

THE CHRISTIAN RESTORATION MOVEMENT OF THE 1800's

**A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE
THREE CHRISTIAN GROUPS KNOWN TODAY AS THE DISCIPLES
OF CHRIST, THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST, AND THE
INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

**BY
TYLER GRAY**

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INTRODUCTION

The following is a brief account of the nineteenth century beginnings of the brotherhood of Christian congregations known as the Disciples of Christ and the three currently existing bodies that resulted from divisions within the Disciples of Christ; these three groups being the Churches of Christ, the Independent Christian Churches (some congregations of which are called Church of Christ), and the Christian Church—Disciples of Christ. Also mentioned are two historically related denominations: the Congregational Christian Church and the United Church of Christ and their historical predecessors as well as one other denomination whose connection to the Restoration Movement many people will find surprising.

This account is not intended to be a complete detailed history of the movement but rather a short outline designed to introduce the origins and background of the Restoration Movement to those who are not familiar with it, many of whom have been members of Restoration churches for years but have never heard very much, if anything, about the historical background of the church they belong to. Neither is it intended to show even an outline of the history of these churches up to the present time;

most of the events in this account took place in the 1800's with only a few significant developments of the twentieth century listed.

Now quite a few detailed histories of the Restoration Movement *have* been written and I was able to consult the following three of them for much of the information used in this account:

Christians Only by James D. Murch

The Stone-Campbell Movement by Leroy Garrett

A Distinct People by Dr. Robert E. Hooper

I have seen a number of other such works but did not have access to them at the time I was putting together this account. There is also a considerable amount of information about the movement available on the internet; however anyone seeking information from this source should be aware that material found on the internet may be incomplete or inaccurate. One source may not be in agreement with another, and it may be slanted toward the viewpoint of the person or organization from which it originated.

I believe anything I have presented here as fact to be from an accurate source. I would, however, recommend that those desiring to learn more about the Restoration Movement consult not only the sources I have listed above but also any other related works they might find. I also admit that in places I have expressed my own opinion which the reader should recognize as such and nothing more. I do not expect everyone to agree with me just because I have stated an opinion in writing.

Anyone wishing to contact me in regard to this work or to request permission to copy it may reach me at the following address:

Tyler Gray
Greenville Church of Christ
Post Office Box 249
Greenville, Ohio 45331

BARTON W. STONE

For many years I have heard people in the Church talk about the Restoration Movement and for most of that time I knew very little about it. I knew that it involved somebody named Alexander Campbell and that it called on people to give up denominational connections and to serve God as Christians and nothing else, using only the Bible as a source of doctrine. I also believed, incorrectly as I later learned, that this movement restored the true Church which had not existed since it had fallen away shortly after the time of the apostles. Whatever the movement may have restored, the Church was built by Christ himself and he promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. The Lord would not build a church that was so fragile that it would cease to exist after a few generations and then, centuries later, be rebuilt by human beings. If man could build the Church then there would have been no need for Christ to die. On the other hand, at the time the Restoration Movement began there was definitely a need to restore some of the *practices* of the early church, a need to restore the *faith* of the early church, and a need to eliminate many religious practices that had been adopted over the centuries since the time of the apostles, practices which served no purpose as far as teaching the Gospel and which many people came to believe were displeasing to God since they were not practiced by the apostles or authorized in the New Testament.

Now the Restoration Movement from which we as a group descended was not the first effort to restore correct practices in the Church and it probably won't be the last. Over the centuries there have been a number of such movements, the best-known of which is the Protestant Reformation. Another one was the Anabaptist Movement in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, from which developed the Mennonite, Amish, Brethren, German Baptist, and Hutterite churches. The Anabaptist Movement was very similar to the Restoration Movement in many ways, the chief differences resulting from the Anabaptist Movement having taken place in Europe instead of America and two hundred years before the Restoration Movement. There have been attempts at restoration in the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The Iconoclastic movement which took place in the Eastern Orthodox Church some centuries ago was an effort to eliminate the use of statues and images in the churches. Although this movement produced a lot of controversy it was, for the most part, unsuccessful and eventually died out. Our own Restoration movement is actually one of the least known of all these attempts at correcting church practices and beliefs. Most people outside the movement have never heard of it. If you mention "Restoration Movement" to secular historians they will think you are talking about a completely different political or cultural movement. Even most religious historians do not give the Restoration Movement the significance that we do but instead consider it to be only a small part of the Great Revival of the early 1800's. Now, although it was part of the Great revival, the Restoration Movement, on its own, was a significant part of the historical development of the United States but, even more important, it has probably been instrumental in the salvation of several million souls.

While many of the philosophies behind it originated in Europe several hundred years ago and the actual causes of it go back as far as the second century A. D., the Restoration Movement began in the United States during the years following the American Revolution, the late 1700's and early 1800's. It is significant that it began at this time. Throughout history there have been periods of deep religious faith often approaching fanaticism and sometimes lasting a century or more, alternating with times of disinterest and indifference toward religion sometimes actually becoming opposition to religion. In the 1500's and 1600's religion was very popular, with many new denominations formed, many people seeking religious freedom, while many churches sought to deny religious freedom to those with different beliefs. Probably in reaction to the fanaticism of the 1500's and 1600's; the 1700's were what some people called an "Age of Reason" during which the interests of many people turned away from religion. The late 1700's saw a return to religion followed by an even greater return in the early 1800's as the American frontier continued to move west. While churches have continued to be active in recent years, the overall trend in the twentieth century was away from religion with some increased emphasis

on religion as the end of the century approached. It was in the early 1800's when people were beginning to return to religion that the Restoration Movement began. At that time most of the people in the United States who went to church were Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and in certain locations there were numbers of Quakers, Lutherans, Catholics, Amish, Mennonites, and at least one synagogue of Jews. Most of the established denominations were highly structured, centrally organized and very authoritarian; and out of resentment against this authority many people had simply quit attending church.

Throughout the country and especially on the frontier there were many people who had no religion at all. Frontier people were very independent and if they *did* go to church they would most likely go to the Methodist or Baptist churches as these were less formal and more suited to frontier life. At this time there began to appear in different places along the frontier a number of independent, non-denominational religious movements. These groups, most of which broke off from existing denominations, were not connected with each other and were not exactly alike by any means. For some groups the emphasis was freedom from denominational authority; for some it was unification of all denominations into one church; for some it was elimination of human names in the Lord's church and for some the emphasis was on using only the Bible as a source for religious doctrine. Soon these independent congregations were springing up all over the country, especially in the frontier regions. While these groups were not alike in all points of doctrine and practice, they were similar in many ways. One significant similarity was in the names used by these churches; it was almost universally agreed among these independent congregations that the Church should carry the name of Christ himself and so most of them were called either "Christian Churches" or "Churches of Christ." Most of these groups were historically insignificant in that they eventually disappeared or merged with certain denominations. However, there are four of these groups that are significant because they developed into churches that still exist today.

About 1801 a group in New England under the leadership of Abner Jones and Elias Smith broke off from the Baptist Church and became independent. They baptized by immersion and called their congregations "Christian Churches." Not very much is known about their beliefs but they are significant in that they established at least a nominal connection with two other of the independent groups.

As early as 1793 a group in Virginia led by James O'Kelly separated from the Methodist Church and called itself the "Republican Methodist Church", the word "republican" here having no political significance but meaning simply "self-governing." Within a year they had changed their name to "Christian Church" and by the early 1800's they had established quite a few congregations in North Carolina.

More significant as far as the Restoration Movement is concerned was Barton W. Stone who was a Presbyterian minister at Cane Ridge, Kentucky when the great Cane Ridge Revival took place in 1801. This was an interdenominational revival in which Stone participated along with Methodist and Baptist ministers; it was a united effort to bring religion to the sinful and unbelieving frontier. As many as 20,000 people attended, many of them coming for commercial and recreational reasons as well as for religious purposes. However, religious enthusiasm *was* high and there was a strange, uncontrollable behavior in many people similar to that which takes place in Pentecostal churches today. This behavior, commonly referred to as "the shakes" was believed by many to be caused by the Spirit of God. Many people who had previously had no religion were converted and began attending church. It is almost certain that this revival had a strong effect on Barton W. Stone who already had some serious doubts about the beliefs and practices of the Presbyterian Church.

The revival message that salvation was free for all who would accept it was in conflict with the Presbyterian (Calvinist) doctrine that salvation is only for the elect who are predestined to be saved. Soon Presbyterian authorities were accusing their ministers of teaching contrary to their confession of faith. There was considerable conflict and in 1803 Stone and a number of other dissidents withdrew

from the local organization of the Presbyterian Church and formed their own body which they called the Springfield Presbytery. Their intentions at that time were to remain Presbyterians but to be free to believe and teach the truth as they found it in the Bible. However, they soon came to believe that belonging to a denomination and following its creed were not necessary for salvation, not part of the Gospel and, for that matter, probably not pleasing to God. So on June 28, 1804 the Springfield Presbytery ceased to exist and was formally laid to rest with a written document called *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, which stated “We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large for there is but one Body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.” Many people consider this date, June 28, 1804, to be the actual beginning of the Restoration Movement. *The Last Will and Testament* is about one page in length and lists a number of changes its writers felt should be made in the practices of the church, some of them general and some specific. Some of these changes were: elimination of the title “Reverend”, freedom of Christians from church government, congregations choose their own preachers and support them by free-will offerings, and that people take the Bible as their only guide to Heaven.

From that time on, Stone and his followers no longer considered themselves Presbyterians but called themselves “Christians” and nothing more, and the churches they established were called “Christian Churches” and Churches of Christ,” the two names being considered to mean the same thing. Now these churches were not exactly like we are today in all of their beliefs but they were free from denominational control so they could study on their own and learn the truth without having to conform to some prescribed doctrine. And they were not afraid to make changes when they found something in the scripture indicating that such a change should be made. For example, at the beginning, their doctrine on baptism was no different from the Presbyterian belief. Barton W. Stone himself had been baptized as a baby by sprinkling in the Presbyterian Church. When he discovered what the Bible taught on baptism he began teaching that only believers should be baptized and he himself was baptized by immersion. From the beginning, the new movement grew rapidly, starting with about 15 congregations in Kentucky and southern Ohio and growing to 300 congregations by 1826. With growth came opposition and considerable persecution from the various denominations, primarily because Stone was preaching against their creeds. While he did have opposition, Stone also found some allies. The Christian churches founded by James O’Kelly and those established by Abner Jones and Elias Smith united with Stone’s congregations in a fellowship that came to be known as the “Christian Connection.”

THOMAS AND ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

As we have seen, Barton W. Stone led the beginning of the Restoration Movement, first by starting a new local organization within the Presbyterian Church in 1803 and then completely separating this group from the Presbyterian Church in 1804 with the intention that the congregations within this group would not be part of any denomination but would only be part of the universal church. However, the Restoration Movement had another separate and completely unrelated beginning a few years later and another founder whose name was Thomas Campbell. This movement, like the one led by Stone, also had its origins in the Presbyterian Church.

Now the Presbyterian Church of the late 1700’s and early 1800’s was very different from the Presbyterians of today. It was very strict, for one thing, something like modern-day fundamentalists. It involved itself not only in the spiritual and moral lives of its members but in their social and political lives as well. It was also filled with internal conflicts, continually breaking apart at the least disagreement into numerous sub-denominations, each of which considered itself to be the One True Church. Thomas Campbell, who was born in Ireland in 1763 and was raised in the Anglican Church, voluntarily joined and eventually became a minister of one of these factions which was called the Old-Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church. In 1807 he came to America where he continued his work as a minister in Pennsylvania. Two years later he was joined by the rest of his family including

his son Alexander. By that time Thomas Campbell was no longer connected with this faction of the church. This particular group had a regulation that other religious groups, even other Presbyterians, could not take communion with them and he had broken this rule by opening the communion service to Presbyterians of all branches. He was accused of heresy and by 1809 he had resigned from the ministry and was no longer connected with the denomination. However, many people wanted him to continue his ministry which he did, preaching in homes and public buildings and in the summer at outdoor meetings. Eventually his followers decided to organize and held an organizational meeting in the summer of 1809. Thomas Campbell spoke at this meeting about using only the Bible as a source of religious doctrine. It was at this meeting that he first stated the rule: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." The group proceeded to organize under the name of "The Christian Association of Washington," the name referring to the community of Washington, Pennsylvania where the group first organized and a church building was constructed. The congregation was called the Brush Run Church from the location of the building. It was decided that a document was to be drawn up stating the purpose and direction of the association. This document, known as *Declaration and Address* is one of the chief documents of the Restoration Movement and ranks with Barton W. Stone's *Last Will and Testament* in its importance. It is considered by some to be the beginning of the Restoration Movement. Many of the principles listed in it are still practiced by Restoration churches today although some have been changed.

It was about this time that Thomas Campbell's family arrived from Ireland. Not long afterwards, Campbell discovered that baptism as taught in the Bible was by immersion of believers and so, at a rather lengthy service at Buffalo Creek, Thomas Campbell and his wife, their daughter Dorothea, Alexander Campbell and his wife, and another couple were baptized by immersion; the actual baptisms being performed by a Baptist minister since nobody in the congregation had any experience in baptizing by immersion.

Thomas Campbell was truly one of the founders of the Restoration Movement and to this day what we do in the church and what we believe is greatly influenced by his work and teaching. He lived forty-five more years after writing *Declaration and Address* and continued preaching the Gospel for the rest of his life. However, to some extent, his work, as great as it was, was overshadowed by that of his son Alexander who came to be the most influential person in the Restoration Movement during what was probably its greatest years.

Alexander Campbell came to the United States in 1809, the same year that Thomas Campbell had written his *Declaration and Address*. Alexander told his father that he had left the Presbyterian denomination they had both belonged to and was pleased to learn that Thomas Campbell had also left it and that the two of them were generally in agreement on religion. On March 12, 1811 Alexander married Margaret Brown and it was shortly after this that the Campbell family was baptized by immersion as I mentioned before.

The *Declaration and Address* by Thomas Campbell was 56 pages long in its printed form. It basically stated that the church is one and there should be unity among Christians, that only the Bible should be the source of doctrine and practices in the church, and that any practices, customs or traditions which may be required by circumstances are not of equal force or value to the Holy Scriptures. The *Declaration and Address* was accepted by the Christian Association and became its charter. As such, it is one of the founding documents of the movement to which we belong today, although there are very few Christians who have ever read it or even seen a complete copy and many have never even heard of it. (Anyone desiring to read it can obtain a complete copy on the internet.) Now, at the time of its founding, the Christian Association was not a church, either in the sense of a denomination or a congregation. We might think of it as a club or society dedicated to restoring Christian unity and discovering the true form of the Gospel of Christ. It did construct a building in which to meet; this structure also served as a schoolhouse. At that time, Thomas Campbell still considered himself a Presbyterian and in 1810 he presented the *Declaration and Address* to the

Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh in hopes of having the Christian Association accepted as an organization within the Presbyterian Church. He probably felt that to separate from the Presbyterian Church would be inconsistent with the Christian unity which the Association had declared to be one of its main reasons for existing. He may have also believed that the Association could influence the Presbyterians, who already had a stronger emphasis on the teachings of the Bible than some other denominations, to accept the Bible as their *sole* guide to religious doctrine and practice. However, the Presbyterian Synod did not accept the Association, declaring that such a connection was not consistent with their regulations.

After this, the Association decided to go ahead and become a separate church, independent of the Presbyterians. In May of 1811, they organized themselves into a local church. Thomas Campbell was elected as an elder and his son Alexander was licensed to preach. The first service was on May 5, 1811 and it included communion. From that time on, they had communion every Sunday, believing that this was the way it was practiced in the early church. One of the members donated some land for a building and a church building was constructed. The congregation was named the Brush Run Church after the location of the building.

From not long after his arrival in the United States, possibly as early as his baptism by immersion, Alexander Campbell assumed leadership of the movement that was begun by his father Thomas Campbell, and Alexander remained its leader and later the leader of the united movement until his death in 1866. Now, neither Thomas nor Alexander ever held any official position in the movement higher than elder of a local congregation. For that matter, even today the three groups that descend from the Restoration Movement are not organized as denominations. Even the Disciples churches, which many people consider to be a denomination, comprise a fellowship or brotherhood of autonomous congregations and, while they have a central organization, their individual congregations are free to make their own decisions. There was never any power struggle between Alexander and his father. Most likely Thomas had intended all along for his son to be a church leader and had trained him for that work. The Campbell family was originally from Scotland where there are a number of well-known clans named Campbell. Thomas' parents, who had been Catholic, moved to Ireland where Thomas was born in 1763 and his son Alexander was born in 1788. In addition to being very religious, the Campbells were well-educated, intelligent people. Both Thomas and Alexander had studied at Glasgow University in Scotland. Alexander knew at least four foreign languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French; and after he came to the U. S., his father supervised him in a study for the ministry that included reading the scriptures in their original languages several hours every day. Education was taken more seriously in those days than now.

The intended purpose of the Brush Run Church was to practice Christianity according to the teachings of the New Testament, without the traditions and rules of the various denominations, and to bring unity to the denominations by persuading them to use only the Bible as their source of doctrine. Most denominations did not go along with this and some even persecuted the Brush Run Church. However, some of the Baptist churches felt that this might be the thing to do. Eventually the Brush Run Church was invited to join the Redstone Baptist Association, which they did in 1813. While they were not in total agreement with the Baptists, there was fellowship and a degree of unity with at least some of the congregations in the Redstone Association. It should be remembered, however, that while the Brush Run Church was trying to follow the New Testament, its members were from various denominational backgrounds and were still learning (as we are today, if we would just admit it). The various points of doctrine which we feel we know perfectly today were gradually being discovered one at a time. By 1813 they had learned that baptism should be by immersion and that babies should not be baptized, only believers. This made the Brush Run Church at least moderately compatible with the Baptist beliefs.

On August 30, 1816 the Redstone Association held its regular meeting at the Cross Creek Baptist Church. Apparently a number of congregations were represented as the crowd was too large for

the church building so they met outside, possibly under a large tent. The program included several lengthy sermons as was common in those days. However the scheduled main speaker was sick so Alexander Campbell was asked to speak in his place. He requested that he might speak second so he would have time to get his thoughts together. His sermon, which he later wrote down and published, was at least 16 pages long. It became known as his “*Sermon on the Law*” and it is considered by many church historians to be as significant and influential as Barton W. Stone’s *Last Will and Testament* and Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* in pointing out the direction the Restoration Movement would go. The text of the sermon was Romans 8: 3. The main idea of the sermon was that there is an important difference between the Old and New Testaments; that the Law of Moses applied only to the Jews and was not binding on Christians at all. Instead, the Law of Moses was abolished and nailed to the cross while Christians are under the Law of Christ which is new, different, and perfect; while the Law of Moses, which was sufficient for Israel until the coming of Christ, was incomplete and only a part of God’s total plan of salvation. It had accomplished what it was supposed to do and had expired when Christ came to earth and fulfilled it.

Today the doctrine that we are not under the Law of Moses is commonly believed and taught in the Churches of Christ as well as the Independent Christian Churches and the Disciples Churches. In 1816, however, it was a new and unusual teaching to most people, one that many had never thought of and that some could not even comprehend. It was a common belief in most denominations at that time (and still is in many) that both the Old and New Testaments applied to Christians. It is true, of course, that the denominations did not keep all the commandments of the Old Testament but then they did not keep all the New Testament teachings either. As might be expected, this was not the ideal sermon to preach in a Baptist church. Opposition began immediately and Alexander Campbell was involved in a continual conflict with the Redstone Association for the next seven years. Many of the Baptists were just not willing to give up their creed, even though it did not have its origin in the Bible. They could not accept the belief that Christians are not bound by the laws of the Old Testament. When the Redstone Association met in 1823 it was their plan to expel Campbell. He was at the meeting but only as an observer and he explained that he was no longer a member since the congregation that he belonged to at that time was not part of the Redstone Baptist Association.

The congregation that Alexander Campbell belonged to in 1823 was one he had started in Wellsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia) on the Ohio River not far from Steubenville, Ohio. This was a Baptist congregation and Campbell was still a Baptist although he didn’t agree with everything commonly being preached in Baptist churches. He was in demand as a preacher and spoke in a number of churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and northwestern Virginia, and some of these churches *did* agree with what he was teaching. About that time, a number of Baptist churches in northeastern Ohio organized the Mahoning Baptist Association and they invited Campbell and the Wellsburg congregation to join, which they did in 1823. It was also in 1823 that Campbell began publishing a journal called the *Christian Baptist*.

Campbell was able to accomplish more in the Mahoning Association than he had done in the Redstone Association. A number of congregations, at least twenty, became convinced that he was right in such matters as using only the Bible for church doctrine, the belief that the New Testament had replaced the Old Testament as the divine law which Christians were under, and the idea that Christians should not be required to adopt a human creed such as the Baptists were expected to follow. New congregations were established in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and what is now West Virginia, some of them as far away as Dayton, Cincinnati, and Louisville. He was assisted by several very capable preachers including his father Thomas Campbell, Sidney Rigdon who preached in Pennsylvania and northeastern Ohio and eventually became minister of a congregation he had established in Kirtland, Ohio which we will hear more about later; and a young man from Scotland named Walter Scott (not the famous writer Sir Walter Scott although he was related to him). He would become one of the greatest leaders of the Restoration Movement during the period of its most rapid growth in the mid 1800’s. It was Scott who

was credited with coming up with the five-step “Plan of Salvation” outline (hear the Gospel, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized).

Although Alexander Campbell wanted the churches that followed his teachings to be united with all the Baptist churches, it eventually became obvious that there were two very different kinds of Baptist churches, the regular Baptist churches that disagreed with Campbell on a number of issues and those led by Campbell which became known as Reformed Baptist or Campbellite. Now, Campbell didn’t want to use the name Campbellite as he had no intention of starting a new denomination and he especially didn’t want to start one with his name on it. However, the name came into common use and there are many historical references to Campbellites and the Campbellite Church. Campbell used the term “Reformers” when referring to those who shared his beliefs.

MERGER AND UNIFICATION

As the decade of the 1820’s came to an end there were two fairly large but unrelated religious groups in the United States whose purpose was to be simple Christians without belonging to any denomination and to get their doctrine only from the Bible rather than by subscribing to any man-made creed. One was the group unofficially led by Alexander Campbell consisting of a number of congregations in western Pennsylvania, eastern and southern Ohio, northern Kentucky and the part of Virginia that is now West Virginia; once known as Reformed Baptists and later as Reformers or Campbellites and eventually as Disciples of Christ. The other was the Christian Connection under the unofficial leadership of Barton W. Stone consisting of congregations he and his colleagues had founded in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee as well as congregations in Virginia and North Carolina that had broken off from the Methodist church under the leadership of James O’Kelly and congregations in New England that had been led out of the Baptist Church by Abner Jones and Elias Smith. Congregations of both groups were called either “Church of Christ” or “Christian Church” and it was considered that both names were valid, scriptural, and meant the same thing. Some of the churches in the Christian Connection referred to themselves as “New Lights.” There appears to have been a standing joke about the names. A traveler, when entering a building where the sign said “Church of Christ” or “Christian Church” would ask the members if they were “New Lights” or “Campbellites.” In order to distinguish between the two groups in this discussion, I will refer to the congregations led by Campbell as Disciples churches and those led by Stone as Christian churches since this is how they preferred to distinguish themselves in the period leading up to the merger.

Both groups were active in travelling around the country and preaching at every opportunity. Many converts were made, both from people who had no religion and from members of various denominations. New congregations were established over a large area and a number of denominational congregations, mostly Baptist, gave up their denominational affiliations and united with either the Disciples or Christian churches. By 1830 there were quite a few towns, especially in Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and western Virginia in which there was both a Christian church and a Disciples church. The two groups were aware of each other and, to a considerable extent, were well acquainted and on good terms. In some locations preachers from the two groups would occasionally exchange pulpits. Alexander Campbell had first met Barton W. Stone in 1824 in Kentucky and the two of them remained in close contact from that time on. Considering that one of the primary goals of both groups was Christian unity, it is not surprising that there was discussion of the possibility of the two groups uniting to become one brotherhood. Joint meetings between the two groups were held in a number of places. Sentiment was strongly in favor of the unification of the two groups so a rather large meeting was scheduled to conclude the union, more or less. It should be remembered that neither the Christian churches nor the Disciples were organized denominations with central headquarters. In fact, neither group believed in the church having such a central organization. The meeting they held had no official authority to compel the churches to unite; however, the statement made by the meeting was

strong enough that it had that effect. The meeting was held in Lexington, Kentucky at the end of December 1831 in a large building recently built by the Christian church. Alexander Campbell was not present and, with communication being as slow as it was in those days, there is a good possibility that he did not know that the meeting was scheduled until sometime after it had taken place. The Disciples were represented by “Raccoon” John Smith who had become a well-known and successful preacher by that time. He spoke to the assembly on unity and concluded by saying that the brethren should no longer be “Campbellites, Stonites, New Lights, or Old Lights” but that they should come to the Bible which can provide all the light we need. When he finished, Barton W. Stone, representing the Christian churches, spoke, expressing total agreement with what Raccoon John Smith had said. When Stone finished speaking the two men shook hands and the audience stood up and burst into song.

This, of course, was not the completion of the merger between the Disciples and the Christian churches but only the beginning. It was up to each congregation to decide whether they wanted to merge and with whom. In some places the churches merged within a short time. In other places the churches didn’t unite until Campbell or Stone or one of the other well-known preachers would visit the area and convince two congregations to unite and become one or to unite in fellowship. Some churches were located so far out of the way that they didn’t even hear about the merger for a long time. For several years, preachers travelled around the country persuading congregations to join together with considerable success. Eventually practically all of the Disciples churches became involved in the merger as did at least a majority of the Christian churches. Although exact figures are not known and different sources give different numbers, it is believed that between 20,000 and 50,000 members of the two groups became united into a single fellowship.

Some of the Christian churches were not willing to unite with the Disciples. There were feelings against Alexander Campbell among the leaders of some congregations and they felt that they could not get along with the Disciples. None of the churches in New England, those started by Abner Jones and Elias Smith, joined the merger. At least one source indicated that they eventually became Unitarian. The Christian churches in North Carolina which were founded by James O’Kelly as well as a number of congregations in the eastern states and southern Ohio also refused to merge with the Disciples but chose to remain in the fellowship they called the Christian Connection which set up a headquarters in Dayton, Ohio. In 1931 the Christian Connection merged with the Congregational Church, the combined denomination being known as the Congregational Christian Church with congregations in Michigan and some other states called Congregational churches but in Ohio where some of the original Christian congregations exist they are still known as Christian churches. In the late 1950’s, part of the Congregational Christian Church merged with the Reformed Church creating the United Church of Christ.

It was one of the distinguishing marks of the Restoration churches that we believe the church should get its doctrine only from the Bible and that we should not adopt as part of our religion any man-made teaching or practice that is not clearly prescribed in the Bible. This has been a characteristic of the Restoration Movement from the beginning and, for that matter; it was true of some of the other restoration movements in various places over the centuries. Along with this belief is the teaching that if Christians gave up everything that was not scriptural and followed only the Bible, then all churches would be exactly alike in name, doctrine, form, and practice and the true church would be restored to its original pure form. Unfortunately, history does not show this to be the case. Today there are a number of religious groups that claim to get their doctrine entirely from the Bible, some of them even claiming to be the One True Church, and yet there are considerable differences between them. The same situation existed in 1831.

The two groups that merged beginning in December 1831 were alike in their origins, purposes, intentions and at least some of their beliefs and practices. Both groups originated in the Presbyterian Church which, in those days, was much stricter than it is today. Both had rejected Calvinism, the belief that God had predestined everything that happens; that a person who was predestined to be saved

would never be lost and those predestined to be lost could never find salvation. Both the Christian churches and the Disciples did not believe in a central governing body for the church, in denominational names, or in man-made creeds and disciplines. Both used only the Bible as their source of doctrine. Both believed in the unity of all Christians under the authority of Christ and the New Testament. Both Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone were pacifists, believing that participation in war is both immoral and sinful, as did many preachers in both groups as well as many of the members. Both groups baptized only by immersion and neither group baptized babies. Congregations of both groups used either the name "Church of Christ" or "Christian Church" with the two names considered to mean the same thing.

There were, however, considerable differences between the two brotherhoods, differences which today we would most likely find so significant that we would never consent to such a merger. When Alexander Campbell heard that the churches were uniting he was surprised and quite concerned, possibly even horrified. He had been personally acquainted with Barton W. Stone since 1824 and was well aware of the differences in their beliefs. Still Campbell supported the merger and eventually came to be considered the leader of the united brotherhood as he had been leader of the Disciples before the merger. (It should be remembered that Campbell never held any official position in the church any higher than elder of his local congregation, and that the merger was not a single official act but was a number of voluntary mergers between individual congregations throughout the country.) He was instrumental in bringing about the success of the merger and in keeping the church united as long as he lived and he played a large part in leading the churches to agreement in matters where the two groups had differences.

One difference seems to have been fairly easy to take care of. The Christian Churches had communion at irregular times while the Disciples took communion every Sunday. From the time of the merger all the churches involved apparently had communion every Sunday. Other matters may have been more complicated to settle. The Christian churches had an ordained ministry and they believed that only an ordained minister or elder was qualified to perform a baptism or preside at communion, while the Disciples believed that every member was a minister and could perform any rite or act of worship. In the Christian churches worship was emotional and involved the mourner's bench with loud praying, crying, shouting, and possibly speaking in tongues, something like the Nazarene, Holiness, or even Pentecostal churches of today while the Disciples' worship was more calm and dignified and maybe even a little formal. The Christian churches believed that the Holy Spirit was active in both the conversion of a sinner and in the daily life of a Christian while the Disciples felt that a Christian came in contact with the Spirit only by reading the Bible. (Many Christians still believe this to be the case today even though there is nothing in the Bible to indicate it to be true. The one verse used to "prove" this doctrine (I Corinthians 13: 10) has to be taken out of context to do so and is actually referring to love rather than the Holy Spirit.) A major emphasis in the Christian churches was unity among the churches while the Disciples, who had some interest in unity, were considerably more concerned with restoring the ancient order of things in the church. There was, of course, disagreement concerning the name believers should be called, with the Christian churches believing the name "Christian" to have been inspired by God while the Disciples, seeing the name "Christian" as having originally being a derogatory term, felt that believers should be called "Disciples." One of the more serious issues was a question in the mind of Barton W. Stone as to whether Christ had existed eternally before he came to earth or if he was created by God at the time of his birth, a belief similar to that held by Unitarians, the ancient Arian sect, or current-day Jehovah's Witnesses. Fortunately this matter was settled by the time of the merger as eventually the other differences also were.

It would be hard to imagine two groups with such differences merging today. The modern church is much too afraid of anything different to ever make such a move. Things were different in the 1830's. Unity was considered much more important in those days, important enough to make compromises, especially in matters of personal opinion. There were leaders from both groups who

went out of their way to make the merger work. Preachers travelled throughout the country encouraging congregations to unite and, for the most part, they were successful. Not only did the Disciples and Christian churches unite but there were also many individuals, some who had previously had no religion and some from various denominations, who came into the newly united brotherhood. In addition, there were a number of denominational congregations that joined the merger. For example, the church in Nashville, Tennessee (where today there are over a hundred Churches of Christ as well as a considerable number of Disciples churches and Independent Christian churches) began as a Baptist church but gave up its denominational affiliation and united with the Restoration Movement. One of the factors that facilitated the union was the ability to tolerate differences of opinion. A common belief in both groups that merged was that, while there should be no departure from what is taught or commanded in the Bible, matters that were not clearly explained in the New Testament were left to the individual or the local congregation and when there were differences regarding these matters, such differences should not be allowed to destroy the unity of the church. This is not the case today and has not been for over a century. Sometime during the 1800's somebody in the church discovered how to make his personal opinion appear to be supported by the Holy Scripture. This was done in several ways. One was to say that if the New Testament shows an example of Christians doing something then that is a command for *all* Christians to *always* do this. When someone had an opinion for which there was no example he could say that the Bible *inferred* that his belief was true. (This, by the way, is how the Catholic Church proves the existence of Purgatory.) Sometimes, to give an opinion scriptural validity, unrelated passages would be taken out of context and used together in such a way as to make the Bible say something it was never meant to say. These practices and the outlook they produce has led many modern Christians to believe there is only one right way to do things and we must all agree with this belief and never have anything to do with anyone who is not in complete agreement with us. If such a view had been prevalent among the Disciples and Christian Churches in the 1830's, they would never have been able to unite as they did. What they did agree on was that they would be united on what was plainly taught or commanded in the New Testament and they would allow diversity in personal opinion to exist as it applied to beliefs and practices not clearly specified in the Bible and things that were obviously matters of personal choice.

Considering how many differences there were between the Christian churches and the Disciples, it is surprising how well they all came to believe and practice the same things after the merger. How were they able to do this? It helped considerably that they believed that differences in personal opinions didn't matter so making minor changes was fairly easy to do. Congregations from either group continued to go by the name of Church of Christ or Christian Church, with both names considered to mean the same thing. As a brotherhood, the united church came to be known everywhere as Disciples of Christ. As beliefs and practices in the various congregations became more similar, they tended to become more like those taught by Alexander Campbell than those of Barton W. Stone. It is hard to say exactly why it happened this way but a major factor was probably the Christian college. The first Christian college in the Restoration Movement was Bacon College which opened in Georgetown, Kentucky in 1836, moved to Harrodsburg, Kentucky in 1840, closed in 1850, reopened in 1857 as Kentucky University and in 1865 merged with Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, which was about to close. Transylvania had been run by several denominations and now came under the control of the Disciples. In 1840, Alexander Campbell started Bethany College near his home at Bethany, Virginia, now West Virginia. The two schools trained many preachers who were active in the expansion of the church that accompanied the westward growth of the United States. Both colleges are still in existence and are operated by the Disciples of Christ. Another major factor in the standardization of church doctrine and practice, possibly the most significant, was the religious publication. From fairly early in the Restoration Movement there had been a number of religious publications, many of which circulated widely. Alexander Campbell published the *Christian Baptist* and then later was editor and publisher of the *Millennial Harbinger* which was probably the best-

known church paper in the brotherhood in the middle 1800's and is still available in reprints. Such publications had an enormous influence on the rapidly growing Disciples—as they still do on the churches today. People have a tendency to believe something if they see it in writing. The church turned to publications for spiritual guidance, sometimes as much as they depended on their preachers. The fact that the church had no central governing body gave the church papers an even greater influence—some might even say power—over the church. It has been said that the editors of the religious publications were in effect the bishops of the church.

A LITTLE-KNOWN CONNECTION

In addition to the three major religious groups that people associate with Alexander Campbell, there were at least three other groups that came out of the Restoration Movement. Two of them were rather small cults known as Spiritualists and Christadelphians, neither of which was ever large enough to be historically significant. The other, while cult-like in its teachings and practices, eventually became a fairly large group that is significant in both the historical and religious senses. It is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormons. Most people in the Restoration churches today don't realize that the Mormons are historically related to us, and yet if there had been no Restoration Movement the Mormon Church would probably have never developed.

In 1830 Sidney Rigdon, a close friend and colleague of Alexander Campbell, was minister of the church in Kirtland, Ohio, a village near Lake Erie in northeastern Ohio. This church was a member of the Mahoning Baptist Association, as were the other congregations that Campbell had started. About this time, Parley P. Pratt, another Gospel preacher and friend of Rigdon, was riding through Palmyra, New York when he met Joseph Smith whom the Mormons consider to be their founding prophet. Pratt apparently believed Smith's prophecies and took several of the Mormon converts (At that time there were only about half a dozen of them.) back to Kirtland and introduced Sidney Rigdon to the new belief. Rigdon went to New York where he met with Joseph Smith and invited him and his followers to come to Kirtland, which they did. Rigdon and most of his congregation was converted and the Kirtland church became the first Mormon congregation. However, it was not known as a Mormon or Latter-day Saints church at that time. For several years the congregation continued to be known as Church of Christ as did other congregations established by Joseph Smith. Eventually Joseph Smith claimed to have a revelation changing the name to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Kirtland became a center of the Mormon Church and it was there that they built their first temple. The temple, which is still standing today, is owned by a group that descended from the Mormon Church known as the Community of Christ (formerly known as Reorganized Latter-Day Saints).

When Alexander Campbell learned that Rigdon and his congregation had joined the Mormons, he went to the Kirtland area and taught from door to door to prevent further defections from the church. Shortly after this, the *Book of Mormon* was published. Mormons believe it was miraculously translated by Joseph Smith from ancient gold plates which were shown to him by an angel. Many people believe that Sidney Rigdon wrote it by giving a religious slant to a fictional work by Solomon Spaulding that Rigdon found in (and may have stolen from) a print shop in Pittsburgh. Alexander Campbell believed that Joseph Smith wrote it. Several conflicting accounts of the origin of the *Book of Mormon* have been published, some of which may be found on the internet.

Sidney Rigdon was known to have always had a very active imagination and a strong interest in things that were strange, unusual, and weird. Some people said that he had some unorthodox religious beliefs before he ever met the Mormons, but such stories could have been made up after the fact to explain how he could leave the church. Rigdon became a leader in the Mormon Church and expected to be chosen as Joseph Smith's successor, but when this did not happen he was very disappointed and moved back east where he died in obscurity.

Today there are at least six denominations that have descended from the Mormon Church, at

least one of which still uses the name “Church of Christ.” And while we would find many of the Mormon beliefs totally alien and strange, they have others that come directly from their connection with the Restoration Movement. For example, they baptize only by immersion and they do not baptize babies. Also, they teach a list of “First Principles” that is actually closer to those listed in Hebrews 5: 12 through 6: 2 than those we commonly teach.

GROWTH AND EXPANSION

From the uniting of the two branches of the Restoration Movement which began at the end of 1831, the Disciples of Christ existed as a united brotherhood of Christians, rapidly growing and expanding throughout the country for over fifty years. It should be understood that the changes that took place in the church during this time did not happen in a single day or even a single year but were gradual processes that happened slowly over time. Neither the original merger that formed the united church nor the eventual breakup of the church happened overnight. This, of course, was because the church was never organized as a denomination with a central governing body but instead was a fellowship of autonomous congregations. However, from even before the merger there were some very capable preachers in addition to the Campbells and Barton W. Stone who unofficially performed the function of leaders of the brotherhood. They travelled around the country preaching the Gospel and starting congregations. Some of them edited and published religious papers. Some were involved in founding and operating Christian colleges. From Barton W. Stone’s Christian churches came such men as Samuel Rogers, B. F. Hall, Tolbert Fanning, and Pardee Butler. From Alexander Campbell’s Disciples churches there was Walter Scott, John T. Johnson, “Raccoon” John Smith, Davit S. Burnet and Benjamin Franklin (not the same as the well-known American statesman of the same name). As was previously suggested, one of the biggest changes in the church in the middle 1800’s was its growth as it spread throughout most of the country. The least amount of growth of the Disciples was in New England and the Atlantic coast; the greatest growth took place in the west and south along the expanding frontier. In addition, congregations were established in Canada, the British Isles, and even Australia.

To understand what the Church experienced in the 1800’s we need to remember how the United States developed and changed during that century. In 1800 the U. S. was a relatively small nation, mostly along the Atlantic coast with only two western states, Kentucky and Tennessee. Ohio was not yet a state; it became a state in 1803. That same year the U. S. bought the Louisiana Territory from France, doubling the size of the country and eventually extending it to include what is now Washington and Oregon. Everything west and south of the Louisiana Territory was part of Mexico. In the early and middle 1800’s there were three major wars: the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Civil War. In 1836 Texas, which had been part of Mexico, became an independent republic. Then in 1845 it became part of the United States. Americans had been moving into Mexican territory (where they were not always welcome) for some time. At least partly on their behalf, the U. S. invaded Mexico in 1846 and when the war was over the U. S. had taken almost half of Mexico including the part that is now California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. After this, Americans by the droves moved into the new territory and thousands of them were Disciples who started congregations wherever they settled, many of which still exist. Technology was another factor influencing society in the 1800’s. Travel had been mostly by foot, by horse or by wind power but beginning in 1807 there were steamboats on the rivers and not long afterwards railroads were being built. By 1840 it was possible to send instant messages by wire to most cities. New inventions made agriculture and manufacturing easier and more profitable. All these changes, including territorial growth, wars, and technological advances affected people all over the country, including members of the Church, and ultimately affected the beliefs and practices of the Church itself.

Even in matters purely of a religious nature there were differences of opinion among members

of the church and there always had been. Sometimes these disagreements on religious matters were magnified by social, cultural, and political differences. However, one of the main points of the church's doctrine was unity of believers based on Christ's prayer for unity, so for at least half a century the church remained united in spite of its internal differences. One controversy (which still exists) was whether congregations should cooperate in doing Christian work such as benevolence or evangelism. One viewpoint was that for congregations to work together would destroy their autonomy and turn them into a centrally controlled denomination. The opposite position was that some work can be done much more effectively by congregations working together than by individual congregations working separately. It is ironic that the Churches of Christ, which have traditionally taken the first position in this matter, now have quite a few cooperative agencies, each supported by a number of individual congregations. The first major cooperative effort by the Disciples began in 1849 when members of about 100 congregations met in Cincinnati and organized the American Christian Missionary Society. Another controversial issue was pacifism, the belief that Christians should not support or participate in war. The founders of the Restoration Movement were pacifists as were some of the early preachers and many of the members, although there were some members of both groups that merged in 1831 who fought in the War of 1812. The number of pacifists in the church increased because of the Mexican War, possibly due to the fact that it involved the U. S. invading a sovereign nation and annexing conquered territory. In the Civil War there were members of the church fighting on both sides, including some who had previously been pacifists; however, pacifism remained a belief of a considerable number of church members through World War II, after which the editors of church publications, at least those of the Churches of Christ, presented a nationalistic viewpoint in which national interests were portrayed as being part of Christian teachings or in some cases as *superseding* Christian teachings. Since that time, for the most part, pacifism has not been associated with the Churches of Christ except for a few individual members; although I did hear of one congregation in Pennsylvania in the 1960's or 1970's that required their ministers to be pacifists.

However the worst controversy to affect the church was slavery. Slavery had been practiced since the colonial period and once existed in all parts of the country but by the 1800's it had ceased to exist in the northern states where the economy was based primarily on industry but became widespread in the southern states where cotton and tobacco farming was the main part of the economy. Eventually it was outlawed in many northern states. By the 1830's there was an organized anti-slavery movement in the north. By this time the church had spread over most of the country and the two groups of the Restoration Movement were in the process of uniting. So within a few years there was a nationwide brotherhood that was united in regard to the Bible and certain points of doctrine but they were not united regarding slavery. People often acquire the social, cultural, and political views of their surroundings. Most members of the church in the north were opposed to slavery, some of them so opposed that they became part of the organized anti-slavery movement. In the south, many members of the church were in favor of slavery and there were quite a few of them who actually owned slaves. There were also a large number of church members in the south who *were* slaves. These, of course, were generally opposed to slavery but they were not in a position to do anything about it or even express their opinion. In the mid 1840's the church in Nashville had 500 members, about half of whom were African-Americans and they probably all belonged to the white members of the congregation. African-Americans have made many significant contributions to many phases of society including the church but because of the nature of slavery and racial prejudice they were never given the proper recognition for their contribution. For example, it is a little-known fact, seldom mentioned in history books and never shown in Civil War movies that there were over 90,000 African-Americans in the Confederate Army, almost as many as the 100,000 who served in the Union Army. While some were in the army because they hoped to get their freedom through military service, they were mostly there because they were drafted and, being slaves, they had even less to say about being drafted than the white men did. Among the leaders of the church there were about as many views on slavery as there

were among the members in general or the population at large. In the south, some preachers who were pro-slavery attempted to justify the practice by Paul's letter to Philemon in which he requests Philemon to take back his runaway slave Onesimus. Other preachers who were opposed to slavery would respond that Paul had requested Philemon to take him back, not as a slave but as a brother. Some preachers were so much against slavery that they became Abolitionists, mostly the kind who worked peacefully, trying to end slavery by peaceful means. Some preachers who had favored slavery eventually came to believe it was morally wrong. Alexander Campbell had a large farm in northwestern Virginia where he owned a number of slaves. However, after some study, he concluded that it was wrong. Since he was concerned with their welfare, he took the time and the trouble to educate them and then gave them their freedom. (The part of Virginia where Campbell lived was mostly mountainous country where there were few slaves and most of the people were opposed to slavery. In the early years of the Civil War there was considerable fighting in this area. In 1863, when this part of Virginia was occupied by Federal troops, it seceded from the Confederacy and became the U. S. state of West Virginia as it still is today.) At Bethany College which Campbell ran near his home, there were some notorious student demonstrations, mostly pro-slavery since most of the students were from the south. As was mentioned before, many members of the church including quite a few of the leaders were pacifists and some of them didn't participate in the Civil War at all. Many others in the church did fight in the war; there were Disciples fighting on both sides. Alexander Campbell had a son in the Confederate Army. Some who had been pacifists became so involved with such issues as slavery, states' rights, and related matters that they decided to fight anyway. One of these former pacifists was James A. Garfield who had been a well-known Gospel preacher. When the Civil War started he joined the Union Army and became a general. He led a unit from Ohio that was said to be made up almost entirely of Disciples. In 1880 Garfield was elected president but he was murdered not long after he took office. Because of the slavery issue and the Civil War, several major Protestant denominations including the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians and two groups of Presbyterians broke apart and formed separate northern and southern branches, some of which still exist today. The only major Protestant group that didn't divide because of the war was the Disciples of Christ. This may have been because the unity that held them together was not based on a central governing body, a man-made doctrine, a human name, or an ethnic origin, but rather on Christ and the Bible. When the country reunited the Disciples went back together almost as if there had been no cause for division in the first place. After the war congregations in the north joined together to help churches in the south, that were suffering because of the war. Evangelism took up where it had left off or, in some cases continued as it had during the war. However, it would be inaccurate to say that the Disciples survived the Civil War totally unscathed. They had just spent four years killing each other, in some cases believing they were fighting for the cause of Christ as some of their songs indicate, a perversion of the Gospel if there ever was one. Thousands of them had been killed and thousands more had been injured, many of them permanently crippled. Millions of dollars worth of property had been destroyed, condemning many church members to years of poverty. People find it hard to forget such things and sometimes even harder to forgive. While the Civil War was not the direct cause of the eventual breakup of the Disciples, there is a good possibility that many members of the church held on to feelings of resentment, prejudice and hate that they eventually directed at their fellow Christians who happened to disagree with them on certain matters of doctrine.

There was another change in the outlook of the Disciples that gradually took place during the middle 1800's, something that began before the Civil War and probably existed in the Restoration Movement to some extent from the beginning. Along with the desire for unity in the church, many of the members came to feel a need to be 100% right in all matters of doctrine. This perceived need gradually grew in many people until it outweighed the desire for unity and eventually it grew until it left no room for disagreement at all. However, this wasn't until almost a quarter of a century after the Civil War. In spite of any negative feelings that may have existed, the church remained united through

the Civil War and until 1889. Many people give Alexander Campbell credit for holding the Disciples together. Campbell died in 1866.

DIVISION IN THE BROTHERHOOD

Some years ago I visited the headquarters of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville and one of the questions I asked the Director was if there was any correlation between the congregations that broke off from the Disciples in the late 1800's and whether the congregation had been or was descended from one of Stone's Christian churches or one of Campbell's Disciples churches. I was told that there was absolutely no correlation and that the issues that divided the church in the late 1800's were matters that had come up after the merger had been completed. I find it interesting and probably significant that none of the differences between the two groups that merged in 1832 were factors involved in the breakup of the church that took place more than half a century later. Those original differences had been worked out at a time when unity did not depend on everybody being in total agreement on all points of doctrine but rather on a spirit of love that eventually *did* result in the churches generally believing the same things regarding these matters. It is also significant that the issue of slavery, the worst conflict that ever existed among the Disciples, did not cause the church to break apart although it did cause divisions in such groups as the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, some of which continue to be divided today. Many people give credit to Alexander Campbell for holding the church together during that terrible time. Campbell died in 1866, a year after the civil war ended.

We usually think that when division did come, that it was because of the use of musical instruments in worship. Actually the instrument was only one of a number of issues that became more and more controversial until they resulted in the split. One of these was the Christian college which we in the Church of Christ no longer oppose. Today the Churches of Christ operate quite a few colleges and universities all over the U. S. and in several foreign countries. I studied at one of them for three years myself. In the late 1800's, however, there were many people in the church who felt that such colleges were unscriptural innovations and had no business being connected to the church in any way. Another issue was the missionary society, several of which had been organized in the middle 1800's as a cooperative way to spread the Gospel, and many also saw this as an unscriptural innovation. One thing practiced in some congregations and opposed in others was fund-raising by some means other than contributions from members, such activities as church suppers and rummage sales. Some congregations had choirs which many thought of as sinful and unscriptural, even though some of the hymns from the early church and many of the psalms contain indications that they were written for choirs which sang *with* the congregation and served the function that a song leader does today. Probably the issue that we would find the strangest and disagree with the most was the belief that many members had, that is was sinful for a congregation to have a full-time paid minister who was an employee of the congregation. It was common in many congregations for preaching to be done by various members or occasionally by travelling preachers who apparently provided their own support. The fact is, the beliefs and practices of the churches have changed continually from the beginning of the Restoration Movement to the present and they are still changing today and it is common that what a group opposes in one generation it will *itself* practice in the next. At any rate, the causes of the breakup in the Disciples was opposition to Christian colleges, the missionary societies, outside fund-raising, choirs, and full-time paid ministers, as well as the use of the musical instrument in worship. But it is the instrument that we remember.

Until the middle of the 1800's the only churches that had organs were the very large wealthy churches in the big cities along the east coast, mostly Episcopal and Catholic churches in such cities as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. These were churches that could afford the elaborate and expensive pipe organs, most of which had to be imported from Europe. Very few of the Disciples

churches fell into this category and, for that matter, neither did most of the various denominational churches. Then certain companies began manufacturing a much simpler and less expensive organ in which the sound was made by reeds instead of pipes. This enabled many people to buy organs for their homes and some churches started using them too. The first time an organ was brought into a Disciples church was in 1959 in Kentucky; I understand that this same organ still exists in a museum or college somewhere. The first complaints about it were that the sound of a reed organ was not as dignified as that of a pipe organ and therefore was not suitable for use in worship. Eventually some people began to object to it on a religious or scriptural basis because the New Testament, at least in most English translations, does not say we should play an instrument in worship. (In contrast, the most common translation used by German Protestants actually says “sing and play.”) There were all kinds of opinions in the church; some liked the organ, some didn’t, and some didn’t care. Some churches got organs; some got pianos, and some didn’t get instruments, either because they didn’t believe in them or because they couldn’t afford them. Some churches used instruments during Sunday school but not for worship. Some congregations divided because of the instrument but even in such cases the divided congregation still considered themselves to be two congregations of the Lord’s church. For thirty years this was the situation that existed in the church. There were differences of opinion regarding musical instruments and the other issues I have mentioned but nobody made these things a test of fellowship.

The break began in the summer of 1889. The Disciples churches in Shelby County, Illinois, none of which used the instrument in worship or supported any of the other items that were previously mentioned as being objectionable to some church members, were holding their annual meeting at Sand Creek. Afterwards the question came up as to whether this meeting was a central convention of some kind at which church doctrine and policy would be decided, which would have been contrary to the common beliefs of the Disciples at that time. It probably was not, although there was enough of a question that some felt obligated to state clearly that it was not such a convention. The speaker was Daniel Sommer, a 39-year-old preacher from Indianapolis. He spoke for several hours against musical instruments in worship, Christian colleges, located and paid preachers, missionary societies and fund-raising projects, and then proposed a resolution, written by some of the local church leaders, that those who allowed or practiced such things *should no longer be considered to be brethren*. This document which was named *Address and Declaration* by its writers (The name was a take-off of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* which had been delivered 80 years earlier.) but became commonly known as the Sand Creek Resolution, was passed by those assembled and adopted by all the congregations represented at that meeting. It was at this meeting that Sommer first made the distinction between the names “Christian Church” and Church of Christ. Before this time, there were Disciples congregations of both names and it had been considered that the two names meant the same thing. After this, Daniel Sommer began to travel around the country trying to get churches to accept the resolution.

Now the Sand Creek resolution did not gain immediate acceptance, even among those who were opposed to the things it condemned. Leaders of the church from both viewpoints were opposed to it and considered Daniel Sommer to be a troublemaker and a heretic. After all, the New Testament taught against division and in favor of unity. Church publications, including the *Gospel Advocate*, were for the most part against the resolution. However, it was David Lipscomb, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* and most prominent leader of the Disciples in the south whom some historians credit with eventually bringing about the division in the church. Most of the churches in the south did not use instruments and, while this may be partly because of the poverty caused by the Civil War, most of them had come to believe that this was the correct way to worship and, although Lipscomb had originally opposed the Sand Creek Resolution, he was himself opposed to using instruments in worship and eventually took the lead in bringing about the division of the churches in the south. By the beginning of the twentieth century the two groups were completely separate in most parts of the country, with congregations that did not use musical instruments using only the name “Church of Christ” while those that did use

instruments retained the name “Disciples of Christ” and called their congregations either “Church of Christ” or “Christian Church.”

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND

In 1906 the director of the U. S. Census Bureau wrote to David Lipscomb asking if Churches of Christ should be listed separately from Disciples churches. Lipscomb, who by this time was totally in favor of separation and who had already begun to compile a list of approved preachers and congregations that he considered faithful, answered that the Churches of Christ were a distinct people and that they were separate in name, work, and rule of faith. This, in effect, made the separation official and some historians consider 1906 as marking the beginning of the Churches of Christ as a separate religious group, although the Sand Creek Resolution in 1889 was the first time separation had been proposed at any level higher than that of an individual congregation, and the controversial issues that caused the separation had divided congregations as long as thirty years before that time. It seems that the Census Bureau considered the Church of Christ to be a denomination with David Lipscomb as its head and, to some extent, by replying and acting as he did, Lipscomb may have assumed the role of head of the church; whether this was intentional or not we may never know.

Probably as a result of the division culminating in 1906, there was a second division in the disciples in the twentieth century. When the first division took place, most of the members, including the church leaders and preachers, who went with the Churches of Christ were *theologically* conservative. (Don't confuse this with politically conservative; the leadership in the Churches of Christ was politically neutral with some even refusing to vote or take part in politics and many members and some leaders being politically liberal well into the middle of the twentieth century.) This left the leadership of the Disciples overbalanced in the direction of extreme religious liberalism and as a result, they began to bring in a number of European philosophies that involved such things as denying or at least questioning the need for baptism and even the divinity of Christ. (It is my understanding that such teachings are not part of the Disciples' beliefs today.) In response to this, many congregations left the Disciples during the period from 1900 to 1940. These Independent Christian churches, many congregations of which go by the name “Church of Christ,” teach a doctrine almost identical to that of the Churches of Christ except that they use musical instruments in worship and observe some religious holidays and, in some cases, even non-religious holidays. Some of these want to have fellowship with the Churches of Christ and, in a few places, congregations of the two groups have merged in recent years. Like the Churches of Christ, the Independent Christian churches are non-denominational and have no central governing body. They do meet in a convention once a year; however the purpose of this convention is not to determine doctrine or policy but is more like a lectureship and there are many Churches of Christ that are also represented at this convention. Today the Disciples of Christ are organized more like a denomination with a central headquarters; however their congregations retain a considerable amount of autonomy. Some of them allow women to preach. At one time they worked out some kind of connection with the United Church of Christ but this was probably something less than a merger but more like an informal alliance relating to the Disciples' long-standing belief in unity.

To continue this account further would require three separate accounts, since there are three separate brotherhoods, each with their own unique history. Such histories have been compiled and are available to those desiring to read them; however, it is not my intention to go into such accounts at this time. My knowledge of the Disciples of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches in the twentieth century is not very extensive so I won't attempt to go into it. My own religious experience has been almost entirely limited to the Churches of Christ. My family attended the Church of Christ and since my baptism in 1957 I have been an active member of at least twelve congregations in three states. In the half-century I have been actively involved I have seen a number of significant changes and events take place in the church and I am familiar with a number of others. No matter how hard the

church tries to hold onto the pure Gospel, there have been a number of conflicting issues that come and go and some of them have caused division while others have either disappeared or have been replaced by others. This is probably the nature of the human being; it is why we need a Savior. The belief in pacifism which existed in the church at least until the First World War was replaced to some extent by a degree of nationalism and even some pro-war tendencies. From the early twentieth century there was the question of premillennialism which may have caused some congregations to separate from the brotherhood, although I don't know if there are any premillennialist Churches of Christ today. There have been groups within the church who didn't believe in Sunday School and those who believe a congregation should use only one cup at the communion service. There are still some congregations who exist to perpetuate these beliefs. A controversy beginning around the 1950's involved the question of whether congregations should cooperate in supporting orphan homes and other benevolent institutions, with some congregations breaking off and forming their own "sub-denomination" which refers to itself as Conservative Churches of Christ and is commonly known as "Anti." A few years later there was the issue of Pentecostalism within the Churches of Christ. There was the so-called "Crossroads Movement" which involved certain members of the church controlling the behavior of other members, and was considered to be a cult by people outside the Churches of Christ. A more recent effort at change in the church has been the matter of contemporary worship (which has come into most denominations including even the Catholic Church). In some Churches of Christ there is both a traditional service and a contemporary service on Sunday morning and in a few congregations a musical instrument is used in the contemporary worship. I don't know if any congregations have actually broken off fellowship because of this issue but I suspect that some have. There are groups within the church who are trying to bring about change of one kind or another and there are also groups who are trying to prevent change. One issue which is quite prevalent but so far doesn't seem to have caused that much division in the church is the teaching of politics as religious doctrine. Many ministers in the Churches of Christ feel free to teach their own political beliefs from the pulpit as if they were part of the Gospel. I was once the minister of a small congregation in Michigan and it was common for me to receive material in the mail from various political organizations, as well as some publications from within the Churches of Christ, suggesting that I teach certain political viewpoints from the pulpit. It appears that the membership has generally accepted such teaching and will not question it. Some even believe that politics *should* be taught as church doctrine. I have not known of this causing division in the church, probably because most of the members have accepted it and cannot tell political teaching from Biblical doctrine. It seems ironic and, to some extent tragic, that a brotherhood whose separate existence was based on not allowing doctrines foreign to the New Testament to be brought in, should adopt something as alien as politics to become part of our doctrine when there is neither a command nor an example for it in the New Testament. I have seen some evidence that this situation may also exist within the Independent Christian Churches and the Disciples of Christ.

Not all the changes within the Churches of Christ have been negative or divisive. Over the past century many congregations have been established and countless people have been baptized. An enormous amount of benevolent work has been accomplished in the name of the Lord, some through church agencies and quite a bit by congregations and individual Christians. Christian colleges, universities, and schools of preaching have been established all over the United States and in many foreign countries. A considerable number of children's homes are operated by members of the church. Quite a number of religious publications are printed, some of them dating back to the 1800's. (As has been the case since religious publications were first published in the Restoration Movement, these periodicals, not all of which are in complete agreement with each other, are very influential in setting the norm for policies and doctrines in the Churches of Christ, although the membership is almost unanimous in its belief that our doctrine comes entirely from the Bible.) Overall membership in the Churches of Christ continues to grow, although not as rapidly as it did in the 1950's and 60's. It is quite likely that thousands of souls have been saved, through our efforts but by the power of God and

the sacrifice of Christ.

I would assume that similar changes and issues have taken place in the Independent Christian Churches and in the Disciples of Christ; however, since I am not that familiar with the history of these two groups during the past century I will not attempt to relate it in this discussion. I am certain, however, that such information is available from both groups.

Two centuries have passed since Thomas Campbell presented his *Declaration and Address* which many people consider to mark the beginning of the Restoration Movement. Quite a number of things have happened in the movement, some of the more significant of which I have presented in this discussion. However, in such a short work it is impossible to present all that is known about the Restoration Movement, even the part that took place in the nineteenth century. It was my intention to give here a basic outline of its origin and development, presented in such a way that church members would have at least a simple understanding of where we came from and why we speak, act, and think the way we do in matters of religion. In these two hundred years there has been a lot of serious study and hard work within the movement. There have been both efforts toward unity and toward division. There have been expressions of love and, unfortunately, expressions of resentment and maybe even hate. While it may be possible for people to agree on religion, it appears more likely that they will disagree. This, it appears, is the nature of people. God made us, as some people say, “free moral agents” capable of doing our own thinking which, regardless of what we claim to follow, will go in different directions. Since the time of the Apostles, Christians have broken up into separate groups and will probably continue to do so as long as the earth exists. The only stable factor is the Creator himself. God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and Christ is our hope and means of salvation.