve the goal of removing himself from the stresses he had experienced among the Seceder Presbyterians in Northern Ireland. His commitment to Christian unity and cooperation surfaced quickly in the American context. His actions in late August 1807, on a preaching trip to a small Presbyterian group at Cannamaugh, a community on the Allegheny River above Pittsburgh, began a series of events that would sever his formal ties with the Associate Synod. Traveling with a fellow minister, William Wilson, Campbell felt compelled to invite Presbyterians not part of his Associate Synod to share in the Lord's Supper.

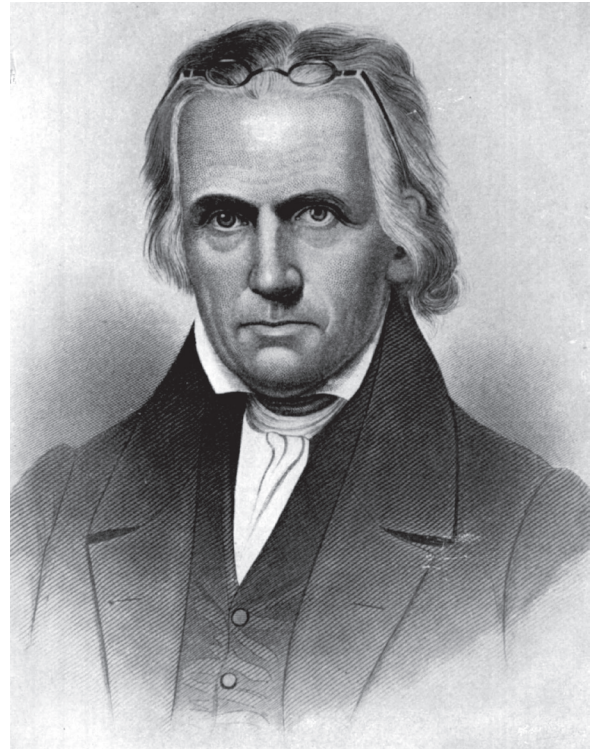
As Wilson and Campbell traveled together to and from Cannamaugh (today Conemaugh), the younger and more doctrinally strict Wilson must have been distressed to hear some of Campbell's ideas. In a sermon before serving the Lord's Supper, Campbell expressed his belief that it is through faith that one receives Christ, and that there was no divine authority for requiring confessions of faith, covenants, or fasting before administering the Lord's Supper. These were matters over which the Seceders had been wrestling for some time as they revised their confession of faith titled *Narrative and Testimony*.<sup>75</sup>

Wilson evidently expressed his displeasure with Campbell's views to several other ministers of the Chartiers Presbytery. One of those ministers, John Anderson (1748-1830), had been appointed to accompany Campbell to a sacramental service at Buffalo, but refused to go because of his belief that Campbell was teaching doctrines "inconsistent with some articles of our testimony." Campbell's troubles began when at the October meeting of the Presbytery someone raised a question as to why Anderson had neglected to fill his assignment at Buffalo. Anderson stated his reason, and after considerable discussion the Presbytery voted that he was justified.<sup>76</sup>

The next day Thomas Campbell moved that Anderson's excuse be reconsidered. Though he had some support, the majority ruled against him, and Campbell angrily left the meeting. The Presbytery appointed a committee of five to look into his supposed heresy and ruled he was to receive no more preaching appointments because he had left the meeting the previous day. The committee included his antagonist John Anderson and three of Anderson's former pupils.

At the January 5, 1808, meeting, Anderson and the committee presented a list of seven formal charges.

In addition to heresies concerning the Lord's Supper, confessions of faith, and two other doctrinal matters, they accused Campbell of advocating that lay ruling elders had the responsibility of preaching in congregations without a minister, and that it was acceptable to hear ministers not part of the Secession church. Furthermore, they charged him with preaching in a church with a settled minister without being assigned to do so by the Presbytery.<sup>77</sup>



Engraving of a portrait of Thomas Campbell by Thomas Sully, prominent Philadelphia portrait painter, that appears in Alexander Campbell's *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, published in 1861.

The Presbytery delayed a full discussion of the charges until February, allowing Campbell to prepare written responses to the accusations. The Presbytery judged his answers on two of the doctrinal matters to be satisfactory, but on the rest they judged Campbell's answers to be either evasive or actually admitting the charge. The Presbytery then voted to censure Campbell and suspend his ministerial standing.

In May Campbell appealed his case to the Associate Synod of North America meeting in Philadelphia. While the Synod reprimanded the Presbytery for

allowing Anderson to refuse to fill his appointment and removed the suspension of Campbell's ministerial standing, it voted to censure Campbell with a rebuke and admonition. Though disappointed and angry, Campbell submitted to the rebuke of the Synod and spent the next two months ministering in Philadelphia at the direction of that body. When he returned home in August he discovered that the Chartiers Presbytery had given him no preaching assignments.

At the September 14, 1808, meeting of the Presbytery, Campbell presented a paper renouncing its jurisdiction and that of the Associate Synod. Following up on this action, he submitted another paper to the May 1809 meeting of the Synod titled "Declaration and Address to the Associate Synod" in which he removed himself from the authority of the Presbytery and Synod.<sup>78</sup>

With no ministerial appointment and no immediate means of support, a few supporters stepped forward to help. He continued to preach in the vicinity of Washington, Pennsylvania, to people who sympathized with his ideas. By early summer, however, many felt they needed a more organized way of proceeding. Abraham Altars, in whose home Campbell was living, hosted a meeting to discuss possibilities. Campbell laid out his ideas concerning the unity of the church based on the simple teachings of Scripture, which were, he insisted, the foundation for evangelizing the world. However, when he proposed that the group's operating principle be "where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," some objected, thinking it cast doubt on infant baptism. Infant baptism had already been controversial in the group, though Campbell did not believe that rejection of infant baptism was an inevitable conclusion from Scripture.

At the next meeting of the group in August, Campbell proposed the formation of an evangelical society for the spread of the gospel—to be called the Christian Association of Washington. A committee commissioned Campbell to write an organizational document and apology. By September he had completed a "Declaration and Address"—the second he had written that year. This time, however, it was not a document of separation, but a call for Christians of all denominations to come together to "promote simple evangelical Christianity." Reflecting many of the sentiments of the Evangelical Society of Ulster Campbell had helped form eleven years earlier, the *Declaration and Address* described the work of the Association as supporting ministers who would preach only those things that conformed to the "original standard"—Scripture—and who actually

practiced simple New Testament Christianity.<sup>79</sup>

To accomplish this, Campbell insisted, cooperation across denominational lines would be necessary. Campbell attacked divisions among Christians and urged all to come together in one fold under the one Shepherd. Reflecting millennial hopes of the day, he asked why any Christian would think it incredible that the church's original unity, peace, and purity should resume "in this highly favored country"? By reading Scripture rightly, all would agree on the great central truths—in fact, they already did. Inferences and opinions divided Christians. He admitted that he had prejudices like all other humans, but stated his willingness to surrender anything not explicitly taught in Scripture if it meant returning "to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church; and, in this happy unity, [to] enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity."<sup>80</sup>

Thomas Campbell had sent word for his family to join him in America in a letter written January 1, 1808. Because of an outbreak of smallpox, the family was unable to make arrangements until late August when Alexander traveled to Londonderry to find a ship. He contracted passage with the captain of the *Hibernia*, and the family set sail on Saturday, October 1, 1808. The group consisted of Jane Campbell and six children, who ranged from twenty-one year old Alexander to Alicia who was two. The ship was caught in a storm off the coast of Scotland the following Wednesday and the Captain anchored in Loch Indaal near the Isle of Islay, for three days. On Friday evening, October 7, strong winds caused the ship to drag its anchor and strike a rock that pierced the hull. The wreck forced the Campbells to delay their journey to the United States by ten months.

Yet the delay proved to be an important time for Alexander Campbell's intellectual and spiritual formation. The family decided to stay in Glasgow until sailing weather was better. Two things shaped Alexander during the next nine months—his studies at the University of Glasgow, and his association with religious leaders seeking to reform the Church of Scotland.

At the University Campbell learned the Scottish common sense philosophy of Thomas Reid (1710-1796) from George Jardine (1742-1827), who had studied under Reid and who became one of Campbell's favorite professors. This philosophy affirmed that the data of the human senses, when confirmed by the testimony of others, was a reliable source of knowledge. The other major influence was his friendship with Greville Ewing (1767-1841), formerly a minister in the Church of Scotland, but then a leader in the religious reform led

by James (1768-1851) and Robert (1764-1842) Haldane. When the Church of Scotland opposed the Haldanes' formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home in 1798, they began to form independent Congregational churches.



Portrait of Alexander Campbell from the late 1820s or mid-1830s by Washington Bogart Cooper, prominent Nashville painter.

In Ewing's home Campbell heard discussions on topics ranging from weekly Lord's Supper to church structure and baptism. The legitimacy of infant baptism, which Ewing strongly supported, had divided the independents, especially after the Haldane brothers received immersion—though they had never made it a term of communion. This would become a major issue in the Christian Association and the reform that Alexander and his father would launch in America.

When the University school term ended in May, the Campbell family began preparation to travel, though it took three months to secure passage. In the meantime, the semiannual "communion season" observed by the Seceder Church arrived. Though the Westminster Confession of Faith had recommended "frequent communion," the Church of Scotland had retained the medieval custom of taking it twice a year. The Confession directed that when communion was infrequent, congregational

elders should examine the spiritual state of each member in preparation for the sacrament. For anyone the elders already knew, this might mean simply showing up to receive the metal token necessary for entrance to the communion service. Since Alexander did not have a letter from the Irish Synod certifying his good standing, the elders asked him to appear before them for an oral examination. Apparently they had no problem with his answers, and he received the token.

Campbell had changed during the previous six months, however. His actions on the day of the communion service have come to symbolize Alexander Campbell's growing anti-sectarianism and passion for religious reform. The method of serving the sacrament was the Scottish tradition of seating people in shifts at large tables to partake of the elements. He presented his token and was admitted, but waited until the last table of communicants was seated. When the bread and wine came around, he passed them on without taking them. This was not unheard of—Reformed literature spoke of the dangers of taking the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner." Apparently Campbell's refusal caused no stir. But this act, though largely private, marked for Campbell a rejection of what he now saw as sectarianism and a turn in his journey toward reform.

Finally, the family set sail from Greenock, Scotland, on August 3, 1809, on the ship *Latonia*. After an almost two-month voyage they arrived in New York on September 29, and set off immediately for Philadelphia. There Alexander contracted for transportation across the mountains to Washington, Pennsylvania, a distance of three hundred fifty miles.

In early October Thomas received word that his family had arrived in New York, so he and a friend, John McElroy, left immediately, encountering them on October 19. Over the next days they filled one another in on the details of the past two years—Thomas's formation of the Christian Association, the family's shipwreck and stay in Glasgow, Alexander's refusal to take communion at the sacramental service in Glasgow. Alexander examined his father's *Declaration and Address* and embraced the ideals it expressed.

Thomas Campbell recommended that Alexander spend six months studying Scripture, which he did, reading widely in theology and church history as well. On July 15, 1810, Alexander preached his first official sermon, eliciting strong approval from his audience. Within a few weeks he was receiving frequent calls to preach. That Thomas encouraged his son to accept these invitations despite Alexander's lack of ordination,

however, proved to be a major obstacle to Thomas's petition for ministerial affiliation with the Synod of Pittsburgh of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). The Synod rejected Campbell's petition in October 1810.<sup>81</sup>

Though Thomas Campbell had made it clear in the *Declaration and Address* that the Christian Association was not a church, it had begun to look increasingly like one. Both Campbells preached on Sundays for members. When Thomas's efforts to affiliate with the PCUSA failed, it appeared inevitable that the group would organize itself into a church. They did so on May 4, 1811, calling it the "First Church of the Christian Association, meeting at Crossroads and Brush Run."<sup>82</sup> On New Year's Day the following year, Thomas Campbell formally ordained Alexander to Christian ministry.

Thomas Campbell felt uneasy about creating one more church in the dizzying array already present on the American scene. His vision for unity expressed in the *Declaration and Address* simply had not materialized. Events of 1812, however, would result in affiliation with another body calling for a return to New Testament Christianity.

Alexander Campbell had met Margaret Brown (1791-1827) in late 1810, and they were married on March 11 the following year. By summer 1811 they were expecting their first child. The Browns were Presbyterians and joyfully anticipated the baptism of their grandchild. Alexander Campbell had been thinking about infant baptism since hearing the arguments and witnessing the sharp controversy among the independents in Scotland. Now, however, the issue was personal. After studying the matter for several months, he concluded there was no scriptural warrant for infant baptism and refused the rite for his daughter Jane, who was born March 13, 1812.

Alexander's rejection of infant baptism had obvious implications. If he took his position seriously, his own infant baptism was now in question. The Haldanes had not made immersion a term of communion, and he himself had preached that it was unscriptural to do so. Yet he now felt compelled, contrary to his earlier views, to submit to immersion.<sup>83</sup>

The previous year Thomas Campbell had immersed three members of the Christian Association. Though he opposed immersing persons who had been baptized as infants, Joseph Bryant, Margaret Fullerton, and Abraham Altars, had never been baptized in any form. Because Bryant insisted that immersion was the only true baptism, Thomas Campbell immersed the three on July 4, 1811.<sup>84</sup>

Alexander assumed his father would refuse to administer immersion to him and others who had

received infant baptism. The Baptists were the only ones who consistently practiced believer's immersion, yet Campbell had strong prejudices against them as ignorant and uneducated.<sup>85</sup> Finally he approached a Baptist minister named Matthias Luce (1764-1841) who he felt would be open to immersing him. In their initial conversation, Luce was more than happy to immerse Campbell and any others who desired it according to normal Calvinist Baptist practice, which included relating a conversion experience. When Campbell explained that he wanted the act performed on the basis of a simple confession of faith in Jesus as Son of God, Luce balked. Campbell had been studying the issue intensely for some time by then, and he was thoroughly prepared to argue his position. Campbell's persuasive abilities prevailed, and Luce, despite possible censure by his Baptist Association, agreed to perform the baptisms as Campbell stipulated.

Wednesday, June 12, 1812, was the day appointed. Thomas Campbell had been convinced by his son's arguments, and prior to the immersions stated in a lengthy address that it was his duty to submit to this important divine institution. Alexander also spoke on the importance of immersion. Luce then immersed Alexander and Margaret Campbell, Thomas and Jane Campbell, Alexander's sister Dorothea, along with James and Sarah Hanen in Buffalo Creek. Within a short time, almost all the members of the former Christian Association, now called the Brush Run Church, had either submitted to immersion or left.<sup>86</sup>

With the acceptance of believer's immersion, it seemed natural to many that the Brush Run Church would affiliate with the Baptist denomination. Alexander Campbell, however, still viewed Baptist preachers as "narrow, contracted, illiberal and uneducated." Furthermore, he opposed subscription to the Baptists' Philadelphia Confession of Faith as a term of fellowship.

Yet Campbell's experience with the Baptist people generally was much more positive, seeing them as committed to Scripture and true conversion.<sup>87</sup> Over the next year Baptist churches in the area issued Campbell multiple invitations to preach and urged the Brush Run congregation to join the local Redstone Baptist Association. Both Alexander and his father believed they should pursue their reforms with other Christians. So after consultation, Brush Run agreed to become part of the Redstone Association on the condition that they would be allowed to preach and teach whatever they learned from the Holy Scriptures regardless of any creed or confession. A majority of the association agreed to the



condition, and from 1815 until the 1830s the Campbells advocated their reforms as Baptists.

Meanwhile, Alexander Campbell became a master at spreading his ideas through the popular media of his day, especially public debates and journalism. Though at first he had agreed with his father that debates were contrary to the Christian spirit, he eventually came to view “a week’s debating [as] worth a year’s preaching.”<sup>88</sup> In 1820 he published his first debate, conducted with Presbyterian John Walker on baptism. The book became something of a sensation, leading Campbell to reissue it in an expanded edition in 1822.

The popularity of the published Walker debate led Campbell to open his own printing shop in 1823 in Bethany, (West) Virginia, on land deeded to him by his father-in-law. For the next seven years he published a monthly journal, the *Christian Baptist*. In 1826 he published the first edition of a version of the New Testament he edited titled *The Living Oracles*. Two years later he issued the first of many hymnals.<sup>89</sup>

Through the *Christian Baptist*, Campbell called for a “restoration of the ancient order of things,” including weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper and weekly contributions for the poor. He also attacked confessions of faith, “modern missionary schemes,” and the clergy.<sup>90</sup> Campbell argued that the ancient faith was not the metaphysical dogmas of the creeds, but the gospel or good news of what God had done through Jesus Christ, as testified by the apostles. To be a Christian was to believe that Jesus was the Messiah upon the testimony of the apostles, and to be baptized in accord with apostolic practice into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, he declared that the confession that Jesus is the Christ, followed by baptism, was the only basis necessary for the union of Christians. Human beings would never unite on a human creed, since creeds were composed of inferences made from the revelation of what God had done in Jesus Christ and were subject to all the defects of human reasoning. Attempts to establish unity on a human creed were contrary to “the prayer and plan of the Lord Messiah,” that is, Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20-21: “I do not pray for these only (for the unity and success of the apostles) but for those also who shall believe on me through, or by means of *their word*—that they all may be one—that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”<sup>92</sup>

For Campbell, the testimony of the apostles, the unity of the disciples, and the world’s belief that Jesus is the Christ were bound together. Only when the church

was united through faith in the apostles’ testimony would the world believe that Jesus was the Christ. Missionary “schemes” prior to the restoration of the unity of the church would be futile.<sup>93</sup>

Campbell also attacked the “clergy system” and the two props he said supported it. The first was the “alleged special call of God” to ministry, which clergy used to enhance their authority. The second was the supposed necessity of an association of the called ones for the better administration of the church. The real purpose of such associations was to protect the authority and stipends of the clergy. The clergy system resulted in people not hearing and reading the Bible, since when congregations could not afford the services of the clergy, they did not meet.<sup>94</sup>

Campbell’s opposition to the clergy, however, did not extend to what he identified as the church’s rightly authorized ministry. The first issue of the *Christian Baptist* carried the following caution in bold type: “In our remarks upon the ‘Christian clergy,’ we never include the elders or deacons of a Christian assembly, or those in the New Testament called the overseers and servants of the Christian Church.”<sup>95</sup> In the *Christian Baptist* and later publications, Campbell outlined what he understood to be the qualifications and duties of the divinely instituted ministry.

The ministry of the Christian community consisted of bishops, deacons, and evangelists. Bishops, meaning overseers, also identified as elders or pastors, were to teach, preside at meetings of the church, shepherd the members of the congregation, and rule in matters of discipline.<sup>96</sup> Campbell did not include the word “preach” in his description of the bishop’s distinctive duties since he saw preaching as simply sharing the Christian gospel, which was the duty of all Christians. Campbell understood the bishop’s duty to teach as explaining a passage of Scripture or interpreting the Christian faith.<sup>97</sup> Administration of the Lord’s Supper was included in “presiding” at meetings of the congregation.<sup>98</sup>

Campbell believed that elders or bishops should give full time to the office and should be remunerated for their service.<sup>99</sup> Bishops differed from clergy in that they were elected to pastoral office from the congregation of which they were a member and were officers only of that congregation. Campbell argued that the qualifications necessary to fulfill the duties of an elder were not likely to be found in a younger person or in a new convert of any age. By 1826 he was convinced that there should be a plurality of elders, which he also called a “presbytery,” in every congregation.<sup>100</sup>

Deacons were servants of the church. Campbell noted with approval that it was a custom of the ancient church to “commit to the deacons care of the Lord’s table, the bishop’s table, and the table of the poor.” Since the duties of a deacon were often “too oppressive for a single individual” and included keeping the treasury of the church, Campbell believed it advisable to establish a plurality of deacons in every congregation.<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to bishops and deacons who were officers of the congregation, evangelists were sent out by the congregation or a group of congregations to preach the gospel, baptize converts, organize congregations, administer discipline, and teach the assembled Christians until they were able to elect elders. Evangelists were to receive both compensation and supervision from the church or churches that sent them. Presumably because he read 1 Timothy 4 (“Let no one despise your youth”) as instructions to an evangelist, and because the evangelist was not set over the church but worked under its supervision, Campbell believed that an evangelist could be a young person.<sup>102</sup>

In 1830 Campbell replaced the *Christian Baptist* with the *Millennial Harbinger*, though he published both through July. In the prospectus Campbell stated, “This work shall be devoted to the destruction of Sectarianism, Infidelity, and Antichristian doctrine and practice.” The journal’s object was to develop and introduce the millennium, which he defined as the achievement of the ultimate perfection of society described in the Bible.<sup>103</sup>

Campbell used the *Millennial Harbinger*, as he had the *Christian Baptist*, to oppose slavery. Having made Virginia his home, he was familiar with the institution of slavery and personally acquainted with Africans. As early as 1820, Africans had been included on the rolls of the Brush Run Church.<sup>104</sup> In the inaugural issue of the *Christian Baptist*, he had criticized American Christians who praised the civil and religious freedom of the United States, yet maintained at the same time “a system of the most cruel oppression, separating the wife from the embraces of her husband, and the mother from her tender offspring...because might gives right and...skin is a shade darker than the standard color of the times.”<sup>105</sup> He again acknowledged the evil of slavery in the first issue the *Millennial Harbinger*, alluding to it as an injustice that would be righted under any government embodying Christian principles. He also promised to publish articles that would pave the way for the elevation and emancipation of enslaved Africans.<sup>106</sup>

In 1829, Campbell served as representative from Brooke County to the Virginia State Constitutional

Convention, intending to introduce gradual emancipation of enslaved Africans into the document. His failure led him to conclude that he would focus his efforts on eradicating the evil through religious and not political action. Like Stone, however, Campbell later became a supporter of the objectives of the Colonization Society, even proposing in 1832 that the federal government allocate ten million dollars a year to fund the work of the Society, including the purchase of enslaved females from slaveholders who would not emancipate them so as to reduce the potential number of persons born into slavery.<sup>107</sup>

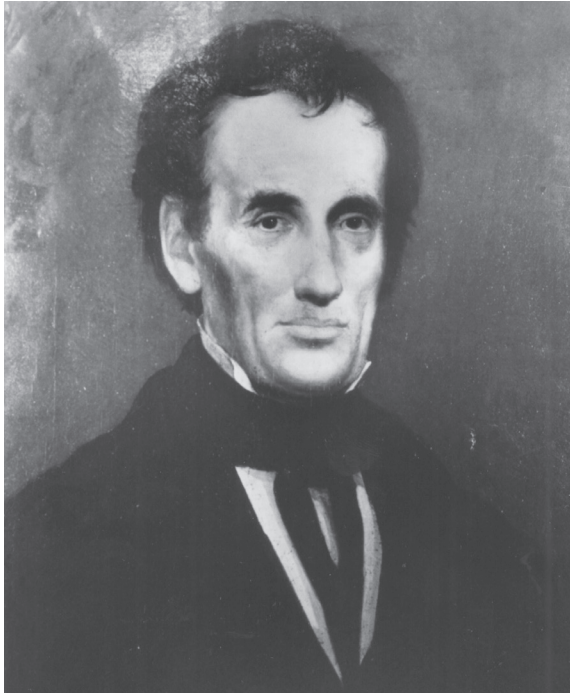
Despite his professed opposition to slavery, Campbell purchased two brothers, James and Charley Pool from a Methodist preacher during the months between the death of his first wife, Margaret, late in 1827, and his marriage to Selina Huntington Bakewell in July 1828. In keeping with his advice to others, he freed them when they reached the age of twenty-eight. He also owned at least two other enslaved Africans, all of whom were freed after a period of service.<sup>108</sup>

Campbell engaged in five public debates, and several others in print. Three public debates were with Presbyterian ministers—John Walker in 1820, William Maccalla in 1823, and N. L. Rice in 1843. All focused on baptism, though the Rice debate included discussions of the role of the Holy Spirit and the authority of creeds. In 1829 he met the skeptic Robert Owen (1771-1858), and in 1837 Catholic Bishop John Baptist Purcell (1800-1883) of Cincinnati. These last two contests propelled him into the national spotlight as one of the chief defenders of Protestant Christianity.<sup>109</sup>

One of the most distinctive doctrinal developments in the Campbell reform was its understanding of the purpose of baptism. Campbell first fully developed the position that baptism is for assurance of the remission of sins and admission to the Kingdom of Christ in his debate with Maccalla. This view contrasted sharply with the Baptist position that the church should administer baptism only to candidates who had already received inward assurance of the remission of their sins. Campbell’s view of the purpose of baptism along with his sharp distinction between the Old and New Covenants, which eliminated the role of the law in bringing persons to faith, disturbed many Baptists and led to increasing tensions between Campbell and other Baptist leaders.<sup>110</sup>

The person often credited with the numerical growth of the Reformers was Walter Scott (1796-1861). Scott was born in Moffat, Scotland, in 1796 and raised in the Church of Scotland. While his parents had hoped he

would become a Presbyterian minister, after study at the University of Edinburgh he immigrated to Long Island, New York, at age 22 to teach school at the invitation of his uncle, George Innes. The following year he moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There Haldane minister George Forrester invited Scott to teach in a school Forrester operated. Under Forrester's tutelage, Scott accepted his reform ideas and was immersed.



Portrait of Walter Scott painted between 1832 and 1844 while serving as pastor of the Christian Church at Carthage, Ohio. The artist is unknown.

Acceptance of believers' immersion led Scott to re-examine all his religious views. When Forrester drowned in 1820, Scott assumed leadership of the school and church, and spent much time reading in his former mentor's library. The next year he traveled to New York in search of the author of a pamphlet that argued convincingly that baptism was for the remission of sins. His disappointment at the legalism of the Scotch Baptist congregation where the tract's author, Henry Errett (d. 1825), was a member, led the melancholy Scott on a months-long journey through New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., in search of authentic Christianity. He finally returned to Pittsburgh at the invitation of Robert Richardson, father of one of his former pupils, to tutor fifteen students.

Scott met Alexander Campbell when Campbell visited Pittsburgh during the winter of 1821-22. Though temperamentally very different, they forged a relationship that would lead to forty years of collaboration in religious reform. Within five years Scott had married, moved to Ohio, and become active in the Mahoning Baptist Association of which Campbell was then a part.

Campbell endorsed Scott as one who understood the ancient order of things like few others. At the 1827 meeting of the Mahoning Association, Scott accepted the invitation to serve as the group's evangelist to "proclaim the word to those without, and to teach those within to walk in the Lord."<sup>111</sup> This opportunity, and Scott's development of the evangelistic method known as the "five-finger exercise," made him the foremost evangelist among the Campbell Reformers. Pointing one by one to the fingers of a hand, Scott proclaimed that *faith* in the gospel of Jesus Christ leads to *repentance*, which leads to *baptism*, which is followed by God's *forgiveness of sins* and the *gift of the Holy Spirit*. Scott said that if he had a sixth finger, it would be "eternal life."

To many who assumed a Calvinist model in which sinners could only pray for the Holy Spirit to give them faith, this message was a marvelous word of hope. Scott—like Stone—was preaching that anyone could hear and accept the gospel without waiting for a special work of the Spirit. God had already acted, and they had only to accept the good news to begin the inward process that would lead to eternal life. According to contemporary accounts, Scott baptized an average of 1,000 persons annually for the next three years.<sup>112</sup>

As Reformed Baptist churches spread through Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Western Reserve of Ohio, and Kentucky, antagonism also grew between the Reformers and those who rejected Campbell's beliefs. In 1829 the Beaver Baptist Association in Pennsylvania issued an "anathema" condemning the Campbell reformers, a move that spread to other associations and led to the expulsion of members and churches that sympathized with the reform. By the end of the decade a clear break existed between the groups. In Kentucky up to one third of Baptists, numbering as many as ten thousand, sided with Campbell.<sup>113</sup>

### Union of Christians and Reformers

Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell met in fall 1824, while Campbell was conducting a two-month preaching tour of Kentucky. At Stone's invitation, Campbell spoke at the Christian Church in Georgetown and stayed in Stone's home. In 1827, they engaged in

a brief published exchange regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and the confession required for Christian fellowship.<sup>114</sup> In the September 1829 *Christian Messenger* Stone reported that a Baptist brother had recently asked him why the Christians and the “New Testament Baptists” did not become one people. Stone responded that if there was any difference between the two groups, he did not know it. “We have nothing in us to prevent a union,” he declared, “and if they have nothing in them in opposition to it, we are in spirit one.”<sup>115</sup>

Despite Stone’s professed ignorance, significant differences did exist between the two groups. Like other Baptists, Campbell believed that only congregations had the right to ordain ministers. Stone, maintaining his Presbyterian heritage, held that ministers could be ordained only with the approval of both a congregation and a conference of ordained ministers. He also held that ministers charged with teaching false doctrine were to be tried by a conference of ministers rather than a congregation. Like other Baptists, Campbell made believer’s immersion a qualification for participation in the Lord’s Supper. Though the Christians had generally adopted believer’s immersion, they refused to make it a qualification for membership or receiving the Lord’s Supper.<sup>116</sup>

Campbell feared that union with the Christians, known for their non-traditional views of the Son of God and atonement, would hinder his influence with more orthodox Christians. Rather than responding directly to Stone’s statement that they were already one in spirit, Campbell published the views of correspondents who believed there would be negative consequences in associating too closely with the Christians. A letter from an Irish writer identified Stone as an Arian and chided Campbell for calling Stone “brother” in their exchange on the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>117</sup>

Another correspondent, referring to the New England Christians associated with former Baptists Abner Jones and Elias Smith, reported hearing of a Christian church that was Unitarian, ignorant, and enthusiastic. The writer observed that he would certainly use the name Christian exclusively if such disreputable groups had not already appropriated it, but that as things were, he thought he would keep the name Baptist.<sup>118</sup> Stone responded that based on this reasoning, one would have to reject Christianity itself because of abuses. And, certainly, Stone ventured, this correspondent would have to reject the Reformed Baptists, for in the West their enemies would assert that “they were Unitarian in their

sentiments, and enthusiastic too, and that many of them were ignorant as well.”<sup>119</sup>

Campbell claimed he had always favored the name Christian. However, if Christian had come to imply Unitarian or Trinitarian in a technical theological sense, he would choose the ancient name disciple over Christian and recommend “disciples of Christ” as the best designation.<sup>120</sup>

Despite Campbell’s negative responses, Stone raised the issue of union again in the August 1830 *Christian Messenger*. He asserted that both groups were working “to unite all Christians in the spirit and truth of the New Testament,” a cause he had advanced for almost thirty years. Furthermore, some among the Christians had long advocated immersion for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He warned, however, that if the Reformers were to make their view of baptism a requirement for fellowship, they would become sectarians with a one-article unwritten creed that excluded more followers of Christ than any written one.

Responding in the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell expressed hope that his “Extra” on “Remission of Sins” would convince Stone that the immersion commanded by Christ was for the remission of sins. If obedience to the commands of Christ was sectarianism, Campbell declared, it would be impossible to refute the charge. “No opinion, creed, or dogma of human invention shall be with us a term of communion; but *obedience* to the commands of Jesus will always be, unless we should unhappily renounce the Lord Jesus as our Lord, King, and Lawgiver.”<sup>121</sup>

In February Campbell continued to develop the distinction between opinions and obedience in response to an article by Stone the previous month. Stone had stated that it was his opinion that immersion was true baptism. If, however, he were to make this opinion a term of fellowship, where would such action stop? Campbell responded that opinions were always speculative, doubtful matters. However, the word could not be applied to “matters of testimony, to laws, institutions, or religious worship,” otherwise the church would have no way of determining its faith and practice.<sup>122</sup>

In the September 1830 *Christian Messenger* Stone endorsed weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>123</sup> However, Stone rejected Campbell’s view that churches should make believer’s immersion a qualification for participation in the Lord’s Supper. “What authority have we for inviting or debarring any pious, holy believer from the Lord’s table? The King’s will is, that his friends

do this in remembrance of him—and all that his law [1 Corinthians 11:28] expressed on the subject is, ‘Let a man examine himself and so let him eat and drink.’” Stone declared that Christ never instituted barriers to keep unimmersed persons from worshipping him. As for names, he had no objection to the biblical “disciple.” He could not, however, give up the name Christian, since according to his reading of Acts 11:26, God had given it to the church and it was a means of uniting followers of Christ.<sup>124</sup>

Stone raised the issue of a union of the Christians and Reformers a third time in the August 1831 *Christian Messenger*. “The question is going the round of society, and is often proposed to us, Why are not you and the Reformed Baptists, one people? or, Why are you not united?” Stone again responded that he believed the two groups were united in spirit, and that there was no barrier on the Christians’ side to their union in form.<sup>125</sup>

Campbell’s reply in the *Millennial Harbinger* challenged Stone to define what he meant by “union in form.” If he meant creating a formal confederation of all the “christians” and “disciples,” what would be the “articles of confederation,” and how would they be adopted? Should there be a convention of messengers from the churches, or a general assembly of all the members? He noted that Stone had made no proposal for a formal union, nor had he heard of any general meeting among the Christians to discuss terms for such a union. Did Stone think, he asked, that one or two people had the power to “propose and effect a formal union among the hundreds of congregations scattered over this continent, called christians or disciples, without calling upon the different congregations to express an opinion or a wish upon the subject?”<sup>126</sup>

Campbell also questioned Stone’s claim that the Reformers had adopted positions taught by the Christians many years before. Identification of his reformation with earlier anti-creedal movements was precisely what he wanted to prevent.

Many persons, both in Europe and America, have inveighed against sects, creeds, confessions, councils, and human dogmas, during the last two centuries, and some even before Luther’s time; but what have these to do with the present proposed reformation? This is only the work of a pioneer: it is clearing the forests, girdling the trees, and burning the brush.

It was not the anti-creedal, anti-council, and anti-sectarian impulse that was central to his reformation,

Campbell claimed. Rather, the quest for the ancient gospel and ancient order of things distinguished it “from every other cause plead on this continent or in Europe since the great apostasy.”<sup>127</sup>

Campbell’s critiques could not stop Stone’s efforts to bring Christians and Reformers into union. Early in 1831, Stone had established a cordial relationship with Reformer John T. Johnson. Johnson, a lawyer and former member of Congress, had been a member of the Baptist church at Great Crossings, Kentucky, just west of Georgetown. When the Great Crossings Baptist Church refused to become part of Campbell’s reformation, Johnson and two others had formed a new congregation in February 1831. In October the new church began worshipping with a group of Christians in the vicinity.<sup>128</sup>

As part of a strategy for uniting Christians and Reformers, Stone invited Johnson to join him as co-editor of the *Christian Messenger* to begin in 1832. At a meeting at Georgetown in late November 1831, Reformer John Smith and Christian John Rogers expressed their willingness to travel together throughout Kentucky to unite congregations of the two groups. Those present also agreed that before sending Smith and Rogers, they would conduct a four-day meeting at Georgetown over Christmas day and a similar meeting at Lexington over New Year’s Day to which they would invite Christians and Reformers from across the state.<sup>129</sup>

According to John Smith’s biographer, John Augustus Williams, the four-day Christmas and New Year’s meetings were well attended by both Christians and Reformers who “worshipped and counseled together with one spirit and one accord.” Though no official records exist of either meeting, Williams provided an account of the Lexington gathering. Smith, speaking on behalf of the Reformers, stated that the union God commands was founded on the Bible alone as the rule of faith and practice. He admitted that the two groups differed on some speculative teachings such as “the mode of divine existence” and Christ’s atoning work, matters that had been controversial among Christians for centuries. He claimed that for several years, he had attempted to use only the language of the Bible when speaking about such things since no one could be offended by using the very words of the Lord himself.

Distinguishing between opinion and faith, he asserted that followers of Christ could never be united in opinions, but that they must be one in faith. He concluded, “Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or

any other kind of *lights*, but let us all come to the Bible and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the Light we need.”<sup>130</sup>

Stone responded, agreeing that they could never unite on speculations regarding the subjects Smith had mentioned. While philosophical discussions of these topics might be interesting, they could never build up the church. He confessed that after the Christians had given up creeds for the Bible alone, he had delivered some speculative discourses on such subjects, though they never feasted his heart. He agreed with Smith that such speculations should never be preached, and that if speaking of these issues at all, only the words of Scripture should be used. He concluded, “I have not one objection to the ground laid down by him as the true scriptural basis of union among the people of God; and I am willing to give him, now and here, my hand.”<sup>131</sup>

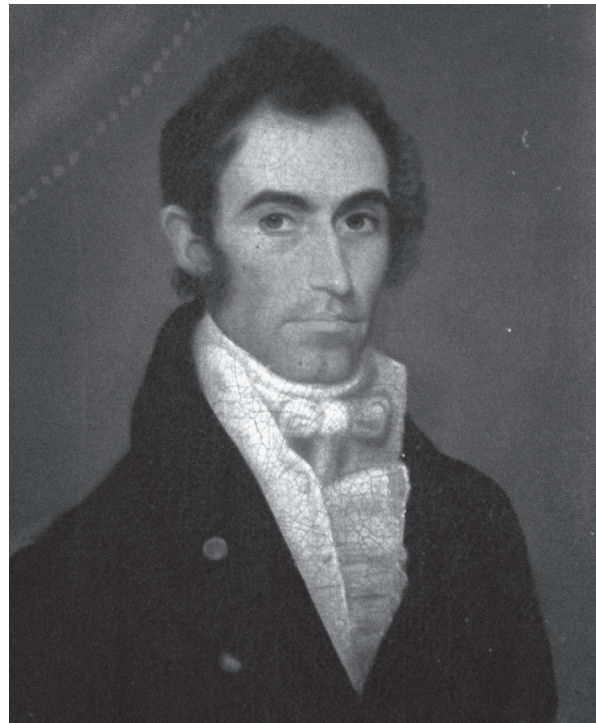
Williams reported that Stone turned and offered Smith his hand symbolizing the pledge of fellowship. Someone then proposed that all who were willing to unite on these principles follow Stone’s example, and leaders from both groups moved forward to clasp one another’s hands and ratify their union. The next day, Sunday, January 1, 1832, the Christians and Disciples present met together to share the Lord’s Supper, symbolizing their unity.<sup>132</sup>

The *Christian Messenger* for January 1832 announced the Lexington union. It also announced that John Smith from the Reformers and John Rogers from the Christians, supported equally by contributions from both groups, had been set apart to visit the churches to encourage similar unions. When asked if the Christians and Reformers in other places would now unite, Stone and Johnson answered: “If they are sincere in their profession, and destitute of a party spirit, they will undoubtedly unite.” The two editors rejoiced to report unions in Rush County, Indiana, and Maury County, Tennessee, noting that the union had been manifested already in three states. They encouraged members everywhere to send news of the progress of the cause in their regions, describing such news as “worth more than volumes of dull theology, and vain speculations.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite Campbell’s reservations, two individuals, Smith and Stone, had proposed and initiated a union of the two communions. There had been no general meeting of messengers from all the congregations of Christians and Disciples to deliberate on terms and conditions. Though the meetings in Georgetown and Lexington had consisted of members and preachers from

several churches, neither meeting could be described as a general assembly of both bodies. Both were simply regional gatherings with immediate results limited to the union of the local congregations in their respective towns. Every congregation was free to decide how to proceed.

The union of Christians and Reformers begun at Lexington would grow only if embraced by individual congregations and leaders, and there were members of both groups who were not happy with the prospect. In an early effort to head-off objections to the union, Stone and Johnson published a joint editorial in April 1832 insisting that neither side had “joined” the other. They noted that “One will say, the Christians have given up all their former opinions of many doctrines, and have received ours—another will say, the Reformers have relinquished their views on many points, and embraced ours.” Such statements, they observed, were harming the union effort by provoking jealousy between the groups. Furthermore, they declared, such statements were not true. Neither group had dropped any beliefs or practices



John T. Johnson joined Stone as co-editor of the *Christian Messenger* in 1832. From a prominent Kentucky family, Johnson had served two terms in the U.S. Congress before becoming a minister. His brother Robert M. Johnson was vice-president under Martin Van Buren.

held before the union; that had not been a condition for bringing it about. All had pledged, they insisted, simply to follow Christ as he directed in Scripture.<sup>134</sup>

Union, of course, did lead to changes for both sides. Campbell's view of the authority of the local congregation to ordain ministers prevailed over Stone's belief that a body of ordained ministers also had a role.<sup>135</sup> Stone's insistence on open communion prevailed over Campbell's exclusion of the unimmersed, reflected in Stone's widely adopted admonition that the table is the Lord's and that Christians do not have authority to invite or debar.

At the same time, Campbell's practice of limiting church membership to the immersed became the norm. This was a departure from the Christians' open membership practice, which allowed individuals to decide whether they had fulfilled the command to be baptized. Reflecting, perhaps, a move toward Campbell's understanding of immersion as an institution commanded by Christ, and not a matter of opinion, Stone defended this change by observing that the Christian Church was founded on the New Testament and that in the New Testament baptism was not sprinkling or pouring, but immersion.<sup>136</sup> The matter of the name remained unresolved, with individual congregations being known as Church of Christ or Christian Church while the united movement was often identified as Disciples of Christ.

That many of the Christians had adopted Campbell's understanding of the purpose of baptism made the union easier, as it had a direct influence on Christian assemblies. Well into the 1820s, the Christians' assemblies had resembled gatherings of the Great Revival. Describing the preaching of the Christians prior to their adoption of baptism for remission of sins, preacher B.F. Hall wrote, "We would clap and rub our hands, stamp with our feet, slam down and tear up the Bible, speak as loud as possible and scream at the top of our voice, to get up an excitement." Though the falling, jerking, and laughing had disappeared, emotional outbursts and simultaneous prayers had continued to mark the worship of the Christians, especially when praying for "mourners" to receive an assurance of the remission of sins from the Holy Spirit.<sup>137</sup> Campbell's teaching of the purpose of baptism changed the congregations' expectations regarding how the Spirit would be received, and correspondingly, their behavior in seeking the Spirit.<sup>138</sup>

Christians who had not accepted Campbell's views of immersion had the greatest difficulty with the union. This included leaders of the Elias Smith-Abner Jones

movement in New England and the James O'Kelly movement in Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>139</sup> It also included leaders of Stone's Christians in the West, such as David Purviance who, like other opponents of Campbell's views, argued that identifying immersion with assurance of the remission of sins crowded out inward evidences of the remission of sins, substituting cold legalism for a lively spiritual faith.<sup>140</sup>

Stone called on Christians to unite with the Reformers despite differences on the purpose of baptism. All of the disputants, he noted, believed immersion was baptism. With this fundamental agreement why should they fight and divide because they didn't agree on every aspect of the design of baptism? Reminding the Christians of their historic refusal to impose opinions as tests of fellowship, he admonished: "Let the unity of christians be our polar star. To this let our eyes be continually turned, and to this let our united efforts be directed—that the world may believe, and be saved."<sup>141</sup>

Stone insisted that he could see the presence of Christ in Campbell's movement—the chief test of fellowship for both groups. Christians who opposed Campbell's views replied, however, that the Campbell churches made their position on the purpose of baptism and other doctrines tests of fellowship, thereby excluding the Christians from fellowship.<sup>142</sup> Despite Stone's efforts, many churches of his movement in Ohio and some in Indiana refused to unite with the Reformers. Instead, they remained in communion with the Smith-Jones and O'Kelly Christians in what became known as the Christian Connection. In 1931 the Christian Connection, by then known as the Christian Church, merged with the Congregational Churches to form the Congregational Christian Churches. In 1957 congregations of the Congregational Christian Churches (each deciding for itself) merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to become the United Church of Christ.

Stone grieved that not all the Christians united with the Reformers. Nevertheless, the union brought together roughly ten thousand Christians and perhaps twelve thousand Reformers to form a new movement of over twenty thousand. Over the next three decades the Stone-Campbell Movement would become one of the ten largest denominational bodies in the United States, with an estimated membership of two hundred thousand.<sup>143</sup>