

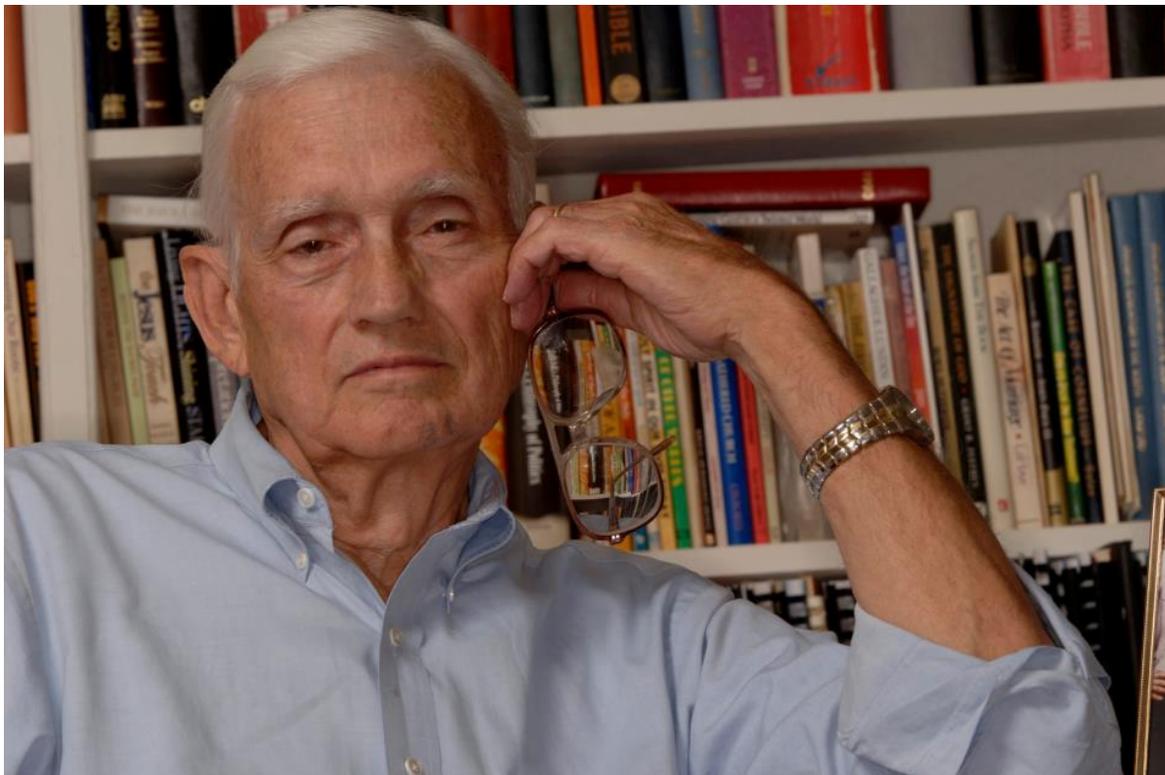
Preface

Among Churches of Christ, the late Dr. Thomas A. Langford was one of the outstanding authorities on the Restoration Movement. He wrote a series of articles on the subject in the periodical *Gospel Tidings*, which appear on the following pages.

We thank his son Dr. David Langford for permission to reproduce these articles on this website. They will be published later in a book, along with a brief biography of Dr. Thomas Langford.

Churches of Christ, Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ all have a common heritage in the Restoration Movement which arose in the early 19th Century. We will understand better the issues of today, as well as who we are, if we understand the history of the movement.

B. Shelburne



Dr. Thomas A. Langford

1: The Restoration Ideal

This is the first of a series of articles having to do with the principle of “restoration.” Most of the readers of this magazine are more or less familiar with what is called the Restoration Movement and its plea for turning away from human creeds and institutions and for recovering the freshness and integrity of first-century Christianity. This movement began about the first of the nineteenth century and sought to go back to the Bible, sweeping away the theological debris that had accumulated through the centuries, beclouding the simplicity and beauty of Christ’s teaching. This series will not, however, concern itself exclusively with that movement in itself, though it is supremely interesting; rather, we will focus on the scriptural principle which made the movement “move.” We may be losing sight of this principle in our temptation to assume a place as just another denomination and to develop uniform “brotherhood positions.” We must continually return to the Bible, measuring every position and practice, not in terms of the brotherhood, but by the standard of the Book.

It will thus be the purpose of these meditations to talk about “restoration,” not the restoration “of” the church, for the gates of hell have never prevailed against it, but restoration to the church of its primitive ideals and doctrinal patterns. Our study will rest on the conviction that the new covenant scriptures contain not only the record of the establishment and growth of the church of the first century, but also the spiritual constitution for the church in every age. Our further conviction is that the divisions and impotence of Christendom today arise from failures to accept and implement the simple “way” of the New Testament scriptures. Human wisdom and promotional ingenuity may seem for a time to fulfill the good intentions of eager Christians, but it will finally be evident that no “improvement” upon the apostolic way is possible. The true significance of restoration thought is in its attitude toward the Word and in its commitment to the final authority of that Word in all aspects of the church’s life and work.

One of the mottoes of the early years of the movement was, “We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.” That was a noble aim and worthy of our acceptance today. It is in line with the Apostle Peter’s admonition, “If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God.” (1 Peter 4:11).

Our next column will deal with some historical roots of the Restoration principle, helping us to see the validity of that principle for today. Since none of us can appropriately claim that we are perfect, or that the restoration process is complete, it behooves us to continue the cry, “away with human wisdom; back to the Bible for faith and practice!” We invite all who are interested in restoration to study with us.

2: Restoration Roots

The roots of the Restoration Movement reach back through Luther's time, though the Hussites and Waldenses, through the earliest rebellions against Catholic hierarchy, into the time of the apostles themselves. Restoration is, in fact, a concept even older than the apostles, arising out of a common hope of Israel. So often plagued by defeat and foreign domination, the Jews continually longed for the restoration of golden times (Lamentations 5:19-22). Their prophecies encouraged this longing (Acts 1:6). When Jesus came down from the mount of transfiguration, he cautioned his disciples not to tell of the vision they had witnessed, "until the son of man is raised from the dead." The disciples then asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He replied, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things (see Malachi 4:6), but I tell you Elijah has already come, and they did not know him." The disciples then understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11-13).

John's ministry, then, was a ministry of restoration. He came to call men back to God, from whom they had drifted. And he heralded the Messiah who would truly restore men to God by his ministry of reconciliation. That Messiah continually preached a message of restoration, and, after his death, continued his work through the Holy Spirit, given to his apostles to equip them to be his ambassadors, reconciling men to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Their message was "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold the new has come." All that was lost in the first Adam could now be restored in the second.

The book of Daniel tells of the captivity of God's people and of the long suffering they endured because of their unfaithfulness. But the book is also filled with hope as Daniel received visions and prophesied of the restoration of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25) and its sanctuary (8:14). This almost continuous cry of Israel throughout the Old Testament is "Restoration!" David says, "Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let thy face shine that we may be saved!" "Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away thy indignation toward us!" (Psalm 85:4).

Thus the roots of the restoration principle penetrate deep into antiquity and the principle remains valid so long as God's kingdom is among imperfect men. I sometimes hear brethren today arguing against the principle, saying that the restoration ideal is impractical and will never work. I suspect they are talking about something else besides restoration; perhaps they are thinking of the sectarian and divisive movements which have plagued the Church of Christ in the name of restoration. The principle of restoration itself is as valid as the Bible (inasmuch as it is a Biblical concept) and must always be the course of all those who seek to establish the way of God again wherever the wisdom of man has corrupted and obscured the way.

Our next column will pursue the restoration effort into the time of the great reformers. For although they are sometimes distinguished from each other, restoration and reformation have much in common.

3: The Great Reformation

We have noted that the nineteenth century Restoration effort of which we are heirs had its roots back far beyond that century. We might even say that it was at work in apostolic times as the New Testament writers pointed out the error of Christians of their own time. Paul withstood Peter early in the history of the church because of the latter's support of the racism of the Jews. John wrote to correct the errors of the Gnostics in his epistles, and the Book of Revelation contains instruction to the churches designed to restore them to their original ground.

Shortly after the death of the apostles, other trends arose to carry the church away from her original simplicity and purity. The occasional voices which were raised against this drifting apostasy were not successful in preventing it. Power centers developed and from the simple congregational autonomy of the first century the church moved gradually into the superecclesiasticism of the Roman Catholic Church by the sixth century. From then to the twelfth century, there was little real challenge to the strange conglomerate of paganism, oriental mysticism, and Christianity which was the Catholic Church, in both of its major divisions. One can find fleeting references to individuals and groups throughout this period who protested and in some cases persisted for a time, but their influence was relatively insignificant in relation to the progress and power of the Roman church.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Albigenses (named after Albi, a city in southern France) and Waldenses (after Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyons, France) arose in protest against Catholicism and its worldliness. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there arose Wycliffe in England and Huss in Bohemia. Wycliffe was an Oxford scholar who began the first systematic translation of the Bible into English, arguing for the access of every Christian to the sacred scriptures. Huss translated Wycliffe's work and circulated it throughout the Balkan countries. The martyrdom of these men raised a tide of sentiment against Catholicism, which resulted in the Great Reformation. Wycliffe has often been called the "Morning Star of the Reformation" and there is no doubt that our debt to him is beyond measure.

There were many variations of the sixteenth century Reformation under Luther, Calvin, and others, but their emphases may be summed up under a few common doctrines: 1) the authority of the Scripture, 2) the right of every Christian to study the Scripture, 3) salvation by faith rather than works, and 4) the priesthood of all believers. The reforming tide swept over Europe and, through the Puritans, to America. It was not a unified movement and culminated in a number of sects: the Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia, the Presbyterians in Switzerland and Scotland, the Anabaptists in Holland, and the Anglicans in England. But the doctrines they held in common have become the heritage of millions, including those of us today who seek to be unsectarian Christians, with the Bible only as our guide.

4: John Milton

Many think that the Restoration Movement was begun by the Campbells at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although their work did give it a mighty impetus, there were strong currents of restoration thought much earlier which are continually being discovered by historians of the movement. As a professor of English, one of my own special interests is the work of John Milton who lived in the seventeenth century. I have been re-reading Milton recently in connection with a course I teach at Texas Tech. To most of us Milton may be known only for his *Paradise Lost* and perhaps the *Areopagitica*, his treatise on freedom of expression. But Milton was a Puritan and very much involved in the religious controversy of his day. He was appointed a Secretary to the Council of State under Cromwell after King Charles was deposed and executed, and he fulfilled his role with his usual religious devotion. His *De Doctrina Christiana* (addressed “To All the Churches of Christ”) reflects a painstaking study on Christian Doctrine which Milton undertook because he felt that every Christians held an obligation to “work out his own salvation.”

I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God; but on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone... I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Holy Scriptures themselves... I so far satisfied myself in the prosecution of this plan as at length to trust that I had discovered, with regard to religion, what was a matter of belief and what only a matter of opinion... For my own part, I adhere to the Holy Scriptures alone—I follow no other heresy or sect.

Milton’s arguments on a number of points—distinction between the Law and the Gospel, Christian liberty, predestination, church government, the clergy—were sufficiently at variance with received doctrine in his day to make their resemblance to the teaching of American Restorers rather remarkable. Those of you who are aware of the difference between Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell on the nature of the Trinity will be interested to know that, as far as I can tell, Stone’s views are identical with those of Milton. (Both are nearer right, I think, than Campbell’s). It is on the subject of the clergy, however, that Milton reminds us most of Campbell. In his *Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty*, Milton wrote that he would

Not cease to hope through the mercy and grace of Christ, the head and husband of his church, that England shortly is to belong, neither to see patriarchal nor see prelatical, but to the faithful feeding and disciplining of that ministered order which the blessed apostles constituted throughout the churches; and this, I shall essay to prove, can be no other than that of presbyters and deacons.

Milton insisted that the modern clergy was a perverted human distinction,

That the title of clergy St. Peter gave to all God's people, till Pope Hyginus and the succeeding prelates took it from them, appropriating that name to themselves and their priests only; and condemning the rest of God's inheritance to an injurious and alienate condition of laity, they separated from them by local partitions in the churches, through their gross ignorance and pride imitating the old temple, and excluded the members of Christ from the property of being members, the bearing of orderly and fit offices in the ecclesiastical body, as if they had meant to sew up that Jewish veil which Christ by his death on the cross rent in sunder.

Many other references might be given to show some of the currents of Puritan thought which made their impact on reform in England, but these suffice for the present purpose of showing that the Restoration had roots in times far earlier than our American pioneers.

5: John Locke

Another Englishman whose contribution to Restoration thought has not always been fully appreciated is John Locke. The most significant English philosopher of the Seventeenth Century, perhaps of all time, he is particularly noted for his theories of knowledge, but he also had much to say about religion and was called “the Christian philosopher” by Campbell and his contemporaries.

Those familiar with the famous *Declaration and Address* of Thomas Campbell will find special interest in Locke’s “Letter Concerning Toleration” an essay arguing for liberty of conscience in an age which insisted on religious conformity. Note the following statement:

Since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them here, by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the condition of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in words, to be necessary to salvation.

This statement conforms closely with Campbell’s insistence that nothing should be made a condition of Christian fellowship which the Lord has not made a condition of salvation. (Both Locke and Campbell were concerned about all the creedal formulations which were being posed as the measure of acceptance.)

Locke preceded the American Restorers in their views on clericalism, on distinctions between Law and Gospel, on the church as a “free and voluntary society,” and on what constitutes heresy. He defined heresy as an “ill-grounded separation in ecclesiastical communion made about things not necessary.” Where common opinion both then and now defines heresy as any unorthodox doctrinal position, Locke correctly recognized that it is not the position held (in matters of interpretation) which constitutes heresy, but the insistence upon that position to the point of schism and division of brethren. A man is not condemned for being wrong in his opinions; heresy arises, however, when he creates a party, a sect, around those opinions and thereby divides the Body of Christ.

Thomas Campbell presented his son Alexander a copy of Locke’s *Essay on Toleration* at the latter’s seventeenth birthday. Walter Scott, the “Golden Oracle” of the Restoration Movement, was educated at the University of Edinburgh, the seat of Locke’s influence. According to Louis Cochrane, in his history of our movement (*Captives of the Word*), Scott and Campbell “were as one in agreeing with Locke in his assumption that the New Testament is the only court of appeal, and that Reason is its only arbiter” –not churchmen or councils. Locke opposed that aspect of Calvinism which held that saving faith was a sovereign gift of God, and that no man could exercise it unless he belonged to the “elect.” It was largely Locke’s influence which helped the Restorers to throw off the Calvinist yoke and see clearly the Biblical teaching that saving faith is simply man’s response to the testimony of God’s grace, the gospel. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

I mention Locke in this review of reformers partly because in our time he has most frequently been connected with the American Restoration by those who feel that his rational philosophy tended to influence Campbell and others away from emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's heart. I am convinced that this is a misunderstanding of both Locke and Campbell and that this is a subject which needs considerable further research. Just now, however, I am interested merely in noting Locke's influence upon cardinal points of Restoration thought. There is no denying that it was highly significant.

6: British Roots

By the middle of the eighteenth century we come to movements in Great Britain which may be more clearly identified with Restoration ideals, and the purpose of reproducing the church of apostolic times. John Glas is one of the important names from this period. He withdrew from the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) because of his objection to its alignment with the state and because he believed that congregations ought to be independent and at liberty to follow their own understanding of Scripture. Glas and his followers rejected all human creeds and instituted weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Robert Sandeman, Glas's son-in-law, was probably the most significant man in the movement. A scholar whose theological works were read widely, he stressed a reasonable approach to religion and played down emotion. Probably the most famous man who belonged to the Glasite churches, however, was Michael Faraday, the scientist.

The Glasites were effusionists at first, but Archibald McLean and Robert Carmichael, Glasite ministers, began to immerse after the apostolic order and their churches came to be known as Scotch Baptists. These churches were the fore-runners of the Churches of Christ in Great Britain and remarkably similar to the first Restoration churches in America. Yet they date back to 1765, almost a generation before the birth of Alexander Campbell. This point is worth remembering when the charge is made that Campbell was the founder of the Church of Christ.

It is with the Haldane brothers of Scotland, however, that we come to direct connections with Alexander Campbell and influences that were carried to America. The Haldanes were wealthy men who supported a variety of religious causes. Their churches were congregational and the result of a conscious effort to restore the exact pattern of New Testament churches in work, worship, ordinances, and ministry. They defended infant baptism at first, but eventually gave it up. They practiced weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Alexander Campbell came in contact with the Haldane churches in 1809 during the year he spent in Glasgow University after being shipwrecked with his family on the way to America from Ireland. He was twenty-one at the time.

One distinction of the Haldane churches was their emphasis on mutual ministry. William Ballantine published a *Treatise on the Elder's Office*, insisting on a plurality of elders in every church and mutual exhortation in the Lord's Day assemblies. Mutual ministry came to be a hallmark of Restoration churches both in Great Britain and America. With time, this emphasis slackened in America, but it has lasted insistently in Britain's churches down to the present time. There has been little interest in British churches of Christ in the development of a professional ministry. Those churches have sustained no Christian colleges, no seminaries, or preacher schools. This may explain why the movement has never flourished numerically on that side of the Atlantic, though one cannot help but feel that British churches have preserved, better than American, the character of work and worship of the primitive churches of the New Testament.

Our next column will deal further with British aspects of the movement and with the work of David King, probably the most outstanding British preacher among the churches during the nineteenth century.

7: The Work of David King

It was not until 1833 that Churches of Christ in Great Britain seem to have established contact with their American counterparts. In that year, an American disciple informed some British brethren of Alexander Campbell and his work. They began to read his publications and soon established a British *Millennial Harbinger* to circulate his writings. From that time on, relations between churches on both sides of the Atlantic were cordial. In 1847, when Campbell visited Great Britain, his reception was warm and appreciative. By that year there were at least eighty churches throughout the British Isles and well over 2,000 members.

Four years ago, Nellie and I were privileged to spend some time in Scotland and England in connection with my professional interest in Lord Tennyson, the Victorian Poet Laureate, and a meeting of the Tennyson Society in the Lake District of Northern England. Our plane landed in Glasgow, where we picked up a rental car and drove to the University of Glasgow for a brief visit and then on to Edinburgh, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities in the world and famous for its great thinkers (e.g., John Locke and Thomas Carlyle). For the flight over from New York I took along and read for the first time the *Memoir of David King*. I had been aware of his work before but knew little of the details. He has been frequently referred to as the Alexander Campbell of Great Britain. It was, in fact, the reading of Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* which convinced King of his need for immersion. He was baptized in 1842 in London and that city became the seat of his first successful evangelistic work. The church which received him is regarded as the oldest congregation of the Restoration movement in England. It continues to this day in Kentish Town, just north of London's central core, under the leadership of Brother Scott, a great old patriarch who loves the history of our movement. We were privileged to worship there on Lord's Day with about fifty of the saints. They still practice mutual ministry. Their service was simple, refreshing, and scriptural. They have no Sunday School, in the usual sense, though there is a teaching program directed toward the youth.

David King preached all over England as his power came to be known. By 1852, ten years after his immersion, there were seventy-six churches in England associated in the aims of Restoration. King moved the center of his work from London to Birmingham, the industrial heart of England, finding that the working classes responded most readily to his message. The church which he established in Birmingham still meets. A young man from that congregation spent Christmas holidays in our home three years ago. He had come up from Abilene where he was completing his masters degree at ACU, preparatory to returning to Africa and mission work in Zambia. He was a welcome source of information about the movement in Great Britain, and David King in particular. I was particularly interested in his reaction to the differences between American and British churches. He felt that although British churches have profited in some respects from American influence, that influence in most cases has been more harmful than helpful. He saw the American churches as more materialistic, more program and numbers oriented, and generally more sectarian in their outlook and practice. Sunday Schools, the modern pastor system,

individual communion cups, and the tendency to divide over these issues—these are things that he feels the Americans have exported to Churches of Christ in Great Britain.

It is a pity, perhaps, that most of us do not know more of men like David King and of our brethren in Great Britain. We could learn from their non-sectarian spirit.

8: American Beginnings

We come now to reflect on the beginnings of Restoration in America. To a certain extent the principle of restoration was a factor in the founding of our country. We are all familiar with the fact that many of our early colonists came because of the desire for greater freedom in the exercise of their religious convictions. The Puritans in particular were dissatisfied with what they felt to be corruptions in the Church of England and came to America in order to practice what they believed the Bible taught in the way of church order and personal life. But they were basically Calvinist in theology and practice, and little more willing to grant others religious freedom than were their oppressors in England.

With some notable exceptions, religion in America during the 1700s seems to have been characterized by party spirit and sectarian strife. Each denomination vigorously promoted its particular creed, excluding all who would not conform. Such sectarianism made a farce of Christianity in the minds of many and contributed to a period of relative decline in the influence of religion on the population in general. By the end of the 18th century less than ten percent of the people held membership in any denomination. Exceptions to this condition were in two general “revivals,” the “Great Awakening” of the 1730s and the “Second Awakening” around 1800, which touched the lives of thousands and cut across denominational lines. But neither of these revivals did much to disturb the patterns of sectarianism, or to lead the denominations to place the Bible before their creeds.

Two groups should be noted here in our search for the early roots of Restoration in America, one among Methodists in Virginia and the other among Baptists in New England. In Virginia James O’Kelley objected to the adoption of the Episcopal form of church government as the Methodists withdrew from the Anglican Church in 1784. He continued to serve as a presiding elder for a time, but in August of 1793, O’Kelley and those sharing his convictions met at Piney Grove and drafted a resolution calling on Bishop Francis Asbury to call a meeting to “form a permanent plan for peace and union, taking the Holy Scriptures for our guide.” Asbury refused, and on Christmas Day, 1793, the dissidents formed a new body, calling it the “Republican Methodist Church,” in keeping with their view that a more democratic form of church government ought to prevail. The following year, the new church dropped “Republican Methodist” in favor of the name “Christian” and agreed to follow the scriptural order for church government by ordaining elders in each church. By 1809 the membership had grown to 20,000, with congregations scattered over several states, each claiming the Bible as their only creed and wearing only the name Christian.

In New England, quite independently of the O’Kelly movement, a “Christian Church” was established in Lyndon, Vermont in 1801. Abner Jones and Elias Smith were leaders who had become dissatisfied with Calvinist doctrine in the Baptist churches. Concluding that all theological “systems” were divisive, they argued that local churches should be free and independent of all outside authority, submitting only to Jesus as head of the church. In

1808, Elias Smith began publishing the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* and fraternal relations were established with the Christian Churches of the South.

Neither of these groups fully accomplished the Restoration ideal, but they were on the way. It is interesting to note that in so many different places, and quite independent of each other, groups of Christians have been able to discover for themselves the futility of human creeds and the complete adequacy of the Bible as a basis for freedom and action in Christ. The story of the O'Kelleys and Smiths and Joneses has been repeated many times over throughout the world wherever honest men have tired of human innovations and ecclesiastical tyranny, and sought once again for integrity and vitality in the simple Christianity of the Bible. May the Father help us all to be ever cautious of human traditions and to keep measuring all that we believe and practice by the divine standard, the Bible.

9: Barton W. Stone

Another great early pioneer was Barton W. Stone, who came from North Carolina to Kentucky in 1796. Although ordained as a Presbyterian preacher, he had serious misgivings about the Westminster Confession of Faith of that denomination. When asked, at the time of his ordination by the Transylvania Presbytery on October 4, 1798, if he accepted this creed, he replied, “I do, as far as I see it consistent with the word of God.” He continued preaching at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, and was a part of the great revival which spread through that area under the preaching of James McGready. This revival, known in history as the “Second Awakening,” embraced people from different denominations and was characterized by intense emotionalism and physical “exercises.” Stone reported that “all united in prayer—all preached the same things—free salvation urged upon all by faith and repentance.” The climax of the general revival came at the Cane Ridge camp meeting attended by an estimated 25,000 and continuing night and day for six days.

There was strong opposition to the revival within the Presbyterian leadership. “Free salvation to all” was not thought consistent with the doctrines of predestination and limited atonement. The revivalists were charged with heresy and plans were made for a trial before the Synod of Kentucky. Before the trial could be held, however, five of the Presbyterian preachers involved, including Stone, announced that they were rejecting the authority of the Synod and establishing their own organization, the “Springfield Presbytery.” Stone wrote a part of the defense for their action, arguing that portions of the Westminster Confession were not in harmony with Scripture. The Springfield Presbytery was short-lived, however, as the men soon saw that there was no more authority for their organization than the one they had left.

The document proclaiming the dissolution of their organization is the now famous “*Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.*” Included in the document were such statements as the following:

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.

We will, 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.

We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Since they were disbanding the Springfield Presbytery, the men determined to call themselves simply “Christians.” Stone began signing his name “Barton W. Stone, E.C.C.,” the “E.C.C.” denoted “Elder in the Church of Christ.” Local congregations were more generally called Christian Churches, however, though throughout the 19th century Church of Christ and Christian Church were both used. Although Stone and others still practiced sprinkling for baptism at the time, in 1807 they changed to immersion, in keeping with their avowed intention to follow the Bible in all things. The movement grew rapidly through several states, and by 1830 numbered some 20,000, not including the members of the O’Kelly group along the eastern seaboard. Stone began a journal in 1826 called the *Christian Messenger*, which enhanced communication and served to unite the scattered forces of the reformation movement. He also operated schools successfully in Lexington and Georgetown, Kentucky.

Barton W. Stone is thus another in that long line of illustrious Christians who led the way back to the Bible. While our own faithfulness to Christ does not depend on such men, it is good that we recognize their heroic faith and accomplishment. We are the better for their having preceded us.

10: Thomas Campbell

Thomas Campbell was born in Ireland in 1763, the son of a man who had fought the French under General James Wolfe in Canada in 1759. Although Archibald Campbell was a Catholic at the time, and later died a staunch member of the Church of England, Thomas joined the Presbyterian church and became a pastor of the congregation at Ahorey, in northern Ireland. The Presbyterians were beset with divisions and internal strife, so much so that it had become difficult to distinguish adequately all of the various factions. Thomas belonged to the "Old Light Anti-Burgher" faction of the Seceder branch of the National Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Because he was concerned about this unhealthy, sectarian atmosphere he decided to seek a freer spiritual climate in the New World. Consequently, in April, 1807, he embarked from Londonderry, leaving his wife and six children in the care of the oldest son, Alexander. His plan was that they should join him later, after he had found a place for them.

Thomas arrived in Philadelphia on May 13, found denominational officials in session there, and was promptly assigned to a district in western Pennsylvania as a circuit preacher. He soon found that his American brethren were no more tolerant than their Irish counterparts. Because he invited Presbyterians from another branch to join with him in communion, he was brought to formal trial by his brethren and suspended from his duties. This experience convinced him that all human creeds were divisive and ought therefore to be abolished as tests of fellowship. He preached wherever he had opportunity that all who believed on Christ could be saved, without regard for denominational affiliation. Calvinism and its doctrine of the "elect" was so thoroughly entrenched in the churches of the day that Thomas Campbell's preaching of free salvation to all was thought to be heretical.

Campbell found many people who, like himself, were weary of sectarian strife and eager for freedom in Christ. They did not want to establish a separate church, but in order to encourage fellowship and the preaching of a non-sectarian gospel, they organized in 1809 the "Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania." Thomas Campbell was the natural leader of the association and he took upon himself the task of explaining their aims to the world. The resulting document was entitled *Declaration and Address* and was adopted by the association on September 7, 1809. An impassioned plea for Christian liberty and the sufficiency of the Scriptures, it was destined to become, after the Bible itself, the most significant document in the history of the Restoration Movement.

Thomas Campbell was, by nature, a gentle and spiritual man. His son, Alexander, was more aggressive and possessed greater oratorical powers, and consequently became better known. But many historians feel that the father was the guiding spirit and the real source of the ideas which motivated the movement. The son's exceptional writing and teaching ability popularized the restoration principle and effected its greatest success. But Thomas Campbell deserves more study than he has received and we will examine his *Declaration and Address* in our next column.

11: Declaration and Address

The following is a condensation of the thirteen propositions of the *Declaration and Address*, written by Thomas Campbell and adopted by the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, September 7, 1809. The propositions were followed by a hundred-page address pleading for Christian unity. Whoever wishes to read the entire document may find it in *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Chicago, 1904.)

1. The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to Scripture.
2. Although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate from one another, there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them.
3. Nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith, or required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught in and enjoined upon them by the word of God.
4. Although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, the New Testament is a perfect constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church.
5. Nothing ought to be received into the faith and worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.
6. Although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet they are not formally binding upon Christians farther than they perceive the connection; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God.
7. Although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths be highly expedient, yet as these must be in great measure the effect of human reasoning, they ought not be made terms of Christian communion.
8. It is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge of all Divinely-revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the Church; neither should they be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge.
9. All that are enabled through the grace to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the brethren, children of the same family and Father.

10. Division among Christians is a horrid evil; it is anti-Christian as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ.

11. A neglect of the revealed will of God and an assumed authority for making human opinions and human inventions terms of communion are and have been the immediate and obvious causes of the corruptions and divisions in the Church of God.

12. None should be received as members of the Church but such as profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures. None should be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their temper and conduct.

13. If circumstances necessary to the observance of Divine ordinances be not found in Scripture, only such as are absolutely necessary for this purpose should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense for a more sacred origin.

12: The Campbells Reunited

It was in October of 1808 that Thomas Campbell's family, with the 19-year-old son, Alexander in charge, set sail from Ireland to join the father in America. After only two days, however, the ship on which they sailed experienced difficulty just off the coast of Scotland. Although for a time the passengers feared for their lives, they eventually made their way by lifeboats to shore. Alexander determined, during the anxious moments in which he sought to bring the family to safety, that if his life were spared, he would devote his remaining days to the preaching of the gospel.

As the Campbells were unable to book passage on another ship until the winter had passed, they settled in Glasgow for the season. It was here that Alexander received what university training he got, enrolling in the University of Glasgow, where his father had studied before him. This period was highly significant in Alexander's development, not only because of the opportunity for formal study at the university, but also because of his contact with the great independent preacher, Greville Ewing, and with John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and the Haldane brothers, Robert and Alexander, all dedicated to the goal of restoration of primitive Christianity.

Alexander soon caught the vision of Sandman, Glas, and the Haldanes and renounced his allegiance to orthodox Presbyterianism. It was at a time of communion, when the elders were passing among the assembly, examining the members as to their worthiness to participate. They approved Alexander, but in reaction to their presumption to judge the hearts of communicants, he refused communion and left the service. His one concern, after thinking about his behavior, was what his father would think. He was unaware, of course, that the father was about the same time experiencing similar difficulties with denominational loyalties and concerned with how to explain his reactions to his faithful Presbyterian family when they would join him.

In August of 1809, the family set sail again, this time without mishap, arriving in New York a month and a half later. They then traveled on to Philadelphia by stagecoach, finally joining the father on the road between there and Washington, Pennsylvania, where he had come to meet them. Thomas brought along the newly published *Declaration and Address* and Alexander read it by candlelight in a roadside inn where the family spent the night. As Louis and Bess Cochran write, in their *Captives of the Word*, Alexander "realized that he and his father, although separated by a great ocean and a span of time, had been led as if by divine providence to reach the same stage in their theological and religious views. For the rest of his life, Alexander Campbell regarded this document as the clearest and most scriptural and irrefutable religious pronouncement of the age."

Inasmuch as Thomas Campbell had been excluded from his Presbyterian fellowship in Pennsylvania, and Alexander had voluntarily withdrawn from Presbyterianism in Scotland, a need was felt to find some association with professing Christians, both for fellowship and mutual edification, and for pursuit of the aims of Christian unity and simple New

Testament discipleship. Neither man wished to start a new denomination and thus add to the already too numerous list of sects plaguing Christendom. On the other hand, their understanding seems not yet to have progressed to the point of seeing the possibility of constitution themselves simply as a church after the pattern of local congregations of the New Testament. Instead, they worked through the “Christian Association of Washington, Pa.” This organization was not at first thought of as a church but simply as a group of Christians with common aims and convictions about the need for opposing human creeds and promoting New Testament Christianity. It was this association which provided audience for Alexander’s first sermons and gave encouragement to the growing movement.

The Christian Association became a church on May 4, 1811. Soon after, a simple frame building was erected on brush Run near the line between Pennsylvania and Virginia. The first meeting in the new edifice was on June 16, 1811. The small group was known simply as the Brush Run Church. Each Lord’s Day was an occasion for the observance of the Lord’s Supper and other aspects of worship characteristic of the New Testament congregations. Alexander was ordained as a preacher of the gospel and Thomas as an elder. Thirteen years ago Nellie and I visited the site of the church, where now only a few stones of the original foundation are left. It is a beautiful spot, hallowed by the memory of great events, and of great saints of God who led the way out of denominational bondage.

From such simple beginnings the movement grew to influence the nation and the world, and we today embrace a heritage which proclaims “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” Our aim should be to recapture the spirit of these early pioneers, to be guided by the same rule.

13: Baptism on the Buffalo

When the Brush Run church was constituted in 1811, none of the thirty members had given much consideration to the question of baptism. Most, if not all, had been sprinkled in youth and had not yet thought through all of the implications of their new resolve to follow the Bible only in such matters. But when three new persons wanted to unite with the church and requested immersion, the question of the Biblical validity of sprinkling had to be considered. Thomas Campbell immersed the new candidates, even though he himself had never been immersed and, at the time, insisted that it was not necessary to “rebaptize” those who had only been sprinkled.

Alexander was uncertain at first, saying that “as I am sure it is unscriptural to make this matter a term of communion... I wish to think and let think on this matter.” Providence brought him to serious consideration of the issue very soon, however as he had married Margaret Brown and with the birth of their first child she insisted, in staunch Presbyterian terms, that the child be sprinkled lest it die in an unsaved state. Forced to reach a decision, Alexander searched the scriptures and concluded that there was neither authority nor necessity to “baptize” an infant.

Further study led him to conclude that immersion was the only scriptural response to the Lord’s command and that only those who were of an age and disposition to believe were scriptural candidates for baptism. Thomas did not immediately yield to this logic, but finally resolved that the scripture allowed no other conclusion. On June 12, 1812, Thomas and Alexander and their wives, along with three other members of the Brush Run church, were led into the shady waters of Buffalo Creek, just above Bethany, by the Baptist preacher, Matthias Luce. At their request, Luce baptized them, upon a simple confession of faith, for the remission of sins. Other members of the Brush Run church followed.

Should you ever go to Bethany, West Virginia, you might want to go a little out of your way to see the site of these historic events. There is probably no way most of us can appreciate fully the extent of courage and integrity these noble ones exhibited in breaking with lifelong tradition to follow the leading of Jesus, simply through his Word. The beauty of the setting, in the hills where West Virginia and Ohio come together, is not greater than the beauty of the faith of these who took Jesus at his word, in spite of all others.

There is probably no better illustration of the restoration principle than the baptism of the Campbells in 1812. Thomas had argued in the *Declaration and Address* that men ought to follow the “perfect model” of the New Testament church:

Let us do as we are there expressly told they did, say as they said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after their approved example; and in so doing we shall realize and exhibit all the unity and uniformity that the primitive Church possessed.

Being immersed upon a profession of faith in Christ was doing as the early church did, professing and practicing as the New Testament “expressly enjoined by precept and precedent.” This same principle was to continue to be the guiding star of the same movement as it touched the eager hearts of thousands in the decades ahead. We live 162 years after these events, but is not the principle as valid today as ever? Are we as ready to sacrifice tradition for truth as they were? Are we as eager to search out truth when it may entail such sacrifice? Let him who will answer for his own heart. May we all mean it when we sing, “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow.”

14: The Restoration Principle

Perhaps this is as good a time as any to discuss more thoroughly the principle of restoration. There was a time when few among us questioned the validity of the appeal for a return to Biblical patterns. Inasmuch as the Bible records the beginnings of the church under the power of the Holy Spirit, as well as a record of the early church's activity and apostolic guidelines, it seemed only appropriate to call believers back to the Bible and the practice of the early church.

In recent years, however, good brethren are suggesting that the restoration principle will not work, that the Bible merely records what the first-century church was like and was never intended to provide a norm for the church in every succeeding age. Our "charismatic" brethren, in particular, believe that God continues to provide revelation to the church and that the Biblical revelation was not final. Accordingly, God guides the church in new directions in each age and we need not be overly concerned with conforming to the New Testament pattern.

Then there are others who say that the restoration principle has been attempted for a hundred and fifty years and it does not work. They point to all the divisions in the church and argue that they are evidence of what happens when people claim to go back to the Bible but cannot agree on what the Bible says. They say that it is impossible for everyone to reach a common understanding and that to insist upon such a goal is to lead inevitably to division.

What are we to say to these arguments? On the surface they appear to have some logic and validity. Actually, both arguments represent at base the same general view of the Scripture, a view which challenges the "once for all" character of God's revelation. Both positions deny that the Bible was ever intended as a constitution for the church through the ages, and assert that the New Testament is merely a record of the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century only, and that it is the church's business to listen to what the Spirit is saying today, either through additional revelation, or through modern cultural adaptations of the original record. Accordingly, for example, it does not matter so much that the Apostle Paul forbade women preaching in the first century, if a woman "receives the gift" of evangelism today, or if the collective witness of the modern church says that it would be "sexist" to deny woman any right given to man.

The restoration principle is squarely opposed to both positions, insisting that the Bible is God's final revelation until Christ returns (see Jude 3; Galatians 1:8; Revelation 22:18; 2 Timothy 3:14-17), and that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear on all matters essential to salvation that all sincere believers can understand them and hold a common faith. It is true that divisions among Christians are a real evil and a hindrance to our plea. But it is not appropriate to blame the restoration principle for our divisions. Rather, such divisions are evidence that we have not followed the principle; going back to Biblical patterns means

seeking oneness in Christ, and the restoration principle has not been followed when brethren divide.

For every division in the church one finds evidence of the fact that personal or party interpretations have come to be more important than common faith and oneness in Christ. Divisions occur, not when brethren differ on points on which the Bible does not specifically dictate, but when those differences become party or sectarian distinctions and are made tests of fellowship, that is, more important than the common ties of brotherhood. As Thomas Campbell wrote, “nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith, or required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught in and enjoined upon them in the Word of God.” Restoration insists upon a common faith, based upon God’s Word. But it also insists upon freedom of opinion, where God’s Word does not bind (see Romans 14).

The restoration principle is as valid today as it ever was. The fact that division has occurred in the restoration ranks is not an indictment of the principle, but our failure to live up to the principle.

15: Baptist Associations

Because of the position of the Campbells and their new Brush Run church on immersion, it was natural that the congregation should stir the interest of the Baptist churches of the area. Although there were significant differences between the Calvinist Baptists and their Brush Run neighbors, their similar views on baptism made it seem at the time that their common ground would allow them to work together. Inasmuch as the new reformers were advocates of unity among Christians, they were eager to associate themselves with other believers. Consequently, in 1813, the Brush Run church was gladly accepted into the ranks of the Redstone Baptist Association.

The Brush Run church made it clear, however, at the time of their entry into the Association, that they were opposed to human creeds and held other positions at variance with their Baptist friends. Because of these reservations, some of the leading preachers in the Association were wary of the new reformers and determined to observe them closely. For a time, harmony prevailed, but within a year or so, it became apparent that the new church was different. They immersed new believers upon a simple confession of their faith, without requiring evidence of an “experience” and a vote of the congregation. Other differences included views on the clergy and frequency of observance of the Lord’s Supper.

But the real test came in 1816 when Alexander Campbell was invited to speak at the annual meeting of the Association at Cross Creek, Virginia. For some time Campbell had been concerned over the lack of distinction made between the Old and New Testaments among the Baptists, who seemed to feel that the Law of Moses was of equal authority with the new covenant of Christ. In his sermon, entitled simply “The Law,” he argued for the sole authority of Christ over his church, and clearly demonstrated that the Law had been fulfilled and set aside to make way for the reign of the Spirit.

This historic sermon is one of the great documents of American religious history. Its truth has subsequently been accepted by the vast majority of Christians, but, at the time, it convinced the Association that Campbell was a heretic to be excluded from their fellowship. Before action was taken, however, Campbell and his brethren withdrew from the Association to affiliate with the more liberal Mahoning Association, across the state line in Ohio. Although the Campbells were eventually to recognize that their best course lay free from all such associations, they continued with the Mahoning Association until 1830, when under the influence of their teaching, that body was dissolved by vote of its own members. The dissolution came so late because the Campbells were reluctant to do anything which would be interpreted as sectarian. Alexander had written in his paper, *The Christian Baptist*, “I do intend to continue in connection with this people so long as they permit me to say what I believe. I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of sects. I labor to see sectarianism abolished and all Christians of every nation united upon the one foundation.”

16: The Golden Oracle

Another great figure of the early Restoration Movement was Walter Scott, reported to be a relative of the famous English novelist of the same name. Lately come to America after study at Edinburgh University, Scott was a talented musician with a poetic imagination. Reared in strict Presbyterianism, he came to America seeking a freer religious climate. After a year in New York City he walked west to Pittsburg and in time came across others who, like himself, were seeking a more biblical Christianity. Scott had read Sandeman, Locke, and Haldane and was committed to the belief that it was possible to follow Christ without human creeds and denominational allegiance. On this basis, he was immersed into Christ by a preacher named George Forrester. Soon afterwards, he took lodging with the Richardson family, agreeing to serve as a tutor. This family had already established a friendship with Alexander Campbell and it was not long before Scott and Campbell met and discovered a similarity in their thinking. They studied together the implications of the elder Campbell's *Declaration and Address* and came to share the vision of a united church.

Alexander discussed with Walter his plan to start a periodical which would attack denominational error and open the way for broad consideration of biblical ideals. According to Cochran in *Captives of the Word*, it was Scott who persuaded Campbell that his original intention to name the paper simply the *Christian* would not catch sufficient attention and that he ought to call it the *Christian Baptist*.

Scott's preaching soon became widely known and in 1828 he was invited to become the evangelist of the Mahoning Association. This choice was particularly significant as Scott had on numerous occasions declared that he was not a Baptist, but simply a Christian. He had not been as comfortable within the Baptist Association as were the Campbells, and it seems to have been largely due to his influence that the Mahoning Association dissolved itself in 1830.

By this time Scott's success as a preacher was known throughout the eastern section of the Western Reserve. His audiences were made up of pioneer stock and his message was adapted to their understanding and needs. Thousand responded to his preaching following the simple terms of the gospel. In fact, Scott claimed to have "restored" the plan of salvation when it dawned on him that when inquirers sought instruction upon their conviction of sin, he should reply to them in exactly the same way that Peter did in a similar situation on the Day of Pentecost. Scott began to count off the steps of salvation on his fingers before eager audiences: Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Remission, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The "five finger exercise" soon became standard procedure among Restoration preachers; its welcome simplicity cut through the mysticism that had been associated with salvation in the preaching of the time.

Scott was known as the Golden Oracle of the Restoration Movement because of his eloquence. But he was a scholar as well, reading the New Testament in Greek and

publishing several volumes, including *The Gospel Restored* and *Messiahship or Great Demonstration*. He also edited a periodical called *The Evangelist* and wrote numerous articles for Campbell's papers. Overall, he may have been the most interesting of the early leaders in the Movement. His life and work deserve more study than they have received; such study would help us to follow Paul's instruction to follow those who follow Christ.

17: Raccoon John

Undoubtedly the most colorful of all the figures in the early Movement was John Smith, nicknamed "Raccoon" because of his backwoods origin and character. Reared in poverty, his self-taught educational development was rather remarkable. He early became a seeker after God, wrestling with the strict Calvinism of the Kentucky frontier religion of the early nineteenth century. He became a respected preacher among the Baptists, but experienced great difficulty in reconciling Calvin's doctrine of election with his Bible. He moved with his family from Kentucky to Alabama, seeking to better his economic condition. It was there that he returned home after a preaching tour to discover his log cabin in ashes and his two children burned to death. His wife died soon after, never recovering from the tragedy; and John agonized over what the Lord might be telling him by the catastrophe, and whether his children had died among the elect or the damned.

Raccoon John Smith returned to Kentucky to try to rebuild his life and to sort out his confused thinking. The more he studied his Bible, the more he questioned his Calvinist doctrines. When he came across a copy of the Christian Baptist, he was stirred by Campbell's fresh approach to Scripture and found himself longing to hear more. He rode horseback some thirty miles to hear the controversial Campbell when he made his first visit to Kentucky in 1824. The story goes that John was sorely disappointed that the man spoke for only thirty minutes, until consulting his watch, he discovered that the sermon (on Galatians 4) had lasted two hours and thirty minutes. When asked what he thought of Campbell, he replied, "Be he devil or saint, he has thrown more light on that epistle and the whole Scriptures than I have heard in all the sermons I ever listened to before." From that time, Smith became one of the "reforming Baptists," joining in the task of calling men back to the Bible and away from human creeds.

He was not long welcome among his Baptist brethren, though he sought to reform rather than to separate. His preaching was well received by many, however, and in numerous cases entire congregations embraced the Restoration principle. He soon became the most popular preacher among the reformers in Kentucky, moving believers everywhere to become "Christians only," and turning thousands from unbelief to Christ. One report indicates that over 800 were immersed under his preaching during a few months in 1828. Nowhere in America did the preaching of the reformers enjoy greater success than in Kentucky in the 1820s and 1830s.

Raccoon John lived on to age 84, through the Civil War and two years past Alexander Campbell's death. Thousands were introduced to Jesus by this backwoods preacher before he was called home. If you have not read it, you would gain much from Louis Cochran's fine book *Raccoon John Smith*. Some think it an even more fascinating book than his *Fool of God*, on Campbell. In Smith and Campbell we have examples of radically opposite leaders in the Movement, the one a highly cultured and consummate scholar, the other a rude pioneer, preaching from unassisted personal study in the language of the common man. The Lord had great use for both, demonstrating the value in diversity of gifts among

his saints. May we all learn from this, despising neither the scholar nor the unlettered among us so long as they use well the gifts God gave.

Another stalwart leader of reform in Kentucky was John T. Johnson. Born to a prominent Virginia family that had moved west about the time of the Revolution, John was one of eleven children who were schooled by their father, Colonel Robert Johnson, for service. One brother, Richard, later became Vice President of the United States under Martin Van Buren. John studied law with his brother at Transylvania University and, after brief military service in the War of 1812, entered the state legislature in 1815. Five years later he was elected to the United States Congress where he served two terms with distinction.

By this time, however, John was being drawn to devote his entire life and energy to the cause of Christ. Always a man of deep conviction, he had attended the great Cane Ridge Revival when only a boy. He was deeply moved by that experience, while holding serious reservations about the emotional demonstrations which passed there for the workings of the Spirit. This early experience, along with the reservations, impelled him in a search for a clear understanding of the will of God regarding salvation. Study of the Bible accompanied his political career and when he met and heard Alexander Campbell he readily grasped the simple biblical truths which that Virginian preached. He became an avid reader of the *Christian Baptist* and it seems clear that Campbell's influence was a significant factor in his decision to forsake the halls of Congress for the white harvest fields of the gospel.

In commenting upon Johnson's decision, Campbell wrote: "Sir, in descending from the forum and legislative hall to proclaim the crucified Savior, you have ascended far above all earthly crowns." Johnson soon became one of the most respected and successful preachers in the movement. Wherever he preached, hungry souls responded. One of his regular reports in the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1838 tells of a meeting in North Middleton, Kentucky.

We reaped a most glorious harvest, notwithstanding the cold, snowy weather. We kept up the immersion every day after we started, and gained 184 accessions to the cause of the Lord! O, it was a season of rejoicing every day and night!

The same report indicates that within less than three months 563 were converted under his preaching. In a footnote to the report, Campbell wrote:

The Lord be exalted for these glorious fruits of the gospel! What thanks are due to him from all his saints for these trophies of his grace! How honorable to be the instrument of such a work! How inferior the glory of the Hon. Richard M. Johnson, Vice President of this great nation, compared with his brother the humble servant of Jesus Christ, the most successful proclaimer of the gospel in the great valley of the Mississippi.

As notable as were Johnson's accomplishments as an evangelist, however, they did not overshadow his contributions to the cause of peace and harmony among brethren. One of the most stirring stories of the movement was his part in the great unity meeting in Lexington on New Years Day in 1832. But that story must be reserved for the next issue.

19: Unity at Lexington

By the year 1830 the “Christians” in the movement led by Barton Warren Stone and the “Disciples” in Campbell’s movement each came to number about 10,000. As may be recalled, the former dated from 1804 when Stone and other Presbyterians renounced their creed and proposed to follow Jesus through the Bible alone. Their growth had been primarily in Kentucky and quite independent of Campbell, whose work began in 1809 in Pennsylvania but was confined within the Baptist fellowship for about fifteen years. As the “Reforming Baptists” eventually came to be excluded by the orthodox, Campbell’s movement spread through parts of Ohio, West Virginia, and into Kentucky, especially as the *Christian Baptist* was circulated more widely. In 1830, reflecting the break with the Baptists, Campbell changed his journal to *Millennial Harbinger*, a name it continued to wear throughout the rest of its life, until 1870.

As the Campbell movement spread into Kentucky, contacts were made with the “Stoneite” churches, as they were called. It soon became apparent that there were only minor differences between the groups, and as both had been committed from the beginning to promotion of unity among all Christians it was only natural that an interest should develop in bringing the groups together. Over the Christmas holidays of 1831 in Georgetown, members of both groups met for four days exploring the possibilities. Barton Stone then lived in Georgetown and John T. Johnson and Raccoon John Smith were also there for the meetings, as was John Rogers, another highly respected leader. As the meetings confirmed that both congregations in Georgetown were in agreement that they should join hands in the work, another four-day meeting was scheduled for Lexington beginning on New Years Day, including brethren from all around. The meeting climaxed with a powerful sermon by John Smith, asserting the great central truths of Christianity and pleading for unity on the basis of Christ and his word. At the conclusion, leaders of both groups arose as one and tearfully extended hands of fellowship. As Smith later wrote to Campbell, who was not present:

We decided to be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but to come to the Bible and to the Bible alone as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need. A union of your followers and those of Mr. Barton Stone has taken place in Lexington, Paris, and Georgetown, and it is spreading to other localities.

Two preachers, John Smith and John Rogers, were selected to travel among the churches, “to increase and consolidate this union.” Their efforts met with great and lasting success.

Although there had been many divisions before, so far as we can tell, this was the first successful unity effort among Christian groups on American soil. John Rogers wrote, “We trust in God that no such disaster as that of division shall ever befall us. Nor can it, if we are true to our cause.” Through the Civil War when every other major group divided,

north and south, the Restoration churches remained united. Such unity did not last, of course, and as we look upon the separation of brethren today, it will do us good to look back to that New Year's meeting in Kentucky, 1832, when the Lord's prayer for unity (John 17) was answered so beautifully in Lexington.

20: The Spirit of 1832

Our last article told of the unity achieved by the two streams of the Restoration Movement in 1832. The “Disciples” associated with Campbell, and the “Christians” led primarily by Stone, demonstrated that in spite of minor differences men who loved and followed the same Lord could join hearts and hands in his service. After the Lexington unity meeting, John Smith and John Rogers, evangelists from both sides, were sent abroad among the churches to encourage all to follow the examples set in the New Years Day meetings in Lexington.

What happened in 1832 was a beautiful illustration of the principles stated twenty-three years earlier in Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*. That document has argued that restoration and unity were complementary goals. As Christians return to the biblical platform, they will meet others there who have followed the same goal. While theological disputation and human creeds had for centuries kept believers divided, it was now being shown that on the basis of the Bible alone they could come together.

It is scarcely possible to overemphasize the significance of this unity meeting in 1832. Many are prone to argue today that the Restoration principle will not work, pointing to 20th century divisions among those who are the heirs of the Restoration tradition. But these divisions have occurred precisely because we have lost sight of the Restoration principle, not because of the principle itself. As differences of interpretation and practice have developed, men have focused on those differences, as distinguishing creeds which separate one group of Christians from another, rather than seeing that unity lies in returning to basic Bible truths, accepting others on that basis without regard for speculative distinctions and matters of opinion.

But even more important, what happened at Lexington was an illustration of the answer to Jesus’ prayer (John 17) for the unity of his followers, a demonstration of the binding quality of a common relationship to the Father through the Son. He prayed that his disciples might be one “that the world might believe,” and after 1832, the cause caught fire and swept west to Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and even Texas. To men everywhere who had become weary of denominational divisions and party strife, the Restoration plea found a ready reception. Both those who were believers but tangled in sectarian thickets, and those who had resisted the gospel because a forest of confusion had darkened the way, gladly heard the simple message and were incorporated into the fellowship of those who were “Christians only.”

The spirit of Lexington needs to be revived today. Let us, preaching Christ rather than party, and insisting on the Word only, embrace as our brethren all those who have accepted the Lord and been born again. For God “hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

21: Defender of the Faith

Although Elder Thomas Campbell in his irenic spirit seemed never to be convinced that disputation was an appropriate way to communicate the good news, son Alexander soon became aware that debates could attract attention to the cause, and that he possessed considerable talents in controversy. His first significant debate was in 1820, in response to a Presbyterian, John Walker, of Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, who had challenged the Baptists to defend their position on immersion. This was followed in 1823 with a second debate on the same subject with W. L. McCalla in Washington, Kentucky. In both debates, the Baptists were elated with Campbell's power in presenting the biblical case for immersion; many of them were disturbed however, by their champion's unorthodox teaching on creeds, Calvinism, and the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. Campbell was completely frank in his insistence that he differed about as much with the Baptists as with the Presbyterians.

While both of these first debates attracted considerable regional notice and established his fame as a debater, it was in 1830 that Campbell engaged in a debate that brought national attention. Robert Owen, a wealthy British manufacturer, known for his socialistic philanthropy, had brought his theories to America and established a communal colony at New Harmony, Indiana. Owen openly argued that religion was responsible for all of the ills of society and challenged the clergymen of the country to debate. Given Owen's fame and well known speaking ability, it appeared for a while that he would have no takers. Campbell was not at the time well known outside the states bordering Virginia, but he felt that Owen had to be answered. The debate occurred in Cincinnati, in April, 1829, and attracted thousands. It continued for eight days and nights in the largest auditorium in the city. Owen gave up his time on the last three days and Campbell delivered a twelve-hour speech, in six two-hour periods. According to Cochran, "no verdict was rendered at the conclusion of the debate, but when Mr. Campbell sat down after his final twelve-hour speech, the audience rose to its feet in a prolonged tribute to the Defender of the Faith."

After his success in the Owen debate, Campbell's reputation spread across the nation and he was regarded as a spokesman not only for the Restoration Movement, but for Protestant Christianity in general. Thus it was entirely appropriate that he should be the one to face the noted Catholic Bishop John Purcell when that dignitary was persuaded to debate in Cincinnati in 1837. The debate set a precedent, unusual as it was for Catholic officials to defend their faith in such a forum.

But the greatest debate of all may have been the one with Presbyterian H. L. Rice in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1843. It was moderated by so notable a figure as Henry Clay, and lasted for sixteen days. Frederick Kershner called it "in all probability the greatest religious discussion ever recorded in human history." While this assessment may be exaggerated, it was undoubtedly the most important of the debates in providing clarification and consolidation of the principles of the Restoration. It addressed "the action, subject, design, and administrator of Christian baptism, the character of spiritual

influence in conversion and sanctification, and the expediency and tendency of ecclesiastic creeds as terms of union and communion.” My own copy of the published version of the debates runs to 910 pages in small print.

Debates have declined in popularity in our own time, but in that earlier period they seem to have served their purpose in allowing curious multitudes to hear “both sides” of controversial issues, and to make up their own minds as to the truth. There is no doubt that Campbell’s debates were among the most important forces in shaping and giving impetus to the early stages of the Movement.

22: Campbell the Statesman

Alexander Campbell usually felt that the Christian had little business in politics, but when friends insisted, he became a candidate for delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention in 1829. His reasons were the duty he felt to his neighbors in the western part of the state and two things which he hoped to accomplish by participation. One was to change the aristocratical basis of representation and suffrage and the other was to present a plan for the abolition of slavery. While he decried the usual role of a politician, he argued that every Christian should do what he could to improve the lot of his fellow man. The development of the Commonwealth's constitution offered just such an opportunity.

Campbell arrived in Richmond at 2 p.m. on October 4th and preached that evening "to an immense congregation." The debate with Robert Owen had spread his reputation and there were more invitations to preach in the city's pulpits than he could honor. This was true even though he preached every Sunday and almost every night during the three and one half months the convention lasted. His audiences included many of the delegates; ex-president Madison attended frequently, calling Campbell "one of the ablest and most original expounders of the Scriptures I have ever heard." Wherever he preached, Campbell sought to promote New Testament Christianity, opposing the sectarianism of the day.

Campbell was more successful in his preaching than in politics; he found the delegates generally hostile to the liberal political goals he sought. He represented the area of small farmers while many of the delegates were from the wealthier Piedmont region. He sought to gain representation for the poor and unpropertied; most of the delegates wanted to limit the vote to landholders. He arose again and again to plead for a Bill of Rights that would not be based on privilege and money, but his arguments carried little weight with men who were set on protecting their own vested interests.

Campbell's greatest disappointment came from not being able to present and gain passage of his plan for peaceful abolition of slavery. He had hoped to gain approval for setting a constitutional date, say 1835, after which all children of slaves would be born free. This would have meant the gradual phase-out of slavery without depriving any slaveholder of his property. Campbell himself had inherited slaves from his father-in-law through his marriage to Margaret Brown, but he set his slaves free and made provision for their future. His hopes for the Constitutional Convention were doomed, however. More experienced colleagues had warned him against presenting his plan before the question of representation was settled. After the extended debates on that subject, it became apparent that the abolition plan would never be received. Had Campbell's proposals been accepted, in Virginia and throughout the South, the Civil War would never have occurred. Because of the way the constitution went, Campbell felt he could not recommend its ratification and, as a likely result of speeches he made after returning to Brooke County, that area unanimously rejected it. The vote of the state as a whole, however, was for ratification. Largely as a result of differences made apparent at the convention, the western part of the state eventually pulled away to form the present West Virginia.

For his own time, Campbell was a political liberal, a strong advocate of democracy and civil rights. He firmly believed in the separation of church and state, while insisting that every Christian ought to be a good citizen and respectful of his government. But he never again returned to politics, though he once accepted an invitation to speak before Congress in Washington. He knew that his own calling was to be an ambassador in the kingdom of Christ and he felt that vocation should occupy all of his remaining days.

23: Publishing the Word

From its earliest years, the Restoration Movement has relied extensively on the printed word. Taking their cue from the Bible itself, the pioneers published the gospel in numerous journals and utilized the public mails to reach ever state and hamlet in the country.

Alexander Campbell set the pace with his *Christian Baptist*, begun in 1823, and followed it in 1830 with the *Millennial Harbinger*. The latter journal continued its broad and powerful influence for forty years. Readers of the earlier journal note its militant tone as Campbell inveighed against the sects. But by 1830, he had separated from the Baptists and the movement was growing; Campbell confidently believed that the millennium was being ushered in by the turning of thousands to simple Biblical Christianity. He saw his journal as a harbinger of the golden age of the gospel and, while he was known far and wide as the most powerful preacher of the day, his greatest work may have been as an editor. During much of his mature life, he would arise at four every morning, go out to the skylighted, octagonal study just a few steps away from his house, and write, standing, for four hours. Having produced enough copy to keep his printer occupied all day, he then would turn to other duties.

Fortunately for us, the 25,000 pages of the *Millennial Harbinger* have recently been reprinted and are now easily accessible. All students of the Movement's history should spend some time with this remarkable journal and relive the excitement of those years. To do so is to marvel at what God wrought in the days when "Back to the Bible" was the most exciting theme in American Christendom.

Most of the principal figures in the early movement were editors as well as preachers. Barton Stone published the *Christian Messenger* (1826-1843) and Walter Scott published *The Evangelist* (1832-1844). According to Humble (*The Story of the Restoration*), at least twenty-eight journals were published during the 1830s, a rather remarkable fact in view of the state of printing and the mails at this early date.

But the tradition continued. One of my favorite journals was *Lard's Quarterly*, begun before the close of the Civil War and continued for five years. A student of Campbell's, Moses Lard is thought by many to be one of the best writers the movement produced. A frequent contributor to the *Quarterly* was J. W. McGarvey, probably the movement's greatest scholar.

Three journals which have continued their influence down to current times were begun at mid-century. Benjamin Franklin's *American Christian Review* started in 1856 and soon became the most widely read paper in the brotherhood. A conservative journal, it opposed instrumental music and came, after 1866, to oppose the missionary society. It continued until recent years.

The *Christian Standard* was begun in 1866 by Isaac Errett and the *Gospel Advocate* resumed publication in that year, having been discontinued during the War after its beginning in the 1850s. Both of these journals enjoy wide influence today, the *Standard* among the more conservative Christian Churches and the *Advocate* among Churches of Christ in the deep South.

The Firm Foundation was established in 1884 by Austin McGary and has had a long and interesting history. McGary's principal focus at first was the "re-baptism" controversy. He insisted that those who had been baptized without understanding that it was for the remission of sins should be reimmersed. David Lipscomb, editor of the *Advocate*, accepted any immersion that was in recognition of the Lordship of Christ.

Journals have been equally popular among non-Sunday School churches. Some of our readers will remember the *Apostolic Way*, edited by Clarence Teurman and R. F. Duckworth. Then there were *The Truth*, by J. D. Philips, *The White Horse*, by J. A. Dennis, *The West Coast Evangel*, by C. R. Worsham, and the *Church Messenger* by Paul Knight. Among our "one cup" brethren, *The Old Paths Advocate* has had the greatest influence, with early editors Homer King and Homer Gay. Most of the readers of this paper are also familiar with *The Christian Appeal*, begun in 1952 by C. B. Head and now ably edited by Gene Shelburne. And, of course, *Gospel Tidings* was founded by G. B. Shelburne, Jr. in 1936: it has been a strong force for peace and stability throughout the brotherhood.

What has been the effect of all this writing? Sadly, it must be admitted that many journals in our history have existed primarily to promote a sectarian and party line. Some have contributed to divisions and unbrotherly hatred. On the other hand, there have been numerous editors whose sole purpose was to publish the gospel and build up the saints. We thank God for them and for their influence for Christ. I am pleased to write for the journal you are reading. It has been among those which, throughout the years, have counseled peace and refused to encourage the party spirit. Let us hope that more and more writers will emerge, and that the influence of the written word will flourish.

24: Higher Education

Formal education was an important element in the development and spread of the Restoration Movement. The Campbells were a highly intellectual family, Father Thomas having studied at the University of Glasgow before entering the Presbyterian ministry in Ireland. Alexander was tutored by his father but would likely not have gone up to the university had not unusual circumstances made it feasible. When the ship on which he and the rest of the family had embarked for America to join the father was wrecked off the coast of Scotland, the family settled in Glasgow for the winter and Alexander was able to spend a term at the university. His studies there, though not extended, were highly significant to his future development.

Soon after his marriage to Margaret Brown, Alexander founded the Buffalo Seminary, a boarding school for boys. But his dream of a college whose curriculum would be based on the Bible was not to become a reality until November, 1841, when Bethany College was opened. Campbell was the president and chief professor. There were five professors at the beginning, and 101 students, from nine states. Set in the beautiful hills of West Virginia, the college has continued to the present as a highly respected liberal arts institution. Regrettably, much of the original focus on the Bible has been lost, under the sponsorship of the most liberal wing of the movement.

Although by far the most influential, Bethany College was not the first among Restoration Colleges. Bacon College was founded in 1836. A math professor named T. F. Johnson was a central figure at the beginning, while financial backing was provided by John T. Johnson (no relation to T. F.). The well-known evangelist and educator, Walter Scott, was called to be president. He was soon succeeded by another man who was to rise to prominence in the movement, David Burnett. The College took its name from Frances Bacon, 17th century founder of the “New Science,” and was greatly influenced by the empirical philosophy of both Bacon and Locke.

The southern part of the movement contributed Franklin College. A forceful Tennessee preacher, Tolbert Fanning, established the college near Nashville in 1845. One of the more interesting things about this school was that both faculty and students were required to spend five hours of field and garden work after nine hours of study. Although Franklin College did not survive long, Nashville is still the site of another prominent college of the movement, David Lipscomb (originally Nashville Bible College), established in 1891.

Several other colleges were begun in mid-nineteenth century, each with an interesting history. Northwestern Christian University was established in 1855 by Ovid Butler as an anti-slavery college when brethren thought Campbell and Bethany College were too sympathetic to the southern cause. Campbell was quite unhappy over the founding of Northwestern and wrote that he hoped it would not encourage others to create “ill-begotten, misshapen, clubfooted, imbecile schools under the name and title of schools and colleges.”

Hiram College, originally Western Reserve Eclectic Institute, was established around 1860 with James A. Garfield as its president. Garfield was one of the most popular Restoration preachers on the Western Reserve; he left the college to become an officer in the Northern army and later became president of the United States.

The College of the Bible was started in 1865, at the close of the Civil War in Lexington, Kentucky. Its president was J. W. McGarvey, the great scholar of the movement, and the school came to be a highly respected center for Biblical studies. Ten years after the founding of the College of the Bible, brethren in Edwardsville, Mississippi, started Southern Christian Institute, the first Restoration college for blacks.

Other institutions of the movement at the end of the century were Drake University, founded by the Governor of Iowa, a devoted member of the movement, and Oklahoma Christian University (later Phillips), begun by E. V. Zollars and Thomas W. Phillips. Texas Christian University also dates from the 1870s.

Space would fail us to list the colleges founded by brethren in the twentieth century, not all long lived, but many developing considerable reputation. It is enough to say, perhaps, that the ideals of the Restoration Movement have always fostered learning and the pursuit of truth.

25: A Mormon Connection

One of the more interesting stories of the Movement concerns a young Baptist preacher named Sidney Rigdon. He first came in contact with the Campbells when, with his father-in-law, Adamson Bentley, he came to Bethany to visit the man who had so completely vanquished John Walker in the debate on baptism. They sat all night with Alexander Campbell, discussing his views of the Bible and reformation. Rigdon was won to the Movement and a year later, through Campbell's influence, was called to become the pastor of one of the Restoration-leaning Baptist churches in Pittsburg.

The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell continue to mention Rigdon periodically as he became known as an eloquent and popular preacher among Restoration churches. He eventually developed a friendship with Walter Scott and the two congregations for which they preached in Pittsburg merged in 1824.

When Campbell left home on horseback in 1823 to debate McCalla in Kentucky, he was accompanied by Rigdon who came along to take notes, from which a record of the debate was later published in book form. Rigdon is mentioned regularly as a speaker at annual meetings of the Mahoning Association and seems to have been one of the leading preachers on the Western Reserve.

About 1830, however, Sidney Rigdon became one of the promoters of Mormonism, which began its development in that year. He had for some time been speculating and preaching new millennial theories, some think in preparation for the advent of Joseph Smith. Many believe that it was Rigdon who secured, in a Pittsburg printing office with which he had connection, the Solomon Spaulding manuscript on which the Book of Mormon seems to be based. Textual scholars have recently published a book which claims to establish the connection between the Spaulding manuscript and the Book of Mormon.

Richardson thinks that Rigdon developed a liaison with Joseph Smith as early as 1827 and that together they fabricated the story of the discovery of the "golden plates" at Palmyra, New York, inscribed in "reformed Egyptian characters." These plates were purportedly translated with the aid of an angel and the Book of Mormon issued from the press.

A number of people were drawn away into Mormonism from the churches in which Rigdon had preached. The defections were stayed, however, when Campbell made a three-week tour to northern Ohio to stabilize the churches. He also published a tract analyzing the Book of Mormon, as Richardson writes, "laying bare its flagrant falsehoods and its contemptible absurdities." Rigdon later disputed with Brigham Young over the right to the Prophet's mantle when Smith was assassinated. Rigdon was expelled from the Mormon community and retired to New York, eventually dying in obscurity.

26: A New Translation

Many, supposing that a modern speech translations of the Bible are only 20th Century productions, may be surprised to know that Alexander Campbell brought out in 1826 a new translation which, according to Richardson, was “the very first to furnish to the English reader a version of the New Testament completely rendered into his own vernacular.”

Campbell had long felt that the King James version, issued as it was under the direction of a monarch dedicated to preserving customs and practices of the Anglican church and who prescribed that his translators maintain certain ecclesiastical words already established rather than scrupulously translating all of the Greek into corresponding English, contributed to the confusion of sectarianism. Campbell was familiar with the translation work of three eminent scholars of his day and decided to combine their work with his own reading of the Greek to give the public the most faithful rendering possible. George Campbell of Scotland had translated the Gospels, James McKnight the Epistles, and Phillip Doddridge the Acts and Revelation. Devoting the winter of 1826 to the work of compilation, he brought out a handsome volume with helpful notes and appendices which soon became quite popular and widely used.

One feature of the work which was quite remarkable was the use of the English word “immersion” rather than “baptism” which was merely the transliteration of the Greek word. Nearly all translators have avoided translation on this point because of the established practices of most of the denominations and the consequent resistance to a work which would clearly call those practices into question. Each of Campbell’s translators, “had declared that the word rendered baptism meant immersion, yet in deference to usage they continued the Anglicized Greek term.” A. Campbell simply took them at their word and gave the English word, “so as to avoid ambiguity and make the work complete as a translation.”

Another interesting characteristic of the work was the use of the term “congregation” rather than “church,” for much the same reason. Thus, Romans 16:16 reads, “The congregations of Christ salute you.” Church was one of the words King James had specifically requested be retained, even though it was not the best translation of the Greek “ecclesia.”

Campbell’s General Preface to the new translation, subtitled “An Apology for a New Translation,” presents a scholarly and, for its time, quite advanced rationale for the work, not unlike the cogent arguments that have been made by respectable translators in our own time. Although the *Living Oracles*, as Campbell’s translation was subsequently entitled, is no longer in common use, it stands as a remarkable forerunner to most of the respected modern speech versions that have become such an important part of our Bible study and general use today.

27: David Burnett

A significant figure in the Movement, often overlooked by many of us who are more conservative, was David Burnett, a member of one of the most prominent families in Ohio. David's father, Isaac, was the mayor of Cincinnati, and his uncle was the well known Judge Jacob Burnett. Although the family was associated with the Presbyterian Church, David rejected his infant baptism and was immersed at age fifteen. He considered for a time following his father and uncle into the law profession, and was offered an appointment to West Point, but eventually concluded that preaching would be his life's work.

Burnett first met Campbell in 1826 when the latter came to Cincinnati on a preaching tour through Ohio and Kentucky. The young preacher was only eighteen at the time and Campbell's teaching gave additional focus to his growing concern for Biblical truth and practice. By age twenty, Burnett was the preacher for a small Baptist church in Dayton and, when he began to read Campbell's *Christian Baptist*, he soon led his congregation to reject its human creed and to withdraw from the Baptist Association. Under his influence a few years later other Baptists in Cincinnati became "Christians only" and the Eighth and Walnut Christian Church was established. This church was destined to become one of the strongest churches in the Movement.

In 1813, Campbell invited David Burnett to join him in a tour of churches in eastern Virginia. They attended the first "cooperative assembly" of churches in Virginia held at Richmond. Nearly one thousand were in attendance, coming from sixteen Restoration churches. Burnett had already felt the need for stronger ties among churches in Ohio, and it seems that the Richmond meeting confirmed this dedication to work for more cooperative ventures among the churches. Even Campbell seemed influenced by the Richmond experience to modify his earlier opposition to any associations larger than the local church. He wrote in 1834 in the *Millennial Harbinger*: "The church is not one congregation or assembly, but the congregations of Christ composed of all the individual congregations on earth. In the work of conversion, the whole church, by natural necessity, as well as by the authority of the great King, must cooperate."

Shortly after returning from Virginia, Burnett began a journal entitled *The Christian Preacher*, intended to provide instruction and leadership for young preachers. The journal ran for five years, during which time Burnett became president of the newly founded Bacon College. The college seems to have been originally conceived as a force to challenge Restoration inroads among Baptist ranks but soon became itself dedicated to Restoration principles. The college was short lived, however, and Burnett turned his energies back to the local work in Cincinnati.

Largely as a result of Burnett's dedication to encouraging greater cooperation in the brotherhood, the American Christian Bible Society came into being in 1845 with headquarters in Cincinnati. Soon thereafter Burnett established the Sunday School and

Tract Society. Then in 1849 the American Christian Missionary Society was founded in a brotherhood assembly at the Eighth and Walnut church in Cincinnati. While Campbell had raised a number of questions about their new organizations and was not himself present at the Cincinnati meeting, he was elected president of the Society. Burnett was chosen first vice president; among the other nineteen vice presidents were some of the most prominent men of the brotherhood at that time.

David Burnett's role in all of this organizational structuring of the brotherhood was most significant, though of course he was only one of many. With these events, however, the movement was taking a more denominational form, turning, in fact, from being a movement to becoming an establishment. Many historians of the Movement see in the establishment of such brotherhood-wide organizations the beginning of trends that were to lead to two major divisions in Restoration forces fifty to seventy-five years later. From the movement to unite and draw together Christians divided by human creeds, the Restoration forces began to think more in terms of taking a place among the major denominations of America. And with this move, much of the power and freshness of the Restoration appeal was lost.

While we honor David Burnett for his many contributions to New Testament Christianity, his interest in official organizations should serve to remind us that the church of the Lord is best seen in individual Christians and congregations and not in superorganizations and denominational structures. This is a lesson which every generation of the Lord's people must learn anew.

28: The Oak Grove Church

Recently I was privileged to meet for worship with the congregation in Rincon, Georgia. I first heard of this church in 1948, when a young man named Leon Kessler came from Georgia to the Kerrville Bible Training Work and became my roommate and dear friend. I never learned of the origins of his home church, however, until sometime after 1958 when I began seriously to study Restoration history. That some claimed this church to be the oldest within our movement made me want to know more about it, but no opportunity came until just recently when university business sent me to Savannah for a meeting of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools.

By prearrangement, I was met at the Savannah air terminal on Saturday afternoon by Erwin Kessler, cousin to my former roommate, and tireless worker in the Rincon church. Erwin is engaged in building restoration work, a very important industry in historic Savannah. He took me into some of the old buildings he had helped to restore, including the old Independent Presbyterian Church, founded in 1736, which bore over its doors the inscription, "National Church of Scotland." It was here that Lowell Mason, the well known hymn writer served, and where President Woodrow Wilson was married. From here we went to Christ Church, which John Wesley served in the 1730s before returning to England and work which resulted in the Methodist breakaway from the Church of England shortly afterwards. George Whitfield, the noted Methodist revivalist of the "Great Awakening" also served the same church in Savannah for some time.

But my real interest was in the Oak Grove Church of Christ in Rincon, some fifteen miles from Savannah. Saturday evening as I enjoyed the hospitality of Erwin and his lovely wife, he showed me a copy of a little booklet on the Salzburger of Georgia, which has a chapter on the history of the Oak Grove Church. According to this book, about two hundred immigrants originally from Salzburg, Austria, came to Georgia in 1734, on the same ship with John and Charles Wesley and General Oglethorpe. The Salzburger established a colony which they named Ebenezer, overlooking the Savannah River, not many miles above the present site of Savannah. They were Lutherans and their colony maintained a Lutheran unity for many years. But in 1819, one of the settlers named Christian Herman Dasher, determining from his earnest Bible study that it would be possible to follow the New Testament more closely than his creedally oriented brethren were doing, began assembling with others in his home, observing the Lord's Supper each Sunday. Dasher had earlier found a preacher in Savannah who shared many of his convictions and who immersed him according to the New Testament pattern. This preacher, Shelton C. Dunning, had come south from Connecticut some years earlier and become well known for his preaching on the streets of Savannah. After the establishing of the church in Ebenezer, Dunning occasionally visited and taught the saints there. According to the little booklet mentioned previously, this church "has met and worshipped continually, observing the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, near its original location." From these beginnings, the church eventually spread throughout Georgia.

The interesting thing about the beginning of the churches in Georgia is that it was not until years later that Dasher and his brethren heard about the work of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. Nor is there any evidence of a connection with James O'Kelley or Rice Haggard and the movements which sprang up in North Carolina in the 1790s. One might speculate that since S. C. Dunning of Savannah had come from Connecticut, he had some connection with Elias Smith and Abner Jones and the Christian churches in New England which evolved at the turn of the century. But evidence is lacking to demonstrate lines of influence and one is tempted to accept the argument that the Oak Grove Church is merely further evidence that men and women with Bibles alone may honestly and independently follow the early New Testament patterns and become a part of the great church of God, without regard for human creeds or denominational councils.

Needless to say, I was thrilled to address the fifty or sixty saints who met in Rincon on February 15, 1981, to break the bread as their fathers had done before them for over one hundred sixty years. The continuity they represented gave me new hope for the force of the Restoration principle.

29: Aylett Raines

While most of us are familiar with the term *restoration*, there was also a school of *Restorationists* making considerable headway on the Western Reserve in the 1820s. They were generally universalists, teaching that all men would eventually be restored to grace. One of their most talented young preachers was named Aylett Raines. He heard of the evangelist Walter Scott and his unusual preaching, which invited men everywhere to accept salvation on the simple terms of the gospel. Known generally as a controversialist, Raines decided to go to hear Scott and challenge him with his own universalist and pentecostal doctrines. Raines did not believe in water baptism, only in baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.

When Raines first heard him, Scott preached from the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, unfolding the gospel so clearly that no fault could be found. Raines not only decided not to challenge Scott, he returned to hear him several more times and became convinced of the truth of what he heard. He did not immediately submit to baptism, however, wanting time to think. He contacted another of his preacher associates and after considerable discussion convinced him of the validity of the simple New Testament gospel which Scott had preached. They then proceeded to a lake and immersed each other. In the course of a few weeks, Raines had baptized at least fifty others, including another of his former preaching associates.

Raines soon met Thomas Campbell and gladly accepted an invitation to join him in his travels, learning much from this venerable leader in the Restoration movement. It was some time, however, before Raines completely relinquished his universalist opinions. His views were soon to provide an important test of the principle of fellowship within the movement.

The Mahoning Association of churches in the area had made great progress in the gospel during the year following their appointment of Walter Scott as itinerant evangelist. Nearly a thousand converts had been added and there was a general feeling of elation as brethren gathered in 1828 for the annual meeting at Warren. The one troublesome issue was the question some held over whether Raines should be received in view of his holding some "strange" opinions. Alexander Campbell was to deliver the opening address and, aware of the scruples held by some, took as his text the fourteenth chapter of Romans, particularly the verse, "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

The next day one of the brethren insisted on bringing the matter to a head and Thomas Campbell, fearing the result of discord, spoke favorably of Raines, saying, "If I were Paul, I would have him, in preference to any young man of my acquaintance, to be my Timothy." Alexander followed with remarks on the difference between faith and opinion and insisted that Raines' views on the restoration of the wicked after a period of punishment had to be in the realm of opinion as there was no word in the Bible affirming it. He then proposed that Raines indicate his willingness to preach the gospel and "retain

his opinions as private property in harmony with the principles of the Reformation. Walter Scott expressed his agreement with this proposal and Raines declared that he would be happy to do as suggested. The assembly generally agreed upon this principle and what started as a troublesome issue was resolved happily.

The wisdom of this charitable course toward Raines was borne out subsequently. Two years later Aylett Raines wrote the following to Campbell:

I wish to inform you that my "restorationist" sentiments have been slowly and imperceptibly erased from my mind by the ministry of Paul and Peter and some other illustrious preachers, with whose discourses and writings, I need not tell you, you seem to be intimately acquainted. After my immersion I brought my mind, as much as I possibly could, like blank surface to the ministry of the new institution... I hope during the remainder of my days to devote my energies, not to the building up of sectarian systems, but to the teaching of the Word.

Perhaps even more interesting are the words Raines wrote many years later as he reflected upon his reception by the brethren. He wrote of

The great kindness and magnanimity with which the Campbells and Walter Scott treated me after my baptism, and before I was convinced of the erroneousness of my restorationist philosophy. They used to say to me: "It is mere philosophy, like Calvinism and Arminianism, and no part of the gospel." They made these "isms" of but little value, and therefore not worth contending for, and they did not put themselves in conflict with my philosophy, but rather urged me to preach the gospel in matter and form as did the apostles. This all appeared to me to be reasonable, and I did it; and one of the consequences was, that the philosophy within me became extinct, having no longer the coals of contention by which to warm or the crumbs of sectarian righteousness upon which to feed.

Aylett Raines continued to preach very successfully for many years, making a great contribution to the cause. It would appear that there is an important lesson for us to learn from this story. Doubtless many of the divisions of our own time could have been avoided had not so much importance been assigned to human opinions. Were we all as busily engaged as we could be in preaching the gospel to the lost and concentrating on the undebatable text of the scripture, we would have little energy left to fret about the varieties of opinion which deserve, relatively, little attention.

30: Back to Britain

In April of 1847, Alexander Campbell yielded to pressure from churches in Great Britain and decided to return to the country of his birth. His friend James Henshall agreed to accompany him and they met at Baltimore, where Campbell preached and received donations to carry to the poor in Ireland. They passed on to New York where Campbell visited British Consul James Buchanan, a man devoted to the cause of religious reformation. Campbell also received a call here from Robert Owen, the great Socialist he had debated eighteen years earlier in Cincinnati. The two had a most amiable visit and Campbell later remarked that of all his opponents in debate, "the infidel Robert Owen was the most candid, fair and gentlemanly disputant" he had met.

Campbell and Henshall set sail May 4 on the vessel Siddons. The two engaged in morning and evening prayers for the success of their mission agreeing, according to Henshall's account, to "commend ourselves daily to the Lord, praying him to impress our hearts with the importance of the work to be done; calling on him for this guidance and protection... Brother Campbell laid the whole before the throne of grace in a very impressive manner, and we felt the good influence of the sweet Spirit of God. Oh that the traducers of this Reformation and the revilers of this good man could have felt what we enjoyed upon the broad face of the mighty waters."

At the Captain's invitation, Campbell preached every Sunday during the twenty-five-day voyage. After landing at Liverpool, he spoke at nearby Chester in the building where Matthew Henry had regularly preached during his lifetime, and at Concert Hall, an edifice erected by the Owenites in Liverpool to promote their cause. From here he went throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, speaking in some thirty cities. In some places he addressed large audiences attracted by his considerable reputation; in others, he spoke to small groups of disciples in their modest meeting houses.

In London, he spoke at various places: in the disciples' meeting house, in public rooms near the university, at the Mechanics Institute, in a Unitarian house, and in a building of the General Baptists. Richardson notes, in his Memoirs, that "in this vast city of three million there was but a small ineffective church of about seventy members." (I am not sure, but I believe this may be the original of the little church we visited in Kentish Town, in 1974. Although there are several such churches in London now, this church numbers about fifty.)

Campbell carried with him a letter of commendation, sent to him by the great American statesman Henry Clay when he heard Campbell was going to England, and while in London he attended meetings of Parliament, hearing Lord Brougham and the Duke of Wellington speak. He also made a quick trip to France, visiting there the Louvre, the Tuilleries and some of the noted churches. At the close of his London visit, however, he wrote to his daughter.

*Meantime I sigh for repose, and often think of the hills around
Bethany and of the enviable lot of those I left behind me,
compared to that of the millions through which I am passing in
this Old World of palaces and hovels, of princes and beggars, of
exuberant wealth and cheerless poverty.*

While admired by many of the great of this world and comfortable in the company of statesmen and princes, Campbell was at heart a democrat and impatient with this world's pomp and splendor. He preached in many notable places, but he was most happy when winning new allegiances to the kingdom which is not of this world. He did not hesitate to enter the houses of Unitarians or Presbyterians, or the halls of unbelieving Socialists or courts of state, if by doing so he had opportunity to promote the name and interests of Him for whom he was ever an ambassador. Perhaps we need to learn from Campbell's example, we who scarcely ever leave the familiar walls of the brethren or the security of friendly faces.

31: Glasgow Prison

During Campbell's British tour in 1847, he experienced generally favorable reaction to his advocacy of New Testament Christianity. Although the progress of the Restoration Movement was not so rapid or widespread in Great Britain as in the United States, there was enough general interest to make the great reformer's appearances exciting and popular occasions. Not all of the reception was positive however. Campbell was to experience totally unexpected opposition in Scotland from men who sought to discredit him, not on the basis of his reform teaching, but on his views of slavery,

Although Campbell sought the abolition of slavery by constitutional means, he was not in sympathy with the extreme abolitionists who wanted an immediate end to the system, by force if necessary. Campbell had freed the slaves he inherited from his father-in-law and he sought unsuccessfully as a delegate in the Virginia constitutional convention to get a provision adopted which would eventually have eliminated slavery in that state. While he was misunderstood and opposed by abolitionists in their impatience, his influence in general had a calming effect and helped to hold restorationists together when much of the nation was dividing.

As Campbell proceeded on his tour north into Scotland, he encountered men who had determined that the best way to check the influence of his reform teaching was to attack his position on slavery. A preacher named James Robertson, concerned that Campbell's restoration principles were making serious inroads into his own ranks, organized an offensive on the slavery issue. He posted placards at announced speaking locations:

Citizens of Edinburgh
BEWARE! BEWARE!
The Reverend Alexander Campbell of Virginia
Has been a Slaveholder Himself and Is Still
A Defender of Man-Stealers!

Although greatly incensed by such misrepresentation, Campbell determined to ignore it and continued to preach to audiences now made larger and more curious. Robertson persisted, however, challenging Campbell to debate the slavery issue, knowing that all of Campbell's time was already committed. Not wanting to grant the rascal a hearing, Campbell refused, but he eventually agreed to a written debate. Robertson continued to follow with his placards to every announced speaking point on the tour. Finally, at Dundee, as the brethren were discussing what to do, one of them wondered if this James Robertson was the one who had been dismissed by the Baptists for abusing his mother and had subsequently joined the Morrisonians, one of the most intolerant sects of Scotland.

The next morning Campbell posted a notice to the Edinburgh journal, indicating that he would discuss publically his position on American slavery with anyone the Anti-Slavery Society might select, "even Mr. Robertson himself-provided only that he be not that

Reverend James Robertson who was publicly censured and excluded from the Baptist Church for violating the fifth commandment in reference to his mother, of which I have heard something in Dundee.” Campbell then went to Glasgow, to his next preaching appointment, and it was here that a warrant was served for his arrest, charging him with libel. His friends immediately insisted on going his bond but Alexander refused and was taken to jail where he stayed ten days before the case was called. The charge was dismissed immediately, but Campbell had contracted a hacking cough in the damp cell which forced him to curtail his speaking and to spend only six days in Ireland where he had planned to spend a month

On October 4, he boarded ship for America and two weeks later docked at Boston Harbor. Mail was waiting there, including a letter from Campbell’s daughter Clarinda. It carried the somber information that Campbell’s eleven-year-old son, Wickcliffe, had drowned. The blow was severe, coming on top of the prison ordeal, and there are those who think that Campbell was never again as vigorous and forceful as he had been.

As a postscript, brethren in Scotland assisted in filing a suit against Robertson for false imprisonment, though Campbell himself insisted that he would not take a penny. A judgment was rendered against Robertson, ruling that he pay 2,000 pounds in damages. He deserted to France rather than pay. Campbell’s reputation, rather than suffering from the whole incident, grew considerably on both sides of the Atlantic. Even honorable abolitionists denounced the imprisonment and praised the reformer’s behavior.

32: Slavery and Schism

An earlier article related how Campbell suffered from the hands of abolitionists in Scotland for taking a middle ground on slavery. Although he had freed his own slaves and hoped the nation would find peaceful means to abolish the slavery system, he did not believe that it was a violation of scriptural law for a man to hold slaves. Because of this middle ground, he had numerous critics on both sides of the Mason and Dixon line. During the decade preceding the Civil War he used his considerable influence to insist that slavery not be made a test of fellowship.

As early as 1832, Campbell denounced slavery as an evil, a curse that was likely to strangle the country unless overcome. Twenty years later he argued that no one could show where the scriptures ever specifically condemned slavery and that it existed without condemnation from the time of Abraham to that of the apostle. His argument against American slavery seems to have been mainly on economic and practical grounds. In 1849, he pointed this out, saying

It was such reasoning as this, and not the absolute scriptural unlawfulness of Slavery, that constrained me to emancipate and set free from slavery, not my slaves only, but myself. I hesitate not to add that emancipation was much more enjoyed by me than them; and hence from that day till now the emancipation of masters is full as much an object near to my heart as the emancipation of slaves. But alas! Masters sometimes, as well as slaves, hug the chains that enslave them.

It was because of his conviction of the practical effects of Slavery as a system that Campbell had sought as a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention to introduce provisions that would guarantee the gradual dissolution of slavery. (He sought unsuccessfully to persuade other delegates that a date should be fixed after which all children born to slaves would be born free.) In this area as in so many others the Sage of Bethany cut to the heart of the matter, distinguishing between divine law and practical wisdom. On the issue of slavery he resisted every effort to turn the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger* into a heated forum for divisive debate.

“To preserve unity of spirit among Christians of the South and of the North is my grand object,” he wrote in 1845, and, for the next fifteen years before the outbreak of the War he continued to argue the cause of peace, denouncing both Abolitionists and slaveholders who would make the issue a test of fellowship and cause for schism in a movement designed to promote unity. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 was a source of great dismay to him, but Campbell continued to wage peace throughout the bloody conflict struggling against great odds to maintain the fellowship among the brethren. This was the first great test of the principles of the movement and only time would tell whether the ship would weather the storm.

33: Weathering the Storm

It is an interesting fact that of all the major religious groups of America, the Disciples alone were not divided by the Civil War. Campbell had argued as early as 1845 that “we are the only religious community in the civilized world whose principles ... can preserve us from division.” Moses Lard eloquently argued the same thing in his *Quarterly*—that local autonomy and the freedom of every congregation to follow its own understanding of God’s will in such matters precluded divisions.

Later historians have analyzed the situation a little differently, some showing that the movement did divide in the last third of the century, over instrumental music and the missionary society, in spite of the local autonomy principle. These historians argue that division was avoided during the Civil War only because of the strength of Campbell’s influence and peace-keeping efforts. When he died, the movement divided in spite of local autonomy.

Still other recent historians argue that the movement actually divided during the Civil War, but that it did not become fully apparent until later. These scholars point out that the later open division over instruments and mission was largely sectional—between the conservative South and the more liberal North—and that the seeds of division were sown in the animosity of the Civil War, only to flower in the later, more obvious split.

There is probably some truth in all of these viewpoints. It is hard to believe that the Civil War did not produce serious strains for the Restoration fellowship—strains that continued to irritate during the rough years of Reconstruction. However, we should recognize that the principle of local autonomy is valid, and that it did work, albeit with the assistance of men of strong influence in the movement. They insisted that the principle was biblical and, if followed, would prevent division on a brotherhood-wide basis, allowing each congregation to follow its own conviction on matters not specifically legislated by scripture, such as the slavery issue.

The fact that the movement later divided does not invalidate the principle of local autonomy (if biblical, how could it?), but only demonstrates that brethren came to regard issues of opinion as more important than unity. The missionary society, instrumental music, the Sunday School, as well as numerous other issues, brought their divisions only when brethren began to regard such issues as more important than maintaining the unity of the Spirit, and the urge to conform more desirable than congregational freedom in Christ. It is interesting to think that if issues like slavery and the Civil War were not great enough to divide us, perhaps there is hope for recapturing the principle that worked so well then in dealing with divisions today. In this, as in so many other areas, we have much to learn from our pioneers in the faith.

34: Unity and Freedom

One of the mottoes adopted by the movement became the watchword of Christians across the country. “In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberality; in everything, charity.” We remember the Restorers for their devotion to the Scripture, their insistence upon strict fidelity to the Word in matters of faith. “Where the Bible speaks, we speak: where it is silent, we are silent,” they said. This was a cardinal point in their platform. But we need to remember also their fight against the religious creeds of the day and against the binding of human opinions as conditions of communion. Equally important to following the Word where it speaks was the freedom to differ in matters not clearly taught, to study without the necessity of arriving at the same opinions which the theologians held.

In his debate with Nathan Rice in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1843, Campbell emphasized this point:

Our doctrine is catholic, very catholic—not Roman Catholic nor Greek Catholic, but simply catholic. In religion we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, one spirit, one hope and one God and Father. But we have many opinions. The church, then, may have opinions by thousands, while her faith is limited to the inspired testimony of the Apostles and prophets. Where that testimony begins and ends, faith begins and ends. In faith, then, all Christians may be one, though of diverse knowledge and of numerous opinions. In faith we must be one, for there is but one Christian faith; while in opinions we may differ. Hence, we are commanded to receive one another, without regard to difference of opinion. It is not the object of our efforts to make men think alike on a thousand themes. Let them think as they please on any matters of human opinion, and upon “doctrines of religions,” provided only that they hold THE head to be Christ and keep his commandments.

It was with this two-sided thrust that the Movement flourished. Unity of faith and freedom of thought—these principles made our pioneers at the same time the most conservative and the most liberal group of their day. Tired of the confusion and jangling of the sects of that time, people readily accepted the Restoration message and from New York to New Orleans, from Georgia to Kansas, the great message moved with tremendous success. Adherence to those two principles—unity of faith and freedom of opinion—was so general that even the Civil war did not produce the general division among Restoration churches that every other religious group experienced. It is true that since the Civil War divisions have multiplied: a tendency to forget those earlier scriptural principles caused some to over emphasize one side or the other of the original plea. Some insisted on unity when they actually sought to require uniformity. Others insisted on freedom, when what they wanted seemed to be license. The result of the former was legalism, of the other lawlessness and anarchy.

35: Recapturing the Spirit

Here in 1982 perhaps we can reflect and recapture the spirit of our pioneers' plea—a scriptural balance between emphases on unity and freedom. We read Ephesians 4 and Romans 14 and see that the program must hold to the scriptural platform for unity while exhibiting that sweet charity which receives brethren when they differ in matters not essential. As we look around us at the shambles that has been made of the Restoration plea, surely we can be open to the appeal for a more scriptural and practical basis for unity than that we and our brethren have often followed. There is encouraging evidence that such a re-evaluation is occurring, that by God's help we may be on the way to taking up where our fathers left off one hundred years ago.

The Restoration movement in America brought back to focus for Christendom five important principles:

- 1) *The sole authority of the Word in matters of faith.*
- 2) *Freedom of thought where the Scriptures do not clearly speak.*
- 3) *The evil of sectarianism among Christians*
- 4) *The significance of Christianity's two great ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—one at the gate and the other within the kingdom of Christ*
- 5) *The nature of the church of Christ and of her government according to Scripture*

With these principles the pioneers changed the face of religion in America. Not everyone accepted their plea, but thousands did, and many more were moved to rethink their creeds.

There has been no time in Christian history when these principles were more needed than at the present, no time when the Restoration plea was more appropriate than now. Were we all to dare to recapture fully that grand plea, we would heal our division and get on with the business of taking the world for Christ. Jesus prayed, you know, that his disciples would be one that the world might believe. There is thus no more pressing imperative than that we find that oneness; upon this hangs the conversion of the world. God hasten the day!

Restoration - August 1983

**36: The Stone-Campbell
Movement - A Book Review**

College Press has published Leroy Garrett's *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, subtitled "An Anecdotal History of Three Churches." The book has received numerous reviews, mostly favorable and from all wings of the Restoration Movement. The work strikes me as one of the most objective histories of the movement thus far written. Although other good histories have been produced, e.g. West's *Search For The Ancient Order*, Murch's *Christians Only*, and Cochran's *Captives of the Word*, one senses while reading them the author's particular bias. Garrett's difficulty with many readers has been that he was not biased enough. Most of us want to find justification in history for our own peculiar positions, and we are uncomfortable when the historian reveals how "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

The dominant thesis of Garrett's work is that "restorationism" is a mistaken philosophy upon which the heirs of Stone and Campbell have shattered the movement which set out to unite all Christians. He notes that a "restorationist" insists upon "restoring the primitive church [and] assumes that the New Testament provides a fixed pattern for that church." Because many brethren have differed over what the pattern was, many sects have come about. And so Garrett writes that "history clearly demonstrates that restorationism by its very nature is divisive."

While the facts would seem at first to bear out this conclusion, I think it can be argued logically that our divisions were not the result of efforts to restore primitive Christianity, but of too narrow a view of restoration. Perhaps we have concentrated too much on the forms of the primitive church and not enough on the ideals and spirit of that church. The primitive church is represented not so much by any one church in the New Testament as by the criticism of all those churches by the apostolic writers, whose perspective we seek to restore. Who can quarrel with a restorationism which seeks to recapture the spirit or Romans 14, or 1 Corinthians 12, or Ephesians 4 as well as the forms of Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 11? It is a fractured restoration which settles for baptism by immersion and weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, but neglects to love and receive differing brethren or to exalt Christ over opinions.

Brother Garrett argues that the pioneers did not refer to themselves as a "Restoration Movement," usually referring instead to the "Current Reformation." My own reading indicates that the pioneers used restoration and reformation more or less interchangeably. It is a fact, however, that Campbell wrote a thirty-article series entitled "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" that ran through six of the seven years of his *Christian Baptist*. Then in the prospectus of the new *Millennial Harbinger*, one of the eight subjects he proposes to address is material of "interest to all engaged in the proclamation of the Ancient Gospel, and a restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." Five years later he writes that "the restoration of the gospel institution has been our theme for many years.

I am not able to see that the early pioneers really used the term restoration much differently from the way we use it today. It is true that their pursuit of the goal was accompanied by less sectarianism and party spirit than we often see in our day. If by Restorationism Brother Garrett means factionalism and partyism, it is easy to agree that this has been the source of much of our division. But I fail to see that these things are a necessary part of the Restoration Principle. In fact, valid Restorationism is as opposed to the party spirit as it is to infant sprinkling or human creeds.

But aside from this objection to the book's thesis, I must praise the way in which Brother Garrett has captured the essential qualities of the movement and presented the story with fascination and affection. Few histories are so readable as this, largely because of the author's lifelong love affair with our movement and its human components, and the evident affection with which he writes. There is no bias toward any one of the movement's branches; but the treatment of the movement as a whole has the bias of one who loves his material. He writes as no one from outside the movement could. This does not, I think, detract unduly from the book's accuracy and historical integrity.

One of the most interesting chapters is the final one, which analyzes the movement today and observes current trends and prospects. Readers of Gospel Tidings will be especially pleased with the favorable treatment of Non-Sunday School churches and their contribution to the movement as a whole. The author may be too kind to us.

With eighteen chapters and over 700 pages, the book will not be read in a sitting or two. But once one begins, he will find a compelling fascination in the drama of our fathers and the development of their dreams over the 150 years involved. One of the best features of the book is the original art work of Robert Ferro, capturing the countenances of 33 of the most prominent names in the movement in drawings from earlier photographs. One is able to see the men as he reads of their word.

All who have interest in the Restoration Movement must eventually read Brother Garrett's book. It may be ordered from Gospel Tidings.

37: Restoring What?

Some thirty-six of these columns so far have been published on the theme of Restoration. Yet I am reminded frequently that the restoration ideal means different things to different people. To many of our younger folk who may lack a sense of history, it may mean nothing at all. Definition and clarification are therefore often necessary.

Restoration as advocated here does not mean “patternism.” There is a sort of literalistic legalism which insists on finding an exact New Testament pattern for everything practiced today, whether it is a meeting in an upper room, gathering only at certain times, using only one container in the Lord’s Supper, a certain unvarying order of worship, etc. Such an approach usually focuses on externals only and seeks to bind on others the specific interpretation of the particular person or party. It results in sectarianism and the party spirit and usually argues to justify divisions as a means to “doctrinal purity.”

Strangely enough, others who are not sectarian in spirit seem to accept the same definition of Restoration in their insistence that the principle is necessarily divisive. They point to the results of those who practice *patternism* under the banner of Restoration as the evidence for their argument. That’s like saying the Hippocratic Oath leads to materialism because some physicians are motivated by greed. Yet we know that the Oath presents a noble ideal and that many are inspired by it to unselfish service.

Let me suggest that the Ideal of Restoration is to recover the spirit of Christianity as reflected in the teaching of Christ and his apostles. It respects patterns of behavior that are revealed in the New Testament for both individuals and churches, wherever those patterns are clearly commended by apostolic writings (e.g., the practices in the Corinthians’ church meetings). But the Restoration we seek is not merely the adoption of the pattern; it is the recovery of the spirit behind the pattern. To observe the Lord’s Supper weekly might indeed be following the New Testament pattern, but it would matter little if all we did was to be faithful to external forms without entering into the deeper significance of the observance. The same might be said of baptism and any number of others things. While the pattern of baptism dictates immersion, real Restoration recovers the full drama and significance of the redemption inherent in the act.

Thus, the Restoration we seek is concerned with the forms which Christians practice, but it will not settle for a sectarian emphasis which elevates those forms over the Christians who use them, or the Lord who ordained them. The relationship between believers, and between them and their Lord, is sacred business, too sacred to allow for sectarian divisions. The Restoration we seek is of the spirit of Romans 14, as well as the forms of 1 Corinthians 11; the depth of Romans 6 as well as the surface of Acts 2.

This is the penetrating and workable Restoration principle of the Campbells and Stones of the past century, not the sectarian splitting of our own time. It is a powerful principle, not

because great men espoused it, but because it is Biblical. The fact that lesser men and movements have perverted and distorted the principle is no reason for maligning or rejecting it. Let us everywhere restore, recapturing both the form and the spirit of the apostolic doctrine.

On Saturday, May 9, the Quaker Avenue Church in Lubbock hosted a seminar on the theme "A Common Plea: Imperatives for Unity Among Separated Brethren."

Four speakers, well known to their respective parties, were charged to make a positive contribution to the growing interest in unity among Restoration groups. Reuel Lemmons, long-time editor of *Firm Foundation* and, more recently, *Image* and *Action*, spoke on the topic "A Common Plea: Our Message to a Divided World and the Hindrance of a Disunited Church." Taking his text from Jesus' prayer for his disciples' unity, Lemmons pled eloquently for an end to partyism and for a willingness to allow opinions that have divided us to fade in significance as we emphasize instead the seven aspects of our faith as detailed in Ephesians 4:4-5. He insisted that our brotherhood should not be canceled out because of the issues we have divided over.

Ervin Waters, veteran debate warhorse of the "One Cup" party in the past, spoke of "Our Common Heritage: Looking to the Past for the Pioneers' Approach to Unity." In a powerful way, he traced the genius of our movement from earliest times. Perhaps his strongest point was the conclusion that Restoration churches have lost their way by forgetting the cardinal argument of Walter Scott in his *Messiahship*, or *The Great Demonstration*. Scott argued that the lordship of Jesus should be the biding force in unifying believers, that creeds and parties are an affront to that lordship and divisions in Christendom represent an elevation of issues of interpretation above Jesus himself.

G. B. Shelburne, founding editor of *Gospel Tidings* and respected leader and preacher trainer among non-Sunday School churches, spoke on "A Common Lord: The Authority of Jesus as the Basis for a United Church." His message followed quite logically from Waters' insistence on the centrality of Jesus, outlining the biblical case for the authority of Christ. He followed with some practical suggestions for a more united effort, including greater attention to congregational autonomy (which means allowing others some freedom) and cooperation in areas of mutual agreement. While he equated the Sunday School and instrumental music as issues for which there is no specific biblical authority, he recognized the need for allowing other brethren some latitude for following their own understanding on these points.

The final speaker, Joe Barnett, former preacher for Lubbock's Broadway church and now president of Pathway Evangelism, spoke on the topic "A Common Goal: Reaching the World for Christ Through a United Voice." He called upon his brethren to write the second chapter of the Restoration Movement, to demonstrate by loving behavior what the first chapter had established in its teaching. He indicated that he was encouraged by the seminar, as a type of the needed spirit. He impressed upon the assembly the tragic consequences for a lost world of a divided church, and argued that we ought once again to turn our energy and interest away from internal controversy toward evangelism.

The audience of about 250 seemed most responsive as one of the Quaker elders spoke in concluding the meeting, appealing to all not to be so stifled by the difficulties of achieving a full and active fellowship that they fail to practice the marvelous spirit evident in the activities of the day. In song, in prayer, in study, all had demonstrated a measure of fellowship and love that was rather amazing in itself. "Let us do what we know is right: love the brethren. Who knows but that God will use this love to take us all further, through the difficulties, into the full experience of the unity we desire."

39: The Real Restoration

In recent years there has been considerable discussion of the relative merits of *restoration* and *reformation*, and whether our own pioneers were restorers or reformers. Because of the many divisions in the Restoration Movement, some are arguing that the idea of *restoration* is inherently divisive and that our nineteenth century pioneers ought really to be called reformers. While much hinges on one's definition of restoration, if we take the word as those pioneers used it, there is every reason to conclude that the principle of restoration is not divisive but unifying in its tendencies.

From the beginning the pioneers seem to have used the words reform and restore almost interchangeably, believing that if they labored to "restore the ancient order of things," they necessarily brought reform of existing practices and structures in the church. If they sought to "reform" existing institutions, it was because they wished to restore the ancient apostolic order. Many passages from these early leaders could be cited to illustrate the point. They should be familiar to every serious student of the Movement.

Why then are current writers so eager to make a distinction and to denigrate restoration? What seems to be responsible is the sectarian and divided state of the Movement in our day. Men look at the distortions, at the sectarian and divisive corruptions of the worthy idea of "restoring the ancient order," and blame the principle rather than the abuses. Surely we all grant that a factionalist spirit has arisen under the banner of the Movement. The plowshares of peace have been converted into the implements of war. What began as the attempt to restore the ancient order of freedom and unity has been warped into a movement of stricture and strife. But is it the principle of restoration that is responsible?

Let us acknowledge that what is often argued in the name of Restoration today is not what was pled by the nineteenth century pioneers. Through the years, with the development of major differences and a virulent party spirit, what began as a noble experiment to promote unity became an ugly sectarian campaign to prescribe conformity. Men lost sight of the fact that Paul himself acknowledged that there would be differences (Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 12) and taught that brethren ought to respect and receive one another in spite of such differences. The Restoration plea by Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address*, and by those who advocated its principles for the next 75 years, was predicated on freedom of opinion as solidly as upon foundation principles of faith. But in the sectarian spirit of later generations, men were unwilling to allow the diversity and freedom in which the Movement could continue to flourish. They sought to bind one another to a creedlike uniformity of interpretation and practice, and to judge faithfulness not by loyalty to Christ but by conformity to the party line.

Some have used the term "Patternism" for the twentieth century corruption of the pioneers' dream, suggesting that we have been too concerned with minute details of New Testament practice and not enough concerned with principles. Yet in a general sense we are all concerned with patterns, with knowing the outlines of the apostles' practice. Perhaps the problem is not patternism but legalism. The fault was not so much in the pattern, or even

in our interpretation of it, but in the tendency to give the force of law to what we had deduced through purely human logic. Our interpretation of the patterns became a salvation matter, and the grace of God was reduced to a system of conformity to “brotherhood” interpretation. Lines of fellowship were no longer coextensive with the bloodline of the saved but with the narrower and graceless creed of the party. Every new difference became an issue as crucial as one’s faith in Jesus. Consequently the centrality of grace through faith was diluted by shared importance with a host of other issues, not unimportant in themselves but certainly secondary, if not trivial, by comparison.

But was this all Restoration? Should we fault that good concept because its distortions were divisive and ugly? No! No more than we should criticize the good work of Reformation because its heirs separated themselves into so many denominations and went astray in their zeal to crystallize their particular emphasis of reform. There is a better view of Restoration, and rather than focus on distortions, we need to recapture the goal of our fathers, rejecting latter day corruptions as readily as we have called upon the heirs of the Reformation to reject their denominationalism.

Restoration does not mean following the model of the Jerusalem church, or the Antiochian or Corinthian. There were problems in all the New Testament churches and we are nowhere called upon to ignore those flaws and blindly follow the pattern any of them reflects. The letters of the New Testament were written to correct such flaws and to point to the ideal. While the record of each church tells us something of the Lord’s will for his body on earth, we must gather from the whole of scripture, both historical and critical parts, a synthesis of the ideal church, the ideal Christian life. Restoration means attention to such forms as immersion (Romans 6) and the Lord’s Table (1 Corinthians 11), but also to the principle of fraternal acceptance (Romans 14), the criticism of the party spirit (1 Corinthians 1) and the principles of ministry and service (Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12). Restoration means attention to church leadership principles (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), but it also means acceptance of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) and shepherding through loving care (1 Peter 5:2-3).

While the great Reformers are worthy of honor and their work was a basis for much good, that movement stopped short of its goal. Denominational heirs of the Reformation have generally been guilty of creedal ossification rather than continuing the process of reform. The Restoration Movement suffers from the same danger under the influence of men who assume that the process is complete rather than seeing that it is continuous. When the Movement ceased to move and hardened around debated issues, we, like the Reformation groups before us, became distinct parties, hindering rather than enhancing the process of restoration. The Movement has become stalled by too much focus on our differences, rather than on the greater unity of all those who have been born again into a common relationship with the Father.

There is some evidence of an awakening, of a new sensitivity to what happened and what needs to be done. For all the *cul de sacs* of the Movement, there is still very much alive the concept of the pioneers’ approach to scripture as normative. The Restoration Ideal is still distinctly superior to the characteristic approach to the Word of the denominations around us. In matters of salvation doctrine, the nature of the government of the church, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, Restoration principles still have

much to offer the rest of the religious world. But we will have little impact as long as we persist in sectarian tendencies. A new day is dawning and our children may perhaps see again the glory of a Movement that succeeds in calling men back to the Bible. We should encourage and strengthen these heartening tendencies and work for a revival of the spirit of our grand predecessors, rather than focusing on the unfortunate lapses from the Ideal that are already too much in evidence around us.

Having written all this, I come back to my title, “The Real Restoration Movement.” It strikes me that all of our efforts at restoration and all of our talk about reform may after all be subsidiary to the heart and core of the problem. The burden of the Christian religion is to restore men to God, to repair the breach that has ever been widening since our first parents went astray and died. In his essay “On Education” John Milton wrote that “the end of all learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright.” Milton uses the word “restore” throughout his work. In the beginning of his greatest poem he declares his intention to write “of Man’s first disobedience” and the “loss of Eden, till one greater Man/ Restore us and regain the blissful seat” (*Paradise Lost*, I, 4-5). Ten thousand lines later, as Milton portrays the sad exit of Adam and Eve from Eden, hope is inspired by woman’s word as Eve says, “By mee the Promis’d Seed shall all restore” (XII, 623).

This, after all, is the real restoration movement, the bridging of the great gulf between God and man, by the atoning work of Christ and the continuing work of his Spirit. Church reform and doctrinal purification may indeed be legitimate adjuncts to the preaching of the Gospel of Restoration, but perhaps we should be careful to always see them as just that, secondary to the first work of divine/human reconciliation, without which, whatever our definition or goal for Restoration, other progress is meaningless. I can’t now cite the place, but I remember that Campbell himself said that whatever our progress in the externals of reform, we fail unless men’s hearts are changed and they exhibit the fruit of righteousness and love of God.

40: The Roots of Restoration

This series of lessons is really designed for our younger Christians. You have grown up in the church and have more or less accepted it because of your parents and your loyalty to them. That's not a bad thing. To come to know and love the Lord because our parents did so before us is a natural and Biblical pattern. But your elders have been thinking that more teaching is needed on the basic principles of Christianity, that perhaps because we had such a steady diet of "first principles" in our day, we may have tired of the repetition, gone on to secondary things, and neglected to emphasize "first things" to our children as much as we should.

We are a people whose history is identified with basic Bible truth. Our fathers made war on human creeds and insisted on going "back to the Bible" and "calling Bible things by Bible names" and "doing Bible things in Bible ways." Many of our children, though, are not aware of this rich historical tradition and consequently feel no special loyalty to the Bible-centered concepts that were so familiar to many of us older folk.

There are many believers around us, in the various denominational traditions. How do we differ from them, and is that difference justified? How does our special history fit into the larger picture of Christendom? Are we "just another denomination?" If not, why not? Why do we observe the Lord's Supper every week? Why do we teach and practice believers' baptism instead of infant sprinkling? Why do we insist on immersion? Is it really essential to our salvation? These and other questions will find their answer in a study of our restoration heritage, the history of the "Back to the Bible" movement.

"Restoration" is a term you hear frequently and you may have wondered about it. You know what "restore" means. We restore a building when it begins to decay and get dilapidated. We restore a painting after it has been damaged by time and the elements. We even hear about restoring hair to balding heads. We restore our streams by cleaning out the rubbish and pollution. The American Restoration movement had a similar purpose. Our forebears saw that the primitive gospel and the church of the New Testament had become clouded by human traditions and that people were distracted from finding salvation because of the confusion of creeds and the doctrines of men. Our father wanted to ascend the stream of history to the source and drink once again of the water of life as it issued from Jesus and his apostles. They wanted to "restore the ancient order," and their work was thus called the "Restoration Movement."

Actually, restoration may appropriately describe all that God has been doing since Adam and Eve fell away from him in the Garden. Since that time, ours has been a fallen race and the Bible is merely the story of God's continual work to "restore" men and women to his favor and grace. God's "restoration" movement culminates in the gospel of Christ and it continues wherever the gospel is preached and people respond.

The church is a "restored" family, a "restoration" community. It should stand as an example to all the world of God's "restorative" power. Beyond that it serves as an

ambassador to the world telling men that they too can be “restored” to God’s favor. This “restoration” movement will continue until Jesus returns, heralding the good news and demonstrating its power. When Jesus comes, he will complete the process and present the church, “without spot or blemish,” unto the Father.

In Jesus and the apostles’ time, the great work of gospel restoration began. On the day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the apostles began to preach the good news and when the multitudes accepted it the church was established. The Book of Acts is the story of the apostles’ work as they went everywhere, proclaiming the gospel of restoration to God. They preached Christ and baptized believers. The church (the “called out”) was established and the New Testament was written to instruct Christians in the ways of God, or, as Paul puts it, that Christians might be “rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught” (Colossians 2:7). In the New Testament we have a record of what the church was intended to be and do, under the guidance of Christ’s own apostles.

The apostles knew, however, that men would not always be faithful to their teaching. Paul wrote, “The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This and other passages suggest that the apostles were aware that the church would drift away from the will of God.

History reveals just how true Paul’s prophecy was. The first thousand years of church history is generally a sad picture. In fact, the 1260 days of Revelation 12 may present these years of apostasy when the church was transformed from a simple community of saved ones into a powerful political and ecclesiastical machine, capable of all sorts of crimes and corruption in the name of Christianity. The Fall of Eve, the “mother of all living,” in Eden was paralleled by the Fall of the spiritual bride, the church, away from the teaching of Christ. And so, John writes, “The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God where she might be taken care of for 1260 days” (Revelation 12:6). Some people think this is a reference to the underground nature of the church in hiding during the Great Apostasy.

It was after about 1200 years that men began to question this state of affairs. There may have been significant reform movements earlier, but we don’t seem to know much about them before the 12th century. But at that time the tide began to turn, slowly. The first major group to oppose the Roman Church was the Albigenses, named after the town of Albi, in France. Shortly after the Albigenses, there arose in another French city the Waldenses, named after Peter Waldus, a merchant of Lyons. They objected to the corruptions in the church and were excommunicated in 1184, though they survived and still exist in the Alps of France and Italy.

Each century thereafter gave rise to new reformers. In the 14th century there came John Wycliffe, an Oxford scholar who believed that ignorance of Scripture was the greatest hindrance to New Testament Christianity. He began the first systematic translation of the Bible into English. In the next century, a man named Huss translated Wycliffe’s writings and circulated them in the Balkan countries. Both Wycliffe and Huss were greatly

persecuted for their opposition to the established church, and Huss was eventually burned alive. It has been said that the blood of such martyrdom watered the seeds of reform to produce the great Reformation of the next century.

In 1519, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses, points of disagreement with the Catholic Church, to the door of the cathedral in Wittenburg (East Germany) and became the greatest name among the Reformers. His work was paralleled in Switzerland by Calvin (Geneva) and Zwingli (Zurich), and by John Knox in Scotland. The 16th century was a time of great religious ferment and widespread repudiation of established religious authority – in general, a movement back to the Bible and personal accountability. The work of these great reformers resulted in several major denominations that remain to this day – Lutheran, Presbyterian, and several Reformed Churches.

We owe a great debt to these reformers. Because of them, the Bible was translated into the people's languages and came to be a familiar book. The authority of the Word of God over human ecclesiastical dogma and the freedom of faith for the individual came to be the heritage of many Christians in the Reformation. Yet much remained to be done if the New Testament ideal was really to be recaptured. Rather than fully returning to New Testament ideals, however, the heirs of the great Reformers crystallized their progress into creeds and each group contributed to division among the people of God. By the 17th century the battle of restoration had shifted from a struggle against the Roman church to conflicts between the new denominations.

The roots of our own American Restoration movement can be found among those in the 1600s who sought to reject human creeds and follow the Bible only. There was a group in Holland known as Anabaptists. They regarded themselves as voluntary associations of believers and practiced the mutual ministry of the saints. They insisted on immersion and opposed infant baptism. They emphasized the spiritual life, the regular observance of the Lord's Supper, and the separation of church and state. They wished to be known simply as "Christians" or "brethren," and pled for a return to the Christianity of the first century.

In England, in the same period, were the Puritans, struggling against the established church of that country. Many individuals could be mentioned, but I have a special interest in one of them, a poet. We know John Milton primarily for his great poems, but he also wrote extensive commentaries on the Bible. As Secretary of Foreign Tongues under Oliver Cromwell in the great 16th century Puritan Revolution he wrote against the corruptions of the state church and argued for the freedom of each local congregation, under its own elders and deacons. He insisted that every Christian was a priest before God and that the clergy system of the denominations was founded on pride and ignorance. Milton also argued that immersion was the scriptural mode of baptism and that Christians should observe the Lord's Supper weekly, after the apostles' model.

Another man of the same period was a philosopher. Not known primarily as a religious reformer, John Locke's writings have nevertheless exerted a major influence on later restorationists. Anyone familiar with Thomas Campbell and his *Declaration and Address* will find a special interest in Locke's "Letter Concerning Toleration." "Since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things only, as

the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express words, to be necessary to salvation.” Locke preceded the Campbells in their views on anti-clericalism, on distinctions between the Law and the Gospel, on the church as a “free and voluntary society,” and on the meaning of heresy. He was especially influential in the movement toward a more rational approach to religion and away from excessive emotionalism.

All these movements and reformers illustrate for us the necessity of continually reassessing our progress in recapturing the New Testament ideal. We have surveyed the church’s progress through the centuries, from the days of the apostles through 1600 years. Our next lesson will focus on American church history and that movement that produced the groups we know today as Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. We will follow the course of reform across the Atlantic and then across America. We will rediscover the great movement to “unite Christians from all the sects” and begin to see how the Lord’s prayer for the unity of his disciples became a vital goal among American “restorers.”

The question we all should ask in these studies is, “Where do we stand, today?” Is our loyalty to God and his Word, or have we too become mired in human tradition? The goal of Restoration is continually to test our practice by the Bible and to keep moving on to closer harmony with the apostles’ doctrine, and the will of Jesus, Lord of the church.

Restoration - January 1991

41: Restoration Comes to America

In our first lesson we traced the history of reform through the 17th century and noted the work of major figures who sought a return to Biblical practices and teaching. In this lesson we follow the tide of reform across the ocean and introduce figures you may be more familiar with. In each case, men see their way a little clearer because of the work that went before them. That's why we pay honor to Luther, Calvin, and others of their time, who began to break the bonds forged by a thousand years of tradition.

By the middle of the 18th century we come to movements in Great Britain that are more easily identified with the American Restoration. We find groups whose stated purpose was to reproduce the church of apostolic times. For instance, John Glas withdrew from the Church of Scotland because of his objections to its alignment with the state and because he believed that, Biblically, congregations ought to be independent and at liberty to follow their own understanding of scriptures. Glas and his followers rejected all human creeds and began to practice the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. Glas's son-in-law, Robert Sandman, was the most significant force in the movement. He was a scholar whose works were widely read. He stressed a reasonable approach to religion and played down the emotion. Probably the most famous member of this group was the great physicist, Michael Faraday.

The Glasites were infant sprinklers at first, but Archibald McLean and Robert Carmichael began to immerse after the apostolic order and their churches came to be known as Scotch Baptists. These churches were congregational in government and the result of conscious effort to restore the exact pattern of New Testament churches in work, worship, ordinances and ministry. They defended infant baptism at first, but eventually gave it up as unscriptural, recognizing that the New Testament nowhere records the baptism of anyone who did not first believe in Christ and repent of sin. Alexander Campbell came in contact with the Haldane churches in 1809 during the year he attended Glasgow University and being shipwrecked with his family on the way to America from Ireland. He was 21 at the time.

One distinctive of the Haldane churches was their emphasis on mutual ministry. William Ballantine published *A Treatise on the Elder's Office*, insisting on a plurality of overseers in every church and mutual exhortation in the Lord's Day assemblies. Mutual ministry (teaching by all qualified male members) came to be a hallmark of Restoration churches in both Great Britain and America. In time, this emphasis slackened in this country in favor of a professional ministry, but it has lasted insistently in British churches down to the present.

About this same time in America, groups were throwing off denominational trappings and seeking to go back to the Bible for all their doctrine and practice. Time allows the mention of but a few. Elias Smith and Abner Jones in New England established churches which sought the New Testament pattern. Down south, in the Carolinas, James O'Kelley and Rice Haggard rejected their denominational ties and encouraged believers to follow the

Bible only and to be just Christians. In Georgia, there is the story of Christian Dasher among the Salzburger immigrants from Europe who, as a result of his personal study of the Scripture, wanted someone to immerse him after the order of the early church. Someone told him that there was a preacher named Sheldon Dunning in Savannah who would be open to such a strange thing. He looked him up and was baptized, and, in 1819, was instrumental in starting a church in the Oak Grove community that has survived to this day; it now meets in the town of Rincon. Our own Leon Kessler grew up in this congregation. Christian Dasher and his brethren knew of no one else in the world who believed as they did, but they wanted to be Christians only, to be a church of Christ.

A more prominent figure was Barton W. Stone in Kentucky. A Presbyterian, Stone had participated in the notable Cane Ridge Revival, in which thousands turned away from the great worldliness and immorality of the time to embrace the gospel. Because Stone and other Presbyterian preachers were tired of denominational strife, they created their own association and called it the Springfield Presbytery. It was not long, however, before they concluded that all such denominational associations were unnecessary, if not unscriptural. They decided to dissolve their association and published "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery in 1804; it became the first great document of the American Restoration Movement and is a classic in the literature of Christian unity. Stone and his associates declared that they would no longer adhere to human creeds but would follow the scripture and be Christians only. Their work spread rapidly in Kentucky and surrounding areas. The freshness of unsectarian Christianity and the exaltation of Scripture above human creeds were appeals the world was ready for, and the preaching of the simple gospel had a powerful impact on this frontier land.

Of course, the name best known in the Movement is Campbell. Thomas Campbell was a faithful Presbyterian minister in Ireland, highly respected as a pastor of his flock and proclaimer of the Word. Because of his health, he decided to go to America. In 1809, he sailed alone, with the intent of getting established and sending for his family as soon as possible. He settled in Washington County, Pennsylvania, among the Cumberland Seceder Antiburgher Presbyterians there. But he discovered that sectarian division kept his brethren warring against each other and refusing to have fellowship across their party lines. Always a man of peace, Thomas sought to heal the breaches and even invited Presbyterians from other segments to the communion table. He thought this was the one place where common ground could be found.

But Thomas underestimated the bitterness of sectarianism. He was called to account for not being faithful to maintain the lines of separation. In fact, he was brought before a church tribunal and would have been excommunicated except that when he saw what was coming, he voluntarily removed himself from the denomination. This event forced Thomas to do some serious study on the subject of Christian unity. He wrote out his conclusions in a now-famous document: the *Declaration and Address*. In it he repudiated human creedmaking and advocated the union of all Christians. But the one thing he worried about was his family. He had left them as a good Presbyterian minister. How would they take the news of his separation from his denomination?

In Ireland the oldest son, Alexander, gathered the family according to the father's instructions and prepared to ship out to America. They set sail in 1809, but their ship wrecked in a storm off the coast of Scotland. They decided to winter in Glasgow and while there Alexander enrolled in the university, where his father had studied before him. It was in Glasgow that Alexander came in contact with the Haldanes and concluded that he should forsake denominationalism and follow the Bible only. The family sailed again in the spring, Alexander worrying about how to tell his father that he was no longer a Presbyterian.

Father Campbell met the ship and they all departed by wagon for Pennsylvania. As they secured accommodations at an inn for the first night on the way, Thomas thought about how he could break the news of his religious changes. Neither father or son was aware of the other's radical change. After supper, Thomas produced the proofs of his *Declaration and Address* and asked his son to read it. As Alexander concluded, he realized with great joy that Providence had brought them independently to the same conclusions. He was so moved by the experience that he resolved to devote the rest of his life to a proclamation of these ideals of Christian unity and undenominational Christianity.

The "Declaration" was (1) an argument for the unity of the church: "consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures." It was (2) an argument for the final authority of Christ through the New Testament: "a perfect constitution for the worship, discipline and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members." It was (3) an argument for Christian freedom under Christ; "inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God." It was (4) an argument against sectarian division: "division among Christians is a horrid evil . . . productive of confusion and every evil work."

We must remember that at the time both Thomas Campbell and his 21-year-old son were still unimmersed. Neither realized the full implications of the principles they had affirmed. Alexander told his father, however, that if they were faithful to what he had written, they would have to surrender the practice of infant baptism. The father was not sure that such an extreme conclusion was called for. They continued to study the matter and three years later when Alexander had married and his first child was born, the question of whether to "baptize" her had to be faced, as well as whether his own baptism as an infant was valid. As he came to a conclusion, Alexander and his wife sought out a Baptist preacher, Matthias Luce, and asked if he would baptize them according to the scriptural patterns, "in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Luce agreed, and the couple and several others who had been convinced of the need to take the same course made their way down to Buffalo Creek, not far from Bethany Virginia. As they arrived, they found father

Thomas there also, ready to submit to the same scriptural burial. They were following a charted course of fidelity to Scripture that was to characterize the Movement as it continued to seek apostolic ground.

Nellie and I have seen the place along Buffalo Creek where these historic immersions occurred. We have worshipped under the trees which once sheltered the little building of the Brush Run Church where these saints first met. I don't mind telling you that to me these are hallowed spots, as significant in their way as the Wittenberg Cathedral door on which Luther nailed his 95 theses. I thrill to the faith of these pioneers who dared to risk everything on the conviction that the apostles' written word was as sure a guide for the 19th century church as their spoken word was for the first century church. With this conviction, the spirit of the movement began to spread, far beyond the confines of these secluded hills of Virginia.

At first, the Campbell movement in western Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio and the Stone movement in Kentucky were entirely separate, but as their respective influence and churches grew, they eventually became aware of each other. In a historic meeting at Lexington, Kentucky, over New Year's Day, 1832, leaders of both groups came together for study and prayer, exploring their common ground. They finally agreed to join hands and hearts in the great work of the gospel, and in Christian unity. Prominent in this meeting was John T. Johnson, a lawyer who had served two terms in Congress and whose brother, Richard was to become Vice President of the United States. When John T. Johnson caught the spirit of the Restoration plea, he turned from politics to preaching and became one of the most successful evangelists of the day.

Another great preacher present at the meeting was "Raccoon" John Smith, a former Baptist preacher from the hills of Kentucky, whose life is so interestingly told in Louis Cochran's book, *Raccoon John Smith*. As spokesman for the Disciples (as Campbell's followers were called), he pled eloquently for unity, and concluded his speech with, "Let us then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites, or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need." He then thrust out his hand to Barton Stone and in that handclasp the two movements symbolically merged with great joy and thanksgiving. Stone later wrote in his journal, "What could we do but unite? We both compared notes. We found ourselves congregated on the same divine creed, the Bible. We had the same King – the same faith -- that same law. . . . We could not do otherwise than unite in Christian love."

The great significance of this unity meeting was that it occurred on the basis of the simple gospel faith without anyone's demanding absolute uniformity in every point of doctrine. Campbell and Stone and their brethren had substantial differences, but they agreed to discuss those differences as brethren, not as enemies. They were united on the gospel; their differences were opinions about the interpretation of doctrine. Their example reflects a spirit we need to recapture today. It is solidly based on the propositions of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* – but more importantly it is what Paul teaches us in Romans 14.

One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. . . . Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. . . . One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. . . . Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. . . . Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Campbell's and Stone's attitude reflects one of the mottoes soon adopted by the Movement, a motto which became the watchword of Christians across the country as the appeal for unity rang out. *In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in everything, charity.* We frequently remember the Restorers for their devotion to the Word, their insistence on strict fidelity to the Scriptures in all matters of faith. "*Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent.*" This was, of course, a cardinal point in their program. But we need to remember also their great devotion to freedom in matters of opinion. They had fought too hard against human creeds and the binding of human interpretation to turn around and demand a straitjacket uniformity of thought from their own brethren.

It was with this two-sided thrust that the Movement flourished: Unity of faith and freedom of opinion. These principles made the pioneers simultaneously the most conservative and the most liberal men and women of their day. Their message spread like wildfire across America, from New York to New Orleans, from Georgia to Oregon, the simple gospel message powerfully attracting the masses. Adherence to these two principles – unity of faith and freedom of opinion – was so successful that even the Civil War did not divide the Movement as it did every other religious group in America. As we look back and see the success of the New Testament Christianity throughout the 19th century, we glorify God and are inspired to recapture the same spirit here at the end of the 20th.

43: The Continuing Restoration

Our 19th century forebears were committed to “restoring the ancient order.” They wanted to reproduce first century Christianity in their own day, to worship and work according to the patterns they found in the New Testament. They sought to “keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” The great unity meeting of 1832 in Lexington was symbolic of the movement across America as men and women were attracted to the restoration plea. They did not think of themselves as a new church but sought simply to be the church of the New Testament.

For 150 years now, this plea has been sounded forth. The movement spread to Canada, England, Australia, and all over the world. Wherever you travel, you can find churches and Christians with the same goal—preaching the gospel and making disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). We thank God and rejoice to be a part of the noble work of the kingdom.

But history shows that all good movements eventually suffer corruption. It was true in the Garden. It was true with the first century church. Paul told the elders from Ephesus, “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:29-31). And the great falling away took place. For a thousand years the church drifted farther away from its ancient moorings.

Then came the Reformation and a great stirring took place as men and women throughout Europe began again to read the Scripture. They sought to know God on an individual basis and to elevate his Word above human councils. But that good movement settled into major denominations as the followers of Luther, Calvin, Knox, and others crystallized around the creedal peculiarities of their leaders. What started well stopped short of its potential and for 300 years the denominational divisions stifled the progress of the gospel.

As the 1800s dawned, it appeared that a new movement would accomplish what the 16th century reformers failed to do—going back to Jerusalem to recapture the church as God intended it. As we’ve seen, the fresh gospel seed was planted again, without mixture of human creeds, and the pure seed brought forth fruit. Not a new denomination, but churches of the Lord, wherever the gospel went, sprang up. Unfortunately, this glorious movement also came to be marred by division—over instrumental music, missionary societies, Sunday schools, details of the Lord’s Supper, and other, rather incidental things. What began as a grand unity movement lost its force in sectarian division.

Yet here remains the Word, still calling us to the One Body, the One Faith, the One Baptism (Ephesians 4:4). Every new generation is challenged again to ascend the stream to the fountain, to return to New Testament patterns and to restore “the ancient order of things.” Not to advance a party or create a denomination, but to build Christ’s church and to demonstrate that he is Lord. Let’s look again at some of the great truths our fathers restored and reflect on our own risks of slipping away—of forgetting where we’ve come

from. One point needs to be made first. Our Restoration pioneers did not “restore the church.” The church has always been with us; as Jesus said, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18, KJV). Sometimes in secret, sometimes under great persecution, there have been children of God through all the centuries. Jesus has never been a head without a body, a king without a kingdom. What the Restoration movement sought was not to restore the church but to restore to the church “the ancient order of things,” the doctrines and practices revealed in the New Testament. With that in mind, we will proceed to discuss about five major accomplishments of the movement, along with some dangers inherent in those gains.

(1) In 1816, in Cross Creek, Virginia, Alexander Campbell delivered the now famous “Sermon on the Law.” Although it drew the ire of some of the leaders in the Baptist Association with which the reformers had temporarily affiliated, it clearly set forth lost distinctions between Old and New Covenants and proclaimed the exclusive application of the New Testament scriptures for the Church of Christ. The fuzziness with which the Testaments had previously been seen, as though Christian gentiles were still under the Law, was rejected in favor of strict adherence to the covenant of Grace and the revealed will of Christ. While most denominations are still not clear on this issue, and consequently seem not to follow faithfully the provisions of either covenant, our Restoration heirs have generally regarded the New Testament with special reverence. In their circles, the Bible is normative, and what is revealed about the New Testament church is regarded as an appropriate pattern for the church today.

Other groups have felt free, for instance, to depart from the Biblical pattern of immersion for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), in the conviction that current church leaders are free to make changes in keeping with their judgment of expediency and timeliness. While Restoration heirs have sought to reproduce the apostolic church’s organization, with elders, deacons, and evangelists, other groups have felt free to improvise and change, in keeping with their leaders’ judgment. Most denominations have not, as another example, seen fit to follow the early church’s practice in observing the Lord’s Supper every week. Restoration churches regard the practice of the first century church as a pattern to be followed in every age.

The difference is one of approach to the Scripture. While we do not wish to be critical of our religious neighbors (many of whom are every bit as sincere as we), we are very thankful for the high view of the Word that seems to take seriously all that it reveals. We need to continue this respect, measuring our lives and that of our congregations by the “patterns of sound doctrine” once revealed to the saints.

Of course, with this high view of the Word there are dangers against which we should be on guard. There is a tendency among us toward “bibliolatry,” a worship of the written word instead of the Word incarnate. When we forget the Spirit behind the Word and devote ourselves to a legalistic, Pharisaic emphasis on the details of the New Testament, as though it were the Ten Commandments made over, we miss the point. We need equal emphasis on the Word *and* the Spirit, so that all we do is out of love and devotion, rather than fear and mechanical obedience. As Paul told Timothy, “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). We revere the Book, but only because God is in it. We study and obey its teaching,

not because in doing so we can earn our way to heaven, but because it leads us more fully into the life of our Savior, whose perfect obedience has already earned our salvation.

(2) The great pioneers of our movement restored baptism to its rightful place in God's scheme of redemption. They insisted on applying the words of Peter and Paul to those who heard their preaching and inquired of the way to salvation. They said, "Repent and be baptized," and those "who gladly received" their word were buried in water, in the likeness of Jesus' burial and resurrection (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4). Our faithful fathers were not so concerned about the questions, "Does it have to be immersion?" and "Is it necessary for salvation?" It was enough for them that the apostles taught it and New Testament believers submitted to it. They noted Paul's statement that "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27), and "we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Today, otherwise respectable evangelists refuse to follow the pattern so clearly revealed by the apostles. A noted radio evangelist recently wrote that "there is no sense in which baptism had anything to do with our salvation: it's all by faith." Yet Peter wrote that "this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). Our fathers were content to accept the scripture at face value, even though it conflicted with prevailing practice and denominational creeds. We are thankful for their heritage of faithfulness to the Word.

But here, too, there is danger. In the past we may have insisted so much on baptism—its necessity and its proper form—that we have tended to represent it as an end in itself, one of four mechanical "steps" to salvation, rather than the loving response of the believer to his newly recognized Lord. We have tended to talk of faith *and* baptism, instead of faith exhibited *in* baptism. Here again, we must not divorce baptism from the Spirit who directs such action; the new birth is a birth "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), and to minimize the work of the Spirit is as bad as to neglect the water.

**44: The Continuing
Restoration (part 2)**

(3) Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of the Restorers is the “doctrine of the church.” To a world accustomed to thinking of the church in terms of creedal statements and denominational structures, their simple and Biblical claim that the church consisted of all those in every age and place who had been “born of water and the Spirit” was a fresh and liberating truth. They noted that on the day of Pentecost those that “gladly received” Peter’s word were baptized, and “about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). They “were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Thus, so simply, was the church created; thus did men flow into it. Contrary to the mystification of Creeds and Councils, here was “the Church.” No one was required to believe anything except that Jesus is the Son of God; no one was required to do anything except demonstrate his acceptance of that glorious fact by obedience. No voting, no catechism, no sanction by synod or priest. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16), and the Lord sets the saved into *His* church.

What dangers could come from so clear a doctrine as this? The danger always lurking behind the championing of any truth—the arrogance of assuming that one has a corner on that truth. And we have tended to talk as though the Restoration movement *is* the church. Great blessing though it may have been, it is not. And when we use “Church of Christ” in a sectarian sense, excluding from the phrase anyone who has been “baptized into Christ,” we fall victim to the error that the pioneers sought to correct. If we use the name “Church of Christ” (one of many acceptable Biblical terms for the Body), let us take care that we always mean either a local congregation (a church of Christ) or the great universal family of the saved. Our tendency to use the term to identify one part of the Body—say the non-instrumental churches—to the exclusion of other baptized believers, is to use it in a sectarian sense.

(4) We thank God for the restoration of the Lord’s Supper in its proper place in the weekly assembly of the saints. While numerous other groups have come to appreciate and practice this Biblical ritual, it was rather uncommon in the early 1800s. It is apparent that the early church made this practice central to their Lord’s Day assemblies, seeing in it the tender memory of a Savior so recently slain. It remains today that aspect of our worship that draws us, more than anything else, to the foot of the cross. Here at the table we all gather in common thanksgiving and love, laying aside our differences in our mutual dependence on Jesus’ healing sacrifice.

How tragic that, even here, many of us have relegated the Supper to a mere “item of worship,” a ceremony of tradition and duty, without the depth of devotion and somber awe that ought to characterize this feast which Jesus established that we might “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). What a weak proclamation we make if we eat and drink casually, as though it were merely an act to be observed through necessity! Can we say that our churches generally have not slipped in this respect and may not be in danger of losing the significance of this restored feast?

(5) Our pioneering brethren restored the ministry to its scriptural place, insisting on the universal priesthood of all believers. Into a world gone crazy over clerical privilege and “Reverend” titles, they came preaching the Biblical order. No hierarchy with headquarters in Rome; no councils of bishops with eyes upon Canterbury. Not even a bowing down before presbyters led from Geneva. “The ministry” is the rightful service of every Christian, with each man and woman occupying the place that God’s calling and gifts dictate. There were apostles and prophets in the early church, and they yet function through the Word they wrote. For continuing ministries in every age, he gave others to be “evangelists. . . pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith. . .attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). Each congregation had its elders and other servants (Philippians 1:1), selected by the people on the basis of scriptural qualifications (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:8-10), and serving according to the congregation’s needs and development.

But of course there is always the danger that leaders will mistake their roles of service and see themselves as voices of authority, dictating instead of leading. There is a tendency among us that wants to vest control and priestly power in overseers who Biblically ought to be shepherds and servants of the flock. Sometimes decisions are made and directions are charted without reference to congregational thought or input. Biblical leaders assume a most unbiblical role, “lording it over God’s heritage.”

In other instances, our desire for worldly effectiveness makes us want to turn the ministry over to professionals and to make of evangelists a special class of “clergy.” While Paul clearly justifies the work of financially supported ministers and we need to sustain those who devote their lives to preaching the gospel, we must not corrupt their office to pander to our own ease and taste. We must recognize the danger and seek always to go back to the Biblical ideal, restoring the pattern of universal ministry, each saint serving according to his or her gifts. Perhaps there is no area where there is greater temptation to depart from the Biblical ideal than in our concepts of ministry.

Conclusion

The Restoration is not completed; it is a continuing process. As long as men are imperfect, they will drift away from God’s perfect will. The message of restoration is needed today as much as ever before. Much has been accomplished, and we can be thankful, but the world has not been converted, denominationalism is still a curse, and the church has often drifted into sectarianism. We have a glorious message that, largely, is not being heard. Our isolationism and exclusivism have led us to talk and debate among ourselves instead of engaging the world in the dialogue of restoration. We have become “defenders of the truth” instead of “angels of light,” bearers of the good news.

Let us pass over the last 100 years of division and strife and recapture the glowing message of our pioneer fathers. They weren’t all that concerned about who was worthy of the fellowship, but welcomed all who loved the Lord and were seeking to follow him. They went everywhere anyone would let them preach the message of unity in Christ. They had such confidence in the truth of their message that they weren’t worried about losing anything by wide and inclusive association. They wanted exposure for the truth and, like

ancient saints, they “went everywhere preaching the word.” They were known far and wide as a people of the Book, for the authority with which they preached the gospel and the vigor of their effort to lead others out of non-Biblical practices.

Such is our heritage. Couldn't we be more like that today? Doesn't the world need a strong call to Biblical Christianity? Shouldn't we seek strength in unity, “that the world might believe?” If the Lord tarries, we might yet see the 21st century as a time of turning to God. With what is now occurring in Russia, China, Europe and the Third World countries, we face momentous challenges. Is the Church up to those challenges? I have been talking about the “Back to the Bible” movement, but I am reminded of the suggestion of one of our younger preachers that what we really need is to “go forward with the Bible.” If we really believe that the Book is for all ages, that it is as relevant today as it was in the past, what we really need is to “come up to” the Word (actually, a phrase that Campbell used also), to “get in step with the Spirit,” as Paul puts it in Galatians. While we talk about recapturing the principles of the first century church, ours is not an antiquarian quest but an attempt to do everything and be everything our Lord calls us forward to in his Word. Let us then “go forward with the Bible!”

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45: A Case Study in Sectarian
Futility

A friend recently gave me a copy of Ronny F. Wade's book, *The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday*, and it has been a long time since I have gained more mixed pleasure from a reading experience. I noted with avid interest information on early Twentieth Century preachers that I had read of and read about but longed to know more of—men like Dr. G.A. Trott, H. C. Harper, Homer Gay, Homer King, J.N. Cowan, R.F. Duckworth, Clarence Teurman, N.L. Clark and J.D. Phillips. These were men whose dedication and influence on churches of my own association were well known but never before so carefully articulated as in Wade's book. I had met N.L. Clark and J.D. Phillips. I heard the former preach in Tulsa in the church where I was baptized, and visited with "Doug" Phillips in his Austin office in the early 50s. My father and others had told me of the prowess of J.N. Cowan in debate and our home held a copy of his famous encounter with Daniel Sommer, which I read with some interest as a boy. And I was aware of R.F. Duckworth's work with the federal government in Washington on behalf of conscientious objectors: I know a considerable number of CO's who benefited from his labors.

Of course, Harper, Gay and King were known to us as "One Cuppers" and we were less favorably disposed to their work. From early in my Christian life, though, I have had a consuming interest in all my brethren, and I read the *Old Paths Advocate* often and with interest just to find out what these "other" brethren were accomplishing. I often admired their rugged devotion to their special cause, even when I could scarcely understand or agree with their arguments. I remember hearing and marveling at the preaching of Gillis Prince and E.H. Miller some 40 years ago. Prince preached on the "Mark of the Beast" at a church in Austin and we followed him with fascination for about an hour and 45 minutes. As a young man I was mightily impressed; I might find more to quarrel with now in his style and content, but I'm not sure. Theirs was a brand of fiery and self-taught scholarship that offers much to admire and might well benefit more polished younger preachers today.

Perhaps the paragon of this sort of hard-scrabble scholarship is that prince of debaters from an earlier day, Ervin Waters. Wade's book speaks with considerable respect for him even when Waters' current peacemaker stance is not fully appreciated. No one of his generation better represents the power and progress of the debating strategy than Ervin Waters. He stood up to the giants and, according to brethren who knew him best, always won the day. He himself tells a fascinating story of his former fractious forays from one side of the country to the other. Not only as a debater, but a preacher of the ancient gospel, he was almost without peer. I have heard him proclaim with such force and captivation that the audience sat spellbound to the end of his sermons. One night I heard a young man sitting behind me exclaim audibly at the end of Ervin's sermon, "Wow!" And he merely vocalized what many of us felt.

So it is with a great deal of pleasure that I read Wade's account of the history of One Cup churches and of preachers who preceded the division and therefore belong to both streams of Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ. But that pleasure was mixed with considerable

sadness and frustration as the book chronicled the history of division and partisan strife. Of course, it is possible to view all this debating and competitive struggling as evidence of loyalty “contending for the faith.” Ronny Wade so views it. Throughout his book he talks of standing for the truth and battling the forces of error. His work concludes on the note, “Brethren, let us gird on our armor and keep up the fight.” He seems to feel that the work of the kingdom is primarily combative.

While I admire conviction and appreciate devotion to one’s causes, I am saddened by the record of what has happened so often to the church in community after community when brethren made loyalty to these issues of greater importance than the unity for which Christ prayed and died. I will not here argue with my brethren over the cup issue, or the Sunday School issue, or the marriage issue, or the drink element issue, or the premillennial reign issue, or any other matter of interpretation which has been elevated to greater importance than the unity of Christ’s body. Brother Wade seems to think that what has never worked will someday miraculously become efficacious. He chronicles division after division and seems to think that the problem is always as simple as winning others to his understanding of the “truth.” And while the record as he himself writes it shows the futility of this approach and the division it has perpetuated, he still thinks “The Sun Will Shine Again, Someday!” Better debaters will arise, and eventually we all will be persuaded by the force of their logic and the truth of their propositions. We will have unity because agreement has been forged on all these issues.

But it will never happen! The course Brother Wade delineates will produce more and more divisions until our numbers are dissipated and our influence in the larger world destroyed. We are well on the way to that sad outcome already. Brother Wade’s book is the best description I have ever seen of the futility of sectarianism, of the inevitable destruction inherent in the proposition of unity by conformity. If you ever had any doubt about what would happen when we make fellowship contingent on uniformity of thought, just read this book. In spite of occasional glimpses of glory and, perhaps undetected by the author, no clearer picture could be drawn of what happens when issues become the watchword rather than the gospel!

One chapter, relating the schism over the “order of worship” controversy, is entitled, “The Division That Never Should Have Happened.” That ought to have been the title of the whole book! *None* of the divisions chronicled in the work should have happened. The division over the cup issue should never have occurred. The division over the Sunday School should not have taken place. Is this to say that those issues are not important, should not have been discussed and studied? Certainly not! It is to say that these issues should never have been made the tests of fellowship. If Romans 14 teaches us anything, it shows that we should leave this judging business to God; we are told to accept our brethren even when they disagree with us. The idea that the only way to purge out a disagreement is to divide the church and hem in all who agree on the issue and consign the others to hell is *not* a scriptural principle, rather the reverse of it.

Paul tells us in Romans 14 to accept one another in spite of differences, and not just to argue and wrangle. It is true that our differences will manifest themselves from church to church, but that doesn’t mean that we should be divided. One congregation may, because of its understanding of scripture, choose to use only one container for the drink element on

the Lord's Table. But it need not therefore excommunicate all in another congregation across town because they do not so understand that scripture. One congregation may not choose to divide into classes for Sunday School, may in fact feel that such a practice is wrong. But it need not disfellowship other congregations whose study has not led them to the same conclusions. The same holds for instrumental music and a host of other issues that have been elevated to tests of fellowship. We ought to debate (or discuss) these issues in order to come to closer agreement, but we should deliberate as brothers and not as enemies. There is no scriptural justification for the disfellowshipping and excommunicating that has characterized our history for the last 100 years. Rather, there is emphatic scriptural condemnation for such behavior.

So I read Brother Wade's book with mixed emotion. I thrill at the story of our pioneer preachers, their sacrifice and accomplishment for the Lord. I'm glad to know more of brethren with whom I have had little opportunity for association. But I am sickened by division and strife, and frustrated by the persistence of a view that seems to me invariably destined to produce such carnage against the Body of Christ. I pray that this book will have wide circulation, both for the good things it contains and for the demonstration it gives of the sordid results of sectarian zeal. It is just such a story as may drive us to find God's grace, the only antidote for the poison of partisan religion.

A Heritage of Prayer

July, 2004

Editor's note: Though not a part of his regular column on Restoration, the following article continues the spirit of that column as it provides a response to the increasingly popular characterization of Campbell and other leaders of the Restoration Movement as overly influenced by the rationalism of the Enlightenment and thus less interested in the work of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual dynamic of prayer.

For Some years now, a few historians have blamed the perceived legalism of our movement on the early pioneers. They point out that the Campbells, like many of their time, were enamored by the rational school of John Locke and by Enlightenment philosophy in general. It is easy to find evidence of common sense rationalism in the early writings, and particularly in the debates of Alexander Campbell.

Our pioneers were battling the extreme emotionalism and subjectivism of early frontier revivalism and so argued for a more logical approach to religion. But that these pioneers were not spiritual and pious in the best sense of the words is a mistaken view. I have long thought that they were getting a “bum rap.” There was too much emphasis on prayer and the Holy Spirit to justify the charges. When given a recent speaking assignment on our “Heritage of Prayer,” I decided to make a thorough search through early documents to see what I could find.

Harbinger Insights

The *Millennial Harbinger* was the journal Campbell published from 1831 until his death and it was continued by W.K. Pendleton, his son-in-law, another five years, until 1870. Thus we have forty years of writing reflecting the most important thinking of the early Movement. Going through the forty years of the Harbinger, I found forty-four essays on prayer, an average of more than one essay a year. I have read through these pieces, in order to determine the nature and intensity of the pioneer thinking on the subject. Most of these essays were written by Campbell himself, but there are perhaps a dozen by other leading men in the Movement, including Robert Richardson, Robert Milligan, W.K. Pendleton and J.W. McGarvey. In what follows, I would like to present a sampling of these essays, to give a better and more accurate picture of the pioneers' spirituality and piety. I will attempt by these excerpts and my comments to construct a framework for their belief on this important subject. I know that these essays are not the Bible, but they are grounded in the Bible and they are very important to an understanding of our own history and heritage. Paul says (Philippians 3:17) “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.”

Prayer Principles

As we take up excerpts on general prayer principles, we start with A. Campbell writing in 1832. In this essay it is clear that he values prayer and meditation on the word as more important to spiritual life than issues of doctrine and ordinances, as vital, in fact, as breath to physical life. Without prayer and communion with God, man is unfit for heaven.

Men may talk about religion, about sound doctrine, about ordinances, about institutions, about everything present and future; but without this communion with God, this habitual devotion of mind, these constant aspirations, ejaculations, and soaring to the throne of mercy and favor, man is unfit for heaven, and unworthy of the Christian profession. A zealot he may be, orthodox in doctrine, moral in demeanor, but he wants the life and power of Christianity. Meditation on what God has spoken to us, and the outpourings of our spirit to him, is to the moral man what free respiration in a pure atmosphere is to the physical man—life, health, vigor, beauty.

One can scarcely read this essay, and others like it from Campbell, without concluding that he was more than a skillful logician, a great debater; he was also a deeply spiritual man. Read on, from an 1839 essay:

To know and enjoy God himself is the supreme bliss, as it is the highest style and dignity of man; and to this, religion is but the means. . . A prayerless Christian is as paradoxical to me as a lungless man. I could as easily believe that a man could live seven years without breathing, as a Christian live seven days without praying.

One of the great names from the second generation of the Movement is J.W. McGarvey, schooled at Bethany College and writer of numerous books still esteemed and read today. McGarvey may be perceived to tend a bit more toward legalism, though his devotion no one can doubt. He insisted in an 1865 essay that we have no right to pray for things God has not promised and that prayer must be coupled with obedience.

We cannot pray for rain without a cloud, nor for food without labor. Neither can we pray for pardon in unbelief, in impenitence, or in disobedience. Here is the folly of mourning-bench prayers, which call upon God to pardon the sinner before he has complied with the conditions of pardon which the will of God prescribes. . . When we pray for wisdom, which God has promised to give to all liberally, we are to let the word of wisdom dwell in us richly; when we pray for stronger faith, we must not forget that faith comes by the word of God; and when we pray for the salvation of sinners, we must preach to them the gospel which is the power of God to salvation.

We can scarcely object to any of that, can we? Yet we might think that an earnest pleading from the heart does not always follow a formula. In fact, sometimes there are needs so deep and hard to articulate that we must depend on the Holy Spirit to present them to God for us (Romans 8:26).

Public Prayers

We move to the category of public prayer. From C.L. Loos, in an 1866 essay, we learn that the pioneers considered the issue of prayer to be an especial emphasis in their attempt

to restore for the church the primitive, apostolic practice. Just as they argued that baptism was the action of initiation into the family of God, so prayer was the medium of communication between children and their father God.

The spirit of prayer in the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus, was transmitted to the church, as a vital element in it. In the study and theoretical development of Primitive Christianity, and in its practical reproduction among men today, it must constitute a very prominent, characteristic part. To omit or neglect this, is to break the integrity of the perfection, to mar the beauty and power, of New Testament Christianity. . . . May this same grace of the Lord Jesus, be with all them who seek to bring back among men the pure doctrine and holy life of the saints of the New Testament Church, in making them, as were the holy men of the Bible and of every age, diligent and fervent in prayer.

A consistent theme in A. Campbell's writing, from first to last, was sincerity and appropriateness in public prayer. When the congregation prays it is a community activity, and the leader must always keep in mind that he is speaking for the assembly and be careful to lead in such a way that all may follow, by speaking simply and from the heart, avoiding stilted and stereotyped phrases, and by being specific and brief. While he never said so, I think Campbell would have been disturbed by the common contemporary emphasis on "I" and "me" on the part of prayer leaders, who thereby effectively shift the focus from the congregation to themselves. Note several excerpts from an 1832 essay by Campbell, which I will follow with an excerpt from an essay thirty years later, in 1862, to show his consistency.

When we speak from the heart, there is a propriety in our terms, and a pathos in our expression, which easily distinguish them from all that language of art, and the studied forms of speech. Therefore it is that we improve so much in the style of our prayers when we are much practiced in secret prayer... Surely he that is wont to converse with the King, will never want language nor feel himself embarrassed when he speaks in the presence of the King's servants. . . . There is so much of the studied and set phrase of ordinary and artificial composition in our addresses to the throne of the universe, that there is more apparent concern in the speaker to please the ears of his auditors, than to worship and adore the Majesty of the Universe. By uniformity in the matter of our prayers is meant a certain methodical and stated expression of the same sentiments and sentences in every address to God. Some people pray in such a monotonous strain of sentences, that after you have heard them twice or thrice, you can always anticipate the next sentence; and if you are obliged to attend upon such prayers for a considerable time, they become perfect opiates to your understanding and senses, and are more to be desired for their soporiferous than for their devotional powers. Plain and unaffected language, which does no more than give scope to the feelings of the heart, is the proper language of public prayer. This is the true eloquence of devotion. But deliberation is doubly necessary in public or social prayer; for if we do not speak slowly

it is impossible for others to unite with us. Many, both in their prayers and their preachings, continue to speak a long time after they are done.

And now for the 1862 excerpt:

The most common fault in public prayer is carelessness. A well-meaning brother commences to pray without that careful weighing of thoughts and words which he would feel to be proper if he were about to commence a speech. . . . His carelessness leads him into the utterance of a succession of stereotyped commonplace sayings. . . . not in themselves undesirable petitions, but they have fallen so often on the ears of those who are being led in prayer as to lose all that life and earnestness which should be the characteristics of every prayer offered to God. In public prayer we cannot be too earnest: we cannot be too direct and pointed in our petitions; and we need not be afraid of making our prayers too short. A very common error is to spin them out to such length that we may almost seem to think we shall be "heard for our much speaking." Notice the earnestness and directness of the petitions in the Lord's prayer, the publican's prayer in the temple, Peter's prayer when he is sinking, the prayer of the dying thief on the cross; then compare them with some of the long-strung prayers that we sometimes hear. Which is best?

This latter comment on brevity may come as a surprise when one considers that Campbell frequently preached for two hours or more. But he is simply recognizing that long rambling prayers, are usually not helpful for the congregation, especially when it is on its knees. All of us would do well to consider how we say the most with fewest words when we are leading others.

Congregational Amen

On another matter, C.L. Loos, a co-editor of the *Harbinger* after Campbell's death, addresses (in an 1862 essay) the need for the congregation to express its assent by saying "Amen" at the conclusion of public prayer. I must confess that this is one area where I sincerely wish we could restore the ancient practice. You may not agree, but listen to Loos' argument to see if you think it has merit:

Under the Old Testament dispensation there were public, congregational, as well as private, prayers. In these the whole congregation--"all the people"-- participated; it was not intended to be the voice of petition—the praise or thanks of a single man, but the voice and prayer of the whole, expressed for them all by one, and the people were publicly and audibly to utter their assent....It was especially ordered that the congregation should in an audible and most decided manner, give its response of assent. Even in the awful curses pronounced before the assembled nation from Mount Ebal, at every utterance "all the people" were to say "Amen!" The practice of congregational devotion and piety was fully carried over into the Christian organization of the New

*Covenant....he that prays in the congregation is the mouth for all;-
-that all may heartily join with him... As the public prayer of the
Christian congregation, though uttered by one, it is Biblical, in the
spirit and manner of the Old Testament and the new, that the
church give an public and audible assent...It is evident from 1
Corinthians14:16 that in the apostolic church the congregation
responded to the public prayers and giving of thanks by the word
Amen...That this practice was retained in the early church...we
learn from Justin Martyr: “when he(the president of the assembly)
has finished the prayers and giving of thanks, all the people
present heartily respond, saying Amen!” Other writers of the early
church declare the same.*

I don't remember in my lifetime ever hearing an entire congregation say “Amen!” but I know it was much more common among some of the men fifty years ago. Here is one area that the women, as well as men, should speak. That would not, I think, violate Paul's restrictions. And wouldn't it add life and vitality to our prayers for us all to signify assent.

One other concern of the pioneers regarding public prayers was posture. While this may sound quaint in our culturally proper ears, it was part of their feeling that in prayer, body and soul should be united in reverence. How does one, they argued, properly address the Lord of Heaven while sitting comfortably on a padded pew? But listen to Brother Campbell, in an 1858 piece:

*On our recent tour through Illinois and Iowa, we were no
little shocked in witnessing whole congregations, with very few
exceptions, sitting in the act of prayer. We, on first impression,
wondered whether they were skeptics or actual unbelievers. We
could not think that any gentleman would sit down to address a
king or an emperor, to ask a favor of him; much less could we
think that any Christian man would sit down by a deliberate act of
his own will, to address “the King of Kings and the Lord of
Lords.” Sitting worshippers are lazy-bodies; kneeling
worshippers are in good keeping with our present personalities,
and are, therefore, acceptable to God so far as they correspond
with him in spirit and truth. If angels cast their crowns at the feet
of the Lamb of God, we may afford to bow our persons in the dust
before him. There are no sofas in the heavens for the
aristocracies of the skies. Let us then, humbly worship at his feet,
in spirit and truth; for God seeks such and such only to worship
him.*

This echoes an earlier (1835) essay from the same pen:

*To sit down and address God, as is very common at most
family tables, in their thanksgivings for God's daily bounties, is
most indecorous and disorderly. This, unless in cases of great
physical debility, is not to glorify God with our bodies. Shall a
man arise to address a respectable friend, and sit down to thank
God for his daily repasts! Good order will never sanction so
indecorous a usage. Much less in the public congregation is it*

comely for those who unite in public worship to keep their seats when they presume to address the eternal throne, around which the angels of God prostrate themselves in token of their profound reverence.

While we should listen to this and examine our own degree of reverence, I think we may take some exception. Jesus himself prayed with his disciples while reclining (Matthew 26:20,26). On the other hand wouldn't it be good if we knelt more often? I know our elderly have trouble. I like the practice in some churches to have kneelers on the back of pews, to make it easier and perhaps enhancing reverence.

On Family Prayer

It is, however, in the area of family prayer and devotions that the pioneers make their greatest emphasis. It is evident that they realized that the family was an important key to the success of the church and to the development among all the saints of the spiritual depth necessary to the goal of restoring New Testament Christianity. It may be that this is the area where we have the most to learn. We have turned our children over to others—teachers in the schools and Sunday Schools—rather than assume full responsibility for their spiritual development.

Robert Milligan, in 1857, insists that family prayers are a privilege, not just a duty.

If there were not in the whole Bible, a single precept or example, bearing directly on the subject of family prayer, it would be enough for the man who has a right conception of his own wants, and the wants of his children, to know that it is his privilege at any time, and at all times, to lead them to the mercy-seat, and there with and for them, to implore the mercy, the protection, the sustaining grace, and the all-comprehensive blessing of Him who has said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Thomas Campbell, father of Alexander, even suggested that every Christian home ought to have two tables, one for food for the body, and one for food for the soul. The following excerpt is from an essay published in 1860, six years after his death.

Alas! Then, of what a heaven upon earth do we deprive ourselves and our children, by neglecting as we do, our vastly superior privileges! And we have not time to take our three spiritual meals per day, as Joshua, and those other Old Testament worthies did, who like him, were determined, that let others do as they pleased, as for them and their families, they would serve the Lord. And why not, brethren? Can we possibly make a better choice? Can we possibly spend our time to better purpose?... For this purpose, let every Christian family keep two tables; the one furnished with Bibles for feeding their souls, and the other for the products of the earth for their bodily food.

Alexander, in an 1848 essay, admitted to the difficulty of absolute regularity in family devotions, and his own travels often left the leadership in this respect to his godly wife. But he argued for consistency and regularity.

The Christian must have his stated season of prayer, as he has his stated meals. Christians live in families, and in churches, and as such they must approach together the mercy seat, and there unite, and thus strengthen and aid one another. True, our children may not all, nor always, unite with us. Still, Christian parents may pray and worship together in their presence, and bear them up as an offering to the Lord...They must teach and train them by example, as well as by precept and by doctrine. We might as rationally withhold from them the Bible, as the throne of grace.

To assist the brethren in this important matter, Campbell published a long series titled “*Conversations at the Carleton House,*” to portray what he thought reflected the ideal family culture. These essays were later collected and published as a book by Hall and Company in London, 1850. At the end of that series Campbell writes,

May the good Lord hasten family reformation! For till that takes place, “Zion must remain a wilderness; Jerusalem a desolation.” And further, “Christianity is at a low ebb when heads of Christian families neglect family teaching, family praying, family singing, and family conversations.”

Campbell argued in 1854 that every Christian home ought to be a “Bethel,” a “house of God,” and that rearing children successfully was nigh impossible without such an atmosphere.

Can any Christian demonstrate the possibility of bringing up his children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord, who seldom or never gathers them round his knees and allows them to hear him invoke for them the blessings of God, temporal, spiritual, and eternal?... We shall regard it as a privilege and an honor bestowed on all heads of households, in Christ’s church to make their families Bethels, and to gather them around the Bible morning and evening to hear God speak to them... and their parents speak for them to God.

Private Prayer

There is no insistence here on brevity for time spent in closeted communion. Rather, here is where “Pray without ceasing” applies. The cultivation of private prayer is the sure means of maintaining the close relationship with God that ought to be the goal of every Christian. Note well (from Campbell, 1839):

We need then to pray for “the spirit of grace and supplication,” and to cultivate prayerful temper habitually and constantly; for, without this, it is impossible to enjoy Christian

privileges. Our hearts cannot be kept right any other way. We cannot have confidence in God nor in ourselves, but from living near, very near to God, in our daily and constant meditations, prayers, and thanksgiving. The stream of piety is a clear, constant, tranquil, swelling current that bears the soul nearer to the bosom of our Father and our God. Say not, my Christian brother, you have not time for this; rather say you have not disposition. Say not this will interfere with your business of life. Time is given you for no other purpose than to be saved; that is, to be purified, sanctified, and fitted for heaven; and our daily and constant business is, "To give all diligence to make your calling and your election sure."

The advantage of private prayer is that it is not limited by time or place. In nearly every situation, we can "incline our hearts to pray," even without audible words. In fact, Campbell argued (in 1834) that this is the meaning of "praying in the spirit," as distinguished from "praying with the understanding."

It is agreed that there is a praying without speaking aloud. Such was the prayer of Hannah, most acceptable to God. "She spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought that she was drunken." This speaking in the heart, or praying in the spirit, is not only practicable in the midst of all the business of life; but it is the only way in which the apostolic exhortation of "praying without ceasing" can be obeyed...To sing and pray "with the understanding" is to sing and pray aloud and intelligibly—to sing and pray in the spirit, is to sing and pray for our own edification and comfort. Paul would practice both. So ought all who value his example. But the only proper preparation for these (the battles of life) is the spirit of grace and supplication—this constant praying in the spirit, which creates a relish for communion with God in the closet and in the society of kindred spirits.

Some folk in Campbell's day, as in ours, argued that God did not answer prayer directly, but that prayer was designed merely to condition our minds toward spiritual things, to help us follow the revealed Will in Scripture. Campbell responds with a contrary view, showing the weakness of this "clockmaker" concept:

I do not believe that when God created the universe he made it like to an eight-day clock, to run just seven thousand years, and then stop. In that case, indeed, there would be no direct answer to prayer. One form of prayer would suffice for all cases. Instead of a daily prayer for our daily bread, or our daily health and safety, we might, with more propriety, say, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This would be the only prayer necessary, in all cases, were prayer merely designed to produce acquiescence.

It is thus obvious that Campbell believed in direct answer to prayer and, as he elsewhere insisted, it is appropriate for the Christian to pray for whatever he legitimately desires. If

the Spirit leads you to want something, you pray for it. “Pray at all times” involves what was called “fragmentary prayers,” requests and praised uttered in the moments between other involvements. “Thank you Lord, for my family.” “Hallelujah, praise Jehovah.” “Lord, grant me wisdom for the task ahead.” Such prayers flow intermittently from a mind attuned to God and aware of his presence and power.

Conclusion

I conclude this review with an 1857 selection from Robert Milligan on the benefits of “secret prayer.” This is from a seven essay series by Milligan later published in a little book that went through many editions after its first printing in 1863.

The Benefits of Prayer

1. *It cultivates our own spiritual nature.*
2. *It forms a habit of close union, communion and fellowship with God.*
3. *It preserves us from many evils. (Our worst enemies are our own lusts and passions.)*
4. *It secures to us much positive good.*
5. *It enables us to promote the good and happiness of others.*

Why, then, do we not all pray? Why do we not more frequently retire to our closets, and pray more earnestly for the salvation of mortal souls? How much more parents might do in this way to promote the present and eternal well-being of their children, than they can by constantly laboring to secure for them a large supply of the riches and the honors and the pleasures of this vain world! Let us then endeavor to appreciate more highly the great value and efficacy of secret prayer, as a means of securing to others rich blessings of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

This is just a sampling of the Harbinger essays on prayer, but perhaps enough to give you an idea of the significant emphasis on this spiritual activity in the thought of our religious forebears. While some have questioned the spirituality of the pioneers, I think we may well ask whether we measure up to their level—or more importantly, whether we come close to God’s standard. I know that I do not, though as age and experience advance, I seek daily for a closer walk. All the important things that hinder me are inconsequential in comparison.