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# How to Speak Stone-Campbell

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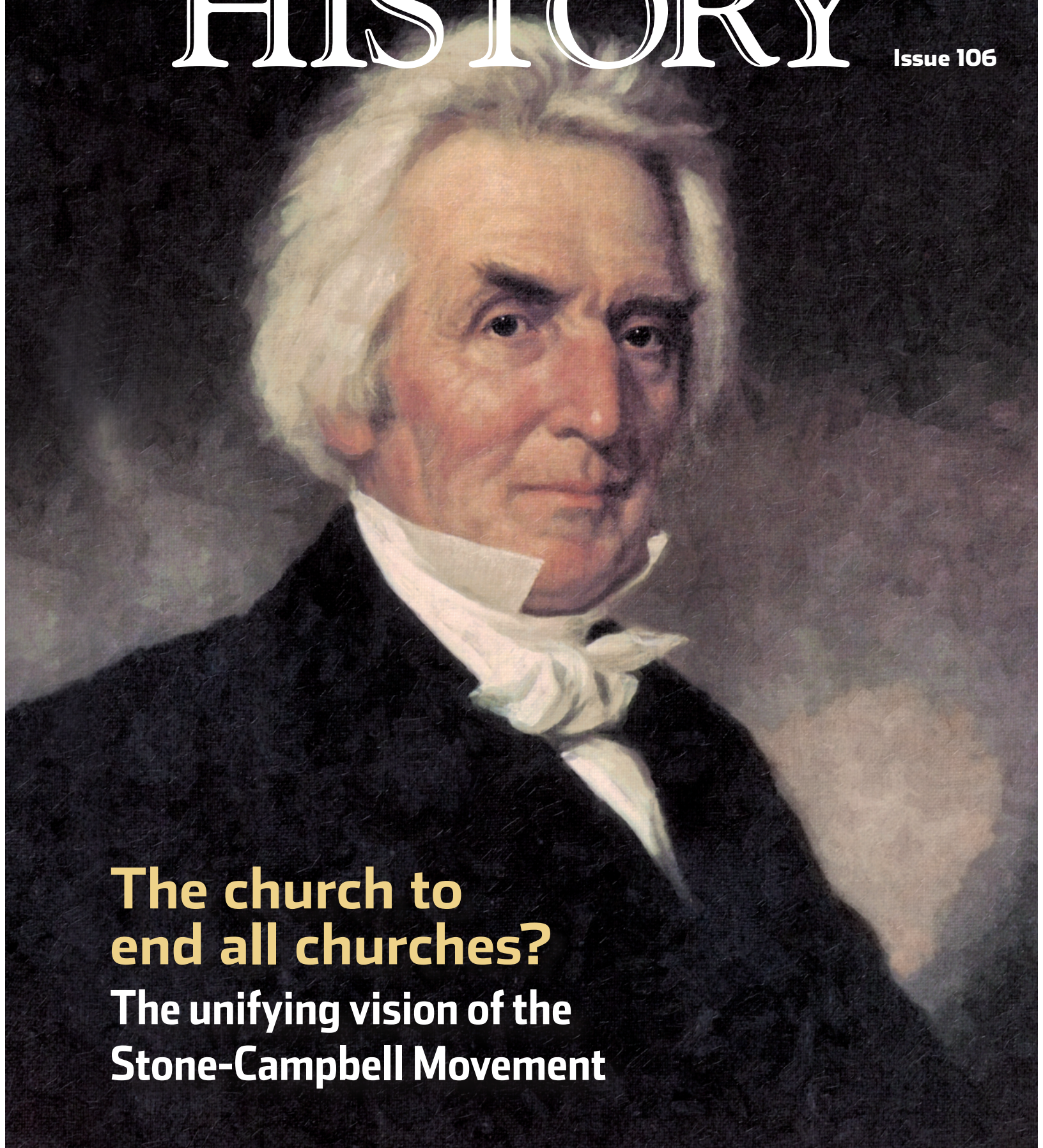
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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 106



**The church to  
end all churches?**

**The unifying vision of the  
Stone-Campbell Movement**





# Did you know?

## SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM STONE-CAMPBELL CHURCHES

### FROM LBJ TO ZIMBABWE

SEVERAL PRESIDENTS have been members of the Stone-Campbell tradition. The first was James Garfield. Baptized at age 18, Garfield began preaching at age 21 and is the only U.S. president who was a minister (of a **Christian Church** in Cleveland, Ohio). He was also among the group that launched the magazine *Christian Standard*, still published today.

The second was Lyndon Baines Johnson. As a young man, he was baptized in a small Christian Church in Johnson City, Texas, where he also attended services in his retirement.

Church was also a focal point of Ronald Reagan's youth in Dixon, Illinois. He was a member of First Christian Church and graduated from Disciples-affiliated Eureka College in 1932. While there, one of his first stage roles was as a Christian Church minister.

Politician Sir Garfield Todd (see "Worldwide disciples, worldwide Christians," pp. 34–36) was a minister at a New Zealand Church of Christ before moving to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1934. For a decade, he wore the hats of missionary, schoolteacher, bricklayer, and occasional doctor. He entered politics in 1942 and by 1953 was prime minister of Southern

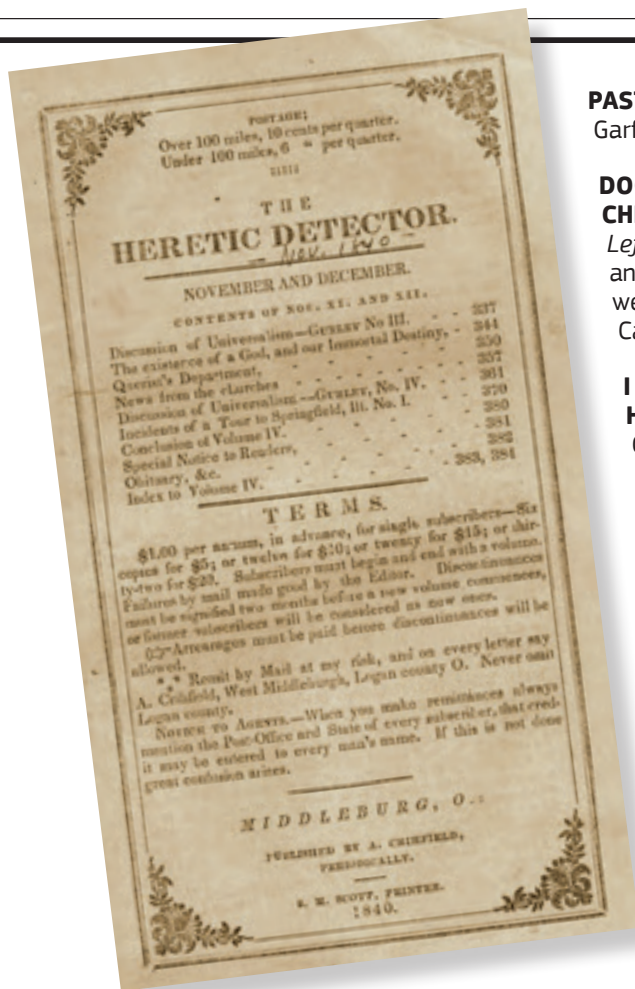
Rhodesia, where he worked for equal rights for all Africans. Queen Elizabeth II knighted Todd in 1986, but in 2002 he was stripped of Zimbabwean citizenship.

### TOP MAN AT YALE; HOOPS HERO

He visits Civil War battlefields for fun and at his day job explains how early Jews and Christians adapted to the culture around them without adopting its values. He is Greg Sterling, appointed dean of Yale Divinity School in 2012—a noted New Testament scholar, former dean at Notre Dame, and minister in Churches of Christ. Sterling's appointment at Yale testifies to the passion for biblical scholarship that has always characterized the Stone-Campbell tradition (see "Reading the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible," p. 16).

In 1963 Disciples's magazine *World Call* featured basketball phenomenon John Wooden. He later won 10 NCAA Championships, appeared 16 times in the Final Four, had 40 strong seasons, and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame twice—as a student and as a coach. A deacon at and generous donor to First Christian Church of Santa Monica, California, Wooden was present every Sunday except when his team was on the road.





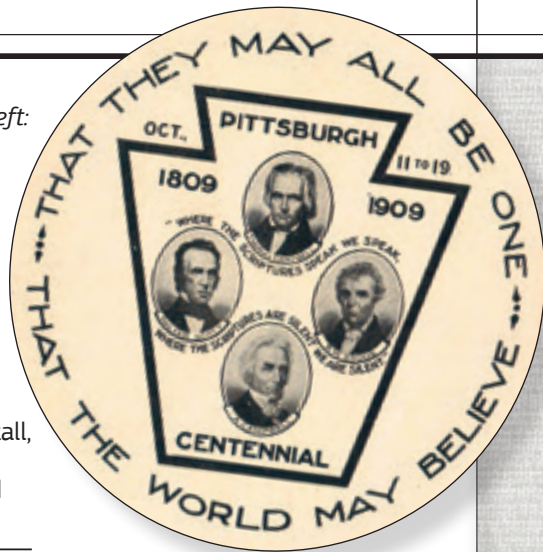
**PASTOR AND PRESIDENT** Far left: Garfield poses with his family.

**DOCTRINAL PURITY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY**

Left and right: This newspaper and badge show that both were important to Stone-Campbell believers.

**I DID IT WITH MY**

**HATCHET** Below: At six feet tall, Carry Nation was an imposing force both physically and spiritually.



**SONGS BY THE DEAD**

Janis Joplin grew up in Port Arthur, Texas, a “rough” refinery town near Houston. Before she burst onto the national music scene in 1967, she taught Sunday school and sang in the youth choir at First Christian Church.

The church’s historian noted on Joplin’s baptism card: “Died of a drug overdose in a Beverly Hills hotel. . . . She was cremated and her ashes were strewn along the coastline of Northern California. She had also set aside \$2,500 for [her] wake. The Grateful Dead and others provided music for the wake.”

**STARDUST AND COUNTRY MUSIC**

Though Hoagland (Hoagy) Carmichael failed at practicing law, he had music to fall back on—inspired by his mother, who played for dances and accompanied silent movies. He wrote “Stardust” (one of the most recorded songs ever), “Old Buttermilk Sky,” and “Georgia on My Mind.” An active member at North Hollywood Christian Church in California, he performed for the 1962 convention of the Disciples of Christ.

And, does singing unaccompanied in church spark a musical career? Pop and country singers Pat Boone, Glen Campbell, Roy Orbison, and Loretta Lynn were all raised in or converted to Churches of Christ.

**WOMAN WITH THE HATCHET**

Carry Nation was born in Kentucky and baptized in a stream in Missouri with ice floating in the water. She began her temperance crusade after the death of her first husband from alcoholism and earned the nickname “The Home Defender” as a result of taking her hatchet to whiskey bottles and saloon furnishings.

Her second husband, David Nation, divorced her in 1901, citing abandonment. In 1902, calling her a “stumbling block and a disturber of the peace,” her Disciples church disfellowshipped her. But frightened of their decision, they provided her a letter of commendation so she could transfer her membership elsewhere.

Other famous, or infamous, people connected with the tradition included golfer Ben Hogan, bank robber John Dillinger, Lew Wallace (author of *Ben-Hur*), and James Warren Jones, pastor at Jonestown, Guyana. ☐

*Portions of this text are adapted from Some Assembly Required, online exhibit created by McGarvey Ice. Republished by permission of Disciples of Christ Historical Society (www.discipleshistory.org). Ice has worked at the Brown Library at Abilene Christian University and the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. He writes and speaks widely on Stone-Campbell history.*

HERETIC DETECTOR—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER  
CARRY NATION CARTOON—THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK  
PITTSBURGH CENTENNIAL PROGRAM—COURTESY OF MCGARVEY ICE



# Editor's note

**EVER OPENED UP** someone else's old photo album?

Grandparents, aunts, second cousins, old Ford Model Ts, big hats. Or boat cars and poodle skirts. People smiling into long-vanished sunsets and sunrises. At first, it seems confusing. Maybe you can pick out an era, but these aren't your grandparents and your second cousins, your stories, or your inside jokes.

But then you talk to the people who own the photo album. You listen to their stories and the photos come alive. You learn what it meant to be part of that family in all its struggles and heartaches and joys. What it meant to live at that moment in history.

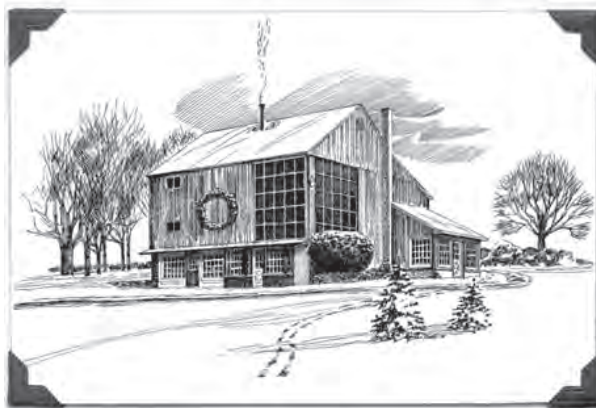
## TELLING THE STORY

A while ago, some folks from the **Stone-Campbell Movement** approached us about wanting to tell their story. To open up their old photo album, so to speak. If you didn't grow up in the movement, you may not even have heard of them or know that they are often referred to by the names of their founders, Barton Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

Many of us come from Christian groups that take the Bible very seriously and may have even started because a group of people wanted to get "back to the Bible." Stone and the Campbells were no different. But the movement they created went whole hog.

There were no sects or denominations in the New Testament; so they claimed they were simply "Christians," and subscribed to no creed but the Bible. There were no musical instruments in New Testament worship; so they worshiped without instruments. There were no organized missionary societies; so they refused to organize for the support of missionaries. What they did see in the New Testament was a unified group of Christ-followers with equality before God who baptized by immersion and shared Christ's holy meal together every Sunday. So that was who they became.

Eventually, and ironically, disagreements over all these issues led to their separation into three different "streams." One stream even became a denomination, quite self-consciously. In the process of defining



themselves, they went by a dizzying array of names for being "simply Christian" (which are spelled out in our "How to speak Stone-Campbell" glossary on pp. 14–15; terms in the glossary appear in **bold** throughout the rest of the issue).

What does this photo album teach the rest of us? Things we already knew, but things it is good to remember. The centrality of the Bible. The centrality of the body of Christ. How American culture and the Christian message influenced each other.

And how difficult it is to be "simply Christian." Even when you go whole hog. Traditions and human constructions can turn out to be, in the end, inescapable. But also inescapable, in the end, is the grace of God. Thanks be to God, who redeems all constructions. ☒



Jennifer Woodruff Tait  
Managing editor

## A NOTE FROM THE CH INTERN

Special thanks to Richard Hughes for his patience in waiting for an issue on the Stone-Campbell Movement. In the midst of cleaning out my grandfather Ken Curtis's office, we discovered a letter Dr. Hughes wrote in the 1990s proposing an issue on this topic.

I reconnected with Hughes when I was privileged to have him as a professor at Messiah College last year. When he discovered my connection to the magazine, his interest re-emerged. We are grateful for his hard work as a scholar-advisor and writer for this issue. Thank you, Dr. Hughes, for persisting in your dream to make an important piece of Christian history accessible to the rest of us! —Michelle Curtis

*All images credited "Doug Foster" are courtesy of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee, or the Center for Restoration Studies of Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas. CHM also thanks Sara Harwell, vice president and chief archivist at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, for her assistance in providing images.*



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*edited by D. Newell Williams,  
Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers*

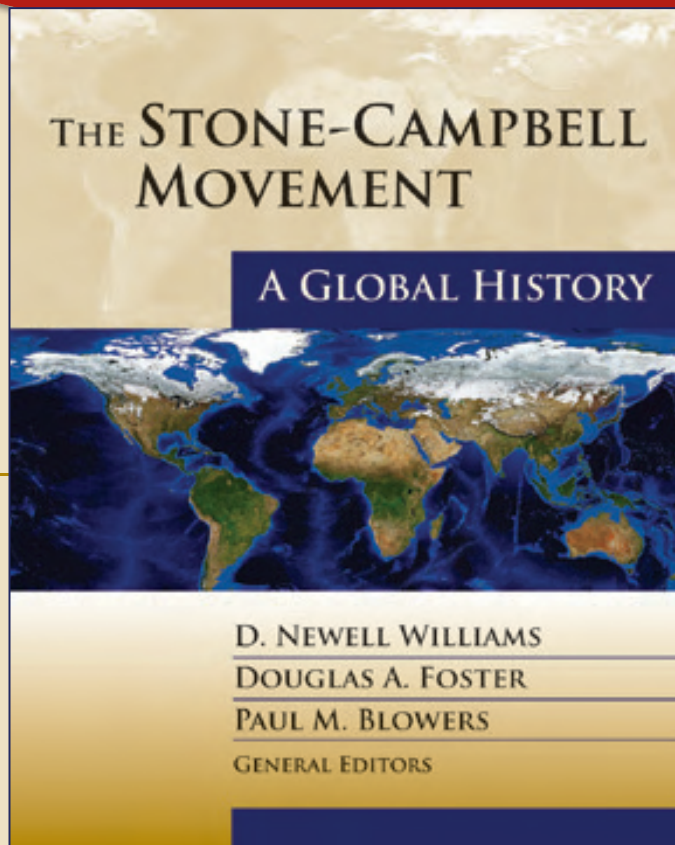
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# Freedom's ferment

THE WORLD FROM WHICH THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT EMERGED

*Richard Hughes*

IT HAD NO LONG and storied history, few highly educated clergy, no bishops except over local congregations, and no carefully organized evangelistic campaigns. Yet this upstart Christian phenomenon swept into its fold thousands upon thousands of Americans in the early nineteenth century, even as it rejected all traditional churches—Catholic and Protestant alike—and aspired to become the universal church that would unify all Christians and inaugurate the millennial dawn. Perhaps no Christian tradition more fully mirrored the democratic and optimistic world of the new American republic.

## A DEMOCRATIC MOOD

Seeking to follow biblical directives, Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone—along with the thousands who looked to them for guidance—passionately devoted themselves to democracy and freedom in the context of the Christian religion. As it turned out, this emphasis held great appeal for Americans newly launched on their experiment of self-government.

**SONS OF LIBERTY** The signing of the Declaration of Independence. The newly formed country was in the mood to explore democracy in religion, too.

Stone and Campbell rejected creeds, claiming to follow no text but the Bible. They extolled the ability of ordinary people to read the Bible and understand it for themselves. And they understood their work as reflecting the passion for freedom they saw all around them.

“The present conflict between the Bible and party creeds and confessions,” one member of their movement wrote, “is perfectly analogous to the revolutionary war between Britain and America; liberty was contended for on one side, and dominion and power on the other.”

Another author thought the Jeffersonian phrase from the Declaration of Independence regarding humanity’s “unalienable rights” applied equally to “free investigation” and “sober and diligent inquiry after [religious] truth.” Likewise, Stone and Campbell rejected any ecclesial authority—whether bishop or synod or priest—that supplanted the authority of the





**“GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH”** Above: Patrick Henry exhorts the Virginia Assembly.

local church. That emphasis renders some parts of the tradition radically independent to this day, answering to no authority except the will of the people who compose a given congregation and the elders that congregation appoints.

**“HE HAS SMILED ON OUR BEGINNINGS”** Below: The Great Seal of the United States pictured the new nation as radically different from any other land.

### RESTORING PURE BEGINNINGS

But freedom was not all that motivated Stone and Campbell. They were deeply committed to recovering the primitive church of the New Testament—the golden age, they thought, of the Christian religion. The term they used to describe that endeavor was “restoration.”

Campbell in fact often spoke of “the restoration of the ancient order of things” as one of the goals he was trying to reach as a Christian leader.

America’s founders, too, were seeking purity—in their case in nature. They thought that God had built timeless principles of freedom into nature at the time of creation, and they wanted to dig them back out from under the obscuring centuries of kingcraft, tyranny, and corruption. This is what Jefferson meant when, in the Declaration of Independence, he appealed to “self-evident truths” that “Nature’s God” had established.

Jefferson’s friend, Thomas Paine, also proclaimed that the American government was like “the beginning

of a world.” Viewing the American system, he wrote, “We are brought at once to the point of seeing government begin, as if we had lived in the beginning of time.”

Reading and hearing such arguments, many Christians asked themselves an obvious question: if the founders had restored the God-intended form of secular government, could Christians do any less with the church?

If America’s founders could reject kings and tyrants and build the American nation on democratic principles inspired by God, so Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and thousands of other Christians would reject priests, bishops, and popes, and restore similar democratic principles that they believed had been central to the primitive church.

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF PEACE

Americans in the early nineteenth century sought to build their nation on principles—democracy and freedom—that they considered to be as old as the beginning of time. A nation built on those ancient ideals, they argued, would finally usher in the long-anticipated millennium.



GIVE ME LIBERTY—LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GREAT SEAL OF U.S.; FROM DOLLAR BILL



**“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT”**

Right: Thomas Jefferson expressed democratic ideals.

**“THESE ARE THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN’S SOULS”**

Below: Thomas Paine encouraged perseverance.



The millennium would be started on earth by human beings in obedience to God’s will for creation, and it would be a golden age of peace and freedom for all humankind. No one made this point more clearly than popular American preacher Lyman Beecher.

He explained to Americans that the light their new country would send into the world “will throw its beams beyond the waves; it will shine into darkness there and be comprehended; it will awaken desire and hope and effort, and produce revolutions and overturnings, until the world is free.”

And when people around the world were free, he proclaimed, “the trumpet of Jubilee [will] sound, and earth’s debased millions will leap from the dust, and shake off their chains, and cry, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David.’”

**WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE**

Christians in the **Stone-Campbell Movement** picked up on this same vision of the coming dawn. But if the larger public applied that vision to the nation, the Stone-Campbell Movement applied it to the church. Alexander Campbell wrote in 1825 that “just in so far as the ancient order of things, or the religion of the New Testament, is restored, just so far has the Millennium commenced.”

But whether applied to the nation or the church, the logic of this vision was clear: restoration of the purity of the first golden age would usher in the purity of the final golden age. In that way, all human history essentially became water under the bridge. American citizens, on the one hand, and Stone-Campbell Christians, on the other, were crossing that bridge from one golden age to the other.

Such a view was written into nothing less than the Great Seal of the United States. Americans commonly think of the seal’s front, if they think of it at all—an eagle with arrows and olive branches. But on the back side of the seal is an unfinished pyramid with the date of the American founding—1776—on its base.

The pyramid grows from an arid and barren landscape, suggesting that all human history, when compared to this new nation, is barren—and therefore fundamentally irrelevant. Below the pyramid appear the Latin words *novus ordo seclorum*, “a new order of the ages.” The United States was not simply a new nation when compared to other nations. It was radically new since it was also radically old, building on the ancient foundations of freedom laid in the Garden of Eden.

The pyramid is unfinished because the American example was yet to spread around the globe: though

the dawn was rising, the final golden day was yet to come. Above the unfinished pyramid, the eye of God looks on with approval, and above that eye a Latin motto affirms: “He has smiled on our beginnings.”

The Stone-Campbell Movement embraced this very same rejection of history. The difference was that while the nation rejected secular history, the Stone-Campbell Movement rejected all Christian history since the days of the primitive church.

Two of Barton Stone’s associates in Kentucky, for example, wrote that “we are not personally acquainted with the writings of John Calvin, nor are we certain how nearly we agree with his views of divine truth; neither do we care.”

**UNITY OUT OF DIVERSITY**

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone also mirrored the nation in the plan they devised for the unity of all Christians. Theirs was a vision of unity in diversity with long roots that stretched all the way back to Paul’s metaphor of the church as the body of Christ and Jesus’ unity prayer (John 17). But they also borrowed that vision from key Enlightenment

THOMAS JEFFERSON—WIKIPEDIA  
THOMAS PAINE—WIKIPEDIA



**A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW NATION** Alexander Campbell (arrow) represented a western Virginia district when Virginia wrote its constitution in 1829—alongside U.S. founders like Monroe and Madison.

thinkers—the very same thinkers who inspired America’s founders.

One of those thinkers was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the father of the English Enlightenment. Distressed by the bloody religious wars that plagued Europe in the seventeenth century, he published a book that he called *De Veritate* (1624), or “The Truth.”

In that book, he proposed a way to end religious warfare. While Herbert valued the Bible highly as a “source of consolation and support,” he also knew that it is a complex book, full of hundreds of teachings that Christians could interpret in many ways and then bind those interpretations on others.

Herbert therefore proposed that reasonable people banish from the public square all points of doctrine peculiar to particular religions or holy texts. Instead, he argued that citizens should build the public square on two great truths that everyone could know through the light of nature—that God exists and that a moral order pervades the universe.

These two truths, Herbert believed, are the essential truths that stand at the heart of every great religion. They could thus serve as the basis for religious unity.

### WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS . . .

When the founders created the American nation, they, too, understood religion’s potential to inspire civic strife and even religious warfare. Such religion could destroy the American nation before it had a chance to succeed. So they addressed that problem in the same way Herbert had, not seeking to build the nation on this or that interpretation of the Bible or on any peculiar doctrine.

Instead they appealed to “self-evident truths” accessible to all humans through the light of nature. Those “self-evident truths” were that “all men are

created equal” and “endowed with certain unalienable rights”—rights that could not be taken away since God had woven them into the fabric of nature itself.

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone commended that same formula to Christians in the early nineteenth century. The difference between the founders and the Stone-Campbell Movement was that the founders uncovered essential truths in nature while Stone and Campbell found their essential truths in the biblical text.

They sought core essentials that formed the bedrock of the ancient church established by Jesus and the apostles. And making famous a phrase first used by Lutheran ecumenist Rupertus Meldenius (1582–1651), they appealed: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”

### DISSENTING AGAINST DISSENT

The American world of the early nineteenth century was committed to dissent against everything from corrupt and oppressive regimes to traditional social structures. Ironically, the Stone-Campbell Movement so faithfully mirrored the values of the new nation, including the value of dissent, that it ultimately dissented against America itself.

Alexander Campbell argued that the kingdom of God would finally triumph over all human governments, “the very best as well as the very worst,” including the government of the United States.

“The admirers of American liberty and American institutions have no cause to regret such an event, nor cause to fear it,” he wrote. “It will be but the removing of a tent to build a temple—the falling of a cottage after the family are [*sic*] removed into a castle.”

Barton Stone and his disciples expressed this dissent in especially provocative ways—arguing that Jesus might be the one bringing the millennial dawn. Stone wrote that “the lawful King, Jesus Christ, will shortly put them [human governments] all down, and reign with his Saints on earth a thousand years, without a rival.” Christians must therefore “cease to support any other government on earth by our counsels, cooperation, and choice.” Stone and his followers thus refused to vote, refused to hold political office, and refused to serve in the U.S. military.

Even while showing themselves children of their era in so many ways, Stone-Campbell Movement Christians pledged their ultimate allegiance not to the nation but to the kingdom of God. ☒

*Richard Hughes is distinguished professor of religion at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania.*





# No name but the name of Christ

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

*D. Newell Williams and Douglas A. Foster*

ONE FOUNDER WAS UPSET at fellow clergy who condemned Presbyterians and Methodists for—gasp!—dating after being introduced at revival meetings. Two others were sick of religious divisions in their homeland and of being marooned in a church so sectarian it was called the Associate Synod of Ulster of the Anti-Burgher Seceders. Little did they know they were founding a movement themselves. They just wanted peace and Christian unity.

## MARRYING MEETINGS?

By 1800, the awakening known as the Great Western Revival had begun in Tennessee and Kentucky (both were the “West” in 1800). Presbyterians and Methodists began coming together in revivals lasting four to six days and culminating in “union meetings,” where they joined in celebrating the Lord’s Supper. The meetings drew thousands and included both blacks and whites—which convinced many whites to free their slaves.

The gatherings also became famous for the “falling exercise.” Powerfully affected by sermons and

**SERMONS IN GLASS** These windows at Cane Ridge Church show the uniting of the Stone and Campbell movements and the signing of the “Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.”

testimonies, people fell to the ground and appeared dead for hours. Then they arose praising Jesus and calling others to him for salvation.

Not all Presbyterians supported the revivals. Their biggest objections were not to the falling exercise or the freeing of slaves, but that young adults from Methodist and Presbyterian families were meeting at these heated gatherings and marrying. In many cases, the newlyweds were joining the Methodist Church!

Some Presbyterian ministers began urging their colleagues to “preach up” the differences between Methodist and Presbyterian doctrine, specifically the Presbyterian teaching derived from Calvin’s doctrine of predestination: the idea that God had chosen particular human beings to be damned and others to be saved before the foundation of the earth.





Barton Warren Stone (1772–1844) was a Presbyterian preacher born in Maryland, raised on the Virginia frontier, and educated in a church academy in North Carolina. He and other Presbyterian revival leaders refused to preach predestination. They knew it would offend the Methodists and bring the “union meetings” to an end.

They had also personally, though quietly, rejected it as inconsistent with God’s love revealed in Jesus. As a result, Presbyterian defenders of the doctrine tried to remove Stone and his friends from the ministry.

Stone and four other ministers withdrew from their jurisdiction and formed their own Springfield Presbytery. But they did not stop there. In June 1804, they published a tract titled “The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery” rejecting denominations and creedal statements as divisive.

They wrote: “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 . . . that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

Taking the generic name “Christians,” they sought to further the unity they had experienced in the revivals and convince Presbyterians and Methodists to unite. They failed but did gain supporters among Baptists in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana.

### THE CAMPBELLS ARE COMING

Meanwhile, Thomas (1763–1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788–1866), father and son, were also seeking an end to division. They came from Ireland, where they had been Presbyterians (Church of Scotland). Their par-

**WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES** Barton Stone preaches at Cane Ridge in 1801, one of the most famous revivals in American history.

ticular sect had splintered over Scottish political and religious matters irrelevant in Ireland. Still, the differences kept the factions from fellowship.

Also, the British rulers (Anglican) never fully trusted Presbyterian loyalty, and there was friction between Protestants and Catholics. In the midst of this religious strife, the Campbells longed for peace and Christian unity.

After several unsuccessful attempts to bring Presbyterians in Northern Ireland together, Thomas Campbell became seriously ill. On his doctor’s advice, he sailed to America in 1809. While conducting worship for Seceder Presbyterians near Pittsburgh, he served the Lord’s Supper to some worshipers outside the group who had shown up to hear the distinguished guest preacher.

For this, his presbytery attempted to defrock him. Though his conviction was overturned, he soon separated from the Presbyterians and formed a group called the Christian Association.

Campbell wrote the new group’s purpose statement—the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*. He claimed all Christians “should consider each other as the precious saints of God . . . bought with the same price, and joint heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.”

Not many responded. Instead, the Christian Association became a local church, taking the name “disciples of Christ.” Like Stone’s “Christians” the name was intended to be simple and nondivisive.



**THEY JUST WANTED CHRISTIANS TO LOVE EACH OTHER** *Right: Alexander Campbell and his children. Below: Barton Stone.*

When Thomas's family joined him, his son Alexander embraced the ideals of the *Declaration and Address*.

When, in 1812, Alexander's wife had a baby, the child's birth forced him to rethink infant baptism as taught by the Presbyterians. He concluded that the New Testament taught baptism of believers by immersion. That June, Alexander, Thomas, and five others from the Christian Association were immersed.

Some assumed Campbell denied that those baptized as infants were Christians. Yet Campbell never said so. He stated in 1837 that he "could not make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Campbells worked for reform as part of Baptist churches for over 15 years. In his first journal, *Christian Baptist* (1823–1830), Alexander published a series of articles titled "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" detailing what he saw as beliefs and practices of the apostolic churches in the early Christian centuries: believers' baptism by immersion, weekly Lord's Supper, congregational self-rule, and "simple" worship with unaccompanied congregational singing and no formal liturgy.

In 1827 the Mahoning Baptist Association, a group supporting Campbell's views, asked Walter Scott (1796–1861) to serve as a traveling evangelist. Scott taught that one could accept the gospel, turn from sin, and in faith be baptized without needing to pass through tearful struggles and an emotional conversion experience to show acceptance of the Holy Spirit.

This view would remain profoundly influential and the basis of the popular "five-finger exercise" for teaching the way of salvation (see "A story all their own," pp. 38–40).

Over the next three years, Scott baptized about 3,000 people. But soon Baptists and Campbell reformers began to separate over the purpose of baptism and the need for organization beyond the local congregation. Who else could Campbell cooperate with in the cause of Christian unity?

**LET'S GET TOGETHER**

Enter Barton Stone. Campbell and Stone shared a commitment to the visible unity of Christians based on the teachings of Scripture. But they had big differences, too.

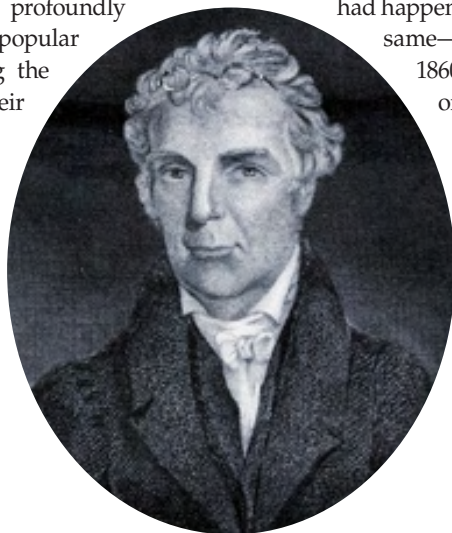


Stone saw Jesus as Savior, but not equal to God; Campbell held a traditional view of the Trinity. Stone's group practiced immersion but did not make it a requirement for joining; Campbell insisted on immersion for membership. Stone used the name "Christian," while Campbell preferred "disciples of Christ." Stone did not believe that Christ died to "pay for" our sins, but to demonstrate God's absolute love.

But both were committed to Christ's prayer in John 17 that all might be one so the world would believe. And both had glimpsed union when Christians came together to work and worship despite differences.

In late 1831, Stone and John Smith, a leader from the Campbell movement, called meetings of church leaders in Georgetown and Lexington, Kentucky. In both places, the congregations united. There was no central organization; in each town the churches simply decided to unite.

On the first Sunday of 1832, the two Lexington groups shared communion together as one fellowship. The Kentucky churches sent messengers to tell what had happened and urge other churches to do the same—which they did, over and over. By 1860 the Stone-Campbell Movement was one of the 10 largest Christian groups in the United States, numbering about 200,000—all while trying to be nothing but Christians working together in unity, bearing no name but the name of Christ. ☒



Douglas A. Foster is professor of church history and directs the Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University. D. Newell Williams is president and professor of church history at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University. Parts of this article are adapted from *The Story of Churches of Christ* by Douglas A. Foster (ACU Press, 2013) and are used by permission.

# Who was that white-robed man?

JOSEPH THOMAS, “THE WHITE PILGRIM,” TRIED TO BE AS APOSTOLIC AS POSSIBLE

*Richard Hughes*

THERE IS NO MORE colorful character in the annals of the **Stone-Campbell Movement** than Joseph Thomas, the “White Pilgrim” (1791–1835). Converted to Christ at age 15 at a North Carolina camp meeting in 1806, Thomas determined, then and there, to devote his life to the proclamation of the Christian gospel.

But before he could preach, he felt he must join a church. This proved to be difficult. He rejected the Methodists since they depended too much on the “arbitrary power” of Francis Asbury, their bishop.

He rejected the Freewill Baptists since they had “too many articles and particulars contrary to my impressions.” And finally, he rejected the Presbyterians when they told him that to preach among them, he would “have to go to school and study divinity under Mr. \_\_\_\_.” Thomas thought it better to “study my divinity under Jesus Christ, and did not join them.”

## NO RULES BUT THE SCRIPTURES

Then he learned of the growing “Christian movement” in North Carolina and Virginia. He “went some distance to see one of the preachers” and was elated when the preacher “told me they had no rules but the scriptures” and followed none but “the Lord Jesus for their head and ruler.”

Thomas later recalled that “at hearing of such people as these my heart rejoiced. I said to the preacher, ‘Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’”

On October 19, 1807, having now reached the ripe old age of 16, he set out to preach, committing himself to “a journey not of a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, but as long as life should last.”

Soon Thomas heard of “the Christians in the West”—followers of evangelist Barton Stone, chiefly



**WEARING WHAT APOSTLES WORE** Even Thomas’s tombstone mentioned his white robe.

in Kentucky—and traveled there in 1810. He reported that Stone’s followers numbered some 13,000 believers, that their worship included emotional practices like jerking under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and that they were so devoted to the lordship of Christ that they voluntarily freed their slaves, at a time when such an act was almost unheard of in the American South.

Soon after that trip, Thomas committed to preach in what he viewed as the primitive and apostolic style. He determined, as he put it, to “travel on

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*Thomas decided he would “study my divinity under Jesus Christ,” rather than under the Presbyterian clergy.*

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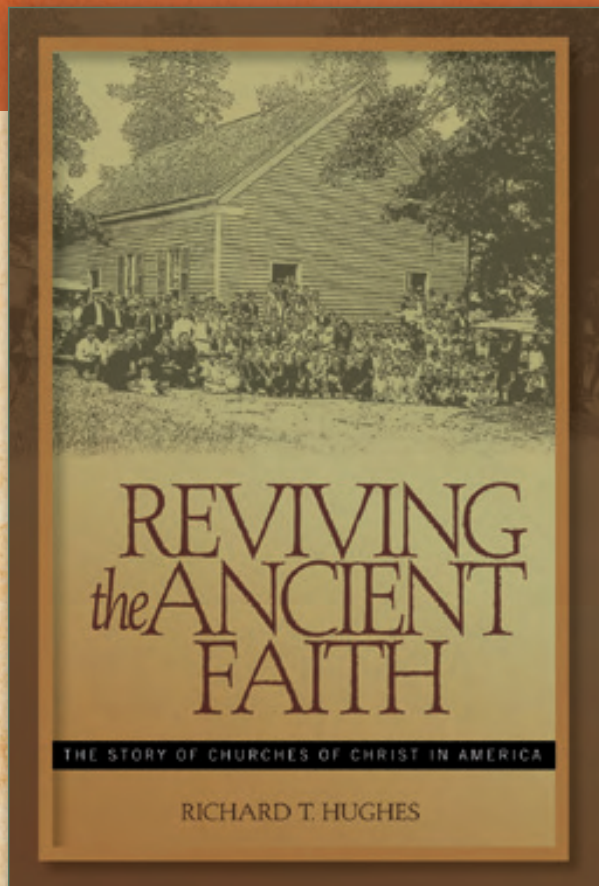
foot . . . , [to] take nothing for my journey, no purse, nor scrip . . . , [to] deny the present fashion of dress, both as it relates to the cut and the colour, and particularly to refuse black; and a white robe was the covering I should appear in.”

For the rest of his life, Thomas traveled on foot throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains of Appalachia, preaching the gospel and clad in a long, white robe.

By doing so, he embodied in his own life one of the themes most central to the Stone-Campbell Movement—a commitment to the simplicity of the gospel message and to the primitive, apostolic church. ☐



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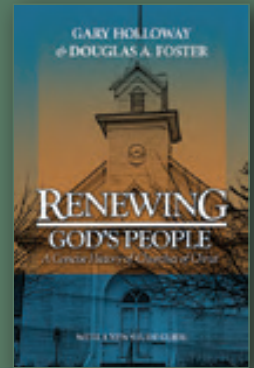
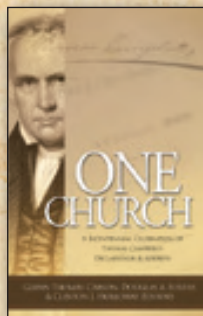
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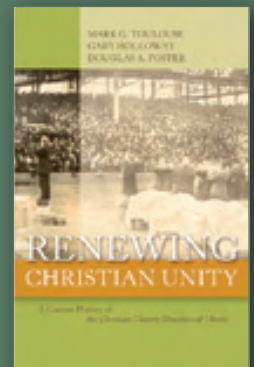


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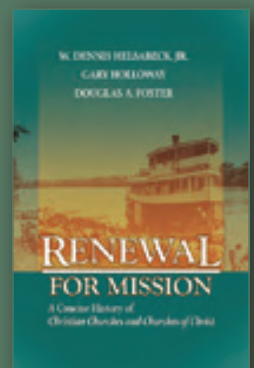


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**UNDERWATER** *Left:* Being baptized by immersion is the culmination of the experience of redemption for Stone-Campbell believers.

**WHERE IT ALL BEGAN** *Below:* Here in the Cane Ridge meeting house Stone and friends signed the “Last Will and Testament.”



# How to speak Stone-Campbell

WHAT DO THEY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY . . . ?

*Douglas A. Foster and McGarvey Ice*

**THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT** today comprises three distinct bodies: **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**, **Churches of Christ**, and **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ**. Congregations of the movement in the nineteenth century were known by several versions of these names. But division became a settled reality in the twentieth century.

Congregations who did not worship with instrumental music or conduct missionary work through organized societies were known by the early 1900s as **Churches of Christ**. Congregations using instruments and cooperating with missionary societies were called **Christian Churches** or **Disciples of Christ**.

In 1968 the more progressive wing of the **Christian Churches**, through a process called Restructure, formed a mainline Protestant denomination: The **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**. Those not wishing to be identified with that denomination are often called **Independents** and usually refer to themselves as **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ**.

**A CAPPELLA CHURCHES OF CHRIST:** Or “**Churches of Christ**.” This stream of the Stone-Campbell Movement rejects instrumental music in worship, arguing that Scripture does not authorize it.

**“ANTIS:”** This common term is used (1) by members of **Disciples** and **Christian Churches** to describe **Churches of Christ** who oppose missionary societies and instrumental music in worship; (2) within **Churches**

of **Christ** for a number of twentieth-century groups who “stand out” by opposing parachurch organizations, Sunday schools, ministers drawing salaries and settled in one congregation, and multiple cups in the Lord’s Supper; and (3) by **Disciples** for those who opposed the Restructure in 1968 that made **Disciples** into a mainstream denomination.

**THE BROTHERHOOD:** Designation for a speaker’s group of churches, much like “**the Church**.” For example, “I read three brotherhood papers every month.”

**CAMPBELLITE:** Pejorative label applied by opponents to members and churches of the movement accusing them of being followers of Alexander Campbell; almost always rejected by insiders.

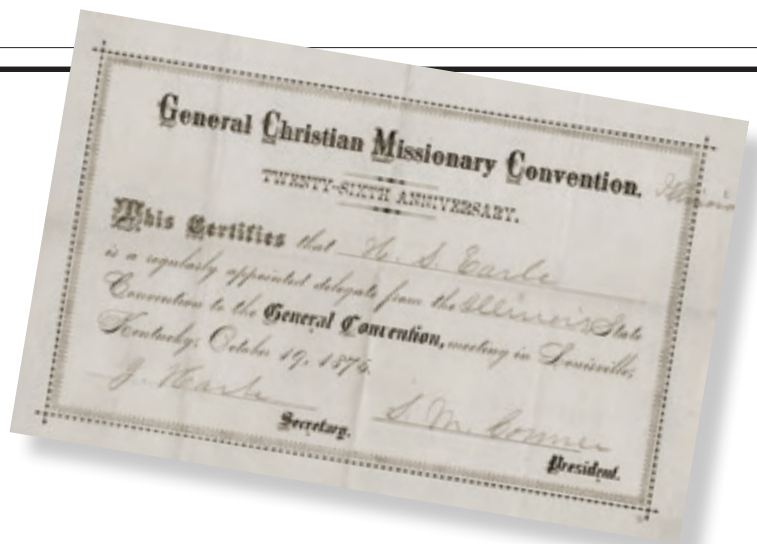
**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST):** Name adopted in 1968 during the “Restructure” of the **Disciples**. The shift from plural “Christian Churches” to singular “Christian Church” reflected this stream’s embrace of a corporate, denominational identity.

**CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST:** Congregations that chose not to continue affiliation with **Disciples of Christ** after the 1968 Restructure. These were generally more theologically conservative congregations reflecting evangelical values.

**CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT, CHRISTIAN CHURCH:** Many movements in early America that sought to recover the simplicity of the early church used

BAPTISM IN CONGO—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER  
CANE RIDGE—CHRIS LIGHT/WIKIPEDIA





**DON'T ORGANIZE US** *Above:* Using missionary societies to support missionaries was controversial for some.

**LET EVERY CHRISTIAN BEGIN THE WORK OF UNION IN HIMSELF** *Left:* Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone are two of four founders memorialized in stone at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville.

the generic name “Christian” instead of denominational names they believed to be unscriptural and divisive.

**“THE CHURCH:”** Used by insiders before the various divisions to refer to all the churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement. After the divisions, used to designate the specific stream of the speaker.

**church(es) of Christ:** A little “c” is used by some congregations to indicate that they do not see themselves as part of a denomination or historical tradition, but simply as a church that belongs to Christ.

**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, DISCIPLES MOVEMENT:** Widely used designation for the whole movement in the early twentieth century.

**INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCHES:** Same as [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#). The name reflects that these congregations undertake independent mission efforts because they object to the practice of **open membership** and to perceived liberal theology among [Disciples](#) leaders.

**LECTURESHIPS/CONVENTIONS:** Annual gatherings often sponsored by educational institutions. They provide worship, fellowship, classes, and workshops but have no legislative function or authority.

**NACC:** North American Christian Convention, the largest annual gathering of members of [Christian Churches/Churches of Christ](#). It began in 1927 as a fellowship meeting for those who had reservations about the leadership of the [Disciples](#).

**OPEN MEMBERSHIP:** Practice of allowing nonimmersed persons—usually those baptized as infants in another Christian body—to become members of a Stone-Campbell congregation. Stone’s movement generally practiced open membership; Campbell’s did not. This became a heated issue among [Disciples](#) in the twentieth century, contributing to division.

**PLAN OF SALVATION:** The five steps needed to receive God’s redemption: hear the gospel, believe in Christ, repent of one’s sins, confess one’s faith in Christ, be baptized by immersion.

**THE REFORMATION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:** Most common designation for the movement at its beginning, along with “the current reformation.”

**RESTORATION MOVEMENT:** Common designation for the movement, reflecting the ideal of restoring beliefs and practices of the New Testament church perceived to have been lost, neglected, or corrupted. This idea was also often used by Latter Day Saints traditions.

**STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT:** New name proposed by historian Leroy Garrett in *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (1981). Some resisted the name because they felt Campbell should be listed first; others thought it abandoned the “Restoration Ideal.” Still, it is currently the most widely used designation for a movement that embraces three distinct churches. ☑



# Reading the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible

CONNECTING THE LIFE OF THE MIND TO THE WORLD OF REVIVALISM

*Richard Hughes*

**QUIETLY, ALMOST INVISIBLY**, a veritable Bible-scholar factory has been humming away in the American **Churches of Christ** over the past half-century, producing scholars of both the Old and New Testaments in extraordinary numbers and enriching the study of the Bible in every American denomination. How did so many Bible-reading, Bible-studying, Bible-teaching scholars come from such a relatively small group of Christians?

## THE BOOK OF GOD

In 1839 Alexander Campbell wrote to his followers on why someone might want to read the Bible in the first place: “The man of God reads the Book of God to commune with God, ‘to feel after him, and find him,’ to feel his power and his divinity stirring within him; to have his soul fired, quickened, animated by the spirit

**SEEKING GOD** *Left:* Francis Bacon argued that you could see God in the “books” of both Scripture and nature.

**THINKING HARD** *Right:* Enlightenment philosopher John Locke profoundly influenced Campbell.

**READING WELL** *Far right:* Campbell published a translation of the New Testament for his followers.

of grace and truth. He reads the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible.”

But this warm stirring was not merely a matter of warm feelings. Campbell read much by thinkers, Christian and otherwise, who emphasized the life of the mind and the search for truth (see “Freedom’s ferment,” pp. 5–8).

Campbell also taught his followers to read the Bible through the lens of the scientific method popularized by Francis Bacon (whose influence remained so central that when Stone-Campbell folks founded their first college, they named it Bacon College in his honor). Campbell, having read Bacon, argued that “the Bible is a book of facts.” If you could use the scientific method on the facts of nature, then you could use it on the facts of Scripture.

Campbell wrote, “When I at last took the naked text and read it with common sense, the Bible became a new book to me.” That heritage of Enlightenment rationalism has for almost 200 years formed the core of Stone-Campbell DNA and is one of the reasons behind the Bible scholar factory. But it’s not the whole story.

## THE MIRACLES OF THE SPIRIT

The **Stone-Campbell Movement** had deep roots in revivalism, too, through Barton Stone. But those roots, unlike Campbell’s rational roots—in fact, *because* of Campbell’s rational roots—did not flower in the same way.

Stone was a child of America’s great evangelical revivals, especially the Second Great Awakening. He believed the power of the Holy Spirit would not only quicken the hearts of sinners and guide believers into truth but also enable believers to perform miraculous works. “By what authority,” he asked, “have we concluded that no . . . [one] with miraculous powers may be expected in the present dispensation or age?”

Campbell, like Stone, affirmed the indwelling Holy Spirit. But unlike Stone, he rejected the possibility of miracles in his own time. Instead, he trusted the power of the biblical text itself to quicken the hearts of sinners, and in time, many of his followers flatly identified the Spirit with the Bible itself.

Campbell was also, like many of the Enlightenment thinkers he admired, profoundly optimistic about what people could do with the world if given a





chance. He thought human beings would soon bring in a golden age, a “new millennium” of peace and prosperity.

Early in his career, Campbell argued that the restoration of the primitive church would achieve that objective. As he grew older, he claimed that morality, education, and science, coupled with true religion, would launch the millennial dawn.

Finally, he suggested that when the Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States had spread its power and influence around the globe, “then will . . . [all people] ‘hang their trumpet in the hall, and study war no more.’ For over all the earth there will be but one Lord, one faith, one hope and one language.”

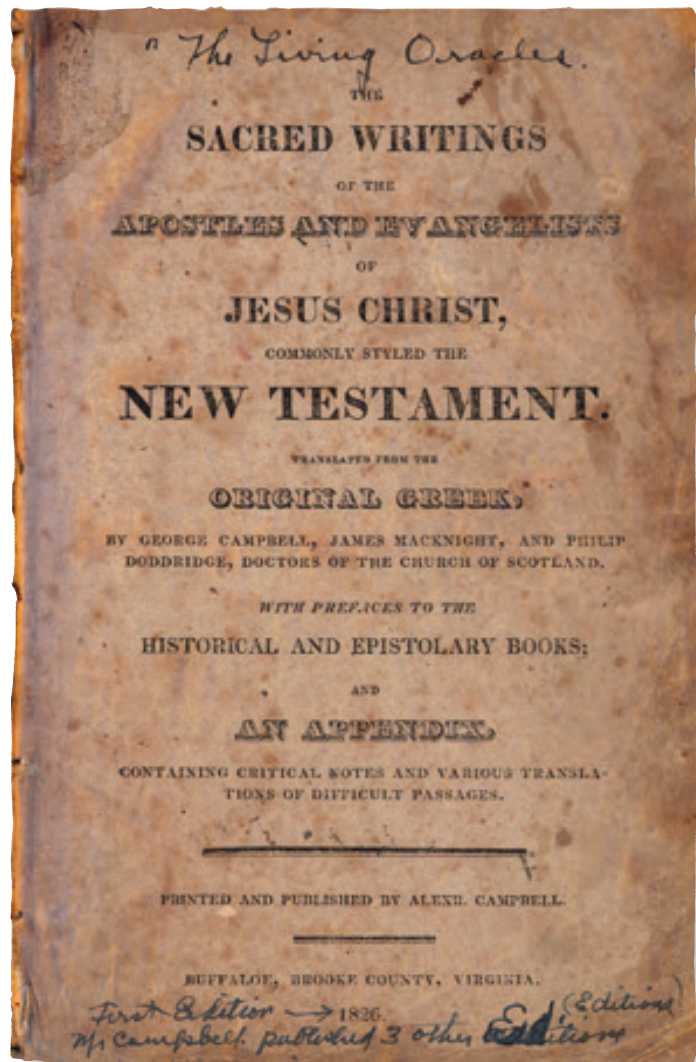
Barton Stone, however, despaired of human potential. He was convinced that only Jesus’ return could bring the golden age and that the millennial dawn was in God’s hands alone. But his understanding

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*“The majesty, purity, excellency, and glory of [the Bible’s] Author may overshadow ... inspire ... transform ... and new-create [us] in the image of God.” (A. Campbell)*

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of Christianity—revivalism, hope for Jesus’ return, miracles, and all—would not triumph in the movement. He and his followers were so committed to religious freedom that they refused to embrace many doctrinal standards at all. This created a vacuum.



Campbell stepped into that vacuum in an 1823 debate with Presbyterian W. L. McCalla. By then, Campbell had developed a rational grid encompassing the essential beliefs and practices of the primitive church—“the ancient order of things,” as he put it. He laid out that vision in his debate with McCalla.

Hungry for greater precision than Stone had provided, many of Stone’s followers began to embrace Campbell’s “ancient order of things” and his commitment to a rational approach to the “naked text” of the Bible. This same commitment drove many young people in the movement to find out all they could about the Bible and make its study their life’s work.

Over time, Stone’s popular evangelicalism receded further and further into the background. Alexander Campbell rejected the revivals of Charles Finney, claiming that Finney substituted “the anxious bench” for baptism and replaced the ancient gospel with his “new measures.”

By the 1950s and 1960s, some were rejecting Billy Graham’s revivals for essentially the same reasons,

**PREACHING THE GRACE OF GOD . . .**

*Below: Max Lucado delivers a sermon.*

**. . . AND FALLING UNDER THE SPIRIT**

*Right: Sinners at an early camp meeting repent on the “mourners’ bench.”*



claiming that Graham substituted “faith only” for what Stone-Campbell believers saw as a biblical requirement to baptize adults (see “A story all their own” pp. 38–40).

But today the revivalist approach is reappearing from two directions. From one stream, a sizable number of the increasingly denominational Disciples of Christ (see “Climbing into the mainline boat,” pp. 20–21) resisted being led into mainline Protestantism.

Centered in America’s Midwest and deeply affected by the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century, this group (known today as the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, or Independents) broke from the Disciples and aligned with fundamentalists and evangelicals.

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*“And what is the reward?  
What awaits those who seek  
Jesus? Nothing short of the  
heart of Jesus.” (Max Lucado)*

---

Others came back to revivalism from a second direction. In response to the cultural revolution of the 1960s, many in the Churches of Christ asked if there was not more to religion than Campbell’s rational grid. Some rejected his restorationism altogether and looked for more fruitful ways to live the Christian life.

They found those more fruitful ways in the biblical text itself—that text to which they had always been committed—for there they discovered the New Testament doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In earlier years, preachers in Churches of Christ

often laid out in their sermons a wealth of biblical evidence that resembled a legal brief far more than it did heartfelt revivalist preaching. Today, though, preachers in Churches of Christ, like their revivalist cousins, routinely proclaim the saving grace of a loving God.

**ON THE SAME PAGE AFTER ALL?**

They also found those fruitful ways in other Christian movements. As many had long said, they were “Christians only, but not the only Christians.” Since Churches of Christ shared with evangelicals a cultural, moral, and political conservatism, they increasingly viewed them not as foes but as congenial allies—revival meetings, warm feelings, and all.

Popular evangelical author Max Lucado has long been a minister in the Churches of Christ, and his San Antonio church proclaimed itself the Oak Hills Church of Christ for the first 15 years of his ministry. Now it is simply Oak Hills Church, and Lucado shares the pulpit with Randy Frazee, formerly of Willow Creek, perhaps the best-known evangelical church in America.

In the end, Stone-Campbell DNA, like all DNA, is complicated. Every year, almost 200 of those Bible scholars—mainly members of Churches of Christ—convene at a professional meeting.

Surrounded throughout the week by thousands of other biblical scholars of all faiths and of none, they have chosen to meet together as members of the Stone-Campbell tradition, not for study only, but on Sunday morning to worship and share the Lord’s Supper.

Perhaps both Stone and Campbell can be heard ringing through the centuries in that act, and in Lucado’s words: “God rewards those who seek Him. Not those who seek doctrine of religion or systems or creeds. Many settle for these lesser passions, but the reward goes to those who settle for nothing less than Jesus himself.” ☐

MAX LUCADO—MICHAEL HOLAHAN/THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE  
CAMP MEETING—THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK



**WORSHIP WARS** Would instruments be used to accompany these songs by an early Disciples composer? The answer depended on where you were singing them.

# North and South

WAS THE DIVISION IN THE “UNITY MOVEMENT” AS MUCH ABOUT GEOGRAPHY AS THEOLOGY?

*Richard Hughes*

THE FOUNDERS of the **Stone-Campbell Movement** pursued the vision of restoring Christianity to its primitive form and uniting the Christian world. But deep irony plagued the movement when that agenda broke apart. It went two ways—the **Disciples of Christ**, who nurtured the ecumenical vision of unity, and the **Churches of Christ**, for whom the restoration ideal stood front and center. Both groups explained the rupture differently.

On the one hand, the Disciples argued that they had remained faithful to the ecumenical objectives of Stone and Campbell and that the Churches of Christ had turned their backs on Christian unity and busied themselves with narrow-minded, sectarian concerns.

For years, historians of definitive books on the history of American religion parroted the Disciples' explanation. For instance, Winthrop Hudson wrote: “By 1906, the rigidly biblicistic wing of the Disciples—the ‘Churches of Christ’ of the middle South—had gone its separate way.”

## WHO LEFT WHOM?

On the other hand, the Churches of Christ thought the Disciples were the wandering ones. They agreed with David Lipscomb of the *Gospel Advocate* (see “New woman, same gospel,” p. 33).

Pointing to the musical instruments and missionary societies that the Disciples now embraced, Lipscomb announced that the Disciples had turned their backs on a conservative reading of the biblical text: “The evidence is clear that it [the use of musical instruments in worship] was dropped out by Christ and his apostles, and was not introduced into the church for six hundred years—then among the Catholics, who claim the right to change the appointments of God.”



But these dueling interpretations met their match in the 1960s, when a young historian from the Churches of Christ, David Edwin Harrell, offered an entirely new take on the controversy.

Theology mattered, Harrell argued, but so did the Mason-Dixon Line. The Civil War, and the economic gaps and hostilities between Northern and Southern ways of life that it created, brought about many divisions.

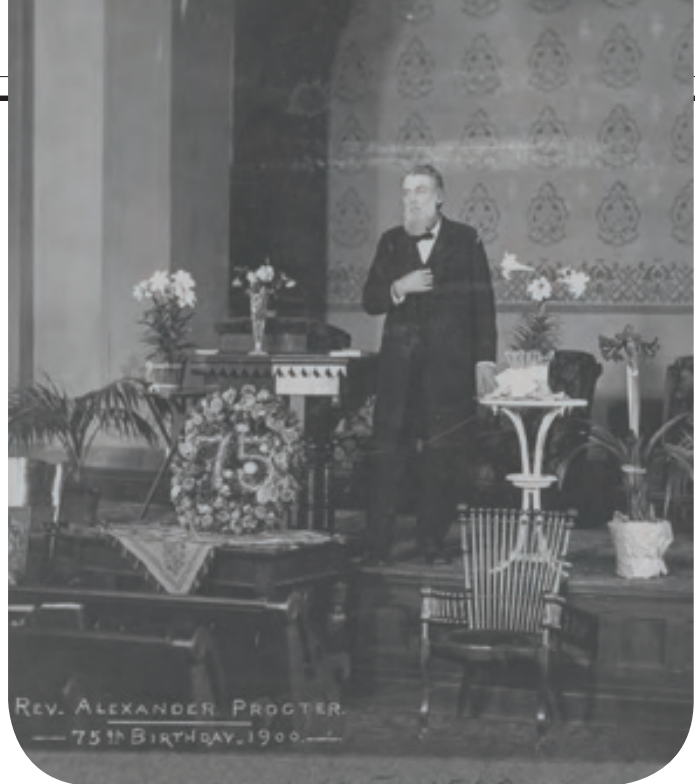
The facts and the map bear this out. Since the Civil War, Disciples of Christ have been mainly middle-class Christians in the Midwest. The population center of the Churches of Christ is in the mid-South where, for the century following the Civil War, they chiefly appealed to a far less prosperous following. Harrell described them as “the religious rednecks of the post-bellum South.”

Geography complicated these theological disputes. Benjamin Franklin of Cincinnati launched the instrumental music fight in the 1860s, objecting to instruments in terms full of disdain for upward mobility.

Instruments might be appropriate, he wrote, “if a church only intends being a fashionable society [or] a mere place of amusement and secular entertainment.” And of instruments’ supporters, Franklin wrote, “These refined gentlemen have refined ears, [and] enjoy fine music manufactured for French theatres, interspersed with short prayers and very short sermons.”

But a Northern supporter of instruments, Robert Richardson, noted their connection with upward mobility gladly: “The musical talent of the present generation is a hundred percent above that of the past; and as we receive into our churches new converts, they naturally expect to hear what will not offend their good taste. . . . The only remedy is to bring the popular taste of our congregations up to the required standard.”

Refined heresy or necessary improvement in taste? So much depended on where you were sitting. ■



# Climbing into the mainline boat

EARLY DISCIPLES RESISTED ALL “MAN-MADE” DENOMINATIONS. SO HOW DID SOME OF THEM BECOME ONE?

*Mark G. Toulouse*

**IT WAS JUNE 1811.** Alexander Campbell, preaching at Brush Run Church on Job 8:6–7, issued a clarion call against human structures, human rules, and “ignorance and superstition”: “We commence our career as a church under the banner of ‘the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible’ as the standard of our religious faith and practice. . . . Christians are the sons of liberty—the Lord’s freed men.”

## ROW, ROW, DISCIPLES BOAT

Yet, ironically, over the course of the next two centuries, the stream of Campbell’s movement today known as the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** somehow emerged as the largest mainline Protestant denomination born in America. How did this stream become a mainline tributary?

Near the end of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of Disciples ministers became familiar with the higher-critical approach to the Bible emerging in Germany. This approach challenged many of the early movement’s traditional assumptions related to the Bible. Did Paul write the letters attributed to him? How much do the Gospels really tell us about Jesus?

**BRUSH RUN CHURCH** *Above left:* Campbell’s movement was organized here.

**MAINLINE MAN** *Above right:* Alexander Proctor wrote that Christianity should include a “free spirit of inquiry” and affirmed “new methods of biblical study,” that “love is central to Christian theology,” and that “God’s creative methodology was evolutionary.”

Herbert L. Willett, dean of the Disciples House at the University of Chicago after 1894 and a prolific popular writer, led the charge to spread a new liberal vision of American Protestantism among Disciples laity.

Willett emphasized Christ’s teachings over church declarations. He loved to tell the Bible’s stories. For him, the authority of the Bible rested in how God made a difference in people’s lives, not in literal allegiance to the words on the page.

But hearts as well as minds were involved in the shift. By 1900 Disciples embraced social gospel trends, emphasizing the church’s need to solve social problems rather than defend doctrinal statements.

By 1940 these trends were attracting the majority of some 350 Disciples ministers studying at mainline seminaries like the University of Chicago and Yale.





**NOW WE HAVE ONE TOO** *Left:* James Garfield was the first U.S. president from the Stone-Campbell tradition.

**AROUND THE TABLE** *Below:* The first Disciples emphasized restoring early church practice. Modern ones emphasize the church's "worship, witness, and service" through the ages.



At least 48 Disciples ministers had also received PhDs from these schools.

As Disciples sailed this mainline stream, they grew to over 1,000,000 members at their 1909 centennial. They attributed their growth to their vision of Christian unity, but cultural factors also played a role.

In 1881 one of their own, James A. Garfield, was elected president. Their 11,000 congregations represented a central cultural position. They claimed 27 colleges and 3 missionary societies, and their National Benevolent Society provided significant benefits for orphans, widows, the aging, and the poor. The Disciples had arrived.

When, in 1908, mainline Protestants organized the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ (33 denominations that represented more than 18,000,000 church members), they included the Disciples, even though the Disciples possessed no organizational structure to affirm their membership. Their course down the mainline stream was set.

In 1968 the Disciples finally restructured to formally recognize the "denominational" character of their own work. Their first moderator, Ronald Osborn, wryly noted that the Disciples had officially made it to the mainline just as the mainline was ending. But Disciples leaders had really counted themselves mainline long before.

Through it all, though, the Disciples emphasized particular themes historically consistent with their earliest beliefs. They remain a people of the Book. Though they are less likely to affirm biblical


literalism than other Stone-Campbell streams, most Disciples still emphasize the central role the Bible plays in Christian life.

They affirm the unity of the church as resting upon the common Christian confession of Christ rather than the authority of the institutional church. While they no longer believe the church is unchanged by time or social context, today's Disciples still affirm the church

belongs to God, not to its membership, and must serve the mission of God within history.

And they still believe God is in the business of redeeming human history, perhaps one reason they have always been a sacramental people. Baptism remains, as Campbell put it, an "embodiment of the gospel"

where Christians affirm the grace of God, identify with the burial and resurrection of Christ, and are born into God's family.

The Lord's Supper, still practiced weekly in the majority of congregations, "inscribes the image of God" upon every Christian, as Campbell also said. Disciples still believe the Supper connects them with the community of faith, brings to mind the hope of God's final victory, and reminds them that the healing of creation is not yet complete. 

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### *19th-century British prime minister David Lloyd George and 20th-century fantasy author Katherine Kurtz were both raised as Disciples.*

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# From Stone and Campbell to the Great Communion

1700s

1800s

1800s

1800s



BARTON STONE

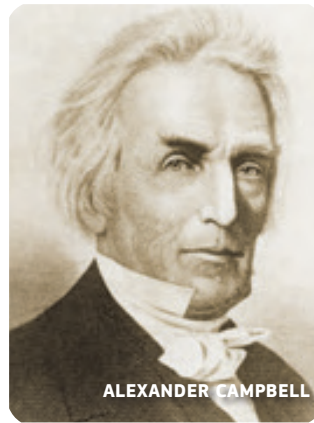
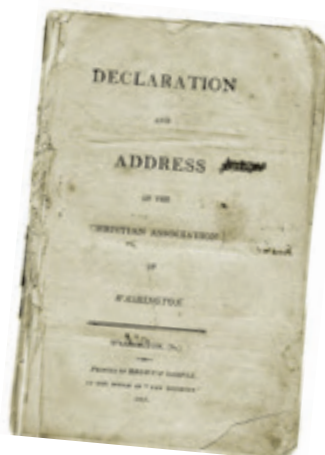
— 1798: Barton Warren Stone is ordained a Presbyterian minister. He serves churches in Cane Ridge and Concord, Kentucky, outside of Lexington.

— 1801: Between 10,000 and 20,000 people from Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian groups attend the Cane Ridge Revival, a revivalistic, sacramental camp meeting.

— 1803–1804: Stone and others are censured by the Synod of Kentucky and withdraw to form the Springfield (Ohio) Presbytery on September 12, 1803. In June 1804 they voluntarily dissolve the presbytery with “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery,” expressing a desire to “sink into union with the Body of Christ at large.” They seek to preserve the right of churches to call their own ministers and read the Bible for themselves, as well as the unity of all professing Christians.

— 1807: Thomas Campbell, Presbyterian minister, weary of the spirit of religious strife in Ireland, arrives in Philadelphia and begins serving churches in western Pennsylvania. He is soon censured for encouraging competing Presbyterian groups to share communion. He urges a return to the New Testament alone for the basis of union among Christians.

— 1809: Thomas Campbell and supporters establish the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, as a way for any and all professing Christians to cooperate in preaching, worship, and communion. Campbell publishes the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*, widely held to be the founding document of the Campbell movement. When his family arrives from Scotland in September, his son Alexander eagerly joins Thomas’s efforts.



ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

— 1810: The Presbyterians refuse to recognize the Campbells and the Christian Association. They form a local church at Brush Run, Pennsylvania, and adopt a congregational polity.

— 1823–1830: Alexander Campbell publishes the *Christian Baptist*.

— 1826–1844: Barton Stone edits and publishes the *Christian Messenger*.

— 1830–1870: Alexander Campbell publishes the *Millennial Harbinger*.

— 1832: Stone’s followers (Christians) meet with representatives of the Campbell movement (Disciples or Reformers) in Lexington, Kentucky, in late December 1831 to discuss points of agreement and disagreement. January 1, 1832, marks the union of the two groups which is considered the beginning of the “**Stone-Campbell Movement.**”

— 1849: The first national convention is held at Cincinnati, Ohio, where the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) is formed. This gives a sense of structure to the radically congregational movement.

— 1861, 1863: Southern leaders criticize the ACMS when it passes pro-Union resolutions.

— 1866: Isaac Errett begins publication of the *Christian Standard* in Cincinnati, Ohio. **This paper is still published and represents the positions of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.**

— 1874: Christian Women’s Board of Missions is organized.

— 1875: Foreign Christian Missionary Society is organized.



**G. L. WHARTON WAS A MEMBER OF THE FIRST GROUP OF MISSIONARIES SENT BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST TO INDIA.**



The unity movement begun by Stone and the Campbells soon encountered division. In the chronology below, you will find **Churches of Christ in red**, **Christian Churches/Independents in green**, and **Disciples of Christ in blue**. But you will also find, all along the way, attempts at fellowship and service across all three groups and with other Christians.

1900s

1900s

1900s

1900s



CLARA HALE BABCOCK (P. 30)



GINLING COLLEGE, FOUNDED BY DISCIPLES MISSIONS (P. 32)



R. N. HOGAN (P. 25)



— 1888/9: Clara Hale Babcock is first woman ordained to preach in the tradition.

— 1889: **Daniel Sommer and other conservative northern Disciples call for separation from congregations that support the use of instrumental music and missionary societies. Their Sand Creek Address and Declaration intentionally plays off Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address.**

— 1906: **Conservative "a capella" group (meaning "without instruments") is officially recognized as a distinct church in the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies.**

— 1909: **Centennial Convention, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the publication of the Declaration and Address, is held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.**

— 1919: **Three missionary societies merge into the United Christian Missionary Society. Some moderates resist this move, foreshadowing further division.**

— 1927: **First North American Christian Convention is held among moderates and becomes one of the markers of the second great division in the movement. An annual meeting emphasizing preaching, teaching, and fellowship, it continues today.**

— 1930: The World Convention of Churches of Christ is established to provide a global forum for Christians in all streams of the movement to worship together and network for ministry.

— 1947: **The Christian Standard publishes the "Honor Roll of the Faithful," a list of conservative congregations.**

— 1952: **Churches of Christ begin national evangelistic radio and (eventually) television program, Herald of Truth.**

— 1955: **Conservative Disciples publish the first Directory of the Ministry, still the best way to determine which stream a minister or congregation belongs to.**

— 1960: **The United Christian Missionary Society authorizes the Commission on Brotherhood Restructure.**

— 1968: **The International Convention of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) approves the Restructure and becomes the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Though denominational in structure, organization, and ministry, it also retains a strong congregational streak. Its biannual General Assembly does not speak for the Disciples, rather it speaks to the Disciples.**

— 1971: **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ is listed as a distinct group for the first time in the Yearbook of American Churches.**

— 1996: **Disciples form common Global Ministries Board with members of another denomination entirely, the United Church of Christ (one with roots in the same radical commitment to being "just Christian" that birthed the Stone-Campbell movement).**

— 2009: **Great Communion Celebration marks the bicentennial of the Declaration and Address, celebrated worldwide by members of all streams of the movement.**

— 2013: **Stone-Campbell Movement has 7,400,000 members worldwide.**



WORSHIPERS SHARE THE BREAD AT THE GREAT COMMUNION OF 2009 (P. 37).

**“YOU WERE PROUD CRUSADERS”**

*Right:* White leaders closed Marshall Keeble’s Nashville Christian Institute in 1967. Alumni gathered there in 2012.

**LEARNING FOR LIFE**

*Far right:* Students take sewing at Southern Christian Institute, Mississippi.



# Fighting for the pure gospel

## AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

*Edward J. Robinson*

“DEAR WHITE BRETHREN, some of the loyal colored brethren have the zeal, the whole truth, and the courage to do the right thing, and you white brethren who are loyal have the zeal, the whole truth, the courage, and the money.”

So wrote Alexander Cleveland Campbell (1862–1930) in 1909—not the revered founder of the **Stone-Campbell Movement**, but a later African American preacher. Campbell was pleading with white supporters to help him in the cause of the “pure gospel”: worship without musical instruments, the Lord’s Supper every Sunday, and evangelizing without missionary societies.

When he protested these innovations during a sermon at Lea Avenue, his home church in Nashville, Tennessee, the Lea Avenue organist played loudly enough to drown him out in response. After this incident, he soon founded the Jackson Street **Church of Christ** in Nashville—the “mother church” of African American Churches of Christ. Here he could exercise what he and others called not only the “pure gospel,” but “pure worship,” “pure Word of God,” and “pure religion of Jesus Christ.”

Against enormous social barriers, black leaders and members in the Stone-Campbell Movement toiled to plant their own churches, establish their own schools, write and edit their own journals, and organize their own conferences.

Many felt that given the prejudice they faced, without white support and philanthropy their efforts would eventually prove futile. They relied on white generosity to advance the “pure gospel.” Others, however, sternly spurned it and worked independently instead.

### PREACHING TO BEAT THE DEVIL

African Americans had been responsive to the Stone-Campbell Movement from its beginning. In 1804 there were 851,532 enslaved Africans in the United States. A handful joined the Stone-Campbell Movement, the harbinger of greater things to come.

Blacks and whites connected in complex ways within the movement. White believers owned slaves who attached themselves to the movement, and talented black preachers caught the interest of sincere and well-meaning white Christians.

In the mid-1830s, yet a third Alexander Campbell, an ardent black preacher, presided over a congregation in Midway, Kentucky. Generous white Christians purchased Campbell so that he could give his time and talent solely to preaching. His wife, Rosa, a convert of pioneering white preacher John T. Johnson (1788–1856), cast her full support behind her husband’s efforts.

By 1850 the population of enslaved Africans had grown to 3.2 million; 101,000 of them now belonged to





the Stone-Campbell Movement. Alexander Cross (1811–1854), a gifted enslaved preacher from Kentucky, came to white attention at this time. In 1853 white Christians pooled their resources, purchased Cross’s freedom, and sent him and his family as missionaries to Monrovia, Liberia. But Cross contracted malaria and suddenly died.

Black believers would not remain in such large numbers for long. As the Civil War approached, many enslaved Africans escaped northward and flocked behind Union lines, leaving the religion of their masters behind. By 1862, black membership numbered only around 7,000.

After the Civil War, Samuel W. Womack (1851–1920) of Tennessee emerged as a pivotal leader. Shortly

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***Preacher Richard Rose Sr. told fellow NCI alumni he once sneaked out after curfew to hear Sam Cooke sing “Twistin’ the Night Away.”***

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after his emancipation, Womack came under the influence of three white preachers who “made impressions on my mind that the waves of time will never be able to wash out.” As a result, Womack developed a “high ecclesiology,” the idea that the church—specifically, membership in a Church of Christ—was central to God’s scheme of salvation as local churches were “the God-given institution provided for all his work.”

Around 1900 Womack joined the pure-worship-seeking Alexander Cleveland Campbell in leaving “modernizing” **Christian Churches** in Nashville to

**FIERY PREACHER** *Right:* Hogan asked his followers to “take their stand with the loyal body of Christ.”

form Jackson Street. Womack was against institutional bureaucracy beyond the local church, saying, “I know of no way taught in the Book to succeed in the work, but to work, talk, and trust God by doing what he says, just as he says it.” His son-in-law Marshall Keeble (1878–1968) also launched his evangelistic campaigns in 1914 saying, “I had rather follow God’s plan than man’s.”

### “TEARING UP” THE CHURCH

This conflict in Tennessee was merely a foreshadowing of a much bigger fight about what God’s plan looked like. Discord broke out in Longview, Texas, in 1935 when young African American preacher R. N. Hogan (1902–1997) convinced 95 members of his Disciples church to leave. Black Disciples called the police and put him out of their building.

Around the same time, J. S. Winston (1906–2002) “tore up” a Christian Church in Marlin, Texas, transforming it into a Church of Christ by convincing the congregation that God did not approve instruments and missionary societies. Yet, despite this raging conflict, African American youth in Churches of Christ who wanted to pursue higher learning received a cordial welcome from Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas, a school established by black and white Disciples in 1913 (see “The story of a school,” p. 28).

Paradoxically, while African American preachers in Churches of Christ were attacking the organs and organized missionary efforts of African American Disciples, they relied on these organ-playing foes to receive a college education, since white Church of Christ colleges barred them—a prejudice Hogan





lambasted, writing harshly against segregated schools and racism.

Meanwhile, Samuel Robert Cassius (1853–1931) was fighting both worship innovations and white racism in Oklahoma and beyond. Born into slavery, Cassius converted to the Stone-Campbell Movement in the 1880s. After being ordained by white leaders, he lived and labored for three decades in Oklahoma. There he filled various roles: evangelist, educator, farmer, postmaster, family man, and “race man” (a common term for an African American who devoted his life to promoting black advancement).

While Cassius’s primary focus was the “pure gospel,” he also fixed his heart on resolving America’s race problem. His *Third Birth of a Nation* responded to D. W. Griffith’s inflammatory *Birth of a Nation*, the infamous 1915 motion picture that portrayed the Ku Klux Klan as “savior” of white womanhood and white civilization. Cassius vehemently contested racism and chided white Christians who ignored America’s race problem while funding foreign missions. “Brethren, when you think of heathen,” Cassius proclaimed, “don’t look beyond the United States. You have Africa at your door.”

Cassius died impoverished and disappointed in Colorado Springs in 1931. At the time of Cassius’s death, Keeble was preaching a gospel campaign in Valdosta, Georgia. It marked a changing of the guard, as that year Keeble announced that his evangelistic campaigns had resulted in over 1,000 baptisms. B. C. Goodpasture, a white admirer of Keeble, had Keeble’s sermons published, making the preacher a household name.

Cassius and Keeble both had strong faith in God, a passion for the lost, and a hatred for religious error. But Keeble had one thing that Cassius did not: the consistent support of white philanthropist A. M. Burton (1879–1966). Keeble once called Burton “the greatest missionary in the church today.” Keeble steered clear of racial strife and focused on planting churches. Such an approach garnered generous support from white believers, enabling him to travel extensively and establish congregations across the United States.

**BIBLE FIRST** *Left:* Samuel Cassius teaches on the New Testament.

**LIFE OF LEARNING** *Above:* Students study in the library at the Southern Christian Institute.

Not everyone followed Keeble. Some took Cassius’s path. One was George Philip Bowser (1874–1950), a former Methodist minister. Bowser’s bold stance meant that he never enjoyed support from white Christians. But he shared with Keeble the same goal of leading people out of “human institutions to the church of our Lord.”

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

In 1907 Bowser launched Silver Point Christian Institute. By 1918 it fizzled out. Two decades later, he began the Bowser Christian Institute, but lack of funds doomed this school as well in 1946. Bowser’s dream finally lived on in the 1948 founding of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas—the only accredited African American college in the Churches of Christ.

There he collaborated with Keeble, who sent many students from his Nashville Christian Institute to Bowser’s school. Together, both schools formed the next generation of African American leadership. That formation led to a new era: the New Wineskins movement of the early 2000s, which contested the idea that no salvation was possible outside of Churches of Christ.

Supporters of New Wineskins chose, instead, to address economic, social, and racial conditions obliterating African American families. The “fighting style” of previous generations of preachers was giving way to different practices appropriate to a twenty-first-century American culture—a new way to practice the “pure religion of Jesus Christ.”

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# No “soft soap”

MARSHALL KEEBLE  
PREACHED A STRONG AND  
UNCOMPROMISING GOSPEL

*Edward J. Robinson*

AS AMERICANS STRUGGLED through the Great Depression, groups paraded with signs telling blacks, “Go back to the cotton fields—city jobs are for white men.” It was the summer of 1939, a few weeks before the outbreak of World War II. Seventy-six years had passed since the Emancipation Proclamation, but in many places separate drinking fountains still existed for blacks and whites.

That year, black preacher Marshall Keeble declared his own war—not on racism, but on sin and sectarianism. Collaborating with his faithful song-leader, William Lee, Keeble began a campaign in Huntington, West Virginia, that resulted in eight baptisms.

## SIN AND ERROR CONDEMNED

White community leader Joe Morris lavished praise on Keeble and Lee: “It was impossible for us to seat the audiences any night of the meeting. I have never heard nor seen greater power in the pulpit. Sin was condemned, error exposed, and the church and Christ exalted to the heavens, and no man can do this with a greater degree of success than Marshall Keeble.”

Marshall Keeble appealed to whites and blacks across the Jim Crow South, his audiences in some places consisting mainly of whites. Keeble’s “power in the pulpit” derived from his story-centered preaching and practical illustrations. He had a humble, nonthreatening demeanor, and his homespun wisdom and wit kept his listeners coming back for more.

White preachers in the **Churches of Christ** also admired Keeble because he was a “radical exclusivist,” arguing that those outside Churches of Christ were unsaved. “May God speed the day,” Morris wrote, “when soft-soaping preachers and neutrals among the white preachers will have the courage to condemn sin and error and exhort righteousness as does M. Keeble.”

Keeble was a native of Nashville, Tennessee. As a young man, he came under the spiritual influence of his father-in-law, Samuel Womack, and the social influence of Booker T. Washington (1856–1915). Keeble inherited his rigid exclusivism and high view of the church from Womack. From Washington, Keeble learned how to win the favor and finances of influential white leaders in the South, including his chief benefactor, insurance company founder A. M. Burton,



who funded his preaching campaigns across the South and beyond.

Significantly, Keeble would not have received such generous, enduring monetary support had he challenged the racial status quo, as did many of his black contemporaries in the pulpit, such as Samuel Robert Cassius and G. P. Bowser, and those in the social and political arena, such as Henry M. Turner (1834–1915) and W. E. B. Du Bois (1878–1963).

## SONS AND GRANDSONS

Though Keeble hated to see fellow African Americans lynched and discriminated against, he refused to oppose white racism publicly. For Keeble, leading black people to heaven was more important than helping them achieve racial and social justice in this life. As complex as he was famous, Keeble understood his white contemporaries and supporters better than they understood him, and he left an indelible mark on Churches of Christ and on American society.

His spiritual “sons”—Luke Miller, John Vaughner, and Lonnie Smith—evangelized thousands. He also had “grandsons,” young men who attended the Nashville Christian Institute, his K–12 school for black youth (1939–1967; groundbreaking pictured above).

These young men accompanied Keeble on his preaching and fund-raising tours. They eventually comprised much of the leadership of black Churches of Christ in the later twentieth century: Molefi Kete Asante (formerly Arthur Lee Smith Jr.), Franklin Florence Sr., Floyd Rose, and Fred Gray. Yet, in the end, they did something Keeble had not publicly done: they challenged America to live out “the true meaning of its creed—all men are created equal.” ☐



# The story of a school

BLACK COLLEGES AMONG THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

*Lawrence A. Q. Burnley*

**IT AROSE FROM THE WOODS** of East Texas in the early decades of the twentieth century, and it provided a gift that had long been denied to the parents and grandparents of many who enrolled there. Its name was Jarvis Christian College.

During the years following the Civil War, a great majority of newly freed African Americans exercised a crucial freedom long taken from them—the freedom to learn to read and write. By doing so, they sought a better future with far-reaching spiritual, economic, and political implications for themselves and their children.

Many went to one of the colleges established by the **Disciples of Christ**. The Disciples had a rich history in this area, founding 11 schools for African Americans between 1868 and 1913.

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Jarvis's story is one example of how both individuals and agencies, and African American and white Disciples, worked together. The land was given to the Christian Women's Board of Missions (CWBM) by the college's namesakes, the wealthy, influential—and white—Ida and James Jarvis, to “keep up and maintain a school for the elevation and education of the Negro race . . . in which school there shall be efficient religious and industrial training.” But money also came from African American Disciples, who raised \$1,000, at which point the CWBM contributed \$10,000 to the project—about \$270,000 in 2013 money.

**STUDYING HARD, STANDING TALL** Jarvis Christian College opened in 1913 in this clapboard building in Hawkins, Texas.

Schools like Jarvis focused on helping blacks develop basic skills, offering industrial education, training for ministry, and teacher education. African American leaders also wanted to provide qualified men and women a classical college education. But this goal caused problems with the CWBM; the white women's organization championed the industrial model almost exclusively.

African American Disciples leader Preston Taylor addressed the issue in 1917: “More than thirty years ago it was held that a knowledge of the English language and the English Bible was all that was necessary for the colored minister.” The “great white brotherhood,” Taylor thought, still had that same spirit, “the spirit of suspicion and doubt concerning the really educated man.”

Jarvis, the only one of the 11 Disciples schools for African Americans remaining today, evolved from a comprehensive school encompassing elementary grades to a four-year liberal arts institution enrolling a diverse student body. Its founders hoped that it would train “head, heart, and hand” and make “useful citizens and earnest Christians.” For over a century, it has worked for that goal. ☐

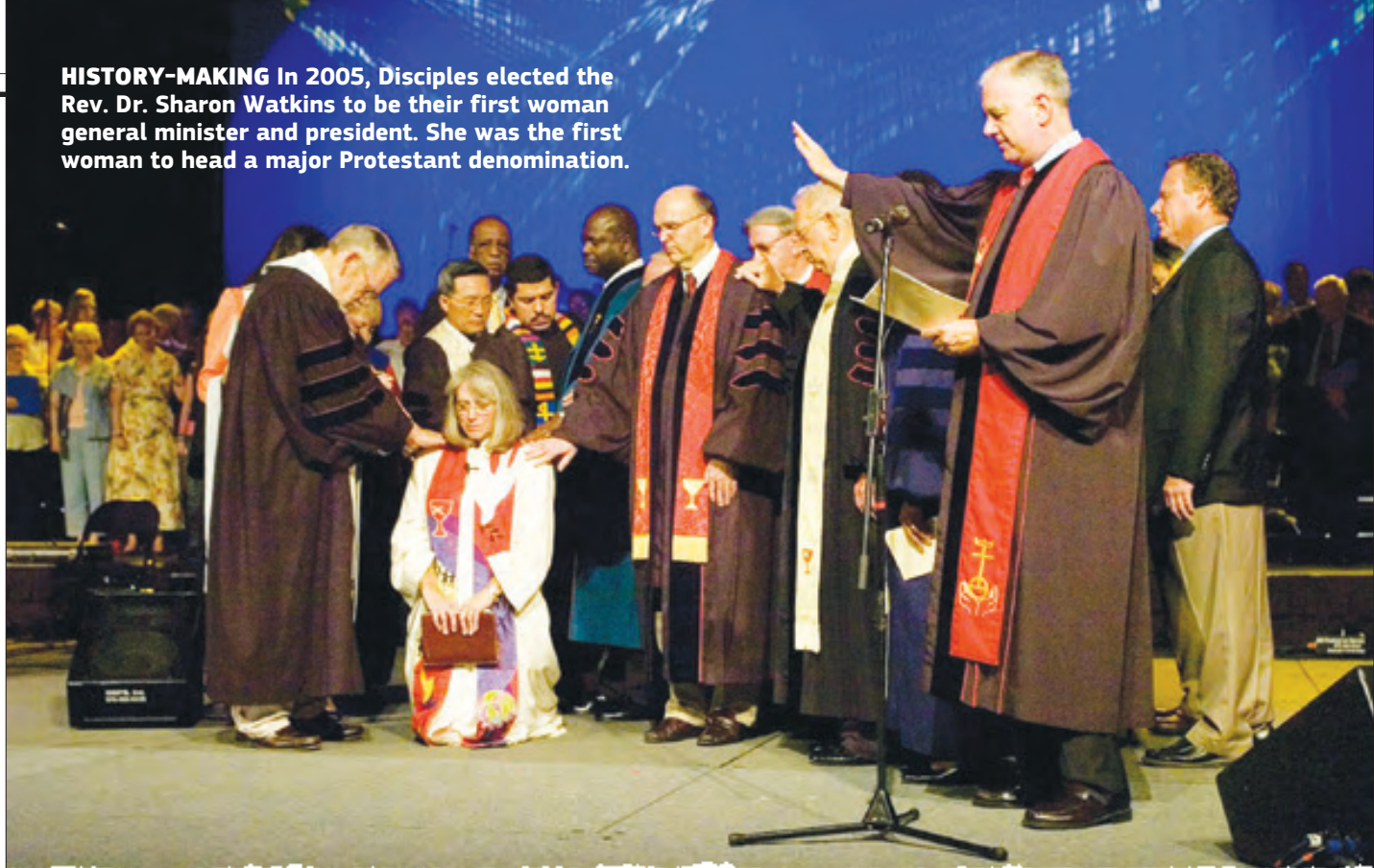
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*Schools for African Americans founded by the Disciples of Christ included Tennessee Manual Labor University, Nashville, TN (1868); Louisville Bible School, Louisville, KY (1873); Southern Christian School, Edwards, MS (1875); Clara Schell's School, Washington, DC (1882); Christian Bible College, New Castle, KY (1884); National Colored Christian College, Dallas, TX (1884); Louisville Christian Bible School, Louisville, KY (1892); Alabama Christian Institute, Lum, AL (1894); Goldsboro Christian Institute, Goldsboro, NC (1900); Piedmont Christian Institute, Martinsville, VA (1900); and Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, TX (1913).*

IMAGES PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



**HISTORY-MAKING** In 2005, Disciples elected the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins to be their first woman general minister and president. She was the first woman to head a major Protestant denomination.



# Freedom to speak, freedom to serve

WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES IN THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

*Sara Harwell and Loretta Long Hunnicutt*

**IN THE EARLIEST DAYS** of the **Stone-Campbell Movement**, women fulfilled important pastoral roles: caring for the sick and the poor, preparing food during extended worship meetings, and bringing up and training Christian children. The early years of the movement coincided with the early years of the American republic, and women were encouraged to be “republican mothers.” Assumed to have superior virtue, they were charged to pass that virtue on to their children. The result? Good Christian citizens to populate the new republic.

## **WHERE DID THE BREAD GO?**

Women moved out of these private roles into public ones first as educators. Jane Campbell McKeever (1800–1871), younger sister of Alexander Campbell, founded Pleasant Hill Female Seminary near West Middletown, Pennsylvania, as early as the 1830s. Alexander had very moderate views on slavery, but Jane did not share them. She was a firm abolitionist, and she and her husband

even ran a station of the Underground Railroad on their farm. (Her students sometimes wondered why the bread they baked one day was gone the next morning.) In 1854 she publicly disagreed with her famous brother and wrote a fierce indictment of slavery in the abolitionist *North-Western Christian Magazine*.

Women were also involved in active evangelism, organizing congregations, and, in the absence of male preachers, baptizing believers on the American and Canadian frontiers. Mary Graft, Mary Morrison, and Mary Ogle of Pennsylvania and Mary Stoddill of Ontario are not remembered well today, but they were torchbearers who brought the gospel to isolated places, and their ministry was welcome.

The Civil War brought many changes to American society. Some of them affected women's calls to ministry. In the wake of the war, women found they had acquired new skills of management and leadership. In addition, they were receiving a better education, much of it on par with that received by young men of the



**MOTHER LODE** Above: Early Stone-Campbell women were encouraged to be good mothers of good American citizens.

**SHELTER FROM THE STORM** Left: Minnie Vautrin of Ginling College in Nanking, China, saved up to 10,000 girls from Japanese soldiers on a campus designed for several hundred.

day. Many found their voices by participating in temperance, suffrage, and other social reform movements. These skills transferred naturally to the pulpit.

### PASSION FOR PREACHING

Clara Hale Babcock (1850–1924) is considered to be the first woman ordained to preach by the **Disciples of Christ** in 1888 or 1889, followed by Jessie Coleman Monser (1891), Bertha Mason Fuller (1891), and Sarah (“Sadie”) McCoy Crank (1892). These women were remarkably effective evangelists. Clara Babcock baptized more than 1,500 people during her ministry. Sadie Crank baptized even more and organized over 50 rural congregations. They all had a voice in the temperance movement as well.

Probably the most passionate temperance advocate of all was Carry Nation (1846–1911). A popular lay preacher and lecturer for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), she gained notoriety for smashing illegal saloons with her hatchet. (See “Did you know?,” inside front cover.)

The newspapers that caricatured Nation in cartoons did not call as much attention to the fact that near the end of her life she operated a shelter for battered women in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Her relationship with the Disciples of Christ was sometimes tense because of her unorthodox methods and uncompromising advocacy for women’s rights.

Another outlet for women’s energies was missionary work. Caroline Neville Pearre (1831–1910)

founded the Christian Women’s Board of Missions (CWBM) when she saw the vital work of domestic and foreign missions languishing in the Disciples of Christ. In 1874 she set up the first women’s missionary society at her home church in Iowa City and soon began encouraging and supporting other women to do the same.

That same year representatives of these societies came together to form the national CWBM, with the blessing of the Disciples’s American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS). ACMS secretary Thomas Munnell famously replied to Pearre’s request for permission to convene: “This is a flame of the Lord’s kindling, and no man can extinguish it.”

The CWBM was very successful in fund-raising and supporting mission projects. In 1919 it helped form the United Christian Missionary Society. Because the CWBM provided the bulk of the funds and the members, it was able to insist on equal representation on the society’s committees—a privilege many women in other Protestant groups were fighting for in this era.

But segregated times led to a racially segregated missionary society. Sarah Lue Bostick (1868–1948), while probably never officially ordained, was an early African American woman preacher in the Disciples of Christ and an active organizer and fund-raiser in the separate black CWBM, setting up chapters in several African American congregations.

Bostick’s leadership and that of other female African American Disciples provided major support for the Southern Christian Institute in Edwards, Mississippi, and for mission work in Liberia. This segregated group of the CWBM helped establish Jarvis



Christian Institute in Hawkins, Texas (see “The story of a school,” p. 28).

## WOMEN MINISTERS

Any examination of the role of women in the movement must at some point confront the movement’s central motivation: a return to New Testament Christianity around which all Christian groups could come together. This meant reading the Scriptures as a blueprint to be followed to the letter.

Alexander Campbell was thus opposed to women ministers, writing in the *Millennial Harbinger* that he followed Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:1–15, where the apostle admonished women to be silent in the church, not to usurp male authority, and to talk privately to their husbands if they had questions or comments.

Many Stone-Campbell churches still debate what Paul’s words mean to Christians today. Was he speaking to Christians in a specific time, place, and culture, or were his words binding for all time? The Disciples of Christ, the most mainline stream, generally accepts that Paul was speaking to a particular situation and that it is important to utilize the gifts of all Christians, regardless of gender, race, class, or other circumstance.

The other two Stone-Campbell streams, the **Churches of Christ** and the **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ**, held more closely to a literal interpretation of Paul’s instruction and resisted accepting women in the more public forms of ministry.

But that is changing, and it is common in the twenty-first century to find women youth ministers, family ministers, music ministers, education ministers, and even occasionally, pulpit ministers. The role of women continues to be debated, and there are many gradations of acceptance of their public ministry.

## DECISION FOR CHRIST

Uncovering the experiences of women as the Stone-Campbell Movement spread around the globe also presents challenges. Most stories told in the West reflect the perspectives of missionaries, not converts. But even so, they tell a significant tale.

In 1920s India, British missionary Anne Piggot traveled between Church of Christ mission stations to work with Bible women and to preach the gospel. One convert, Jaswa, visited Piggot several times under the cover of darkness before finally declaring her desire to be a Christian.

Jaswa’s family repeatedly tried to dissuade her from pursuing her new faith. They said they would

cut her up, bury her in the house, and tell the neighbors that she had gone to live with relatives. Jaswa was terrified. But when she received a vision of two men in shining white robes asking her to return to the Christians, she decided to go back. Later, the transformed Jaswa rescued a girl of the despised “sweeper caste” who had fallen into a rushing river.

India was not the only place where conversion threatened social order. One of the first Japanese converts, Ino Fusakawa, whitened her teeth after her conversion, a departure from the usual practice of married Japanese women blackening their teeth (perhaps to make them unattractive). Neighbors questioned her morals, but missionaries pressured her to do it as a means of embracing her new Christian faith.

## BIBLE WOMEN

Before the Second World War, Bible women (so called because they taught the Bible) represented the

most numerous female evangelists. These missionaries taught other women (and sometimes men), served as church staff, distributed books and tracts, and visited women in isolated regions. Hundreds

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*“We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.” (Thomas Campbell)*

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**TAKING HER STAND** *Below:* Carry Nation worked uncompromisingly for temperance and women’s rights.





**SPEAKING FOR THE LORD** Sarah Lue Bostick was much in demand as a speaker and motivator.

was a leader in ecumenical cooperation and the fight for social justice. She began preaching in 1930 at Villa Mitre Christian Church in Buenos Aires, soon one of the largest churches in Argentina. In 1951 she publicly wore a suit that she had made from sacks to demonstrate to poor women in her congregation “what could be done with just a little.”

Some women developed unique ministries to grow the church and spread the gospel. Mama Beyeke of the Disciples Mission in Congo trained Congolese singers and formed a traveling choir that evangelized through song. Beyeke composed songs with African musical instruments that replaced the translated Western Christian hymns that had predominated in African worship. The “Mama Beyeke Chorale” even traveled as far as the United States (in 1987).

### SEND THE SISTER

Mary Thompson became the first missionary from the Australian Churches of Christ when she left Melbourne for India in 1891. An American missionary couple had written to the Australian churches saying, “If a brother is not ready, and a sister is, send her out, for we greatly need help.” The first missionary society formed in Australia had two women among its eight members.

Australian women entered the pulpit in 1931 when a local church in Hawthorne, Queensland, chose Violet Maud Callanan as their pastor. The local leadership had the freedom to make their own decisions, and they concluded that the calling of a woman to public ministry was valid because of their belief in the mutual ministry of all believers.

Callanan had completed a qualifying certificate at the College of the Bible in Victoria. But her position remained tenuous. She even dressed in a habit and veil in her early career, possibly trying to adhere to strict boundaries of female behavior even while transcending them.

Despite the lack of institutional barriers to women’s ordination, Callanan was the only female pastoral minister for over 25 years in Australia. The percentage of women in ministry in the entire movement even in the twenty-first century remains low (23 percent among Disciples and only a handful in the other streams). Many still seek the freedom to speak. ☐

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served in India, Japan, and Korea in particular. They gained a foothold for women in church affairs, and they contributed significantly to the movement’s losing its Western character.

For example, in 1916, Japanese Christian Kei Nakamura served as a Bible woman in a church of the Yotsuya Japan Mission. Her ministry spanned all aspects of church life. She conducted meetings, visited women in their homes, taught a class of girls at the Bible school sponsored by the mission, participated in worship, and served as the pastor’s assistant.

After World War II, missions took a new direction. The ministries of Bible women were replaced by the growing Christian Women’s Fellowship—organized in 1949 by Jesse Mary Trout of Ontario, also vice president of the United Christian Missionary Society. Trout had been a missionary to Japan before World War II and to Japanese Americans in internment camps during the war. Her hope, and that of other woman leaders, was that women would become part of a world structure that encouraged an international sense of community and sisterhood.

One of the most unique of these sisterhoods was the Fellowship of the Least Coin, pioneered by Carmen Armonio of Manila in 1956. This ecumenical organization quickly spread to over 60 countries and still exists today. It encourages all women to pray for peace, justice, and reconciliation and to give of the “least coin” in their currency to support projects throughout the world.

Jorgelina Lozada (1906–1995), a native of Argentina and the first ordained female pastor in Latin America,



# “New woman,” same gospel

SILENA MOORE HOLMAN ARGUED FOR WOMEN’S EQUALITY IN STONE-CAMPBELL CHURCHES

*Loretta Hunnicutt*

“IN THE MORN of the resurrection, a woman was counted worthy to bear to the disciples the glad tidings of a risen Lord. But in the nineteenth century, she is counted by some brothers unworthy to tell the same tidings to the little children in the Sunday-school.” With these words, Silena Moore Holman (1850–1915) challenged prevailing teachings within the more conservative southern tradition of the **Stone-Campbell Movement**, eventually labeled the **Churches of Christ**.

## PREACHING IT

Holman emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as the movement’s most articulate defender of a greater sphere of engagement for women. She and influential Church of Christ editor David Lipscomb engaged in a famous debate over the issue in the pages of Lipscomb’s journal, the *Gospel Advocate*, beginning in 1888.

Holman had come to her conclusions from her own life experience. The wife of a lay leader in her congregation, she mothered eight children, actively participated in her church in Fayetteville, Tennessee, and served for 15 years as the president of the Tennessee Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

During her tenure, she increased WCTU membership from 200 to more than 4,000. In all these actions, she represented the “new woman” of the late nineteenth century—a woman who enjoyed access to education and sought to participate in

spheres once labeled “men only,” such as social reform movements and church leadership.

Her adversary, Lipscomb, along with southern churches who read his paper, opposed any public role for women in church or society. Lipscomb believed organizations such as the WCTU enticed women away from the joys of raising children and tending the home.



## TELLING GLAD TIDINGS

According to Lipscomb, women who attended conventions, and especially those who spoke publicly, violated scriptural limits. He relied on passages such as 1 Timothy 2, which told women to keep silent in the churches and not to assume authority over men.

In her vision of women’s roles, though, Holman also upheld the Bible, crafting a well-reasoned scriptural defense of larger opportunities for women to lead and teach.

In particular, she criticized the use of Scripture to condemn all female involvement in the church and society: “The trouble with such people is that they base their ideas on some one passage of Scripture, when it is necessary . . . [to] take the Bible as a whole.”

She added that a “literal interpretation of the verse would keep women at home altogether, NOT ALLOWING THEM TO GO TO CHURCH AT ALL,” clearly not Paul’s intent. “Women were ‘last at the cross and first at the tomb,’”

she argued, “and to a woman did our risen Lord first appear, while a woman received the first commission to tell the glad news of the resurrection.”

Holman eventually achieved recognition, not only among Churches of Christ, but also from the state of Tennessee. Two years after her death, through the influence of the WCTU, her portrait was placed in the State Capitol. At her death, she reportedly said, “I want no man to apologize for my work.” ☐

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*“When the ‘new woman’ . . . comes into her kingdom, wide-awake, alert, thoughtful, and up to date, she will . . . magnify and glorify the profession of motherhood.” (Holman)*

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# Worldwide disciples, worldwide Christians

HOW THIS MOST AMERICAN OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS  
FLOURISHED ON THE WORLD STAGE

*Gary Holloway*

**IT WAS QUINTESSENTIALLY** American: born on the frontier, derived from the camp meeting experience, seeking freedom, and passing over centuries of tradition, creeds, and state churches. But even from the beginning it had a strong impulse toward world mission—seeking unity so that the world might believe in Jesus (John 17:21) and spreading the good news of Jesus to neighbors near—and very far.

## **FIGHTING THE DARKNESS**

British churches had a separate origin from those in America—one that skipped right over Barton Stone. William Jones, minister of a Scotch Baptist church in London, was so influenced by the writings of Alexander Campbell that, in 1835, he began his own journal, *Millennial Harbinger and Voluntary Church Advocate*, to spread the same message.

One of its first issues wrote off 2,000 years of church history: “The volumes of traditions, the cabalistic dogmas, the eastern philosophy, the pagan speculations . . . intercepted entirely, or totally eclipsed the light of the moral sun. Nearly all the earth was overspread in this darkness.” Jones soon influenced a

group to leave the Scotch Baptists and form the first Churches of Christ in Britain.

From these small beginnings grew a vibrant group of churches, planting new congregations all over the British Isles and spreading the gospel to Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. While not as large a group as their American counterparts, this Commonwealth stream produced many leaders who influenced the **Stone-Campbell Movement** worldwide.

## **SERVING BODY AND SOUL**

Stepping onto the global stage widened the church’s message beyond standard revivalist preaching. In Asia in particular, health care and justice issues stood shoulder to shoulder with church planting and evangelism (see “Freedom to speak, freedom to serve,” pp. 29–32).

This new stage saw heroic efforts like those of Dr. Zoena Rothermel (1882–1979), a missionary to Maudha, India, who provided health care for thousands at a time when there were few female physicians anywhere in the world. She also regularly traveled by bike through the hilly terrain and climbed mountains at the age of 68—in some cases faster than her youthful companions!

But difficulties loomed larger than simply riding bikes up mountains. Dire political realities plagued missionary efforts.



## WORSHIPPING JESUS AROUND THE WORLD

*Left:* Girls prepare trays for communion in the Congo.

## BUILDING THE CHINESE CHURCH *Right:* Missionaries made friends and converts.

In China, for instance, the church suffered many cultural upheavals—the 1937 Japanese invasion, World War II, the Communist revolution, and government debates on allowing more personal freedom.

Yet, already by the end of the 1920s, the United Christian Missionary Society had entered the Yangtze River Valley in China in a significant way, and in an essential move of cultural sensitivity and practical wisdom, plans were already underway to transfer its leadership to the Chinese. Australians, Koreans, and many others soon joined the North American missionaries.

## MARTYRS FOR CHRIST

Many Asian missionaries gave their lives or their health. For example, in Tibet in the 1920s, Dr. Albert Shelton and other missionaries established churches, schools, a hospital, and an orphanage. Attacked by armed robbers on a mission journey in 1922, Dr. Shelton died from his wounds. Sarah Andrews worked in Japan from 1916 until her death in 1961. She remained in Japan even during World War II, suffering imprisonment and deprivation along with the Japanese people she loved. After the war, she opened a home for widows.

William Cunningham of Japan's Yotsuya Mission sent the first Stone-Campbell missionaries from Japan to Korea in 1910. In 1933 he sent more. Americans arrived after World War II, planting churches and creating what are today Korea Christian University and Seoul Christian University.

Even greater growth came in the Philippines. By the 1920s, Leslie and Carrie Wolfe had organized missions in Manila and Northern Luzon into the Christian Convention. Soon, regional conventions, Bible institutes, and church planting all flourished. In 1958 Filipinos assumed leadership of the convention.

The Stone-Campbell Movement was still growing rapidly in Asia in the twenty-first century, but faced, as other Christians did, the challenges of being a minority in Asian cultures.



**FUNDING THE GOSPEL** Alexander Campbell himself signed this receipt for a \$100 donation to Stone-Campbell missions.

## DREAMING OF BRAZIL

Through the work of the United Christian Missionary Society, Jamaica and Puerto Rico boasted their own well-established Stone-Campbell churches by the 1920s. By the time other regions of Latin America were catching up in the 1960s, the Puerto Rican church had achieved full self-government as the Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) en Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico was not only first in self-governing, but was also a formative influence in planting churches in many Latin American countries.

In 1948 Lloyd David Sanders and his wife, Ruth, went to Brazil as missionaries—a dream Sanders had cherished since he was 12 years old. Settling in the Goias area, they began to plant churches. When Brasilia, the new capital of Brazil, was established in 1960, the Sanderses secured one of the first church sites there. Over 70 years of work resulted in over 300 churches, all led by Brazilian ministers. Today these churches



support Brazilian missionaries in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mexico, Portugal, the United States, and India. By the twenty-first century, Stone-Campbell churches were found in every Latin American country.

### “TO SAVE RHODESIA”

The Stone-Campbell Movement went to Africa in 1854 with the brief work of Alexander Cross in Liberia. But not until 1892 did Henry Elliott Tickle from the British **Churches of Christ** plant a mission that would last.

In 1897 John Sherriff of New Zealand spread the gospel in what would become Rhodesia and later Zimbabwe. Additionally, Garfield and Grace Todd, sent by the New Zealand Churches of Christ to Rhodesia in 1934, had political as well as religious impact. An educator and organizer, Todd became a citizen of his adopted country and eventually the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia in 1953. He said of his mission, “I had to save Rhodesia.”

The Eglise du Christ au Congo began when Ellsworth Farris was sent to the Congo in 1897. There he encountered three Congolese Christians, including Josepha, who despite palsy had developed a ministry at campfires where he witnessed “the love of Jesus Christ and salvation in his name.”

In 1909 churches in the Pacific Northwest of the United States raised funds for a steamship, the *S.S. Oregon*, for the Disciples of Christ Congo Mission. The *Oregon* traveled the Congo River for over 40 years. Its captain, John Inkema, wrote, “She is a Gospel boat so



**HOMEGROWN** Above: Missionary Domingo Rodriguez was born, baptized, educated, and ordained in Puerto Rico.

**TIMELESS GOSPEL** Left: An Indian preacher delivers an illustrated sermon.

that our people may know the God of love, our heavenly Father, that they may be released from the dreadful fear of spirits, the strong bonds of ignorance, of superstition, of sin.”

Missionaries from the United States continued to plant churches in Africa after World War II. In most cases, they quickly established schools to train indigenous leaders. As a result, Stone-Campbell churches are led by local people who in turn plant churches in their countries and in nearby nations. Today there may be more Stone-Campbell Christians in Africa than in the United States.

### GLOBAL UNITY

Stone-Campbell churches are found in 181 countries (see table at left, which counts both baptized members and children). Some churches have national or regional bodies. Most are strictly congregational.

The World Convention of Churches of Christ seeks to connect these churches and cooperate with Christians everywhere at the ecumenical table by building fellowship, understanding, and common purpose. Just as in the beginning, the hope is that the whole church can come together to take the whole gospel to the whole world. ☐

*Gary Holloway is executive director of the World Convention of Churches of Christ and the author of 28 books on preaching, discipleship, and the Bible.*

#### Countries with most adherents:

United States	3,234,869
Congo DR	1,052,000
Ghana	700,000
Zimbabwe	360,500
Philippines	324,000
Malawi	175,900
Nigeria	171,800
Zambia	140,400
Kenya	114,700
Ethiopia	100,000
South Korea	84,400
South Africa	83,400
Australia	68,800
Brazil	63,000
Mexico	58,900
Central African Republic	55,200
Guatemala	46,100
Papua New Guinea	35,300
India	34,500
Angola	26,200

#### Numbers by continent:

North America	3,254,109
Africa	3,064,860
Asia/Middle East	490,370
Latin America/ Caribbean	367,290
Oceania/Australia/ New Zealand	124,120
Europe	72,770



# “United we shall prevail”

THE GREAT COMMUNION OF 2009

Douglas A. Foster

**SORROW** over sometimes rancorous divisions, a growing sense of shared history and faith, and a commitment to reclaim a heritage of unity. These words might describe any Christians seeking reconciliation with brothers and sisters around the communion table. And that was the point.

## ONE CHURCH?

In 1809 Thomas Campbell called separated Christians to come together based on their shared salvation in Christ and not on doctrinal uniformity. His call became one of the founding documents of the **Stone-Campbell Movement**—the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association*: “The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, internationally, and constitutionally one . . . all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures . . . as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.”

Yet by the twentieth century, divisions had taken root in this movement founded on unity. Differing approaches to Scripture led to different practices of worship and church structure. Mutual accusations of unfaithfulness resulted. Each stream took its views around the world.

There had always been some communication. But by the late twentieth century, church leaders began new efforts to reconnect these estranged sisters and brothers: the Restoration Forums (1984–2007) and the Stone-Campbell Dialogue (1999–present). Scholars collaborated to produce new stories of the entire movement’s history.

One hundred years earlier in 1909, the **Disciples of Christ** had commemorated the centennial of Campbell’s words with a communion service at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh during its annual convention. Now leaders from the separated streams decided to hold another communion service—this time including Christians from all Stone-Campbell streams and beyond.

Beginning in 2005, they produced resources for planning “Great Communion” services worldwide—not



**THE BLOOD OF CHRIST** Stone-Campbell believers in Nashville, Tennessee, share in one of the Great Communion services.

simply as a nostalgic remembrance, but as an active re-appropriation of Thomas Campbell’s passion for unity in the twenty-first century.

Organizers released the book *One Church*, restating the *Declaration’s* main propositions in contemporary language and issuing calls for unity in the spirit of Thomas Campbell. People from Stone-Campbell churches around the world contributed to its writing.

On October 4, 2009—World Communion Sunday—hundreds of churches in the United States and 87 other countries celebrated the Great Communion.

In many instances, Christians from other traditions were invited to participate, signaling the intent of Thomas Campbell’s original appeal. New relationships were forged, not only among the streams, but beyond them as well.

The Great Communion was a call to share the Lord’s Supper with all people who shared a com-

mon commitment to Christ. It was a celebration of and recommitment to Campbell’s original call for unity in the *Declaration and Address*: “Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity; in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail.” ☒

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*“Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.”*  
(Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address)

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# A story all their own

WAS—AND IS—THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT “EVANGELICAL”?

*Paul M. Blowers*

**IT ALL DEPENDS** how broad the evangelical tent is. What could have been more evangelical than the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801, called by some “America’s Pentecost”? And by nineteenth-century standards, “evangelical” was a sufficiently broad label to include many Protestant movements and churches devoted to the power and authority of the New Testament gospel, the proactive conversion of unbelievers, personal discipleship, and missionary work. Stone-Campbell folks fit right in.

## ARE WE UNDER THIS TENT?

Yet, even then there were signs of uneasiness. Campbell and other leaders openly criticized what they saw as other churches undermining gospel simplicity—and Christian unity—by requiring confessions of theological creeds or principles for membership.

In particular, Campbell mounted significant assaults on the Reformed theology that would later form the mainstream of twentieth-century evangelicalism. He called the doctrine of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture—the idea that every word in the Bible is there because God had moved the biblical authors to produce it—an “ultraism.”

While the movement remained devoted to many cherished pieces of Reformed teaching, it rebuked the Calvinist “order of salvation,” in which God elected those whom he wanted to redeem. In their judgment, this reversed the apostolic pattern by claiming that the Holy Spirit had to regenerate sinners before they could be converted. The Campbells insisted that faith was primarily belief in gospel facts and trust in the person of Christ. They also said its true climax was baptism by immersion in water.

**UNDERWATER** *Above:* Central to Stone-Campbell tradition is baptism by immersion. *Below right:* Common Stone-Campbell “five-finger exercise” shows the full order of salvation.

Campbell was not alone. Frontier revivals and the preaching of Charles Finney were toning down the predestination emphasis within Calvinist groups.

But it is important to note that Campbell saw his own positions not as “human opinions” but as simply the truth of the Scriptures. Therefore, he consistently claimed that his interest was not to side with any “sect” but to restore pure New Testament Christianity.

Fast forward a hundred years and many thousands of members. The movement experienced its first internal division as the **Churches of Christ** parted company with the **Disciples of Christ** to safeguard fidelity to the “restoration of the ancient order” (see “North and South,” p. 19).

By the 1920s, while more progressive and liberal Disciples sought to acquire status within the emerging mainline Protestant “establishment,” conservative Disciples, the forerunners of today’s **Christian Churches/Churches of Christ**, grew increasingly frustrated with that agenda (see “Climbing into the mainline boat,” pp. 20–21).

American Protestantism just then was growing increasingly polarized between left and right—through the 1925 Scopes trial and larger fundamentalist-modernist conflicts of the 1920s and 30s (see *CH* issue 55, *The Monkey Trial and the Rise of Fundamentalism*). Conservative Disciples hoped to resist involvement,



but they quickly came under cultural pressure to forge alliances against liberalism. Their *Christian Standard's* coverage of the Scopes trial favored William Jennings Bryan's defense against evolution. Hardliners held to the King James Version of the Bible as the only appropriate translation and rebuked critical approaches that undermined biblical authority.

Some, like Rupert C. Foster (1888–1970) of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, even encouraged the establishment of Bible colleges, often in close proximity to large universities, to protect young people aspiring to ministry or mission work from the compromises and ill effects of a liberal university education.

By the 1930s and 40s, these Christian Churches (increasingly dropping the “Disciples” name) formed a fairly well-organized coalition with their own schools, their own “independent” missions (where missionaries were supported directly without the involvement, or interference, of missionary societies), their own journals, and even their own convention. As this coalition rode out the storms of twentieth-century culture, had it become “evangelical”?

## LET'S LOOK AT THE SCORECARD

Historian George Marsden identified a famous set of commitments as underlying fundamentalism, and by extension, modern evangelicalism. How did Stone-Campbell folks who had not followed the Disciples of Christ into the mainline measure up?

- **Commitment to biblical authority:** Many Stone-Campbell believers continued to maintain the “common sense” way of reading the Bible they had learned in the nineteenth century (see “Reading the Bible to enjoy the God of the Bible,” pp. 16–18). They looked to the Bible as a book of facts, evidences, and commands—a platform for restoring New Testament Christianity. Here they maintained common cause with many twentieth-century fundamentalists and evangelicals.

- **Reformed “orthodoxy”:** Though recognizing the movement’s Presbyterian heritage, these believers thoroughly opposed hardline Calvinism. They thought it had no serious scriptural warrant and that it denied the apostolic model of conversion and regeneration. Here, too, they had companions among the twentieth century’s more revivalistic churches.

- **Dispensationalism:** The Christian Churches upheld Alexander Campbell’s threefold model of biblical dispensations—Patriarchal (before the 10 Commandments), Mosaic (from Moses to Christ), and Christian. But they adamantly resisted later developments of



**CROSSING OVER** Above: James DeForest Murch, leader of a “clearinghouse” of conservative Disciples, became well known as an editor of *Christianity Today*.

**WHAT TO TEACH?** Above right: Creationism and evolution were debated at Stone-Campbell schools.

Dispensationalism like those of Cyrus Scofield, Arno Gaebelein, and Charles Ryrie—household names among some modern fundamentalists.

- **Premillennialism:** The Churches of Christ witnessed a “premillennial” movement within their ranks as early as 1915—the idea that Christ would return, gather the righteous, and begin a 1,000-year reign. But, by and large, many in the movement distanced themselves from debates about the Second Coming, considering them distractions from New Testament Christianity.

- **Holiness:** Many within the movement supported nineteenth-century moral crusades like temperance, but the “Holiness” theological tradition emerging from the Wesleyan heritage did not impact them as it did other evangelical churches.

After the 1942 founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and World War II, American evangelicalism became a movement with a capital “E.” It had vigor, adaptability, diversity, and organizational imagination. It challenged the more liberal core of mainline Protestantism and worked to expand international missions. The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, continuing to distance themselves from the Disciples’s re-invention of itself as a mainline denomination, followed suit. A key symbolic figure was James DeForest Murch (1892–1973), leader of the Christian Restoration Association (est. 1925) in Cincinnati.

Murch energetically sought to merge his “neo-restorationist” emphasis on recovering New Testament Christianity into the larger



MURCH—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER  
IS GENESIS MYTH?—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER  
HAND—IMAGE PROVIDED BY DOUG FOSTER



**“SIMPLE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY”** Thomas Campbell reads the *Declaration and Address* to his people in 1809.

“neo-Evangelical” movement (Billy Graham-friendly Christians in the mold of *Christianity Today* and Fuller and Gordon-Conwell seminaries; see CH 92: *America’s 20th-Century Evangelical Awakening*). In fact, he lost a position with the *Christian Standard* for opening communication both with progressive Disciples and with neo-Evangelicals. Shortly thereafter, having joined the NAE, Murch edited its magazine for 13 years, and then became managing editor of *Christianity Today* (1958–62). With the possible exception of Donald McGavran, conservative Disciple pioneer of the church growth movement, Murch was the most conspicuous Stone-Campbell believer to have “crossed over.”

Murch’s career signaled a new urgency to find common cause with outsiders. In his judgment, the “restoration plea” was still compelling and would speak to a broader audience. Many congregations and officials followed his lead, getting involved in neo-evangelical groups like the Billy Graham Crusades, Campus Crusade for Christ, and InterVarsity.

That wasn’t all. They used Sunday school materials from evangelical publishing houses like Baker, sent their ministers to evangelical seminaries like Fuller, and engaged speakers from the broader tradition at meetings. They joined evangelicals in the pro-life movement and in opposing same-sex marriage.

All the while, though, they kept some distance. They remained suspicious of approaches to conversion that focused on faith alone and not baptism. Some churches embraced inerrancy as a “restoration” principle, but others simply affirmed the Bible as “infallible” in revealing the way of salvation.

Evangelicalism also stood at a crossroads. Was it a clearly defined movement still bounded by the interests of the NAE, *Christianity Today*, and InterVarsity? Or had it become a much bigger tent, in which all variety of churches—from Reformed to Wesleyan to Anglican to emerging churches with no name at all—advanced the centrality of the cross under the authority of the Bible? Perhaps, once again, Stone-Campbell churches would fit right in.

Today, the convergence of the two movements is most visible practically in Stone-Campbell megachurches. Some have downplayed their identity for fear of putting off seekers or people from other traditions, and in doing so claim to be “restoring” the ideal of an “undenominational” Christianity. But they also embrace, like other megachurches, large staffs, multiple campuses, extensive programming and discipleship ministries, short-term missions, church-planting networks, and sophisticated technologies.

In the end, quite a few Stone-Campbell believers keep common cause with evangelicals in the twenty-first century, especially as “evangelicalism” has become more diversified and accommodating. But many insist that they have a unique history, a unique ethos, and a unique mission. The movement is still writing a story all its own. ■

*The central appeal of Campbell’s Declaration and Address was not an end in itself but a means to a larger goal: world evangelization.*

*Paul M. Blowers is Dean E. Walker Professor of Church History at Emmanuel Christian Seminary (Johnson City, TN).*



# Seeking the body of Christ

STONE-CAMPBELL BELIEVERS STILL SEEK “A BIBLE FAITH, A HOLY LIFE,” AND A UNIFIED CHURCH

W. Dennis Helsabeck Jr.



FROM THE MOMENT the Springfield Presbytery expressed its desire to “sink into union with the body of Christ at large,” the plea of Stone-Campbell Christians has always been that there be only one Church with a capital C—one body of Christ.

Members shy away from descriptions of their tradition as a sect or denomination (“church” with a small “c”). Instead, they identify as a “movement,” a community of concern and understanding within the larger body of Christians throughout the world.

The **Stone-Campbell Movement** seeks to serve the one church by grounding unity in common faith—“consisting of all those in every place who profess their faith in Christ,” as well as in common scriptural practice—“obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures.”

Recognizing that the limitations of human reasoning prevent any Christian’s perfect understanding of all things in Scripture, the movement still puts its shoulder to the great, continuous, unifying task: restoring the church that was in the mind of Christ and the apostles, found in Scripture.

## THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE

While unity and restoration are critical, they cannot be ends in themselves. The movement sees them as means to the end: that the world might know Christ. Thus Stone-Campbell Christians have historically emphasized cross-cultural missions.

Alexander Campbell once suggested that the best missionary approach would involve a church of 20 people going to a country “where they would support themselves like the natives, wear the same garb, adopt the country as their own,” and “sit down and hold forth in word and deed the saving truth, not deriding the gods nor the religion of the natives, but allowing their own works and example to speak for their religion.”

The movement also offers to the church worldwide a high view of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These precious, authentic symbols—death, burial, resurrection, participation in the body and blood

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“We have felt most successful when we’ve had a clear understanding of God’s unique calling for our church. . . . Our heritage in the Church of Christ is an uncluttered, simple approach to faith. We have little ritual. We emphasize open Bible study. We downplay hierarchy; people here feel that every member is a minister. Yet I can honestly say we don’t feel as though every church has to offer that. We see the place of the high-church tradition, with the mystery of worship, and if somebody wants that, they won’t be happy at our church.”

—Max Lucado, “The Applause of Heaven and Earth,” *Leadership*, July 1992

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of Christ, immersion, weekly observance of the Supper—are vital to all Christians.

This high view coexists with a belief in the “royal priesthood” of all believers. Any Christian may be called on at any time to preside at the Lord’s table or to baptize the penitent believer. Thus each congregation can prayerfully and freely order its own corporate life.

Finally, aware of both its strengths and weaknesses, the movement frequently engages in lively self-examination of its story and principles by scholars and laity alike. This sometimes involves a recognition of how imperfectly the movement has carried out its own principles. But it also involves a continued commitment to them. ☐

W. Dennis Helsabeck Jr. is associate professor emeritus of history at Milligan College in Tennessee and a coauthor of *Renewal for Mission—A Concise History of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ*.

# Recommended resources

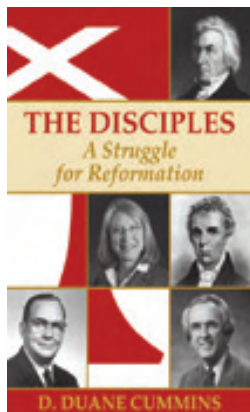
HERE ARE A FEW BOOKS, WEBSITES, AND PAST MAGAZINE ISSUES RECOMMENDED BY CHI STAFF AND BY THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS TO HELP YOU THROUGH STONE-CAMPBELL HISTORY

## BOOKS



- William Baker, ed., *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*. Essays by Stone-Campbell authors and responses by leading evangelicals on where the movements diverge and where they find common cause. The second volume focuses on what the two groups think about the Trinity, Christ, the Lord's Supper, the Second Coming, and the Scriptures.

- Glenn Thomas Carson, Douglas A. Foster, and Clinton J. Holloway, *One Church: A Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address*. A history of Campbell's groundbreaking document and a plea for unity in the twenty-first century.



- D. Duane Cummins, *The Disciples: A Struggle for Reformation*. A history of the one stream of the movement that, quite self-consciously, re-invented itself as a mainline Protestant denomination.

- Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, and D. Newell Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*. Over 700 entries—and lots of pictures—bring alive the people, places, and debates

that have shaped the movement for nearly two centuries.

- Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches*. How the streams of the movement related and separated over the years.

- Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Focuses on the broad context of early American religion, a time when "common people became powerful actors on the religious scene."

- Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. Sets the movement in the context of the American impulses toward primi-

tivism and restoration of the "ancient order of things."

- George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. Gives a thorough picture of what was "in the air" intellectually in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American religion.

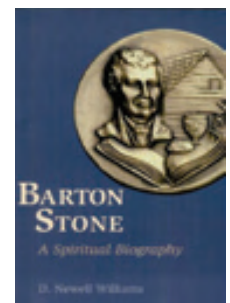
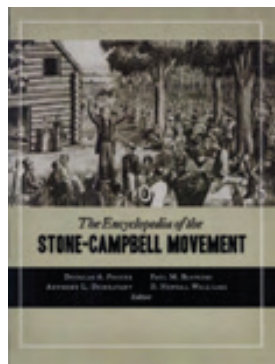
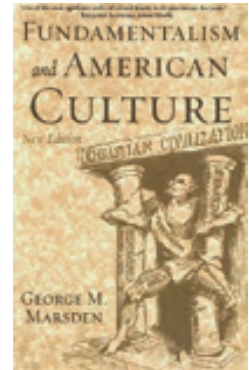
- Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. The standard biography of Campbell and a good history of the early movement. Also of interest is a biography penned by Campbell's second wife, Selina Huntington Campbell, *Home Life and Reminiscences of Alexander Campbell*.

- Various authors, *Renewing God's People: A Concise History of Churches of Christ; Renewal for Mission: A Concise History of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ; and Renewing Christian Unity: A Concise History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. This trilogy of books on the history and thought of the three North American streams is a "short course" in the unique stories of each group.

- D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography*. The life and theological struggles of Stone as he sought to find a way to "sink into union with the Body of Christ at large."

- D. Newell Williams, Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds., *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History*. How a quintessentially American movement spread worldwide.

- Eva Jean Wrather, ed. D. Duane Cummins, *Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom: A Literary Biography*. A thorough journey through Campbell's life and his writings.





## WEBSITES

Full links to all of these resources will be found in the online version of the magazine, [www.christianhistorymagazine.org](http://www.christianhistorymagazine.org).

- Both the “Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery” and the *Declaration and Address* are online.

- The website of the Disciples of Christ is [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org). The other two streams do not maintain unified websites, although there are many sites for individual churches and movement-related schools. The World Convention of Churches of Christ, which seeks cooperation among all streams of the movement globally, is at [www.worldconvention.org](http://www.worldconvention.org).

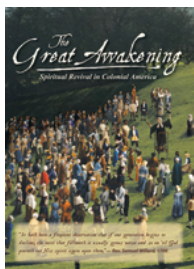
- Much work has been done on preserving the history of the movement by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, [www.discipleshistory.org](http://www.discipleshistory.org) (check out the colorful and entertaining online exhibits!) and the Center for Restoration Studies (CRS) at Abilene Christian University, [www.bible.acu.edu/crs](http://www.bible.acu.edu/crs). The CRS also hosts many, many texts and pictures relating to the movement compiled by Dr. Hans Rollmann.

- If you think you might have Stone-Campbell ancestors, visit “Restoration History,” with its extensive listing of genealogical resources along with biographies, articles, and interesting tidbits at [www.therestorationmovement.com](http://www.therestorationmovement.com).

- Many materials relating to the Great Communion (p. 37) are at [www.GreatCommunion.org](http://www.GreatCommunion.org). The Abilene, Texas, Great Communion service is available on YouTube, and you can also check out a map on Google showing a few of the places that celebrated the Great Communion.

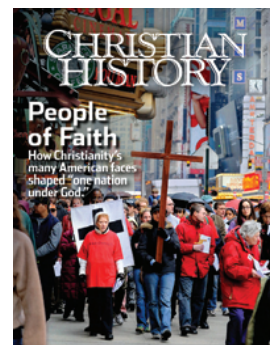
## RELATED DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO

Several DVDs about American history and American Christianity are helpful in understanding the contexts that gave birth to the Stone-Campbell Movement:



- *The Christian Story* (vol. 4, *The Church in America*)
- *Gospel of Liberty*
- *The Great Awakening*
- *People of Faith*
- *Proof through the Night*
- *Saints and Strangers*
- *We the People: Character of a Nation*
- *Wrestling with God*

The image on page 25 of *CH* issue 105 is incorrectly identified as Origen. It is actually a mosaic of John Chrysostom. *Christian History* regrets the error.



## PAST CHRISTIAN HISTORY ISSUES

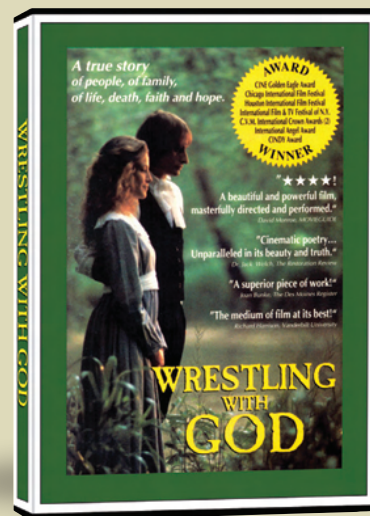
Back issues telling the story of the American church and particularly relevant to the themes of this issue include

- 23: *Spiritual Awakenings in North America*
- 45: *Camp Meetings and Circuit Riders: Frontier Revivals*
- 92: *America's 20th-Century Evangelical Awakening*
- 102: *People of Faith*

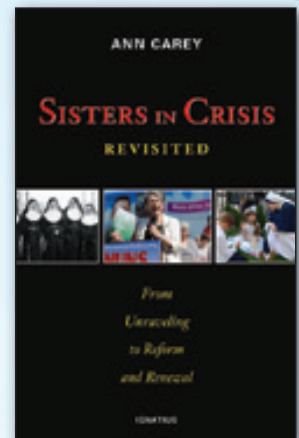
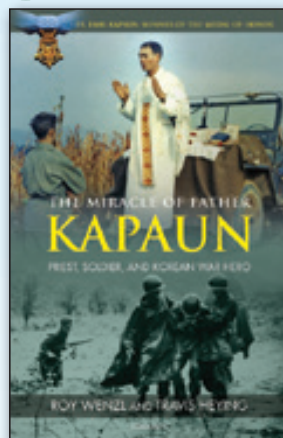
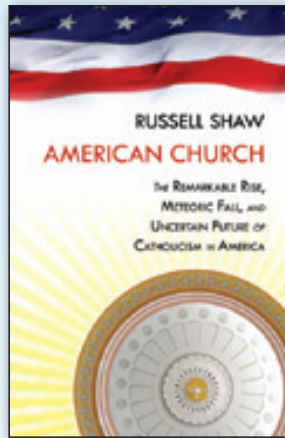
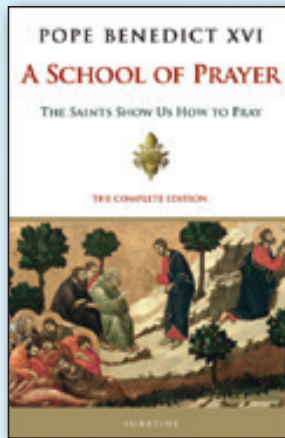
Back issues of *Christian History* can be read in full at [www.christianhistorymagazine.org](http://www.christianhistorymagazine.org).

DVDs and print copies of many back issues of *Christian History* magazine are available for purchase at [www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/storefront](http://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/storefront).

Vision Video has recently released *Wrestling with God*, a DVD about the life of Alexander Campbell.



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## AMERICAN CHURCH — *The Remarkable Rise, Meteoric Fall, and Uncertain Future of Catholicism in America* — Russell Shaw

Has the cultural assimilation of American Catholics been a blessing or a curse for the church? Cultural assimilation, championed by Cardinal James Gibbons in the nineteenth century, conferred many benefits on Catholics. Their absorption into the secular culture of America, however, now threatens the Catholic identity of the faithful and their institutions, including schools and hospitals. *American Church* is a richly documented analysis of the assimilation process over two centuries. Colorful characters and dramatic incidents abound including the anti-Catholicism that arose around the presidential campaigns of Al Smith and John Kennedy, and the numerous intra-church conflicts that have divided Catholics since Vatican II. The author offers thought-provoking suggestions about what the church needs to do in the face of a decline that threatens its very survival.

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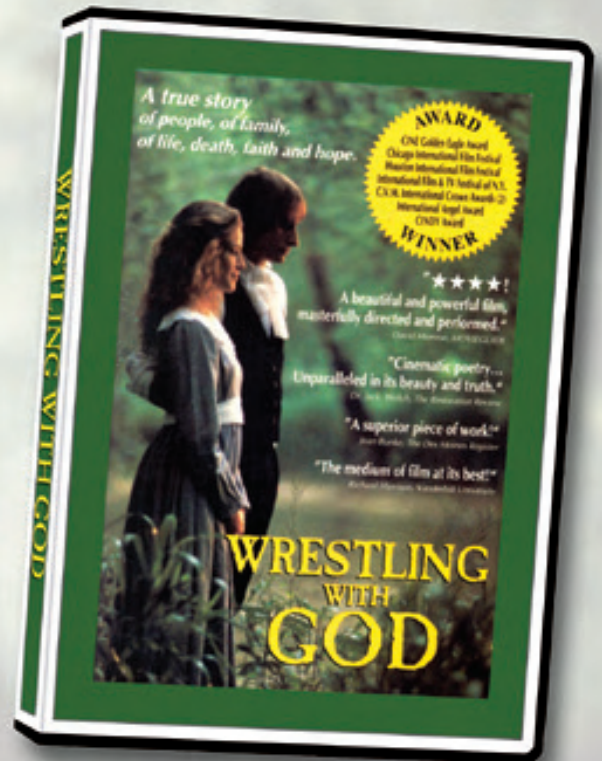
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